No sooner had the priest and myself descended, carrying our luggage with us, than as if from the ground, a score of Orangwoks enclosed us. They were mounted on little ponies, striped with yellow and white, which moved with great speed. Their riders were clothed in a long, loose-fitting robe, reaching below the knee; this was the common dress of the country. They were armed with swords, spears, and bows and arrows. Some of them carried shields of pure gold, and others had a breastplate of gold bars. They had a warlike look, although they were of small stature. We were seized before we had time to offer resistance, even had we thought of doing so, and bound with a well-made rope of bark and gold thread.

The head of the troop demanded our names and business in a tone of authority. He spoke the same language as the coast tribe, but spoke it differently. The coast tribe spoke from the throat; the Orangwoks spoke from their lips and upper part of the mouth; their voice too was more resonant, their pronunciation of the words was also different, and many of the words used were unknown to me. Lakangeeo replied to the speaker, and explained in an undertone our business. The officer listened with an indifferent air until the priest mentioned the goldmines. The chief's attention was at once aroused, and he now displayed the keenest interest. When the priest finished speaking, at a word from the leader, every Orangwok sheathed his sword, or lowered his spear, from which I inferred that we were safe, and prepared to ride onward... Their little ponies went like the wind, and their white and yellow stripes flashed in the passing light in a striking manner; so too did the arms and shields, which were brightly burnished. I could now understand how the imagination of the coast natives had been wrought upon by the vision of some hundreds of the Orangwoks riding rapidly in their bright armor...

K’ootar consisted of about two thousand or three thousand houses, and had a population of nearly ten thousand people. It was by far the finest city of the kingdom, though by no means the largest. None but chiefs and warriors were permitted to live in K’ootar, although any person, on receiving permission, was allowed to stay in it for a limited time. The houses were of several storeys, varying from three (including the ground floor) to seven. The palace of the king consisted of seven storeys. A few of the more distinguished chiefs had houses of six storeys, others less distinguished had five, four or three. No house of less than three was allowed to be built in K’ootar. This procured a uniformity which was very agreeable to the eye...

‘What do people in your country do?’
‘Dig gold out of the earth.’
‘How is the gold obtained?’

To this I replied shortly by explaining,

‘Will you go to the gold-mines of the Great King?’ (And here I could feel there was a general movement of reverence.) ‘And teach his servants to get gold?’

To this I replied that I would.

These questions were not put to me by the king himself. He addressed the wise man on his right hand, who again communicated with one on the next step, and he to one on the dais. My answer was conveyed to the king after a similar manner, but going the reverse way, being delivered to him by the wise man on his left hand.

I was now gently touched with the spear, and moved on, pleased that the wearisome and painful exhibition was over. On going up into the galleries already mentioned, I was struck with the magnificence of the ceremonial... The bright sun, which fell upon the gorgeous spectacle, illuminated the vast court with dazzling light; for every guard was clothed in bright uniform overlaid with gold. Everywhere there was a profusion of this metal.

The king was very small, not more than four feet high, and made in proportion. His wife was still smaller. They were richly dressed, and their jewels (they were the only persons permitted to wear jewels) shone with a dazzling lustre. In addition to the tigers I have mentioned were on the outer rim of the dais four wild-looking animals (bisons, I believe they were); while in the trees which shaded the throne, and which were carefully cultivated, there sat several magnificent waukoo.


THE REALITY: DOCUMENTS B94 to B125

With our knowledge of the cultural backgrounds of the Europeans involved in first contacts with the peoples of New Guinea, it is easy to understand why they saw and thought as they did. But now comes the real work of the ethnohistorian: what did they really see? What was the cultural background of the New Guinean, and in what ways were his attitudes changed by the new experiences? What did the New Guinean think of the white man? Did he think of him as a man like himself, or as something more than or less than a man? Was the New Guinean’s approach essentially friendly because he thought the Europeans were more than men and had come to bring him material advantages? Or was it essentially hostile because he thought the Europeans were less than men and brought evil? Did the New Guinean have any answers as to where the white man came from or why he came? There is always the evidence preserved in oral tradition, but the truth is not easily arrived at. In the collecting of ethnohistorical evidence we have a
problem similar to the naturalist, William Macleay, when he employed natives to gather specimens for his collections. They were so anxious to please him that they brought loads of common species. Macleay said he had to accept all those worthless grasshoppers and butterflies because to have done otherwise would have dampened their enthusiasm, and he might then have missed the valuable specimen that was occasionally brought in. In their desire to help, the enthusiasm and ingenuity of the native people can lead them to create an entertaining 'story from my village'. There are surely answers truly preserved in legend, but it would be foolish to accept them without corroborative evidence. (See Section A, Living Voices of the Post: Documents A1 to A4.)

Records left by some of the more perceptive and sensitive European observers occasionally give us insight into the New Guinean's thoughts and feelings; however, we must approach conclusions warily, for we can never be sure that what we see is not merely the interesting result of the observer's misinterpretation of a scene or conversation. What appears to be a New Guinean viewpoint could be nothing more than a European view disguised.

Terence Connel and Jim Hutton were Irish convicts who escaped the penal colony at Sydney and reached the south-west coast of New Guinea. They finally found refuge with the Horraforas people who received them kindly, 'believing they were something supernatural as there were no ships by which they could come.' After Hutton was killed in inter-club warfare, the Horraforas gave Connel high rank and 'placed him in the dignified position of head chief; as king of the tribe.' Thomas Manners, a beachcomber of ten years' residence on New Ireland, was described as 'haughty enough for any chief'... a habit acquired by so long a residence on this island, and exercising so much authority over a people whom he considered so much his inferiors, and who looked upon him as a god.'

Chalmers described a ritual by the natives of Bald Head which he interpreted as his presentation to the gods. Natives of the Madang area told James McAuley that their people had thought the Russian scientist, Miklouho-Maclay, to be a manifestation of their deity. The Rev. W. Gill, on the Katua River in 1872, described how his arm was rubbed by one of the Torotorom people to see if the white would come off. 'They call us Malakai, i.e. "ghosts" or "spirits,"' he said. 'God is spoken of by our teachers as "the true or great Malakai". The heathen of this part of New Guinea and of the Straits invariably associate the idea of whiteness with their notion of a spirit. Our gifts were elliptically designated “malakai” i.e. (belonging to) glistening spirits.'

The dog appears to have an important place in rituals of people placed as far apart as Duke of York Island, inland along the Sepik River and Killerton Islands. John Hunter's party at Duke of York was greeted first by stones and spears and then by a procession of natives singing songs and carrying green boughs. On the beach they piled their 'peace-offering' of food. On top of the pile was laid a small living male and female dog with their mouths and feet tied, while in the middle was staked a young tree from the branches of which hung lengths of braided fibres. 'What this could mean,' wrote Hunter, 'we were wholly at a loss to comprehend, unless, as the head of this young tree was designedly bent down by the lines ... it was a token of submission.' Hunter was sure that a sign of friendly intention was the natives' singing in one tone followed by the mimicking of a dog's bark. The bark he thought certain proof of their friendly disposition.

In 1866 when von Schleinitz took a scientific expedition up the Sepik River for about 156 miles, the party was greeted by natives who killed a dog, and then stuck point first into the ground a spear decorated with ornaments. The party thought it to be a sign of friendship. John Moresby was received at Killerton Islands by natives waving weapons and shouting defiantly. After a consultation on the beach, a party of them came to the Basilisk carrying a dog. The leader sprang on to the ship and dashed out the dog's brains on the quarter-deck, whereupon the manner of the rest of the natives appeared to change to a show of friendship. Moresby's officers, incensed by the defilement of Her Majesty's deck, bundled the natives off the ship and threw the sacrifice after them. A large crowd was then seen assembled on the beach round the body of the dead dog, in noisy consultation.

The tensions of these Europeans making first contact with a strange race allowed them to think of the meeting only in terms of 'friendly' or 'hostile'. It is
probable that neither of these terms had any application to the scene. Even where the performance of a rite was recognized, the purpose was not guessed. The Europeans were seen as spirits who could make good or evil sorcery. If their power were for good, then a ritual could be performed to bring them under control. If their power were for evil, they might be driven away, or, failing this, brought under control and rendered harmless.

Some Europeans, like the convicts and beachcombers who lived to become permanent residents of New Guinea, were able to adopt the role the people cast for them, even though they did not realize that they were doing so. By joining in inter-clan warfare and acting as military advisers, they proved they brought power to be used for the good of the people they joined. Europeans who failed to live up to their role were not so fortunate. It soon became apparent that they had come to take things away from the people instead of to give great powers. In addition to their demands for food, the Europeans were often eager to prolong their stay unduly, and to try to enter the villages and even their domiciles. In many cases, these acts were an unpardonable affront. In their giving, the Europeans appeared mean, and to withhold the important powers while offering things of dubious worth. The New Guinean was usually as selective in his purchase as the European; in fact, it appears that he was not after the object of practical use or superior quality as much as the object he fancied was used by the white man to create the things of use and quality. His efforts to take the ‘powers’ that were not freely given by the Europeans gained him the label of thief. His dishonest dealings with the visiting ships contrasted sharply with his honest behaviour within his own group, and confounded many a European trader.

The gradual realization that the Europeans were not going to share their magic formula for producing the things of their material wealth gave the native people a completely different outlook. When the Rev. George Brown asked Chief Talili of the Baining region for a meeting, the Chief sent a reply that not only challenged the white man’s power but questioned his claim of superiority as a being.\(^9\) In many of the primal myths which also seek to explain the light skins and powers of the white man, there is an assumption that in the beginning all men were equal, and that one section of mankind—the ancestors of the white men—advanced to power through undeserved luck or trickery. Burroughs relates a myth of the Tangu people, inland from Madang, in which the dark descendants of one man are condemned to live out a primitive village existence in order to expiate his crime of spearing a magic fish, while the pale descendants of his brother progress to wisdom and power.\(^1\) From the Taupata people of South-East Papua, comes the myth related by Giblin, in which the lighter skinned Lavara clan stole from their neighbours, the Aurara clan, all their belongings and a magic tree which they hollowed out and sailed away in. The tale ends thus:

‘When the white people came to Taupata everyone knew that they were the descendants of the old Lavara clan, but because their fathers had taken all the utensils and weapons they had grown wise and become people of property, while the Aurara and other folk had stayed as they were.’\(^2\)

For people educated to these, or similar beliefs, the white man appeared to have no right—certainly no exclusive right—to his powers; he had no right to ‘return’ and expect hospitality unless he came to give redress or to make compensation.

The European visitor in search of fresh food could not understand why the natives were not eager to trade their fruits, and were always reluctant to part with a pig. These attitudes were not generally met with elsewhere in the Pacific. They could not know that they were outside the native peoples’ system of distribution of food and other objects. The natives already had their special trading relationships, whether on a small local scale, or on a large scale, as in the Kula Ring described by Malinowski.\(^3\) The exchange of such gifts formed part of a ritual and the reciprocal obligations involved formed the basis of their morality. Acceptance of a trading relationship with the outsider would have involved the learning of a whole new concept and its effect on the social and economic security of the people would have been tremendous. A New Guinean achieved status by fulfilling his moral obligations within the system of gift exchange. The European must have appeared to him as something quite different from himself, because the stranger had status gained from an entirely different source—the possession of material goods.

The European trader was used to practising within social structures based on kingship or chieftainship. As a first step to negotiation, it was his habit to give small presents to those of minor influence, and to reserve the most and valuable for the king or chief.

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\(^9\) W. Powell, *Wandering in a Wild Country or Three Years Amongst the Cannibals of New Britain*, London, 1884; p. 123


In New Guinea he was puzzled by the absence of a familiar social structure. The old ploy, 'Take me to your leader!' met with no response, because chieftainship, where it existed, was far less highly developed than in most other countries. The man of influence was hard to recognize; in appearance he was usually no different from the rest. It would also have been impossible for the uninstructed to know the extent of a 'big man's' influence. This could only be learned by trial and error. The plan of the Marquis de Rays colonists to enter into treaty with the neighbouring chiefs of Port Praslin, New Ireland, and become the head of a Franco-Oceanic confederation appears naive when we consider that even a relatively minor piece of negotiation could involve the goodwill of a great number of people. On the Katau River in 1887, Strachan tried to exchange trade goods for the people's wooden god. Strachan secured the god from the 'priests' by exciting their curiosity, but the transaction was made difficult by the arrival of peoples of three principal tribes besides men from some of the farther inland tribes to prevent the exchange.

Until the missionaries made their appearance in the late 19th century Europeans came always as receivers, not givers. They expressed annoyance that the people were eager to accept gifts but were reluctant to give something in exchange. 'One native of New Ireland emerged from the bush,' wrote Keppel, 'as naked as he was born; we thought, at first, that this was his way of proving to us how little we might expect to get from him; but they were all in the same undress uniform.' Both European and New Guinean had mistaken their roles. From the latter's viewpoint, the white spirits had so much power they could not possibly need anything from him; his task was to help in the ritual of propitiation that would persuade the spirits to share their powers. His confidence in the rituals appears to have been profound, and is illustrated by the actions of some who seized the anchors and attempted to pull the great ships to land.

It must have seemed to the New Guinean that the visitor fought hard to retain his powers for his exclusive use. Some Europeans, when their safety depended on their own wits, inadvertently encouraged this misunderstanding by making a deliberate show of power to impress the natives. Acts of European 'sorcery' included the pounding of the shoreline with the great guns, and the lighting up of the night sky with rockets. D'Albertis, the Italian naturalist, kept the natives of Yule Island under control by exploding shells, dynamite and rockets. A black flag flying over his fortress was a sign to the natives that he was about to use his powers against them.

Missionaries who came as 'givers' also failed to meet the people's expectations. They said they had come to bring them 'the word' and to teach them the most important things of life. But they withheld the magic words that would allow the New Guinean to accrue material wealth. The young geologist, Stone, attending the first service in the chapel at Port Moresby, said the congregation appeared to know it ought to be quiet, but every now and again the word 'koi-koi' (lie) was heard.

The European's insistence that warfare should cease, whether it was because it interfered with his commercial enterprise or with his missionary work, made for tremendous social change. Warfare was a necessary part of the social system. A 'big man' gained his status not only through sorcery or gift exchange; he could also gain status through his prowess as a warrior, or as a mediator of battles. All accounts of warfare make it clear that little blood was spilled. The serious exchange was, in fact, very brief, most time being taken up in the ceremony of preparation for the battle, when warriors would challenge their opposite numbers in true Billingsgate fashion and gain status with every boast. A native at Duri, sensing the European's disgust with cannibalism, assured Captain Keppel that there was no truth in the rumour that his people were cannibals; then, in a flash of conscience, he qualified this by saying that he, personally, only indulged in the particularly dainty parts, such as the palm of the hand. The ritual of cannibalism was in the acquiring of strength or some other desirable trait to be used for the preservation of the clan in a hostile world. The European was unable to rationalise the inhumanity of this practice, but was able to rationalise some of his own acts of inhumanity. The labour recruiter, Wawn, explained that he always tried to get his recruits out of sight of their homeland quickly before second thoughts and homesickness set in—an emotion he equated with the temporary homesickness experienced by the English emigrant as he sailed down the English Channel.

A remarkable custom of the Tolai is their system of revenge: If A injures B, B burns down C's hut, or makes a hole in his canoe, or sticks a spear in the...
pathway so that C is nearly sure to run against it. C is expected to settle the account with A, the first aggressor. Off East Cape, a native came on board Romilly’s ship to confess the killing of a white man, and to bring payment for him—four arm shells and a pig’s tooth. “Such is the value of a man’s life here,” wrote Romilly. “The poor wretch was much astonished when he was put in irons; he could not understand it at all.” To the native who had attempted to comply with the rules of the only system he knew, that of negotiation through gifts, the white man’s actions must have seemed illogical and horrifying.

The traditional social structure through which the New Guinean gained status, and thus satisfaction, was weakened by the imposition of the white man’s authority. Where there appeared nothing to take the place of his old values, he was forced to look for some-

\[21\] C. Bridge, op. cit., pp. 551-2; the system of “Kamera” is also described by Richard Parkinson and by Rev. Isaac Rooney.

\[22\] H. H. Romilly, Letters from the Western Pacific and Mashonaland, 1878-91, letter from Romilly to his mother, 19 October 1885.

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B94  New Guinea Natives Introduced to European Guns, 1606

On the Torres expedition of 1606-7, Prado related how a party landed at St. Clara Island (Mugula or Bona Bona Island), on the south-east point of New Guinea, for fresh food and water. See also B7; B8; B9.

On the day of the Assumption of Our Lady (Aug. 15th) we went ashore in the boats towards a big river which runs from a corner towards the north, and near its mouth we found a large village of well-disposed people, tall and white, and though they saw us approaching they were not frightened, but waited for us and saluted us after their fashion, raising both hands to heaven, like one who gives thanks to God, and then sat down on the ground; we responded in like manner and sat down. They continued looking at us as a people they had never seen, and in a short time one of them, who must have been one of their chiefs, rose up and asked us by signs what we wanted. He was answered by putting the hand in the mouth, which is the sign for asking for water to drink. He at once went to a good-sized house and brought a cane tube full of water, which would hold about three azumbas (= 3 half-gallons) and our people drank; these are the vessels in use throughout this country, tubes of very thick and large canes. Having replaced the tube in the house he again asked by signs what we wanted farther; he was answered by blowing with the mouth as one blows a firebrand and he brought it to him alight. Just then a very big pig, white with black spots like those of pasture land, came across among the men, and a soldier asked him by signs to give it to him, and he answered contemptuously that he might take it; he put the match to his arquebus and shot the pig below the ear and straightway it fell dead. This caused them great astonishment. The said Indian who had brought the water rose up and asked him for the arquebus and went about twenty paces to a sty with a pig, which for shear fatness could not move; he pointed the arquebus at it and with his mouth said, “pu” with great force, thinking that the soldier had killed the other in that fashion; and seeing that had not killed it he aimed at it again and raised his voice still more saying pau with the same result. All the Indians, some fifty, who were awaiting the event, seeing that he had not killed the pig began to roar with laughter so that it was a sight to see the fun they made of it after their fashion. The Indian came back very much ashamed, with his arquebus so that he could hardly walk, and gave it back to the soldier who turned the other way and recharged it and asked the Indian by signs that he should give him the pig and he replied by signs that he might take it; the soldier went to the sty and killed it, then the laughter was still greater, like men making fun of their companion.

PLATE 37: The Dutch explorer, Jacob le Maire

PLATE 38: (Top) Chart of the voyage of Jacob le Maire and Willem Schouten. From J.A.J. de Villiers (ed.), _The East and West Indian Mirror_, London, 1906. (Below) Present-day map of the same area, drawn by E. Ford
The States General of the United Provinces granted to the Dutch East India Company an exclusive charter, which prohibited all subjects except this Company from carrying on any trade to the eastward beyond the Cape of Good Hope, or westward through the Strait of Magellan. Isaac Le Maire, a rich merchant of Amsterdam, was anxious to trade in the east. He appealed to William Cornelisz Schouten of Hoorn, who was already famous for his maritime trading ventures to the Indies, to consider the possibility of evading the power of the Company by finding a new passage into the South Seas. The two men resolved to attempt such a discovery. In the spring of 1615, Le Maire, Schouten and friends of rank and money advanced the funds for an expedition. At Hoorn was fitted out the Eendracht (220 tons) and a yacht. The Eendracht carried 65 men, and was skippered by William Schouten with Jacob Le Maire, son of Isaac, as supercargo. The yacht Hoorn (110 tons) carried 22 men and was skippered by Jan Schouten. The secrecy that was observed in the preparations caused speculation all over Holland. Many people called them 'the goldseekers', but the Directors called their concern 'The Australian Company'. On 28 July 1615 they set sail for Plymouth. By April 1616 Cape Horn was sighted and named. To the east they could see the Magellan Strait. The new passage into the South Seas had been found. By July the expedition was in New Guinea waters. William Schouten overrode Le Maire's suggestion for a course that would have brought the ships to the east and south east coast of New Guinea. Instead the expedition struck out further east and then north-west to come into the northern seas. Here Green Island and St. John's Island were discovered, before the party coasted the northern shore of the mainland. When it reached Bantam the President of the Dutch East India Company confiscated the vessels. Schouten returned home with the Admiral, Joris Spilbergen. The voyage had lasted 2 years and 10 months. Four men were lost including Jacob Le Maire, who died off the island of Mauritius on 22 January 1617. The following extract describes the Dutch contact with the natives of Vulcan Island and of the mainland near the Sepik River delta.

Before daybreak on the morning of the 7th we turned her head again towards the high mountain; it was a burning island, emitting flames and smoke from the summit, wherefore we gave it the name of Vulcanus. The island was well populated and full of coker-nut trees. The inhabitants came in some prows near our vessels but were sore afraid; they kept shouting to us, but we could not understand them neither could Moyes, our back.

They were also quite naked, only their privy parts being covered; some had short and some had long hair. We could not find any bottom here, so that we could not anchor. To the north and north-west of us we saw some more islands and proceeded north-west by west towards a low promontory we saw in front of us, near which we came in the evening; then we took our sails in and let her drift for the night. We got different colours of water here, such as green, white and yellow, which we presumed to be the outpourings of rivers, for it was much sweeter than sea-water. Here, too, many trees, branches and leaves were floating about, sometimes with birds and crabs on them.

On the 8th we anchored in 70 fathoms, about a gun-shot distant from the shore. Some canoes came alongside there with a funny kind of people, who were all Papoos, having short hair, which was curled and wearing rings through their noses and ears, with certain small feathers on their head and arms, and hog's tusks around their neck and on their chest as ornaments. They also ate betel-nuts and were afflicted with various deformities; one squinted, another had swollen legs, a third swollen arms, and so forth, whereby it is to be presumed that this must be an unhealthy country, especially as their huts stand upon piles about eight or nine feet from the ground.

On the morning of the 9th, whilst we lay at anchor, our shallow rowed out to look about for a convenient place for our vessel to lie in, and returning, the men said they had found a good bay, whither we proceeded, anchoring in 26 fathoms on a good bottom of sand mixed with clay. Close by were two small villages, whence many canoes came alongside of us, bringing a few coker-nuts, but they were very dear with them, demanding for four nuts one fathom of linen, after which they were very eager. They also had a few pigs, which they likewise held in great value, and although we repeatedly made signs for them to bring us some to supply our wants they would not do so.

That day the following rations were dealt out to the crew: five pounds of bread and a quarter of oil per week for each man, with a quarter and a half of Spanish wine and a glassful of brandy per day. All our pottage, such as peas, beans and barley, and all our meat, bacon and fish were gone, and we did not know where we were.

On the 10th some twenty canoes again came alongside, filled with men, women and children; they were all quite naked, their privy parts only being covered, but they brought nothing of any value.

On the morning of the 11th we again set sail, proceeding north-west by west and west-nor'-west, keeping constantly along the coast and always in sight of land, at a distance of not more than 3, 2, 1½ or even 1 mile from the shore, and passing at noon a high promontory. This land was Nova Guinea; it extends mostly north-west by west, sometimes a little more westerly, sometimes again somewhat more northerly.

On the 12th, 13th and 14th we sailed along the same coast.

On the 15th the wind and course were along the coast as before, with good weather. In the afternoon we came to two low inhabited islands, which lay about half a mile from the land and were full of coker-nut trees. We ran towards
Dampier approached Terra Australis in the *Roebuck* from the west, and spent from the end of July to the beginning of September, 1699, on the western and northern coasts of that land. From Timor he sailed to the western extremity of New Guinea, then set a course east out of sight of land until he reached St. Matthias Island. He passed between this island and Squally or Stormy Island, and following what he thought to be the coast of New Guinea, he mistook a strait for a bay, naming it St. George’s Bay. Towards the end of March he sailed through the Strait which is named after him, and called the land to his east, Nova Britannia. The condition of the *Roebuck* and the need for fresh food and water made Dampier decide to attempt to trade with the natives who appeared to be well furnished in these things. Abandoning his original plan, Dampier beat along the north coast of New Guinea and returned to Timor. For further background detail see B29.

I sent ashore Commodities to purchase Hogs, etc. being informed that the Natives have plenty of them, as also of Yamms and other good Roots; But my Men returned without getting any thing that I sent them for; the Natives being unwilling to trade with us: Yet they admir’d our Hatchets and Axes; but would part with nothing but Cocos-nuts; which they us’d to climb the Trees for; and so soon as they gave them our Men, they beckon’d to them to be gone; for they were much afraid of us.

The 18th, I sent both Boats again for Water, and before Noon they had filled all my Casks. In the Afternoon I sent them both to cut Wood; but seeing about 40 Natives standing on the Bay at a small Distance from our Men, I made a Signal for them to come aboard again; which they did, and brought me Word that the Men which we saw on the Bay were passing that way, but were afraid to come nigh them. At 4 a Clock I sent both the Boats again for more Wood, and they return’d in the Evening. Then I called my Officers to consult whether it were convenient to stay here longer, and endeavour a better Acquaintance with these People; or go to Sea. My Design of tarrying here longer, was, if possible, to get some Hogs, Coats, Yamms or other Roots; as also to get some Knowledge of the Country and its Product. My Officers unanimously gave their Opinions for staying longer here. So the next Day I sent both Boats ashore again, to fish and to cut more Wood. While they were ashore about 30 or 40 Men and Women past by them; they were a little afraid of our People at first; but upon their making signs of Friendship, they past by quietly; the Men finely bedeck’d with Feathers of divers Colours about their Heads, and Lances in their Hands; the Women had no Ornament about them, nor any Thing to cover their Nakedness, but a Bunch of small green Boughs, before and behind, stuck under a String which came round their Wastes. They carried large Baskets on their Heads, full of Yamms. And this I have observ’d amongst all the wild Natives I have known, that they make their Women carry the Burdens, while the Men walk before without any other Load than their Arms and Ornaments. At Noon our Men came aboard with the Wood they had cut, and had catch’d but 6 Fishes at 4 or 5 Hauls of the Sain, though we saw Abundance of Fish leaping in the Bay all the Day long.

In the Afternoon I sent the Boats ashore for more Wood; and some of our Mena went to the Natives Houses, and found they were now more shy than they us’d to be; had taken down all the Coco-nuts from the Trees, and driven away their Hogs. Our People made Signs to them to know what was become of their Hogs, etc. The Natives pointing to some Houses in the Bottom of the Bay, and imitating the Noise of those Creatures, seem’d to intimate that there were both Hogs and Goats of several Sizes, which they express’d by holding their Hands abroad at several Distances from the Ground.

At Night our Boats came aboard with Wood; and the next Morning I went my self with both Boats up the River to the Watering-place, carrying with me all such Trifles and Iron-work as I thought most proper to induce them to a Commerce with us; but I found them very shy and NoSuch. I saw but 2 Men and a Boy: One of the Men by some Signs was persuad’d to come to the Boat’s Side, where I was; to him I gave a Knife, a String of Beads, and a Glass-bottle; The Fellow call’d out, Cocos, Cocos, pointing to a Village hard by, and signified to us that he would go for some; but he never return’d to us. And thus they had frequently of late served our Men. I took 8 or 9 Men with me, and marched to their Houses, which I found very mean; and their Doors made fast with Withes.
Dampier's New Britain Landing Place

I visited 3 of their Villages; and finding all the Houses thus abandon'd by the Inhabitants, who carried with them all their Hogs etc. I brought out of their Houses some small Fishing-nets in Recompence for those Things they had receiv'd of us. As we were coming away, we saw 2 of the Natives; I shewed them the Things that we carried with us, and called to them, Cocos, Cocos, to let them know that I took these Things because they had not made good what they had promis'd by their Signs, and by their calling out Cocos. While I was thus employ'd, the Men in the Yawl filled 2 Hogsheds of Water, and all the Barreces. About 1 in the Afternoon I came aboard, and found all my Officers and Men very importunate to go to that Bay where the Hogs were said to be. I was loath to yield to it, fearing they would deal too roughly with the Natives. By 2 a-Clock in the Afternoon many black Clouds gather'd over the Land, which I thought would deter them from their Enterprise; but they sollicited me the more to let them go. At last I consented, sending those Commodities I had ashore with me in the Morning, and giving them a strict Charge to deal by fair means, and to act cautiously for their own Security. The Bay I sent them to was about 2 Miles from the Ship. As soon as they were gone, I got all Things ready, that, if I saw Occasion, I might assist them with my great Guns. When they came to Land, the Natives in great Companies stood to resist them; shaking their Lances, and threatening them; and some were so daring, as to wade into the Sea, holding a Target in one Hand and a Lance in the other. Our Men held up to them such Commodities as I had sent, and made Signs of Friendship; but to no Purpose; for the Natives wavis'd them off. Seeing therefore they could not be prevailed upon to a friendly Commerce, my Men, being resolved to have some Provision among them, fired some Muskets to scare them away; which had the desired Effect upon all but 2 or 3 who stood still in a menacing Posture, till the boldest dropt his Target and ran away; they suppos'd he was shot in the Arm: He and some others felt the Smart of our Bullets, but none were kill'd; our Design being rather to fright than to kill them. Our Men landed, and found Abundance of tame Hogs running among the Houses. They shot down 9, which they brought away, besides many that ran away wounded. They had but little Time; for in less than an Hour after they went from the Ship, it began to rain: wherefore they got what they could into the Boats; for I had charg'd them to come away if it rain'd. By that Time the Boat was abroad, and the Hogs taken in, it clear'd up; and my Men desir'd to make another Trip thither before Night; this was about 5 in the Evening; and I consented, giving them Order to repair on Board before Night. In the Close of the Evening they returned accordingly, with 8 Hogs more, and a little live Pig; and by this Time the other Hogs were jerk'd and salted. These that came last, we only drest and corn'd till Morning; and then sent both Boats ashore for more Refreshments, either of Hogs or Roots: But in the Night the Natives had convey'd away their Provisions of all Sorts. Many of them were now about the Houses, and none offer'd to resist our Boats landing, but on the contrary were so amicable, that one Man brought 10 or 12 Coco-nuts, left them on the Shore after he had shew'd them to our Men, and went out of Sight. Our People finding nothing but Nets and Images, brought some of them away; which 2 of my Men brought aboard in a small Canoa; and presently after, my Boats came off. I order'd the Boatswain to take care of the Nets, till we came at some place where they might be disposed of for some Refreshment for the Use of all the Company: The Images I took into my own Custody. In the Afternoon I sent the Canoa to the Place from whence she had been brought; and in her, 2 Axes, 2 Hatchets (one of them helv'd), 6 Knives, 6 Looking glasses, a large Bunch of Beads, and 4 Glass-bottles. Our Men drew the Canoa ashore, placed the Things to the best Advantage in her, and came off in the Pinnace which I sent to guard them. And now being well stock'd with Wood, and all my Water-casks full, I resolv'd to sail the next Morning.


B97 Dampier's Landing Place in New Britain Identified

Research undertaken by a European administrator in Gasmata, New Britain, has possibly led to the identification of Dampier's landing-place. In a letter dated 21 April 1931, from the District office at Gasmata, B. Calcutt gave this description of the spot.

... The small river mentioned by Dampier is the Kabu and the village from which some fishing nets were taken is Ruakana, right at the Cape now known as Cape Dampier ... the village is only a few yards from the river's edge...

I have no doubt at all that the Roebuck anchored in the bay into which the Kabu River flows; that Dampier landed on the left bank of the Kabu and inspected Ruakana village; and that it was the village of Awul (then, as now, a large place) that was bombarded, and from which the pigs were taken.

Source MS. letter from B. Calcutt to the Librarian, Mitchell Library, Sydney, dated at District Office, Gasmata, New Britain, 21 April 1931, Mitchell Library
Lewis de Bougainville. See B36 for background of the man and the voyage.

We had New Britain constantly in sight till the 3rd of August, during which time we had little wind, frequent rain, the currents against us, and the ships went worse than ever. The coast trenched more and more to the westward, and on the 29th in the morning, we found ourselves nearer it than we had yet been; this approach procured us a visit from some periagias; two came within hail of the frigate, and five others went to the Etoile. They carried each of them five or six black men, with frizzled woolly hair, and some of them had powdered it white. They had pretty long beards, and white ornaments round their arms, in form of bracelets. Their nudity was but indifferently covered with the leaves of trees. They are tall, and appeared active and robust. They showed us a kind of bread, and invited us by signs to go ashore. We desired them to come on board, but our invitations, and even the gift of some pieces of stuff which we threw overboard, did not inspire them with confidence sufficient to make them venture alongside. They took up what was thrown into the water, and by way of

PLATE 39: The French navigator, Lewis de Bougainville
Forster, J.R. (ed.), A Voyage Round the World, 1766-9,
Dublin, 1772

PLATE 40: Routes taken by the Frenchmen, Bougainville and
D'Entrecasteaux
Adapted by E. Ford from J. Dunmore, French Explorers in the
De Surville at Port Praslin, Santa Ysabel, 1769

De Surville has often been condemned for his habit of kidnapping in order to get information about a new country. On this voyage he took three natives from Bashi Islands, a boy from Port Praslin, Santa Ysabel, and a Maori Chief, from Baie de Lauriston—Cook’s Doubtless Bay—New Zealand. His ruthless treatment of natives in the face of their aggression and in his attempts to capture a prisoner stands in marked contrast to his humane treatment of his prisoners on the voyage to New Zealand and Peru. The following extract describes the adventures of de Surville’s party at Port Praslin, and the kidnapping of a young boy. After the ship left the Port, the boy remained constantly at de Surville’s side and was given every kind of attention which Monneron thought he deserved because of his good qualities. For background information on the voyage see B37.

Shortly before noon M. de Surville ordered two boats to be lowered, and put in command M. Labe, his first officer, in whom he had great confidence, both for his prudence and his courage. The sailors were provided with cutlasses, and the soldiers carried their guns and ammunition. M. de Surville, nephew of our captain, commanded one of the boats under the orders of M. Labe. Hardly had they left the vessel than all the canoes followed them, and kept with them to the end of the port. During the journey the natives kept going to and fro, and talking hard all the time. At first it did not seem unnatural to us, as our arrival was bound to cause great excitement amongst these people.

While M. Labe was at the top end of the port, M. de Surville, in company of some of his officers, was hunting on one of the islands. What was our surprise when we heard ourselves being loudly called. M. Labe had just landed on the island where we were, towing some native boats, and with several of his men severely wounded. He told us that when they got to a rather narrow place, thickly surrounded by scrub, the natives made signs to them that there was water there. The locality seemed to M. Labe rather suspicious, and he did not have his boats beached, as the natives seemed to want him to do; he only sent four men with some natives to have a look at the watering-place. He was getting rather anxious when the four men came back saying that they had been taken to a place where they only found water left there by the rain which had fallen about an hour ago. This event made M. Labe more wary. However, he was conducted to another place, where he met with the same difficulty. The sergeant in command of the four men he had sent was indeed taken to a place where there

Upon the whole, it seemed that the visits they made us these two last days had been with no other view than to reconnoitre us, and to concert a plan of attack; for the 31st, at daybreak, we saw a swarm of periaguas coming off shore, a part of them passed athwart us without stopping, and all directed their course for the Etoile, which they had no doubt observed to be the smallest vessel of the two, and to keep astern. The negroes made their attacks with stones and arrows, but the action was short, for one platoon disconcerted their scheme, many threw themselves into the sea, and some periaguas were abandoned: from this time we did not see any more of them...

We advanced but little each day. Since our arrival on the coast of New Guinea, we had pretty regularly a light breeze from east to N. E.... The 19th, in the morning, we again saw the westmost of the two islands we had seen the preceding evening. We discovered at the same time, other land, which seemed to us to be islands, extending from S. E. to W. S. W. very low, over which, in a distant point of view, we perceived the high mountains of the continent... At ten in the morning we fell into a race of a tide, where the current seemed to carry us with violence to N. and N. N. E. It was so violent, that till noon it prevented us steering... This race of a tide seems to indicate either a great river in the continent, or a passage whose entrance would be almost north and south.

Source Lewis D. Bougainville, A Voyage Round the World, 1766-9, J. R. Forster, ed., Dublin, 1772, pp. 343-54
...was a little water flowing from a rock. The natives deserted them there, and it was only with much difficulty that they found their way back to the boats by narrow passes through the scrub. During this time the natives did all in their power to induce M. Labe to beach his boats. They attempted to pull them ashore themselves, and wanted to tie them to trees. But M. Labe would not allow that. Besides this, the natives tried to separate our sailors by inducing them to go and gather some coconuts, which are there in great quantities. Our men were quite willing, but the officers prudently would not allow them. M. Labe was more than two and a half leagues from the vessel, and as it was getting rather late, and he did not think he could do more that day, he gave orders to everybody to re-embark.

As soon as the savages, who numbered at least 150, saw these preparations, they put themselves in an attitude of fight. Several of our men assured us that they began by a religious act. An old native raised his eyes to heaven, also his hands, muttering some words, and seeming to exhort them to do their best.

The first act of hostility was accomplished on one of the soldiers, who got his hat torn by a blow from a club while he was getting on board. M. Labe then gave orders to fire, but that did not prevent the natives from wounding several men, among whom was the sergeant, who received a blow from a lance above the hip. He died of that wound three days after. During his illness the surgeon was very perplexed by the cause of it. He could only see a slight wound, to which could not be attributed the great pain in which the soldier was. He suspected that some foreign matter had got into the wound, but could not find it with the probe. He opened the wound after the death of the man, and found a piece of lance six inches long embedded in the vertebra with such a force that in order to extract it he had to use pinchers and break the bone with a hammer.

The first discharge of firearms on the natives astonished them so much that they remained immovable. It was all the more murderous as they stood all together only a dozen yards away.

The astonishment produced by the discharge of firearms gave time to fire another volley, which the natives could not stand. They fled to the woods in a great hurry, leaving thirty or forty killed or wounded on the battlefield.

As soon as the natives had disappeared M. Labe took a few of the canoes and had the others broken and set fire to. He ordered some arms and other things, which the natives had with them, to be gathered. We had three or four of our men wounded, M. Labe himself receiving a blow from a stone on the leg and two arrows in the thigh. Although his wounds were slight, ten months after this adventure they were still bleeding, which made us believe that the arrows were poisoned.

Coming back to the vessel we noticed on the little island in the north-west, situated at the entrance of the port, five or six natives. They flew to the woods in a great hurry, and although we were quite near, they were clever enough to launch their canoe and embark. We manoeuvred so as to cut off their escape and were able to fire on them. One of them was wounded, and fell in the water, and after he got on shore we saw him crawling on all fours to the wood; the others also swam ashore, and we never found them again.

The intention of M. de Surville was to get hold of one of these natives and to get him to show us a place where to get water. Besides, he had recourse to that last act of hostility only to give these people an idea of our strength, and thus prevent them from attacking us again. They could very well have given us a great deal of trouble if they had known our real situation.

After that skirmish we saw two men in a canoe, who came to examine us attentively. We employed to attract them an expedient which was rather successful. We got two of our Kaffir sailors in one of the canoes previously captured; we arranged them somewhat like the natives; they kept making the same signs they had noticed the savages making, and were so successful that the natives in the canoe came much nearer the vessel. We at once sent two boats to give chase, but turning quickly they fled, gaining in speed on our boats. We tried to stop them by firing on the canoe. One savage was killed, and as he fell overboard the canoe was capsized. The second native tried to reach the nearer island, swimming; but before he got there we caught up to him. He fought with much courage, and having no weapon, he used his teeth, and bit any one coming near him. I will have occasion later on to speak about this native. Towards the middle of the night: two canoes came to examine us; we fired in them and wounded several natives, judging by the cries of pain we could hear.

On the 15th we took our prisoner on the island situated in the east, so as he could show us a place to get some water. He took a rather long route, and, on the way, without anybody noticing it, he got hold of a piece of shell with which he managed to cut part of the ropes he was bound with. However, we noticed it in time, and afterwards kept a better watch on him. As he made us signs that we were near the water M. de Surville allowed him to guide us on, although still afraid to see him escape somehow. He was, however, really leading us to a watering-place, but one of our soldiers having found another proper place we stopped there. The young prisoner was then taken back to the vessel, but, before, he kept rolling himself on the shore, making horrible cries to attract his companions, and biting the ground in a great rage.

We got all the water we wanted at that place, and were not troubled any more, on account of our firing on the canoes every time they put in an appearance...

The way we were received in this country induced us to find a name characteristic of this nation. Therefore we called the part we discovered Arscicides Coast. Arscicides, according to some authors, means ‘murderers’.

The young black we took prisoner in Port Praslin gave us some information relative to his people. I believe what he told us (except what was dictated by prejudice), as I have always, during the two years he was with us, found him to be perfectly fair in everything.

Captain James Cook in the *Endeavour* left Plymouth on 26 August 1768 and entered the Pacific via Cape Horn. On 15 August 1769 he left Tahiti where scientists on board had been occupied with astronomical observations, and commenced a search for the great south land. His voyage brought him first to New Zealand and then to the east coast of New Holland. Following this coast north, Cook was determined to clear up the question of whether New Guinea was a part of New Holland. On 22 August 1770 he established that New Guinea was separated from New Holland. Along the south coast of New Guinea Cook sought an opportunity to obtain fresh food and water. His landing place has not been identified. Evidence suggests that he landed at that bay marked ‘Cook’s Bay’ on some maps. Dr Beaglehole thinks Cook was north of Frederik Hendrikk Island. See also B39.

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**PLATE 41:** The English navigator, James Cook
Barrow, J., *Cook’s Voyages of Discovery*
At the time we put off from the Ship we saw not the least sign of Inhabitants but we had no sooner landed than we saw the print of Mens feet fresh upon the Sand, and a little way farther we found a small shade or hutt about which lay green shells of Cocoa-nuts, by this we were well assured that the Inhabitants were not far off; Nay we thought they heard their Voices in the woods which were so close and thick that we did not think it safe to venture in for fear of an ambuscade, as we had only a boats crew with us, a part of which was left to look after the boat which lay above a 3 of a Mile from the shore. We therefore took a walk along the Sea beach but had not gone above 200 Yards before we were attacked by 3 or 4 Men who came out of the woods a little before us, but upon our immediatly firing upon them they retired; finding that we could not search the Country with any degree of safety we returned to the boat and was follow'd by 60 or as some thought about 100 of the natives who had advanc'd in small parties out of the woods, but they suffer'd us to go to our boat without giving us any trouble. We had now time to view them Attentively, we thought them to be about the Size and Colour of the New-Hollanders with short crop'd hair and quite naked like them. I thought these of a lighter Colour but that might be owing to a whitish Pigment with which we thought their bodies were painted because some appear'd darker than others; their Arms were ordinary darts about 4 feet long made of a kind of Reed and point'd at one end with hard wood, but what appear'd most extraordinary to us was something they had which caused a flash of fire or smoke very much like the going off of a Pistol or sm'Gun but without any report, the deception was so great that the People in the Ship actually thought that they had fire arms, indeed they seem'd to use these things in imitation of such for the moment the first man we saw made his appearance he fired off one of these things, and while we lay looking at them in the boat 4 or 5 would let them off all at once which had all the appearances in the world of Volleys of Small Arms; but I am confident that nothing came from them but smook, but by what means this was done or what purpose it answer'd we were not able to guess. I thought the Combustible matter was contained in a Reed or piece of small Bambo which they gave a swing round in the hand and caused it to go off.

This place lies in the Latitude of 6° 15's, about 65 Leagues to the NE of P't S. Augustine or Walsche Caep, and is near to what is call'd in the Charts by the long name of C. de la Colta de S' Bonaventura. The land is very low like every other part of the Coast we have seen, here it is thick and Luxuriously clothed with woods and Verdures all of which appear green and flourishing; here were Cocoa-nutt Trees, Bread fruit Trees and Plantain trees, but we saw no fruit but on the former and these were small and green; the other trees, shrubs, plants &c were likewise such as is common in the South-Sea Islands and in New-Holland. Upon my return to the Ship we hoisted in the boat and made sail to the Westward with a design to leave the Coast altogether to the no small satisfaction of I believe the Major part of ye Ships company. However it was contrary to the inclination and opinion of some of the officers, who would have had me send a party of men a shore to cut down the Cocoa-nutt Trees for the sake of the Nuts, a thing that I think no man living could have justifed; for as the Natives had attack'd us for meer landing without taking away any one thing, certainly they would have made a vigorous effort to have defended their property, in which case many of them must have been kill'd and perhaps some of our own people too—and at this for 3 [q] r 300 green Cocoa-nuts which when we had got them would have done us little service, besides nothing but the u [t] most neccessity would have obliged me to have taken this Method to come at refreshments.


B101 Forrest's Friendly Reception at Dorei (Manokwari), 1775

See B61 for background details of Thomas Forrest and his mission.

On Thursday the 9th, fine weather and southerly winds. Two small boats returned from a place they call Wobur, with sago, plantains, &c, for their families; they were therefore unwilling to dispose of any. They also brought Bird of Paradise which I purchased from them. Today I repaired to the large tenement, near which the vessel lay, I found the women in the common hall, making cocoyas mats as usual; also kneading (if I may so term it) the clay, of which others formed the pots, with two pebble stones, as before described. Two of them were humming a tune, on which I took out a german flute, and played; they were exceedingly attentive, all work stopping instantly when I began. I then asked one of the women to sing which she did. The air she sung was very melodious and of a species much superior to Malay airs in general, which dwell long on a few notes, with little variety of rise or fall. Giving her a fathom of blue bañas, I asked another to sing; she was bashful and refused; therefore I gave her nothing; her looks spoke her vexed, as if disappointed. Presently she brought a large bunch of plantains, and gave it to me with a smile. I then presented her with the remaining fathom of bañas, having had but two pieces with me. There being many boys and girls about us as we sat at that part of the common hall, that goes upon the outer stage of the tenement, I separated some of the plantains from the bunch, and distributed to the children. When I had thus given away about one half they would not permit me to part with any more; so the remainder I carried on board. I could not help taking notice that the children did not snatch, or seem too eager to receive, but waited patiently, and modestly accepted of what I offered, lifting their hands to their heads. The batchelors, if courting, come freely to the common hall, and sit down by their sweethearts. The old ones at a distance, are then said often to call out, well, are you agreed? If they agree before witnesses, they kill a cock, which is procured with difficulty, and then it is a marriage. Their cabins are miserably furnished; a mat or two, a fire-place,
an earthen pot, with perhaps a china plate or bason, and some sago flour. As they cook in each cabin, and have no chimney, the smoke issues at every part of the roof; at a distance the whole roof seems to smoke. They are fond of glass, or china beads of all colours; both sexes wear them about the wrist, but the women only at the left ear.


**B102 John Hunter at Duke of York en route to England, 1791**

John Hunter (1737-1821) was a Scotsman who gained considerable sea-going experience in the North Atlantic and West Indian stations and rose ultimately to the rank of Admiral. In 1772-4 he was master of the *Intrepid* on its journey to the East Indies. Under Arthur Phillip, Hunter was second captain, commanding the *Sirius* in the First Fleet to Botany Bay, N.S.W. The early years were critical for the Colony. Crops failed and food rations were drastically cut. In October 1788 Hunter sailed in the *Sirius* to the Cape of Good Hope for supplies. The vessel returned to Sydney in 1789 having circumnavigated the globe. In February of the following year he took the *Sirius* to Norfolk Island and was wrecked on a coral reef. He returned to Sydney in December after having been stranded for eleven months. Hunter was obliged to return to England for the inquiry that was held into the disaster. He left Sydney in the Dutch transport *Waaksamheyd*.

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*Plate 43: Port Hunter, Duke of York Island, 1883*

*Methodist Church of Australia: Department of Overseas Missions Papers, Mitchell Library, MSS.*

*Meth, Ch. O.M. 125*
in March 1791. The route to Portsmouth was by way of the Lord Howe Group, New Britain, Duke of York Island, the Admiralty Islands, Batavia and the Cape of Good Hope. While in England he published the journal from which the following extract, describing the party's efforts to obtain fresh water from Duke of York Island, is taken. Hunter returned to Sydney on 7 September 1795 as Captain-General and Governor-in-chief of the Colony of New South Wales, and served in that capacity until September 1800. See C. M. H. Clark, A History of Australia, Melbourne, 1962, Vol. 1, p. 142 et seq.

The watering business was now begun, and might have satisfied the natives what our business was there; however, their numbers increased to such a degree, all armed, and they were so very troublesome, that very little work could be done in the watering. An old man, who was powdered all over with a white powder, and who seemed to possess great authority and influence among his countrymen, disposed them to be more and more troublesome; presents were offered him, but he rejected everything with a very surly and determined air; in short, he seemed resolved that we should not fill water, or remain upon their territory; he carried every appearance of an intention to dispute the point by force; every means were used to please this old fellow, but without effect; at last some stones were thrown from a sling, but this was not done until the principal part of the natives who had retired to some distance from the place where our people were employed; the men who were armed for the protection of the waterers, stood the whole time with their arms ready to fire at a moment's notice, and the natives, ignorant of what the musquets were, had certainly taken them for clubs. Some of the stones, which they threw, came with the force of a shot from a gun among the sailors. The consequence of this unmerrited attack was, that the officer was obliged to fire, the covering boat fired, and a few shot were fired from the ship: at this time, there were thirty or forty canoes about the ship, full of the people; their terror and consternation at the noise, and probably the effect of the guns, was such, that many leaped from their boats overboard, and swam under the water as far as they were able; such guns as were fired from the side on which the canoes were, were pointed well over them, being more intended to intimidate than destroy. This firing occasioned a general dispersion of the natives, and the filling of water was carried on with ease and expedition; we received on board that afternoon about seven tons. The next morning, before the boats went on shore, we fired a few grape shot into the woods, and the boats landed without seeing any of the natives; at the same time we warped the ship within a cable's length of the watering-place, and secured her head and stern for covering the party on shore; the covering boat was directed to fire whenever any of the natives were seen in the woods over the watering party, which, in the course of the day, they had frequent occasion to do; many canoes came into the bay this day, but kept at an awful distance, holding up green boughs as a signal of peace and amity; to some we made signs to go away; to others, who ventured a little nearer, we showed signs of friendship, and made them perfectly understand, that our firing was occasioned by their slinging of stones among our people, who were watering: after these hostilities, our watering went on without the smallest interruption, except that the covering boat had occasion sometimes to fire a few musquets into the woods over the watering place. In four days we completed our water, and on the last evening, as the sailors were coming from the shore, a number of the natives from the woods right above the watering place, came down to the beach with green boughs in their hands, bringing with them cocoa-nuts, yams, plantains, &c. accompanied by a song of friendship: they seemed earnestly to wish for a reconciliation, and took every means in their power to testify their concern for what had happened; a boat was sent on shore to meet them, with a green branch in the bow, and the boat's crew were desired to spread open their arms when they came near the breach [sic] to show they were well disposed to peace. When the boat landed, the natives retired back a little, but not out of sight; having piled up upon the beach their peace-offering, which consisted of yams, cocoa-nuts, plantains, bananas, sugar-cane, and some other articles: on the top of this pile was laid a small living male and female dog, with their mouths and feet tied: (they appeared to be of the small terrier kind) in the middle of the heap was stuck in the sand, a young tree of the palm kind, upon a branch of which were hung a number of braded lines, like what is called by seamen 'sennit', and much of the same colour, being made of the bark of a particular tree: what this could mean we were wholly at a loss to comprehend, unless, as the head of this young tree was designedly bent down by the lines above-mentioned, it was meant as a token of submission; be that as it might, they received the boat's crew, &c. with every demonstration of a true concern for what had happened; and I fear and believe they had much cause to be sorry, for I think some must have lost their lives by the grape shot from the ship. It is much to be regretted, that after having seen us employed in getting what we wanted, in doing which every person was completely employed, and not the most distant appearance of insult, or any sort of provocation had been offered them, they could not have dissisted from hostility until some kind of offence had been offered, a circumstance which, during the whole time, was most particularly guarded against in those but from the ignorance of the effect of our arms, and from their very superior numbers, they were inclined to be insolent and troublesome; our sailors on shore were so very few, when compared with their numbers, that it became absolutely necessary to resent the first unprovoked offence which they gave, and thereby to convince them before it might be too late, that although their numbers far exceeded ours, their real force was very inferior. After peace had been re-established on shore, the cork shell was sounded, which is the signal whereby they assemble considerable numbers; and in a very short time, they appeared coming from all parts of the wood round the bay, and were met by those who had been the means of bringing about a reconciliation, with a song of friendship, in which the whole joined, and which was really harmonious and very pleasing; the canoes crowded the bay from different parts of the island, and were as familiar as ever, except that they would not now venture on board, which many had done before this quarrel: every boat brought a green bough, that was conspicuously held up; they also brought many things to barter, and were pleased with such trifles as we had to give them in return. They are, I believe, the only people in those seas, who do not set a value upon iron work, in preference to any other things; beads or
D'Entrecasteaux Sails through Dampier Strait

looking-glasses they were not much pleased with, but rags of white linen, strips of scarlet cloth, or any thing of gay colours, they were very anxious to have: nails they would not accept at all.

Source J. Hunter, An Historical Journal of the Transactions

B103 An American Captain Reflects on Causes of Native Hostility, 1791

Amasa Delano was captain of the Wanderer, which left America to take part in the China trade. In the East, the ship was sold and Delano joined the British East India Company expedition commanded by John McCluer. (B62) The expedition lost its surgeon, Dr Nicholson, in New Guinea waters close to McCluer's Gulf, when he joined a native canoe and the natives with whom he had hoped to trade turned upon him and killed him.

We knew, from the journals of several English Indianmen, that the natives in this region were hostile to all white people. This not only taught us the hazard we run, but made me particularly reflect upon the conduct, which ought to be observed towards parties sent out from a ship or a fleet, on land duty in a savage country. The responsibility of commanders in this respect should be specifically recognized and regarded. I have, ever since that period, laboured to do my duty according to the estimate, which I then made of it, and have always inculcated the same upon officers under my care. A man, who is brought to a proper sense of discipline is ordered to go on shore, or upon any other duty, which may be attended by danger. He has no will of his own to employ, but must obey, presuming on the discernment and fidelity of his superiors, that he will be aided and protected according to his wants and their ability. If he be left for destruction through the sloth, neglect, or timidity of his superiors, they are accountable for it, if not to the same degree, yet as actually as though they had deliberately shot him. We had then the journal of the Queen Indianaman on board, giving an account of three boats, with the first, second, and third mates, cut off in this very neighbourhood, at one time, with all their crews. We had also other journals, which mentioned similar calamities in regard to different ships. Warnings of this nature ought not to be lost upon the mind of any commander, but should awaken a lively and effectual sense of his duty toward the parties he may be obliged to send on shore. The natives of New Guinea and of the adjacent islands are negroes, or woolly headed, and are well known to hate white people so much as to reward an individual, by making him a chief, when he will bring them a white man’s head. If he will bring three, they will make him a chief of the first rank. The causes of this hatred are, in a great measure, traceable to our own misconduct toward them. When Europeans first visited New Guinea, the natives manifested no spirit of enmity. But the Europeans seized and carried them away as slaves, in a most treacherous manner. It was common for them to hook the yard tackles of a ship to a canoe, hoist her on deck with all the crew in her, transport them and sell them for slaves. The natives have heard also of the cruelties practised toward the inhabitants of other islands, and even of the enormities committed by white people against each other at Ambon, and several places in the vicinity. It is not therefore a matter of surprise that the natives should encourage and transmit this hatred toward Europeans. The white people have too often, and to their everlasting disgrace, used their arts and force, as members of civilized society, to betray, to kidnap, or to seize openly and violently, the natives for the most selfish and inhuman purposes. They make reprisals upon us, whenever they can, and are peculiarly inveterate against us in their hostility. Happy will it be, when the time shall arrive, that we ourselves furnish no longer the chief obstacles to the civilization and moral improvement of the natives, according to the laws and religion of christian countries.

Source Amasa Delano, A Narrative of Voyages and Travels in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, Boston, 1817, pp. 80-81

B104 D'Entrecasteaux from the Louisiades through Dampier Strait, June-July 1793

See B42 for background details of the man and the voyage.

At break of day we perceived the Esperance at a great distance from us, and much nearer to the land than our vessel, so that we were obliged to be towed by the boats...

The calm still continued, and about one o'clock the Commander sent the barge to assist in towing the Esperance, as the crew might be supposed already much fatigued with their labour. At length, about half an hour after four a breeze sprung up for the south-east, which enabled her to get clear of the shoals. The barge soon returned to our vessel when we were informed that the Esperance had been
surrounded for a long time by a great number of savages, that about noon they had pointed out to the crew two canoes rowing from two small islands to meet each other, and given them to understand that the islanders in the boats were going to fight a battle, and that those who came off conquerors intended to devour their enemies. During this recital, a ferocious expression of pleasure was visible in their countenance, as if they were to partake of this horrible banquet. After this communication, almost all those among our crew who had eaten of the pudding which the savages brought them in the morning, were seized with retching, from the apprehension that this food, which seemed to be so hugely grateful to the islanders, was partly composed of human flesh.

The two canoes were soon near enough to commence the engagement. The combatants were seen mounted upon a platform of wood, supported by the out-rigger and the canoe, from whence they threw stones with their slings, each of them wearing a buckler upon his left arm, with which he endeavoured to ward off the stones thrown by his adversary. They, however, separated after a fight of half a quarter of an hour, in which none of them appeared to have been dangerously wounded, and returned to the shore.

The Captain of the Esperance sent to the Commander a tomahawk and a buckler which he had obtained from those savages...

On the 25th... we saw the high grounds of New Guinea, extending from south-west to north-west. After having followed them in their direction to north-west, we arrived on the 27th at a deep gulf, about 40,000 toises in extent, and surrounded by very high mountains, the loftiest of which are on the north side, where they unite with that which forms the Cape of King William. The calm detained us here till the 29th, when we sailed for the Straits of Dampier.

The sun being in our face, the man at the mast-head could not perceive timely enough a flat over which we passed about eight in the morning, the surge running very high. After getting clear of this, we thought ourselves out of all danger; but about three-quarters of an hour afterwards, we found ourselves between two shoals very near to each other, which enclosed us in such a manner, that it was impossible to pass through with the south-south-east wind, which drove us further and further in. The Commander gave orders immediately to put about; but there was not time sufficient to perform this manoeuvre, before our vessel drove towards the shoal to the northward, where we expected she would soon be wrecked, when Citizen Gicquel cried from the mast-head that he saw a passage between the rocks which, though very narrow, was yet wide enough for our vessel to sail through. We immediately steered for this passage, and were at length extricated from one of the most hazardous situations which we experienced during the whole course of our expedition...

About noon we were already very far up the Strait... The coast of New Britain bore from east 37 degs. south, to east 61 degs. north, where being at the distance of 2,500 toises from the land.

The island on which Dampier discovered a volcano, bore west 38 degs. north, at the distance of 7,000 toises. This volcano was then extinguished, but we saw at the distance of 5,130 toises, a small island of conical form which was not observed by Dampier, to exhibit any signs of subterranean fire. A thick smoke proceeded at intervals from the summit of the mountain and about an half hour after three, a great quantity of burning substances were thrown out of the aperture of the volcano, which lighting upon the eastern declivity of the mountain, rolled down the sides till they fell into the sea, where they immediately produced an ebullition in the water and raised it into vapours of a shining white colour. At the moment of the eruption, a thick smoke, tinged with different hues, but principally of a copper colour, was thrown out with such violence, as to ascend above the highest clouds.

We saw a great number of inhabitants along the coast of New Britain, and several huts raised upon stones, after the manner of the Papuas.

We left the Strait before the close of evening.

We now ranged along the northern coast of New Britain where we discovered several small islands, very mountainous, and hitherto unknown. The currents in this passage were scarcely perceptible, except under the meridian of Port Montague, where they carried us rapidly to the northward, which led us to suppose that we were opposite a channel that divides the lands of New Britain. We left this coast on 9th July, after having been impeded in our survey of it by the winds from the south-east, and the frequent calms.

We had been obliged for a long time to live upon worm-eaten biscuit and salt-meat, which was already considerably tainted, in consequence of which, the scurvy had begun to make great ravages amongst us. The greater part of us found ourselves compelled to leave off the use of coffee as it occasioned very troublesome spasmodic affections... About seven o'clock in the evening of the 21st, we lost our Commander D'Enrercasteaux; he sunk under the violence of a colic which had attacked him two days before. For some time he had experienced a few slight symptoms of the scurvy, but we were far from imagining threatened with so heavy a loss.

Source M. Labillardiére, *Voyage in Search of La Perouse*, performed by order of the Constituent Assembly, during the years 1791-4, London, 1800, Vol. 2, pp. 281-97

**B105**  **The Men of New Ireland Are Observed by a Naval Captain's Wife, New Ireland, 1803**

H. M. S. *Buffalo* sailed from Port Jackson on 21 April 1803, under the command of Captain William Kent. On board was the captain's wife, Eliza, who kept a journal written in the form of letters to her mother.

The *Buffalo* sailed to Bengal to purchase livestock and stores for the Colony of New South Wales. The route sailed was by way of Norfolk Island, New Caledonia, the Solomon Islands and then along the north-east
coast of New Ireland and so on to Java and from thence to Bengal. The incidents recorded in the following extract occurred in the vicinity of the Tanga Island Group on the north-east coast of New Ireland.

On the 3rd July, 1803 off New Ireland and the Islands Bournard and Oraison—In the evening observed two canoes coming off, in the largest were nine people and in the smallest three. The small canoe turned back after approaching the ship within half a mile, and the largest turned towards the shore when within a quarter of a mile, occasioned I suppose by its beginning to turn dark. The canoes seemed to be hollowed out of trees like those of New Caledonia. On the beach opposite the ship was observed a number of natives walking along. As soon as those in the canoes joined their companions on the shore, two large fires were made on the beach. The next day four canoes came off with six natives in two of them, and four in each of the others. They advanced with great caution and when within a hundred yards of the ship the two foremost waited for the others to join them and then proceeded slowly abreast. After coming half the distance made another halt, all perfectly silent. We held out whatever we thought would entice them to come on—a silk handkerchief being thrown, they ventured near enough to pick it up, staid [sic] a few minutes, and then returned as fast as possible to the shore.

They had come merely to gratify their curiosity, without bringing even a Cocoa Nut—they were large athletic people of a dark copper colour and entirely naked. The natives of Antieve of Dampier and Bougeau (two islands in N. Ireland) resemble them in size and colour—are free from timidity and deal with honor and honesty—altho' I am not without suspicion of their being Cannibals from the circumstance of there being among the curiosities I collected two human bones. One of these a large arm bone, is fixed as a handle to a spear, with six rows of human teeth round it. I am afraid to tell you, my cabin is ornamented with this relic least you should think I am turned cannibal too—not but I allow there may be something infectious in the air—and I can't tell you how far I might be tempted if a delicate white hand with taper fingers and gristle instead of bones come in my way. Well! but these said giants that deal in human bones, favored us with their company almost the whole of yesterday and I could not help discovering that every part of their pretty persons were totally neglected but their precious heads on which they bestow a world of pains. Their bushy hair is cut in the form of a helmet, the centre part from the neck to the forehead loaded with a red powder resembling brick dust—the hair on each side cut close to the head, and on one of these sides is a thick plaster of a yellow composition and on the opposite side one of white, with long peaks to touch the corner of their eye brows. Now cannot you imagine this headdress extremely becoming?


B106 Attempt to Establish Friendly Trade Relations, 1826

The voyage of D. H. Kolff in the Dutch Brig of War, Dourga, was directed along the south-west coast of the mainland of New Guinea. Despite Kolff's eagerness to establish friendly relations with the natives the encounter ended in bloodshed. For background detail on the voyage and details of the hostilities, see B21.

We continued running along shore until the 8th, when we entered a wide channel, carrying a depth of six and seven fathoms close into the south shore, while the land on the opposite side was scarcely visible. We anchored in seven fathoms within the entrance, and the same night I left the brig in the boats, accompanied by the surgeon, the clerk and the interpreters, for the purpose of ascending the river ...

No natives were seen during the excursion, nor were any traces of them seen, with the exception of two old canoes, formed of hollowed trees, which were half buried in the mud...

[Ed. This previously unknown river received the name of Dourga River. This opening was also entered two years subsequently by the Dutch corvette, Triton, and schooner, Iris, when it was still supposed to be a river; but in 1835, Lieut. Kool of the Dutch navy, paddled through it out to sea, proving the Dourga and St. Bartholomew Rivers to be the north-west and south-east entrances of a strait which cuts off the south-west extreme of New Guinea, and forms an island about one hundred miles long and sixty broad.)

On the 13th ... we were enabled to near the land, and seeing smoke arise to the northward of us we stood towards it, and shortly perceived a number of small houses on the sandy beach, off which we came to anchor in three fathoms, about four miles distant from the shore. A number of men were running to and fro on the beach, and I lowered one of the boats down for the purpose of communicating with them. Several small prahus, containing seven or eight men each, now came towards the vessel and having approached within musket-shot, turned back towards the shore. With a view to give them confidence, I sent the crew down below, and caused the pilots and interpreters to call out to them; but their answers were unintelligible. Seeing that they were afraid to come on board, I sent one of the interpreters with six native seamen in the boat, unarmed, with a view to conciliate them by presents of spirits, tobacco etc., which were shown to them, and then launched towards them on a plank. Our endeavours, however, were unsuccessful; for they were as much afraid of the boat as of the brig, and retreated on its approach. I therefore called the boat on board again, on which the natives remained quiet for some time, until the number of their prahus were increased to
twelve, when they suddenly rowed towards the brig with a loud shout, stopping, however, when still at a little distance. I again showed them the presents, and called to them in the Papua language but with the same result as before. I again sent the boat towards them, without the interpreter being able to get near, and it had no sooner commenced returning than the natives followed with loud cries, taking up their bows and arrows, but stopping short when the people in the boat ceased rowing...

While the prahu were pulling towards shore, a man stood up in one of them, with a thick bamboo in his hand, out of which he threw something that appeared to me to be ashes.

The Sulphur Visits New Ireland

When the boats approached them they also threw water up in the air, and showed their teeth like enraged dogs. My interpreter assured me that these people were so inhuman as to devour their prisoners taken in war, which appeared probable enough, if we may judge from the above grimaces.


B107  An American Woman Observes the Primitive Bismarck Archipelago, 1831

We landed on New-Britain, and found a great quantity of birds, some of beautiful plumage, and others of most melodious notes. Hogs and dogs are also found here, and are plentiful to an extent. The fish are remarkably fine around the island. In fine, these people seemed to me to be the happiest of all the race of wild men I had ever seen. It is amusing to think how soon we become enamoured with the thought of natural society, and in moments of contemplation wish to be found among people of primitive cast. The thousand evils of social life crowd upon us when we look at these forests and their inhabitants; there is no vulgar wretchedness, as seen in crowded cities—no squalid diseases; there is nothing of aristocratic contumely, and the laws of nature are only slightly regulated by convention or necessity.

From here we sailed to examine the north cape of New Britain. We were visited by the inhabitants, who seemed of a much more savage nature than those of New-Ireland. The shores are surrounded with coral reefs, about eight or ten miles from them. Arrowsmith's charts, my husband said, were pretty correct; but he regretted very much that he could not spare time to give a more correct one. It is wonderful to me that they are so correct as we find them, so little time could be bestowed upon the subject. We continued to keep near the shore for some time, having now and then a little difficulty with the natives; for they thought our vessel so small that a crew of one or two canoes would take her with ease; we had only to splash the water about them, however, with a cannon shot or two, to make them keep at a fearful distance. There is something terrible to a savage ear in the sound of big guns, and I knew not whose ear gets familiar to the roar of a full-mouthed battery. I must confess, though I thought myself quite brave, that I always trembled a little to hear a great gun fired, and to feel the tremulous motion of the ship at its recoil. Fortunately we were not obliged to sacrifice any of the natives for our safety, as we could get along without proceeding to such extremities. Half the blood that has been spilt in the world might have been avoided by prudence and moral reflection.

The natives often act from ignorance, and a natural love of gain or power; and the civilized man turns his rage upon the poor wretches as if they were as able to reason as an enlightened European. If we had a hold on their affections, I have no doubt that we should find them strong and permanent; for they have but few conventional reasons to break in upon a course of nature, and as far as I have watched the operations of nature, the savage loves his offspring as much as civilized man. But it is in vain to moralize, for this will not change habits, manners or morals. Oh! for that blessed day when civilization, attended by all the Christian virtues, shall reach the isles of the sea, and make glad all the nations of the earth. I am no enthusiast; but when I see what has been done in New-Zealand, I do not despair, in my time, of hearing that these very places I have attempted faintly to describe have felt the benign influences of our holy religion.

Source Abby Jace Morrell, Narrative of a Voyage to the Ethiopian and South Atlantic Ocean, Indian Ocean, Chinese Sea, North and South Pacific Ocean in the Years 1829, 1830, 1831, New York, 1833, pp. 74–6

B108  The Sulphur Visits New Ireland, 1840

H. M. S. Sulphur was commissioned in September 1835 by Captain Beechey. She and her consort, the Starling, under Lieutenant-Commander Kellett, quitted England in December of that year. The voyage which was to result in a circumnavigation of the world was undertaken for the express purpose of maritime discovery, but during 1840-1 the vessels were also engaged in naval operations against China.
Captain Beechey was invalided at Valparaiso, and Captain Sir Edward Belcher picked up the command at Panama. In January 1840 the ships sailed west from Panama, visiting the Marquesas, Tahiti, the Tonga group, Fiji, New Hebrides, New Ireland, New Britain and the New Guinea mainland, surveying the coastline as far as Arimoa and Jobi during July 1840. At English Cove, the party met an English-speaking native, and learned of European trade with New Ireland. See Edward Belcher, *Narrative of a Voyage Round the World performed in Her Majesty's Ship Sulphur, during the years 1836-1842, etc.*, Vol. 1, preface and Vol. 2, pp. 72-107.

Between the flaws and warping we reached our anchorage in Port Carteret by midnight; affording to our crew a good night's rest, instead of knocking about at the mercy of swell and currents outside. We were fortunate, as the rains recommenced at dawn, and continued with slight intermission during the whole period of our visit.

On the second day we succeeded in securing our principal observations, and the main triangulation of Port Carteret. I then joined the Starling, and proceeded to complete the coast as far as Cape St. George, leaving the Sulphur to complete wood, water, &c. Rain still impeded us, but by perseverance and taking every advantage which offered, this was eventually achieved.

This southern bay is termed Gower's Harbour and English Cove. The latter is more peculiarly adapted for watering, but does not afford sufficient facility for ingress or egress without towing. At the southern extremity of Gower's Harbour, we fell in with a party of five natives, one of whom spoke a little English. From him we learned that the visits of British vessels from Sidney were frequent; that the natives who communicated with them resided on the eastern side of the island; and that their supplies consisted chiefly of wild hogs, fruit and vegetables. He was anxious to sleep on board the schooner, to which we consented, and his allies, youths from sixteen to eighteen, were despatched home, with directions to return the following morning with stock, &c.

The inclemency of the weather, I suspect, prevented this, and our labours having terminated, our new friend 'Tom Starling' (for Jack seldom fails to christen his friends) was landed, and we rejoined the Sulphur that evening...

Although Captain Carteret named the greater island in Port Carteret Cocoa Island, from the abundance of cocoa nuts found there at the period of his visit, not a single tree of this fruit now exists...

In a mercantile point of view I cannot at present perceive how these islands can prove interesting beyond the fancy woods and tortoise shell, of which latter substance every canoe appeared to possess several plates. It is of good quality, better than I have before noticed in the Pacific, and from the manner in which it was offered no doubt vessels come here to trade for it; indeed we learnt as much from Tom Starling.

It was unfortunate that such an opportunity for acquiring a more perfect estimate of these islands and their resources was completely marred, by the dreadfully tedious weather and long sick list, which rendered further delay impossible.

**Source**

Captain Sir Edward Belcher, *Narrative of a Voyage Round the World performed in Her Majesty's Ship Sulphur, during the years 1836-1842, etc.*, London, 1843, Vol. 2, pp. 71-8

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**B109 Papuans Entertained by Captain Stanley's Party, 1849**

In June 1849 while H. M. S. *Rattlesnake* and H. M. S. *Bramble* under the command of Captain Owen Stanley were on their fourth surveying cruise, the men attempted to communicate with natives in the Louisiade Archipelago. For further details of the cruise see B66; B82; B110; B111; and Adelaide Lubbock, *Owen Stanley R. N.*, Melbourne, 1968.

... In the afternoon Simpson and several of the officers went to try to establish a communication with the natives on the reef but they were so timid or distrustful of our proceedings that he did not succeed. Some of his party then landed and by going a short distance into the interior met about 30 of the natives who evidently knew what firearms were as they would not allow any of our party to approach with their guns but on leaving them behind two or three at a time advanced from the main part of the officers and were well received by the natives from whom they got sundry articles such as combs of tortoise shell, mats made, small bottles constructed from a species of gourd with a highly ornamental stopper. The time was too short to allow of a visit to the village to which the natives made no objection. On the contrary they were rather anxious for it. Today as well as yesterday the natives held free communication with the *Bramble* but would not come near this ship though we were not more than a cables length apart.

June 17 Simpson went away water hunting and finding a good place to land he did so accompanied by Brierly, Huxley and Mr. McGillivray. The natives were there soon after they landed bringing with them a pig on a pole which was soon purchased for a handkerchief and one or two baubles. But too much familiarity soon bred contempt and the natives seemed so much inclined to help themselves to what they admired most so that Simpson deemed it advisable to retreat before worse came of it and accordingly Huxley and Brierly shouldered the pig and carried it safely down to the boat. Simpson and Mr. McGillivray remaining as a rear guard against any attack from the natives who had now obtained spears and were assuming rather a threatening attitude, fortunately they all got off to the boat without coming into collision but Huxley found they had stolen one
of his Pistols with which as it was loaded they are not very unlikely to shoot some of their own people.

Two canoes came off to the ship in the course of the day and we had some bartering with them but obtained little worth having. Robert was in a state of extreme delight at seeing men, as he called them, in a perfect unsophisticated state.

*June 18* The natives came off to us again in five canoes but would not come near enough to barter. They seemed in a great state of excitement and repeatedly waved to us to go to sea. Chances are that Husley's pistol had done more mischief than it would have done had they not stolen it because being of peculiar construction it would very likely go off in handling it and pulling it about which natives are sure to do and when they prize iron very much they generally burn away the wood work as the easiest method of obtaining it. Our exploring boats today found a watering place to which we mean to move as soon as we have mended the *Bramble* rudder which has turned out to be defective having a strong party ashore we shall there be able to see more of the country than we have yet done.

The natives after stealing the Pistol kept away from us for two or three days and then all at once resumed their communication with more confidence than ever.

June 24 was a grand day for them as the *Bramble* being busy in rehanging the rudder, which took some time they all came to us, and the shouting and screaming that ensued may be better imagined than described. When the drum beat to division, they were very much astonished but screamed with delight as the marines came to the poop in their red jackets and when we appeared in epaulets their excitement was as great. The Hurdy Gurdy was then struck up which caused much amazement. A looking glass in which most likely they saw their ugly faces for the first time caused at first much terror but at last many were anxious to see the wonderful effect and went away well pleased at what they had seen of themselves.

Source: *Journal of Captain Owen Stanley*. Original in the possession of Hon Mrs Adelaide Lubbock, microfilm, National Library, No. G. 743

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B110 Relationship between British Sailors and Indigenes, Brumer Island, 1849

See B66; B82; B109; B111, for background detail.

Of late the number of natives daily coming off to the ship has rapidly increased, so as now to amount to upwards of 100 in about 15 canoes and catamarans. Those from Tissor Island and the mainland usually arrive in the forenoon, and after an hour's stay, leave us for the northern village on the nearest Brumer Island, where they spend the night and return the next morning with a fair wind. The noise and scrambling alongside when bartering is going on baffles all description ... besides the usual talking and shouting, they have a singular habit of directing attention to their wares by a loud, sharp -ss-, ss, a kind of hissing sound, equivalent to 'look at this'. In their bargaining the natives have generally been very honest, far more so than our own people whom I have frequently seen cheating them by passing off scraps of thin worthless iron, and even tin and copper, for pieces of hoop, the imposition not being found out until the property has changed hands. As at the Louisiades iron hoop is the article most prized by the natives, and is valued according to its width and thickness as a substitute for the stone heads of their axes. They also showed great eagerness to obtain our hatchets and fish-hooks, but attached little value to calico, although a gaudy pattern, or bright colour, especially red, was sure to arrest attention; but in such matters they are very capricious. Even glass bottles were prized, probably as a substitute for obsidian or volcanic glass, portions of which I saw among them, used in shaving, as was explained to me, and probably also for carving in wood.


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B111 A Papuan Entertains, Brumer Island, 1849

See also B66; B82; B109; B110.

Same catamaran came off again but having only seven natives this time. Rushed to port to get sketch. They were bartering away principally for iron hoop — but the men had given one of the natives a large round tin box. They seemed to value this very much and when it happened to get knocked off the raft in their anxiety to get other things, one of them jumped overboard and swam after it, the whole party calling out and showing the greatest interest in the precious article being saved. The native who had got it, to prevent it going over stuck it under his left arm and began drumming upon it with his right hand humming a sort of tune at the same time. That I might more conveniently look at them and get the proportions of their raft went up on the poop.

Captain Stanley and several of the officers came there to...
Captain Keppel's Impression of New Ireland

look at them and wished to get some of them to come on board. And making signs for them to go to the gangway Mr. S. and self went and tried to induce them to come up. But when they were along side they seemed to hesitate and had some consultation upon the matter. One of them took hold of the main rope which we held out to him and looked as if very little more would induce him to venture up. This was a fine young man, with a pleasing and intelligent bush expression and with a bush of hair not less (I am afraid to say how much more) than four and a half feet in circumference. At last after looking intently at Mr. S — and myself, saying as plainly as expression of countenance could convey it — 'I certainly should like just to get up and have a peep but I am afraid it won't do to trust you too far.' He shook his head and shutting his eyes laid his head upon one hand, pointing to the shore, that as the night was coming on he must return to sleep there. During this time the man with the can kept drumming away on the top of it apparently very much delighted with his own performance. This suggested an idea — send the drummer here — aye, aye sir — in a few minutes the drummer made his appearance. Here! Get out into the main chains — and exit drummer through one of the quarter deck ports and out into the main chains over to where the natives were. The man with the can seemed to comprehend the thing at once, as when it struck up the whole lot were in extacies. The man with the tin listened for an instant or two to catch the time and taking up the three large white cowries which he wore suspended about his neck brought them up to his mouth blowing them with a loud buss noise, at the same time striking up a regular dance to the tune, skipping from one part of the catamaran to the other, marking the time by a series of bumps with most surprising precision, moving his head from side to side with a roguish expression, buzzing away with the shells and rattling on accompaniment all the time on the old can. He kept his balance all the time, sometimes balanced on one leg at the very edge of the round and sloping sides of the raft which might be said to move properly float in the water than upon it for at any dip of the bow the sea washed right over it. The rest shouted a kind of chorus and keeping time by moving their bodies but leaving a clear space for the man with the shells and can who was the principal performer on this occasion. Some of them balanced their long paddles (which we found to be 6'3" in length) like a dancer on the right rope, just lifting their feet and keeping time without moving from one spot. When the drum stopped they ceased dancing and prepared to return to the shore kneeling and sitting on their heels. Just as they had taken up their paddles and were about to start the fiddler came up — 'now then give them something lively — a Polka.' And accordingly off they went. This was too much for our friend with the tin who dropped his paddle and jumping up and catching it from under the arm of a native who was standing up loaded with their baskets (stuffed with the handkerchiefs and red cloth and barter to be out of the wash that kept flowing over) went off again with fresh energy. He had evidently, to speak phrenologically, an amazing preponderance in the organ of time and the manner: in which he adapted his steps to the time, his attitude of attention with one hand raised to catch the bar at which he might strike in, had all the ease and grace of Julian. Turning from the canoe to the ship the scene was equally novel and striking. The whole of the port side on which the canoe was, from the poop to the forecastle being lined with men, standing along the decks and down in the chains, all in a row laughing at the inimitable drollery which the fellow threw into his attitudes and expression. There was a degree of irresistible infectious humour which it was impossible to ignore.

Source O. W. Brierly's Journal of H. M. S. Rattlesnake and H. M. S. Bramble, August, September, 1849, Mitchell Library MS. No. A511, extract, dated 7 August 1849

B112 Captain Keppel Is Impressed by New Ireland and its People, 1849

On 1 February 1849 H. M. Maeander under the command of Captain the Hon. H. Keppel, left Spithead for Port Essington with Mr Brooke, the Governor of Labuan, and William Napier, the Lieutenant-Governor, on board. On 1 December of the same year the Maeander left Port Essington for Sydney, and not being in possession of the surveys of Torres Strait, Keppel decided to take the route via the Amboina Sea and Pitt Strait, round the north side of New Guinea, and then make for the south through St. George's Channel. The Maeander had not been able to obtain sufficient water at Port Essington because of drought, so the route taken by Keppel was also dictated by the knowledge that water could be taken on board at Port Carteret, New Ireland.

On the 8th we again crossed over to the New Ireland coast, and then stood to the southward, between that and New Britain, the scenery of which was of surpassing beauty. There were extensive green slopes, which, from a distance, appeared to have been cleared by cultivation: but we ascertained that such was not the case.

We now looked for a harbour near the southern end of New Ireland — discovered by and named after a Captain Carteret — where fresh water was to be obtained: it is a place occasionally visited by English and American whalers, — as was proved by a salutation which met our ears, while we were standing in for the shore. 'What ship that?' shouted a black savage, one of a party in a canoe; 'Tobac got!' — 'God dam!' — 'Rum got!' — 'Give rope!' — while delivering himself of these lessons in English and American, and without waiting for an invitation, he sprang into the main chains, and thence on the quarter-deck.

The manners of these savages were not at all improved by their intercourse with more civilized nations.

Port Carteret is formed by a bight in the land, protected by a small island called Coco: in fact it is nothing more than a channel between the island and the mainland of New Ireland, and so deep is the water that it hardly deserves to be called a harbour. We anchored in forty fathoms, — the best
berth we could find,—close to the north-east end of Coco. We were sheltered from any swell of the sea; but we had not, in case of a breeze much room to veer in.

Fruit, yams, and pigs are to be obtained by barter, but no poultry; nor did we see any after leaving Ceram, where no Malay is seen without a cock under his arm. The water, where we anchored, was so beautifully clear, that in forty fathoms deep the coral, shells, and seaweed growing on the bottom could be distinctly seen, and give it all the appearance of a beautiful submarine garden.

The creek up which we found the fresh water is on the New Ireland side, in the N. N. E. angle. It seemed formed by nature for a dock. Although there is not room to swing, there is great depth of water, and numerous large trees to which a ship of any size may be secured, head and stern.

While the ship was watering, we formed a party, and, under guidance of a savage who spoke and understood a little English, started off to visit one of their villages.

Having pulled along the beach to the northward for a short distance, outside the harbour, we landed opposite some fishing huts; and, striking into the forest, followed a jungle path for about a mile; this brought us to a collection of perhaps 200 huts; they scarcely however deserved that name, each dwelling being nothing more than a circular hole, three feet deep, over which a thatch was thrown, and into which we were obliged to creep on all fours. The women were certainly not shy; both sexes were ‘dressed’ alike in a small apron made from the bark of a tree. Furniture they had none; and little to tempt us to prolong our visit; while myriads of ravenous mosquitos made the usual attack on the pale skins.

Not seeing any gardens, and knowing the natives to have supplied the ship well with vegetables, we made them to understand our curiosity on the subject: they explained that their cultivated ground was further off, and offered to show us the way. They led us by a pleasant walk through the jungle; we met on our way several detached parties of men, women, and children, carrying on their heads to the village the daily supply of vegetables, consisting of tapias, yams, cassava root, and plantains. Half an hour brought us to the banks of a broad and rapid stream, tumbling and roaring over rocks and large stones. The water through which we had to wade was about three feet deep. On the opposite side were the gardens. We were astonished, not only at the neatness and pretty appearance of the ground, but at the order that prevailed where no one appeared to rule. Each section of the village seemed to have its allotted portion. Parties arrived, cut, and carried their vegetables away in perfect quiet. Our party roamed about in twos and threes, while the savages were in tens and twenties; this however was scarcely prudent, as they might, had they been in the humour, have easily disposed of the white men. All accounts describe the natives about Carteret harbour as not only grasping and avaricious, but treacherous and cunning cannibals. One man, spoke a little English, denied to me that they ever ate men: he, however, admitted that, when they killed an enemy, they occasionally eat the palm of his hand, or such some dainty bit. We got away from these dreadful characters without having been molested in any way,—although on the afternoon previous to our visit to the village, one of the officers had found it necessary to protect himself from robbery in summary manner. He had been shooting, but had discharged his gun just before getting into a canoe with two natives, who offered to convey him on board. An attempt was made by them to take forcible possession of his watch; but, being a very powerful young man, he threw one of the savages into the water; and, standing over the other, prepared to break his head with the butt end of his gun, compelled him to paddle alongside.

On the whole, we were much pleased with this our first opportunity of seeing something of the domestic habits of these strange people.


B113 Lieutenant Kops on a Mission to Dorei (Manokwari), 1850

See B23 for background information on Lieutenant Kops and his mission.

The government is parcelled out amongst different chiefs. These are appointed by the Sultan and are called raja, singaji, major, captain, captain-in-law and so forth. Their power over the population is very limited, and they do not appear to be bound to obey, if the command does not proceed from the Sultan or the Singaji of Gebi.

They cannot impose any punishment and do not receive taxes, so that their dignity merely exists in name. When one of the principal chiefs dies, information of the event is conveyed to the Sultan by one of the relatives, who at the same time takes with him a present of slaves and birds of paradise, as a token of fealty. This person is generally named as the successor of the deceased and is presented with a yellow kabaya, breeches and headkerchief. He is then bound to pay a yearly tax to the Sultan of a slave, and to reinforce the hongi with three vessels and to furnish it with provisions.

The arts and sciences are of course at a very low scale of cultivation amongst these uncivilized people. Reading and writing are wholly unknown to them, and they have nothing in lieu of these arts. They understand the art of smelting iron. In some houses I saw bars of iron, and smiths-bellows, as well as some parangs, klewangs, and points of fish spears, which they had made themselves, and which, however rude, appeared to be well fitted for use. They however give the preference to articles manufactured elsewhere and brought by vessels. The bellows is like that of natives elsewhere and consists of two hollow pieces of bamboo with suckers of feathers.

Their prahu and weapons are the articles which they make best, as they are strong and well wrought. The carved work with which they ornament many articles is often very pretty and executed with much care; it generally consists of a running scroll, and here and there a human figure. The mats and boxes of rushes are sometimes very ornamental.
They are acquainted with the art of working in copper and silver, in which they manufacture their car and other ornaments, bracelets, rings, &c. and give them many different shapes. The silver is derived from the Spanish dollars which they receive from the French vessels Astrolabe and Zelee in exchange for bartered articles.

The trade is small and consists principally in tripod, tortoishell, massooi bark and mother of pearl, which they give in barter for lue cotton, sarongs and other cloths, copper-wire, knives, parangs, different kinds of iron-ware and coloured glass beads, the large kind of which are in most demand. Each one trade for himself, and for that purpose they repair in their prahu to islands a long way off even as far as Timor, from whence a prahu returned during our stay. Most of the articles mentioned above, being adapted for the China trade, a cargo might apparently be sent from thence with advantage, and iron wood, which brings a high price in China, could also be procured here, as it grows in abundance. The transport of this wood from the jungles would be the only difficulty. The trade might be easily extended with little trouble, if the population were encouraged to apply themselves to agriculture, for which the fruitfulness of the ground holds out good promise. As the long time which a vessel must remain in these parts in order to purchase a cargo, swallows up the profits in a great measure, it is mostly prahu and native vessels which come here to trade, as these are much less expensive in their disbursements. The bark, Rembang, however, has visited the coast several times and remained for months, as the natives have no quantity of any article in readiness beforehand.

... Kidnapping is general in these countries and is followed as a branch of trade, so that there is no dishonour attached to it. The captives are treated well, exchanged, if there are any of theirs in the enemy's hands, or released on payment of a ransom, in the same manner as was done in Europe in the middle ages. It is an inveterate evil, which however, might probably be nuted out, were an establishment formed, which would check them in this. The slave trade is very extended. The price of a slave is reckoned at 25 to 30 guilders. These men are gently treated and are seldom misused, at least I knew nothing to the contrary during our stay.

Source G. Kops, 'Contribution to the Knowledge of the North and East Coasts of New Guinea', *Journal of the Indian Archipelago*, 1832, Vol. 6, pp. 312-18

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**B114  A Peaceful Contact, South-east Papua, 1869**

As any information relative to a country so little known as New Guinea will doubtless be interesting to the Government, I do myself the honor of forwarding the following account (obtained from Capt. John Delargy of the schooner 'Active') of a visit to those shores in August last.

A boat's crew belonging to the 'Active', a schooner engaged in Beche-de-mer fishery, having gone adrift from Warrior Island in the North-West Channel about the middle of August, Capt. Delargy started in search of them with three large whale boats manned with 30 South Sea Islanders well armed with double barrelled guns. Having searched amongst the islands to leeward without success, he made the South east coast of New Guinea about August 18th at a place called by the natives—Sybee. Here he fell in with the missing boat and the crew in a state of exhaustion from want of food, for they had not ventured to land for fear of the natives. On nearing the shore he observed a large village and about 100 men collected on the beach armed with bows and having thick bundles of arrows slung round their waists, some of whom came out to the boats to trade. On the men landing, however, the natives immediately sent their women and children inland, drew off in good order, and forming a sort of square a short distance off on rising ground, challenged the intruders to fight. At this critical moment when an incident might have brought on a fierce encounter (for the Tanna men were equally eager for the fray) Capt. Delargy advanced towards the Papuans who stood with arrows fitted to their bows, and ordering his own men to ground their arms, succeeded in making peace between them. The Papuans then laid aside their bows and vied with each other in showing hospitality to the strangers. They prepared a sumptuous feast of Pigs, Yams, Taro, and a kind of jungle fowl, and sent a portion on board the boats for those who remained in them...

After dinner, one of the chiefs conducted Captain Delargy through the village, which consisted of about 12 or 14 two storied houses, neatly built of rough timber and roofed with bamboo and palm leaves. Each house had a double verandah about 12 feet wide all round it. The chief's house contains two rooms in each story, access being had to upper rooms by a neat ladder. The apartments on the ground floor were furnished with seats and tables, and the upper ones had sleeping berths raised about 18 inches above the floor all round them. Each room was covered with grass and cane matting, and all were scrupulously clean and neat. A large bamboo, 10 or 12 feet long for holding water appeared to be the only domestic utensil in use among them. The Captain described the men as being exceedingly intelligent, fine men, about 5'10" in height, of an olive complexion with wooly hair stained a bright dust colour. They did not appear to have any apparatus for smoking, indeed they placed little value on tobacco, but were ever and very eager for the smallest strip o' red calico in exchange for which they loaded the boats with taro and yams. The men go entirely naked, but appeared to take great care of themselves, sleeping in the verandah out of the sun as much as possible, and avoid getting wet. The ornaments worn by them were few and simple, and gave us no indication of its being a gold-producing country.

The coast about Sybee is low and the country is magnificent, rich, well grassed plains watered by numerous small stream, extend for some distance inland, while in the vicinity of the village are large fields of taro and yams in a high state of cultivation. The coast is lined with dense groves of coconut trees.

Notwithstanding their professions of friendship, Capt. Delargy did not deem it prudent to pass the night there, but got under weigh and stood to the East along the coast.
for about 18 miles. Before the boats left the Papuans painted and decorated themselves with leaves, and executed a kind of war dance in honor of their guests, keeping excellent time upon a large drum. They then marched in procession to the boats, singing and beating the drums and finally took leave by shaking hands all round.
Thus ended a pleasant adventure, which, but for Capt. Delargy’s courage and prudence, might have had a very different termination.

Source: Extracts from Somerset Letter Book No. 1, Mitchell Library MS. No B1415 (typescript copy of B1414), letter, H. M. Chester to Colonial Secretary, Brisbane, dated Somerset, 30 November, 1869, pp. 9-10

**B115 Attitudes Concerning Primitive Possessions, New Hanover, 1872**

John Brazier was a civilian, employed as a zoologist, on board H. M. S. Blanche, under the command of Captain Cortland H. Simpson, R. N. See also B67.

Sighted New Hanover Island at daybreak and came to anchor at 12 inside two reefs and soon after the natives came off to trade they are rather fierce [sic] looking and go quite naked. All women there that came along side only had a small piece of bark round the loins with a tuft of grass or bark about the size of the hand in front to cover their nakedness. They are most notorious thieves some of them stole shirts that they took out of the ships ports one was detected with his paddles at the port of the office trying to get some of the books out of it so happened that he could not balance his paddle and so was caught in the act. One wanted to pick my pockets but I caught him in time. Mr. Duff and some of the officers went on shore at 2 pm upon their landing the natives showed resistance. Mr Duff who was staying behind collecting plants was surrounded with a number of them and seeing the officers in the distance he made a clean break and got through them. You have to keep your eyes on them ... or else they would probably strip you. Their way of robbing was simple. One would tug you then another would tug you on the opposite side by you having to look two or three ways at once you find that you have lost your knife. They had their axes decorated with rings made out of the shell Trochus Niloticus. Their canoes resemble cigar boats.

Source: Notes by John Brazier C.N.Z.S. London, in H. M. S. Blanche, Mitchell Library, MS No. B512, entry for 13 July 1872

**B116 Mission Teachers Contact Villagers of Torotoram, 1872**

Missionary practice adopted by the London Missionary Society was to train Polynesians who had been converted to Christianity and establish them in the New Guinea field to make the first contacts. In 1872 the Rev. A. W. Murray and the Rev. W. Wyatt Gill established two Polynesian teachers at Mauat on the Katau River and six Polynesian teachers at Manus. The following extract is from the Rev. Gill’s account of their reception at the village of Torotoram. See also C. D. Rowley, *The New Guinea Villager*, Melbourne, 1965, pp. 134-5; Section C of this volume, *The London Missionary Society: Documents C32 to C51*.

The village of Torotoram is larger than Katau. To reach it we had to wade more than half a mile over a bank of fine black sand. The entire population had fled into the bush, with all their valuables, excepting four or five men, who stood doubtfully in front of a house watching our movements. The very pigs had been taken out of the sty and carried off. But, as soon as it became evident to the scouts that our intentions were pacific, and especially when they heard the voice of Maino calling to them, the whole adult male population came out of their hiding-places and gave us an unmistakable welcome...

They call us ‘Malakai’, i.e. ‘ghosts’ or ‘spirits’. God is spoken of by our teachers as ‘the true or great Malakai.’ The heathen of this part of New Guinea, and of the Straits, invariably associate the idea of whiteness with their notion of a spirit. Our gifts were elliptically designated ‘malakai’ i.e. ‘(belonging to) glistening spirits.’ Very similar to this was the notion formed by the natives of Mangaia, in 1777, of Captain Cook, whom they mistook for a god. The skulls ornamenting the houses of warriors on Tuan and Saibai, are, as already remarked, called ‘malakai’, i.e. ‘(belonging to) ghosts’. Such was their delight at seeing the whiteness of our skins that they would, had they been permitted, have stripped us in order to ascertain whether we were really white, and not, as some imagined painted like dolls. One actually wetted his forefinger and vigorously rubbed my arm to see if the white would come off! They said we were the first whites that had ever landed at their village.

On leaving, all the men (110) followed us; some carrying food, others helping to drag our boat into deep water. The writer had a double escort of athletic natives, anxious to put their heads under his umbrella. When the food was finally deposited in the boat, and we were ready to start, these amusing savages simultaneously raised the right-hand palm open, and most gracefully bade us, ‘I aea’ = ‘Farewell.’
Moresby’s Survey of New Guinea

Not a woman, or child, or decrepit man, was seen by us all that memorable day. Those with whom we had such agreeable intercourse were the fighting-men of Torotoram.

B117 Moresby’s Contribution to Knowledge of New Guinea, 1873-4

The eastern part of the mainland of New Guinea remained virtually unknown to Europeans until 1873 when Captain John Moresby in H. M. S. Basilisk undertook a mission to survey the south-east, east and north-east coasts. This involved the charting of 275 miles of coastline in waters that were known to be among the most dangerous in the world. The mission was carried out with extraordinary efficiency. Moresby’s satisfaction lay not only with the accomplishment of an accurate survey, but with the discovery of many fine bays and the China Strait which would afford a shorter passage for ships trading between the Australian Colonies and China. The mission was completed without loss of men, serious sickness or hostilities with the natives. Moresby was, as far as we know, the first European to make contact with the natives of eastern New Guinea; for this reason his descriptions and impressions of the country and the people at several points have been included.

A REDSCAR BAY, FEBRUARY 1873

Anchoring in Redscar Bay, we pulled for four miles over a dangerous shallow flat, formed by the alluvial deposit of the rivers which empty themselves through the Tonton-Opening at the head of this bay; and passing through the

PLATE 44: John Moresby’s survey of the New Guinea coastline, 1873-4
Drawn by E. Ford onto a modern map from Moresby’s chart in his Discoveries in New Guinea, London, 1876

opening entered a splendid expanse of inland water which appeared to be about three miles wide, and showed no limit as to its length, except where a wooded islet intercepted our view to the north-east ... We pulled in for the village, where crowds of natives were anxiously watching and waiting for us, beached our boats amongst a crowd of canoes hauled up on the black shady beach, and stepped onshore amongst our new friends, who, wholly unarmed, and without a sign of distrust, gave us a hearty welcome. We were surprised to see that these people differed totally from the tall, muscular, fierce-looking naked black Papuans we had left in Torres Straits. These men were more of the Malay type—small, lithe, copper-coloured people, with clean well-cut features, and a pleasing expression of countenance ... The little children were all dressed like their elders of either sex, and did not fear us in the least as we walked about, but played round us, shooting with small bows and arrows.

**B BASILISK ISLAND, APRIL 1873**

We had separated another island from New Guinea, and found ourselves now in an open bay, near a large village, on the shores of the newly-discovered island, the inhabitants of which were watching us with intense interest. We were anxious to find if this narrow opening would afford a passage for the ship, and spent the remainder of the daylight in examining it; but a rocky ledge, which ran across, barred it to ships and made it dangerous even for boats at the strength of the tide, the overfall of pent-up water was so great ... We named it after our good ship 'Basilisk'; and its highest peak, 900 feet high, Mount Goodman, after our worthy Doctor.

**C CHINA STRAITS, HAYTER ISLAND, APRIL 1873**

After pulling six or seven miles to the west, we found our conjectures verified by the discovery of a clear broad blue channel, two miles wide, leading fair from sea to sea—fit for a fleet to pass through under sail. Our hearts filled with delight and wonder as we looked. There and then I named it China Straits; the wish being father to the thought, that I had found a new highway between Australia and China.

The stone axes we found here [Hayter Island] were the most perfect specimens I have ever seen, and had been clipped into shape, and polished with a skill that must have been the result of practice for ages. The stone used was a kind of green-stone, hard, close-grained, and susceptible to high polish, but liable to chip off in irregular scales. The blades were some as large as seven inches, and they tapered away in a beautiful curve to a sharp edge; they were set in to a cleft in a handle, which described two sides of a triangle, and secured by strips of rattan. The axe was carried over the shoulder....

**D MILNE BAY, APRIL 1873**

The cove we had entered was semi-circular, and fringed all round by graceful cocoa-nut palms, the blue water rippling up to their roots. Pretty native houses were scattered amongst the trees, every one of which seemed to have sent forth its inmates to gaze at us. There was no unfriendliness; canoes of all sizes, and catamarans darted about us, bringing fine pigs and vegetables, which were gladly exchanged for our hoop-iron ... Mr. Mourilyan took the galley and surveyed the head of Milne Bay (thus named by me after the Senior Naval Lord of the Admiralty) on Monday, and came back with a report that it was full of reefs, and that the natives had been troublesome in pressing on him....

**E NORMANBY ISLAND, D'ENTRECASTEAUX GROUP, MARCH 1874**

Presently the men came crowding to the beach, armed with clubs and spears, and Mr. Bentley and I landed and walking up to the astonished savages, gave them some presents and patted them on the back; in fact, by this time we had all attained such experience in the management of savages that we felt confident of succeeding with these, and they soon became friendly, and we presently returned to the ship, carrying our purchases of weapons, which had perhaps been brought to the beach to be used against us.

**F FERGUSSON ISLAND, D'ENTRECASTEAUX GROUP**

On our landing, strange to say the women were the first to come forward, the men appearing but keeping back in a state of evident timidity. The presents we gave the women, however, soon brought the men round us, and so entire was my confidence in their peaceable disposition that I visited their inland plantations, accompanied only by a seaman ... The good feeling of these natives deserves mention. They had never seen the 'Basilisk', and knew nothing of our possessing superior arms. We were but ten men amongst hundreds, and they knew that we carried iron hoop on our persons; but not only did they refrain from the least attempt to molest us, but they helped us over obstacles, showed us the best paths, and took care of our clothes whilst we bathed....

**G POSSESSION BAY, APRIL 1874**

'The Sandfly' was lying here on our arrival, and we found that the natives had committed the bold act of stealing the barriques and boat's crutches from one of her boats. I had always been ready to overlook the smaller delinquencies of the natives, but this was going a step too far, and I directed Lieutenant Nowell, her commander, to lay an ambush, and seize some natives, near the spot where the robbery had been committed. Two were accordingly secured after a long struggle in which their smooth skin and supple limbs eluded the attempts of our strong seamen, and were taken on board the 'Sandfly' where they seemed to expect instant death. Their wives and friends came off weeping and offering presents to buy them off, and the natives deserted the ship and kept close to the shore in their canoes, ready for instant flight into the bush. I went amongst them in a dinghy, thinking that many of them would recognize me and be assured, and at last succeeded in making them understand that the prisoners should be set free when the property was brought back. On the second day they restored the articles and we released the men, to the intense joy of their friends, which it was quite affecting to witness, and presently a large hog was sent on board the 'Sandfly' to show their gratitude. A few days afterwards our carpenters, working on a stage over the side, missed a saw, but before we could take any steps, we saw a large canoe coming off, in which an old man stood holding up the saw, and on reaching us he returned it and expressed his anger at the theft....

**H CAPE BARTLE FRERE**

About 120 unarmed natives streamed along the beach to meet us on our landing, the foremost carrying the sacrificial dog, and others a pig slung on bamboo poles; but they were very timid, and it was some time before we could succeed in inducing them to approach us. When they gained confidence they took the dog by the hind legs in the usual way, and dashed its brains out against the gunwhale of our boat, and hauling a passing canoe, they sent the body on board the
'Basilisk', where, by my orders, it was received with all respect. They then presented me with the pig, and I made a return present of a hatchet, which was received in a way that showed they had but little idea of its use...

I COLLINGWOOD BAY

At the head of Collingwood Bay we found a good anchorage and remained two days cutting wood. Here Lieutenant Smith observed the droppings of some large grazing animal in a spot where the bushes had been heavily trampled and broken. Our opinion decided that a rhinoceros had haunted there; and we were much surprised, as this animal has never been believed to exist in New Guinea...

The natives here, a dark, dirty-looking people, wholly destitute of clothing, were very shy and difficult to approach, and threatened us with their spears; but by dint of laying presents on the ground and making friendly gestures, we succeeded in winning them to trade a little... These Collingwood Bay people gazed at us with such a blank astonishment, and held such consultation about us amongst themselves, that we were persuaded that they, in common with their neighbours on this coast, had never seen white men before.

J RICHELIEU ISLAND PROVED TO BE PART OF THE MAINLAND

Leaving Caution Point, we kept a sharp look-out for a large island shown on the chart as Richlieu Island, so named by D'Entrecasteaux, after the naturalist of his expedition... but rounding a cape less striking than the preceding capes, we found that no such island existed, and that the position given it was twenty miles inland. I therefore wished to name the cape Ward-Hunt, but it still remains on the chart as Richlieu Island, out of compliment to D'Entrecasteaux...

The following morning the men were employed in wooding, and I was writing in my cabin, when it was reported to me that three of our officers had strayed away from the wooding party about a mile along the beach, and that a large number of armed natives had landed from canoes and were stealing through the bush with the evident intention of attacking them. We, from the ship, could see the natives gliding through the underbrush, but the imperturbed officers could not, and were quite unaware of their approach. Sub-Lieutenant Shortland and I jumped into the dinghy with some spare rifles, and gained the beach just in time to give our shipmates the rifles, and put them on their guard. Hoping to maintain friendly relations, I advanced for about twenty yards alone, armed with a rifle, but holding my arms over my head towards the bush where the natives were now lurking, quite concealed from view. Suddenly they sprang from the bush to the open beach, and formed in two regular lines ten yards in my front—the first line of men armed with spears, which they held, quivering to throw, whilst they moved with a short quick step from side to side, as if to distract an enemy's aim, guarding themselves with shields. The second line was armed with clubs. For some seconds I forebore to fire, hoping still to win them round, but finding this hopeless, and that in another second I should be a target for fifty spears, I fired with a snap-shot at the leading savage. The bullet pierced his shield and spun him round on his heel, but did not wound him; there was no need to fire again and take life, for the whole body of warriors turned instantly in consternation, and ran for the canoes, and we followed them till we drove them on board...

...This bay, which will prove to be one of the best anchorages on this coast, we named Traitor's Bay, on account of the attempt made by the natives to cut off the officers.

K PARSEE POINT AND HUON GULF

We called this point Parsee Point, from the circumstance of the natives wearing singular conical caps, made of tappa. Next morning, May 13th, I went to examine a river which discharges a large body of water into the head of Huon Gulf, but a bar at the entrance prevented our boats passing up, and the banks were too swampy and thickly wooded to permit of our exploring them on foot in the time at our disposal. We named it Markham River, after the able secretary of the Royal Geographical Society...

The land now trended for fifty miles due east forming the north side of Huon Gulf, and making another of those far projecting promontories which we have found so characteristic of north-eastern New Guinea. The land is bold, mountainous, and rises to a height of 9,000 feet. It was named by me Rawlinson Range, after the president of the Royal Geographical Society...

Many canoes came off, and boldly ventured alongside to barter tortoise shell, yams, and cocoa-nuts. They brought dogs also, but they were not sacrificed.

L LESSON ISLAND, ASTROLABE BAY

Large numbers of the natives came off to us, and showed the utmost anxiety for hoop-iron. Their hair was dressed in the most preposterous fashion—it had been suffered to grow long as a woman's, and was drawn through a conical case, over the end of which it curled. This case, which was about a foot long, and highly ornamented with feathers and shells, was worn at the back of the head at right angles to it, and looked like a horn. These people, who were of a dark copper colour and very intelligent in manner, seemed cheerful and friendly, and I regretted much that time did not permit us to improve our acquaintance with them.

M HUMBOLDT BAY

We anchored in Humboldt Bay, May 23rd, wishing to learn if the Dutch had made a settlement here, a report to which effect had reached Sydney before we left. The bay is very large, and contains deep capacious bights, up one of which we steered, and anchored over a coral reef in eight fathoms, where we were presently surrounded by scores of canoes full of wild vociferating savages, armed with formidable bows and arrows, here first seen by us in East New Guinea. They showed no sign of fear nor reverence; and, knowing their reputation for making sudden attacks, we kept our rifles ready. It seems singular that the nearer we came to the seat of the Malay race proper in New Guinea, the more unlike the coast native became to the Malay type, the Humboldt Bay people being almost black, with hair inclining to be woolly, and nose and lips verging towards the negro formation...

...There was not trace of a Dutch settlement.

N THRESHOLD BAY. ENCOUNTER WITH THE RAJAH OF SALWATTI, MAY 1874

It was... the evening of May 28th when we anchored off a delicious little cove of this large open bay, before a large village, through which a mountain stream was running; and here we saw the dutch flag flying.

The inhabitants are pure Malays, descendants of those who have driven the aboriginal inhabitants back into the interior, and now hold their own by the use of firearms. The Rajah of Salwatti, who is supreme ruler at this extreme of New Guinea, came off to visit us on the following day in large prauh, rowed by about twenty men, and ornamented with various banners, and an enormous Dutch ensign. A huge gong, slung in the bow, was beaten continually as he
approached, seated under a large blue silk umbrella spread in the stern, and we received him in conformity with such pomp. We found him a well informed gentlemanly man, able to speak a few words of English; in which he told us that we were the first English man-of-war he had seen on this coast, and expressed a hope that many English ships would follow. We went to quarters and showed him the power and range of our great guns, which seemed to astonish him not a little: and he then exchanged gifts with me, presenting me with some live casowaries, a tree kangaroo and some beautiful bird of paradise skins, which I returned with a regulation sword, giving him also a quantity of tea and sugar, which he said was the greatest luxury he could have. He then took his leave with much ceremony, and landed at the village, where the prauh was hauled above high-water mark, and we thought we had done with him; but no, the Rajah doffed his robe of state, and launching in a small canoe, with two men to paddle, came off to the ship as a trader of bird skins. Very keen bargains he drove, coaxing fowling-pieces, powder, shot and pistols from the officers for his skins, over which we repented afterwards at our leisure. The Dutch, or Hollanders, as the Malays termed them, seemed to be in small repute here.


B118  Captain Moresby Shows Understanding and Tolerance, Killerton Islands, 1873

See B117 for background detail, also part H of document B117 for a description of a ritual at Cape Bartle Frere similar to that described in the following document.

The group consisted of three larger islands, about a mile in length, and several smaller ones, and was named Killerton group by us. Its inhabitants at first seemed inclined to be troublesome, and met our boats in canoes waving their stone weapons and shouting defiantly. Two or three canoes full of fighting men came round Mr. Mourilyan's boat in a most threatening manner; but his resoluteness and good temper told after a while, and natives began to consult with one another. Some paddled off to shore and presently returned, bringing one of the lean wolfish curs that infest their villages. They sprang up the side of the Basilisk, the leader carrying the dog in his arms, and dashed out its brains on the quarter-deck before any one could stop them. On this all the natives near us changed their manner, and showed a desire to be friendly, by making the usual uncouth greeting; but the ire of the officer of the watch and petty officers was so kindled at seeing Her Majesty's quarter-deck defiled, that the dog-sacrificers and their friends were bundled out of the ship at once, and their victim was thrown after them. I had been below at the time, and was sorry to hear of this summary treatment, for I felt that the rite had doubtless, either a religious and sacrificial meaning to its perpetrators, or was intended as a seal of amity between us. I therefore went on shore immediately, to show friendliness, at a spot where a large crowd had assembled round the body of the dead dog in noisy consultation, and received so friendly a welcome, that my companion and I did not hesitate to go onto the village with our new acquaintances, who, similar in physique to their neighbours, were painted in so extraordinary a manner as to look more like monkeys than men.


B119  A Discouraging Estimate of Port Moresby, 1874

Charles Egerstrom arrived in Somerset on 14 November 1873, and found there the ketch Retrieve prepared to proceed to New Guinea with the Rev. A. W. Murray of the London Missionary Society and some Harvey Island native teachers. The vessel was captained by Mr C. Thorngren, a Swede and countryman of Egerstrom, so that the latter was able to persuade the captain to allow him to accompany the party.

The total absence of trees, bearing eatable fruits, is remarkable; the cocoa-nut and banana seems to be the only ones, as I hear, for hundreds of miles, on the coast; which in many aspects is a counterpart of New Caledonia. We will now quit our elevated position, and descend into a valley winding its way among high swelling hills in a northerly direction; but what a barren wilderness it is; large tracts of ground, overgrown by a coarse, rank grass, and pandanus palms—a sure sign of sterility. Now and then a wallaby would skip along a steep hillside, but, not being provided with suitable shot, they are allowed to pass by unmolested, and on we move, looking into every ravine. Turning over
Otto Finsch

the boulders, and grubbing among the earth, I discovered lumps, ledges, and veins of conglomerate, light and dark flint, porphry, and a glassy barren quartz, at which I kept hammering to obtain specimens, which were duly examined by a magnifying glass, without disclosing anything to induce a further search. It was not my lot, with all my exertions, to detect any indications whatever that would substantiate the report of this being a gold-bearing country; and most certain is it that the natives here have no knowledge whatever of the precious metal, and those persons who state that they have seen specimens of gold among Papuans elsewhere, will find that such ornaments have been hammered out from gold coins obtained from Dutch and Malay traders, who frequent the north-western coast.

There is nothing to invite the trader to this place. The people are very poor, and very primitive in their ways. They did not possess a single article of European manufacture, not even a piece of hoop iron, and did not even know the use of hatchets and knives, which they saw among the teachers. Their canoes of various sizes, are cut out from a single log by stone axes, with which they could not be persuaded to part, it being their only implement besides bows and arrows and spears, used in the chase. Their fishing nets and baskets are of a superior make, and the industry of the women is further shown in the manufacture of pottery. Their dresses are simply mats. However, our Papuan friends had nothing to sell, there were no bargains to be made, and we went on board, both weary and satisfied with our researches for the day.

To interrogations respecting the worth and veracity of this not very encouraging narrative, and as to the qualifications of the narrator, I merely beg leave to state that my practical experience of gold-mining in California and Australia, from 1852 to 1857, and subsequently as a settler in Fiji for upwards of thirteen years, besides having seen most parts of Australia, the Sandwich Islands, and New Caledonia, enables me to form a pretty correct estimate of what I did see in Papua; and having also been a witness and victim to much misery arising from misrepresentations circulated by interested parties for mere selfish ends, prompts me to communicate my observations.

Source 'Notes of a Visit to New Guinea', Chas. A. Egerstrom, The Evening News, 23 February 1874

B120 Otto Finsch Contacts Natives of the North-east Mainland, 1885

Dr Otto Finsch, a German zoologist, anthropologist and explorer, surveyed the north-east coast of New Guinea mainland, a region he named Kaiser Wilhelm Island, for the newly-formed Neu Guinea Kompanie. For further background detail see B79.

AT VENUS HUK. EAST OF THE KAISERIN AUGUSTA (SEPIK) RIVER

Hidden under palm trees were three villages. The inhabitants lit bon-fires and came in their canoes to our ship. The masts of the canoes showed peculiar decorations—birds and decorations with a cross on top.

The people were enormous beards and their hair was done up in a thick pigtail standing away from the head and put in a neatly woven little basket, which was also decorated. Their richly decorated loin-cloths made from tapa was something I saw nowhere else. Normally they are plain. Body decorations were plentiful. Strings of little shells and dogs teeth were worn over the forehead, neck and hips. Head decorations made from bunches of cassowary feathers, like the ones we saw on the south-east coast we saw here as well. Bracelets were not missing either. Mostly they were woven from ferns. Some were made from shaped tortoise-shell, artfully engraved, which we had seen earlier at Astrolabe Bay. There were not so many ear and nose decorations and instead of piercing the lobe of the ear the edge or corner was done. Rosettes of dogs' teeth used as breast decorations and bodystrings made of peculiar shells pleated onto strips of raffia that was probably used as money, too, were all new to me.

I saw beautiful woven fern loin cloths dyed red, yellow and black, very elegantly adorned with shells and rings from the conus. Most of the men wore pretty knitted bags around their necks, beautified with splinters of the cymbim shell. They carried special baskets as well, woven from palm leaves adorned with shells and colourful dyed ferns that looked like velvet. No weapons were carried; the people were prepared for bartering and brought plenty of spears and arrows. The spears were 66 inches to 94 inches long, with wooden points and barbed hooks. These were too light to throw by hand and too heavy for a bow. They had a special implement, a two foot long bamboo stick, to throw the spears with. This method we had not seen in New Guinea before. There were no bows but I saw beautiful daggers made from cassowary bones. The people seemed to be very skilful with carvings as indicated by their canoes. Some were carved with crocodile figures, part of which became a bird's head or a hurnan head with eyes of mother-of-pearl. The canoes were twenty to thirty feet long hollowed-out tree trunks that could carry eighteen people.

These people were real Papuans, their colouring a little lighter than that of the New Britain people. They looked stronger than the people on the east coast; some had pockmarks, but there were few skin ailments. They were easy to barter with although they were noisy and fought among themselves. They did not have any European things such as glass, beads, tobacco or knives, but they were happy to see hoop-iron. They brought lovely big coconuts, bananas and plenty of mussels to eat. I saw eatable earth and sweet corn that was very small and worn by a man as a decoration in his hair. Sweet corn was brought by Maclay to Astrolabe Bay. A special friendship ceremony was held. The chief cut a palm leaf in two halves, gave one half to me and put his half on the mast. When I did the same it seemed to please the people. They all left before sunset to get back through the surf before dark.

ON HANSEMAN COAST

Near the Hammacher River ten miles west from Cape de
la Torre came six sailing canoes with natives, but they did not dare to come aboard. They wore their hair in a little basket or in a thick plait adorned with dogs' teeth and leaves. As breast decoration they wore a concave disc made from cymbium shells and beads of black berries; Kauris seemed to be valuable. On to the beard they tie pieces of pearlshell, dogs' teeth or shell rings. Into the pierced ear-edges and sides of the nose they stick green pieces of leaves. Some men wore richly decorated long combs with beads and feathers in the hair and nose-decorations of mother-of-pearl. They gave me one of the round boar tusks which the natives at Venus Huk would not part with. This tusk was bound in the middle with red straw pleating to hide the fact that it was made from two pieces. They all wore loin cloths from tappa. They had a musical instrument I had seen in Port Moresby as well, made from a piece of bamboo with a twanging sound to accompany songs ... These people had not seen white people before and they were very frightened. They had never seen iron before and when I showed them the use of the hatchet they all wanted a ‘maiang’. They did not care for glass, beads, matches and mirrors because they did not understand their use. They are never as surprised as we suppose them to be when they see white people for the first time...

We anchored near the river Caprivi. The inhabitants of two villages who had never seen white people came on board. These were the politest savages we had met. They spoke softly; did not take us for gods, did not pay any attention to the paleness of our skin but showed their astonishment by blowing out their cheeks and clicking their tongues.

Giving was not unknown to them as I had thought to this point. They brought baskets of coconuts, yams, cooked sago, Spanish pepper, cooked and smoked pork. As a sign of peace an old man gave me a small strip of cocoa palm leaf in which he had put eight knots; if this number signified anything I was not able to tell. The people looked weakly built and were dark skinned. I saw one albino, light-skinned like a European, with blond hair; his eyes could not stand the sun. Only the chiefs wore their hair in baskets; most of the others had theirs shaved off or they wore it in the usual tangled way of the Papuans....

D'URVILLE, GRESSINET (MUSCHU) AND GUAP ISLANDS

There we saw distinctly western things such as broad heart-shaped shields as breast-plates decorated with boar tusks, red abrus beans and shells. Feather decorations from birds of paradise and the lovely red feathers of the Dasyptilus Pequeti (cockatoo) were often seen. Otherwise they wore nothing unusual, just a painted strip of tappa around the hips. Their hair was done in the usual fashion.

The bags they wore round their necks showed lovely patterns; the colours were mainly brown, black and blue-grey; often they wore little shells and seeds woven into the strings. Some had tassels hanging from the strings, shields, plates, carvings from coconut shells or tortoisesHELLS and little wooden figures. They also had amulet masks, bamboo knives, nose decorations made of mother-of-pearl, and nice pleated grass bracelets decorated with black seeds, cockatoo feathers and strips of cuscus fur. And as good luck charms they wore ginger or bunches of plants. The Papuans carries his essential properties in his breast bags,—things like spoons from cocconouts, shells for cutting, files made from coral, needles made from fish-bones, tendons for bows, dogs' teeth on string for money, betel nuts, lime and pepper leaves, tobacco in leaves, leaves to be put around cigarettes, eatable earth, rind and ginger. A rare find tied in a leaf were eight little red glass beads which might have come from the neighbouring island of d’Urvile where Sir Edward Belcher had put in in 1840. These people behaved well and were easy to barter with. They did not give us any presents. They had clubs, bows and arrows with nearly carved points and decorated with gised-on feathers and seeds, and throwing spears. The chiefs had heavy lances, three yards long and decorated with cassowary feathers ... Their canoes were so narrow that the people could not put their feet side by side. They did not appear to have sails. The Hansemann coast ended with Cape Pomone; the western continuation up to 141 degrees is called Finsch Coast....

ON FINSCH COAST

It was only after we had passed the out-flow of the Thorspecken River that a few canoes came towards us. Some had sails and carried cassowary feathers on their masts. A young warrior wore a breastplate of boar tusks and red abrus beans. Around his arms were rings made from the cross-sections of shells; through his nose were the two halves of a boar's tusk. His face was painted black and white. In his left ear he had a round cuscus fur ball; in his right ear were strings of seeds. Wound very tightly around his body was a belt of tree bark and a tappa loincloth. The people liked to wear around their heads wide bandages of cuscus fur or black beads or cocoonut rind. Young people had cuts in their skin to beautify them; some of these marks had the shape of leaves. They appeared only interested in iron.

Travelling on, we found a place to anchor behind Cape Concordia. The natives came towards us in little canoes that held only between three and seven men. Some canoes had masts and sails. The engraved sideboards are made in one piece and the ends have decorated S-shaped birds' heads. Their shields were the best I had seen so far. Loin-cloths of tappa were not often seen. Breastplates were here decorated with red paternoster beans which were glued on with sap ... The build of these natives was good and strong. Their normal height was seventy inches. They were terribly noisy and they knew what iron was....


B121 A Christian Missionary Is Presented to the Native Gods, Bald Head, 1885

It was now evident we were nearing a village from the number of canoes about, and at last I was asked to standup in the canoe, orders given to all others to sit down, and all other canoes ordered out of the way. My new-made friend,
the chief, Ipaivaitani, sat near me, and when we entered the village, called out my name, and intimated I was his friend. Accustomed though I had been for years to native towns and villages, this was certainly quite a new experience. Everywhere people standing on the bank of the creek, all noisy, but not a weapon to be seen. Large and well-built houses, with great figures in front painted on native cloth. Streets formed by laying logs of trees along the swamp in front of the houses; everywhere small creeks intersecting the town, over which bridges of wood were built; and, as we paddled along, crowds ran to meet us at my friend’s wharf.

Never before had I seen a town or village built in a swamp that at every high tide was covered. Everybody appeared well, heartily, and really happy. I landed on a tolerably well-built wharf, and walked along a kind of bridge to a very large platform in front of Ipaivaitani’s dubu. He himself led me by the hand, women and children remaining behind, men and youths proceeding and following, until we came to the dubu itself, where I was met by a number of old men, who waved their hands and bade me welcome. Inside and on each side of the long beautiful aisle, were seated young men, legs crossed and arms folded, not speaking a word, whilst I was led down the aisle by the chief, followed by the old men, until we came to near the end, where we stayed a few minutes, and I was then told to return, on doing which, all the seated ones rose, followed me out, and general conversation went on. That I was presented to the gods I have no doubt, and that I was received in a friendly spirit was just as sure.


B122 Hargrave Forecasts Reactions on First Culture Contact, 1885

See also B71; B76; B89.

Dear Sir,

You will perhaps remember that yesterday I told you I thought the Papuans cowardly; this may create an impression on your mind that at some future period will cost you your life; what I wished to convey to you, was that when two or three white men suddenly appear before hundreds of Papuans, the Papuans will at once fly from the uncouth appearance and strange noises of the white men.

I think if a naked white man and a clothed Papuan were put in a saw pit together, the white man would have the best of it.

Yours faithfully,

Law. Hargrave

SOURCE MS. Papers of Lawrence Hargrave, letter from Hargrave to H. Stockdale, Metropolitan Hotel, King Street, Sydney, dated 3 December 1885, microfilm, Mitchell Library, FM4/1060

B123 The Royal Navy Makes Contact with Rooke Islanders, 1885

My second trip to New Guinea included visits to the Louisiades, to Woodlark Island, to Rook and Long Islands, and to the mainland near Cape King William. The Louisiade people are in physique and knowledge of the arts inferior to both races of South-eastern New Guinea. Many of them are quite unfamiliar with white men. But I found, even amongst them, some who had heard of Queen Victoria, a name which is so frequently known and so greatly respected throughout the South-western Pacific, that the stranger is fairly astonished ... On Rossel Island I noticed, in the case of some of the men, the curious dentition which the eminent Russian traveller Dr Miklukho Maclay has called ‘macrodontism’. A continuous tooth extends over the space usually occupied by two or three teeth. The Woodlark Islanders are very fierce, and at one time I thought a collision with them inevitable. They make the same curious gesture of salutation as the Basilaki (or Moresby) islanders, pinching first the nose with one hand and then the navel with the other, finishing up with a low bow.

The natives of the north-east coast of New Guinea whom I met were black, and not superior in physique to the Louisiade people. While in the south of New Guinea the natives are in the stone age, these people have not got beyond the period of shell implements. They could hardly be made to understand the use of a tomahawk, and were frightened by striking a match.

The Rook Islanders seemed never to have seen a white man. Smoke coming out of the mouth of an officer with a pipe greatly surprised them. A chief on being brought up to a looking-glass was struck dumb. The exhibition of a cat caused great excitement, which was immensely increased by showing them a sheep. They are a light-coloured, tall, good-looking race, who express great repugnance to cannibalism. They build good houses and temples, have well laid-out villages, and possess large highly painted canoes ornamented with carvings. They practice circumcision, and an incised figure of an alligator adorns the entrance to their temples. Their reception of my companions and myself was courteous and friendly in the extreme. One of the officers of H. M. S. Dart was a good converser, and the delight with which the disappearance of a coin through the bottom of a tumber was hailed by the natives was intense.

Reginald Gallop travelled in Australia and the Western Pacific in 1886 and 1887. His social position gave him right of entry to official circles and while in Port Moresby he accompanied government officials on various expeditions among the people.

Now a word as to the character of the Papuan Natives, a consideration which is of the utmost importance to the future well-being of the country under a British Government. So far as my personal experience is concerned I can speak as to the central coast district of British New Guinea and as far inland as about 30 miles. The most striking characteristic is their extraordinary superstition, and this extends to their every action. I have already incidentally referred to several instances of this, but the latest that has come to light is worthy of mention on account of the revolting barbarity of its details, (and that must be my apology for describing it in detail). I have mentioned the case of the man who was taken by the Alligator on the Laloki River. On hearing of this his brother, who only a few days previously had visited the Government Bungalow and appeared very frightened and unapproachable, immediately went in pursuit of the wives of his unfortunate brother, and in strict compliance be it understood with a piece of superstition which his fellows consider to be perfectly reasonable—seized one of the women and offered her up as a ‘maino’ or propitiatory sacrifice to the Alligators, whom, I suppose he concluded, something had offended, as evinced by their action to his brother. In the following inhuman way he imagined he appeased them. He cut the woman’s legs off with a tomahawk, one after the other, just below the knee, then below the thigh, throwing the portions into the River, the poor woman being still alive: he next severed one wrist after the other and did the same with the arms; next the breasts, then the head and finally the body was ripped open and cast to the River. The other wife escaped. After this outrage the perpetrator and the whole village took to the bush on the other side of the Laloki. This river is now running a Banker owing to heavy rains, and consequently the Government is unable to deal with the wretch. I am glad to say that the matter will be dealt with at the earliest practical moment and the man severely punished—For the rest, the Natives of this district are dirty in their persons and in their habits, quite unimpressible by kindness or liberality: no further evidence of this is necessary than the fact that they have no word or synonymous expression for ‘thank you’, nor does any expression of gratitude ever appear by gesture or in their countenance; they are lazy, being specially averse to continued labour, and working only when they require food or tobacco in payment. Before the advent of the ‘White man’ they were treacherous and vindictive and would, I feel sure, still be so, were it not for their fear of his rifles and the big guns of the Men-C’-War, for they are nothing if not ‘curs’.

Source: Journal entry for September, 1886 marked Government Bungalow, Port Moresby, N. G., Reginald G. Gallop Papers, Mitchell Library, MS., uncat. MSS. Set 488, Item 1 F

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B125  A European Adventurer Procures a Pagan God, Katau River, 1887

For background detail on John Strachan, see B77.

At the eastern end of the village was a large open house, and there, standing against the wall at the western end was a huge ochre-covered idol. Before was raised a rude altar upon which lay fruit, flowers, seeds, pieces of coconuts and other offerings, and in attendance were two priests.

I determined, if possible, to secure this object of native devotion. I therefore began assiduously to cultivate the acquaintance and make the friendship of the priests, to whom I presented knives, and tobacco and other trivial articles. Having in some measure gained their confidence, through the interpretation of the teacher, I made a proposal to purchase the god, which overture seemed to astonish them, and they distinctly replied that under no circumstances would they part with him. I then enumerated the large number of articles which I was prepared to give in return for the idol, and the teacher told them of all the axes, tomahawks, cloth and tobacco that would be forthcoming provided they were willing to part with the hideous object, which I took care to explain could do no good. Putting the end of my stick in a fire which was burning on the floor, I burnt the end off and again explained that that same fire could as easily burn off their god’s head. Then striking it with a stick, I told them it had no feeling, neither had it power, and although they might think that I wanted their god for some good that it could do, such was not the case. I only wanted to take it so that the people in my country could see it and laugh to think that they were so foolish as to worship a piece of wood. Their god,—by name Seegur—could not make the winds blow, neither could it make the rain fall. It could not bring the leaves nor the fruit upon the trees. It could not help sickness, and, I added, pointing at the sun overhead, it could not make the sun shine, neither could it make the day nor night. I would pay them well for their idol, and if they gave it to me I would do more when I returned to my own country. I would send to them a teacher like Annu, who would tell them of a better God—One who could see everywhere, who made the very air that they breathed, and if they listened to that teacher they
would be ashamed to think that they had been so foolish as to worship such a hideous monster as Seegur.

I know not what impression my speech made, but I do know that the large number of things I had offered (to the value of fully 5 sterling) greatly excited the cupidity of these two priests, and had I had the goods with me on the spot there is no doubt that I should have taken the god back with me to Tauan. As it was, I arranged that Annu and Tamea should come and interview them again, and, if possible, negotiate the purchase...

... By the teacher and chief I was informed that they had succeeded in purchasing 'Seegur' and that it was now with two smaller idols at the Mission House. From my own people I gathered that the priests in selling their god had nearly created a serious disturbance, and that the peoples of three principal tribes (the Goua, Massigari, and Koonini) had gathered around to prevent them carrying it away, besides men from some of the farther inland tribes.
