

INDIVIDUAL EUROPEANS LIVING AMONGST THE PEOPLE: DOCUMENTS C12 to C14

Before regular European settlement began in New Guinea there are some recorded cases of individual Europeans living amongst the people. Some of these were naturalists like Wallace, Miklouho-Maclay and d'Albertis. Others were castaways and adventurers whose numbers were sufficient, it seems, to be of significance in the history of contact. Some of these individuals appear to have assumed positions of some authority amongst the people. One, Miklouho-Maclay, succeeded in establishing close rapport with the people and this has been considered to be of lasting importance.¹

The documents in this section are taken from two main sources: the writings of John Coulter and the papers of Nicolai Miklouho-Maclay.

John Coulter in 1832 sailed from London as ship's surgeon on board a trading vessel. Subsequently in the course of the trading voyage along the Pacific coast of North America he transferred to the American schooner, *Hound*, commanded by a Captain Trainer. This vessel traded throughout the central Pacific and in 1835 sailed through the Bismarck Archipelago and around the coasts of west New Guinea. In writing of this voyage Coulter described

his meeting with three Europeans, one on each of the islands, New Ireland, New Britain and New Guinea.

Caution might be suggested by the fact that Coulter encountered a white man living on each of the main islands visited. He might have been subscribing too enthusiastically to what he thought the reading public wanted. Coulter himself, however, emphasised the point that there were numbers of European castaways living amongst the indigenous peoples of the Pacific islands in this period and this is borne out by evidence from other sources.

Nicolai Miklouho-Maclay was born in Russia in 1846 and studied at the University of St. Petersburg. In 1870, after having accompanied a scientific expedition to the Red Sea, he was sponsored by the Russian Geographical Society to go to New Guinea for the purpose of conducting scientific investigation. In September 1871, he was landed at Constantine Harbour, Astrolabe Bay, from the Russian corvette *Vitiaz*. Accompanied by a Swedish sailor and a Samoan servant he lived amongst the people for a period of 15 months until taken off by the Russian naval vessel, *Isumrud*. In 1876 he spent a further period of 17 months in the same place.

¹Peter Lawrence, *Road Belong Cargo*, Melbourne, 1964, pp. 63-6; James McAuley, 'We Are Men—What Are You?' *Quadrant*, Vol. 4, No. 3, Winter 1960, p. 74.; S. W. Reed, *The Making of Modern New Guinea*, Philadelphia, 1943, p. 62 (F.N.); H. H. Romilly, *The Western Pacific and New Guinea*, London, 1886, pp. 221-2

See also F. Greenop, *Who Travels Alone*, Sydney, 1944; H. E. Maude, 'Beachcombers and Castaways,' the *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, Vol. 73, No. 3, Sept., 1964, p. 263; G. Souter, *New Guinea: The Last Unknown*, Sydney, 1963, pp. 25-6

C12 A European Chieftain on New Ireland, 1835

In about a quarter of an hour afterwards great numbers of natives were assembling on the beach and rocks. Several canoes were launched filled with men paddling towards us, and, as they came alongside and around the vessel, the noise and uproar was very great; but there was no demonstration of a hostile feeling, neither had they clubs, spears, or other war-like weapons with them. They appeared to scan the vessel closely, paddle round and round her, chattering and laughing loudly all the time. Some of them tried to get in-board, but, when prevented by the sailors, were heartily laughed at by their friends.

There was nothing in their canoes to trade for, neither did there appear to be any chief amongst them, as they were all dressed alike, that is, nearly naked: nothing on them save a small cloth or piece of matting round the waist, and many not even that. The colour of their skins perfectly black, the hair of the head woolly and naturally black, but, with most

of them, artificially white with a quantity of chalk rubbed into it; but the form and features were very fine, and no similarity whatever to the negro but the color of the skin. Their language sounded differently from any of the islanders I had seen further to the eastward: in fact, we could not understand a word of it. However, we soon found out how to make ourselves understood by signs, and the business of the day was opened by the captain holding up a piece of red cloth and some trinkets, &c. to their view, pointing to himself, and giving them to know that these presents were for a chief or great man, and motioned some of them away to bring him.

A consultation was held for a few minutes, which seemed to end in nothing. However, two canoes were about starting off to the shore, when they all stood up, raised a shout, and pointed in the direction of the beach, where a small canoe, having an outrigger, like the rest, with two men in it, were

seen approaching. As they came nearer, the fleet of canoes that hovered about us opened out, affording this canoe a clear passage to our vessel's side. 'Ho, ho!' said our captain, 'we have somebody coming now;' and it certainly turned out so, for one of the party was no less a personage than the king or head chief of all the country near this bay.

He was a fine, tall, middle-aged man, of most commanding appearance, black as a coal. Some of his front teeth were stained red, and round his wrists, ankles, and neck, strings of fancifully formed bone and shell ornaments were dangling. His features were truly noble; but there was no covering on his person except a small mat of fine texture, fancifully adorned with red feathers, round his loins. His companion was nothing more nor less than a white man who had turned native and had resided many years on this island. However, he had the decency to cover his naked body with a large ornamented mat before he came alongside; and I must say we felt relieved and agreeably surprised when we heard him say, 'A rope for the canoe!' in plain English; so we obtained now what we wanted, an interpreter. On first coming on the deck, he said, 'Keep the natives off: allow no one to get inboard but the king and me.'

Trainer invited the king and him down to the cabin, where a long conversation ensued as to what might be obtained here and the description of trade necessary to give the natives. On coming on deck, our now hired interpreter spoke to the natives in the canoes, telling them what to do, what to bring off, and what they would get if they stirred themselves. Most of them paddled away to the shore, leaving the king on board. There was, for a while, comparative silence about the vessel, so we may as well take advantage of it to say a word about our interpreter.

Thomas Manners (such was his name) was a native of London, England, had been a sailor a great part of his life, with the exception of the ten years he had been living with the natives of New Ireland. He said he was tired of a sea-going life. He served last on board an English whale-ship which landed him here at his own request. He had no reason to regret it, as he had no friends alive anywhere else, and those people were extremely kind to him; in fact, he ranked high, and had nearly as much authority over the natives as the king had. He was a middle-sized man of stout, athletic make, and his eye and aspect generally was bold and determined. His long dark hair, which would hang down on his shoulders, was coiled up on the top of his head and made fast there by a rude kind of tortoise shell comb. His beard was long and rested on his chest.

The fine matting he wore was hanging from his shoulders, after the manner of a cloak or mantle; encircling his neck was a fine cord formed by the plating or twisting together of cocoa-nut fibres; from it was suspended a curiously

carved shell ornament as large as an oyster. This was his badge of rank, presented to him by the sable monarch now on board. It conferred on him, I may say, absolute authority over the lower class of natives. His expression of face was very open and candid to us, and, to all appearance, we might put confidence in him, which we did to a certain extent, and found him worthy of it. His manner was extremely independent, and haughty enough for any chief. However, this was probably 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. To most of them he was rude and tyrannical; but he said in explanation to us, that nothing else would answer his ends; besides, the adoption of such a course pleased Boolooma, the king, so highly, that he considered him worthy of high rank, and presented him with four wives, one of them his own daughter, the other three those of chiefs.

Not the least amusing scenes took place between our interpreter and the king during dinner in the cabin. The king preferred a seat on the deck, the interpreter was sitting at the table like ourselves, and in his attentions to the wants or wishes of Boolooma, would take a piece of bread, or a large lump of beef or pork, and heave it at his majesty, who was certain of catching those missiles in the most expert manner and with evident pleasure, not thinking a moment of the (as it seemed to us) unmannerly manner by which Manners conveyed the desired morsels to him. The appetite of this monarch was excellent; indeed, it required the assiduous attentions, for some time, of our interpreter to satisfy it, but, with some perseverance, much good-humour, and true comicality of action, the desired end was attained to his majesty's perfect satisfaction.

Throughout the first day a great many canoes passed to and from the schooner. Their black and woolly-headed crews kept up an incessant confusion of sounds that were any thing but harmonious. We were not visited by any of the women on our arrival, as is usual with the islanders further to the eastward. However, this was caused in a great measure by our captain requesting Boolooma to issue orders to prevent their coming off, as they would only idle the sailors, whose continued services were required in guarding the vessel from surprise, and doing repairs that could not be properly accomplished if the schooner was rolling about in a sea way.

SOURCE J. Coulter, *Adventures on the Western Coast of South America and the Interior of California; including a narrative of incidents at the Kingsmill Islands, New Ireland, New Britain, New Guinea and other Islands in the Pacific Ocean*, London, 1847, pp. 241-5

C13 Miklouho-Maclay Makes First Contact with the People, Astrolabe Bay, 1871

See also B47, C114.

19 SEPTEMBER 1871

At about 10 a.m. the coastline of New Guinea came in sight. The Corvette 'Vitiaz' was on a course parallel to the

north coast of New Britain. The coastline in front of us was recognized as Cape King William in the North East of New Guinea. Mountain ranges with heights to 3,000 ft. were in view. Between New Guinea and Rooke Island we sighted a few flat islands covered with vegetation. The current was favourable and we made good progress. Around mid-day

the ship was so near to the coast that one could make out the terraces, valleys, meadows and gorges for the first time. On two places on the beach, we could see fires, a good sign that people were present. By 6 p.m. we came across a small island on which we discovered the roofs of houses towering over bushland. We could also make out people who were assembled on the beach. However, there was no suitable mooring available and we left it to the current to take us further...

20 SEPTEMBER 1871

During the night the current had carried us about twenty miles north. I went on deck early in the hope that before sunrise the mountains would be free from clouds. And yes, the mountains were free from mist and clouds and some of the tips of the mountain ranges were melting into the massive walls at an even height of the range ... By mid-day we arrived in the great Astrolabe Bay.

The Captain of the Corvette, Captain Paul Nikolajevitch Nasimov, asked me on which side of the bay I would like to be put ashore. I indicated the higher side of the bay as I thought that the flat side would be rather unhealthy.

We watched the coastline and tried very hard to discover any huts or natives. However, nothing else than a few smoke columns rising, indicated that people were present. When we came nearer to the beach, the officer Nowossilskij called out that he could see natives running. Just then the coastline showed a very small outcrop of land, behind which a bay could be expected. This expectation was right and the 'Vitiaz' anchored, about 150 metres from the beach...

I asked the Captain to put me ashore in the longboat. He agreed but would have liked to give me a crew for my protection. However, I refused and asked only my two servants Olssen and Boy to accompany me. I took some presents for the natives such as glass beads and red calico and other small items.

I proposed to land where we had seen the first natives but the surf was so strong that it was impossible for us to reach the beach. Whilst we were considering our position, a native appeared from out of the bush. He carried his spear over his head indicating that we should go away. But when I stood up in the boat, holding some of the red calico strips over my head, a whole group of natives came from out of the bushes. All carried weapons of some kind but did not dare to come out to the boat. As I did not feel justified in getting all wet just to give them their present, I entrusted the calico strips to the water and was sure that the surf would carry them safely towards the natives on the beach. The natives waved their arms more threateningly and clearly indicated that we must go away.

As soon as we rowed further away, the natives entered the water and went for the red calico items. They seemed to be very pleased with them, but nobody swam towards our boat and we returned to the 'Vitiaz'. I was disappointed, realising that my intentions were misinterpreted by the natives. However, on my return to the 'Vitiaz' I heard that on another place further up the beach, more natives had been sighted high on the beach near the bushes. I took off at once and after a while I noticed that near some trees, a sandy spot in the coastline made it possible for me to land. We discovered a small path which took us right into the jungle-like woods. I was in such a hurry to get ashore that I had forgotten to give any instructions whatsoever to my two servants. They just tied the long-boat to a tree and were following me. I may have done 30 paces on this path when I saw roof tops between the trees and shortly after reached

a clearing surrounded by native huts which had roofs nearly down to the ground. The village made a clean and friendly impression. The clearing was well trodden and lots of flowering shrubs and palm trees gave it a delightful appearance. Banana trees, pandanus and Breadfruit trees grew in wild profusion. High trees sheltered the village from winds. Nowhere were any natives to be seen. Traces of people living in the village were everywhere, and it seemed that the natives must have left in a hurry, I went to inspect one of the huts. The door opening was about 60 inches above the ground and served also as a window. There were no other entrances or exits from the building. Looking inside the hut, I could only distinguish objects with difficulty. It was dark inside. On the ground a few stones supported a large pottery urn and between the stones, the ashes were still hot. A couple of platforms made from bamboo must have been used as beds. Shells and feathers hung on the walls and under the roof, and on the roof's highest point hung a skull. The whole situation, the call of the birds, the quietness, the sinking sun, everything was just like a dream. I walked towards another hut and hearing a noise looked around only to find a native standing behind me. He looked at me for a second and then vanished again into the bushes. I hurriedly followed him, showing a red bit of calico. He turned around several times and when he found that I was by myself and had no visible weapons with me, stopped and faced me. Slowly I walked towards him, holding in front of me the red calico, offering it to him. He took it with visible pleasure and put it around his head. It was a Papuan, of middle height, with short black negro-like hair, broad flat nose, eyes that were brown and had rather bushy eyebrows. He wore a thick beard that covered his top lip and chin. His whole dress was made up of three parts. One was an eight inch cloth strip which was like a belt around his waist and then travelled between his legs to the back of his body to be fastened there. He carried on his left arm a knife made from bone and tied to his arm by dried grasses, and on the other arm he carried a betel nut leaf, again fastened to his arm by dried grasses. His face gave me the impression that he was a sympathetic human being and that he would cooperate with me. I took his hand and he followed me back to the village quite willingly. We offered him tobacco, which he took. Even so, he had no idea what to do with it so he put it with the Betel nut leaf on his arm. When we arrived at the clearing, other villagers came forward cautiously, and at any time ready to vanish again into the bushes nearby. I took every native by the hand and led him over to where we all were standing and after having done this, I sat down rather exhausted and distributed small presents amongst them, such as glass beads, nails, fishing hooks and red calico pieces. What to do with the nails and hooks was quite a mystery to them but they did not refuse the presents. Many of the natives had stone axes and others carried bows and arrows. Their hair was partly black and partly coloured by red clay. All had the same skin colouring but the young children were slightly lighter in colour than the old ones. As the sun had set, I decided to make a start back to the ship. The natives came to the beach, carrying presents such as coconuts, bananas, and two squealing piglets. I wanted to show my new friends to the Ships Officers and after a long discussion (rather difficult to indicate what one wants, without knowledge of the language) five of the Papuans climbed into the longboat and came with me to the ship. Halfway towards the 'Vitiaz' they became a bit anxious and wanted to return to the beach. It took all our good will to make them stay and get on board ship. Once

aboard they were so afraid that they were shaking and trembling all over their body. They could hardly stand on their feet, they must have thought that their last hour had come and that they would all be killed. In the meantime it was completely dark and one of the sailors brought a lamp and the natives calmed down after a while, as obviously nobody was thinking of killing them, and they became even quite jolly when some of the officers gave them presents and poured out cups of tea for them, which they drank with great relish. After this they departed quickly and rowed swiftly towards their village.

21 SEPTEMBER 1871

... On this day a Church Service was to be held, and the usual Salute from the cannon of the 'Vitiaz' was part of this service. I decided to return to the village and to stay there whilst this salute was fired in order to prevent the natives from getting scared. As there was still a short time before the Salute was fired, I had a look around in the village, to find a spot for my future house. I did not want to live right in the village, as I could not speak the native tongue and therefore could not ask permission from the natives to build my house in the village. Secondly, I was not known to any neighbouring tribes and would not like to be the dispute between two tribes, and thirdly, I do hate loud noise and to live in the village would mean to be disturbed by loud cries of the

natives and their children and on top of this by the constant barking and howling of dogs.

So I went a bit outside the village and found a small path that led me to a small peninsula where a little river ran past an opening in the wood and plenty of large trees offered shade. I thought that this would be the most suitable place for me to occupy as the path would connect me with the village but the place was still far enough from the village to be quiet. I now had to hurry back to the village as it was time for the Salute to be fired. When it occurred the natives showed more bewilderment than actual fright. They lunged towards the nearest shelter and also tried to escape the sounds of the Salute. They trembled over their whole body as if they had an attack of fever.

This behaviour was so funny to look at, that I could not do anything else but laugh, this must have been the right medicine. They looked at me and as nobody got hurt by the sound of the firing, they too started to laugh. Having conquered this situation successfully, I went back to the ship. At 3 p.m. a crew went with me to make a start on clearing the spot I had chosen for my future home and the carpenters made a start in erecting the hut.

SOURCE D. Fischer, *Unter Südsee-Insulanern (Das Leben des Forschers Mikloucho-Maclay)*, Leipzig, 1956, extracts as shown, pp. 43-53. Translated from the German by Valli Shipmaker.

C14 The Return of Miklouho-Maclay to the Maclay Coast, Astrolabe Bay, 1876

27 JUNE 1876

The 'Seabird' came to anchor. I had arrived for the second time on the Maclay Coast. The high ranges on the horizon somehow looked different from the first time 4 years ago. The natives were pleased to see me again and remembered my name. Some of the Papuans had tears in their eyes when they saw me. I missed some old people that had died in the meantime and recognized in some of the young women, the little girls that I had left before. I refused again the offers of the natives to settle in their villages and searched for a secluded place for my house. Having found it the carpenters set out to build it. It took five days to be completed and to be reasonably comfortable.

4 JULY 1876

The 'Seabird' is on her way again. The natives told me a lot about the Earthquakes that have happened during those four years and which were the cause of the different mountain formations. Also high seas and spring tides, as well as a huge tidal wave after the last earthquake, left their marks in the landscape. The tidal wave took one of the villages with it and many of the natives got killed.

SOURCE D. Fischer, *Unter Südsee-Insulanern (das Leben des Forschers Mikloucho-Maclay)*, Leipzig, 1956, pp. 319-20, extracts as shown. Translated from the German by Valli Shipmaker.

THE VICARIATE APOSTOLIC OF MELANESIA AND MICRONESIA: DOCUMENTS C15 to C31

By Papal Brief, Ex debito pastoralis officii, of 19 July 1844, Pope Gregory XVI erected the Vicariate Apostolic of Melanesia and Micronesia.

Baptiste Epalle of the Society of Mary, Pro Vicar

and Procurator for the Vicariate Apostolic of Western Oceania, had first suggested the creation of this new field for Catholic evangelisation. While visiting Rome in August 1843, he had submitted a plan, through