EARLY SCIENTIFIC INTEREST: DOCUMENTS B43 to B55

With the Pacific Voyages of Carteret, Bougainville and Cook, a precedent appears to have been set: Carteret's was the first expedition to record a scientific objective with the broader aim of discovery. With Bougainville went Commerson, a botanist, and Ver- ron, an astronomer; with Cook went Banks and Solander, botanists, and Green, an astronomer. Most of the expeditions of the nineteenth century included the 'disinterested curious' — men whose sole interest lay in the developing sciences.

In 1823 the Frenchman, Duperrey, who had sailed with Freycinet to Waigeo Island (B43), visited the Northern Solomons, New Ireland and New Britain; the naturalist, Lesson, accompanied this expedition. (B44) Four years later the French admiral, Dumont D'Urville, visited the Bismarck Archipelago. (B45) For the period 3-10 March 1875, Sir Charles Thomson and his party from the Challenger were in the Admiralty Islands; the naturalist, Moseley, was with this expedition and he made a comprehensive study of the area around the present-day Nares Harbour. (B52) In the same year the warship Gazelle carried a German scientific party to parts of New Hanover, New Ireland, the Gazelle Peninsula and Bougainville Island. (B49)

The new scientific knowledge spread by itinerant scholars was supplemented by workers in the field. Alfred Wallace, a naturalist who spent nearly six months in western New Guinea and adjacent islands, gave the world a better knowledge of the New Guinea peoples in that region. (B46) Dr Bernstein spent a brief period near Sorong in 1864 and a Dutch Colonial Officer, Count von Rosenberg, explored the shores of Geelvink Bay. In 1872-3 the Italian naturalists, D'Albertis and Beccari, lived and worked in the Arfak Mountains behind Dorei (Manokwari). D'Albertis later made his base on Yule Island and from there navigated the Fly River. (B50)

Towards the close of the century the British Ornithologists' Union sent an expedition led by Walter Goodfellow to study the Snow Mountains in Dutch Territory. The region had not been visited previously, although ever since Jan Carstensz expressed his astonishment upon seeing snow on mountains in the tropics (1623) the phenomenon had attracted a great deal of interest. Goodfellow's party could not approach, because of the swamp barriers, the mountains of their interest.

The Dutch made several coastal surveys of West New Guinea but as their primary interest was commercial the interior was neglected until the 'seventies when the need to define their territorial claims necessitated excursions to several hitherto unknown coastal and inland points. Naturalists usually accompanied these expeditions. Van der AA compiled many reports of these scientists. (See B27; B33) Miklucho-Maclay, a Russian naturalist, reached New Guinea in 1871 and spent eighteen months in the Astrolabe Bay district. (B47) In the 'seventies and 'eighties there were several German scientific expeditions along the north-east coast of the mainland and the Bismarck Archipelago. Of these the most important were the contributions made by Otto Finsch. (B79) Richard Parkinson, who settled in the Gazelle Peninsula in 1882, was primarily a planter, but he made valuable studies and collections of natural specimens for German Museums and he was honoured by German scientific bodies for his work. Australian scientific interest was first represented by William Macleay, who in 1875, collected specimens from the Katau River district. (B51) Most ships visiting New Guinea, for whatever purpose, acquired specimens of anthropological and scientific interest, as the sale of specimens and artefacts proved to be a lucrative side-line. See also, Evelyn Cheeseman, 'Naturalists' Expeditions in the Pacific', The Pacific, C. Barrett, ed., Melbourne, 1950; Anon., 'Recenti spedizioni alla Nuova Guinea', Cosmos, 1-3, 1873-5-6. A series of articles surveying the achievements of Beccari, D'Albertis, Miklucho-Maclay, &c.

B43  A French Expedition at Rawak, North-west New Guinea, 1818

The principal object of the expedition commanded by De Freycinet, according to his reporter, Arago, was, 'the investigation of the figure of the earth, and of the elements of terrestrial magnetism; several questions of meteorology had also been suggested by the Academy as worthy of attention.' In the corvettes,
Uranie and Physicienne, the expedition voyaged around the world, and was able to give reports to the Academy of Sciences of their findings in the use of navigational instruments, geography, meteorology, hydrography and natural history. The expedition reached the island of Rawak, near Waigo and West New Guinea on 16 December 1818, and remained there until 5 January 1819. The main object of their stay was to make observations at a spot close to the equator of the number of oscillations of four invariable pendulums to determine 'the extent of the oblateness of the two hemispheres.'

The natives of Rawack, Waigooe, and New Guinea, whom we have daily before our eyes, are little, squat, large headed, woolly hair, nearly black, big bodied, spindly shanked, with long and broad feet. Their countenance is inexpressive, their manners unengaging, their air stupid. Some of them have so much hair on their head, that you would take it for a pile of wigs. Almost all are covered with leprosy, or have been affected by it. They have big bellies and prominent hips; their gait is awkward, though they are tolerably active. Their language is nois, and inharmonious; their smile, almost laughable. They climb trees with surprising facility, and are skilful fishers; standing on the bow of a canoe, rudely enough fashioned, and sometimes furnished with a sail of cocoa leaves, a man sees a fish at a distance, directs his proa toward it, and, though more than twenty paces distant, almost always strikes it with a long bamboo, headed with a double-pointed iron.

To live, fish, and propagate their species, are their sole occupations. If their fishing be successful, they make a good meal. The table is placed, and the cloth soon laid. Placing the fish on branches of green wood rised two or three feet above the ground, they kindle underneath it a large fire, round which they assemble. Their appetite serves them for sauce, their fingers for forks, the palm of the hand, or a large leaf, for a plate. The intestines of the largest fish, far from being rejected by them, appeared to me to be most agreeable to their palates, which are not over nice. I know many Parisian ladies, who would scream loudly at being set down to such an unceremonious meal, where a piece of fish strewed with earth is devoured with a degree of pleasure, which our best seasoned dishes do not always afford.

Do not think, however, my dear Battle, that these men, near as they approach the state of nature, are absolute strangers to every species of nicety. They have also a tomorrow; and the approach of bad weather, or some public rejoicing, obliges them to exert themselves more, and double their labour the day before. They then throw the surplus of their provision into a large bamboo, fresh cut, the knots of which they perforate, and which they half fill with boiling water, in which it is cooked, and remains hot for a long time. I have tasted fish thus prepared, and I can assure you, that I found it excellent. I must add, however, (for I would not flatter), that an involuntary abstinence of more than two months, and the attraction of novelty, contributed not a little to dissipel the insipid and smoky taste which my generous messmates appeared not to perceive.

... Behold these islanders, happy and contented, seated in a circle round a heap of fish thrown promiscuously on a few leaves of the bread-fruit, or of the cocoa-tree, devouring with astonishing voracity the meal, which their dexterity has just procured them.

Source: J. Arago, Narrative of a Voyage Round the World, in the Uranie and Physicienne Corvettes, commanded by Captain Fremcnet, during the years 1817, 1818, 1819 and 1820; etc., London, 1823. Letter from Arago to his friend, No. 72, pp. 225-29

B44 A French Naturalist Observes the New Irerladers, 1823

René Primevère Lesson (1794-1849) was a naturalist who accompanied Louis Duperrey on his voyage around the world in La Coquille (1822-25). The expedition left France on 11 August 1822 and sailed for Tahiti and the Society Islands. Proceeding to New Guinea, the expedition reached Port Praslin, New Ireland, and stayed in port from 12 August to 21 August 1823. Lesson's observations at Port Praslin are contained in this extract. From New Ireland La Coquille navigated St. George's Channel to voyage to Waigeo, the Moluccas, Amboina, Port Jackson, N. S. W. and New Zealand. See also, G. P. Whitley, 'R. P. Lesson, 1794-1849', R. A. H. S. Journ. & Proc., 1933, Vol. 19, p. 312.

The New Irerladers have black skin; but it is difficult to decide about their complexion; a sooty colour seems to be the result of a smooth mixing of yellow with brown. Their physique is nothing remarkable; it varies with individuals; the average proportion is close to five feet one or two inches. Their limbs, but for the thinness or poomarks that seem to be prevalent among those of the negro race, have, for the most part, the regularity and grace that is characteristic of Oceanic peoples. Thick woolly hair covers the head and falls down onto the shoulders in frizzled locks arranged like corkscrews. The old men allow their beards to grow very long and they appear to take great trouble with them; to these most prominent features of their external appearance one can add a narrow forehead, a broad flat nose and a large mouth in which can be seen two rows of teeth discoloured by betel...

All the men of this black race in those parts of the world where they have been observed seem to ignore rules of decency; complete nakedness is for them the natural state; they have never sought to hide their private parts from the eyes of the world. The New Irerladers do not pluck out hair and a few old men were remarkable for the thick covering of hair on the limbs; they have no custom of circumcision.
The faces of the old men show an aloof dignity; their calm and serene features are stamped with an impassiveness which accompanies senility, while the young of these people, like all those elsewhere, are characterised by a dynamic manner and a lively spirit. If one studies for some time the faces of the New Ierlanders one can easily identify the emotions reflected there; and alongside the duplicity and perfidious aspects of some is contrasted the defiance and suspicion of others, the friendliness and trustfulness of yet others. Among these men gaiety and passion do not appear to be part of more than a small number; their life is spent laying ambushes for their enemies or protecting themselves from the enemy's traps, and a perpetual state of hostility is part of their existence...

Among the men who came to stay temporarily on the banks of Port Praslin during our stay, we noticed a large number of old men; which gave us to think that life here, if exempt from ambitions and plots, would flow on for many many years provided war and destruction does not come to trouble the times and destroy the monotony. Man is carried along to destruction so naturally and war is so basic to his organization that one notices that hatreds are never more alive and more fierce than when they occur between two tribes descended from the same family; and yet the hatred which divides them is so great that the name of Birare (native name for Dampier's New Britain) pronounced in front of a native of Port Praslin, is sufficient to provoke a terrible anger and to make him utter imperations in his own tongue which, to judge from the violence of the accompanying actions, must be terribly vigorous and drastic. We were also inclined to think that the New Ierlanders are cannibals; we have not yet any proof of this, only assumptions; but this frightening liking, resulting from an immoderate desire for revenge, is converted into a religious dogma by the most barbarous superstitions and is elsewhere more widespread than is thought among several Oceanic peoples and Polynesians. The weapons of the natives of Port Praslin are ordinary, ornamented with human bones and hair. Some hideous trophies were given to use... They are so brutish that instead of protecting their prisoners they massacre them and distribute the parts in order to perpetuate even after the killing their terrible revenge. We took careful measures to prove our suspicions about this distressing habit and several natives confirmed our suspicions and proved to us by very expressive gestures the pleasure that they got from it by working their muscles as if devouring; while others, on the other hand, were restless and troubled by this question; they would not reply at all, showed anxiety and were in a hurry to leave the vessel. We could not give them the benefit of supposing that this must be the result of remorse: this feeling is completely unknown to them. It is more likely that fear made them suspect that our customs were analogous to theirs, that perhaps we were treasonably preparing for them the same fate that they had for their prisoners and that our overtures to them were just the beginning of this practice.


**B45 Dumont D'Urville at Dorei (Manokwari), 1827**

Jules Sebastien César Dumont D'Urville (1790-1842) was a French naval officer and navigator who served as a lieutenant on *La Coquille* under Louis Duperrey in his Pacific expedition of 1822-25. In 1825 an expedition was arranged 'by order of the king', to explore the principal groups of islands in the Pacific and to augment as much as possible the mass of scientific material acquired by Duperrey. *La Coquille*, renamed *L'Astrolabe*, was placed under the command of D'Urville for this venture. D'Urville left Toulon on 22 April 1826 and arrived at Port Jackson, N. S. W., in December of that year. From here he journeyed to New Zealand, then north to the Kermadees, Tongatabu, Fiji, New Britain and New Guinea. See also, 'Dumont D'Urville', *Aust. Encyc.*, Vol. 2; R. P. Lesson, *Voyage autour du monde ... sur la corvette La Coquille*, Paris, 1838-39.

The inhabitants of Dorei are distributed among four villages placed at the water's edge. Each village encloses from eight to fifteen houses built on piers. A few of these houses have twice the usual number of separate little rooms and cater for several families. These buildings, constructed entirely of roughly-worked wood, are open by day on all sides and often shake under the steps of passers-by. The whole population of Dorei must number about fifteen hundred people.

Plate 30: The French admiral, Dumont D'Urville
Naturally defiant and very jealous of their women, the Papuans were extremely reluctant to allow us into their huts so that we were not able to find out the details of their domestic habits. We were likewise unable to describe their religious ceremonies and forms of government, and can only conjecture about them.

Idols that are found on their graves, amulets that they wear around the neck and in the ears, their sacred houses, are all part of a common-place culture.

Various pieces of their big sculpture remind one of the Egyptian style in its infancy. Their small wooden pedestals ornamented with sphinx heads have a perfect resemblance to objects that have the same practical use and that are found every day in Egyptian tombs. Lastly, models of crocodiles, dogs, and other animals that are frequently found in their houses,—are they merely ornaments, or are they not a part of a worship that is given to these animals? It is certain in all cases, that Malayans have brought several confused Islamic ideas to these people.


B46  A British Naturalist at Dorei (Manokwari), 1858

During the period 1854 to 1862, Alfred Russel Wallace travelled extensively throughout the Malay Archipelago to obtain specimens of natural history for his private collection and to supply duplicates to museums and private collectors. The British Museum purchased selections at ls. 6d. per specimen. At Dorei, Wallace suffered from recurrent malaria and was unable to make all the inland trips he had planned before the Dutch schooner that had left him at Dorei called to pick him up. He spent about 5 months and 21 days in Papuasia, and of this, about three months in New Guinea. See also, ‘Notes on a voyage to New Guinea’, R. G. S. Journ. & Proc., 1860; ‘New Guinea and its Inhabitants,’ Contemporary Revue, 1879; Correspondence and Journal of A. R. Wallace, Mitchell Library, Microfilm, FM4 2699-2700.

The next morning we entered, and came to anchor off the small island of Mansinam, on which dwelt two German missionaries, Messrs. Otto and Geisler. The former immediately came on board to give us welcome, and invited us to go on shore and breakfast with him. We were then introduced to his companion—who was suffering dreadfully from an abscess on the heel, which had confined him to the house for six months—and his wife, a young German woman, who had been out only three months. Unfortunately she could speak no Malay or English, and had to guess at our compliments on her excellent breakfast by the justice we did to it.

These missionaries were working men, and had been sent out as being more useful among savages than persons of a higher class. They had been here about two years, and Mr. Otto had already learned to speak the Papuan language with fluency, and had begun translating some portions of the Bible. The language however, is so poor that a considerable number of Malay words have to be used; and it is very questionable whether it is possible to convey any idea of such a book to a people in so low a state of civilisation. The only nominal converts yet made are a few of the women; and some few of the children attend school, and are being taught to read, but they make little progress. There is one feature of this mission which I believe will materially interfere with its moral effect. The missionaries are allowed to trade to eke out the very small salaries granted them from Europe, and of course are obliged to carry out the trade principle of buying cheap and selling dear, in order to make a profit. Like all savages the natives are quite careless of the future, and when their small rice crops are gathered they bring a large portion of it to the missionaries, and sell it for knives, beads, axes, tobacco, or any other articles they may require. A few months later, in the wet season, when food is scarce, they come to buy it back again, and give in exchange tortoiseshell, tripong, wild nutmegs, or other produce. Of course the rice is sold at a much higher rate than it was bought, as is perfectly fair and just; and the operation is on the whole thoroughly beneficial to the natives, who would otherwise consume and waste their food when it was abundant, and then starve. Yet I cannot imagine that the natives see it in this light. They must look upon the trading missionaries with some suspicion, and cannot feel so sure of their teachings being disinterested, as would be the case if they acted like the Jesuits in Singapore...

Dorey Harbour is in a fine bay, at one extremity of which an elevated point juts out, and with two or three small islands, forms a sheltered anchorage. The only vessel it contained when we arrived was a Dutch brig, laden with coals for the use of a war-steamner, which was expected daily, on an exploring expedition along the coasts of New Guinea, for the purpose of fixing on a locality for a colony...

The villages of Mansinam and Dorey presented some features quite new to me. The houses all stand completely in the water, and are reached by long rude bridges. They are very low, with the roof shaped like a large boat, bottom upwards. The posts which support the houses, bridges, and platforms, are small crooked sticks placed without any regularity, and looking as if they were tumbling down. The floors are also formed of sticks, equally irregular, and so loose and far apart that I found it almost impossible to walk on them ... The walls consist of bits of boards, old boats, rotten mats, attaps, and palm-leaves, stuck in anyhow here and there, and having altogether the most wretched and dilapidated appearance it is possible to conceive. Under the eaves of many of the houses hang human skulls, the trophies of their battles with the savage Arfaks of the interior, who often come to attack them. A large boat-shaped council-house is supported on larger posts, each of which is grossly carved to represent a naked male or female human
A Russian Naturalist at Astrolabe Bay

figure, and other carvings still more revolting, are placed upon the platform before the entrance. The view of an ancient lake-dweller’s village, given as the frontispiece of Sir Charles Lyell’s ‘Antiquity of Man’, is chiefly founded on a sketch of this very village of Dorey; but the extreme regularity of the structures depicted has no place in the original, and more than it probably had in the actual lake villages.


---

**B47  A Russian Naturalist Sets at Astrolabe Bay, 1871**

In September 1871 the Russian naturalist, Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay, arrived in the *Vitiaz* at Astrolabe Bay. He spent 15 months here near the present site of Madang before returning to Java for a rest and recuperative period. See also, N. von Miklouho-Maclay, ‘Fahrten an der Südwestküste Neu Guinea im...1874’, *Globus*, 1874; ‘Anthropologische Bemerkungen über die Papuas der Maclay-Küste in New Guinea’, *Cosmos*, 2, 1874; 4, 1877.

**25 SEPTEMBER 1871**

It was decided that in two days time the ship would depart. My friend, Tui, the first native I ever encountered, came to tell me that as soon as the ship had left me, and only we three, Olsen, Boy and myself were left behind, natives from other villages would come and kill us. He told us this in sign language, but we all understood his warning. I made out that I did not understand him and time and again he mentioned the names of the villages ‘Bongu’, ‘Gurendo’, ‘Gumbu’ and again began in his sign language to explain to us the destruction of the hut and the killing of us all...

**26 SEPTEMBER 1871**

I showed the Captain and others a place where I would hide my diary or other reports just in case of sickness or attack by natives. About 3 in the afternoon Constantine Bay (as the little bay was named on which my house was situated) looked like the busiest harbour in the world. Boats rushed to and from the ship to get all my possessions ashore, provisions, the last hands were laid on the house to put the finishing touches to it. I was unable to supervise those last minutes as I had to pack the last of my possessions into crates and have them brought ashore. I was so tired that I did most of these arrangements as if in a dream. I went to sleep at 1 a.m.

**27 SEPTEMBER 1871**

In the morning I gave my last letters to the Captain and said farewell to the officers and crew of the *Vitiaz* thanking them all for the effort they had made on my behalf. Then I departed for good from the ship. When the ship lifted anchor I asked Olsen to dip the flag and noticed that he was quietly shedding a tear or two. From now onwards we were on our own without the protection of the *Vitiaz*. As soon as the ship was out of sight, natives came out of the bushes from all sides and for one horrible moment I thought that this must be the end and that they would kill us. They ran about wildly and performed a kind of dance and then at once they stopped, looking curiously at me. It seemed that one of them had noticed the Russian flag on the flagpole. They talked in rather an animated way with each other and again suddenly vanished into the jungle. I was too tired out to get some order into the crates that were still lying about. Tui, my Papuan friend, came and wanted to enter the hut. I said to him, ‘Tabu!’ and he desisted. He asked me if the ship was coming back and in order to get rid of him, I said, ‘Yes,’ and gave him a bit of red calico and asked him in sign language to bring me some coconuts. It was about one hour later when Tui arrived back, bringing with him another Papuan and two smaller boys. He settled himself down and did as if he was asleep. However, I could see that he was watching me intently. After a while he got tired of this game and he went to inspect the mines. He touched the strings and connections but did not dare to go nearer to the actual mine. After this he made a funny movement with his head and all of them went back to the village. I now always carry a notebook with me, noting down any expressions of the native language. About 4 p.m. a long whistle was heard and from the bushes appeared several Papuans carrying spears, arrows and bows and other

---

![Plate 31: The Russian scientist, N. von Miklouho-Maclay](image-url)
weapons. With lots of apprehension I went towards them and asked them to come and join me in front of my hut. They divided into two groups one put his weapons away and others came forwards with coconuts in their hands. About 6 men stayed with their weapons. These were the same natives who had seen the ship depart and who had danced on the beach. I gave them presents and they departed when I indicated that I would like to sleep.


### B48 A Roaring Trade in Birds of Paradise, 1873

Dr Odouardo Beccari was an Italian naturalist who accompanied D’Albertis to New Guinea to collect specimens. Some of his work was done in conjunction with D’Albertis; at other times he worked alone. In July 1873 Beccari was in the Aru Islands. He had been there since February and was disappointed in that the specimens available were less rare and rich than he had expected. See also, Odouardo Beccari, ‘Appunti etnografica sui Papu’, *Cosmos*, 2, 1874; E. H. Giglioli, ‘Dr Beccari’s third visit to New Guinea’, *Geographical Magazine*, 1876, p. 210.

I have only obtained seven specimens of the *Paradisea apoda*, males in full plumage, but many in divers stages of moulting. A destructive war is now waged by the natives against these birds, for which a high price is paid. A skin, prepared in the barbarous native style, deformed and smoked, is exchanged for a box of Yava arack, containing fifteen large square bottles, of the value of about sixteen to eighteen shillings, by the Macassar traders. I have never been able to get a recently killed specimen from the natives. I have been told that no less than 3000 skins of Paradise-birds were exported this year from Dobbo.

**SOURCE** ‘Beccari’s Exploration of Papuasia’, letter from Dr Odouardo Beccari to Marquis G. Doria, dated at Wakan Aru Islands, July 3-4, 1873, published in *Ocean Highways: The Geographical Review*, December 1873, M. L. collected in newspaper cuttings

### B49 S. M. S. Gazelle at New Hanover, 1875

By the 1870s German merchants dominated trade in the South Seas. German traders moved into the Bismarck Archipelago and in the following decade the Neu Guinea Kompannie pressed for Germany’s annexation of New Guinea. Agitation finally resulted in German annexation of the Archipelago in 1884. Prior to annexation the German government was forced to protect its nationals in the Archipelago by sending an Imperial Navy ship periodically to supervise trade and labour recruitment. Natural scientists often joined these expeditions. S. M. S. *Gazelle* was employed thus under the command of Captain von Schleinitz, during 1874-76. Strauch gives a fairly detailed description of peoples and customs in McCluer’s Gulf, New Hanover, New Ireland, New Britain and Bougainville. See also, G. Schleinitz, *Die Forschungsreise SMS ‘Gazelle’ in den Jahren 1874 bis 1876 unter Kommando des Kapitän zur See Freiherrn (G. E. G.) von S*, Berlin, 1888-90.

As SMS Gazelle approached the north-western side of New Hanover there appeared on the beach a large number of natives and many canoes being made ready; the speed of the ship, however, prevented them, as they came out of the reeds, from coming close; only one, which was already at sea when our ship approached was able to come alongside, but the speed of the *Gazelle* was such that they could not keep hold of the rope that was thrown to them. Immediately after anchoring in a lagoon not far from Cape Queen Charlotte, (where the English corvette *Blanche* had also anchored in 1869), the ship was approached by a large number of canoes, and trade commenced. The natives did not demand very much for their wares. For ornaments they accepted bottles and mirrors and trinkets; they preferred to receive pieces of light red cloth—as sign that they had had very little contact with strangers before. Very much preferred also were articles of steel, such as axes and knives, the value of which they knew, but at times they seemed doubtful whether to take the steel articles or the cloth for trade. It was obviously a battle between their commonsense and emotions. As the material was in large pieces they took this most often and immediately tucked it away in their bark baskets, only to get it out again almost immediately to admire. The red cloth so intrigued them it seemed that they were drawn to it, and despite their doubts, they seized it impulsively.

As the cloth was in large pieces the natives seemed under the impression that in exchange for their wares they were to receive a whole bolt of material; they were very upset when, after handing over their wares, they received only a strip. Often after a native received a smaller portion of material than he had obviously anticipated, his neighbours
laughed at him and made him the butt of jokes. They expressed disappointment in the same fashion: a native trader stood in his canoe offering his wares with one hand, and the other hand extended ready to receive the large piece of cloth; when he saw that the cloth was being torn, he started to hiss, and with his free hand slap his thigh. When he realized the inevitable, he tried to receive the larger piece of cloth. His neighbours joined in the hissing during the purchase, thus voicing their joint protest. It is astonishing the impact this cloth of Turkish Red had on the natives, or rather, this red colour, because they would not take other colours when they could get the red. They called it ‘Bolkup mellek’ (red cloth)—it was always their first demand and there must have been a special reason for this. The writer has not been able to observe this but other observers have seen a large number of women wearing this red cloth over their loins instead of the usual covering.

In general the natives in the area of this first anchorage were fairly harmless, and they seemed to be of a peaceful disposition; at least they never showed signs to the contrary and one seldom saw anyone in the villages carrying more than the usual number of spears for hunting. Although a large number of natives came daily out to the boat and they were not shy, at no time could any of them be persuaded to go on board. They seemed to be afraid of the ship and any sudden movement on board made them nervous and suspicious. This reaction made it difficult to communicate with them to find out anything about their culture.

One of the native habits that was observed from the first contact and which is confirmed by the report of those on the ‘Blanche’ is that of thieving. They were clever and accomplished thieves. No sooner had a canoe come alongside the ship than a native grabbed a rope hanging over the side and tried to pull the ship away after him. The sailors stopped him and belted him with the rope but he was not unduly concerned about his punishment. Theft was always on a small scale—one man with a helper usually,—but still nothing, not even a handkerchief, was safe from them. Most pickpockets would envy the skill with which they extracted objects from clothes and pockets. They do not have the patience to wait for an opportune moment to commit their theft, but manage to manoeuvre their victim into a suitable position and condition. This routine in stealing leads one to the conclusion that theft is a very common condition in this area ... it was, however, prominent that in cases where articles were being received for barter, some of which could have been withheld as they passed through many hands, all the articles of barter were meticulously given up. Perhaps they thought theft from strangers was acceptable behaviour, as they appeared to trust their own people completely. In general one could conclude that the natives of this first anchorage were a happy and harmless people.

Conditions were different at the second anchorage. No boats approached us and the natives appeared shy and uncommunicative. It is possible that the Gazelle was the first ship they had seen, and their behaviour might have been influenced by this. Also it was observed that there were large differences between the inhabitants of different villages, and it could be assumed that the river there was the border dividing two entirely different tribes. The inhabitants of the right bank always kept their state of shyness; they stole often, and tried to get by force what they could not get through more devious means. The inhabitants of the left bank were always friendly, and visited first, and often afterwards, the ship, and always emphasised that they had nothing in common with the people of the right bank. It seems that the presence of the Gazelle brought about a cessation of hostilities between the two tribes, but they always sat separately on land. It was difficult to decide which tribe was the stronger. Inland, however, the villagers of the left bank seemed to be more affluent than their neighbours. Individuals of our party were able to travel inland in the company of natives without fear of attack. It seems that the natives only become hostile when their numbers are vastly superior—perhaps ten or fifteen times greater than the enemy. Compared with the happy and harmless people we met at our first anchorage, these natives were not so pleasant. One had the impression of most of the natives here that they were always suffering from a guilty conscience. In appearance they were no different from the others. Of their other social conditions we were not able to learn much. The following points are based on individual observations which did not always agree, only in the main ideas.

Firstly, in regard to family life, a form of marriage exists which seems to be monogamous; also, the woman seems to have large authority,—at least it appears so, as in barter the handing over of wares depended on the say of the woman. The children appear to be treated well ... We could not observe definitely whether they had chiefs or head-men. At the second anchorage the orders of several persons were followed and we could not see any difference between these and others. We did not have an opportunity to see dances and other festivities of the natives.

Extended periods of peace between the native tribes do not appear to exist,—at least not at the second anchorage. Everything was prepared for war; every native carried an arsenal of arms with him. One hardly ever saw a native without weapons. The carrying of a spear seems to be a permanent habit, as if the bearer must always be prepared in case of attack.

Finally, to the question, are the New Hanoverians cannibals, we have no answer at all. We have not seen or heard anything that speaks for or against it....


B50 Report of a Resident of Yule Island, 1875

Luigi d'Albertis, an Italian naturalist, arrived on the north coast of New Guinea in 1872. Two years later, with the help of Aplin, in Somerset, he made Yule Island his base and, spurning loneliness and danger,
devoted himself to exploration, anthropological studies and the collection of natural history specimens. The results of his research were published in two volumes entitled, *New Guinea: What I Did and What I Saw*. D'Albertis made a report for the Royal Colonial Institute on the fitness of New Guinea for colonization. It is from this report that the following extract is taken. For d'Albertis' exploration of the Fly River see B70.

I arrived in Yule Island in March, 1875, and established myself there, and after having made several excursions into the interior of the mainland, at a distance of from twenty to twenty-five miles travelling in various directions, I have been able to form some idea of the nature and capabilities of the country...

Nicura was the name of the first village I visited, and perhaps the least interesting, having only about eighty inhabitants. We reached it by the Nicura river (the Ethel River of Captain Moresby).

I reached the village on the 12th of April at 5 p.m., and, before entering, my guide sent a message, and in a little time after I received permission to enter. I was received by a chief named Oa, in a marea, or reception-house. I arrived just as a funeral of a woman was taking place; the body was laid in the middle of the village, with a group of people around it uttering lamentations. Thinking it would make a favourable impression on the natives, I made a present of beads to the dead body, and by this act I am sure won their good opinion. From the marea I witnessed the funeral ceremony. As soon as the natives had recovered from the surprise of my arrival, they recommenced their lamentations over the dead. I observed them at the same time beating their foreheads, breasts, and other parts of the body, apparently with great violence. Close to the corpse was an ample supply of bananas, yams, etc. The body was lying under a mat; shortly after, or in about half an hour, it was bound in the mat with strips of white tapuna, a kind of cloth made from the bark of trees, and the body was then conveyed to the grave, which was dug under the house of the deceased and laid in it with great care amidst the lamentations of the followers, after which the grave was filled in with earth. When this was completed, two of the natives remained by the grave, and the others went to the marea without evincing any further sign of grief...

The second interesting village I visited was Bioti. This village is large, having from 400 to 500 inhabitants; the natives are principally occupied in fishing, the river and lagoons abounding in various kinds of fish, some of a very large size. At the same time they cultivate plenty of bananas, yams, taro, and have also an abundance of bread-fruit. The natives of Bioti are the best-looking and strongest natives I have as yet seen in New Guinea, and for a small reward they were always ready to carry my luggage, which was sometimes very heavy...

About three hours walk from Bioti there is another large village called Naiaubui, consisting of about 40 to 50 houses, on two sides of a long street ... The inhabitants of Naiaubui are nearly three hundred.

The men take their first meal with the women. The natives rise early in the morning, but often sleep for some hours during the day. After the morning toilette, the men are occupied during the cool hours of the morning in making ropes for nets; the women sweep the houses, bringing water and cook the first meal, after which most of the natives leave the village for the plantations, the men carrying their spears and the women their net bags and a strong hardwood club, which is used for breaking up dried wood for fuel; it is often handsomely carved. It is supposed by Europeans to be a war weapon; it may be used at times for fighting, but its real use is that which I have mentioned, and is so seldom seen in the hands of the men...

The race inhabiting Yule Island and the coast of New Guinea, east and west of the island, differ materially from the inhabitants of the far west of New Guinea, the true Papuans, or the mixture resulting from their intercourse with strangers. It is difficult to say to what race these people really belong. In many respects they resemble the inhabitants of the Polynesian region, but in other respects they differ materially. I am led to believe the present race has invaded the country in an epoch more or less distant; the date of which it would be difficult to discover, but there is no doubt that they are a race between the invaders and the aboriginals. The indigenous race, the true Papuans, physically and morally inferior to the invading race, have been driven from the coast, where the land is comparatively healthy and fertile, and permitted the invaders to establish themselves and multiply, and the indigenous race have found refuge in the interior or on the mountains.
I form this opinion from what I heard at Epa, one of the villages on the mountains I visited, where I saw a man of the Papuan type; he was a slave in the village, and had been so from his boyhood, and I was told that he belonged to a race living in the interior. I may add that having seen some of the inhabitants of Anapocuna and Uni Uni, two villages far enough from the coast, I observed a marked difference between them and the inhabitants of the coast, which led me to suppose that they are derived from the same race as the invader, but at the same time were more mixed with the true aboriginals than those at present occupying the coast...

The chiefs have a more noble appearance than the common people, and may readily be distinguished from them.

I could not ascertain that they had any religious worship or many superstitious observances; they appear to live under a kind of Feudalism; two or three or more chiefs are in each village, they are the owners of the plantations and all the land to the boundary of the territory. The mass of the people work for the chiefs, who, leaving them to labour, lead an indolent life. The people receive from the chiefs food and houses, and the power of the chiefs does not extend beyond their own subjects.


B51 First Australian Natural Science Expedition to New Guinea, Katau River, 1875

William Macleay, a Scotsman, arrived in Sydney in 1839. A fortune which he made from wool on his several runs in New South Wales enabled him to devote much of his life to scientific studies. It was his interest in exploration and natural science that led him to fit the barque Chevert for an expedition to New Guinea in May 1875. He was excited by Jukes’ speculation, reported in Voyage of H. M. S. Fly, of the existence of a great river on the south coast of the mainland almost opposite Cape York. Jukes had seen only what appeared to be a delta, but it was his opinion that a steamer might penetrate many miles by this river into the heart of the land. (See B110) When Macleay’s expedition reached Darnley Island, bad weather, dangerous shoals and currents made the Captain, Edwards, decline to run the risks seen in the entrance to the Fly River, so the expedition tried the eastern side of the Gulf, and anchored off the village of Mokatta on the Katau River. The trip proved rewarding for the collection of natural specimens, but disappointing in that they had missed the Fly, and the Katau did not prove to be a great waterway into the interior. See also, D. S. MacMillan, A Squatter Went to Sea, Sydney, 1957.

SATURDAY, 3 JULY

... (yesterday) we got before dark to our present anchorage about 2 miles from the mouth of the Catou and the native town of 'Mokatta'. We shall probably be here now for some time, the difficulty of getting to the place — constant shallow reefs for the last 10 or twelve miles — making it necessary to utilize our position as much as possible.

This morning two canoe loads of natives came off to the ship about 20 in all. Among them 'Maino' the head man of Mokatta Village with his son, a lively young savage of the name of 'Cooki'. Any doubts they previously had of us were dispelled by our Joe and our two Warrior Island friends ... and after breakfast as many as could leave the ship went ashore in the swift fishing boat ... we found the natives most friendly, their regular trade in Cocoa Nuts, bananas, taro, yams and sweet potato was conducted by Tongan Joe, who seemed quite au fait at that sort of thing. As soon as the boys of the village were made acquainted with the object of our visit, they displayed a wonderful activity in collecting grasshoppers and other common things all of which I felt compelled to accept in order not to damp their enthusiasm. The village consists of 7 long houses built on poles 6 feet above the ground with open gable ends and thatched roofs exactly as described by Jukes in the Voyage of the Fly; they probably contain 60 or 70 people each, bringing the total population to nearly 500. Two of these houses are parallel to the beach, the rest end on. They are scarcely above high water mark and behind the ground is a stinking marsh. All around the houses are stinking remains of animals, human skulls, faeces, &c., &c. I have not yet seen the interior of their houses. The people themselves are lively, particularly the young men, but wonderfully unlike Australians: they are strong, middle-sized, black, woolly haired and small in the lower extremities, but instead of the large head and flat nose of our aborigine, they have well shaped heads and noses of a very marked Jewish character. This indeed is so marked as to attract the attention of anyone at first sight.

Source: Journal of William Macleay. The New Guinea Expedition, MSS. Linnean Society, Sydney

B52 An Account of the Inhabitants of the Admiralty Islands, 1875

In 1875 the Challenger, commanded by Sir George Nares, carried a scientific expedition led by Sir Charles Thomson to the Admiralty Islands. The Challenger anchored between two small islands at the
north-west end of the group in the harbour still known as Nares Harbour. The naturalist, H. N. Moseley, accompanied this expedition, and during the period 3-10 March, studied the inhabitants. The following extract is taken from a detailed paper read by Moseley to the Anthropological Institute on 9 January 1877.

The natives contrasted at first glance with the Papuans of Humboldt Bay in being far thinner and lankier. I saw but one native that was at all fleshy, although such were not uncommon at Humboldt Bay.

The usual colour of the natives is a black-brown, often very dark, and darker than that of the Papuans of Humboldt Bay. The young girls and young boys appear much lighter as a rule than the adults. Some one or two of the younger women were of a quite light yellowish-brown, as was also one young man, who came from a distance to the ship to trade. I saw no old women who were light coloured.

The arms and legs of the men are covered with a short sparse curly black hair, which appears as if growing in separate locks, exactly as in the Humboldt Bay natives. Hair is rarely present in any quantity on the back or chest, but in a few exceptionally hairy examples it was well marked.

The hair of the head, which is worn long only by the younger adult males, formed in them a dense mop, projecting in all directions 6 to 8 inches from the head…

Eyebrows were generally absent, very probably shaved off (the natives made signs when offered razors, that they used obsidian knives for shaving). I saw eyelashes long and well developed in some youths…

Some of the natives, as at Humboldt Bay, have most remarkable long Jewish noses. About 1 in every 15 or 20 has such a nose. I at first imagined that this form of nose was produced to some extent by long action of excessively heavy nose ornaments, but I saw one youth of only 16 or 17 with such a nose very fully developed, and I saw more than one woman with a well marked arched nose with dependent tip, and the women appear to wear no nose ornaments. An incomplete mixture of two races may possibly exist here, but unfortunately I did not carefully observe with this view whether the natives with Jewish noses showed other points in common in which they differed from the remainder of the population…

Expression of the Emotions. A native expressed astonishment and admiration at the vast size of our ship to me by holding up his hands vertically, with the palms facing forwards and moving them upwards with a series of jerks as if to express the great height.

Another man put his finger in his mouth in expressing astonishment.

The natives, when talking in an eager excited manner amongst themselves, ran their voices occasionally into a kind of falsetto, producing a sort of affected girlish tone. I noticed the same peculiarity amongst the men of Api, New Hebrides.

Rage. I had the opportunity of seeing the chief, Oto, in a furious rage. His upper lip was raised so as to show his teeth, which were clenched; his brow was wrinkled, his eyes starting, and his head lowered and jerked towards the object of his wrath as if he meant to attack him with his teeth. He had a most horrible appearance.

Population. As far as we could conclude from the extent of our observations, the Admiralty Islands are very thinly populated indeed. The main island about Nares' Anchorage is entirely uninhabited, but a small settlement was found on the shore to the east, not far from the mouth of a small river. This settlement was apparently recently established. The natives must certainly at one time have lived or squatted at various spots all over the tops of the hill ridges, for the numerous clumps of cocoa nut trees on these ridges almost certainly mark a spot inhabited at some time or other. At present the natives seem to confine their dwellings almost entirely to the small outlying islands, no doubt for purposes of protection from one another. Only two of the many small islands about Nares Anchorage, Wild Island and D'Entrecasteaux Island are inhabited. On D'Entrecasteaux Island, in the fortified village, there are about 22 houses, and about 30 houses in the island all. The population is probably about 250 or 300; that of Wild Island is greater, probably between 400 and 500. On one evening 42 adult men left the ship for Wild Island. I did not count more than 30 men and boys in canoes around the ship at any one time. Natives from some distance along the coast visited the ship constantly for barter &c. On one occasion six canoes with about 65 men in them thus arrived in one lot. The population seems to be distributed here much as occurs generally in Melanesia, i.e., the settlements are only on outlying islands, river mouths, and eligible spots on the coast, the inland districts being probably uninhabited…


B53  A Dutch Naturalist on an Expedition to Geelvink Bay and Humboldt Bay, 1876

J. E. Teysmann, naturalist, sailed in the steamship Dasoon, commanded by Van der Crab, to make observations of the people and country in the regions of Geelvink Bay, Humboldt Bay and their adjacent islands. Humboldt Bay had been visited by the Basilisk (Moresby) in 1874 (B117) and by the Challenger (Nares) in 1875 (B52), but Teysmann expressed the opinion that both visits had been too short to note anything of value. In December 1875 the regions had been visited also by the Italian naturalist, Beccari.

We left Dorei on 1st October early in the morning. Although it was raining hard there were a lot of prongs and
spectators about. Outside the Bay of Dorei we set a course between Schouten Islands and Japen to the east end of Geelvink Bay. As soon as it stopped raining, the voyage was favoured with a calm sea, and so it remained during the following days. On 3rd October early in the morning, a strong gust of wind out of the north-west sent us some high waves, but not for long. Progress was slow because we had to pull the coal-barge and we only managed to do three German miles an hour.

... the island of Kroeoeoe has a big population and is visited by traders to buy trepang. Great care has to be taken as the people are wild and treacherous.

Opposite the island of Kroeoeoe, along the east side of the Bay of Geelvink, lies the settlement of Waropin-Kei with seven small kampongs on the beach, of which Wandabi and Jansir are the most important. Some of the islands lying nearby are populated by the same race ... The land along Geelvink Bay is mountainous and the range runs along the east coast moving gradually down to a very wide and marshy area that could produce sago.

From the island of Kroeoeoe to King William's Island, one can see from the different colours of the water that changes from blue to violet-green at the foot of the cliffs, where the sea water and the river water meet. One can see from the green nipa-casuaria trees growing on the dry spots in the marshy lands the direction that the river takes. There were several big tree trunks spread out on the river bank that had been taken down by the river and left stuck in the mud; eventually they will drift out to sea.

THE ARIMOIA ISLANDS

No prows came outside although the kampong was visible. We could see prows at several places. Then some days later we came by again and slowly steamed by the beach of the southernmost island. Only two houses could be seen. Several people ran hither and thither and five prows were lying on the beach. No-one would come to us. They waved to us that we should come to them; there was a great deal of talk and the presence of bows and arrows did not augur well for us. Mangareni, our interpreter from Dorei, related that some time before there were many houses and on account of the considerable amount of tea that was used for house-building, the place had attracted traders and the population had been forced to leave it for other islands. The traders dare not anchor here any more, still less go on shore; for some years ago a trader is believed to have shot dead a Papuan and although this story cannot be verified, one can see in this how such deeds of brutality undermine friendly relations between peoples.

We continued our journey and on the 5th October prows came out from shore to meet us. The Papuans waved to us to come ashore and when the Dassoon came close to the beach both vessels were almost completely surrounded by about thirty prows. Some fruit and a little turtle was all they had to trade. These natives were strongly built, and were not the least bit shy of the steamship.

These people belong to the area of Tabi, and, according to all reports, they are numerous and a lot less well-behaved than those in other places.

Traders come rarely to these places and are afraid to anchor. The people come out in numerous prows to sell their wares — mainly turtle and trepang. Some years ago, Deyghton, of the Dutch Indiaman Rembang wanted to send a sloop to get fresh water from a nearby river. Although he'd given presents to those on the prows and had asked their permission, the sloop was attacked by natives with bows and arrows and some of the crew were wounded. Deyghton was well known throughout New Zealand and the whole of this archipelago and his name was respected. The treacherous behaviour of the Papuans is hard to understand.

On the east side of the mouth of the Ambeno River, the most important of the bays is Walkeners Bay which is very wide and does not penetrate as far as Humboldt Bay. It lies open to all winds, particularly the south wind and because of the great depth there are few suitable places for ships to anchor; in the monsoon period one has to contend with huge waves and the surf breaks along the whole length of the coast of the bay.

Just outside the west side of the entrance is an island named in the chart 'Lesson'. The men in the prows that rowed out to the ship had the same appearance as those we had seen at Tabi. Their boats were similar too. Also, their language seemed the same, because we could understand several expressions and they named their island Aroe. On the west side of Walkeners Bay lies the kampong Mawes of about fifty houses built on the ground and not, like most others, standing half in the sea. Many prows came out to meet the ships and many natives stood on the beach. Their language was not understood by our interpreter ... when I wanted to give them a Dutch flag they seemed to have no appreciation of what it meant, so I put it away. They were more interested in a piece of iron. It appeared that it would be very difficult to land through the heavy surf and on the navigator's advice I gave up all idea of visiting these places.

Past Walkeners Bay the coast has less sand and higher cliffs and shows spots of limestone between red clay. The hills join up with the Cyclop Mountains that lie on the west side of the entrance to Humboldt Bay.

When on the 7th October we came to Humboldt Bay it was too late to enter as we had no knowledge of a suitable anchorage and were uncertain of the attitude of the natives. It did not seem desirable to go into the bay that night especially with the added danger from suction when a ship is towing a barge. Next morning early when we steamed in a number of prows came to meet us; their number eventually grew to fifty and they rowed about the vessels. Each prow had from three to seven rowers. On other days we had seen up to fourteen rowers to a prow. All these natives were completely naked; some had leaves front and back. Neck, breast and arms were covered with rings and other ornaments made out of shell, coral and woven reeds. Most carried a knife or a dagger that looked as if it had been cut from the bone of the cassowary, a bird that appears to be very large here. Flowers and leaves were tied on to their arms and knees. Their hair-styles were less spectacular than those we had seen at other places. Only the young had their hair cut away on the left and right side, leaving hair combed over the middle and back ... They were strongly built fellows with a rather ferocious look. In all the boats there were spears, bows and other weapons. These boats were carved with all sorts of figures.

The people made considerable noise; trade was conducted with great excitement. The many prows were about the ship and the shouting and talking hindered us a great deal. The noise did not appear to express joy or satisfaction, but seemed wild and continuous.

Apart from some unripe fruit and smoked fish that looked unappetising they had next to nothing in their prows. There appear to be no real trading articles here. When they were shown turtleshell and armbands they made it clear those
articles were not to be found there. The absence of turtle arm-bands shows that the karet turtle does not appear in this area as much as in other parts of New Guinea. From the roots of the pandanus they make a strong fine whitish chord and would sell long lengths of this. By the look of it, it appears to be much stronger than hemp. They make bags out of it to hold weapons; the bags are woven very skilfully with red coloured figures in them. The language they spoke sounded very pleasant and completely different from other places we visited and from the neighbouring language of Tabi.


B54 A French Naturalist at Dorey and the Arfak Mountains, 1876

The French naturalist, A. Raffray, was commissioned by the Ministry of Public Information to carry out natural history research in New Guinea. He embarked from Toulon, France, on board the Corée on 20 July 1876, with a travelling companion and assistant from the Natural History Museum, M. Main-dron. Before touching on New Guinea, they stopped at Java to thank officials of the Dutch administration who had promised support.

When I had finished paying my respects, I went straight to Ternate, and arrived there the 4th December; this was the real beginning of our voyage. Ternate as you know is a Malaysian town which is now a Dutch colony. It is situated at the foot of an ever-active volcano which has caused the formation of the small island of the same name.

We stayed 5 days in Salwatty and on the 31st January went to Dorey, which was to become our headquarters. This part of New Guinea, or to call it by its indigenous name, Papua, was in reality just as I had imagined it; an immense forest begins at the edge of the sea shore, where roots and leaves are often immersed in water, and stretches without interruption to the top of the mountains.

I was immediately struck by the familiarity of the Papuans; this is one of the most prominent aspects of their character and although it satisfied our curiosity at first, it soon became unbearable. The Papuans without permission of any kind competed to invade our small boat and install themselves there, with the air of having achieved a victory.

After visiting some Papuan houses which I will shortly describe to you, I abandoned the idea I had of temporarily living in a native house.

However building a house in this country is neither a long nor a costly business: the clearing of a corner of the forest supplies both the necessary space and materials. The Papuans set to work with a few materials and knives, and after five days we were installed with baggage in our log cabin about 100 metres from the sea.

Dorey is a collective name which includes three small villages: Kouave, Raoudi and Monoukoari; it is situated on the northern side of a creek in the northern part of the great bay of Geelvink. These three villages and the village of Mansinam on the nearby islet of Manas-Ouare are the only centres of population on the bay of Dorey; they are situated at the very edge of the sea and are inhabited by Mauros Papuans. The dwellings of these Papuans are quite strange and deserve a description.

The houses which are long and quadrilateral in shape are built on stilts over the sea, and covered with a roof of coconut-palm leaves, vaguely resembling an overturned boat. A crude bridge, made of tree trunks links them to the village. They are divided lengthwise by a corridor, which is a continuation of the bridge and leads to a sort of projection at the other end which opens on to the sea. Little rooms, each inhabited by a family, open on to the central corridor, like a row of private houses.

However, everything is so roughly constructed and so wobbly, that one must have bare feet and the agility of a native to keep one's balance and avoid falling between the tree trunks which serve as a floor into the water.

Each of these houses has a recognised owner, and all the inhabitants are relatives or close friends, more or less under the authority of what I shall call the pater familias.

Each house may therefore contain from 10 to 30 or even as many as 50 people.

Papuans are fairly tall and larger than Malaysians; their arms and legs are a little too thin; their faces are oval with prominent cheekbones, and a low forehead. Their eyes are not at all slanted, and their noses are aquiline and completely different from the Malaysian nose which is flattened and wide. The skin between their nostrils protrudes slightly downwards, whilst the nostrils extend widely to the sides and are also slightly raised; a general characteristic of all Papuans; this is one of the most prominent aspects of their nose especially when very pronounced. Except for the rare exception, the lips are thick, (there are varying degrees of thickness) and the face does not give any indication of prognathism. The colour of the skin varies from numbers 27-30 of the chromatic scale of the Society of Anthropology; that is to say from dark brown to cinnamon yellow and including slightly reddish shades. Light coloured skins are rare and are found among the women only. Hair varies greatly from tribe to tribe, but is always dark black with a degree of frizziness. There is little growth of beard but the beard is rarely lacking, even though it does not begin until a fairly advanced age. The same remark applies to body hair which can be seen on the chest and is especially abundant on the lower limbs.

Sleeping little and eating and drinking even less, Papuans are agile and skilful but hardly robust.

As for morals: they are inconstant, disloyal, cruel on occasion, always traitors and cowards, noisy, rowdy, demonstrative and lazy. I could give numerous examples of the above traits, but that would take too long.

Although usually monogamous, some Papuans have several wives, if not simultaneously, at least successively. This depends however on their wealth, as the wife is always
bought by the husband. Slavery is the rule everywhere in Papua, but it has not from the woman’s point of view the same consequence as in Moslem countries.

As one can expect among such primitive people, government is still only at a very rudimentary level. For each group of people there is a chief whose hereditary authority is virtually nil. But although individualism is pushed to the extreme, it is none the less true that solidarity is the basis of Papuan society. An example which I witnessed gives proof of this.

An inhabitant of Monoukoari had stolen the slave girl of a Papuan of Mansinam. The latter, not feeling strong enough to avenge alone the affront which he had received, persuaded some very belligerent Papuans of Arfak race from the village of Aimbord to join his cause. This is the means he employed. When two Papuans from Aimbord arrived in Mansinam, he took them prisoner, which infuriated the Arfak tribe. One morning several days afterwards I saw about 40 Papuans arriving from the mountains armed to the teeth with bows, arrows and pedas, reclaiming the prisoners with threats.

‘I’m quite prepared to return your men,’ said the inhabitant of Mansinam. ‘I only took them to interest you in my cause. So instead of bearing a grudge against me, go and declare war on the men from Monoukoari who stole my wife; punish him first for the injury that he did to me, and then for the one I did to you.’ This is in fact what happened, but as Papuans, especially the Mafors, fear nothing as much as blows, the affair was terminated by the return of the stolen woman, and the two prisoners. The thief had to pay a fine in materials twice, once to the owner of the woman, and once to the warriors from Aimbord.

It is difficult to find out about the interesting question of religion, as Papuans are despairingly silent on this issue. This is all that I could learn.

First of all there is a tradition which could only be a memory of Christianity left here perhaps by the ancient Portuguese mariners concerning whom Dr. Hamy has recently resumed his research.

Others have wished to see a trace of Buddhism in this tradition and conclude from this that Papuans could be related to Indians. This is a question that does not really concern me and which I leave to the anthropologists. But whatever the case may be, the Papuans say that a certain Mongoudi, a ‘chief’ climbed up a tree and saw a young girl approaching him. She gave him a fruit from the tree then became pregnant and gave birth to a son called Konoro. Mongoudi and Konoro stayed for a while on the earth, but when men became wicked, they disappeared promising they would return one day and that men would no longer die, but would enjoy eternal youth, that war and sickness would disappear and that the earth would produce of its own accord everything needed by men.

This tradition is widespread in Dorei among the Mafors.


B55 A Description of Secondary Industries at Dorei (Manokwari), 1883

On 21 March 1883 a natural science expedition led by Dr F. Guillemard left Hong Kong for the Malay Islands and New Guinea in the yacht Marchesa. The Marchesa visited Salwatti, Battanta and Waigio Islands, sailed along the north coast of New Guinea to Dorei Harbour, then south-east into Geelvink Bay and the island of Jobi. The return trip followed the same route. The following extract describes iron and pottery industries at Dorei, the centre for the Nufoor tribe, who ‘inhabit the north-west coast and some of the islands in Geelvink Bay, and, according to their legend, originally came from Nufoor Island (the Long Island of the English charts). They claim to have been the first discoverers of fire, which was given to their ancestors by a magician. On seeing it, they immediately exclaimed “Nufoor”—fire, meaning fire, and nu, being the dual, “we two.”’ See F. H. H. Guillemard, The Cruise of the Marchesa, etc., London, 1886, Vol. 2, n. p. 277.

Some of the Dorei Bay natives are acquainted with the art of working in iron. They have learnt it from the Gebi islanders but the knowledge remains confined to one or two families only. These smiths do not eat pigs’ flesh; not that they are Mohammedans, but purely from the superstitious belief that the transgression of this rule would affect the goodness of their work. Behind Monokware we one day came upon one of their forges. The bellows were composed of two upright bamboo tubes, about a yard high and five inches in diameter. In these worked twovalved pistons tightly packed with cassowary feathers, and at the bottom of the cylinders were two nozzles led Y-fashion into one, which, in order to prevent its being charred by the heat, was passed through a hollow stone. A little boy sat on a high bench, and grasping a piston rod in each hand, worked them alternately. The whole apparatus (which was, of course, of Malayan, not Papuan, origin) was almost indiscernible with that I have seen employed in the interior of Africa, and I believe that it is also found in South America.

Pottery-making is a more widely-known art; and many of the women—for the wives and female slaves alone engage in this work—are tolerably clever at it. Vessels of excellent shape are often to be seen, but there is no great variety, and cooking-pots and bowls, all of which are unglazed, seem to be the chief articles made. The only other manufactures are plaited bags or baskets of grass fibre which are often stained with bright colours, and silver bangles, beaten out of Dutch dollars obtained from the Malay traders.