‘The Race Question in Oceania’

A. B. Meyer and Otto Finsch between metropolitan theory and field experience, 1865-1914

Hilary Susan Howes, BA (Hons), BSc, MA (Melbourne)

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
School of Culture, History and Language
ANU College of Asia and the Pacific
Australian National University

April 2011
The Race Question in Oregon

A. D. Leach and E. O. Stiles, Oregon Immigration Survey and
State Reference Library, 1922.
Declaration

I hereby declare that the following thesis, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, contains no material that has been previously accepted for an award of any other degree or diploma at a university. To the best of my knowledge, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except when due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signed ..................................................
Table of Contents

Abstract .......................................................................................................................... 7

Figures .......................................................................................................................... 9

Preface and Acknowledgements .................................................................................. 11

Introduction .................................................................................................................. 15

Chapter One: 'This new and interesting world' ......................................................... 61

Chapter Two: 'It is not so!' ......................................................................................... 117

Chapter Three: Other customs, other crania .............................................................. 175

Chapter Four: 'On one hundred and thirty-five Papuan skulls' ............................... 203

Chapter Five: 'In no way ... savages' ....................................................................... 257

Conclusion .................................................................................................................... 307

Bibliography ................................................................................................................ 321

Appendix One: Biographies of key figures ................................................................. 377

Appendix Two: Dates of Meyer's and Finsch's Oceanic voyages ......................... 384
Abstract

This thesis examines the written, visual and material records produced by two late nineteenth-century German traveller-naturalists in Oceania, Adolf Bernhard Meyer (1840-1911) and Otto Finsch (1839-1917). I probe these records for traces of Indigenous agency and discuss the impacts of their authors’ personal encounters with actual Oceanian people on their understandings of human difference, locating this discussion within the context of racial science in late nineteenth-century Europe and the complex relationship between field experience and metropolitan publication and reception. By identifying countersigns of Indigenous agency embedded in Meyer’s and Finsch’s representations of their experiences in Oceania, I trace the ways in which these experiences informed their contributions to broader debates in the European metropoles: the unity or plurality of the human species, the breadth of variation within supposedly homogeneous ‘races’ and the extent of overlap between them, the importance of field experience in the human sciences, the standardisation and mobilisation of travellers’ observations for metropolitan audiences, and the relative worth of physical, cultural and linguistic data for taxonomic purposes. I interrogate the processes by which racial knowledge about Oceania’s inhabitants was produced from the ‘raw material’ of encounters, the various forms in which this knowledge was embodied – scientific monographs and journal articles, public lectures, sketches, photographs, plaster casts (moulages) of human faces, collections of cranial and skeletal materials – and the extent to which field experience was permitted to confront or contradict metropolitan theories of race. I show that Meyer and Finsch experienced profound transformations in their beliefs about human difference, with respect both to manners and customs and to physical features, as a result of their encounters with actual people in Oceania. I conclude, however, that their ability to communicate these changes to influential colleagues in the metropole was limited by a rigid professional vocabulary, essentialist tools and technologies, and an epistemologically and ideologically unreceptive audience.
Figures

Introduction
1. Anon., ‘Adolf Bernhard Meyer – Gründer und Direktor des Museums von 1875 bis 1905’ (left, undated); Anon., ‘Mr Otto Finsch, Bremen’ (right, c. 1870).

Chapter One: ‘This new and interesting world’
5. Map of maritime Southeast Asia and New Guinea.

Chapter Two: ‘It is not so!’
10. K. E. von Baer, untitled [portrait of ‘Dick Papua’, after Raffles (left); portrait of ‘a native from Karas’, after Earl (centre); portrait of ‘an inhabitant of Uta’, after van Oort and van Raalten (right)] (1859).
11. Map of the Pacific Ocean.
15. Otto Finsch, ‘Wagi I ... ca. 18 Jahr alt’ (left); ‘Mōa ... Knabe von ca. 9 Jahren’ (centre); ‘Ngapaki Puni, Häuptling des Ngatiawa-Stammes von Pitone bei Wellington’ (right) (c. 1884).


Chapter Three: Other customs, other crania

18. J. G. Garson, ‘Four diagrams illustrating some of the cranial measurements recommended by the Frankfort Conference. Reproduced from the “Archiv für Anthropologie” by the courtesy of the German Anthropological Society, through Professor J. Ranke, of Munich’ (1885).

Chapter Four: ‘On one hundred and thirty-five Papuan skulls’


Chapter Five: ‘In no way ... savages’

22. Map showing German South Seas Protectorates, 1884-1914.


Preface and Acknowledgements

This thesis was written in association with the ARC Discovery Project on 'European Naturalists and the Constitution of Human Difference in Oceania: Crosscultural Encounters and the Science of Race', based in the Division of Pacific and Asian History, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies (now School of Culture, History and Language) at the Australian National University, under the direction of Bronwen Douglas and Chris Ballard. The project focused on the reciprocal significance of metropolitan racial ideas and actual regional encounters in representations of Indigenous Oceanian people by European naturalists from the late 1760s to the late 1880s. Its main collective outcome, the 2008 edited collection Foreign Bodies: Oceania and the Science of Race 1750-1940, has been an important source of information and theoretical insight for my own work.

My first debt of gratitude is to the Project’s Chief Investigators, Bronwen Douglas and Chris Ballard, Chair and member of my supervisory panel respectively. This thesis has benefited enormously from Bronwen’s fierce intellect and meticulous scholarship, from Chris’s holistic vision and breadth of knowledge, and from the time, advice, support and encouragement, generously given, of both. I am also grateful to the members of the Race Reading Group and Writers’ Workshop, organised by Bronwen and Chris, for stimulating discussion and critique: Brett Baker, Andy Connelly, Karen Fox, Elena Govor, Vicki Luker, Sandra Manickam, Carlos Mondragón, Ashwin Raj and Tiffany Shellam. Further thanks go to Matthew Champion, Stewart Firth, Tim Rowse, Miranda Stanyon and Carolyn Strange for their comments and suggestions on various drafts.

This thesis is based principally on detailed analyses of written records produced by the German traveller-naturalists Adolf Bernhard Meyer and Otto Finsch. These include published and unpublished materials written before, during and after their authors’ travels in Oceania, ranging from private and professional correspondence to scholarly and popular monographs, journal articles for lay and specialist audiences, print versions of public lectures, translations into German of other authors’ works, circulars, catalogues, and even a short biography. Works by authors consulted by Meyer and Finsch, as well as works written in response to Meyer’s and Finsch’s Oceanic travels and publications, have also been considered. In addition, I have examined a smaller number of relevant visual and material records, predominantly maps, photographs,
reproductions of field sketches, and plaster casts of human heads and faces. The two-volume *Entdeckungsgeschichte von Neu-Guinea* (‘History of the discovery of New Guinea’, 1909-12) compiled by the Netherlands-based German geologist Carl Ernst Arthur Wichmann (1851-1927) has been an invaluable source of information on early European contacts with New Guinea.\(^1\) Given Wichmann’s personal and professional peculiarities, however, it is a resource that must be used with caution, as I stress in the Conclusion to this thesis.

In order to access these materials, I necessarily had recourse to a diverse array of library, museum and archival collections in Australia, Germany, France and the United Kingdom. Those in Australia included the Asia-Pacific (Menzies) collection of the Australian National University Library, the Australian Museum in Sydney, the National Library of Australia, the State Library of New South Wales, and the State Library of Victoria. My research in Germany was conducted primarily in institutions in Berlin and Dresden, namely the Archiv der Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte, the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, the Deutsches Entomologisches Institut Müncheberg, the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin, the Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz, the Bundesarchiv in Berlin-Lichterfelde, the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, the Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden, the Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden and the Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden.

Beyond these two cities, my research in Germany took me to further institutions in Braunschweig, Bremen, Frankfurt am Main, Göttingen, Hannover, Leipzig and München (Munich). I consulted materials in the Stadtarchiv Braunschweig, the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Bremen, the Übersee-Museum Bremen, the Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg in Frankfurt am Main, the Institut für Ethnologie und Ethnologische Sammlung and the Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek in Göttingen, the Stadtarchiv and Stadtbibliothek in Hannover, the Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig, the Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig, the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München and the Universitätsbibliothek München. In London, I accessed the collections of the British Library and the Wellcome Library. Bronwen Douglas kindly made available to me a number of letters held in the Muséum

national d’Histoire naturelle in Paris. I am deeply obliged to the staff at these institutions, many of whom took great pains to assist me, and wish to express my particular gratitude to Horst Junker (Archiv der Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte), Petra Martin (Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden), Marion Melk-Koch (Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig), Editha Schubert (Deutsches Entomologisches Institut Müncheberg), Wilfried Steenken-Eisert (Übersee-Museum Bremen), Melanie van Olffen (Australian Museum, Sydney) and Anja Zenner (Ethnologisches Museum Berlin). In addition, I would like to thank Rainer Buschmann and Rolf Hertel for generously sharing their research and expertise.

The shape of this thesis has been determined not only by what I found in these archives but by what I did not. While some of Meyer’s and Finsch’s letters contain draft copies of articles which later appeared in published form, I was unable to access original field notes for most of their publications. The Museum für Völkerkunde in Vienna holds a substantial collection of materials from both of Finsch’s Oceanic voyages, including diaries, sketches, photographs and objects, but the collection is currently the subject of a large-scale project and consequently not accessible for the foreseeable future. I have not been able to trace Meyer’s personal papers. In 1910, shortly before his death in Berlin, he wrote to the chemist Ludwig Darmstaedter (1846-1927), who in 1907 had donated to the Preußische Staatsbibliothek (‘Prussian State Library’, also known as the Königliche Bibliothek or ‘Royal Library’, now the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin) his substantial personal collection of original documents written by prominent naturalists. Meyer described in this letter his own collection of correspondence from English, French, Dutch, Italian, German and Austrian zoologists, anthropologists, ethnographers, linguists [and] explorers, among others; he acknowledged that ‘the whole [collection] must go to a library at some stage’, but added that in the Royal Library ‘manuscripts are buried [and] accessible only with difficulty, or not at all, by the uninitiated, as the cataloguing does not keep pace with the acquisitions … For this reason I am not so willing to deposit anything into this giant “stomach”, since it will not be digested’. Unfortunately, I do not know whether Meyer did in fact feed his collection into the Library’s giant stomach, or, if not, whether he decided to deposit it

---

elsewhere. If it remained in Berlin after his death, however, it may well have succumbed to the ravages of the Second World War.

While the thesis focuses primarily on German-language texts, I have also utilised records written in Dutch, English, French, Latin and Russian. My readings of these texts have benefited from discussions with the following people: Robert Cribb and the members of the Dutch Reading Group (Dutch); Bronwen Douglas (French); Elena Govor (Russian); John Howes (Latin); and Conny Schüritz (German). Unless otherwise indicated, however, all translations are my own. With regard to stylistic and orthographic matters, inverted commas are included on first mention of problematic terms such as ‘Papuan’ and ‘Negrito’ and implied thereafter. Where the place names given by Meyer and Finsch differ from those commonly used today, I retain the historical version and give the current one in parentheses. I quote verbatim and omit [sic] in all but glaring instances or where misunderstanding is possible.

Many people have helped make my time at the Australian National University a pleasant one; I think particularly of Takemasa Ando, Andy Connelly, Mike Cookson, Paul D’Arcy, Laura de la Cruz, Dawn Duensing, Karen Fox, Lena Heinzmann, Jacqueline Homel, Rob Hurle, Masato Karashima, Arunajeet Kaur, Gaik Cheng Khoo, Yasuko Kobayashi, Minseon Lee, Vicki Luker, Lou Merrington, Haruka Nomura, Jamie Shanks, Carolyn Strange, Matthew Stuckings, Keiko Tamura and Graeme Whimp. Special thanks to Sandra Manickam, my sometime office mate, fellow coffee drinker and general partner in crime: without your companionship and your sense of humour I would have been lost. Jo Bushby, Dorothy McIntosh, Indranee Sundanam, Sandie Walters and Marion Weeks have smoothed administrative and technological hurdles. Friends and relatives elsewhere have also offered advice and encouragement: to Ted Beard, Leisa Buckley, Benita Champion, Michael Champion, Sarah Gador-Whyte, Cat Gomes, Antje Kühnast, Joyce Leigh, Marian Maddern, Philippa Maddern, Laura Maran, Nicholas Prindiville and Martin Wright, my sincere thanks.

My sisters Elizabeth and Janet, my brother John, and my parents Dorothy and Michael have supported me unconditionally, even if they occasionally wondered what on earth I was doing. Conny Schüritz has waited for me with a patience I would not have believed possible and an optimism I can only hope to emulate. My love to all; gratitude is too weak a word.
Introduction

The inhabitants of Rubi [south Cenderawasih Bay, West Papua] ... led me to the conviction that there are in New Guinea, alongside bloodthirsty and untamed savages, also men of milder customs, and that they have raised themselves to these [customs] without external influence. (Adolf Bernhard Meyer)

From all that I have seen so far of human races ... I come more and more to the conviction that they cannot be distinguished by characteristics on a natural historical basis, but merge into one another to such an extent that the difference between Europeans and Papuans ultimately becomes completely unimportant. (Otto Finsch)

Adolf Bernhard Meyer (1840-1911), a German traveller-naturalist who spent five months of 1873 in north-west New Guinea, credited the Indigenous inhabitants of Rubi, a small temporary settlement at the southern tip of Geelvink (Cenderawasih) Bay, with convincing him that New Guinea was populated not only by 'bloodthirsty and untamed savages' but by 'men of milder customs'.¹ Less than a decade later, his contemporary Otto Finsch (1839-1917), who approached New Guinea via Hawai‘i, Micronesia and the Torres Strait Islands, declared that what he had 'seen ... of human races' during his travels had persuaded him that they 'merge into one another to such an extent that the difference between Europeans and Papuans ultimately becomes completely unimportant'.² Both men found that their received ideas about human difference were challenged and transformed as a result of their encounters with actual Indigenous people in Oceania; both struggled to communicate these transformations to their scientific colleagues in Europe's metropoles. This thesis investigates the written, visual and material records of Meyer's and Finsch's experiences in Oceania. I probe these records for traces of Indigenous agency and discuss the impacts of their authors' personal encounters with particular Oceanian people on their understandings of human difference, locating this discussion within the broader context of racial thinking in late nineteenth-century Europe and the convoluted and difficult relationship between field experience and metropolitan publication and reception.

Like many of their contemporaries, Meyer and Finsch were intensely interested in the physical, linguistic and cultural diversity of the earth's human inhabitants, specifically

those people occupying New Guinea and other parts of Oceania. In the second half of
the nineteenth century, both men paid extended visits to these regions, where they
travelled, collected, sketched, observed and experienced. During their travels, and
following their return to Germany, both published extensively on these experiences.
Each tried, on the basis of his personal impressions, to make sense of the human
diversity he had encountered: to describe and classify the people seen, to identify
connections between certain groups and distinctions between others, to locate each
group geographically, and to speculate on their possible origins. The epistemological
tools available to them included the theories, methodologies and frameworks supplied
by the scientific disciplines of natural history, geography, comparative anatomy,
physical anthropology, ethnology and linguistics. A fundamental idea informing their
understandings of human diversity was the concept of race.

Although both Meyer and Finsch drew on existing works, discourses and theories to
assist them in making sense of Oceania’s human diversity, a crucial factor in shaping
their understandings of the people they encountered was the people themselves. This
thesis, therefore, is not merely about Meyer and Finsch. It is also about Tapinowanne
Torondoluan, a young Tolai boy from New Britain who climbed aboard the brigantine
bearing Finsch to Sydney, Australia, and voyaged with him thence as far as Germany,
remaining in Finsch’s company for a total of almost three years. It is about Marcus and
Materi, two Indigenous New Guineans engaged by Meyer as translators, and about
Srema, a ‘sturdy older man’ from the settlement of Hattam in the Arfak Mountains,
whose profile Meyer sketched. It is, in fact, about all those people, both named and
unnamed, whom Meyer and Finsch encountered during their travels in Oceania: people
whose food they shared, whose hands they shook, whose bodies they measured, whose
faces they cast in plaster, whose languages they attempted to record, whose activities
they observed, whose ancestors’ or enemies’ skulls they collected. It is about people
with whom they traded, talked and travelled; people who accompanied them as
translators, hunters, insect-catchers, fishers, personal servants, bodyguards and guides;
people who attacked them, avoided them, or welcomed them. It is about people whose
appearance they found attractive or repugnant, people whose customs they considered
admirable or perverse, and people whose behaviour amazed, amused, impressed or
intimidated them. It is about people whom they thought they understood, and others
whom they acknowledged they could not understand.
Colonial texts, Indigenous countersigns

I accept that it is not possible for me to know with any precision which beliefs, understandings and agendas motivated the actions of these Oceanian persons during their moments of encounter with Meyer and Finsch. They are separated from me by time, space and culture, and by the limitations of the texts which record their existence and their doings. However, these very texts – the written, visual and material records of encounter – necessarily contain conscious and inadvertent impressions made upon their authors, Meyer and Finsch, by Oceanian actions, behaviours and demeanours. Close comparative analysis of these records has the potential to reveal embodied traces of encounter: what Bronwen Douglas has described as ‘indigenous countersigns’. These countersigns – ‘oblique traces of the imprint of local or subaltern agency on foreign or elite perceptions, reactions, and representations’ – can then shed light upon the ways in which Meyer’s and Finsch’s personal experiences of particular Oceanian people did or did not influence their subsequent work and thoughts on human diversity in Oceania, as well as the work and thoughts of others who received their letters, read their publications, attended their public lectures, studied their collections, and challenged or corroborated their conclusions.

According to Douglas, European travellers’ ‘representations and evaluations of indigenous people’, far from recording objective and unbiased observations, were ‘significantly imprinted by native actions and demeanour’. This recognition therefore suggests that the written and visual representations produced by such travellers ‘should be read not merely as reflexes of dominant metropolitan discourses, but also as personal productions generated in the volatile stew of cross-cultural encounters’. Indigenous

---


6 Douglas, ‘Science and the Art of Representing “Savages”’, 159.
agency, defined as active (though not necessarily intentional) manifestations of the cultural and strategic desires of particular Indigenous people, ‘challenged visitors’ predispositions and conventions and left its imprint in what they wrote and drew’. These writings and drawings, then, can be understood as co-productions between the people who authored them and those whom they purported to represent. Through their appearances, actions, demeanours and desires, Indigenous Oceanians thus ‘dialectically helped constitute the very texts in which they were themselves constituted historically.’

Douglas’s theory of Indigenous countersigns aims to ‘foreground indigenous presence and agency’ by ‘conceptualising the distorted textual traces of [Indigenous] agency as ... an intrusive local element in the formulation and content of voyagers’ perceptions and representations of indigenous people’, thereby ‘decentring the colonizers and colonizing their texts’. She critically deconstructs the discourses and interests which represented Indigenous Oceanians in essentialised, stereotypical or denigratory ways, together with the texts (both written and visual) in which these representations were expressed. In this thesis I extend Douglas’s concepts of Indigenous agency and countersigns to address not only written and visual texts but ethnographic and anthropological collections, including those of cranial and skeletal materials. This ‘emancipatory historical strategy’, which draws on insights from feminist literary critique, resonates with other forms of oppositional history, including women’s and subaltern studies, which approach the study of ‘historically suppressed categories of persons’ through provocative readings of materials produced by historically dominant groups.

In order to trace Indigenous countersigns in ‘colonial’ texts, Douglas explains, it is necessary to take into account both what the authors and artists who produced them were thinking about and what they were thinking with. About refers to an ‘ethnographic and spatial grasp of [the] people and places depicted’, a grasp based on

---

7 Douglas, ‘Seaborne Ethnography’, 4; idem, ‘Science and the Art of Representing “Savages”’, 189.
8 Douglas, ‘Science and the Art of Representing “Savages”’, 163.
9 Douglas, ‘Science and the Art of Representing “Savages”’, 194.
10 Douglas, ‘Science and the Art of Representing “Savages”’, 162.
12 Where ‘colonial’ refers broadly to ‘all kinds of texts, both verbal and visual, produced about indigenous people by Europeans and their affiliates from first contacts until decolonization’ (Douglas, ‘Art as Ethno-Historical Text’, 93 note 4).
contemporaneous texts which simultaneously constructed ‘past indigenous people and their worlds’ and were significantly shaped by their authors’ experience of those persons and contexts. With describes ‘particular equations’ of ‘system’ (the conventions and tropes structuring understanding and providing ‘grammar and vocabulary for the description and evaluation of reality’), ‘idiosyncrasy’ (the ‘agenda, interests, capabilities and personality’ of individual artists and authors) and ‘circumstance’ (‘pragmatic contexts ... which enable and constrain experience and representation’). Consequently, my analyses of the textual, visual and material records of Meyer’s and Finsch’s Oceanic travels necessarily consider elements helpful in understanding what these traveller-naturalists were thinking about and with during their time in the field. These include their research interests and theoretical leanings, the ethnographic, spatial and temporal contexts within which they travelled, the pragmatic factors constraining their interactions with Indigenous people, and the constellation of prior and contemporaneous field experiences which informed those interactions. I ask: what had they studied? Whose works had they read? Whose theories did they attempt to apply, or to test? Where and when did they travel? Who accompanied them? What did they hope to achieve? How did they represent their experiences during these travels – at different times in their lives, within different representational genres, to different audiences? How did they understand the concept of race? And, importantly: how, if at all, did their understandings of this concept develop and change during the course of their careers? In short, how and how far was racial knowledge about Oceania’s inhabitants generated through their encounters with actual Oceanian people?

Parallel lives: Adolf Bernhard Meyer and Otto Finsch

At this point it is worth explaining why I selected Meyer and Finsch as the particular subjects of study for this thesis. On one level, the answer is simple: both men produced a substantial and diverse body of records, very few of which have attracted any sustained scholarly attention. Both were prolific correspondents, maintaining a steady flow of letters and reports with friends and colleagues before, during and after their Oceanic travels: their letters to Rudolf Ludwig Karl Virchow (1821-1902), the celebrated cellular pathologist, left-liberal politician, public health reformer and first President of the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte

‘Berlin Society for Anthropology, Ethnology and Prehistory’, hereafter Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie), have been particularly illuminating to my research. Both men also delivered lectures on their travels to learned societies, including the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie and other assemblages of geographical and anthropological enthusiasts in Berlin, Vienna and Dresden. Print versions of their lectures, along with articles written specifically for publication, appeared in the journals and transactions associated with these societies. As well, reports of their travels and digests of their publications appeared in English-, French-, Dutch- and Italian-language journals, ensuring the two men international exposure. Both Meyer and Finsch also assembled considerable collections of visual records (maps, photographs, portrait and landscape sketches) and material objects (human remains, plaster casts or moulages of human body parts, weapons, utensils, artistic productions, ornaments, items of clothing) from their voyages, and both produced monographs on various aspects of their field experiences. They collaborated with colleagues within and beyond Germany and engaged in active debate with some of the principal scientists and scholars of their day.

Significantly, both Meyer and Finsch were also path-breakers in their field. Meyer was one of the first German-born naturalists to visit New Guinea and was certainly the first to publish extensively in German on his experiences there. Finsch, though his first entry into Oceania postdated Meyer’s by almost a decade, had made an earlier debut in the field of Oceanian anthropology with his monograph Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner (‘New Guinea and its inhabitants’, 1865), the first such work on the topic to be published in the German language. Much of the existing historiography discussing Germany’s presence in Oceania focuses on the colonial period, an understandable emphasis given the substantial increase in source material. However, the early

---

14 Otto Finsch, Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner (Bremen: C. Ed. Müller, 1865).
15 This applies not only to studies of German colonial rule, including Peter J. Hempenstall, Pacific Islanders under German Rule: A Study in the Meaning of Colonial Resistance (Canberra, ACT: Australian National University Press, 1978) and Stewart Firth, New Guinea under the Germans (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1982), but to accounts of particular individuals and expeditions, e.g. Hans Fischer, Die Hamburger Südsee-Expedition: Über Ethnographie und Kolonialismus (Frankfurt am Main: Syndikat, 1981); Sven Mönter, Following a South Seas Dream: August Engelhardt and the Sonnenorden, Germanica Pacifica Studies No. 2 (Auckland: Research Centre for Germanic Connections with New Zealand and the Pacific, The University of Auckland, 2008); Marion Melk-Koch, Auf der Suche nach der menschlichen Gesellschaft: Richard Thurnwald (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1989); Andrea E. Schmidt, Paul Witz: Ein Wanderer auf der Suche nach der „wahren Natur“ (Basel: Ethnologisches Seminar der Universität und Museum der Kulturen Basel, in Kommission bei Wepf & Co., 1998); to historical overviews, notably Hermann Joseph Hiery, ed., Die deutsche Südsee 1884-1914: Ein Handbuch (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2001); and to critical studies of European-Oceanian contacts, especially Karl Neumann, Not the Way it Really Was: Constructing the Tolai Past (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992).
contacts and experiences of such men as Meyer and Finsch were influential in shaping German perceptions of Oceanian people and in setting the terms for subsequent expeditions and colonial enterprise.

Meyer and Finsch were contemporaries; they were also, albeit in a restricted sense, research collaborators. In 1885 they co-authored an article describing a number of bird specimens collected in south-eastern New Guinea by Karl Hunstein (Carl von Hunstein, dates unknown), a German naturalist who had assembled them during his expeditions with the Scottish naturalist and merchant Andrew Goldie (1840-1891).\(^\text{16}\) Despite the similarities in their ages and research interests, however, the two men also differed in important ways: in their family and educational backgrounds, in the purposes and trajectories of their Oceanic travels, and in their subsequent careers. These differences, which I summarise below, have allowed me to consider a broader range of activities, experiences and encounters than those which would have pertained to either figure in isolation. Dividing my research between two individuals has also made it easier to focus on the themes linking Meyer and Finsch – their search for well-defined racial types in Oceania, the destabilisation of their received ideas by recalcitrant experience, their insistence on the priority of presence in the formation of anthropological and ethnographic knowledge, and the difficulties they experienced in communicating their altered understandings to a metropolitan audience – rather than become excessively immersed in their biographical details. Having said this, I have also drawn inspiration from several recent biographical studies of German-speaking individuals with connections to New Guinea and/or to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century ethnology and physical anthropology, all of which have very successfully combined discussion of the individual with consideration of his broader socio-historical context. I think particularly of Marion Melk-Koch’s monograph on Richard Thurnwald (1869-1954) and Andrea E. Schmidt’s study of Paul Wirz (1892-1955), both of which recount the lives of travelling ethnologists with an abiding interest in New Guinea, as well as

Constantin Goschler’s biography of Virchow and the edited collection on Felix von Luschan (1854-1924) by Peter Ruggendorfer and Hubert D. Szemethy.\textsuperscript{17} Adolf Bernhard Meyer (Fig. 1, left), the son of a prosperous German-Jewish family in Hamburg, studied medicine and natural sciences at the universities of Göttingen, Vienna, Berlin and Zürich, obtaining his doctorate in 1867 with a dissertation titled ‘Beiträge zur Lehre von der elektrischen Nervenreizung’ (‘Contributions to the theory of electrical stimulation of the nerves’).\textsuperscript{18} His decision to go abroad was triggered principally by his interest in the works of the British naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace (1823-1913), especially \textit{The Malay Archipelago} (1869), which he translated into German the same year it first appeared in print.\textsuperscript{19} Like Wallace, whose travels had compassed much of maritime Southeast Asia, Meyer approached New Guinea from the west, passing first through Celebes (North Sulawesi, Indonesia) and the Philippines. His particular interest in the so-called ‘Negrito’ groups inhabiting these areas was influential in shaping his perceptions of the New Guinean ‘Papuans’ he subsequently encountered during five months of explorations in Geelvink (Cenderawasih) Bay and the Schouten Islands (Kepulauan Biak). Meyer’s experiences during these five months in New Guinea are the subject of Chapter One.

In 1874, only a year after returning from New Guinea, Meyer was appointed Director of the Naturhistorisches Museum (‘Museum of Natural History’) in Dresden, Germany, a position he held until 1904.\textsuperscript{20} From 1879 this institution was known as the Königlich Zoologisches und Anthropologisch-Ethnographisches Museum (‘Royal Zoological and Anthropological-Ethnographic Museum’), its new name reflecting the broad interests of its director and the Museum’s expanded focus under his leadership. The bulk of Meyer’s private collections, including some 350 anthropological and 450 ethnographic


\textsuperscript{20} Letter from A. B. Meyer to Rudolf Virchow, 4 October 1874, NL Virchow, Nr. 1429, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.
objects assembled during his travels, were incorporated into the Museum’s holdings. His collection of 135 Papuan skulls, which was considered particularly valuable by Virchow and other contemporaries, formed the basis of several substantial craniometrical publications and underlay a series of vigorous exchanges between Meyer and the French anthropologists Armand de Quatrefages (1810-1892) and Ernest-Théodore Hamy (1842-1908), who held very different views on the value of craniological data and the existence of boundaries between particular races. Meyer’s craniometrical studies and the debates resulting from them are discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

Figure 1: ‘Adolf Bernhard Meyer – Gründer und Direktor des Museums von 1875 bis 1905’ (left); ‘Mr Otto Finsch, Bremen’ (right).  

Photographic material.

In addition to his contributions to comparative anatomy, Meyer retained a broad interest in all areas of natural history and continued to publish on anthropological, zoological,  

ethnographic and linguistic topics. He also instituted three separate in-house series of scientific publications, the *Publicationen aus dem Königlichen Zoologischen Museum zu Dresden*, the *Publicationen aus dem Königlichen Ethnologischen Museum zu Dresden* and the *Abhandlungen und Berichten aus dem Königlichen Zoologischen und Anthropologisch-Ethnologischen Museum zu Dresden*, which together provided a forum for scholarly discussion of matters of zoological, anthropological and ethnographic interest.23

Otto Friedrich Hermann Finsch (Fig. 1, right), born in Warmbrunn, Silesia (now Cieplice Zdrój, south-eastern Poland),24 was essentially an autodidact. As a child he attended only the local elementary school, but demonstrated an early interest in observing, sketching and collecting the natural world and its products, particularly birds. His father, a glass painter and trader, intended his son to join the paternal business and took him on as a commercial apprentice. Finsch, however, who had little inclination for a career in trade, gave up the apprenticeship in 1857 and travelled first to Pest (now Budapest, Hungary), where he studied briefly at the university, supporting himself through the production and sale of natural historical specimens, then onward to Rustchuk (Ruse) in Bulgaria. He returned to Germany in 1859; his first scientific publication, ‘Beiträge zur ornithologischen Fauna von Bulgarien’ (‘Contributions to the ornithological fauna of Bulgaria’), appeared in the same year.25 From 1861 Finsch pursued his interest in ornithology as an assistant at the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie (‘Imperial Museum of Natural History’) in Leiden, Holland. In 1864 he joined the Gesellschaft Museum (‘Museum Society’) in Bremen, Germany, as curator of the

---


collections of ethnology and natural history. In 1868, he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Bonn, in recognition of his contributions to ornithology. In 1876 Finsch became Director of the Museum in Bremen, resigning in 1879 in order to undertake his first Oceanic voyage. During his time in Bremen he undertook several research trips, including six months (July – December 1872) in the United States and nine months (March – November 1876) in Western Siberia; the latter expedition, which he led, was made under the auspices of the Verein für die Deutsche Nordpolfahrt (‘Association for the German Voyage to the North Pole’), of which he had been a founding member.

From 1879-82 Finsch travelled and collected in Hawai‘i, Micronesia (Marshall, Gilbert and Caroline Islands), New Britain, south-east New Guinea, New Zealand and Java. These travels were supported by a grant from the Humboldt-Stiftung für Naturforschung und Reisen (‘Humboldt Foundation for Natural History Research and Travel’) in Berlin. Although Finsch’s selection for financial assistance was evidently based on his museological activities and his leadership of the expedition to Western Siberia, both of which centred on ornithological studies, the records of the Humboldt-Stiftung suggest that its members were interested chiefly in the anthropological and ethnological possibilities of such an expedition. They mentioned the investigation of ‘flora, fauna and geological formation[s]’ as secondary activities, but implied that Finsch’s primary purpose in visiting the South Seas should be to collect ‘evidence and memorials, as complete as possible’, of the ‘autochthonous population[s]’ of Polynesia and Micronesia, whom they believed to be ‘rapidly declining, in consequence of a melancholy law of nature’, following their contact with ‘European cultural peoples [Culturvölkern]’.

---


30 ‘Öffentliche Sitzung zur Feier des Jahrestages Friedrich’s II’, Auszug aus dem Monatsbericht der Königl. Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, 29 January 1880, 2-3, Sig. II-XI, 74: Vorgang zur
Shortly after returning from his first Oceanic voyage, Finsch became involved with the Konsortium zur Vorbereitung und Errichtung einer Südsee-Insel-Compagnie (‘Consortium for the Preparation and Establishment of a South Sea Island Company’), later the Neu Guinea Compagnie (‘New Guinea Company’), a small group of influential men chaired by the banker and entrepreneur Adolph von Hansemann (1826-1903) and interested in creating German colonies in Oceania. Finsch was made leader of an expedition sent out ‘to locate harbours, establish friendly contacts with the natives, and acquire land to the greatest [possible] extent’. Their travels in the steamer Samoa between October 1884 and May 1885, including several visits to New Britain and five explorations of mainland New Guinea between East Cape and Humboldt Bay, led to the declaration of north-east New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago as German protectorates. Despite this involvement, Finsch was subsequently unable to obtain satisfactory employment, either in the administration of the new colony or back in Germany. Greatly embittered, he returned in 1897 to ornithological work at the Museum of Natural History, Leiden. In 1904 he accepted a more palatable position as curator of the ethnological collection at the Städtisches Museum (‘Municipal Museum’) in Braunschweig, where he remained until his death in 1917. Chapters Two and Five discuss the impacts of Finsch’s Oceanic voyages on his understandings of Oceanian


31 The Konsortium zur Vorbereitung und Errichtung einer Südsee-Insel-Compagnie was renamed the Neu Guinea Compagnie by an imperial writ of protection issued on 17 May 1885. See Otto Finsch, ‘Gedenktage der Forschungsreise mit dem deutschen Dampfer „Samoa“’, Deutsche Kolonialzeitung, 28 (10 July 1909), 469.


26
physical diversity and his perceptions of Oceanian societies and cultural practices respectively.

The periodisation of history invariably involves imposing an artificially-constructed order onto complex and interlinked events. Nevertheless, the dates chosen to begin and end this study do represent significant moments in Meyer’s and Finsch’s connections with Oceania. 1865 marks the appearance of Finsch’s monograph *Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner*, the first work on New Guinea by either man and the first German-language monograph on the topic ever published. 1914 denotes the outbreak of the First World War and the occupation of Germany’s colonies in the South Seas by Allied troops. Although these dates bracket the core period covered by the thesis, I have also paid attention, where relevant, to works and individuals falling outside this period.

**Metropolitan theory and field experience**

Meyer’s and Finsch’s representations of their experiences in Oceania serve to illuminate the mutually constitutive relationship between metropolitan theory and field experience. By examining the Indigenous countersigns embedded in their works, I trace the ways in which their experiences in the field informed their contributions to broader debates about the human in the European metropoles. These debates included questions regarding the unity or plurality of the human species, the physical characteristics, moral qualities and intellectual abilities of Indigenous Oceanians, the possible connections between these people and other supposedly homogeneous ‘races’, including African ‘Negroes’ and southeast Asian ‘Negritos’, and the position(s) occupied by Indigenous Oceanians in a hierarchical scale of human races. They also covered methodological disputes relating to the importance of field experience in the human sciences, the standardisation and mobilisation of travellers’ observations for metropolitan audiences, and the relative worth of biological (somatic) and social (cultural and linguistic) data for taxonomic purposes.

I pay close attention to Meyer’s and Finsch’s impressions of the people they encountered, the consistency or inconsistency with which they expressed these impressions at various periods during their working lives and within the constraints of various genres, and the ways in which others responded to their work. This careful scrutiny, focusing particularly on the interplay between metropolitan theory and field experience, allows me to elucidate significant complexities and contradictions which
characterised the scientific study of non-Europeans and the development of anthropology and ethnology as independent disciplines during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. My approach is complementary to recent studies, notably Uwe Hößfeld’s *Geschichte der biologischen Anthropologie in Deutschland* (2005), H. Glenn Penny’s *Objects of Culture: Ethnology and Ethnographic Museums in Imperial Germany* (2002) and Andrew Zimmerman’s *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany* (2001), which discuss the development of German anthropology and ethnology primarily within their metropolitan context.\(^{35}\) I also draw inspiration from Rainer Buschmann’s *Anthropology’s Global Histories: The Ethnographic Frontier in German New Guinea, 1870-1935* (2009) and the collection *Hunting the Gatherers: Ethnographic Collectors, Agents and Agency in Melanesia, 1870s-1930s* (2000), edited by Michael O’Hanlon and Robert L. Welsch.\(^{36}\) The regional approach of these studies, which permits ‘a combination of breadth and depth offered by neither of the polar opposites of “global” or “local” perspectives’, has been formative, as has their emphasis on the dynamic interplay of agency between European and Indigenous actors in the production of anthropological and ethnographic knowledge.\(^{37}\)

The ‘cultural critique’ of anthropology and ethnography in the 1980s took issue with precisely this question of the relationship between field and metropole. Writers including James Clifford, Michael M. J. Fisher, George E. Marcus, Mary Louise Pratt and Renato Rosaldo challenged ethnography’s persistent ideological claims to ‘transparency of representation and immediacy of experience’, emphasising instead the partiality and constructedness of ethnographic ‘truths’ and their entanglement in power inequalities, including those deriving from imperial and colonial relations.\(^{38}\) Expanding on Johannes Fabian’s identification of the ‘denial of coevalness’ between observer and observed as a key aspect of anthropological theory, they discussed the contradiction


between personal and scientific authority in ethnography and the tensions inherent in its 'attempt to fuse objective and subjective practices'.

They also drew attention to the relations of ethnographic production and the need for a 'specification of discourses' through the questions, '[W]ho speaks? who writes? when and where? with or to whom? under what institutional and historical constraints?'.

These questions resonate with Donna Haraway's insistence on 'situated knowledges' as a responsible alternative to both radically relativistic and explicitly totalising claims to scientific objectivity, as well as with Rosaldo's criticisms of the ethnographic detachment that consists in liberating documents from 'the historical context[s] that produced' them. They also inform my analyses of what Meyer and Finsch were thinking about and with - their historical, intellectual, literary and pragmatic contexts - during their time in the field.

Drawing on the techniques of literary criticism, Clifford and others likewise called attention to ethnography as a process of writing, a transformation of 'unruly experience' into 'an authoritative written account'. Any analysis of this transformation, Clifford stressed, is necessarily an analysis of the strategies of authority employed by the writer. Given that Meyer and Finsch were writing for metropolitan audiences, this analysis must also extend to the individuals, groups and institutions who received, digested, filtered and critiqued their accounts. I focus particularly on Virchow, who acted as bridge and gatekeeper between field report and metropolitan thought for both Meyer and Finsch. Subsequent chapters of this thesis, especially Chapters Two and Four, discuss the ways in which travellers' observations were standardized and mobilized to make them meaningful to metropolitan audiences, the debates which arose when field observations contradicted received metropolitan wisdom, and the degree to which metropolitan authorities such as Virchow policed the interpretation of such observations and determined the boundaries of scientific knowledge.

---


40 Clifford, 'Introduction: Partial Truths', 13 (emphasis original).


'Melanesians', 'Polynesians', 'Papuans': Naming Oceanian people

I turn now to a crucial aspect of the process of transforming unruly field experience into authoritative textual form, that is, the bestowing of collective names on Oceanian people by European traveller-naturalists and metropolitan anthropologists. The people encountered by Meyer and Finsch included inhabitants of the areas known today as Papua New Guinea, the Indonesian provinces of Papua and West Papua, the Philippines, Sulawesi, Australia (Cape York), the Torres Strait Islands, Aotearoa/New Zealand, the Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Hawai‘i, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia. Following other recent historiographers of European contacts with these areas, I use the term ‘Oceania’ to describe the region in general and ‘Oceanians’ to refer to its inhabitants collectively.  

Figure 2: ‘Ozeanien’, Meyers Konversationslexikon, 4th edn (1885-1892), vol. 12.  

This usage reflects the extended meaning given to ‘Oceania’ (French Océanie, German Ozeanien) during the period covered by my thesis, defined by Douglas as ‘the vast

---

insular zone stretching from the Hawaiian Islands in the north, to Indonesia in the west, coastal Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand in the south, and Easter Island in the east' (Fig. 2).\footnote{Douglas, ‘Foreign Bodies in Oceania’, 5.} In addition, its relative unfamiliarity in modern usage, in which ‘Oceania’ does not usually include maritime Southeast Asia, serves to emphasise the discontinuities between past and present thought, and the necessity of analysing the nomenclature of the past within its historical context.

It is important to note, however, that Ozeanien was not used identically by all German writers during the period under study. Virchow, for example, distinguished between Ozeanien, Hinterindien (literally ‘Hind India’ or ‘Back India’, corresponding to modern mainland Southeast Asia) and der indische Archipel (‘the Indian Archipelago’, corresponding to maritime Southeast Asia).\footnote{Rudolf Virchow, ‘Über Schädel von Neu-Guinea’, Verhandlungen der Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte, 5 (15 March 1873), 65. Vorderindien (‘Fore India’ or ‘Front India’) was used at the time to designate modern South Asia; see, for example, Emil Wendt, Bilderatlas der Länderkunde mit besonderer Rücksicht auf Völkerkunde, Geschichte und Naturgeschichte (Leipzig: Dörflling und Franke, 1856). The terms ‘indischer Archipel’ (Indian Archipelago) and ‘malayischer Archipel’ (Malay Archipelago) were used interchangeably, as they were in English. See Richard Andree, Andree's allgemeine Handatlas ... 3., völlig neubearbeitete und vermehrte Auflage (Bielefeld: Velhagen & Klasing, 1893); ‘Indian Archipelago, or Malay Archipelago’, in George Ripley and Charles A. Dana, eds, The American Cyclopaedia: A Popular Dictionary of General Knowledge, 16 vols (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1873), V, online <http://chestofbooks.com/reference/American-Cyclopaedia-5/Indian-Archipelago-Or-Malay-Archipelago.html>, accessed 28 April 2010.} Referents could vary even within the works of a single author: Finsch used Ozeanien, ‘Oceania’, in his earlier works to frame discussions of the Indigenous populations of all the areas he had visited, including Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand, but later applied Ozeanien, ‘Oceanians’, specifically as a synonym for ‘Polynesians’, contrasting them with both ‘Malays’ and ‘Papuans’.\footnote{Finsch, ‘Die Rassenfrage in Oceanien’, 163-6; idem, Samoafahren, 42, 61.}

As the previous example indicates, words for people and their associated connotations formed a crucial component of late nineteenth-century German naturalists’ taxonomies of Oceania. These signifiers (nouns such as ‘Oceanians’, ‘Polynesians’, ‘Melanesians’, ‘Malays’ and ‘Papuans’) and their referents (the people to whom these nouns referred) are consequently an important focus of my research, particularly as they appear in the works of Meyer and Finsch. Subsequent chapters of this thesis analyse in more detail the shifting connotations of these and other names for people, together with the actual encounters underlying their application to particular individuals or groups. The following paragraphs offer an overview of the terms ‘Papua’/‘Papuan’ and
'Melanesia'/'Melanesian', both of which figure prominently in Meyer's and Finsch's descriptions of New Guinea's Indigenous inhabitants.

The etymology of the word 'Papua' is uncertain, though J. H. F. Sollewijn Gelpke tentatively identifies it with *sup i papwa*, an expression meaning 'the land below (the sunset)' in the Biak dialect of the Raja Ampat islands.\(^\text{48}\) The earliest known texts to record it are Portuguese, dating from the beginning of the sixteenth century and registering knowledge derived mainly from Arab and Malay pilots. A map produced around 1513 by the pilot and cartographer Francisco Rodrigues (dates unknown), who in November 1511 set out to accompany his compatriot, the navigator and naval officer António de Abreu (c.1480 - c.1514), on a voyage from Malacca to the Moluccas, depicts a large island to the east of the Moluccas with the inscription *Ilha de Papoa e a Jente della sam cafres* ('Island of Papoa and its people are Cafres').\(^\text{49}\) At around the same time, Tomé Pires (c.1468 - c.1540), a Portuguese apothecary who arrived in India in 1511 and afterwards became Portugal's first Ambassador to China, recorded in his *Suma Oriental* (1512-15) the existence of three islands near Banda: Ceram, Aru and Papua.\(^\text{50}\) Sollewijn Gelpke identifies Rodrigues' *Ilha de Papoa* as Halmahera and notes that Pires' description of the island of Papua would place it within the vicinity of East Halmahera and the Waigeo-Gébé area.\(^\text{51}\)

As recorded by these Portuguese travellers, *Papoa/Papua* was a toponym: both Rodrigues and Pires 'unambiguously understood Papua as the name of an island, or possibly ... a group of islands'.\(^\text{52}\) In the course of the sixteenth century, however, the name quickly 'came to denote both the islands and their population'.\(^\text{53}\) As early as 1521, this slippage from place to people was hinted at by the Florentine patrician Antonio Pigafetta (c.1491 - c.1534), who accompanied the Portuguese navigator Fernão de Magalhães (c.1480-1521) on his circumnavigation of 1519-22. While in Tidore, Pigafetta noted that the island of *gialolo* (Halmahera) was inhabited by *mory*, 'Moors' or 'Muslims', and *gentilli*, 'gentiles' or 'heathens'. Pigafetta stated of the latter: *Il re de

---


\(^{50}\) Cortesão, *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires*, 208-9, 222.

\(^{51}\) Sollewijn Gelpke, 'On the Origin of the Name Papua', 322-3.

\(^{52}\) Sollewijn Gelpke, 'On the Origin of the Name Papua', 323.

\(^{53}\) Sollewijn Gelpke, 'On the Origin of the Name Papua', 324.
queste gentilli, deto raya Papua, e richissimo de oro et habita dentro in la ysola ('the king of these gentiles, called raya Papua, is very rich in gold and lives in the interior of the island'). The juxtaposition of 'king of these gentiles' and 'raya Papua' suggests that the latter could be translated as 'king of the Pauans', though 'king of Papua' cannot be ruled out as an alternative translation. Douglas identifies an early unambiguous application of the term 'Papua' to people in a history of voyages compiled by Antonio Galvão, captain of the Portuguese station in the Moluccas in the late 1530s: in his Tratado ('Treatise') of 1563, Galvão explained that the Portuguese, adopting the usage of 'the Moluccans [os Maluqueses]', called the inhabitants of the north coast of New Guinea 'Pauas [os Pauas]', 'because they are black, with frizzled hair [por serem pretos de cabello frizado].

It is not clear at what point the word 'Papua' was first used to refer to the island of New Guinea specifically. Arthur Wichmann interpreted the Ilhas dos Pauas described by Jorge de Menezes, the Portuguese Governor of the Moluccas, who claimed to have overwintered there when driven off course in 1526 during a voyage from Malaka to Ternate, as a reference to the island of Wiak (Biak) in Cenderawasih Bay. Sollewijn Gelpke, however, asserts that the name Paua was initially 'restricted to a limited area in and near eastern Halmahera' and that some authors, notably François Valentyn, were still applying it in this limited sense at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Douglas clarifies the situation by observing that several Portuguese maps of the 1570s applied the terms 'Pauas' or 'Costa dos pauas' to a mainland, evidently the Vogelkop Peninsula, and 'os pauas' to one or more islands to the north, certainly the Schouten Islands but probably also the Raja Ampat group; some simultaneously include the names 'Nova Ethiopia' ('New Ethiopia') or '(La) Nueva Ginea' ('New Guinea') for a mainland to the east.

---

54 Antonio Pigafetta, quoted in Wichmann, Entdeckungsgeschichte, I, 13.  
57 Sollewijn Gelpke, 'On the Origin of the Name Paua', 325.  
Figure 3: Cornelis de Jode, ‘Novae Guineae forma, & situs’.\textsuperscript{59}

Cartographic material. Scale ca. 1: 30 000 000.

The name ‘New Guinea’ itself can be traced to the Spanish captain Yñigo Ortiz de Retes, who in 1545 made contact with the mainland east of Cenderawasih Bay during an attempted voyage from the Moluccas to Mexico. He claimed possession of this territory for the Spanish crown and bestowed upon it the name ‘Nueva Guinea’, a reference to the Guinea Coast in West Africa.\(^{50}\) It is not entirely clear whether Ortiz de Retes’ choice referred to perceived similarities between the coastal geographies of the two countries or between their Indigenous inhabitants. However, a map drawn in 1593 by Cornelis de Jode (Fig. 3), in which the island in question is labelled ‘Nova Guinea’, with the explanation that it was ‘[s]o named by sailors, because its shores, and the condition of the land, are very similar to Guinea in Africa’, indicates that at least some later cartographers assumed the first interpretation to be the correct one.\(^{61}\)

For the next three centuries, European cartographers referred to the island either as ‘New Guinea’ or as ‘Papua’, with additional confusion caused by uncertainties as to whether it was in fact an island or was connected to the unknown Great South Land, *Terra Australis Incognita*. Over the same period, ‘Papuan’ (French *Papou*, German *Papua*) as a word for people expanded from its origins as a local toponym to the extent that, from the late eighteenth century, it was often applied to ‘black’ Oceanian people more generally.\(^{62}\) The terms ‘Negroes of Oceanica’, ‘Oceanic Negroes’ and ‘Melanesians’ (French *Mélanésiens*, German *Melanesier*, see below) were applied more or less synonymously with this expanded usage. Papuans in the general sense were commonly understood to be characterised particularly by dark skin and curly or frizzled hair: although savants continued to haggle over the classificatory details, the European image of a typical Papuan corporeality was evidently sufficiently clear for both Meyer and Finsch to be able to refer to *echte Papuas*, ‘genuine Papuans’, and expect their audiences to understand the reference.\(^{63}\) In addition, French *Papou/Papoua* and German *Papua* both carried connotations of primitivity, savagery and cannibalism, as evidenced by Virchow’s statement in 1873 that ‘the most primitive form of human development has long been designated with the name *Papua* ... so that, if one wanted to

---

\(^{50}\) Wichmann, *Entdeckungsgeschichte*, I, 24; Ballard, ‘“Oceanic Negroes”’, 162-3.


\(^{63}\) See, for example, A. B. Meyer, ‘Ueber hundert fünf und dreissig Papúa-Schädel von Neu-Guinea und der Insel Mysore (Gelvinksbai)’, *Mitteilungen aus dem königlichen zoologischen Museum zu Dresden*, I (1875), 66; Finsch, ‘Die Rassenfrage in Oceanien’, 163; idem, *Samoauffahrten*, 43.
describe a person very low down on the scale, one applied this expression without thinking'.

The origins of the terms ‘Melanesia/Melanesian’ are both more recent and more easily identifiable than those of ‘Papua/Papuan’. The French navigator-naturalist Jules-Sébastien-César Dumont d’Urville (1790-1842) coined them in an essay written for a prize offered by the Société de Géographie de Paris on the ‘differences and similarities’ between the ‘various peoples’ of Oceania. In this essay, published in 1832, Dumont d’Urville proposed a tripartite division of the Pacific Islands and their inhabitants into Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia (he added ‘Malaysia’ to make a quadripartite division of Oceania). The lasting impact of this division was ensured by its appropriation into Grégoire Louis Domeny de Rienzi’s (1789-1843) three-volume Océanie ou cinquième partie du monde (‘Oceania or fifth part of the world’, 1836-8), translations of which appeared in German, Spanish and Italian, and by its adoption into James Cowles Prichard’s (1786-1848) Researches into the Physical History of Mankind (1836-47). Douglas warns, however, that ‘independent racial mapping of Oceania [both] preceded and followed’ Dumont d’Urville and that ‘the story of [the] adoption’ of his terminology ‘is by no means clear or direct’. The racial mapping of Oceania by French navigators is considered further in Chapter Two, together with another significant factor in the ‘constitution of regional topographies of difference in Oceania’, namely the influence of observers’ ‘trajectories of travel’ on their descriptions and taxonomies of Oceanian people.

European explorations of New Guinea intensified noticeably from around 1870 (see below), partly as a result of the popularity of Wallace’s monograph The Malay

---


68 Ballard, ‘“Oceanic Negroses”’, 160.
Archipelago (1869). Erhard Schlesier states that neither the expedition reports nor the early ethnographic textbooks and manuals which appeared in German during this period usually differentiated between Papuas and Melanesier: he notes as a rare exception the geographer Carl Eduard Meinicke’s (1803-1876) Die Inseln des stillen Oceans (‘The islands of the Pacific Ocean’, 1875-6), which recommended that Papuas be restricted to ‘the inhabitants of the north-west littoral of New Guinea’. Certainly both Meyer and Finsch equated the two, though their descriptions of ‘black’ Oceanians were not limited solely to these signifiers. Meyer, describing the ‘Negritos’ or ‘Aétas’ of the Philippines, characterised them as ‘a dark, curly-haired, in other words ... a Negro population’ and added that ‘one finds just such Negroes in the Melanesians or Papuans of New Guinea and several islands east of New Guinea’. Finsch repeatedly used the terms as synonyms in his letters to Virchow – ‘I observed recently, to my astonishment, that there are also straight-haired Melanesians, i.e. Papuans’ – and referred in a later monograph to ‘the race of the Papuans or Melanesians, anthropologically still very much misunderstood’. Occasionally, however, he also used Papua to imply a different meaning. Writing to Virchow about the physical diversity of the Indigenous people he had encountered around Port Moresby, he declared: ‘At all events these Papuans are Melanesians ... [although the] light-coloured varieties, if they have straight or curly hair, cannot be distinguished from Polynesians’. Unless the signifiers ‘Papuan’ and ‘Melanesian’ are understood here to have non-identical referents, the statement is nonsensically tautological. It is not clear whether Finsch wished to present ‘Papuans’, at least in this case, as a larger group containing the subset ‘Melanesians’, or whether he was using ‘Papuans’ as a nominalist geographical signifier rather than a racial one.

As the preceding paragraph indicates, Meyer considered the Melanesians, including New Guinea’s Indigenous inhabitants, to be in some sense a ‘Negro race’, though he did

not necessarily understand this to imply a genealogical connection between the ‘Negro races of the East’ and ‘those of Africa’. Finsch frequently described people he identified as Melanesians as being ‘negro-like’ (negerähnlich), but usually distinguished such people from ‘genuine’ or ‘typical Negroes’. Both men occasionally used Kanaken, ‘kanakas’, as a catch-all term for Oceanians: Meyer applied it specifically to Easter Islanders (Rapanui), Finsch to the Indigenous inhabitants of Hawai‘i and to those of New Britain, as well as in more general contexts. Finsch also made frequent use of toponyms, such as ‘New Briton’, ‘Ponapese’, ‘Marshall Islander [Marshallaner]’ and ‘North Australian’; I have retained these where appropriate. In addition, Finsch sometimes referred to Melanesians as Schwarzen, ‘blacks’, and on rare occasions as Nigger, the latter invariably with pejorative connotations. In a letter to Virchow written from Thursday Island (Waiben) in the Torres Strait, he stated that he had ‘stipulated ... that my skull at least will reach you, if I should be done in’, adding that, if his own skull were to be displayed amongst those he had collected during his travels, he wished it to be positioned ‘above’ the others, ‘as [their] ruler, so to speak, for I was always esteemed as a great Aolot, i.e. chieftain, and wish to be the first amongst these niggers at least’. This unpleasant levity did not disguise his evident fear of meeting an untimely death during his travels, since he concluded that the idea of being displayed in a museum was ‘more congenial to me than that some nigger should make from my skull a lime caddy for betel, like one that I saw recently’.

---

75 See, for example, Otto Finsch, ‘Über seine in den Jahren 1879 bis 1882 unternommenen Reisen in der Südsee’, Verhandlungen der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin, 10 (1882), 564; idem, Catalog für die Ausstellung für Völkerkunde der Südsee (Stiller Ocean) ... (Braunschweig: Albert Limbach, 1883), 1; idem, Samoafahren, 41-2; cf. letters from Otto Finsch to Rudolf Virchow, 15 and 26 August 1880, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.
78 Letter from Finsch to Virchow, 5 January 1882, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.
If these two usages of *Nigger* encoded anxiety, the third (I have found only three) indicated Finsch’s frustration at being unable to elicit a desired response. Describing the difficulties he had experienced in his attempts to obtain moulages from Indigenous New Guineans inland from Port Moresby, he stated that ‘the people always think that it will cost them their lives’, that the ‘chief difficulty’ was to persuade ‘the first one’, and that ‘[o]ften one toils away unsuccessfully for half a day cajoling a dirty nigger’.\(^79\) As this example suggests, the particular signifiers selected in descriptions of encounters are themselves often countersigns which, when considered in context, can hint at the nature of the contact made, the kinds of agency exercised by the referents, and the ways in which this agency was perceived by the person(s) describing it. However, it is also important to take into consideration the possible impact of the intended recipient or readership on the terms of description used. Given that all three examples of the epithet ‘Nigger’ listed above occur in letters written by Finsch to Virchow, its use may reflect a shared understanding presumed to exist between the letters’ author (Finsch) and their recipient (Virchow). I discuss these issues in particular detail in Chapter One, with regard to the differences existing between Meyer’s several versions of selected events and encounters during his travels in New Guinea.

In his 1853 monograph *The Native Races of the Indian Archipelago: Pauans*, the British navigator and translator George Windsor Earl (1813–1865) offered an unusually perceptive account of the way in which encounter experiences influenced the production of racial knowledge. Acknowledging ‘the discrepancies that appear in the narratives of different voyagers, indeed, sometimes in that of a single individual’, Earl observed:\(^80\)

> It is a singular fact, that whenever civilized man is brought into friendly communication with savages, the disgust which naturally arises from the first glance at a state of society so obnoxious to his sense of propriety, disappears before a closer acquaintance, and he learns to regard their little delinquencies as he would those of children; — while their kindness of disposition and natural good qualities are placed on the credit side of their account ... On the other hand, those whose

---

\(^79\) Letter from Finsch to Virchow, 20 February 1882, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften; idem, idem, ‘Reise nach Neu-Guinea’, 310.

communications with the Pauans have been of a *hostile* nature, become so impressed with the savage, wild-beast-like, cunning and ferocity of their attacks, that they cannot believe that the same people have any feelings in common with more civilized races.\(^1\)

‘[A]ll these discrepancies’, Earl concluded, ‘can be distinctly traced to the circumstances under which their communications took place’.\(^2\) Such reflexivity was exceptional, both for Earl himself and for his contemporaries. Generally speaking, the endeavours of anthropology and ethnology during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were founded on the conviction that ‘facts’ about the world’s inhabitants existed independently of human knowledge or perception. This objectivist philosophy supposed that sufficient research, properly conducted, would reveal to the investigator real information of intrinsic validity. I think here, in the specific context of the natural sciences, of a statue group by the Austrian sculptor Karl Kundmann (1838-1919) which adorns the façade of the Naturhistorisches Museum (‘Museum of Natural History’) in Vienna (Fig. 4).\(^3\) One woman, standing, clothed, a tablet in her left hand, disrobes another seated by her, revealing her naked, her hair unbound; the caption reads: *Forschung entschleiert die Natur* (‘Research unveils Nature’).\(^4\) This objectivism and its influence on anthropological research is discussed further in Chapters Two and Four, in relation to the standardisation and mobilisation of travellers’ observations for metropolitan consumption and to the production of craniometrical knowledge respectively.

---

\(^{1}\) Earl, *The Native Races of the Indian Archipelago*, 79-80.


Early Germans in Oceania

I have described Meyer and Finsch as path-breakers, and yet their experiences of Oceania did not take place in a vacuum. Earlier travellers’ impressions and reports shaped their expectations of encounter and the ways in which they made sense of their own experiences in the field. An overview of European scientific, mercantile and missionary contacts with Oceania prior to the late nineteenth century is therefore helpful for understanding Meyer’s and Finsch’s experiences in context. I focus particularly on the involvement of German-speakers in these contacts, noting that Meyer’s visit to New

---

Guinea in 1873 coincided with the beginnings of an intensified German engagement with the region (prior German contacts with New Guinea specifically are discussed in detail in Chapter One). The German unification of 1871 provided significant additional impetus to existing networks of engagement with Oceania and stimulated the creation of new ones, through increased construction of new museums and through the formation of imperial agencies – notably the German Imperial Navy and the German Foreign Office – which supported these museums’ collection ventures.  

It is appropriate, at this point, to acknowledge the voluminous literature on European voyagers and encounters in Oceania. Pioneers in this field, including Greg Dening, Anne Salmond, Marshall Sahlins and Nicholas Thomas, challenged the ‘generalized models’ which flattened out the ‘particularity and idiosyncrasy’ of historical contacts between European voyagers and Oceanian people, reducing the Europeans to heroes ‘in charge of the drama’ and the Oceanians to ‘passive spectators’ or anonymous actors.  

Reading a diverse range of sources against the grain, these scholars ‘step[ped] behind … false certainties’ to ‘tease out the ambiguities and confusions’ of cross-cultural contacts in Oceania and probe the ‘messy actualities of the past’. More recent contributors have expanded the sites of encounter both spatially and temporally, embracing contacts in mainland Australia, New Guinea and Island Melanesia, and spanning a period from the Hispanic voyages of the early fifteenth century to the late twentieth-century ‘first contacts’ in the New Guinea Highlands. Though my own undertaking is

---

88 Thomas, Discoveries, xxxii-xxxiv.  
comparatively modest, I apply similar strategies, critically reading Meyer’s and Finsch’s records of encounter with the aim of recapturing some sense of all the participants in these events, German and Oceanian alike, as ‘active … and fully human’, pursuing ‘their own practical and political agendas’. Following Douglas (see also below, ‘German contributions to the development of a science of race’), I marry these critical readings with an awareness of racial thinking and seek to elucidate the connections between past Indigenous actions, their countersigns in the ‘tensions, anomalies, asides and silences’ of European records of encounter, and the process by which these records were ‘imbued with meanings and fed back into scientific systems’ of racial thought in Europe’s metropoles.

Returning to my overview of early German contacts with Oceania, it is important to note that voyages prior to the late nineteenth century were dominated by other nations: at first the Spanish and Portuguese, then the Dutch, British and French successively, with significant nineteenth-century contributions by the Russians and the Americans. However, German-speaking individuals frequently accompanied these voyages. The most notable examples were the father and son Johann Reinhold Forster (1729-1798) and Georg (Johann George Adam) Forster (1754-1794), who sailed as naturalists with James Cook (1728-1779) on his second Oceanic voyage of 1772-75. The Forsters, however, did not reach the New Guinea mainland: although Georg Forster posited an ‘aboriginal black race’ of ‘cannibals’ in and around New Guinea, neither he nor his father came any closer to its shores than the island of Malakula in present-day north Vanuatu.

University-trained experts from the German-speaking lands, particularly those competent in natural history, philology and medicine, found a ready welcome in the exploratory and colonial endeavours of other European nations. John Gascoigne suggests that Britain, in particular, provided ‘politically divided Germany’ with ‘one of its major arteries to a larger world’ during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth


centuries, there being ‘no German state to finance the expeditions that took the British – or the French or Spanish – to the Pacific’. Reciprocally, the ‘relatively vast network of German universities’ could supply ‘university-trained experts in abundance’ from ‘states that were not likely to pose a challenge to British imperial designs’.93 Similarly, Klaas van Berkel observes that ‘German scientists in Dutch service who performed research in the colonies far outnumbered the Dutch scientists’ until well into the nineteenth century.94 In England, the prevailing intellectual culture reflected ‘the political and social dominance of a landowning gentry class’, with the result that science was characteristically conducted by amateurs ‘with private means’ pursuing ‘what was of interest to [them]’; Dutch universities, although more central to the nation’s scientific endeavours, ‘seriously suffered from a lack of professors and resources’.95 In contrast, the ‘vast network’ of Germany’s universities, in which research was central and ‘professorial advancement’ increasingly ‘linked to publication’, resulted in knowledge becoming ‘more institutionalized and professionalized’.96 Germany’s contribution to ‘supplying ... scientific expertise and personnel’ was not confined to the European sphere; Rod Home convincingly argues that Germans also provided ‘a disproportionately high percentage of the scientific leadership’ in nineteenth-century Australia, a phenomenon he attributes at least partly to the nature of ‘the German higher educational system’.97

Russia, too, turned to German university graduates to ‘describe ... the resources of [its] vast territories’.98 For example, the first Russian round-the-world expedition (1803-04) on the Nadezhdna and Neva, commanded by Adam Johann von Krusenstern (1770-1846) and Urey Lisiansky (1773-1837), included so many Germans and Baltic Germans amongst its officers and scientists (one of them Krusenstern himself) that the Russian first lieutenant of the Nadezhdna, Makar Ivanovich Ratmanov (1772-1833), complained that he found himself ‘in what one might call a German synagogue’.99 One of the ‘synagogue’s’ younger members, Otto von Kotzebue (1787-1846), later returned to

99 Makar Ivanovich Ratmanov, quoted in Govor, Twelve Days at Nuku Hiva, 9-37.
Oceania as commander of the *Riurik* from 1815-18; he was accompanied by the German-French savant Adelbert von Chamisso (1781-1838), whose work received international acknowledgement.\(^{100}\) France, in contrast, which could access internally-trained professional savants through institutions such as the Académie des Sciences, ‘had little need of German graduates in its exploration of the Pacific’.\(^{101}\)

**German contributions to the development of a science of race**

Earlier travellers’ impressions and reports of New Guinea, partial and contradictory as they were, constituted an important source of information for both Meyer and Finsch. As such, they formed one component of the matrix which structured what Meyer and Finsch were thinking *about* and *with* when they produced their textual, visual and material records of encounter. A second component of this matrix was the idea of race. This ‘slippery word’, as Douglas aptly describes it, was influential and unstable in equal measure: influential, because it profoundly shaped the ways in which Meyer and Finsch thought and wrote about human difference; unstable, because it carried multiple meanings and connotations which varied substantially across both time and space.\(^{102}\) ‘Race’ could and did connote different things for different authors, or even for the same author in different contexts; its meanings also varied within and between different national and subnational cultures of knowledge. A close and critical attention to the ways in which Meyer and Finsch applied ideas of race in their works is one of the major preoccupations of this thesis.

The origins, development and significance of a biological idea of race have received increasing scholarly attention since the 1940s. Ashley Montagu’s *Man’s Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race*, first published in 1942, instituted the modern critique and rejection of the principle of race.\(^{103}\) Following the appearance of his 1964 edited collection *The Concept of Race*, researchers including Michael Banton, Robert Bernasconi, Claude Blanckaert, Ivan Hannaford, Nancy Stepan and George W.


Within the German context, investigations of race have tended to focus either on the Enlightenment era or on National Socialism and the Holocaust.\footnote{For example, Sara Eigen and Mark Larrimore, eds, \textit{The German Invention of Race} (Albany, State University of New York Press, 2006); Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, 'The Color of Reason: The Idea of "Race" in Kant's Anthropology', in Katherine M. Faull, ed., \textit{Anthropology and the German Enlightenment: Perspectives on Humanity} (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1995), 200-41; Thomas Strack, 'Philosophical Anthropology on the Eve of Biological Determinism: Immanuel Kant and Georg Forster on the Moral Qualities and Biological Characteristics of the Human Race', \textit{Central European History}, 29:3 (1996), 285-308; Michael Weingarten, 'Menschenarten oder Menschenrasse: Die Kontroverse zwischen Georg Forster und Immanuel Kant', in Gerhart Pickerodt, ed., \textit{Georg Forster in seiner Epoche} (Berlin: Argument-Verlag, 1982), 117-48; Uli Lincke, \textit{German Bodies: Race and Representation After Hitler} (New York and London: Routledge, 1999); Richard Weikart, \textit{From Darwin to Hitler: Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics, and Racism in Germany} (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).} The few studies directed specifically towards Imperial Germany, with the notable exception of Buschmann's \textit{Anthropology's Global Contexts}, have generally concentrated on German ideas of race in their metropolitan context.\footnote{Benoît Massin, 'From Virchow to Fisher: Physical Anthropology and "Modern Race Theories" in Wilhelmine Germany', in George W. Stocking, Jr., ed., \textit{Volkgeist as Method and Ethnic: Essays on Boasian Ethnography and the German Anthropological Tradition} (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 79-154; Robert Proctor, 'From Anthropologie to Rassenkunde in the German Ethnological Tradition', in Stocking, ed., \textit{Bones, Bodies, Behavior}, 138-79; Paul Weindling, \textit{Health, Race and German Politics Between National Unification and Nazism, 1870-1945} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).} This thesis, which examines the contribution of experiences in the field to the production of German racial knowledge between 1865 and 1914, adds to these studies. In addition, its combined focus on German-language records of encounter in the regional context of Oceania complements the essays contained in Douglas and Ballard's 2008 edited collection \textit{Foreign Bodies}. While this collection is certainly the most comprehensive account to date of Oceania as a laboratory of racial science, most of its contributors emphasise Francophone and
Anglophone records of encounter. The following paragraphs draw on the works named above, including *Foreign Bodies*, to outline the involvement of German-speaking savants in the development of a biological science of race.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the English noun ‘race’ derives from Italian *razza* (late twelfth century) via French *race* (late thirteenth century), its earlier etymology being ‘uncertain and disputed’. Douglas notes that in its earliest usages ‘the concrete noun race signified a family, a kindred, or the posterity of a common ancestor’; in a more general sense, it could refer to a ‘tribe, nation, or people regarded as of common stock’, and could also be synonymous with humanity as a whole in phrases such as ‘the humane race’ (1580) and ‘the race of Mankinde’ (1623). All of these usages connoted ‘consanguinity and shared origin or descent’. However, both French *race* and English race were minor words before the late eighteenth century, while the German *Race/Rasse*, also borrowed from French, was rarely used.

François Bernier (1625–1688), a French traveller, physician and philosopher, is often identified as the first to use the term *race* in its modern sense and to apply ideas of taxonomic classification to human beings. In an article published anonymously in the *Journal des Scavans* in 1684, he suggested ‘a new division of the Earth’ according to ‘four or five Species or Races [*Especes ou Races*] of men’ who supposedly exhibited particularly ‘notable’ somatic differences. Siep Stuurman describes Bernier’s privileging of a ‘physico-biological notion of race … in the classification of the human species’ as a ‘significant intellectual innovation’ which ‘paved the way for the further elaboration of race as a concept in eighteenth-century natural history’.

---


110 [François Bernier], ‘Nouvelle division de la Terre, par les differentes Especes ou Races d’hommes qui l’habitent, envoyée par un fameux Voyageur à M. l’Abbé de la * * * * * à peu prés en ces termes’, *Journal des Scavans*, 24 April 1684, 133-4; Douglas, ‘Towards Races’, 2-3.

however, notes that Bernier’s ‘radical suggestions ... arguably had little contemporary impact’ and that his implication of the existence of inherent racial or specific differences between human groups was explicitly refuted by the German mathematician and philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), who endorsed instead the longstanding belief that ‘all men, who inhabit this globe’, were ‘of a single race [d’une même race]’ and had merely been ‘altered by different climates’.112

If Bernier was the first to apply classification to human beings, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) has been identified as having given the concept of race ‘sufficient definition for subsequent users to believe that they were addressing something whose scientific status could at least be debated’.113 In a series of papers on human diversity, Kant argued that the ‘natural division’ of the ‘animal kingdom ... into genera [Gattungen] and species [Arten]’ was based on ‘the collective law of reproduction’.114 He drew on the authority of the French naturalist Georges-Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon (1707-1788): if one agreed with Buffon’s ‘rule’ for identifying a ‘natural kind [Naturgattung]’ of animals by their ability to ‘produce fertile young together’ rather than by any overriding identity of ‘form’, Kant concluded, it followed that ‘all people on the wide earth’ belonged to ‘one and the same natural kind, since they consistently produce fertile children together’.115 The obvious ‘natural cause’ of this mutual fertility, he added, was the common origin of all human beings; to presume otherwise would require ‘many local creations’ and an unnecessary multiplication of the ‘number of causes’. Heritable variations within a given Gattung (‘kind’ or ‘genus’) of animals, then, were to be understood not as different Arten, ‘species’, which would imply a ‘diversity of descent’, but as Abartungen, ‘deviations’ or ‘degenerations’.116

Kant distinguished Racen – those Abartungen which persisted even when transplanted to ‘other regions’ and consistently produced mixed (halbschlächtige) offspring when crossed with ‘other Abartungen of the same stock [Stamm]’ – from Varietäten,

112 Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz, ‘Lettre de Mr. Leibniz à Mr. Sparwenfeld [1697]’, in Joachim Friedrich Feller, ed., Oitium Hanoveranum, sive, Miscellanea ... (Lipsiae: Johann Christiani Martini, 1718), 38; Douglas, ‘Towards Races’, n.p.
113 Bernasconi, ‘Who Invented the Concept of Race?’, 11.
116 Kant, ‘Von den verschiedenen Racen der Menschen’, 430.
‘varieties’, and Spielarten, ‘sports’, neither of which consistently produced mixed offspring. Thus, while ‘Negroes and Whites’, who ‘perpetuated’ themselves consistently ‘in all regions’ and ‘necessarily’ produced mixed children together, were to be defined as races, ‘blondes and brunettes’ were merely ‘sports’ of the white race, since it would be possible for a blond man and a brunette woman to produce ‘nothing but blonde children’. On this basis Kant proposed a division of the ‘human kind’ into four races: Whites (including ‘the Moors of Africa’, Arabs, the ‘Turkish-Tartar tribe’ and the Persians), Negroes (‘native’ to Africa and to New Guinea), ‘Huns’ or ‘Mongols’, and ‘the Hindu or Hindustani race’. In a later article in the Berlinische Monatsschrift he specified skin colour as the primary character for distinguishing these four Klassen, ‘classes’, and concluded that the ‘concept of a race’ could therefore be defined as ‘the class distinction [Klassenumterschied] of animals of one and the same stock, provided it is inevitably inherited’.

Not all of Kant’s contemporaries agreed with his definition of Racen. One of his students, the philosopher, historian, poet and theologian Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), declared in his Ideen zur Philosophie des Geschichte der Menschheit (‘Ideas on the philosophy of the history of mankind’, 1784-91) that despite the attempts of ‘certain people’ to ‘name [as] races four or five divisions’ made ‘according to regions or even according to colours’, there were in fact ‘neither four or five races, nor exclusive varieties on earth’. He specifically condemned the use of the word ‘race’ to designate such divisions as misleading, claiming that it implied ‘a diversity of descent which … does not occur at all’. The ‘imprint’ of climate, Herder concluded, did not ‘destroy the original form of the stock’ and the ‘transitions’ within this original form were ‘as variable as they are imperceptible’.

The colours disappear into one another: the formations [Bildungen] serve the genetic character; and altogether everything becomes at last only nuances of one and the same great painting, which extends throughout all spaces and times of the earth.

117 Kant, ‘Von den verschiedenen Racen der Menschen’, 430.
118 Kant, ‘Von den verschiedenen Racen der Menschen’, 432.
120 Johann Gottfried Herder, Ideen zur Philosophie des Geschichte der Menschheit, 4 vols (Riga and Leipzig: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch, 1784-91), II (1785), 80-1.
121 Herder, Ideen zur Philosophie des Geschichte der Menschheit, II, 81.
Another of Kant’s critics, the naturalist Georg Forster, derived his reservations from personal experience. He had returned from Cook’s second Oceanic voyage to great acclaim and was feted in Göttingen and Weimar, late eighteenth-century Germany’s leading cultural and intellectual centres. His account of the voyage, initially published in English under the title *A Voyage round the World* (1777) and subsequently rewritten in German as *Reise um die Welt* (1778-80), attracted criticism from some quarters for its ‘outpourings of sentiment’ but was nevertheless hugely influential, both within Germany and more broadly across Europe.

Forster’s criticisms were primarily methodological in nature. A confirmed empiricist, he rejected Kant’s speculative and deductive philosophy, warning that although ‘speculation and abstract positivity’ could sometimes ‘intuit in advance that which perception afterwards recognises as true’, they were more likely to lead the philosopher astray. Deductive methods, he hinted, risked producing a ‘framework’ too inflexible to accommodate new discoveries: ‘Definitions founded on limited knowledge can admittedly be usable within these bounds; but as soon as the field of vision [Gesichtskreis] widens, will they not appear one-sided and [only] half true?’ The ‘unbiased observer’, Forster claimed, could report his observations ‘truly and reliably’ only by avoiding speculation, and the ‘observations of a simple, but clear-sighted and reliable empiricist’, albeit few in number, were infinitely to be preferred to those produced in quantity by a ‘partial systematist’.

Forster also differed from Kant with regard to the permanence of physical characteristics. According to Kant, differences in skin colour, which had initially

---

122 See also Douglas, “Novus Orbis Australis”, 104-5.
developed in response to particular climates, had then become permanent and would subsequently perpetuate themselves in any ‘region of the earth’. Forster, however, aligned himself with the views of the Swedish botanist and zoologist Carl Linnaeus (von Linné) (1707-1778), for whom colour represented one of ‘those accidental, variable phenomena’ which, if considered in isolation from ‘other characteristics’, were ‘not sufficient for [the purposes of] differentiating between genera’. He was suspicious of a priori taxonomic ‘compartments’ which did not reflect the diversity and irregularity of the natural world: ‘the order of nature does not follow our classifications, and as soon as one wishes to impose these upon her, one lapses into absurdities’. For Forster, Thomas Strack suggests, skin colour was ‘a matter of nuances, not of categorical differences’.

Kant’s use of the word Rasse also attracted Forster’s criticism. The latter considered it ‘synonymous with Varietät’ and noted that it ‘means ancestry in general, although in an indeterminate way; for in French one speaks of the race of Caesar, as well as of races of horses and dogs, without considering [their] first origin[s]’. As applied in recent travellers’ descriptions of Oceanians, he claimed, Rasse in fact meant ‘no more than a group of people whose common formation [Bildung] is sufficiently idiosyncratic, and sufficiently divergent from that of their neighbours’, that the one ‘cannot be directly derived’ from the other. Thus, the fact that ‘the Papuans and the remaining black islanders related to them in the South Seas’ had been described as ‘a different race’ to ‘the light-brown peoples of Malay descent’ indicated only that each was perceived to be ‘a people of idiosyncratic character and unknown ancestry’. In contrast, a natural history which adopted Kant’s definition of Rasse, based not on observations of the mutability or fixity of particular physical characteristics but on knowledge of ‘generation and descent’, would become impenetrable to human reason, ‘a science for gods and not for men’.

Forster’s insistence on the primacy of inductive principles and the superiority of experience over theory led him into controversial territory, particularly with regard to

127 Forster, ‘Noch etwas über die Menschenrassen’, 73; see also Caroli Linnaei [Carl Linnaeus], Critica Botanica ... (Ludgundi Batavorum: Apud Conradum Wishoff, 1737), 175-6.
128 Forster, ‘Noch etwas über die Menschenrassen’, 86.
130 Forster, ‘Noch etwas über die Menschenrassen’, 159-60 (emphasis original).
the question of human origins. He himself acknowledged that his investigations led him to ‘an audacious conclusion’, before which others might ‘shudder ... as though before a monster’. However, it was a matter of ‘truth’, not of ‘nestling beneath the yoke of the most foolish prejudices’, and the ‘independent thinker’ ought to accept as true ‘only that of which his [own] reason, not that of all other people’, convinced him. On the question of determining ‘the differences within the human race [Menschengeschlecht]’, Forster praised the empirical methodology of his close friend Samuel Thomas Soemmerring (1755-1830), whose comparative study Über die körperliche Verschiedenheit des Mohren vom Europäer (‘On the physical difference of the Moor from the European’, 1784) connected anatomical features with intellectual abilities and suggested that ‘the Negro, with regard to both external and internal configuration’, resembled ‘the tribe of apes’ more closely than did ‘the white man’. 132 Neither Forster nor Soemmerring went so far as actually to deny the Negroes human status: Soemmerring declared that ‘the African Moors’, despite their supposed similarity to ‘the family of apes [Affengeschlecht]’, ‘nevertheless remained men’, while Forster argued that even the ‘most ape-like Negro’ was closely ‘related to the white man’, concluding that an ‘ape-like man is therefore no ape’. 133 Nevertheless, Soemmerring’s claim for the existence of distinct anatomical differences between white Europeans and black Africans represented a significant challenge to Forster’s gradualist view of nature, which saw ‘everything in creation’ as being ‘connected via nuances’. 134 Forster attempted to reconcile these seemingly incompatible perspectives by stressing that Europeans and Africans, despite their anatomical differences, could still produce fertile offspring, but that an inherent ‘disgust and loathing of heterogeneous intermixture [ungleichartigen Vermischung]’ amongst both blacks and whites prevented the production of such offspring in all but a few cases. 135 Finally, with respect to the question of human origins, Foster denied any wish to affirm ‘decisively’ the existence of ‘multiple original human stocks [Menschenstämme]’, though he considered this possibility no less plausible than Kant’s hypothesis of divergence from a single, initially uniform stock.

134 Forster, ‘Noch etwas über die Menschenraces’, 77.
Several key aspects of Forster’s attack, including the superiority of inductive to deductive reasoning, the priority of observation and experience in the study of natural history, and the difficulty of drawing clear distinctions between groups of humans on the basis of physical features, foreshadowed arguments made separately by both Meyer and Finsch on the basis of their Oceanian field experience. In addition, Forster’s conclusions on the moral implications of a polygenetic theory of human origins illustrate two of the principal issues implicated in late eighteenth-century attempts to categorise humankind according to race: the controversy surrounding the institution of slavery, and the debate about the perfectibility of humankind as a whole.\(^{136}\) The competing hypotheses of monogenism (which proposed a common origin for the human species) and polygenism (the belief that human races arose independently of one another) were central to both debates. Monogenists adhered to the conventional wisdom that human diversity was essentially the result of environmental factors such as climate, milieu, diet and lifestyle. Some, like the French naturalist Buffon, believed that these factors had influenced the original members of the human species directly; others, like Kant, suggested that they had instigated changes in the composition of the body and blood. In addition, monogenists also differed with respect to the potential reversibility of these changes: Buffon expected them, as ‘superficial’ ‘alterations of nature’, to ‘disappear’ or to change again under altered environmental circumstances, whereas Kant’s theory of Keime, ‘seeds’ or ‘germs’, and natürliche Anlagen, adaptive ‘natural predispositions’, allowed only a limited and temporary somatic plasticity.\(^{137}\) In contrast, polygenists followed Forster’s suggestion that the various races had emerged ‘as autochthons, in different regions of the world’, and that the differences between races were therefore original, hereditary and (more or less) permanent.\(^{138}\)

A monogenetic understanding of human origins carried considerable weight in the predominantly Christian context of the Enlightenment, being in accordance with Biblical teachings of Adam and Eve as the ancestors of all human beings and with the church’s conviction that all had the potential for improvement through conversion. By the 1850s, however, earlier Enlightenment beliefs in essential human similarity had

---


\(^{138}\) Forster, ‘Noch etwas über die Menschenrassen’, 161.
already shifted dramatically towards an emphasis on difference as biological, hereditary, and permanent. The gradual acceptance of Darwinian evolutionary theory following the publication of On the Origin of Species in 1859 stripped the monogenetic-polygenetic controversy of much of its urgency; evolution, after all, presented a scenario in which a common origin did not preclude fundamental differences. Nevertheless, aspects of competing pre-evolutionary doctrines persisted well into the nineteenth century and can be also found in the works of both Meyer and Finsch.

Kant’s theory of race gained crucial exposure through its adoption by the German comparative anatomist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840). Blumenbach, as Timothy Lenoir has demonstrated, fundamentally revised his ideas on natural history under the influence of Kant’s philosophy of biology. The essays most important for Blumenbach’s theoretical reformulations were also those central to Forster’s critique – ‘Bestimmung des Begriffs [sic] einer Menschenrace’ (‘Definition of the concept of a human race’, November 1785) and ‘Muthmaßlicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte’ (‘[The] probable beginning of human history’, January 1786) – along with a third, ‘Ueber den Gebrauch teleologischer Principien in der Philosophie’ (‘On the use of teleological principles in philosophy’, January and February 1788), which Kant had written in response to Forster’s criticisms. Blumenbach found in these writings a way to resolve some of the inconsistencies in his own earlier attempts to construct a general theory of natural history. As a consequence of his readings of Kant, he produced new editions of his Handbuch der Naturgeschichte (‘Handbook of natural history’, 1788, 1791) and his dissertation, De generis humani varietate nativa (‘On the natural variety of humankind’, 1795). Douglas traces a series of ‘key changes’ in Blumenbach’s ‘biological terminology’ over this period, noting that the 1806 edition of his Beyträge zur Naturgeschichte (‘Contributions to natural history’) identified fünf Hauptrassen, ‘five principal races’, of the human ‘species’ where the 1790 edition had referred to fünf Spielarten, ‘five sports’. In the 1798 German translation of De generis humani, Blumenbach’s adoption of Kant’s ‘taxonomic vocabulary’ culminated

139 Douglas, ‘Climate to Crania’, traces this ‘major discursive shift’ in detail; see also idem, ‘Seabome Ethnography’, 6; idem, ‘Science and the Art of Representing “Savages”’, 162.
in an explicit endorsement of the definitions of *Stamm*, *Racen* and *Spielarten* – together with their various subcategories – ‘posited by our great Kant’.¹⁴⁴

Two seemingly contradictory aspects of Blumenbach’s work influenced the subsequent trajectory of studies in natural history and human difference in distinct directions. On the one hand, the ‘natural system’ outlined in his *Handbuch der Naturgeschichte* (1779) classified organisms according to their *Totalhabitut*, the totality of ‘all [their] external characteristics’, rather than by looking at ‘individual abstracted characteristics’ only.¹⁴⁵ This approach, which assumed that ‘animals that demonstrated the greatest number of commonly interrelated parts constituted a natural group in ... the total economy of nature’, resembled the ‘more robust’ method, ‘based on correlations of multi-characters’, which Linnaeus had applied to the establishment of genera; it thus avoided the artificiality of Linnaeus’ ‘reliance on single anatomical characters’, namely sexual characteristics, in establishing classes and orders, as well as the difficulties imposed by Buffon’s emphasis on similarities of internal form.¹⁴⁶ With respect to human difference in particular, Blumenbach maintained that the process of dividing the human species into ‘varieties’ was necessarily an ‘arbitrary’ one, since each ‘variety of men’ transitioned so ‘gradually’ to the next that it was virtually impossible to ‘determine boundaries between them’.¹⁴⁷

On the other hand, Blumenbach privileged the comparison of cranial forms in the study of human difference. It was ‘well known’, he claimed, that the external form of the face was ‘intimate[ly] related to its ‘bony substratum’, and the skull, the ‘firm and stable foundation of the head’, could more easily be subjected to comparative investigation when stripped of its ‘soft and changeable’ covering of flesh. A ‘more careful anatomical investigation of genuine skulls of diverse peoples’ could thus be expected to shed ‘a great deal of light’ on questions relating to ‘the variety of the human species

¹⁴⁷ Jo. Frid. Blumenbachii [Johann Friedrich Blumenbach], *De Generis Humani Varietate Nativa* (Gottingiae: apud Vidvam Abr. Vandenhoec, 1776), 40-1; idem, *De Generis Humani Varietate Nativa*, 3rd edn (Gottingiae: Vandenhoek et Ruprecht, 1795), 308, 322; see also Douglas, ‘Climate to Crania’, 37-40, 45.
[varietaatis generis humani]. Although he acknowledged that skulls displayed ‘just such gradual deviations’ as those observed when comparing ‘skin colour or other such idiosyncrasies’ and that ‘related skulls approached each other only by imperceptible transitions’, he maintained that they nevertheless ‘assert[ed]’ in general an ‘undeniable, indeed a distinctive stability’ in those ‘characteristics which contributed a great deal to the national Habitus’. In the first volume of his Decades Craniorum, an illustrated series of detailed descriptions of his collection of crania, Blumenbach repeated the same assertions with greater confidence. He claimed that ‘no part of the human body’ appeared ‘more suitable for the purpose of distinguishing and defining national varieties’ than the skull or ‘bony head [caput osseum]’; besides ‘constituting the foundation and support of the entire physiognomy’ and thus acting as the ‘interpreter’ of the soul, the skull combined ‘stability’ with ‘the utmost variety of shape and of the relative proportion of its parts’, qualities which allowed the natural historian to select from it ‘the most reliable characters of nations’. 

These two features of Blumenbach’s work – his insistence on the taxonomic importance of the Totalhabitus and the gradual transitions between human ‘varieties’ on the one hand, and his privileging of cranial forms in the classification of these varieties on the other – recur in my discussions of human difference as it appeared in the works of Meyer and Finsch. As the following chapters show, both Meyer and Finsch inclined more towards a consideration of all external characteristics, along with cultural and linguistic features, in their discussions of human difference in Oceania, and both challenged the possibility of dividing Oceanian people into discrete categories, partly as a result of their theoretical leanings and partly on the basis of their experiences in the field. However, their activities during and after their travels were also significantly shaped by influential representatives of the metropolitan anthropological community obsessed with comparative cranial studies and neat racial pigeonholes, notably Rudolf Virchow in Germany and Paul Broca (1824-1880) in France.

148 Blumenbach, De Generis Humani Varietate Nativa, 3rd edn, 197-9; see also idem, Über die natürlichen Verschiedenheiten im Menschengeschlechte, 143-5.


150 Io. Frid. Blumenbachii [Johann Friedrich Blumenbach], Decas Prima Collectionis Suae Craniorum Diversarum Genitum Illustrata (Göttingen: apud Henricum Dieterich, 1820 [1790]), 5. Thanks to John Howes for help in translating the following phrase: ‘stabilitati suae maximum conformationis et partium relatiue proportionis varietatem tumctam habeat’ (letter, 10 March 2011).
Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into two major sections of two chapters each, with an additional chapter linking the two sections. The first section, comprising Chapters One and Two, focuses on the field experiences of Meyer and Finsch and the significance of these experiences in shaping their understandings of race and human diversity in Oceania. I examine their early careers and trace the development of their interest in Oceania, taking note of those authors and publications which exercised a formative influence on their scientific thought and their travel plans. I then discuss in detail their specific encounters with Indigenous Oceanian people, paying particular attention to the contexts in which they occurred and the ways in which Meyer and Finsch attempted to make sense of them. Finally, I locate broader tensions between metropolitan theory and field experience within specific dialogues and disputes on race and human difference which developed post-voyage between Meyer, Finsch, and their respective communities of scientific peers. I identify appeals to personal presence and optical validation – that is, being (there) and seeing – as a key component of traveller-naturalists’ authority claims and deconstruct the role of metropolitan authorities in policing the boundaries of scientific knowledge and the interpretation of field observations. In the second section (Chapters Four and Five) I turn to a consideration of the discussion, reworking and analysis of Meyer’s and Finsch’s field experiences in a metropolitan context. Chapter Three, which links the two sections, offers an overview of influential socio-cultural and biological perspectives on human difference underlying these analyses.

Chapter One, ‘This new and interesting world’, relates Meyer’s experiences in north-west New Guinea between March and July 1873. I consider various factors which shaped his perceptions of these experiences, including his interest in evolutionary theory, his translations of works by Charles Darwin (1809-1882) and Alfred Russel Wallace, and his previous travels in Celebes and the Philippines. I also compare multiple versions of selected events and encounters during Meyer’s travels in New Guinea and highlight the ways in which he emphasised, reformulated or omitted certain aspects of his travel experiences, depending on the varying aims of each address or publication and the audience for whom it was intended. Chapter Two, ‘It is not so!’, analyses the depictions of Indigenous New Guineans in Finsch’s major pre-voyage monograph, Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner, before following Finsch on his first Oceanic voyage of 1879-82. I track the progressive destabilisation of several of his core assumptions about race, especially those relating to the breadth of individual variation.
within supposedly homogeneous races and the extent of overlap between them. In addition, I consider the various techniques by which Finsch attempted to standardise and mobilise his observations of Indigenous Oceanians for a metropolitan audience. I focus particularly on his series of 155 plaster casts of ‘native’ faces, the pièce de résistance of his collections of anthropological material, and emphasise tensions between the racial knowledge embodied by these plaster casts and that narrated by Finsch from his own experiences.

Chapter Three represents a bridge between the field and metropolitan sections of this thesis. I consider the recursion and partial alteration, over time and in different national contexts, of influential socio-cultural and biological perspectives on human difference; the co-option and transformation of these perspectives by the emergence and solidification of a biological science of race; and the ways in which socio-cultural and biological understandings of human difference entangled with and mutually reinforced one other.

Chapter Four, ‘On one hundred and thirty-five Papuan skulls’, analyses Meyer’s contributions to the fields of craniology (‘the study of the size, shape, and character of the skulls of various races’) and craniometry (‘measurement of the skull’), in particular those publications relating to his collection of 135 Papuan skulls from north-west New Guinea.\textsuperscript{151} I interrogate the processes by which Meyer endeavoured to produce racial knowledge from what he described as a ‘raw material’, the significance of his field experience for his scientific truth claims, the impacts of differences in methodology, research priorities, instrumentation, and national paradigms of knowledge on the interpretation of craniometrical data, and the extent to which culturally-bound constructions of normality, pathology, gender, class and criminality became enmeshed in what were ostensibly studies of race. I also track alterations in Meyer’s attitude towards craniology and craniometry over time, and consider, with respect to his activities as Director of the Royal Zoological and Anthropological-Ethnographic Museum in Dresden, the variety of ways in which skulls as objects were valued.

Chapter Five, 'In no way ... savages', turns to representations of civilisation and savagery in the writings of Otto Finsch, focusing particularly on his depictions of the Indigenous inhabitants of New Britain. I trace important aspects of his received ideas about savagery, notably its assumed connection with cultural practices identified through European eyes as 'nakedness' and 'cannibalism', and consider the ways in which Finsch's experiences in the field challenged these assumptions. I probe the significance of Finsch's colonial involvement, his views on the value and threatened status of cultural originality, his prior experiences of contrasting cultures in eastern Oceania, and his prolonged acquaintance with Tapinowanne Torondoluan, the young Tolai boy who joined him on his departure from Matupit Island and accompanied him back to Germany.

The thesis concludes with a review of the impacts of Meyer's and Finsch's field experiences on their received ideas about race, a discussion of the extent to which they were able to communicate these impacts to others, and some consideration of the reasons for their success or failure in this regard, with respect both to their personal career trajectories and the broader socio-political context in which they lived and worked.
Chapter One
‘This new and interesting world’: Adolf Bernhard Meyer in New Guinea, 1873

Thus at one stroke I had arrived in the middle of this new and interesting world ... the
life and doings of the Papuans here ... captivate all the attention of the newly arriving
traveller. 152

Adolf Bernhard Meyer travelled and collected in north-west New Guinea between
March and July 1873. Despite the brevity of his stay, he is significant as one of the first
German-born naturalists to visit New Guinea and certainly the first to publish
extensively in German on his field experiences there. Letters, diary extracts, portrait
and landscape sketches, public lectures, journal articles and scientific monographs all
record his encounters with local Indigenous people. In this chapter I describe some
aspects of these encounters and consider their impact on Meyer’s post-voyage work, in
combination with other influences: his research interests and theoretical leanings, the
spatial and temporal context within which he travelled, the pragmatic factors
constraining his interactions with Indigenous people, and the constellation of prior and
contemporaneous field experiences which informed those interactions. I discuss his
comments on ‘Papuan’ mental and moral characteristics as well as his publications on
physical anthropology, where his conclusions, based largely on his field experience,
crashed markedly with those of mainstream metropolitan thinking of the time.

Much of my analysis in this chapter draws on close readings of several key texts
produced by Meyer before, during and after his time in New Guinea. The more
substantial of these include his Bericht über eine Reise nach Neu-Guinea (‘Report on a
journey to New Guinea’), given as an address to the Kaiserlich-Königliche
Geographische Gesellschaft in Wien (‘Royal and Imperial Geographical Society of
Vienna’, hereafter Geographische Gesellschaft) in November 1873 and subsequently
published in their transactions; his ‘Anthropologische Mittheilungen über die Papua’s
von Neu-Guinea’ (‘Anthropological communications on the Papuans of New Guinea’),
presented in February 1874 to the members of the Anthropologische Gesellschaft zu
Wien (‘Anthropological Society of Vienna’, hereafter Anthropologische Gesellschaft);
and his Auszüge aus den auf einer Neu Guinea-Reise im Jahre 1873 geführten
Tagebüchern (‘Extracts from the journals kept during a New Guinea journey in the year

Ethnologie, 5 (1873), 307.
1873'\textsuperscript{)}, which first appeared in published form in 1875, accompanying two maps drawn for the 1875 International Geographic Exhibition in Paris. These three major texts were preceded by a number of shorter reports on various aspects of Meyer's travels, some of which appeared in German-language journals (for example, Petermanns Mittheilungen, Das Ausland and the Zeitschrift für Ethnologie), others in English-language ones (notably Ocean Highways and Nature). By comparing Meyer's presentation of specific episodes from his travels in the contexts of different publications, I probe the ways in which aspects of these episodes were emphasized, reformulated or omitted depending on the purpose of each text and the audience for whom it was intended.

\textit{Before Germany: German-speakers in New Guinea pre-1871}

The Introduction to this thesis has drawn attention to the lack of a German state to finance major expeditions pre-1871 and the consequent dominance of other nations in voyages to Oceania before this time. These factors were also relevant to the few German-speakers to reach New Guinea before Meyer, almost all of whom did so as members of Dutch expeditions, as the following paragraphs discuss. Unlike those German-speakers who accompanied the earlier English and Russian circumnavigations, many of whom published accounts in German simultaneously with, or even prior to, the Anglophone or Russian-language versions, the German-speakers who accompanied the later Dutch expeditions to New Guinea almost invariably published in Dutch. Although shorter communications or digests occasionally appeared in other languages, the works were rarely translated in full.

Three German naturalists – the mineralogist Heinrich Christian Macklot (1799-1832), the anatomist Salomon Müller (1804-1864) and the botanist Alexander Zippelius (1797-1828) – accompanied the 1828 Dutch exploration of New Guinea's south-west coast in the corvette \textit{Triton} and the colonial schooner \textit{Iris}, led by Government Commissioner A. J. (Arnoldus Johannes) van Delden (1804-1885).\textsuperscript{153} On 20 August 1828, Commissioner van Delden opened the first Dutch settlement in New Guinea, Fort Du Bus in Triton Bay; at the same time he claimed possession, in the name of the King of the Netherlands, of western New Guinea as far as the meridian of 141° E. In 1835,


62
however, following devastating illness and frequent Indigenous attacks, Fort Du Bus was abandoned.154

During their time in New Guinea, Macklot and Zippelius produced brief communications, mostly in Dutch.155 Müller, the only one of the three to return to Europe alive, published more extensively and had extracts from his works translated into English in the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society* in London.156 However, Müller focused on the geological and zoological features of the areas explored and scarcely mentioned the Indigenous inhabitants. Another German, the zoologist Heinrich Agathon Bernstein (1828-1865), commissioned by the Rijksmuseum in Leiden to collect natural historical specimens and report on the inhabitants of the areas visited, reached the north-western tip of mainland New Guinea from the Raja Ampat Islands in 1863 and again in 1864-65; his first visit was cut short by ill health and the second ended in his death.157 The journal from this voyage was published posthumously in 1869 and again in 1883, both times in Dutch, though a summary of Bernstein’s travels by Carl Eduard Meinicke, a prolific author on Oceanian topics, also appeared in *Petermanns Mittheilungen*, Germany’s leading geographical journal, in 1873.158 Carl

---


Benjamin Hermann, Baron von Rosenberg (1817-1888), travelled in 1860 to the Raja Ampat Islands (Misool, Salawati, Batanta and Waigeo) in his capacity as a member of the Civil Service in Ceram; in 1869-70 he visited Geelvink (Cenderawasih) Bay and the Schouten Islands, soon to be Meyer's destination, but did not publish on his experiences there in any language before 1875, with the first German version appearing in 1878. As a draughtsman, Rosenberg had previously accompanied the 1858 Etna exhibition, commissioned by Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies Charles Ferdinand Pahud (1803-1873) to identify possible sites for a new Dutch settlement in New Guinea and to carry out natural historical investigations, along the south-west and north-west coasts of New Guinea; all his publications in relation to this voyage, however, were in Dutch.

To these early German scientists’ contacts with New Guinea must be added the efforts of two German missionaries, Carl W. Ottow (1826-1862) and Johann Gottlob Geissler (1830-1870). In 1855, at the behest of Dutch pastor Ottho Gerhard Heldring (1804-1876) and defrocked German priest Johannes Gossner (1773-1858), who collaborated in training young working-class men for evangelical projects in the Dutch colonies, Ottow and Geissler established north-western New Guinea’s first mission presence, an outpost of the Utrechtsche Zendingen Vereeniging (‘Utrecht Mission Society’, hereafter UZV), in the settlement of Mansinam on Manaswari Island, Doreh Bay. Holger Warnk describes the missionaries’ success as ‘minimal’, noting that ‘the overall number of converts was very small’ and that ‘the conversion of … former slaves undermined the traditional social structure of the region’. Although Ottow and Geissler attempted to promote adoption of the Christian religion by opening mission schools and producing books, including a Christian songbook and a small reading book, in the ‘Papuan language’ (probably Biak-Numfor), ‘mass conversions to Christianity’ did not occur in the Cenderawasih Bay and Biak region until after 1900.


64
Although Wichmann’s two-volume Entdeckungsgeschichte, certainly the most comprehensive review of historical European contacts with New Guinea, mentions a handful of additional German visitors – ephemeral, accidental and fictional – during this period, the individuals named above were, to the best of my knowledge, the only German-speakers to have spent any considerable period of time in New Guinea prior to Meyer’s arrival there. Their small numbers, and the fact that the few who did publish anything generally did so in Dutch, resulted in a noticeable scarcity of German-language publications on the region before Meyer’s visit in 1873. This is reflected in Finsch’s Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner (1865), the first German-language monograph on New Guinea, which was able to list amongst the century’s ‘most excellent’ publications on the topic only two German works, neither by authors who had actually been to New Guinea. I return to Finsch’s depictions of Indigenous New Guineans in his monograph, and the changes wrought to these as a result of his field experiences, in Chapter Two.

Meyer, Wallace, and the ‘modification of life forms’

Why did Meyer choose to visit New Guinea? As a student he had shown little obvious evidence of wanderlust. In 1867, as mentioned in the Introduction, he had obtained his doctorate from Zürich with a dissertation on a seemingly unadventurous topic, the electrical excitation of nerves. Meyer’s medical background was not entirely irrelevant to his subsequent choice of career; Gascoigne, noting that both Johann Reinhold Forster and Georg Forster received doctorates in medicine, has described it as ‘the faculty that provided the main institutional foundation for the study of natural history’. During his student days, however, Meyer had also come into contact with

---

163 These include Captain Meindert Boysen and crew, who in 1857 reached Amberpon Island (Numfor) after their ship, en route from Hamburg to China, was wrecked on Helen Reef; helmsman Alfred Tetens, who in 1866 was driven away by locals on the north coast of New Guinea’s north-west peninsula after attempting to raise the Hamburg flag; and the notorious imaginary journey of Theodor Mundt-Lauff (Wichmann, Entdeckungsgeschichte, II, 93-4, 127-8, 138).


the works of Alfred Russel Wallace. In 1869, when Wallace published *The Malay Archipelago*, describing his travels and observations in the region between 1854 and 1862, Meyer produced a translation, *Der Malayische Archipel*, within the same year. He followed this in 1870 with two collections on the origin of species and the theory of natural selection, translated from original essays by Wallace and Darwin. The second of these collections appeared in print in April 1870. On 6 July Meyer embarked for Batavia (Jakarta) and by the end of September was stationed in Manado, Celebes (North Sulawesi, Indonesia). It seems clear that Meyer’s admiration for Wallace’s work influenced his decision to go abroad; indeed, Ballard counts him as one among a ‘wave of naturalist explorers’ who travelled to the Malay Archipelago during the 1870s in Wallace’s wake, ‘each bearing copies of his book and consciously emulating his earlier feats’. Of this wave, however, only a handful were subsequently nominated by Wallace, in the tenth edition of *The Malay Archipelago* (1890), as ‘the most important of the natural history travellers’ to have visited New Guinea since his own sojourn there: Meyer and Finsch, the Italians Odoardo Beccari (1843-1920) and Luigi Maria d’Albertis (1841-1901) and the Briton Henry O. Forbes (1851-1932).

In an 1873 article in *Das Ausland*, along with Petermanns Mittheilungen one of the most important popular geographical journals of the nineteenth century, Meyer summarised New Guinea’s various attractions. Geographers, he claimed, were confronted by ‘the blank expanses and the many question marks on the maps of this island land’, which ‘stare almost shamefully back at [them]”; politicians saw in it ‘yet another nominal possession’, ‘a pearl in [their] diadem’ which would excite the envy of other nations. Finally, naturalists, Meyer among them, saw in New Guinea the opportunity ‘to bring to light’, in ‘areas as yet completely unaccessed, or only shimmering in the twilight and therefore all the more enticing’, a ‘wealth of new facts’ with the potential to ‘give a significant stimulus to science’. Though Meyer was

---

doubtful of New Guinea’s value as a colony, he occasionally hinted at nationalist sentiments when explaining the motivations of his visit. An 1872 report in *Petermanns Mitteilungen* quoted him as saying that ‘[s]ince a Russian naturalist … is at present residing in New Guinea, since an expedition from Genoa is directed thither, [and] since the same is contemplated in Australia, diverse powers may thus in a short time be united in the solution of an important problem’; it was his hope, he added, that ‘from this contest’ ‘considerable merit shall also accrue to German science’.  

**Figure 5: Map of maritime Southeast Asia and New Guinea.**

Map courtesy of Karina Pelling, ANU Cartographic & GIS Services, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University.

On the whole, however, his own and others’ accounts indicate that natural historical considerations dominated Meyer’s decision to venture abroad. An earlier report of his projected travels, also published in *Petermanns Mitteilungen*, named zoology as his ‘major field of study’, but added that he ‘[aspired] to observe and collect as broadly as possible’ and had equipped himself to this end with, *inter alia*, ‘instruments for magnetic, astronomic and hypsometric determinations’. According to a letter written before his 6 July 1870 departure from Rotterdam, on which this report was based,

Meyer planned ‘to embark for the East Indies, at first directly to Batavia, from there ... onwards to Menado [Manado] in Celebes’ and subsequently ‘to visit the surrounding island groups as far as New Guinea to the east’ (Fig. 5). It is thus evident that New Guinea was from the very beginning one of his principal goals.

The centrality of evolutionary considerations to Meyer’s work is made plain in the preface to a collection of extracts from his travel journals, published in 1875 under the title Auszüge aus den auf einer Neu Guinea-Reise im Jahre 1873 geführten Tagebüchern (‘Extracts from the journals kept during a New Guinea journey in the year 1873’) to accompany two maps depicting his travels in New Guinea. Excusing the maps, which had been drawn ‘in some haste’ for the 1875 International Geographic Exhibition in Paris, as ‘only a first draft, capable of much improvement’, Meyer explained that he had not undertaken his voyages with geographical activities in mind. In the Celebes and Philippines he had restricted himself to ‘tolerably well-known ground’; in New Guinea, although the ‘unknown’ nature of the territory had compelled him to produce ‘informal’ ‘geographical sketches’, these had always been subordinate to his ‘principal activity’ of ‘making zoological, anthropological and ethnographical observations and building up collections’. He hoped thereby to ‘gain perspectives’ which would assist him in evaluating ‘the process of modification [Abänderung] of life forms’, perspectives which would be more easily obtained in the ‘island world’ which was his destination than on ‘large continents’. On the one hand, great diversity in both the causes and the effects of such modification could be expected ‘within an island region which is so richly subdivided, both vertically and horizontally’; on the other, such factors could be more easily analysed in an island environment than on continents, where the life forms had presumably influenced one another’s development ‘to a far greater extent and in a more complicated fashion’. Meyer’s emphasis on island environments doubtless reflected his awareness of their importance in both Darwin’s and Wallace’s work. Darwin’s discussion of geographical distribution in his Origin of Species relied heavily on evidence drawn from islands, notably the Galápagos; islands were also intrinsic to Wallace’s 1855 essay, ‘On the Law which has Regulated the Introduction of New Species’, which Meyer translated. Even today, similar

---

176 Meyer, Auszüge, 1.
understandings of the research advantages of island environments continue to influence both the natural and the social sciences. 178

**Indigenous countersigns in Meyer’s texts**

Meyer’s research interests, then, were significantly influenced by his readings and translations of Wallace’s (and, to a lesser extent, Darwin’s) works. Nevertheless, his conclusions regarding the physical appearance, culture and origins of New Guinea’s Indigenous inhabitants differed substantially from Wallace’s. In part, this may be explained by the differing theoretical perspectives of the two men – particularly with regard to monogenist versus polygenist explanations of human origins – and their distinct research priorities. Aspects of these differences are discussed in more detail below. I argue, however, that Meyer’s understandings of Papuan racial and cultural identity were also shaped by his own encounters with Indigenous individuals in New Guinea, and that elements of these encounters were then preserved in his written and visual records. For example, Meyer’s choice and arrangement of certain words, his use of a particular tense, mood, or voice, the presence, emphasis, or absence of certain references in his works, all testify, albeit obliquely, to the ways in which the physical appearances, initiatives, actions, and demeanours of particular Indigenous persons aroused his curiosity, admiration, anger or fear, and challenged or confirmed his predispositions, particularly in regard to racial generalizations. In other words, the textual and visual records Meyer produced during and after his travels captured oblique traces – Douglas’s ‘indigenous countersigns’ – of his personal experiences with particular individuals and groups.179 Such traces can help illuminate the ways in which Meyer’s experiences with particular Indigenous individuals in New Guinea confirmed or contradicted broader assumptions about race and human difference in the European metropoles.


179 Douglas’s concept of indigenous countersigns is considered at length in the Introduction.
Meyer differed from the German missionaries and explorers who preceded him in at least two important ways. Firstly, he travelled without official sanction or sponsorship.\(^{180}\) True, the accompanying letter given him by the Sultan of Tidore, the 'nominal overlord' of New Guinea, described him as travelling 'in commission of the [Dutch] Government', but Meyer was careful to explain that this was said only 'to make my doings comprehensible to the people [of New Guinea], since earlier voyagers mostly sailed under the Dutch flag'; he travelled 'as a private man' and had 'no closer connection with any government'. He added that the Sultan's letter 'made not the least impression' on any of the New Guineans he encountered; on the contrary, when Meyer, shortly before his own departure from Ternate (Maluku Islands, Indonesia), heard that 18 men from the brigantine Franz had recently been killed and eaten in New Guinea, he asked the Resident Commissioner of Ternate how the Government intended to protect him and was informed that he must protect himself, that he had 'the right of life and death not only over the Pauans but also [his] own companions', that the Dutch Government had no officials stationed anywhere in New Guinea and that the UZV missionaries operated independently of the Government and did not enjoy its protection.\(^{181}\)

Unlike most previous German travellers to New Guinea, Meyer was also the only European of his party.\(^{182}\) Its other members, numbering 35 in total, included the captain and crew of the schooner Fathul Hair ('Fortune-Seeker'), hired in Ternate, along with men recruited from various parts of New Guinea and the Malay Archipelago to act as hunters, insect-catchers, fishers, personal servants, bodyguards and translators. This diverse group included Christian and Muslim individuals from Java, Gorontalo, Makassar, Tidore and Ternate. In addition, a number of Indigenous New Guineans joined the expedition at various points and for varying periods of time.\(^{183}\) It was not unusual for Meyer to recount, in his published works, examples of observations and comments made by members of his party, either to confirm his own impressions of

\(^{180}\) Meyer's travels appear to have been largely self-funded; Martin ('Meyer, Adolph [sic] Bernhard', online <http://www.isgv.de/seabi>, accessed 14 August 2008) notes that he came from 'a well-to-do family'. Sales of natural historical collections supplemented his travel costs. For example, the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie agreed at their July 1872 meeting to purchase a selection of skeletons and skulls collected by Meyer in the Celebes and Philippines, paid 'partly from the Society's funds, partly through a voluntary subscription'. See Rudolf Virchow, [Ankauf von ostasiatischen Skeletten und Schädeln], Verhandlungen der Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte, 4 (13 July 1872), 223.

\(^{181}\) Meyer, Auszüge, 2-3, 5.

\(^{182}\) Bernstein, about whom virtually nothing has been written, is a notable exception.

\(^{183}\) Meyer, Auszüge, 2; idem, 'Dr. Meyer's Travels in New Guinea', Ocean Highways, 1 (1873), 387-9.
events or to shed further light on them. Unfortunately, however, his accounts cannot adequately be ‘triangulated’ against theirs, since none of them, to the best of my knowledge, produced any independent record of the expedition’s experiences. The strategy of comparing accounts of a single event produced by multiple individuals of varying social status, experience, occupation and temperament, which has successfully been used to dissect such key historical events as Captain Cook’s death in Hawai‘i and the spearing of Governor Arthur Phillip by an Australian warrior at Manly Cove, is therefore not available to me. Nevertheless, some insights can be obtained by internal comparison of Meyer’s own accounts, in which certain events are variously presented and interpreted depending on the genre and intended audience of the text. Instances in which Meyer diverged from commonly held beliefs or from the opinions of respected peers can also provide clues, particularly when the evidence supporting these divergent views is drawn explicitly from his personal experience.

‘The long-awaited journey’: Meyer’s arrival in New Guinea

On 14 November 1872, Meyer had departed from Vienna in the company of Kamis Birahi, a Malay hunter from Ternate. Following his earlier travels in Celebes and the Philippines (1870-72) – formative experiences, particularly with respect to Meyer’s frequent recourse to the ‘Negrito’ groups seen there as a basis for comparison with the Indigenous New Guineans he subsequently encountered, as this chapter will shortly discuss – the two had returned to Europe in order to deposit Meyer’s wife, who until then had journeyed with them, safely back in Germany. Meyer felt that it would be inappropriate to ‘expose her to the dangers of a journey to New Guinea’. Fearing that his ‘friend Kamis’, who had proved an ‘honest and trustworthy companion’ and whose ‘advice’, ‘skill’ and ‘loyalty’ he did not wish to do without in New Guinea, might go missing if left to wait ‘somewhere in the Indian [i.e. Malay] Archipelago’, Meyer had insisted that Birahi accompany them. This task accomplished, he and Birahi took ship for Singapore, where Meyer laid in quantities of useful provisions for the voyage: knives, razors, red cloth, large and small sarongs and coloured beads to trade, together with firearms, gunpowder, shot, caps, arsenic, brass wire, tinned vegetables and red wine. On 31 December the two left Singapore; on 2 February 1873, having anchored en route at Semarang, Surabaya, Makassar, Gorontalo and Kema, they

---

185 Meyer, Auszüge, 1.
186 Meyer, Auszüge, 2, 15.
arrived in Ternate. A month later, after further provisioning and hiring of their diverse party, they embarked on ‘the long-awaited journey’ to New Guinea and on 13 March dropped anchor beside the village of Kwavi in Doreh Bay (Fig. 6). After four months’ journey from Europe and ten days’ travel from Ternate, Meyer ‘had reached [his] goal at last’. ¹⁸⁷

**Figure 6: Map of north-west New Guinea, showing locations visited by Meyer.**

Map courtesy of Karina Pelling, ANU Cartographic & GIS Services, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University.

His first few days were spent in the company of local missionaries, the successors of Ottow and Geissler: C. Beyer, J. L. van Hasselt, W. H. Woelders and N. Rinnooy.¹⁸⁸ These men and their wives, who ‘showed [Meyer] all possible affection and hospitality’ and whom he remembered ‘with gratitude’, facilitated his earliest visits, advised him on subsequent travel plans and mediated his first encounters with Indigenous New Guineans. Meyer claimed that the missionaries knew ‘virtually nothing’ about New Guinea, explaining that ‘they lack[ed] the means and also the interest’ to leave their

¹⁸⁸ The latter is given as ‘Rennooy’ in Meyer, *Auszüge*, 4. For a complete list of UZV missionaries in the Doreh area, see Kamma, “*Dit wonderlijke Werk*”, II, 811-4.
missions and explore the country, their ‘gaze’ being ‘directed towards the conversion of the natives’; he added that the constant battle with the difficult conditions of daily life ‘exhausts almost their entire strength’. Nevertheless, he consulted them on how best to structure his travels in order to take advantage of the prevailing winds; he also obtained from them sufficient linguistic and ethnographic material to compile two booklets, one on Papuan languages, the other on the beliefs and customs of the Mafoorese (Numforese) people. Van Hasselt, who had ‘spent 10 years amongst the Mafoorese tribe’, was Meyer’s principal source of information for both publications; Woudlers assisted him in compiling a word list from Andei (Andai), a settlement at the foot of the Arfak Mountains. Douglas, noting that these missionaries ‘linguistic and ethnographic familiarity’ with their local communities ‘challenges [Meyer’s] contempt for their knowledge of the people, if not the place’, describes this simultaneous reliance on missionaries and discounting of their knowledge as ‘a classic stance of anthropologists’. A detailed discussion of missionary presence in the texts of Meyer and Finsch is, however, beyond the scope of this thesis.

While still in Kwawi, Meyer was also able to engage the services of two Indigenous New Guineans as translators: Marcus, ‘who had become a Christian and understood the language of the islands to the north’, and Materi, ‘rather a wild fellow from Wariab in the southern Arfak Mountains’. Despite his apparent wildness, the latter subsequently won Meyer’s approval as ‘an exceedingly good-natured and accommodating person’ whose ‘particularly hearty laugh’ distinguished him from the rest of the company. It is worth emphasizing here that all Meyer’s encounters with Indigenous New Guineans were linguistically complicated. Notwithstanding considerable skill in language-learning – apart from German, he read and wrote Dutch, French, English, Latin and some Spanish – Meyer ‘lacked the necessary time to enter more closely into the study of [New Guinea’s] languages, a task which, in consideration of the great variety of dialects prevailing here, would have been an exceedingly difficult and time-consuming one’. Malay, at that time an essential language for anyone who

---

'travels in the East Indian Archipelago and does not want to behave like an Englishman travelling in Germany', served the party as a *lingua franca*, and Meyer, well supplied with 'intelligent interpreters' who 'understood Malay ... and various Papuan dialects', was 'very little obliged to learn any of the [local] languages'.

Nevertheless, the fact that all communication between Meyer and the Indigenous people he encountered had to pass through at least two (often three or even four) interpreters must have increased the potential for misunderstandings, though Meyer himself seldom commented on this. More importantly, it also added a layer of Indigenous presence — itself layered and mediated by the combination and interaction of multiple Indigenous agencies, both Papuan and Malay — to *everything* he wrote about New Guineans.

*‘Shrieking ... naked savages’: Obstruction and negotiation in Kordo*

Buffered, presumably, by the missionaries' presence, Meyer's first few days in New Guinea were unproblematic: he 'visited the houses of the natives, roamed about amongst them the whole day and sought to acquire as much as possible from them'. In contrast, his initial encounter with the inhabitants of Kordo (Korido, Supiori Island), the expedition's next port of call, was anything but reassuring. Having survived a 'miserable night' of 'tropical rain' and high seas which had left 'not a single dry spot' in Meyer's cabin, the crew of the *Fathul Hair*, following Supiori's south-west coast, were met by 'a large boat with some 20 men', who piloted them into the harbour with much 'singing and shouting'. At around 4pm on 25 March, assisted by a 'favourable breeze', they dropped anchor 'quite close to the shore at Kordo' (Fig. 7) and found themselves suddenly overrun:

[M]any people came immediately on board, sat themselves firmly down and could not be persuaded by any means to leave the ship. It was filled to overflowing with shrieking, gesticulating, importunate naked savages, and only the greatest restraint on my part avoided a possibly bloody conflict.

---

196 Compare Meyer, *Auszüge*, 7: '[In Rubi] I could make myself very well understood via two interpreters; I had already had need of three and four side by side'; idem, 14: 'Thus my Papuans reported [the characteristics of the inhabitants of the south-west coast] and thus, if I did not misunderstand it, my interpreter from Mansinam translated [them]' (emphasis mine).
Although Meyer not infrequently used ‘savages’ in his accounts as an alternative collective noun to ‘Papuans’, his writing was rarely so pejorative. His use of the word ‘savage’ here, therefore, can be understood as a textual countersign of the Kordo Papuans’ reception of him and his response to this reception. It is clear that he was badly frightened by the experience, all the more so as he could take little credit for resolving it. He admitted that the inhabitants of Kordo ‘scorned his threats, when he demanded that they leave [the deck]’.\footnote{Meyer, ‘Neu-Guinea: Reiseskizze’, 964.} They ‘removed themselves only as it grew dark’, not because Meyer’s urgings had belatedly taken effect, but as a result of their own beliefs: ‘they do not love the night’, Meyer explained, ‘they believe that the air is then filled with the spirits of the dead’\footnote{Meyer, ‘Über hundert fünf und dreissig Papúa-Schädel’, I, 63; idem, ‘Neu-Guinea: Reiseskizze’, 964.}.

**Figure 7: F. W. Bader after A. B. Meyer, ‘Dorf Kordo auf der Insel Mysore’.**\footnote{‘Kordo Village on the Island of Mysore [Biak-Supiori]’, in Meyer, *Auszüge*, title page.}

The Kordo Papuans were at first unwilling to let their visitors land. Although Meyer’s diary extracts recorded only that one of his hunters ‘had in the past shot a Papuan dead here’ and that the man’s compatriots ‘demanded atonement’, his *Ausland* article recounted the trajectory of this tense encounter in considerable detail, devoting to it the best part of a page.\footnote{Meyer, *Auszüge*, 5.} He began by explaining that a number of Malay traders, in direct contravention of the prohibitions of ‘the well-mannered [Dutch] government, under whose flag they sail’, engaged in ‘human trafficking’ in New Guinea, their trade facilitated by ‘the slavery which prevails amongst the Papuans’.\footnote{Meyer, *Auszüge*, 5; idem, ‘Neu-Guinea: Reiseskizze’, 964.} The men who approached and boarded Meyer’s schooner from Kordo recognised amongst his companions several participants in ‘a battle between traders and Papuans’ which had
taken place there only a few years previously. According to Meyer, the conflict, which had arisen from ‘disagreements during the trafficking’, was a bloody one in which ‘many lost their lives’. He concluded that the Kordo Pauans’ ‘disinclination’ to let him land was ‘well-founded’ and that, their reputation as ‘savages ever eager for plunder’ notwithstanding, they had, in this case at least, ‘genuine cause to renew the quarrel’. 204

In a later publication, the first instalment of a three-part series detailing the skulls he had acquired in New Guinea, Meyer offered a slightly different interpretation of his reception in Kordo. He identified as the precise source of their unease a single member of his party, ‘a Tidorese, who had been involved in a bloody conflict there in 1871, during a trading expedition’, and suggested that the inhabitants of Kordo had wished not to renew their quarrel but to prevent it from re-escalating. They predicted, he claimed, ‘that if [the Tidorese] went on shore, someone would attempt to kill him’, and consequently sought to prevent Meyer and his crew from landing in the belief that such a killing would invite revenge. Meyer opined that they were ‘completely in the right, according to their customs’, to refuse him permission to land until appropriate payment for the death of their ‘slain comrade’ had been made. 205

Despite his sympathetic assessment of the Kordo Pauans’ grievance, Meyer found his subsequent negotiations with them difficult and frustrating. To begin with, the ‘mighty uproar’ that ‘prevailed on board’ meant that he and his companions could not immediately comprehend ‘the cause of [their] visitors’ wild gestures’. Everyone talked at once, and Meyer, unable to identify a leader with whom he could negotiate, concluded that New Guinea’s Indigenous inhabitants had ‘no concept of placing themselves under the leadership of one or more persons’; rather, ‘each one acts on his own initiative, and believes that he can best secure validity for his opinion by shrieking as loudly as possible’. To add to the difficulty, no direct exchange of speech was feasible; here as elsewhere, all communication between Meyer and his ‘visitors’ had to pass through the mouths of the two interpreters from Doreh, Marcus and Materi. 206

Though he subsequently claimed that he ‘had not abandoned the composure of objective observation’ for the duration of the Kordo incident and that ‘the succession of scenes’,

in which he functioned simultaneously as ‘witness and co-actor’, ‘afforded [him] great enjoyment’, Meyer was clearly aware at the time of the precarious nature of his position. Believing that ‘any incautious act’ by a member of his crew, ‘or any perhaps misunderstood action’ on the part of the Papuans, ‘could have led immediately to battle’, he attempted to influence the ‘incensed minds’ of the latter in two ways: ‘On the one hand, I laid before them a heap of gifts; on the other, I had my weapons prepared for action before their eyes’.  

This carrot-and-stick approach, Meyer believed, was not without effect; he added that he had also found it productive of desired results ‘on various other occasions’. Nevertheless, agreement was not soon reached; lengthy negotiation proved to be necessary, and Meyer concluded that the whole affair must have been ‘of the greatest importance’ in the eyes of its Kordo participants, who constantly sought the input of their fellow villagers:

> At every new stage of the diplomatic imbroglio, the Papuans travelled back and forth from my ship to their houses, which stood in the water, and consulted with their comrades ... or, as I have more reason to believe, with their wives, who have great influence over the men, even if this might not always appear to be the case.  

For Meyer, this protracted process was made more stressful by what he saw as mercurial behaviour on the part of the Papuans. At one moment, he recalled, it seemed that they ‘would have risked their lives in order to enforce their will’; then, in the next instant, ‘they changed into haggling hucksters, when they saw that there was something to be procured thereby, and addressed, with an earnestness worthy of a better object, the important question [of] whether a white string of beads was to be preferred to a blue one’.  

Not until midday of the following day was ‘complete concord’ achieved between the participating parties. At first the residents of Kordo indicated that they considered the proffered gifts inadequate; then, when Meyer, by his own account ‘almost at the end of [his] patience and planning to seek out another anchoring place’, added ‘still more’

---

offerings to the pile, all at once ‘peace was concluded and was not marred in the slightest throughout the whole of [his subsequent] stay’. Despite his anxiety and frustration, Meyer had been favourably impressed by the forceful demeanour of these Papuans, ‘fearless, wild and radiating strength in their excitement’, who ‘felt themselves to be masters’ of the situation ‘and also maintained themselves as such’, ignoring what Meyer considered his ‘proprietary right’ to the deck of his schooner and scoffing at his attempts to enforce it. These expressions of admiration, however, along with his sympathy for the justice of the Kordo Papuans’ grievance, were undoubtedly contingent on the eventual success of the negotiations. Had the tensions reached a bloodier conclusion, it is probable that the ‘fearless, wild’ individuals of this account would have been recast as treacherous savages. Meyer himself reflected on what might have been:

I could vividly imagine how the patience of someone who is accustomed to be obeyed, and who attends such a spectacle with a mind less philosophical and less interested in these fellow humans’ way of thinking, can snap, and how the most trifling occasion can result in a bloodbath, which must always grieve the philanthropist to the utmost.  

Once the palm leaf symbolically prohibiting him from landing or taking water had been removed, Meyer came on shore and was pleased to find the locals co-operative, particularly in supplying human remains. When offered ‘glass beads, bright trinkets, knives and tobacco’, they willingly brought him the skulls of enemies, kept as trophies in their huts, and, when these ran out, dug up the remains of their ancestors to trade. Meyer’s seemingly disingenuous explanation of the origins of this ‘rich haul’ – some 112 skulls in all – is the more believable since he freely admitted that the human remains he had previously sent to the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie had been obtained via nocturnal excavations of ‘Negrito’ graves. He elaborated:

Whereas in Celebes and Luzon I sometimes had to plunder skeletons and skulls secretly … in New Guinea, before taking recourse to these means,

---

I attempted to reach my goal in an amicable way, and in fact I did not plunder any of the 135 skulls I brought back, nor any of the many bones, either behind the backs of the inhabitants or in open opposition to them, instead I bought them piece by piece.  

Based on his own observations and on information supplied by van Hasselt, Meyer concluded that this willingness to part with ancestral remains was not so ‘impious’ an act as it might at first appear to German mores. In the Geelvink Bay area wooden figures were customarily carved to represent deceased individuals; following ‘certain ceremonies during the period of mourning’, the soul of the deceased was believed to ‘pass into’ the ancestor figure, or korwar (Fig. 8), which was then venerated as a ‘medium of communication between the deceased and his living relatives’. Meyer observed that these korwar were carefully stored ‘beneath handsome mats in a corner of the [owner’s] dwelling’ and quickly removed from view when unexpected visitors appeared. He wished to purchase examples, but their owners did not part with them easily and Meyer was not prepared to content himself with korwar produced specifically for sale to tourists, considering them inauthentic: ‘A korwar … made simply for amusement (wauereik) is not a korwar kaku, not a real one, for there is no spirit (rur) in it’. His efforts to obtain ‘genuine’ korwar generated a certain amount of tension, as demonstrated by the following episode in Mansinam:

A Papuan had been persuaded to sell me a korwar. I had placed it on the ground at my feet. Suddenly another man rushed up with an expression of horror on his face and made off with the korwar … I sent someone to run after him … and told him I had bought the korwar; but he maintained that the figure belonged to him and had been stolen out of his prahu which lay nearby; it was his father and he would become ill if he parted with it, but he would make me another one.  

---


On this occasion Meyer was ‘forced to leave’ the man in question his father and declined his offer of a substitute. He was, however, able to obtain four korwar at once during a subsequent visit to Weueli, a mountain settlement south-east of Armini (south Cenderawasih Bay). Meyer arrived at Weueli escorted by people from the nearby coastal village of Nappan (Napan) and found that their presence ensured him ‘easy access everywhere’. He deduced that the inhabitants of Weueli were in some way ‘dependent’ on those of Nappan and ascribed the success of his negotiations to the influence of his companions rather than to the ‘abundant remuneration’ of knives and

Meyer’s glass beads, however, certainly proved their worth in his dealings with the inhabitants of Kordo. Their willingness to exchange enemy and ancestral skulls for European trade goods did not extend to the jawbones accompanying these skulls, which Meyer could not at first ‘induce them to sell’. Though they ‘invariably’ told him ‘that they did not have the jawbones’, Meyer believed that in fact the Kordo Papuans, ‘like so many peoples’, considered the jawbone ‘more sacred than the other parts of the skeleton, either as a symbol of the activity of eating’ (‘one of their main occupations’, he churlishly remarked), ‘or perhaps ... because they have found it to be more resistant to the destructive effects of time or of the soil’. Eventually he went so far as actually to ‘refus[e] to buy skulls without jawbones’; and since, by his account, ‘the trade in skulls’ had by that time ‘become a mania amongst them’, as a result of his having taken the precaution of giving away ‘certain objects of barter (particularly large blue beads) ... only in exchange for skulls’, he was at last able to obtain both skulls with jawbones and jawbones alone. Nevertheless, his own figures indicate the reluctance with which their owners parted from these objects: Meyer recorded that he had ‘acquired in Kordo 112 skulls, 97 of these without jawbones, 15 with jawbones and in addition 13 jawbones without skulls’.  

Towards the end of his stay in Kordo, Meyer’s ‘harvest’ of ‘rich treasures’, ethnological as well as anthropological, was favoured by the departure of all the men in the village, ‘with the exception of a few old men and youths’, ‘in a great number of large boats’. Meyer was unable to establish the purpose of this exodus, but hazarded a guess at either a ‘military expedition’ or a hunting and fishing venture. Shortly before their departure the men of Kordo suggested that Meyer leave also, warning him against possible attacks by the island’s ‘mountain dwellers’. Meyer at first interpreted this as a trap, but later discovered that this was not the case: either he had ‘done the good people an injustice in [his] thoughts’, or perhaps ‘the fear of [his] weapons’ had ‘discouraged them from following evil inclinations’. At all events, the absence of the men allowed Meyer’s

---

218 Meyer, ‘Notizen über Glauben und Sitten’, 29; idem, Ausfüge, 10.
interactions with the women of Kordo to become ‘freer’, the latter, though they never consented to board the ship, ‘came rowing to [it] in greater numbers, in order to offer [Meyer] what they had to sell’. Though he could not quite bring himself to describe them as beautiful, Meyer recalled that there were ‘several individuals amongst the women with, according to our perceptions, interesting facial features’; he judged them ‘beautés du diable’ and confessed that he would ‘not easily forget the vivid impression’ made upon him by ‘the vessels, swift as arrows, shooting [towards me] ... occupied by many naked women and girls’. Once again, his indispensable glass beads had their effect:

I piqued the vanity of these ladies particularly with beautiful large pale-green beads, [in exchange] for which they gave [me] everything I wanted. I thus obtained, among other things, extremely curious wooden carvings, some of them obscene, which [had] adorned a small, isolated house serving as a sleeping place for the youths, and which, as it appears to me, represent the begetting and rearing of children.

The getting of desired objects was by no means always so straightforward. On the island of Jobi (Yapen), his next stopping place, Meyer was ‘unable to obtain a single human skull’; his various trade goods, so eagerly received in Kordo, failed to entice the locals of Ansus (Ansas), Jobi’s main coastal settlement, and he was obliged to console himself with the reflection that ‘the success or failure of such acquisition[s] is entirely fortuitous’. Though he had previously expressed considerable satisfaction with the success of his trading practices in Kordo, and had confidently predicted that any ‘successor’ there would ‘be able to reap a rich harvest’, he now admitted that his interpretations of Papuan motivations were speculative at best:

---

220 The German word ungezwungener literally translates as ‘more unforced’ (Meyer, ‘Neu-Guinea: Reiseskizze’, 965).
223 Meyer noted that the island ‘is called Jappen [note that German ‘j’ is pronounced as English ‘y’] by the natives’ and that ‘Jobi is merely a smaller place to the north-east’, but decided that since ‘the name Jobi has become so much established on our maps’ he would ‘not suggest changing it’. Meyer, Bericht über eine Reise nach Neu-Guinea, 15.
The reason why the Kordoans sold me the skulls may have been quite another one than I suppose, for the Papuans, as much as our [own] peasantry and [even] more so, are full of superstitions, divinations and the like.  

*A very dangerous place*: Tensions in Ansus

Jobi, Meyer declared, was occupied by ‘an energetic and warlike population, against whom one must be on one’s guard’. Though he claimed that ‘[t]he Papooas of Jobie [sic] have everywhere the bad reputation of being wild and quarrelsome’, Meyer’s assertion was based not only on hearsay but on personal experience. During a hunting excursion in the mountains of Jobi he and his party were ambushed and one of his hunters ‘wounded in the neck by a lance’. Meyer, who had already deduced that the relationship between the inhabitants of the coast and those of the mountains was a hostile one (he claimed that this was the case ‘almost everywhere in the East Indian Archipelago, but especially in New Guinea’), speculated that perhaps ‘some individuals’ of Jobi’s ‘mountain tribes’ ‘believed us to be more friendly to the inhabitants of Ansus’, a settlement on the island’s southern coast, ‘than to themselves’. It was equally possible, however, that ‘they required no special reason for fighting’. He later stated that ‘attacks without any preceding quarrel and without a direct external cause are common on Jobi’, citing as supporting evidence the comments of a captain he had subsequently met in Nappan, who recounted to him ‘a similar attack’ on Jobi in which ‘three of his people had only just escaped with their lives’. Another captain, an Englishman ‘living in seclusion on Ternate, who had done a great deal of business in New Guinea’, had warned Meyer against sleeping on shore in Jobi, adding that he had once ‘been compelled to shoot a number of Papuans there’ after ‘several of his sailors were killed at the water’s edge before his eyes’. Even Wallace, who had not himself visited ‘the large island of Jobie’, described it as ‘a very dangerous place’ where ‘sailors are often murdered ... when on shore’ and ‘vessels ... attacked’; its ‘natives’, he claimed, ‘are in a very barbarous condition, and take every opportunity of robbery and murder’. Meyer, his translator, would doubtless have been aware of this.

225 Meyer, ‘Über hundert fünf und dreissig Papua-Schädel’, I, 64-5; see also idem, Auszüge, 8.
226 Meyer, Bericht über eine Reise nach Neu-Guinea, 15.
228 Meyer, Auszüge, 6.
229 Meyer, ‘Dr. Meyer’s Expedition to New Guinea’, 78; idem, Auszüge, 6.
230 Meyer, Bericht über eine Reise nach Neu-Guinea, 14.
Fearing that the inhabitants of Ansus, if not directly responsible for the attack, were nevertheless 'behind it' in some way, Meyer returned there and, 'in order to protect' himself, 'made them accountable for the ambush'. He demanded that the perpetrators be captured and handed over. The Ansus Papuans 'made apparent efforts' to comply with this request, but the men they sent into the mountains returned empty-handed and reported that 'the huts there stood empty and everyone had fled'. Meyer then gave them an ultimatum of 48 hours. After this time had elapsed, a delegation appeared and offered him 'two birds of paradise as recompense'. This, they explained, since 'no-one had been killed', was 'the usual payment'; had any member of the party died as a result of the attack, six birds would have been required. Meyer's response was to resort to threats:

I rejected this compensation with the appearance of anger and had my translators say that unless they brought me at least one of the attackers, I would set the whole village on fire ... My ship had 5 cannons, and in addition there were more than 30 weapons on board, so I could certainly threaten; I lay at anchor only a few hundred paces from the houses, and the Papuans therefore took my threat seriously.

At this point Meyer interrupted his narrative to reassure his listeners: it was 'hardly necessary to remark' that he 'did not have the intention to shed blood' and 'would rather have suffered injustice than perpetrated it'. He claimed, however, that such behaviour was 'necessary in order to be held in respect'; 'more reasonable conduct is interpreted by the Papuans as fear, and they become importunate and dangerous'. By today's standards, Meyer's actions at this point appear blameable. However, it should be remembered that his position was undoubtedly precarious and his choices few: despite his superior firepower, he was considerably outnumbered, could expect no assistance from the Dutch Government, and was convinced, both from personal experience and from the accounts of others, that the inhabitants of Jobi could be dangerous.

Once Meyer's 'message became known in the village' – the work of 'a few moments' only – 'women, children and belongings' were immediately removed to the opposite

---

232 Meyer, Bericht über eine Reise nach Neu-Guinea, 16-7.
233 Meyer, Bericht über eine Reise nach Neu-Guinea, 17.
234 Meyer, Bericht über eine Reise nach Neu-Guinea, 17.
shore of the cove. Interpreting this ‘rapid flight’ as the prelude to battle, Meyer allowed it to continue for several hours as an ‘interesting spectacle’ before sending a messenger on shore to reassure the inhabitants of Ansus ‘that I would not do anything to them this time, if they would only return’. Though he was afterwards obliged to ‘let [the original attack] rest’, he added that he was ‘nevertheless more certain of remaining unchallenged’ and that no further incidents occurred during his remaining week in Jobi. 235

**Different spheres, different stories: Explaining variation in Meyer’s accounts**

It is remarkable that the whole Ansus incident is recounted in detail in only one of Meyer’s many travel narratives, the *Bericht über eine Reise nach Neu-Guinea* (‘Report on a journey to New Guinea’), given as an address to the Geographische Gesellschaft in Vienna in November 1873 and subsequently published in their transactions. Other versions of his New Guinea experiences, if they referred to this episode at all, did so only in the briefest and most general of terms. A letter written shortly after his return to Virchow, who subsequently read it to the members of the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, stressed that the initial attack on Meyer and his party was perpetrated by ‘Papuans completely unknown to us’, that ‘not the smallest conflict’ had preceded it and that ‘Jobi is notorious because of its wild population’, but made no reference to any subsequent tensions with the inhabitants of Ansus. On the contrary, Meyer claimed that he ‘became much more intimate with the coastal population’ of Jobi as a result of the attack and that ‘they considered themselves responsible for it’, a claim repeated nowhere else. 236

In December 1873 three articles by Meyer appeared in quick succession, in the journals *Das Ausland, Ocean Highways* and *Nature* respectively. Of these, the article in *Ocean Highways* featured a brief mention of the attack and none at all of its consequences. The *Ausland* article, which was considerably longer, recorded the Jobi Papuans’ ‘ill repute’ of ‘being very wild and inspiring little confidence’ – ‘[a]nd doubtless they earn their reputation’ – and added a lengthy digression on the prevalence and significance of cannibalism in New Guinea. The attack itself was likewise described at length, with Meyer speculating that the perpetrators were attracted ‘either [by] the manhunt alone, or [by] the spoils of clothing and the like’. Its consequences, however, were dismissed in

less than a sentence: ‘As a result of this attack I was able only with difficulty to avoid a conflict with the inhabitants of Anus’. Meyer added that ‘the narration of these events would be beyond the scope of [this] sketch’.\textsuperscript{237} According to the version in Nature, the party was attacked ‘without any warning or provocation ... with spears and arrows’, but Meyer ‘afterwards took such precautions and frightened [the Anus Papuans] to such a degree, that during our whole stay here we experienced nothing further disagreeable’.\textsuperscript{238} In contrast, his travel journal extracts, first published in 1875, made no mention of his having ‘frightened’ the inhabitants of Anus; rather, he claimed, he had been ‘able only with difficulty to avoid a bloodier conflict’ with them following the attack on his hunting party and had done so, moreover, ‘by means of moderation and yielding’.\textsuperscript{239}

With the exception of his letter to Virchow, Meyer’s address to the Geographische Gesellschaft was his first detailed presentation of travel information post-voyage. One might therefore speculate that his audience at this address responded negatively or disapprovingly to his formulation of the events in Anus, and that his omission or modification of this episode in subsequent publications represents a response to this disapproval. Confirmation or denial of this hypothesis, however, would require records of audience responses to Meyer’s address as supporting evidence. I have not found any such evidence. Nor is there any particular reason to assume that Meyer’s audience in the Geographische Gesellschaft would necessarily have seen anything to disapprove of in his description of the happenings in Anus. Another, perhaps more likely scenario is that Meyer emphasized, reformulated or omitted certain aspects of his travel experiences depending on the audience for whom each specific address or publication was intended. Unsurprisingly, his address to the Geographische Gesellschaft foregrounded the ‘main geographical results’ of his expedition: the circumnavigation of Geelvink Bay, the crossing of mainland New Guinea from one coast to the other, and the ascent of the Arfak Mountains to a height of 6000 feet.\textsuperscript{240} Details of his face-to-face contacts with the country’s Indigenous inhabitants took second place to geographical and topographical information. Wolfgang and Christian Sitte point out that Vienna’s Geographische Gesellschaft, which was founded in 1856 with the aim of ‘promoting the dissemination of geographical knowledge and encouraging interest in geography’ through regular meetings and published transactions, originally understood ‘geography’

\textsuperscript{238} Meyer, ‘Dr. Meyer’s Expedition to New Guinea’, 78.
\textsuperscript{239} Meyer, Auszüge, 6.
\textsuperscript{240} Meyer, Bericht über eine Reise nach Neu-Guinea, 30.
as referring primarily to ‘up-to-date ... communications and reports on the exploration of the last blank spots on the map’, with ‘economic data’ and ‘geomorphology’ as later inclusions; ‘human geography’, a ‘comparatively late’ appearance, was not evident as a research interest in the publications of the Geographische Gesellschaft before the 1950s.\(^{241}\)

Given the priorities of the Geographische Gesellschaft, Meyer’s focus on his geographical achievements is not surprising. More subtle, yet equally important, are the stylistic techniques he used to present himself in this address as essentially a lone figure winning geographical knowledge against great odds. Overall, his style does not conform completely to either of the two discourses – the informational and the sentimental / experiential – which Pratt identifies as ‘hegemonic’ forms of nineteenth-century European travel writing.\(^{242}\) Rather, it corresponds in many respects to the ‘heroic narrative [paradigm] of adventure, personal prowess, obstacles overcome and prizes won’ which, she argues, reflected the way in which explorers in the nineteenth century were seen, though not necessarily the way in which they wrote about themselves.\(^{243}\) Central to Meyer’s use of this paradigm, I would argue, was a process of selection which simultaneously performed two seemingly contradictory functions: firstly, to depersonalize the other participants in his New Guinea encounters; and secondly, to emphasize their negative characteristics.

I begin with the evidence for depersonalization. It is revealing that in his address to the Geographische Gesellschaft Meyer did not refer to a single non-European individual by name. This included members of his own party, both Malay and New Guinean, as well as the various locals with whom he had contact in Kordo, Ansus, and elsewhere in mainland New Guinea and the Schouten Islands. Individuals identified by name in his journal extracts were described in the Bericht über eine Reise by role, as though only their functional contribution to the geographical success of the expedition were important: ‘I had six of my Malays with me as an escort’ is a typical example.\(^{244}\) The translators Marcus and Materi, named individually in the travel journals, were


\(^{243}\) Pratt, ‘Scratches on the Face of the Country’, 127.

\(^{244}\) Meyer, Bericht über eine Reise nach Neu-Guinea, 26.
homogenized in the Bericht über eine Reise into ‘several Papuans’ from Doreh, ‘who had learned to speak Malay very well while [staying] with the missionaries’. Their significance hinged on the extent to which they were able to facilitate Meyer’s achievement of his aims, in this case his negotiations with the people of Ansus: ‘with the aid of this language [Malay] … I was very well able to make myself understood’.  

As for Kamis Birahi, Meyer, who stated elsewhere that he considered the Malay hunter’s advice and skill so indispensable to the success of the New Guinea expedition that he was unwilling to let him out of his sight, did not even acknowledge his existence.

Also significant in this context is Meyer’s narration of his confrontation with the Papuans of Kordo. In the Geographische Gesellschaft address only, Meyer utilised what Pratt terms the ‘timeless ethnographic present tense’, representative of a ‘normalizing discourse’ which serves to suppress the particular circumstances of an historical encounter by characterizing Indigenous actions and reactions during this encounter as ‘instance[s] of a pregiven custom or trait’, mere ‘repetitions of … normal habits’.

Since Mysore [Biak-Supiori] is visited from time to time by Malay traders, it is nothing so uncommon for the Papuans there to see a ship approaching. Nevertheless, it is an event, and everyone rows towards such a [vessel]. Immediately, before one has even dropped anchor, the deck is filled with dozens of naked, shrieking savages … amid such a tumult one can do nothing but endure everything quietly and wait until it pleases the gentlemen to withdraw.

Meyer’s use of the ethnographic present here suggests that the Indigenous inhabitants of Biak-Supiori invariably rowed out to meet approaching ships and habitually occupied their decks; that the reception he experienced was not the result of specific historical circumstances, but was in some sense customary and normal. The pre-existing tensions between members of Meyer’s crew and the residents of Kordo, the latter’s demands for reparation, the frustrations and difficulties of extensively mediated communication and lengthy negotiations, recorded in detail in Meyer’s Ausland article and subsequently in

245 Meyer, Bericht über eine Reise nach Neu-Guinea, 17.
246 Pratt, ‘Scratches on the Face of the Country’, 120, 123; cf. Fabian, Time and the Other, 80-6.
247 Meyer, Bericht über eine Reise nach Neu-Guinea, 14.
his published journal extracts, received no acknowledgement in his Geographische Gesellschaft address. He mentioned merely that ‘I avoided a conflict [in Kordo] only with difficulty, since [the inhabitants] did not wish to allow me to land’, but that he had nevertheless been able to ‘get onto good terms with them in due course’ and had afterwards ‘associated with them in [a] friendly fashion’. Even in these brief comments, the first person and narrative past tense used contrast sharply with the timeless, impersonal quality of the preceding paragraph. Perhaps, in reformulating his reception in Kordo in these terms, Meyer hoped to distance himself from a situation in which he had felt his authority to be challenged.

If Meyer’s strategies of depersonalization served to foreground him as the principal actor in the events narrated, the negative light in which he portrayed other participants in these events had the effect of accentuating the obstacles faced during the journey and his personal merit in overcoming them. Following his introductory remarks about previous European expeditions to New Guinea and the possible origins of its Indigenous inhabitants, Meyer’s first concern was to enumerate to his listeners the peculiar difficulties experienced by the traveller in New Guinea: the ‘absolute’ lack of paths and beasts of burden, the scarcity of large settlements, the ‘bellicose’ relations between neighbouring populations, and the difficulty of obtaining and transporting adequate provisions. He concluded that ‘[o]ne enjoys in New Guinea none of those advantages which other countries’ — including, by his account, ‘Inner Africa, Asia and America’ — ‘offer to the traveller’. Though I have no reason to suppose that Meyer was exaggerating these difficulties, his descriptions of them nonetheless occupy a noticeably more prominent place in his Geographische Gesellschaft address than in his other voyage accounts.

The hardships of his voyage, Meyer implied, were aggravated by the negative qualities of its other participants, whom he characterized variously as irrational, lazy, obstructive or violent. This stance is evident from his first mention of specific persons with whom he had contact, and follows directly from his enumeration of the physical obstacles encountered in New Guinea. By way of illustrating the difficulties involved in transporting provisions on overland excursions, he recalled an episode from his crossing of mainland New Guinea:

248 Meyer, Bericht über eine Reise nach Neu-Guinea, 14.
249 Meyer, Bericht über eine Reise nach Neu-Guinea, 9-10.
During my passage from Geelvink Bay to MacCluer Gulf, [on which I was] accompanied by some 15 Papuans and 6 of my [own] people, it cost me tremendous effort in the morning to induce someone to carry a very small, thin, rolled-up mattress, which I had taken with me for my own use. At last I offered an extra payment, a knife, for [any] man who would volunteer [his services], and eventually a Papuan was found for this office.  

Whereas Meyer’s journal extracts recorded that both Malays and Papuans considered carrying loads ‘beneath them’, with the added implication that he judged himself to have been at fault on this occasion for failing to anticipate their resistance to his demands, the version in his Geographische Gesellschaft address offered no such explanatory or mitigating remarks. Instead, Meyer added that the eventual volunteer, ‘curiously enough, claimed in [all] other things to be the most eminent amongst his comrades and bore the name of a “Koráno”, that is to say “King”’. Seemingly Meyer could not reconcile this man’s willingness to undertake an activity spurned by his comrades with his own conceptions of kingly behaviour, noblesse oblige notwithstanding. He asserted, moreover, that ‘distinctions of this kind’ had ‘come into being’ in New Guinea ‘only through external influences’ and that ‘the Papuans lack any [kind of] communal or state organisation; each one is absolutely his own master’.  

Though the suggestion that hierarchical forms of social organisation were absent from Indigenous New Guinean societies also appeared elsewhere in Meyer’s works – one example being his statement that the men who boarded his schooner in Kordo had ‘no concept of placing themselves under the leadership of one or more persons’ – it was given particular prominence in his Geographische Gesellschaft address. Other statements contributed to his depiction of Papuans as generally disorderly and uncontrolled: he complained, for example, that the Papuans from Geelvink Bay who had accompanied him across the mainland as guides and carriers ‘wanted everywhere … to go “taverning”’ and that he ‘had the greatest difficulty keeping them by [him]’. ‘The Papuan’, he added dismissively, ‘is always inclined to stage a “festival”’; this  

---

250 Meyer, Bericht über eine Reise nach Neu-Guinea, 10.
251 ‘When it came to the matter of carrying overland the necessary provisions, the baggage and so forth, my companions failed, as I should have foreseen’ (Meyer, Auszüge, 12).
252 Meyer, Bericht über eine Reise nach Neu-Guinea, 10.
consists of dancing, singing, drinking palm wine ... and eating as much as possible, and often lasts for days.\textsuperscript{253}

In some cases Meyer’s depictions of supposed Papuan anarchy were coupled with graphic illustrations of himself, Jehovah-like, bringing order out of chaos, usually via threats of physical violence. This juxtaposition, demonstrated by his narration of the events at Ansus, is also evident in the following passage:

On the way back by sea [to Geelvink Bay from MacCluer Gulf] we were assailed by a storm, during which things almost went very badly; the boats of the Papuans are very fragile and there is as little leadership [evident] amongst them in [times of] danger as [there is] on any other occasion; each one shrieks with all his might and acts on his own initiative. Amid such pandemonium it is therefore not possible to govern them otherwise than with a revolver in [one’s] hand, and without this I would never have got back to my ship.\textsuperscript{254}

Meyer’s urge to assert his authority over the events recounted to the members of the Geographische Gesellschaft extended even to occasions on which he had not been physically present, notably the ascent of the Arfak Mountains. Though admitting that this geographical mission was not ‘carried out under my personal leadership’, since a heavy fever had compelled him to remain ‘at the foot of the mountains’, he insisted that it had been ‘inspired by me, that is, called into life’, and that he had led his men in spirit, if not in body, ‘like the officer who commands his troops to spread out’.\textsuperscript{255} The choice of military metaphor was not, I think, a coincidence.

Passages from some of Meyer’s other accounts offer a more nuanced picture of Papuan social relations. Though he denied that distinctions such as the title ‘Koráno’ were local in origin, he nevertheless recognised other forms of Indigenous authority; a good example is his description of a man named Mansinami, who according to Meyer ‘functioned as “sorcerer”’ within his home community of Andai.\textsuperscript{256} His conjectures that the residents of Weueli, for instance, were ‘dependent’ in some way on those of

\textsuperscript{253} Meyer, Bericht über eine Reise nach Neu-Guinea, 25.
\textsuperscript{254} Meyer, Bericht über eine Reise nach Neu-Guinea, 27.
\textsuperscript{255} Meyer, Bericht über eine Reise nach Neu-Guinea, 28, note 1.
\textsuperscript{256} Meyer, ‘Anthropologische Mittheilungen’, 108; see also idem, Auszüge, contents page.
Nappan, or that the inhabitants of Ansus could effectively be held responsible for attacks carried out by neighbouring tribes, suggest that he was aware of the probable existence of complex social networks of reciprocity and obligation, even if he was unable fully to comprehend their operation.\textsuperscript{257} His account of the negotiations in Kordo recorded sophisticated diplomatic and consultative processes in action. Finally, the following journal description of an expedition up the Jarotwar River on 20 May contrasts sharply with the previously cited examples chronicling (supposedly typical) Papuan anarchy and chaos:

[W]e travelled exceedingly quickly in the boat, some 25 feet long, manned by 18 Papuans and filled to capacity. The rowers seem only just to dip their oar into the water, sit with their bodies unmoving and use only their arms to execute strokes in very rapid sequence, keeping time by means of a monotonous but hortatory song. The flicking motion which they know how to give to their oar before they draw it from the water has an extraordinary effect ... they travel in this way as speedily as the speediest steamship, sustain the motion for a very long time and dart almost soundlessly through the water.\textsuperscript{258}

Meyer’s address to the Geographische Gesellschaft constructed Indigenous New Guineans not merely as disorganized and uncontrolled, but as actively violent. While recounting the hardships experienced by the Russian naturalist-explorer Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay (1846-1888) during his residence in the Astrolabe Bay area, Meyer asked rhetorically, ‘in which part of this island, on which anyone has thus far landed, has the life of the traveller not been threatened?’ and continued:

Almost all accounts from this and previous centuries have had attacks and battles to report, and I too must deliver my contribution in these terms, even though I was so fortunate as not to forfeit my life.\textsuperscript{259}

In the light of these comments, the attack on Meyer’s hunting party in the mountains of Jobi, in fact the only incident recorded throughout his five-month stay which could

\textsuperscript{257} Meyer, ‘Notizen über Glauben und Sitten’, 29; idem, Auszüge, 10; idem, Bericht über eine Reise nach Neu-Guinea, 15-8.
\textsuperscript{258} Meyer, Auszüge, 10.
\textsuperscript{259} Meyer, Bericht über eine Reise nach Neu-Guinea, 11.
accurately be described as either an ‘attack’ or a ‘battle’, arguably assumed an unwarranted importance within this particular narrative. His subsequent comments that ‘one cannot trust amongst the Papuans even those who sincerely appear to be [one’s] friends’, that under ‘[certain] circumstances [this] friendship turns into its opposite’ and that ‘if they believe that they will go unpunished, opportunity makes thieves and more out of them’, though presented as having a general relevance, were also based on the Jobi attack; while he cited additional sources in support of his claim, these were drawn from the accounts of others rather than from his own experience.\textsuperscript{260}

Certainly, some of Meyer’s experiences in New Guinea could easily have convinced him that his life was in danger. The fact that such experiences were recounted as part of his Geographische Gesellschaft address is therefore less remarkable than their prominence within this particular narrative. Other accounts of Meyer’s travels, as the above paragraphs have demonstrated, depicted both specific events and his perceptions of Indigenous New Guineans overall in often varying, occasionally even contradictory ways. A paper titled ‘Anthropologische Mittheilungen über die Papua’s von Neu-Guinea’, presented in February 1874 to the members of the Anthropologische Gesellschaft in Vienna, represents a particularly clear example of such variation.\textsuperscript{261} Although separated in time by less than three months, the two addresses, geographical and anthropological, differed substantially in form, style and content. In the ‘Anthropologische Mittheilungen’, the Indigenous inhabitants of New Guinea, previously relegated to the margins of Meyer’s narrative as mere nameless hindrances to his exploration of the landscape, suddenly became its central focus.

Since the Greek root from which the noun ‘anthropology’ is derived translates literally as ‘treating of man’, this shift in focus is hardly surprising.\textsuperscript{262} However, where the \textit{Bericht über eine Reise} emphasized situations of conflict and the assertion of control, the ‘Anthropologische Mittheilungen’ stressed friendly communication and peaceful cooperation. Meyer’s data on the ‘external characteristics’ of the people he encountered was by his own account obtained under circumstances of exchange, negotiation and trust. Thus, for example, he described measuring the height and shoulder breadth of particular individuals: although these were predominantly men, he was also able to

\textsuperscript{260} Meyer, \textit{Bericht über eine Reise nach Neu-Guinea}, 15.
\textsuperscript{261} Meyer, ‘Anthropologische Mittheilungen’, 87-110.
obtain measurements from a handful of women.\textsuperscript{263} He completed a number of exquisite portrait sketches of both men and women from various locations, selecting them ‘not arbitrarily and deliberately … but as I had the opportunity and inclination’ and recording the subject’s name, height and place of residence in each case; he subsequently produced these sketches as evidence for the variability of Papuan facial features.\textsuperscript{264} He countered the widespread opinion that Papuan skin was ‘of an essentially different texture than ours’ by drawing on his contact with ‘a small Papuan girl, about five years old, who was around me for a considerable time’; to stroke the ‘velvety skin’ on her ‘little arms’, Meyer claimed, was a ‘positively beneficial’ experience. Anyone who ‘had seen, or rather, felt’ such skin could only condemn as ‘a perversity’ the claim that Papuan skin was, for example, characteristically ‘couvert de villosités’, despite apparent agreement on this point by numerous other travellers.\textsuperscript{265} He also asserted that, contrary to previous reports, the arrangement of hairs on Papuan scalps did not differ from that observed amongst Europeans: he had ‘had the opportunity to see’ the ‘well-known spirals, coiling themselves around assorted centrums’, on ‘a number of [Papuans’] shaved heads’. He had, moreover, bought from one individual ‘his entire coiffure’, cut it off and brought it back to Europe with him, with the intention of studying the hairs under a microscope.\textsuperscript{266} While Meyer did not detail the precise constellations of persuasion, negotiation and (perhaps) coercion under which such moments of contact took place, the physical intimacies recorded in his ‘Anthropologische Mitteilungen’ – measuring shoulders, sketching portraits, stroking skin, cutting hair – nevertheless challenged the apparently straightforward narrative of distanced authority presented to the members of the Geographische Gesellschaft.


\textsuperscript{265} Meyer, ‘Anthropologische Mitteilungen’, 101. Though \textit{couvert de villosités} translates literally as ‘covered with hairs’, Meyer apparently understood it to refer to skin that was ‘rough and scaly’ (\textit{rauh und schuppig}), perhaps because the Latin root \textit{villisus} can be translated as either ‘rough’ or ‘hairy’ (Meyer, ‘Anthropologische Mitteilungen’, 102). Several earlier travellers had suggested that rough, scaly skin was a typically Papuan characteristic, though earlier commentators than Meyer also proposed ichthyosis and other skin diseases, rather than any fundamental difference in the constitution of Papuan skin, as explanations. See, for example, Friedrich Müller, \textit{Reise der Österreichischen Fregatte Novara um die Erde in den Jahren 1857, 1858, 1859 … Anthropologische Theil. Dritte Abtheilung: Ethnographie} (Wien: Kaiserlich-Königliche Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, in Commission bei Karl Gerold’s Sohn, 1868), 14; Finsch, \textit{Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner}, 35, 51; Earl, \textit{The Native Races of the Indian Archipelago}, 19, 36-7, 47, 69; von Baer, \textit{Über Papuas und Alfuren}, 26, 28-30, 33-4.

\textsuperscript{266} Meyer, ‘Anthropologische Mitteilungen’, 103, 105.
Several of Meyer’s remarks on Papuan physical appearance also testified to the length of his stay in New Guinea and to the everyday contacts made with both local Pauans and members of his own party. Continuing on the theme of Papuan hair, he declared that the ‘tufts’ observed by many travellers did not result from the individual hairs being arranged on the scalp ‘in [separate] sections’, as commonly supposed, but by the ‘natural tendency’ of the hairs to ‘clump together in tufts or locks’ unless hindered by cutting or combing. Observations of the Indigenous New Guineans accompanying him led Meyer to conclude that a ‘peruke [Perrücke] extending a foot [from the head] on all sides’, 267 maintained in this condition by ‘relentless’ combing, could under certain circumstances manifest a tufted appearance:

If, for example, my Papuan companions were obliged to leap into the water, as occurred several times, in order to set the boat afloat in a high sea with tempestuous winds, and if they had to swim beside the boat and pull it after them through the water, it was unavoidable that their hair became thoroughly saturated; when they then climbed back into the boat and their hair dried in the wind and sun, it hung down on all sides, clumped together in tufts. 268

An anthropological reverie on the apparent prominence of Papuan buttocks – did they indicate the presence of a ‘more considerable accumulation of fat’ than that usually displayed by European derrières, or was it simply that one seldom had ‘the opportunity, in our own cultural life, to see people going about naked?’ – may well have been influenced by the voluminous literature on the steatopygy of Saartjie Baartman, the so-called ‘Hottentot Venus’, 269 but was triggered in the first instance by another familiar sight, in this case women fetching water:

---

267 Although German Perrücke (now Perücke) translates as ‘wig’ or ‘peruke’, it is clear from the context that Meyer is describing natural heads of hair.
In Kordo the women always had to go a considerable distance along the river in order to fetch water in long bamboos carried over their shoulders... [they] filed past me in succession, one behind the other, and always this protrusion of the posterior attracted my attention anew.\footnote{270}

In his comments on the variability of skin colour amongst Malays, Meyer drew specifically on his extended association with Kamis Birahi, recording, albeit indirectly, the range of experiences shared by the two. Kamis' skin, recalled Meyer,displayed 'a very dark tint ... when he had hunted for several days in the forest' and 'became lighter when he rested; health and sickness and change of climate ... were reflected in his skin colour in the most varying nuances'.\footnote{271}

Essentially, then, these two versions of Meyer's experiences in New Guinea are substantially more illuminating when considered in conjunction than when read in isolation. Though, in some cases, the same events are recounted in both, the selection and presentation of information varies considerably in accordance with each paper's intended audience. In his role as geographer, Meyer's achievements rested on his success in winning geographical knowledge against heavy odds; indeed, as long as they remained within the realms of probability, the heavier the better. As an anthropologist, however, the value of his conclusions depended primarily on the extent to which he could convince his audience that they were based on informed observations made at close (and therefore amicable) quarters.

'The good residents of Rubi', south Geelvink Bay

Following his departure from Jobi on 29 April, Meyer's next extended encounter with Indigenous New Guineans took place in Rubi (Irubi), a coastal settlement at the southern end of Geelvink Bay.\footnote{272} His first contact with its inhabitants was quite different from his experiences in Kordo: according to Meyer, as he and his party were 'travelling slowly along the coast' from 'the south-eastern corner of Geelvink Bay', 'several Papuans rowed towards us and invited us urgently to remain here'. He accepted this invitation and found that here, with regard to the collection of human remains, his luck had turned again; during his approximately two-week residence (3 to

\footnote{270} Meyer, 'Anthropologische Mittheilungen', 96.
\footnote{271} Meyer, 'Anthropologische Mittheilungen', 98, note 1.
\footnote{272} F. S. A. de Clercq asserts that Rubi/Irubi was a temporary settlement and was abandoned shortly after Meyer's departure. See F. S. A. de Clercq, 'Vreemde reizigers over Nederlandsch Nieuw-Guinea', De Indische Gids, 10:2 (1888), 1398; Wichmann, Entdeckungsgeschichte, II, 170 note 4.
16 May) he was able to acquire a further 23 skulls and numerous other bones, including lower jaws, pelvises and femora. Nevertheless, although the Papuans of Rubi were willing to supply human remains, they were careful to control access to them:

The rumour had already gone round before my arrival ... that I bought human skulls and skeletons, and as they brought me many things that were much weather-worn ... I began to enquire where they got [them] from. No one was willing to give this away, but in the end one man agreed to take me there in secret. When we got there, however ... it was immediately evident that everything had been cleared away and only very few leavings remained; obviously they were afraid I would carry it all off.

Meyer described his days in Rubi as ‘the pleasantest ... of the entire journey’. He declared that its inhabitants, although they ‘[did] not differ externally in any way from other Papuans’, ‘stood out very much to their advantage from the tribes [he had] previously visited’ in their behaviour:

They were friendly, not importunate, did not beg for tobacco or gin ... and were evidently contented in the highest degree by my visit ... They showed themselves to me in their charming, merry, naïve way and led me to the conviction that there are in New Guinea, alongside bloodthirsty and untamed savages, also men of milder customs, and that they have raised themselves to these [customs] without external influence.

Meyer’s attempts to explain these favourable differences in behaviour were somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, he portrayed the Rubi Papuans as noble savages existing in a state of unspoilt original goodness, claiming that they ‘had not yet been influenced and corrupted by Malay or other traders’ and that they could attain ‘higher intellectual

---

274 Meyer, ‘Notizen über Glauben und Sitten’, 27. No precise location is specified in this quote; Rubi, however, located near an open-air burial ground and the only place apart from Kordo where Meyer obtained human remains, seems the most likely candidate. Meyer also described a coastal burial ground near ‘Passim’ (indicated on his map as lying slightly south of Mumi, south-west Cenderawasih Bay) but added that here his ‘haul was small’, since the inhabitants, having been ‘told of my visit, appeared to have retrieved the majority’ of the remains (idem, Auszüge, 15).
275 Meyer, Auszüge, 7-8.
and moral development' only at the cost of 'the happy life which they now appear to lead'. On the other, his assertion that they had 'raised themselves' to milder customs suggested a comparison with other Papuans at a lower, culturally more primitive stage. Meyer explicitly mentioned the inhabitants of the region around Lake Jamoor (Jamur/Yamur), where, he was informed, 'the women wear the same loincloth as the men'; noting that the women of Rubi devoted 'greater care to their attire' and that his informants there 'made fun of the women's customs by Lake Jamoor', he concluded that 'the [Rubi] Papuans themselves feel that they have climbed to a higher level with the better development of the concept of shame'.

Nor was Meyer's evident approval of feminine modesty entirely consonant with the gratification with which he recorded, immediately after his arrival in Rubi, the appearance on board his schooner of 'young girls, women and children ... in considerable numbers'. Whereas 'women had never come onto the ship' at any of his previous ports of call, at most appearing alongside 'to bring some animal or to conduct some kind of business', here they 'came merely to look and to pass the time' — a further proof of their charming naïveté.

Probably this positive response to the relative visibility of the Rubi women also registered his awareness of the conventional wisdom amongst travellers to New Guinea, dating at least to the 1615-17 circumnavigation by the Dutchmen Jacob le Maire (c.1585-1616) and Willem Cornelisz Schouten (c.1567-1625), that the presence of women during encounters usually signified peaceful intentions. Despite Meyer's contradictory assessments of the Rubi Papuans' behaviour, however, he appears to have been genuinely touched by their demonstrations of goodwill and friendship:

The parting from the good residents of Rubi was difficult for me; they also seemed to have been fond of me ... Many came on board at our departure on 16 May, in order to give me their hand once again, a custom which they quickly adopted from us, but which I never saw practised between two Papuans. Many saluted me with their head, at the

276 Meyer, Auszüge, 7-9.
277 Meyer, Auszüge, 7.
278 The Latin version of Le Maire's journal recorded, for example, that the presence of women, some of them pregnant, in the canoes that approached the Eendracht off the north-east coast of New Guinea on 9 July 1616 'was a most certain token of peace' (Jacob Le Maire, 'Ephemerides sive descriptio navigationis Australis ...', in Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas, Novus Orbis Sive Descriptio Indiae Occidentalis ... (Amstelodami: Apud Michaelem Colinium, 1622), Folio 69v.). Thanks to Chris Ballard for bringing this point to my attention. On the impact of Le Maire and Schouten's circumnavigation on European perceptions of the South Pacific more generally, see Michiel Van Groesen, 'Changing the Image of the South Pacific: Willem Schouten, his Circumnavigation, and the De Bry Collection of Voyages', Journal of Pacific History, 44:1 (2009), 77-87.
same time looking sympathetically into my eyes. For me there is no question but that these people are good.279

Though he added (perhaps somewhat gratuitously) that these comments did ‘not preclude’ the possibility that even these paradigmatical Papuans might ‘also some day commit a treacherous action, if the temptation is great and no punishment threatens’, Meyer’s own contacts with the ‘good residents of Rubi’ appear to have been wholly positive.280 Other versions of his travels confirm this impression: his article in Nature, for example, claimed that the Rubi Papuans ‘treated me from the beginning to the end in the most friendly way’ and that the decision to attempt a crossing of the mainland from Rubi was made precisely because he saw that he ‘could trust the natives here’.281 No attacks, no threats, not even an unwelcoming reception: it is no wonder that the ‘good residents of Rubi’ did not rate a single mention in his address to the Geographische Gesellschaft. Certainly the latter included an extended reflection on the ‘diverse stages of development’ occupied by ‘the Papuans of New Guinea’; these, Meyer informed his audience, led to the ‘interesting and important question’ of whether New Guinea’s Indigenous inhabitants had ‘in part raised themselves, through their own initiative or through external influence, from a pure state of nature to a higher stage’ – the latter characterized predominantly by moral characteristics, including ‘a more developed sense of shame and many other expressions of disposition and intellect [Gemüths- und Geistesäußerungen] which bring them closer to us’ – or whether they had ‘fallen back into this state of nature’.282 In his Geographische Gesellschaft address, however, Meyer’s reflections were prompted not by the ‘men of milder customs’ he had met in Rubi but by their negative counterparts, the cannibal tribes believed to inhabit the east coast of Geelvink Bay. Despite never having encountered them at first hand, Meyer confidently reported that these tribes occupied ‘a very low stage of human development’:

Admittedly, I did not myself set eyes on them, but saw only their camping places, probably because they withdrew when they saw us coming and heard us shooting; but I ascertained that they lead a nomadic life, stark naked, not even their private parts covered, without houses, in

279 Meyer, Auszüge, 9.
280 Meyer, Auszüge, 9.
very small bands, that they eat their own dead, and that they attack everyone who approaches them without preliminaries ... They are called Tarúngarés, and I can perhaps think myself lucky not to have encountered them in person. They represent amongst the Papuans probably the lowest stage of human development, together with those tribes, living under similar circumstances, which have been described from the south coasts; until now, however, such crude tribes were not known from the north coast or from Geelvink Bay.283

'Men of milder customs': Monogenist thought and cultural comparisons

Regardless of whether he drew his examples from the ‘higher’ or ‘lower’ end of the human development scale, one thing is clear from the above excerpts: for Meyer it was cultural factors, not biological ones, which distinguished the man of milder customs from the untamed savage. His publications consistently emphasized similarities between Papuan and European thought and behaviour. For example, in a remark reminiscent of his suggestion that the ‘superstitions’ and ‘divinations’ of the Papuans of Kordo were comparable to those of German peasants, he likened the supposed lack of clarity in Papuan beliefs regarding the exercise of spiritual agency by their korwar with the uncertainty of ‘many a one amongst us’ as to ‘the nature of the agent through whom he sends his prayer to the correct address’.284 In describing his tense encounter with the inhabitants of Kordo on board the Fatmul Hair, he illustrated his claim that their ‘honour is offended by the slightest provocation’ via a comparison with the ‘German student’ of former days, ‘out to seek a reason to believe his honour attacked’.285 Notwithstanding their unflattering implications, such comparisons suggested that the differences perceived to exist between Papuans and Europeans could be understood as differences of degree, analogous to the contrasts between uneducated and educated Germans or between the customs of earlier times and those of the present day, rather than differences of kind. In the same vein, Meyer stressed the influence of education, contrasting his New Guinean translators – ‘natives of the country, brought up by the missionaries’, who ‘had learned, among many other things, to speak fluent Malay and in general were by no means inferior in intelligence to the Malays who accompanied me’ –

---

with the ‘naïve son of the wilderness’. 286 This commitment to emphasizing similarities, rather than differences, between Papuans and Europeans also spilled over into Meyer’s discussions of the former’s physical characteristics: his 24-page ‘Anthropologische Mittheilungen’, which examined the build, skin colour and texture, hair type and facial features of the Papuans he had encountered, featured phrases explicitly comparing Papuans and Europeans (‘just like us’, ‘just like ours’, ‘as is also the case amongst us’, etc.) no less than 17 times. 287

Such comments hinted at something broader: Meyer’s commitment to a monogenist theory of human origins. This was in no way precluded by his equally enthusiastic support of Darwinian evolution. Stocking’s observations that polygenism ‘spoke to issues which were not ... all answered by the Darwinian assumption that all men had descended from a common evolutionary ancestor’ and that consequently ‘polygenist thinking [in nineteenth-century Europe] did not die with Darwin’s Origin of Species’ may equally be applied to monogenist thought. 288 Though I have not found, in Meyer’s works, an explicit statement of his belief in humanity’s shared origins, the influence of monogenist ideas on his writing is evident in his consistent emphasis on the similarities between human ‘races’ and the importance of cultural and educational factors in determining human behaviour. It is likewise apparent in his declaration that the ‘intellectual life’ of the Papuans was of ‘essentially’ the same ‘type’ as that found ‘amongst us’. 289 This verdict prefaced the following quote, chosen to conclude his 1873 Ausland article and subsequently to adorn the title page of his published travel journals:

We encounter everywhere essentially the same type of intellectual life: we see the same motives for action, the same qualities of temper, the same passions, the same manner of stimulation, interlinkage and progress of the inner functions, in crude primitive men [Naturmenschen] as in civilized Europeans, without the race making any difference, and as soon as the motive of the action is known to us, we cannot fail to

288 George W. Stocking, Jr., ‘The Persistence of Polygenist Thought in Post-Darwinian Anthropology’, in Race, Culture, and Evolution, 42, 45.
recognize, even in the most ape-like Negro, a comprehensible nature homogeneous to our own.\footnote{\textit{Theodor Waitz, Anthropologie der Naturvölker}, 6 vols (Leipzig: Friedrich Fleischer, 1859-72), I, 316; Meyer, ‘Neu-Guinea: Reiseskizze’, 992; idem, \textit{Auszüge}, title page.}

The passage is taken from the monumental six-volume \textit{Anthropologie der Naturvölker} (‘Anthropology of primitive peoples’) (1859-72) by the German philosopher, psychologist and ethnologist Theodor Waitz (1821-1864). The title of the first volume, \textit{Ueber die Einheit des Menschengeschlechtes und den Naturzustand des Menschen} (‘On the unity of the human race and the natural condition of man’), clearly reveals its author’s commitment to monogenist thinking. Meyer must certainly have considered Waitz’s words important, for he also paraphrased them in his 1874 lecture to the Anthropologische Gesellschaft:

Psychological states are reflected with the same fidelity in their eyes as in ours ... by which I often perceived how humanly close to me these savages stood.\footnote{Meyer, ‘Anthropologische Mittheilungen’, 99.}

\textit{‘Other physiognomies’: Explaining variety and relatedness}

Though Meyer’s comments on the moral characteristics of the Papuans he encountered contain valuable traces of Indigenous agency, they attracted less attention amongst his contemporaries than did his contributions to physical anthropology. At the time of his visit, the inhabitants of New Guinea and surrounding islands, along with so-called ‘Negrito’ groups in mainland Southeast Asia and the Malay Archipelago, stood ‘at the forefront of ethnological interest’, both because of their supposed extreme primitivity and on the grounds of their ambiguous and disputed relationship to the ‘Negro’ people of Africa.\footnote{Virchow, ‘Ueber Schädel von Neu-Guinea’, 65.} As discussed in the Introduction, the terms \textit{Papou} or \textit{Papoua} (French), \textit{Papua} (German) and ‘Papuan’ (English) had by this time been adopted by some European savants to refer to ‘black’ Oceanians more broadly, though their application varied considerably between individual authors.

By the time of Meyer’s voyage, however, new anthropological material and travellers’ reports from Oceania, Southeast Asia and the Malay Archipelago had begun to
challenge assumptions of a homogeneous ‘black’ Oceanian race. Wallace’s descriptions of Papuans in *The Malay Archipelago* proved particularly influential. Although he emphasized moral rather than physical features in distinguishing the ‘very strongly contrasted’ Malay and Papuan ‘races’, comparing the Papuans’ ‘loud, rapid, eager tones’, ‘incessant motion’ and ‘intense vital activity manifested in speech and action’ with the ‘quiet, unimpulsive, unanimated Malay’, Wallace also delineated what he claimed was the typical Papuan appearance (Fig. 9, left).

The colour of the body is a deep sooty-brown or black ... The hair is ... harsh, dry, and frizzly, growing in little tufts or curls ... The face is somewhat elongated, the forehead flattish, the brows very prominent; the nose is large, rather arched and high, the base thick, the nostrils broad, with the aperture hidden, owing to the tip of the nose being elongated; the mouth is large, the lips thick and protuberant.

**Figure 9:** Thomas Baines, ‘Papuan, New Guinea’ (left); Adolf Becker and F. W. Bader after A. B. Meyer, ‘Sremma (älterer Mann)’ (right).

---

This description, especially with respect to the nose, departed considerably from existing stereotypes of ‘black’ Oceanian physical appearance. Virchow, ‘surprised in the highest degree ... to find so great a difference in the statements which so reliable a man as Wallace has made regarding the Papuans, in comparison to that which the French report of New Caledonia and others of the New Hebrides’, concluded that previous travellers must have erred: ‘starting from the presumed identity of all black Oceanic races’, they had then ‘extend[ed] that which was observed in one place to all regions’. Such ‘arbitrarily generalised statements’, he warned, were to ‘be taken with the greatest caution’.  

In response to a letter from Meyer received in November 1873, however, Virchow proceeded to make precisely such an arbitrarily generalised statement. He interpreted Meyer’s description of a ‘Jewish’ variety amongst the inhabitants of New Guinea’s Bird’s Head Peninsula as ‘indubitable’ evidence that ‘the narrow, long, downward-hanging nose’ formed ‘the most unique aspect of the Papuan face’. In fact, although Meyer had certainly noticed examples of Wallace’s ‘Papuan nose’ during his travels, he explicitly denied that it was a constant characteristic of Papuan physiognomy:

> It is doubtless true, one meets a great number of Papuans who completely correspond to this image, but in my opinion one is not justified in setting down this form as the typical one ... because one continually encounters other physiognomies which do not correspond to it at all, and these other physiognomies would have just the same right to be considered as typical, even if they differ little or not at all from those of other races.

Examples of these ‘other physiognomies’ were reproduced as woodcuts from Meyer’s original portrait sketches, both in the printed version of his 1874 lecture and in the corners of the maps accompanying his published journal extracts. Although their primary purpose was to demonstrate the variety observed in Papuan facial features, these portraits’ very existence represents Indigenous agency at work: they could not

---

298 Rudolf Virchow, ‘Papua-Schädel von Darnley Island und anderen melanesischen Inseln’ Verhandlungen der Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte, 5 (15 November 1873), 177.
have been produced without the acquiescence and (presumably) the goodwill of the individuals depicted. Amongst the individuals sketched were Sremma, 'a sturdy older man' from Hattam in the Arfak Mountains, a settlement some 3500 feet above sea level (Fig. 9, right); two women, Neiemaan, 'around 19 years old', and Sistena, 'around 22 years old', both from Andai at the foot of the Arfak Mountains; also from Andai, Mansinam, 'a man between 60 and 70 years old', and his son Karraway, 'around 33 years old'; finally, Jamangoni, 'a man in his best years', and Saweri, 'a boy about 8 or 9 years old', both from Rubi. Meyer recorded the names, ages and heights of each individual; in some cases he also commented on aspects of their personalities and temperaments, hinting at the nature of his contact with them. Thus Mansinam’s eyes, ‘lively and fiery despite his age’, expressed ‘passion and shrewdness’. Jamangoni was described as ‘a head-hunter of the first order’ whose ‘features display[ed] truculence and audacious courage’. Sremma’s ‘features and person gave the impression of energy and strength’; ‘though not very talkative, he was nevertheless co-operative and not unintelligent’.

Sremma’s co-operation included allowing himself to be measured from head to toe and across the shoulders, a procedure which led Meyer to meditate on the subjective nature of field observation. Sremma, after all, had struck him at first glance as ‘a very tall, robust man’; when measured, however, he was found to be 30 mm shorter, and narrower by 79 mm across the shoulders, than Meyer himself. The shoulders of another Papuan, Reibobi from Rubi, though they impressed Meyer as ‘enormously broad’, measured 1076 mm, exactly the same as Meyer’s own. Contemplating his own erroneous first impressions, Meyer suggested that earlier travellers, many of whom had reported that the Papuans in general were ‘very tall’ or ‘strongly built and as tall as Europeans’, had perhaps retained a few particularly tall individuals in their memory and subsequently made unfounded generalisations from these. It was necessary, he mused, to bear in mind the difficulty of judging ‘the height of a naked person with dark skin’; European travellers, himself included, were simply ‘not accustomed to estimate this in a person whose appearance differs from our own’.

His experience in measuring Sremma led Meyer to conclude that accurate measurement was essential for effective physical anthropology. ‘Without figures’, he declared,

---

'nothing can be achieved in this area'. Much as he deplored observation without precision, however, he had little patience for precision without observation. Speculating, during his lecture, on the possible relatedness of the various Oceanic 'black races', he hoped his listeners would accord his perspective the significance deserved by 'experiences and impressions gathered on the spot', even in opposition to 'so experienced an anthropologist as [Armand de] Quatrefages, who recently claimed that Negritos and Papuas had nothing to do with one another'. The answers to such questions, admitted Meyer, were 'not at all definite' and to 'pay homage' to a 'final view' on them would therefore be 'perverse'; but he was certain that they were 'by no means to be decided merely with a pair of callipers in the hand, or when the wider source of experience is derived only from books'.

Despite his penchant for precision, or perhaps because of it, Meyer concluded his 1874 lecture, drawn almost entirely from his own observations, with the following strikingly imprecise statements:

1. that the body size of [the Papuans] varies within a considerable range;
2. that the same applies to their skin colour; and
3. that the polymorphism of their physiognomy does not permit a summary of its characteristics in a few words, as is [often] attempted.

Though Meyer acknowledged that Europeans were 'really only accustomed to find' the diversity of facial forms he had observed in New Guinea 'amongst civilized nations', he did not think it necessary to conclude from this that the Papuans were a mixed race. Instead, he emphasized again that existing definitions of Papuan physical appearance were too narrow. He accused other anthropologists of having 'selected a particular type ... as characteristic, because it shows clearly marked traits'; this was 'an unjustified motive' and Meyer reminded his audience that 'one finds amongst [the Papuans] just such differences between different individuals as amongst us'.

Who, then, were the Papuans? Meyer subscribed to the longstanding stereotype that the 'Malayo-Polynesian race' currently occupying the area 'from Southeast Asia to Easter

---

303 Meyer, 'Anthropologische Mittheilungen', 94.
304 Meyer, 'Anthropologische Mittheilungen', 90.
305 Meyer, 'Anthropologische Mittheilungen', 110.
Island’ had displaced an earlier population, remnants of which could still be found in the ‘interior of certain islands’.

These remnants included the ‘Melanesians or Pauans (Papúa) of New Guinea and certain islands east of New Guinea’, as well as ‘the Negritos or Aëtas of the Philippines’, the ‘Andamanese or so-called Mincopies’, the ‘Semangs of Malacca’ (Melaka) and the ‘Kalangs’ of Java, all of whom, Meyer claimed, could be distinguished by their ‘curly hair and darker skin’ from ‘the yellowish-brown, straight-haired Malayo-Polynesiens’. Meyer’s published works tended to refer, with a certain totalising force, to ‘the Pauans’ (or, more rarely, ‘the Pauan’) ‘of New Guinea’, adhering to what Pratt describes as a ‘very familiar, widespread, and stable form of “othering”’, in which ‘[t]he people to be thered are homogenized into a collective “they”, which is distilled even further into an iconic “he” (the standardized adult male specimen)’. Nevertheless, he repeatedly cautioned that his conclusions could not necessarily be extrapolated to other parts of New Guinea and that ‘when I speak of Pauans in general, I mean strictly only those whose acquaintance I have made myself, that is, that I can be responsible for these statements only’.

Meyer’s emphasis on the variability of the Pauans’ physical appearance contrasts strongly with Wallace’s conclusions on the differences between Pauans and Malays, which suppressed individual variability rather than emphasizing it. According to Wallace, ‘the Malay and Pauan races offer[ed] remarkable differences and striking contrasts’, with regard not only to ‘their physical conformation’ but to ‘their moral characteristics … [and] intellectual capacities’:

The Malay is of short stature, brown-skinned, straight-haired, beardless, and smooth-bodied. The Pauan is taller, is black-skinned, frizzy-haired, bearded, and hairy-bodied. The former is broad-faced, has a small nose, and flat eyebrows; the latter is long-faced, has a large and prominent nose, and projecting eyebrows. The Malay is bashful, cold,
undenombrative, and quiet; the Papuan is bold, impetuous, excitable, and noisy. The former is grave and seldom laughs; the latter is joyous and laughter-loving – the one conceals his emotions, the other displays them.\(^{311}\)

**'Profound distinction' or 'original relationship'? Research agendas at work**

Given his evident respect for Wallace’s work, Meyer’s divergence from the orthodoxy of *The Malay Archipelago* is surprising. I suggest that the two authors’ different conclusions resulted partly from differences in their research agendas. Wallace wished to argue for the existence of an ‘ethnological’ line clearly delineating ‘the Malayan and all the Asiatic races, from the Papuans and all that inhabit the Pacific’; he was therefore obliged to emphasize the internal unity of each race while simultaneously contrasting Malays with Papuans in terms of both physical and moral characteristics.\(^{312}\) Ballard has argued that Wallace’s promotion of this ‘profound distinction’ was in fact only part of ‘another, more theoretical agenda’, namely ‘the notion of a long chronology for human evolution’. To support this theory, Wallace drew on biogeographical evidence to ‘[assert] the depth of human antiquity’:

If Papuans, along with their Australasian fauna, were native to New Guinea, and Malays and their Asiatic fauna to the paleocontinent now known as Sunda, then the essential Negroid unity of African Negroes and Papuans could only be accounted for by migrations so ancient that they predated the current form of the continents. All the narrative and rhetorical skill that Wallace could muster was thus directed at emphasizing the sharpness of the divide between Malay and Papuan.\(^{313}\)

In contrast, Meyer’s comparative focus was less on Malays than on the Negrito groups he had encountered in the Philippines. He was interested primarily in elaborating possible connections between these groups and the Indigenous inhabitants of New Guinea. In order to support such speculations, he asserted that differences in physical appearance did not automatically rule out possible relatedness:

\(^{311}\) Wallace, *The Malay Archipelago*, II, 448.


\(^{313}\) Ballard, “Oceanic Negroes”, 186.
Since we do not sufficiently know the limits, in relation to craniology for example and to anthropological features generally, within which a race can vary ... we are not justified in inferring, from the non-conformance of, for example, a hair or skull form, the lack of an original relationship ... the whole habitus of a race must guide us much more than individual pronounced features.  

This conclusion allowed Meyer to speculate on a ‘possible and probable connection’ amongst the Oceanic ‘black’ races, including the Indigenous inhabitants of Australia and New Guinea, as well as remnant populations in the Philippines, the Andaman Islands, Malacca, and Java. These, he suggested, despite differences in their hair and skull type, were merely ‘different varieties ... of a single race, whose original type it may no longer be possible to determine’. Similar arguments, often based on a ‘deeply anti-Negro conjectural history of inevitable displacement of black-skinned autochthones by more civilized, lighter-skinned immigrants’, had been advanced by a number of earlier thinkers and travellers, including Dumont d’Urville, Johann Reinhold Forster, the Spanish navigator Pedro Fernández de Quirós (c.1563-1615) and the French littérateur Charles de Brosses (1709-1777). However, Meyer’s suggestions of ‘possible and probable’ connections between geographically dispersed ‘black’ Oceanian populations found relatively little support in late nineteenth-century anthropological circles, due in part to leading anthropologists’ increased emphasis on the supposed permanence of somatic differences (see also Chapter Three).

Even before arriving in New Guinea, Meyer had been prepared to find similarities between Philippine Negritos and New Guinean Papuans, based in part on the reports of others with whom he had had contact in the field. Recounting his own observations of Negritos in the Philippine Islands of Luzon (Bataan and Zambales provinces), Panay and Cebu, Meyer mentioned that Kamis Birahi, who ‘had already been in New Guinea seven times’ and whom he later described as ‘a truthful and trustworthy witness’, could detect no difference at all between these Negroes and the inhabitants of New Guinea. He was much astonished to find them here

---

317 Meyer, Auszüge, 15.
and never spoke of them except as *Orang Papua*; nor was this only on account of their curly hair. He would not admit any difference even in regard to their short stature, as he had seen in New Guinea many tribes equally short.\textsuperscript{318}

Meyer also discussed similarities between Negritos and Papuans with Miklouho-Maclay, whom he met in Tidore in February 1873. Miklouho-Maclay, another of Wallace’s emulators, was returning from sixteen months’ residence in Astrolabe Bay (Madang Province, New Guinea) on the Russian clipper *Isumrud* and had been delayed in Tidore by illness amongst the ship’s crew.\textsuperscript{319} He had not yet visited the Philippines; Meyer was yet to set foot in New Guinea. With ‘a great throng (c. 60-80) of Papuans’ before them, the two compared observations:

> I directed at him the question, which seemed to me very important, whether they resembled the Papuans of Astrolabe Bay, and he claimed to be unable to detect any difference of any kind. I, however, by virtue of my acquaintance with Negritos … was already able to affirm the identity [existing] between Negritos and Papuans, at least with regard to the external habitus, and did so.\textsuperscript{320}

The ‘very obvious’ ‘external identity’ of these ‘two races’, added Meyer, forced one to consider the possibility that they were in fact related, especially given ‘the comparative spatial proximity of New Guinea and the Philippines’. Even if it were to be proved that Negrito and Papuan skull forms could be consistently distinguished, he argued, this need not undermine ‘the hypothesis of identity’:

> [O]ught one not rather to assume, given [their] otherwise great physical similarity, that they have changed, as indeed ‘species’ (zoolologically speaking) in general change due to insular seclusion and other


\textsuperscript{320} A. B. Meyer. ‘Über die Beziehungen zwischen Negritos und Papuas’, *Verhandlungen der Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte*, 7 (20 March 1875), 47.
circumstances ... even if, despite Darwin and a great deal of fuss, we still lack insight into the how and why?\(^{321}\)

In contrast to his many publications on Papuans and Negritos, Meyer wrote very little comparing Papuans to Malays. Although the following extract from his 1876 lecture on the Minahasa of Celebes suggests that his opinions on the question essentially followed Wallace's, Meyer's emphasis on the 'gradations' and the 'breadth of variation' within each 'race' is significant. Moreover, Meyer, unlike Wallace, did not attempt to attribute all such variation to racial mixing:

Two races share in the possession of the East Indian Archipelago: the Malay and the Papuan; the former is affiliated with the East Asiatic peoples, the latter [is] a race *sui generis*, if it is not to be placed in a broader relationship with the Negro race of Africa. The Malays are in general lighter, yellowish and brownish people, with long straight black hair, of small stature, [with] slanting eyes and prominent cheekbones. The Papuans are in general darker, brownish and blackish people, with short, curly hair, of small and middling stature, [with] eyes set level, cheekbones less strikingly prominent, and perhaps endowed with a more pronounced prognathism ... at the two extremes the types of both races can be distinguished from each other without difficulty, but the gradations in each of the two, the breadth of variation of both forms, and above all the descendants produced via intermixture of the two in the marginal districts for many years, allow them to merge so gradually into each other that it may often be difficult to discern, in an individual, whether Malay or Papuan blood predominates.\(^{322}\)

**Bones to pick: French craniometry and German holism**

With regard to human physical difference, it seems probable that Meyer was again influenced by Waitz. The latter, who considered it 'doubtful to what extent there are

---

\(^{321}\) Meyer, 'Über die Beziehungen zwischen Negritos und Papuas', 47. The German word *abändern*, here rendered as 'to change', can also be translated as 'to vary', 'to modify' or (in a modern biological context) 'to mutate'.

consistent anatomical differences, not merely between large groups of peoples, but also within individual nations’, argued that classifications based solely on skull measurements could never supply sufficient information for a natural division of mankind. In fact, the ‘sphere of variation’ within ‘individual people or races, carefully considered’, was ‘as great as that of the whole human race’; every race could be found to contain ‘skull forms foreign to it’, with the consequence that ‘no perfectly fixed marks of race’ existed. It was ‘necessary’, Waitz concluded, ‘no longer to neglect other physical characters, for it is only in their entirety that they can afford any satisfactory clue as to the peculiarities of each race’.  

Like Waitz, Meyer rejected a solely cranial-based classification system in favour of a more holistic consideration of total physical characteristics, as well as elements of language and material culture. These views closely resembled the ‘natural system’ advocated by Blumenbach almost a century earlier, which preferred consideration of the Totalhabitūs over ‘individual abstracted characteristics’. For Meyer’s French counterparts, the anthropologists Armand de Quatrefages and Ernest-Théodore Hamy, however, this historically grounded and apparently moderate approach represented a radical and threatening departure from the obsessively craniometric physical anthropology promoted by the leading French physician-anatomist Paul Broca and his followers. When Meyer attacked Quatrefages’ definition of ‘true Papuans’ – ‘Melanesian Negroes, tall, with a dolicocephalic head [and] athletic proportions’, ‘very clearly’ distinct both from Negritos and from ‘the black African races’ – as an ‘arbitrary selection of one Papuan type as the typical form for the race’, Quatrefages’ supporters quickly struck back. The ethnographer and administrator Julien Girard de Rialle (1841-1904), who paraphrased Meyer’s Vienna paper in the French Revue d’Anthropologie, concluded:

M. Meyer … has not yet demonstrated that the brachycephalic Melanesians could be the same race as the dolichocephalic; it is not

324 Blumenbach, Handbuch der Naturgeschichte (1779), 56-7.
enough to have visited and lived in Malaysia and New Guinea to reduce
to nothing, with one word or one stroke of the pen, the great
anthropological value of the cephalic index ... contrary to one of the
objects of his communication, M. Meyer has convinced us of the reality
of profound admixture amongst the natives of New Guinea.328

The struggle between metropolitan craniological precision and recalcitrant field
experience continued with Quatrefages and Hamy’s 1882 publication of Crania
Ethnica, two vast tomes which aimed to distinguish ‘various ethnic groups’ by means of
‘a classification founded solely on the characteristics of the skull’. Its authors defined
the ‘Negrito race’ as separate from the ‘Negrito-Papuan’, ‘Tasmanian’, ‘Papuan’ and
‘Australian’ races; they acknowledged the scientific significance of Meyer’s 135
Papuan skulls, but chastised him for ‘refus[ing] to admit ... the coexistence in Oceania
of two large groups of Negroes which almost all of his predecessors have
distinguished’.329 Meyer responded to these criticisms in various publications, notably
his 1893 monograph on the Negritos of the Philippines, which condemned both
Quatrefages and Hamy for drawing firm conclusions from insufficient evidence and
focusing on the human cranium to the exclusion of other forms of physical, cultural or
linguistic evidence. Various aspects of Meyer’s dispute with Quatrefages and Hamy,
including the influences of differences in methodology, research priorities,
instrumentation, and national paradigms of knowledge on the interpretation of
craniometric data, are considered at length in Chapter Four.

While the experiential, personal and professional elements of Meyer’s research agenda
cannot easily be separated, it is clear that his conclusions regarding ‘the Papuans of
New Guinea’ were significantly influenced by his field experiences. Certainly, the
intellectual heritage of German-language physical anthropology provided the conditions
of possibility for some of his most fundamental assumptions. Unlike in post-
Revolutionary France, where savants increasingly leaned towards polygenist
explanations for human diversity, German-speaking anthropologists, influenced by
Protestant religious beliefs, tended to adhere to monogenist principles. These
principles, which informed the writings of both Blumenbach and Waitz, recur in
Meyer’s assertions about the essential unity of the human race. Similarly, Meyer’s

329 Armand de Quatrefages and Ernest-Théodore Hamy, Crania Ethnica: Les crânes des races humaines
ultimate rejection of what he considered an excessive emphasis on craniometrical methods amongst French anthropologists was clearly influenced by the more holistic approach to classification outlined by Blumenbach and subsequently advocated by Waitz. In addition, Meyer's personal interest in exploring the relationships between the Papuans of New Guinea and other Oceanic 'black' races, rather than distinguishing them from the Malays as Wallace had done, encouraged him to emphasize individual variability rather than downplaying it. Though his adherence to the stylistic device of referring to 'the Papuan(s)' in his post-voyage publications inevitably obscured some of the specificities of his field experience, his use of particular individuals and incidents to support his claims reveals the importance he himself attributed to his encounters in the field. His statements on the primacy of 'experiences and impressions gathered on the spot' and the need for anthropological conclusions to be based on a 'personal acquaintance' with the people under study further emphasize this importance. Finally, Meyer's texts contain clear countersigns of local agency: his descriptions of the 'savages' of Kordo, the 'milder customs' of the inhabitants of Rubi and the 'fortuitous' process of acquiring human remains, to name just a few examples, record the impact of these Indigenous New Guineans' strategic responses to his presence and desires, which Meyer variously experienced as threatening, touching, or confusing.

Meyer never completed the 'great scientific work of travel' he had originally intended to write. In 1874, only a year after his return, he was appointed first Director of the Naturhistorisches Museum (subsequently the Königlich Zoologisches und Anthropologisch-Ethnographisches Museum) in Dresden. Following his appointment to this position, his engagement with scientific discussions of New Guinea's Indigenous inhabitants became restricted primarily to the realm of craniology. His contributions to this topic, in particular the robustness of skull measurements as stand-alone racial characteristics and the extent to which craniology could usefully contribute to debates regarding the origins and interrelationships of various races, are discussed in Chapter Four. The next chapter, however, continues what the current chapter has begun, namely a consideration of the impacts of field experiences on received ideas of race. In contrast to Meyer, who approached New Guinea from the west and was interested particularly in drawing possible connections between its inhabitants and supposedly remnant black

---

330 For a detailed analysis of the 'particular national trajectories taken by the discipline of anthropology' between 1750 and 1880, particularly in Britain and France, including disputes over monogeny or polygeny and their supercession by evolutionist theory, see Douglas, 'Climate to Crania', 33-96.
populations in maritime Southeast Asia, Otto Finsch, the subject of Chapter Two, arrived in New Guinea via the eastern island groups of Hawai‘i, Kiribati, and the Marshall and Caroline Islands. His encounters with the Melanesian people of New Britain and south-east New Guinea were thus coloured by his perceptions of the Polynesian or Micronesian inhabitants of these island groups, as well as by received ideas drawn from his pre-voyage compilation on the Indigenous inhabitants of western New Guinea.
Chapter Two

‘It is not so!’ Otto Finsch and physical diversity in Oceania, 1865-85

I have compared the characteristics of these races, book in hand, and found that everything, by and large, is incorrect: it is not so!¹

In 1865, though he had not yet ventured farther afield than Bulgaria, Otto Finsch was in no doubt: the Papuans of New Guinea were easily distinguished from other races by their ‘dark brown to blue-black’ skin, distinctive physiognomy and ‘woolly or curly hair’ and displayed ‘a decisive similarity to the Negroes’.² By 1882, having voyaged extensively throughout Oceania, he had encountered Papuans with straight hair, ‘Jewish’ and ‘Japanese’ physiognomies, and skin indistinguishable in colour from his own, and was convinced that human races, even two as supposedly dissimilar as Europeans and Papuans, could not ‘be distinguished [from one another] by characteristics on a natural historical basis’.³ While his first actual encounters with New Guinea’s Indigenous inhabitants thus postdated those of Meyer by several years, Finsch was the first to publish on the topic by almost a decade. Meyer and Finsch approached New Guinea from opposite directions and with different expectations and objectives, but both found their previous conceptions of human difference transformed as a result of their field experiences.

This chapter explores the complex nexus between field experience and metropolitan science through a focus on Finsch’s encounters in New Guinea, New Britain, the Torres Strait Islands and Micronesia. While his numerous publications on the Indigenous inhabitants of these areas naturally reflect the prevailing scientific and colonial discourses of the late nineteenth century and their associated literary conventions, I argue that they were also significantly shaped by his personal encounters with particular Indigenous individuals and his perceptions of their behaviour, lifestyle, and physical appearance. Thus, as in the case of Meyer, Indigenous presence can be

¹ Finsch, ‘Die Rassenfrage in Oceanien’, 164.
² Finsch, Systematische Übersicht, 11 note 1; idem, ‘Skizzen von Neuguinea’, Illustrierte Zeitung, 46:1186 (24 March 1866), 204-46; idem, Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner, 38.
³ Finsch, ‘Ueber seine ... Reisen in der Südsee’, 553-64.
found in Finsch’s records of his field experiences. His engagement with pre-existing metropolitan discourses of race and his actual encounters with Indigenous people were two sources of racial knowledge, each of which informed and shaped the other. Through close comparisons of texts produced by Finsch before, during and after his Oceanic voyages, I illustrate and discuss the ways in which these encounters challenged many of his pre-voyage assumptions about human difference, notably the breadth of individual variation within supposedly homogeneous races, the extent of overlap between such races, and the reliability of particular cultural practices as diagnostics of savagery or civilisation.

As a case study of the impacts of encounter experiences on prior assumptions, Finsch is particularly interesting. A museum director turned scientific traveller turned colonial pioneer, he moved between several circles of influence during his lifetime. He wrote and published prolifically across multiple genres: travel accounts, scientific papers and monographs on ornithology, physical anthropology, ethnology and material culture, a brief biography of an Indigenous inhabitant of Matupit Island, East New Britain, and numerous unpublished letters. In addition, since he produced a substantial monograph on New Guinea before ever having set foot there, the transformations in his understandings of Indigenous New Guineans pre- and post-voyage are exceptionally visible. Although compelling in its own right, Finsch’s story is not merely of antiquarian interest. His ongoing struggles and ultimate inability to communicate his altered understandings of human difference in Oceania to a metropolitan audience post-voyage illuminate broader issues in the history of anthropological science, particularly in relation to tensions between metropolitan theory and field experience: the influence of observers’ trajectories of travel on the constitution of regional topographies of difference in Oceania, the ways in which travellers’ observations were standardized and mobilized to make them meaningful to metropolitan audiences, and the policing of scientific knowledge and the interpretation of field observations by metropolitan authorities.
'An organised whole': New Guinea and Its Inhabitants, 1865

Finsch’s interest in Oceania appears to have stemmed initially from his ornithological studies. During his time at the Museum in Bremen he authored or co-authored over 30 articles on birds from across the Oceanic region and acquired a number of rare bird specimens for colleagues.  

In an 1882 address to the Gesellschaft für Erdkunde (‘Society for Geography’) in Berlin, given shortly after returning from his first Oceanic voyage, he recalled that ‘years of study had acquainted me more closely with the fauna of [the Oceanic] region and had kindled in me a lively desire to contribute to a better knowledge of the same through my own observations’. His interest in ethnology generally can also be traced back to the earliest years of his museum career, as evidenced by several publications (1861-62) on the people encountered during his travels in Bulgaria and the Balkans (1858-59). In 1865 he combined these two interests in a monograph, Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner (‘New Guinea and its inhabitants’), which included geographical, geological, zoological and botanical information, as well as descriptions of the island’s Indigenous inhabitants.

Since the publication of this work preceded Finsch’s first visit to New Guinea by over a decade, he was dependent entirely on others’ accounts for his information. Publications from French and Dutch expeditions, particularly those commanded by Louis Isidore Duperrey in the Coquille (1822-25), D. H. Kolff in the Dourga (1825-26), Dumont d’Urville in the Astrolabe (1826-29), A. J. van Delden in the Triton and Iris (1828) and H. D. A. van der Goes in the Etna (1858), supplied him with ample, albeit limited and patchy material. He relied above all on the more recent Dutch accounts, noting that they ‘refer to regions previously known little or not at all and thereby enrich our knowledge considerably’ and adding that Dutch works ‘remain almost completely unknown [in Germany], at least to a more

---

4 See Finsch, Systematische Uebersicht, 45-57; letter from idem to F. H. [Franz Hermann] Troschel, 31 December 1875, NL Troschel, No. 118, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften: ‘I have beautiful things (birds) from New Zealand, New Guinea (several of the rarest birds of paradise) and Colombia to give away, if you would like to have a list at some point’.
5 Finsch, ‘Über seine ... Reisen in der Südsee’, 553.
6 Finsch, Systematische Uebersicht, 11, 64-5.
7 For further details of these voyages, see Wichmann, Entdeckungsgeschichte, I, 311-6, 321-34; II, 2-12, 97-103.
general audience’. Attributing the ‘severe lack of knowledge’ of New Guinea which he had encountered ‘all too frequently, even amongst an educated [German] audience’, to the dearth of ‘detailed information’ available – *Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner* listed amongst the century’s ‘most excellent’ publications on the topic only two German-language works, neither by authors who had actually visited New Guinea – Finsch concluded that it would be ‘important and desirable to inspect critically the material at hand and to arrange it, in German, into an organised whole’. A review of Finsch’s monograph in *Petermanns Mitteilungen* congratulated the author for successfully bringing together ‘information scattered throughout many works’ and for his ‘notable’ accounts of ‘the population in various coastal districts of New Guinea’, written ‘in the greatest detail and with evident affection’.

Given the relative prominence of Germans in European explorations of Oceania during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, outlined in the Introduction, the fact that Finsch was still lamenting a dearth of ‘detailed information’ on New Guinea in 1865 requires some explanation. I suggest two contributing factors. Firstly, as Chapter One has discussed, the accounts of German-speakers who accompanied non-German (particularly Dutch) expeditions to New Guinea were usually published in Dutch rather than German. Secondly, New Guinea’s geographical inaccessibility and its inhabitants’ often hostile reception of foreign visitors disinclined many voyagers, not merely Germans, from visiting it, leading journalist and historian Gavin Souter to describe it as ‘the world’s last unknown’.

In the ‘General overview of the population of New Guinea’ which preceded his descriptions of particular groups, Finsch stated that current anthropological knowledge of New Guinea’s Indigenous inhabitants was

---


'meagre', a fact which he attributed 'simply to the lack of material' available. It was not his intention, he declared, 'to lapse into a learned anthropological treatise'; this task, although 'already attempted repeatedly' by other authors, had 'never yet been satisfactorily accomplished'.11 Instead, readers desirous of more information were directed to the 'extraordinarily thorough' essay Über Papuas und Alfuarens ('On Papuans and Alfuros') published in 1859 by the Baltic German anatomist and embryologist Karl Ernst von Baer (1792-1876).12 Von Baer, described by Robert J. Richards as 'perhaps the most eminent morphologist and embryologist of his day', wrote this essay as an extended commentary on the first two sections of his Crania Selecta (1859), a detailed description of 40 skulls held in the collection of the Imperial Saint Petersburg Academy of Sciences.13 He had moved to Saint Petersburg in 1834 and during his time there was one of the Academy's 'most eminent and influential' members for almost 30 years.14

Sections one and two of von Baer's Crania Selecta discussed three 'Skulls of Papuans' and six 'Skulls of New Guinean Alfuros' respectively. These skulls were part of a substantial collection amassed by Georg Joseph Peitsch (1788-1838), a German-born medical officer stationed with the Dutch armed forces in Batavia, and presented after his death to the Academy by a fellow German, his friend and executor Philipp Franz von Siebold (1796-1866), who had arrived in Batavia in February 1823 and spent a few months there before being appointed Doctor for the Dutch trading post in Nagasaki,

11 Finsch, Neu Guinea und seine Bewohner, 33-4.
12 Finsch, Neu Guinea und seine Bewohner, 34.
Japan.\textsuperscript{15} Von Baer described Peitsch’s collection of Indian Archipelago skulls as a ‘valuable and most resplendent’ addition to the Academy’s collection.\textsuperscript{16} He noted that the Papuan skulls, according to the list accompanying them, came from New Guinea, while the Alfuran skulls, with the exception of one marked ‘from the island of Gilolo’, were also listed as being from New Guinea. No more specific location was given, but von Baer speculated that they had probably been sent to Peitsch ‘from the vicinity of [the Dutch] colony’, which he understood to encompass ‘the southern and eastern coast … from the promontory ‘Valsche Cap’ westwards’.\textsuperscript{17}

According to von Baer, the distinction between Papuans and Alfuros was essentially one of geography:

\textsuperscript{15} von Baer, ‘Crania selecta’, 243. Little biographical information is available on Georg Joseph Peitsch. Born in Bruchsal, Germany, he was stationed in Batavia (Java) no later than 1818, was appointed head of the Dutch East Indies Medical Service (Civil and Military) in 1827, and returned to Europe in 1836. He is cited in the \textit{Cyclopedia of Malesian Collectors} as a collector of scientific material from Java and Banda (Moluccas). Philipp Franz von Siebold was born in Würzburg and studied medicine at the university there, lodging during his studies with the anatomist and physiologist Ignaz Döllinger (1770-1841). He graduated in 1820 with a doctorate in medicine, surgery and obstetrics. In 1822 he took up a post as Surgeon-Major in The Hague and was subsequently appointed Ship’s Doctor on the frigate \textit{Adriana}, which arrived in Batavia on 18 February 1823. In April 1823 Siebold was appointed Doctor for the Dutch trading post in Nagasaki, Japan, where he remained until 1829. He returned to the Netherlands in 1830 and undertook a second trip to Japan from 1859-63. In addition to the skulls bequeathed to the Imperial Saint Petersburg Academy of Sciences, both Peitsch and Siebold donated significant natural history collections to the Museum of the \textit{Senckenbergische Naturforschende Gesellschaft} (Senckenberg Society for Natural History Research) in Frankfurt am Main. See E. M. Binsbergen, ‘Philipp Franz von Siebold (1796-1866); Wetenschapper in de Oost’, Librisbibliotheek der Universiteit van Amsterdam, online \url{http://www.uba.uva.nl/collecties/object.cfm/objectid=34853D0C-C771-4E13-8B7334417AB31EE#p4}; accessed 13 July 2010; Werner E. Gerabek, ‘Siebold, Philipp Franz Balthasar’, \textit{in Neue deutsche Biographie}, vol. 24 (Berlin: Duncker & Humbolt, 2010), 329-30; M. J. van Steenis-Kruseman, ‘Peitsch, Georg Joseph’, \textit{in Cyclopedia of Malesian Collectors}, online \url{http://www.nationaalherbarium.nl/FMCollectors/P/PeitschGl.htm}; accessed 14 July 2010; Archief Almelo, ‘Huwelijken 1840-1849, Stad Almelo: Peitsch, Georg Joseph, 11-06-1840, aktenummer 12’, Registers van de Burgelijke Stand Stad Almelo: Marriages 1818-1913, online \url{http://www.archiefalmelo.nl/index.php?option=com_genealogie_zoeken&Itemid=52&subdetail}; accessed 14 July 2010; Eduard Rüppell, ‘Verzeichniss der in dem Museum der Senckenbergischen naturforschenden Gesellschaft aufgestellten Sammlungen. Dritte Abtheilung: Amphibien’, \textit{Museum Senckenbergianum. Abhandlung aus dem Gebiete der beschreibenden Naturgeschichte}, 3:3 (1845), 293-316.

\textsuperscript{16} von Baer, ‘Crania selecta’, 243.

\textsuperscript{17} von Baer, ‘Crania selecta’, 250.
It is agreed that in New Guinea, besides the true Papuans inhabiting the sea coasts and the islands lying round about, another people is present, controlling the interior regions and their mountains … [they are] called Alfurees, Arfurees or Harafurees in the Dutch Moluccas. This name is believed to signify ‘mountain men’ in a particular Malay idiom, and Alfuros are also present in the internal regions of the larger Moluccan and Sunda Islands.  

Ballard explains, however, that the term Alfuro was apparently ‘derived from the Portuguese forrar, ‘free’, compounded with the Arabic article al’, and was ‘widely used … to denote animist communities unconverted either to Islam or, later, to Christianity’. European observers, noticing that ‘communities designated as Alfuros were commonly found in the interior of islands in the Moluccas as well as New Guinea’, concluded that these communities ‘constituted an aboriginal population that preceded the subsequent arrival of both Papuans and Malays’. Given that such communities were identified principally by negative and non-somatic characteristics – ‘not Islamic’, ‘unlike the Malays’ – attempts by later metropolitan savants to ‘define the physical characteristics of Alfuros’ on the assumption that they represented a related and physically homogeneous population ‘met with understandable confusion’.  

In the context of this confusion, von Baer’s conclusion that the Alfuros of the Moluccas and Sunda Islands were ‘different … from the so-called Alfuros of New Guinea’ is not surprising. He reserved further discussion of ‘the true innate character of the Alfuros and in what way they might differ from [the] true Papuans’ for his essay Über Papuas und Alfuren. In this exhaustive 78-page examination of the available French-, German- and English-language literature on the people of New Guinea and surrounding islands, von Baer followed a detailed overview of ‘the history of our

---

20 von Baer, ‘Crania selecta’, 250; idem, Über Papuas und Alfuren, 3.
knowledge of Papuans from its first development onwards’ with the suggestion that it was possible to identify at least two distinct physical ‘types’ amongst the ‘natives of New Guinea’.\textsuperscript{21} Although both the Papuan and Alfuran skulls described in *Crania Selecta* ‘belong[ed] to the long-drawn [type]’ and ‘the jaws protrude[d] in both’, those identified as ‘Papuan’ were, ‘in general’, ‘smaller’ and ‘lighter’, with ‘more markedly protruding jaws and a very receding chin; the crown is also much less domed’. The Alfuran skulls, although similarly ‘long and narrow’, were more ‘highly domed’, ‘larger and heavier’ than their Papuan counterparts.\textsuperscript{22} Von Baer recognised that the word ‘Alfuren’, rather than signifying ‘a particular tribe of people’, had ‘originally’ had the ‘approximate’ meaning of ‘savage’; he cited, by way of illustration, the British colonial administrator and philologist John Crawfurdf’s (1783-1868) comparison of the term with the Spanish *Indios bravos*, ‘with which they designated untamed [and] uncivilized peoples’. *Contra* Crawfurdf, however, von Baer maintained that this recognition did not prove ‘that only one nationality exists in New Guinea’.\textsuperscript{23}

[S]ince it is recognised that the word *Alfurees* has a very indefinite meaning, there is now a tendency to suppose [that there is] no difference at all amongst the inhabitants of New Guinea. This, in my opinion, goes too far; one is in danger of throwing the baby out with the bath-water. My conviction that at least 2 types of curly-haired inhabitants occur in New Guinea rests on the forms of the skulls described by me ... the better descriptions and depictions can mostly be traced back to these 2 forms.\textsuperscript{24}

In order to illustrate these two ‘types’ or ‘forms’, von Baer included woodcut reproductions of three portraits of Papuans from prominent English-language works (Fig. 10). The first of these, copied from an aquatint portrait by William Daniell (1769-1837), depicted a ten-year old

\textsuperscript{22} von Baer, *Über Papuas und Alfuren*, 34-5.
\textsuperscript{24} von Baer, *Über Papuas und Alfuren*, 58.
boy, ‘Dick’ or ‘Dick Papua’, a runaway slave taken into service in Bali by
the former Lieutenant Governor of Java, Thomas Stamford Raffles (1781-
1826). In 1816 Dick accompanied Raffles to England; the portrait in
question was commenced by Daniell during Dick’s fifteen-month stay in
London and appeared in print in 1817 in Raffles’ two-volume History of
Java.25 Von Baer, though reiterating that he considered the first of the two
Papuan skulls discussed in his Crania Selecta ‘by no means … normal’,
nevertheless described it as a ‘vivid companion piece to the often-discussed
picture by Raffles … our Papuan skull No. 1 looks as though it had
belonged to this boy at an older age’.

Figure 10: K. E. von Baer, untitled [portrait of ‘Dick Papua’, after
Raffles (left); portrait of ‘a native from Karas’, after Earl (centre);
portrait of ‘an inhabitant of Uta’, after van Oort and van Raalten
(right)].

Woodcuts.

To illustrate the second, ‘Alfuro-Papuan’, type, von Baer selected two
woodcuts, both copied from portraits prepared by the lithographer G. E.
Madeley (active 1826-54) for The Native Races of the Indian Archipelago:
Papuans, published in 1853 by George Windsor Earl.28 One, ‘a native from

25 Thomas Stamford Raffles, The History of Java, 2 vols (London: Black, Parbury and
Allen, 1817), II, cccxxv. For more information on Dick Papua, see Michael Smithies, ‘A
26 von Baer, Über Papuas und Alfuren, 58.
28 von Baer, Über Papuas und Alfuren, 58-9; Earl, Native Races, xii, 188, Plate 6, Figs. 3
and 5.
Karas on the west coast of New Guinea, 19 years old’, had been sketched by Earl in Singapore; the other, ‘an inhabitant of Uta’, was adapted from one of a series of portraits by the artists P. van Oort and G. van Raalten, who accompanied the 1828 Dutch Triton expedition commanded by A. J. van Delden.29 ‘One sees’, von Baer declared, ‘that the second series of our skulls, which we possess under the name of Alfuros, correspond completely to these heads’.30

Finsch was full of praise for Über Papuas und Alfuren and its ‘talented author’, but displayed less enthusiasm towards Earl’s Native Races. Although this ‘much praised book certainly contain[ed] many remarks on the peoples of New Guinea which are deserving of thanks’, Earl’s conclusions were ‘mostly based on very hypothetical assumptions’ and the author had ‘drawn in part upon very old sources’. Finsch therefore preferred to ‘align [himself] with the investigations of v. Baer’, at least ‘for the time being’.31 He emphasized again, however, ‘how incomplete our knowledge still is with regard to the population of the Indian island world’, concluding that:

[T]o date only very hypothetical results are available regarding an exact distribution of the Papuan tribe and of its connections to the Negro peoples of Australia and other islands in the South Seas, as well as ... their probable migration and spreading out ... a satisfactory solution to the question will remain only a devout wish for a long time yet.32

With regard to craniology specifically, Finsch condemned Earl’s attempt to draw positive conclusions from the ‘investigations of a few skulls ... whose origin could mostly not be considered authentic’. Even von Baer’s ‘thorough investigation of the material available’ had been ‘limited to a

29 von Baer, Über Papuas und Alfuren, 60; Müller, Verhandelingen over de Natuurlijke Geschiedenis ... Land- en Volkenkunde, Pl. 7. On the Triton expedition see Wichmann, Entdeukungsgeschichte, II, 5, 12.
30 von Baer, Über Papuas und Alfuren, 60.
31 Finsch, Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner, 34, 37.
32 Finsch, Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner, 37.
couple of skulls and the well-known illustrations'. 33 Von Baer, however, had recognized the limitations of his own work, calling for future investigations to be based on large numbers of skulls and photographs rather than on single specimens and acknowledging that his ‘postulation of two Papuan types’ should not be understood as anything more than ‘a preliminary deduction from the insufficient material [available] to date’. 34 Finsch seconded these statements, declaring that in the realms of the natural sciences a ‘definitive conclusion’ could be reached only through ‘sustained and repeated investigations … based on a very rich material’. 35

Despite his recognition of the uncertain state of contemporary scientific knowledge and the need for further investigation, Finsch had no hesitation in supplying his readers with an overview of the general physical appearance of New Guinea’s Papuans, based on the travel accounts to which he had access. He asserted that the Papuans, ‘beyond all doubt’, displayed ‘a decisive similarity to the Negroes’, both physically (skin colour and physiognomy) and culturally (particularly their religious customs). Focusing on the former, he remarked that existing descriptions of the various coastal tribes generally agreed on ‘dark brown to almost blue-black skin’, along with ‘curly or woolly hair, decorated in a strange and often fantastic manner’, ‘protruding lips’, a ‘somewhat flattened nose’, a ‘mostly rather retreating chin’, ‘rather prominent cheekbones’ and ‘great dark eyes’. Finsch cautioned, however, that although all previous travellers had ‘agreed … that the inhabitants of New Guinea belonged to the Negro race’, ‘no-one had been able to characterise’ them adequately. Claims that a ‘constant criterion’ for identification could be found in the skin, supposedly ‘dull and always rough-feeling’, or in ‘the formation of the hair’, which according to some observers ‘did not grow evenly distributed over the head … but always in tufts side by side’, were over-hasty: ‘there are still too few observations available, since many travellers’ reports … do not supply the necessary information’. 36 In ‘Skizzen von Neuguinea’ (‘Sketches from

33 Finsch, Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner, 36.
34 von Baer, Über Papuas und Alturen, 70-1; see also Finsch, Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner, 37.
35 Finsch, Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner, 34.
36 Finsch, Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner, 33, 35, 38-9. Finsch noted (p. 35) that New Guineans’ skin ‘mostly experiences a not inconsiderable change as a result of widespread
New Guinea’), a condensed version of *Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner*, which appeared in 1866 in Germany’s first illustrated newspaper, the popular weekly *Illustrierte Zeitung*, Finsch reiterated these conclusions: although the ‘colour (dark brown to blue-black)’, ‘physiognomy’ and ‘woolly or curly hair’ of the Papuans permitted the assumption that they were ‘affiliated most closely to the Negro type’, ‘the question [of] which type they belong to or whether they form a separate race’ was yet to be satisfactorily solved.  

Finsch’s descriptions of Papuans in *Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner*, reflecting the routes of the Dutch voyages from which he drew most of his observations, concentrated on the western half of New Guinea and extended no further east than Humboldt Bay. However, when Finsch at last had the opportunity to travel to New Guinea himself, he approached it from the east, passing first through Hawai’i and parts of Micronesia – the Marshall, Gilbert (Kiribati) and eastern Caroline Islands and Nauru – to the Bismarck Archipelago (New Britain and Duke of York Islands), then travelling briefly to Australia and New Zealand before returning to the Torres Strait Islands and part of the south-eastern coast of New Guinea (Fig. 11). This difference in direction was of considerable significance for Finsch’s work. The Dutch material he had consulted when compiling *Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner*, like later anglophone works such as Earl’s *Native Races* and Wallace’s *Malay Archipelago*, defined the ‘Papuan’ inhabitants of New Guinea and surrounding islands ‘not so much through comparison with Polynesians to the east as with Malays to the west’. However, Finsch’s

---

skin diseases, which often merge into ichthyosis ... and the hair, too, under the influence of so many artificial means, such as the strewing of ash, red earth, plaiting with species of grass, etc., can be altered in many ways".


38 See Finsch, ‘Über seine ... Reisen in der Südsee’, 553-64.

39 Ballard, ‘“Oceanic Negroes”’, 160.
own trajectory of travel, west to east, had more in common with the major scientific voyages of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, most of which went first to the eastern and central Oceanic Islands and/or Australia before reaching the East Indies. Such voyages, Ballard argues, generally focused less on the Papuans of New Guinea and more on the Melanesians inhabiting ‘the extended archipelagic screen of Vanuatu, New Caledonia, and the Solomon Islands’, using the inhabitants of these areas as ‘the primary negative poles for positive evaluations for Polynesia’.\(^{40}\)

**Figure 11: Map of the Pacific Ocean.**

[Map of the Pacific Ocean with labels for different islands and countries.]

Map courtesy of Karina Pelling, ANU Cartographic & GIS Services, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University.

Douglas’s analysis of the ways in which metropolitan thinkers deployed Oceanian examples in their discussions of human diversity qualifies this view.\(^ {41}\) She demonstrates that the French naturalists responsible for producing ‘much of the early anthropology of Oceania before 1850’ frequently included both eastern and western Oceanian people in their comparative assessments of New Guinea’s Indigenous inhabitants. For example, the ‘gradation[s] of the social state’ hypothesised by François Péron (1775-1810), zoologist on the Australian voyage of Nicolas Baudin (1754-1803) in 1800-04, ranked New Guineans above the ‘savages’ of Van

\(^{40}\) Ballard, ““Oceanic Negroes””, 160.

Diemen's Land and New Holland but below New Zealanders, Pacific Islanders (whom Péron had not seen) and the inhabitants of Timor and the Moluccas. The naval medical officers Jean-René Constant Quoy (1790-1869) and Joseph-Paul Gaimard (1793-1858), who served as naturalists with Louis de Freycinet (1779-1842) in 1817-20 and with Dumont d'Urville in 1826-29, included in the official Zoologie volume of the former voyage a brief discussion of the 'physical constitution of the Papous'. They suggested that these Papous, a definition they restricted to people they had seen in Waigeo and its neighbouring islands, appeared 'to occupy the middle ground' between Malays and the 'true Negroes' inhabiting New Guinea itself. Dumont d'Urville's 1832 classification of places and people in Oceania – usually recalled as the now normalised tripartition of Pacific populations – actually suggested four 'principal divisions' of Oceania, namely Polynesia, Micronesia, Malaysia, and Melanesia, populated by two 'truly distinct races', one 'copper-coloured' and one 'black'.

I acknowledge the variety and ambiguity of earlier French uses of the category Papou/Papoua and note the considerable influence of encounters in maritime Southeast Asia on its application and contextualisation in French voyage narratives. However, Ballard's broader claim – that the 'cardinality of comparison' was a significant though 'largely overlooked element in the constitution of regional topographies of difference in Oceania', and that observers' 'trajectories of travel' in Oceania 'had a pronounced influence on the character of descriptions and the terms of comparison' – has relevance for my own work. Certainly it is noticeable that while Meyer's works generally mention Pauans in connection either with Malays or with Negritos, Finsch's writings tend to prefer the term 'Melanesian' and to contrast Melanesians with Polynesians, Micronesians and/or Australians. This suggests that Finsch's experiences in New Guinea must be understood within the broader context of his travels through Oceania and that his encounters with New Guinea's Indigenous inhabitants,
though undeniably significant, formed only one element in an extended process of increasing doubt and destabilisation of his beliefs about the reality and race. This destabilisation developed as a direct, though gradual, response to his encounters with people in various parts of Oceania, particularly those inhabiting the Marshall, Gilbert and Caroline Islands. The question of possible distinctions between Papuans and Alfuros, on the other hand, which had been central to von Baer’s craniological studies and had occupied a correspondingly significant place in Finsch’s discussions of Papuan physical anthropology in *Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner*, became entirely peripheral to his travel experiences.

‘Considerable individual variations’: Hawai‘i and Micronesia

Finsch departed Germany in April 1879. His first stop in Oceania was Hawai‘i, but although he managed to obtain ‘a fine selection’ of skulls from a burial site in Waimanolo, O‘ahu, he had little to say about the islands’ living inhabitants. In July he wrote to Virchow that he had ‘not yet been able to occupy [himself] with the Kanakas, or rather not at all’, since Honolulu was ‘too civilized’ and ‘in the plantations ... one sees more Chinese than natives’. He hoped, therefore, that Virchow would forgive him for not being ‘in a position to send any communications etc. yet’. By the end of September 1879 he had reached Jaluit Atoll in the Marshall Islands and had managed to collect ‘precise measurements from a group [of people] from the Gilbert Islands living here temporarily’. These measurements had convinced him that ‘these individuals, like all others ... vary very much in size, colouring etc’. He had also discovered that supposedly characteristic features identified by other researchers – the Russian naturalist Mikhilouho-Maclay, for example, had noted a distinctive ‘shortness of the big toe’ – were ‘by no means constant’ and warned that it was necessary, as a naturalist, to be ‘very much on one’s guard against declaring [such features] to be exceptional and peculiar’ to the people in


question. Finsch added that he had made some enquiries regarding tattooing, but lamented that such ‘interrogations, with the aid of translators ... are very time-consuming and require an awful lot of patience, because the[se] people think completely differently’.  

Finsch’s travels within Micronesia were facilitated by the German-born Hernsheim brothers, Franz (1845-1909) and Eduard (1847-1917), who together owned one of Jaluit’s two trading companies. With their assistance, Finsch visited several other atolls in the Marshall group, including Milli (Mili) and Arno. Following an excursion to the Gilbert Islands (Kiribati) on board a labour trader’s vessel, during which he visited the atolls Maraki (Marakei), Makin, Butaritari, Apiang (Abaiang) and Tarowa (Tarawa), Finsch also accompanied Franz Hernsheim on a journey to the Caroline Islands from February to March 1880. Here they stopped at Kusaie (Kosrae) and Ponapé (Pohnpei). Writing to Virchow about the inhabitants of Ponapé, Finsch noted that ‘considerable individual variations occur’ and that he had encountered ‘people with curved noses and cheek-bones now more prominent and now less’, as he had in the Gilbert and Marshall Islands. He described as examples of ‘particularly divergent types’ two local ‘kings’: ‘[t]he Idschibau [Isipau] of Metalanim [Madolenihmw]’, ‘the greatest and most powerful chief of the whole island’, was ‘a small, fairly sturdy, elderly man with a broad, round, beardless face’, while ‘the Nanmaraki [nahnnwarki] of Jokoits [Sokehs]’.

---

48 Finsch, ‘Reise nach den Marshalls-Inseln’, 413.
50 Finsch stated that at the time of his visit, ‘5 paramount chiefs, so-called kings, rule on Ponapé ... differing in rank [and] bear[ing] different titles ... The most eminent of these chiefs is the chief of Metalanim, who bears the title Idschibau, after him follows the chief of Jokoits with the lesser title Nanmaraki; the remaining three chiefs are called ‘Nanigan’ (Nanikin) and live in Nott, U (Ou) and Roan-Kitti’. ‘Metalanim’, ‘Jokoits’, ‘Nott’, ‘U’ and ‘Roan-Kitti’ correspond to the current toponyms Madolenihmw, Sokehs, Net, Uh and Kiti. Hezel explains that each of Pohnpei’s five ‘kingdoms’ in fact had ‘two separate lines of nobility ... The principal ruler of each tribe was the nahnnwarki, who stood at the head of one of the two chiefly lines; the nahkken ... was at the head of the other’. Hanlon identifies Isipau as ‘another title for the Nahnmwarki of Madolenihmw’. See Otto Finsch, ‘Über die Bewohner von Ponapé (östl. Carolinen). Nach eigenen Beobachtungen und Erkundigungen’, Zeitschrift für Ethnologie, 12 (1880), 303, 321; Francis X. Hezel, The First Taint of Civilization: A History of the Caroline and Marshall Islands in Pre-Colonial Days, 1521-1885 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983),
was ‘lank [and] lean’, with a ‘large, somewhat protruding mouth [and] flat nose, very broad in the nostrils’. In combination with ‘strongly projecting cheekbones and very curly hair’, these attributes supposedly ‘bestowed upon him a type reminiscent of the Negro’.\(^{51}\)

Finsch confidently advised Virchow that all Ponapeans, ‘without exception’, had ‘dark’ eyes, varying from ‘brown to black’, and that their hair was ‘likewise black’ and ‘mostly straight’, though he added, rather confusingly, that it was ‘very often also more or less curly’. With regard to their skin he ‘found no difference from that of the Marshall Islanders; the predominant colour, as it was amongst [the latter], was a dirty olive yellow-brown’. The skin colour of both Ponapeans and Marshall Islanders, however, also varied ‘individually and artificially’, a circumstance which led Finsch to meditate on the difficulties of accurate observation in the field:

Thus some women appear lighter than men, but it would be incorrect to wish to elevate this to a rule. A native’s body freshly rubbed with oil acquires, from its gloss, a much darker appearance than usual. The same applies to bathing and diving natives. The colour of the body, therefore, cannot always be reproduced as accurately as one would wish, even with the help of Broca’s chromatic table.\(^{52}\)

‘To measure and ... describe methodically’: Broca’s chromatic table

Broca’s table, a graduated series of skin and eye colours designed for use by anthropologists in the field, was created by Paul Broca, a leading French physician-anatomist and founder of the Société d’Anthropologie de Paris.\(^{53}\) Broca had published the table in the Société’s Mémoires in 1865 as part of a lengthy article, titled ‘Instructions générales pour les recherches et observations anthropologiques’ (‘General instructions for anthropological researches and observations’), which aimed to ‘provide to every man of

\(^{51}\) Finsch, ‘Ueber die Bewohner von Ponapé’, 303.
\(^{52}\) Finsch, ‘Ueber die Bewohner von Ponapé’, 303-4.
good will, traveller or sedentary, the means to contribute, through his researches, to the progress of anthropological science’. Earlier travellers, Broca stated, lacking ‘a well-defined goal’ to their observations and uninitiated in ‘the practices of anthropological investigation’, had simply followed ‘their own inspirations’; in consequence, even the most ‘enthusiastic’ and ‘well-informed’ amongst them had been able to produce no more than ‘fleeting notes’ and ‘more or less exact impressions’. Previous versions of ‘instructions designed to direct travellers in their researches’ published by ‘learned bodies [and] scientific committees’ had listed ‘the most important questions’ of nineteenth-century anthropology, but had failed to instruct their readers in the techniques needed to produce answers to them.\(^\text{54}\) Broca’s ‘Instructions générales’, therefore, by detailing everything from the preparation of plaster casts and photographs and the collection of osteological specimens to the various instruments and techniques required to obtain measurements from living subjects, aimed to standardize and mobilize travellers’ observations in ways that would make them meaningful to metropolitan audiences. His instructions, Broca claimed, would enable ‘every physician, every naturalist, every attentive and persevering traveller’ to ‘measure and to describe methodically’ the human beings they encountered during their travels. They would make ‘man’, the subject of ‘certainly the most interesting and the most useful’ of the natural sciences, ‘no more difficult to observe than a plant or an insect’.\(^\text{55}\)

The comprehensive nature of Broca’s text and his personal prominence in anthropological circles contributed equally to the popularity of his ‘Instructions générales’, both in France and further afield. His chromatic table, in particular, was reproduced or recommended in a number of

---


subsequent texts designed for amateur anthropologists. The most notable of these, the 1874 booklet *Notes and Queries on Anthropology, for the use of travellers and residents in uncivilized lands*, was drawn up by a committee appointed by the British Association for the Advancement of Science and featured contributions from authors as eminent as Francis Galton (1822-1911) and Charles Darwin. An 1875 review of *Notes and Queries* in the scientific journal *Nature*, which ‘strongly’ recommended those of its readers who had ‘friends within reach of uncivilised countries to send them out at once copies of this little manual’, noted that the inclusion of Broca’s ‘set of colour-types’ ‘adds much to the value of the book’.

Similarly, an 1881 circular on the correct production of racial plaster casts by Meyer, by then Director of the Königlich Zoologisches und Anthropologisch-Ethnographisches Museum in Dresden, advised that if a cast could not ‘immediately be painted with oils in the skin colour of the [original] face’, the colours of face, eyes and lips could be forwarded ‘in watercolour on paper or designated according to Broca’s Scale’. Although this circular retained Meyer’s previous objections to the arbitrary selection of a ‘particular type’ of physiognomy as characteristic of a race simply ‘because it shows clearly marked traits’ – he advised readers selecting individuals for casting purposes that ‘median [facial] forms are to be preferred to extreme ones’ – it is significant that his emphasis on the exact reproduction of skin, eye and hair colour and his recommendation of Broca’s Scale clearly contradicted his earlier attitudes to the usefulness of colour scales and the difficulty of reproducing skin nuances. In his 1874 address to the Anthropologische Gesellschaft in Vienna he had explicitly ‘refrained from preparing a colour scale’, explaining that ‘the limits within which the colour of the skin varies lie too far apart’ and that any attempt to compile such a scale would therefore ‘only be suitable for disseminating

incorrect ideas’. He had also attempted to contrast the skin colour of the Negritos he had encountered in Luzon (‘blackish-brown’) with that of an ‘African Negro’ recently arrived in the Philippines (‘dull grey-black’), but doubted that such ‘nuances of colour’ could ‘ever be expressed in words’, since ‘even to reproduce them with the paintbrush is an almost impossible task’.

Finsch’s own use of Broca’s table undoubtedly reflected Virchow’s guidance. As discussed in the Introduction, Virchow exercised a quite extraordinary influence over the development of physical anthropology in late nineteenth-century Germany. Following the foundation of the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie in 1869, he took a decisive interest in the Gesellschaft’s collection and analysis of human remains and ‘animated, guided and directed’ numerous ‘potential collectors’, including Meyer, as Chapter One has mentioned. At its height, the Rudolf-Virchow-Sammlung der Berliner Anthropologischen Gesellschaft (‘Rudolf Virchow collection of the Berlin Anthropological Society’) contained an estimated 4017 skulls and 100 skeletons, along with numerous hair and soft tissue samples and so-called ‘anthropologica’, predominantly plaster and wax face masks (moulages). Given Virchow’s towering prominence in German anthropology, it was entirely natural that the two men should have ‘discuss[ed] at length’ the ‘anthropological responsibilities’ of the voyage prior to Finsch’s departure and that Virchow should have entrusted to Finsch various tasks of anthropological interest, including ‘classifications of colour [and] body measurements’.

Virchow later described ‘the determination of colours, in particular those of the skin, the hair and the iris, according to chromatic tables’ as ‘a certain

---

and indispensable step forward’ for accurate anthropological investigation. In a letter from Jaluit shortly after his arrival there, Finsch had requested Virchow to ‘send out’ to him ‘a copy of Broca’s chromatic table or something else usable of that kind’; he had subsequently repeated the request, emphasising the near-impossibility of ‘reproducing the hues of the natives with the paintbrush’, and had at last acknowledged receipt of a copy on 6 July 1880. However, Finsch’s mention of the table in his letter from Ponapé in fact commenced a series of increasingly disillusioned references to it during his Oceanic travels, reflecting his growing awareness that human beings, despite Broca’s assurances, were considerably more difficult to measure and describe methodically than either plants or insects.

Figure 12: Otto Finsch, ‘Tätowirungen bei Eingebornen von Ontong-Java (Njua)’.  

---

64 Letters from Finsch to Virchow, 30 September 1879, 30 May and 15 August 1880, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.
In July 1880 Finsch took passage for New Britain on the Hernsheim steamer *Pacific*. As the steamer was following the south-west coast of Ontong Java Atoll, north of the Solomon Islands, six men from the atoll approached in a canoe and came on board (Fig. 12). Finsch was ‘unable to make any record of their language’ – all six had worked on Australian sugar plantations and were capable of at least some ‘broken English’ – but summarised their appearance in a series of crisp and authoritative statements: ‘Hair black, straight to softly frizzy, tending towards curls ... eyebrows heavy, black ... eyes a fine brown to black-brown ... forehead straight ... nose strongly curved to straight ... nostrils large ... mouth well-proportioned, relatively broad ... teeth beautifully white’. He concluded confidently that the men’s ‘type’ was ‘completely Micronesian’. Broca’s table, however, which had already struggled with the demands of variable field conditions in Ponapé, now proved insufficiently detailed to cope with the finer nuances of Ontong Javanese skin colour:

The skin colouring appeared substantially darker and more red-brown than [that of the] Gilbertese; one would describe it as copper red-brown. Comparison with Broca’s chromatic table, however, indicated precisely the same numbers as for [the] Gilbertese, Marshallese and other Micronesians. No. 36 corresponds most closely, but the colouring is more red-brown, as [it is] amongst the inhabitants of Nawodo (Pleasant Island).

*In no way savages*: Cannibals in New Britain

At the end of July 1880 Finsch arrived in Blanche Bay, East New Britain (Fig. 13), and on 31 September took up residence on Matupit Island, where he stayed until 29 March 1881. He spent these seven months ‘endeavour[ing] to become as closely acquainted with [Matupit’s inhabitants] as possible’; he ‘crept into their huts, observed eagerly all kinds

---

67 Finsch, ‘Bemerkungen über ... Ontong-Java’, 110-1. ‘Nawodo’ and ‘Pleasant Island’ both refer to present-day Nauru.
of activities and was never absent from ... any festival, from pig slaughterings to burials'.

Figure 13: Map of eastern New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago, showing locations visited by Finsch.

Map courtesy of Karina Pelling, ANU Cartographic & GIS Services, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University.

The variability of the Matupit Islanders' appearance did not at first impress Finsch as forcefully as that of the New Guineans he subsequently encountered. A few weeks after his arrival in New Britain, he described its inhabitants as 'strikingly negro-like' and queried, 'why should they not be supposed to belong to the Negro race? I don't know!' During his stay, however, he refined these initial impressions to some extent. In a letter dated 27 October he noted that the 'colouration' of Matupit's inhabitants

---

68 Finsch, 'Tapinowanen Torondoluan', 420-1.
69 Letters from Otto Finsch to Rudolf Virchow, 15 and 26 August 1880, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.
‘varie[d] immensely’, though he had seen no evidence for any ‘admixture of races’. Despite his reservations about Broca’s table – he had previously described it in a postscript to Virchow as ‘fairly inadequate (e.g. the colours of the eyes abominable), but better than nothing’ – Finsch decided on this occasion that even so blunt an instrument could perhaps help communicate some sense of a variability impossible to describe adequately in words. ‘In general’, he asserted, ‘a colouring between 35 and 36 is most accurate, but there are individuals resembling Nos. 49 and 50, and [others] to between 37 and 38, and this amongst children and both sexes’.  

During his stay in Matupit, however, Finsch was less surprised by the physical appearance of its inhabitants than by their way of life, which confounded some of his most deeply-rooted presumptions about ‘savage’ behaviour. These were people with ‘the ill reputation of being “naked savages” and “cannibals”’; indeed, Finsch later claimed to have witnessed a cannibal feast on Matupit at first hand on 7 March 1881. These clear markers of savagery notwithstanding, they nevertheless ranked very highly on his developmentalist model of social progress, a subject which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

After leaving Matupit, Finsch travelled briefly to Sydney before embarking upon a seven-week expedition to New Zealand. He then returned to Australian waters, landing on Thursday Island (Waiben) in the Torres Strait on 12 October 1881. Here he remained for several months, visiting a number of other islands, making contact with Indigenous Australian communities in the Cape York area, and building up his zoological and ethnographic collections. On 11 March 1882, the Zeitschrift für Ethnologie announced that the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie had again received from Finsch ‘a rich collection of skulls, plaster casts (moulages)

71 Letter from Finsch to Virchow, 15 August 1880, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.
and ethnographic objects from the South Seas and the Torres Strait'. These included items from several Cape York communities, the 'Undújamu', 'Koriruga' and 'Gudang tribe[s]', who were so few in number that Finsch described them as 'the last of Australia's Mohicans'.

The Race Question in Oceania

Finsch's experiences in the Torres Strait led him to meditate on the physical variability of the people he had encountered and the possibility of dividing them into more or less distinct 'races'. These musings are recorded in a letter to Virchow, dated 5 January 1882 and published in the Zeitschrift für Ethnologie shortly afterwards under the title 'Die Rassenfrage in Oceanien' ('The race question in Oceania'). In this letter, Finsch's struggles to reconcile the clear-cut racial classifications proposed by metropolitan theorists with his own complex and contradictory encounter experiences exemplify what Douglas has described as the 'recurrent tension between systems and facts' frequently confronted by anthropologists in the field. He commenced confidently, listing the islands he had visited — 'Morilug' (Muralug) or 'Prince of Wales Island', 'Mabiak' (Mabuiag) or 'Jervis Island', 'Badu, Moa, [and] Nagi' (Nagir) — and stating that these visits had 'convinced him' that the inhabitants of the Torres Strait 'are all genuine Papuans, that is, identical with the inhabitants of New Britain, New Ireland, the Solomons, New Hebrides, New Caledonia, Loyalty, Santa Cruz [and] Banks [Islands], Viti [Fiji] etc., in a word, with all that is understood by 'Melanesia'. He added:

To this [category] also belong the natives of the islands located east of the Torres Strait, such as Murray [Mer], Coconut Island [Poruma], Darnley [Erub] ... also of course the inhabitants of New Guinea ... for all of these the main

---

74 Finsch, 'Die Rassenfrage in Oceanien', 163.
76 Douglas, "Novus Orbis Australis", 134.
characteristic is the spiral-curved, matted, woolly hair. The Australians are straight-haired.\textsuperscript{78}

At this point, however, his recalcitrant experience began to make its presence felt. Finsch elaborated:

These would be the main distinguishing characteristics, which, however, can in no way be considered diagnostic. I observed recently, to my amazement, that there are also straight-haired Melanesians, i.e. Papuans, who have hair just as straight and black, and in precisely the same arrangement, as Europeans. I saw such people, namely men and women from Lifu [Lifou] and Mare [Maré], Loyalty Islands, and discovered, to my still greater astonishment, that almost all Lifu [Islanders] have this straight black hair and [that] the finely curled hair is very rare, whereas the latter, on the other hand, predominates on Mare. In all other respects (physiognomy, build, height, colouring) the Lifu and Mare people are thoroughly Melanesian.\textsuperscript{79}

This obstinate and confusing variability was not confined to Papuan hair. Finsch continued: ‘In general, all these characteristics — height, colouring, mouth, nose, expression and so forth — are so variable, that I can base no racial characteristics upon them’, adding caustically, ‘no matter how prettily [such things] may read in Waitz, Meinicke or Peschel’.\textsuperscript{80} With this statement Finsch boldly took aim at some of the most respected works in the German anthropological canon: Waitz’s six-volume \textit{Anthropologie der Naturvölker}; the prominent geographer Oscar Peschel’s (1826-1875) extremely popular \textit{Völkerkunde} (‘Ethnology’), which was first published in 1874 and by 1897 had already reached its seventh edition; and Meinicke’s prolific publications, including several considered ‘the first geographical standard works’ on Australia and the Pacific Islands, namely \textit{Das Festland Australien} (‘The continent of Australia’) (1837), \textit{Die Südseevölker und das

\textsuperscript{78} Finsch, ‘Die Rassenfrage in Oceanien’, 164.
\textsuperscript{79} Finsch, ‘Die Rassenfrage in Oceanien’, 164.
\textsuperscript{80} Finsch, ‘Die Rassenfrage in Oceanien’, 164.
Christentum, eine ethnographische Untersuchung (‘The peoples of the South Seas and Christianity, an ethnographic investigation’) (1844) and Die Inseln des Stillen Ozeans (‘The islands of the Pacific Ocean’) (1875-6).\(^1\)

Interestingly, these writers were far less rigidly deterministic in their understandings of physical variability than some of their contemporaries. The biologist and evolutionary morphologist Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919), the principal German populariser of Darwin’s works, is a notable example: his numerous publications on human evolution outlined a hierarchical scale which categorised human races by inflexibly applied combinations of hair type, skull shape and skin colour, and explicitly correlated these physical characteristics with the capacity, or lack thereof, for cultural development.

Haeckel distinguished ‘Papuan Man (Homo papua)’, ‘New Holland Man (Homo australis)’ and ‘Polynesian or Malaysian Man (Homo malayensis)’ as separate races or species; significantly, he used the terms ‘race’ and ‘species’ interchangeably in his discussions of human biological difference, arguing that ‘the various forms of the human race, which one commonly considers as races or sports of a single human species (Homo sapiens), represent … an equivalent number of good species’ and that ‘the differences in skin colour, character of the hair, and skull formation, by means of which the various human races are separated, are in no way less [significant] than those differences by which many recognised “good species” of animals of a single genus in their natural wild condition are separated’.\(^2\) He further consigned ‘Papuan Man’ — characterised by ‘woolly hair’, ‘dark brown or completely black skin colour’ and a ‘long-headed’ (dolichocephalic) skull — to the bottom of the evolutionary ladder as the species most closely related

---


to the hypothetical ‘primeval or ape-man (Homo primigenius)’, the supposed common ancestor of all humankind.\(^3\)

To the species of primeval man we can first of all add, as a second human species, Papuan Man (Homo papuensis) ... the indigenous inhabitants of New Guinea, New Britain, the Solomon Islands etc. who are still alive today, along with the now extinct inhabitants of Tasmania (Van Diemen’s Land), appear to have distanced themselves only very little from that oldest and lowest human species.\(^4\)

In contrast, both Waitz and Peschel espoused a monogenist theory of human origins which emphasised fundamental similarities, rather than differences, between supposedly distinct races. Both also acknowledged that attempts to define such races by a single criterion were doomed to failure. Waitz, as Chapter One has mentioned, challenged what he considered a prevailing over-reliance on craniology and urged anthropologists ‘no longer to neglect other physical characters’, asserting that ‘satisfactory clue[s] ... to the peculiarities of each race’ could be found only when these characters were considered in toto.\(^5\) Peschel specifically criticised Haeckel’s attempt to ‘base a classification of the human race on hair alone’ as an ‘artificial system’, arguing that neither hair, skull form, nor skin colour permitted ‘clear divisions between races’.\(^6\) He added that it was erroneous to designate existing populations as ‘savages’ or ‘natural peoples’, since ‘the natural condition of the human race’ had ‘certainly passed beyond our observation, even our imagination’.\(^7\)

Finsch himself almost certainly possessed a copy of Peschel’s *Völkerkunde*; on occasion, and with considerable respect, he even quoted from it (see also Chapter Five).\(^8\) Nevertheless, he took exception to what he considered these anthropologists’ excessive faith in the existence of clear and constant

\(^3\) Haeckel, ‘Ueber die Entstehung ... des Menschengeschlechts, 67, 70-2.
\(^4\) Haeckel, ‘Ueber die Entstehung ... des Menschengeschlechts’, 70-1.
\(^6\) Peschel, *Völkerkunde*, 102.
\(^7\) Peschel, *Völkerkunde*, 147.
\(^8\) See, for example, Finsch, ‘Menschenfresser in Neubritannien’, 445.
distinctions between races. Above all, he asserted that neat racial categories, constructed from the comfort of a metropolitan armchair, were simply inadequate to comprehend the vast and bewildering human variety he had experienced:

I would wish the[se] anthropological gentlemen ... on a pearl [fishing] station in the Torres Strait, where one finds natives from almost all islands, from Hawaii and New Zealand to Singapore and the Philippines ... I have compared the characteristics of these races, book in hand, and found that everything, by and large, is incorrect: it is not so! 89

Despite this glaring ‘mismatch of theory and praxis’, Finsch was reluctant to abandon existing categories completely. 90 Using as an example the small cutter which had taken him to Mabuiag, he stated that there had been, besides himself, ‘some 20 natives, divers and shellers, on board’ and that he could ‘differentiate them all, but only into three large groups: 1. Lighter people with straight hair: Polynesians (to which the ... Micronesians also belong) ... 2. Dark people with curly hair: Melanesians.’ (The editor of the Zeitschrift für Ethnologie added a footnote at this point suggesting that Finsch had probably intended to add a third group, ‘3. Dark people with straight hair: Australians.’) ‘Further information about their origins’, however, Finsch found himself quite unable to supply, as he illustrated with examples from his experience aboard the cutter: 91

[T]o return to our company on the Lord Loftus, as our little boat was ostentatiously named. Here is a man whom I take to be decidedly a Maori, he calls Rarotonga his home; another I would have believed to be the brother of a man known to me from Tarowa, Gilberts group, he is from Alexandria ... [and] calls himself an Arab; this handsome olive-brown man seems to me [to be] from Samoa, he comes from Luzon; this other light[-coloured] man [comes] from

89 Finsch, ‘Die Rassenfrage in Oceanien’, 164.
Amboina, I take him for a Samoan half-caste. And who could claim to [be able to] distinguish all the Blacks? No-one could manage it; one might just as well attempt to differentiate a multitude of species of birds which had all been suddenly coloured black.  

Skin colouring, concluded Finsch, although 'in general of importance for differentiation', proved treacherous 'in countless instances'. Overall, 'Polynesians' could be described as 'light-coloured (olive brown)', 'Melanesians' as 'dark-coloured (dark brown to almost black, not "blue-black", as Peschel says somewhere)', yet he had also observed 'Chinese ... as dark as Gilbert [Islanders]', 'a Greek (from Athens) ... as dark as a Maori', and New Britons 'almost as light[skinned] as people from the Marshalls or Manila'. With the exception of individuals who marked themselves out with distinctive tattoos (New Zealanders), stretched earlobes (Marshall Islanders), or other location-specific forms of body ornamentation, Finsch admitted that '[i]f the people are uniformly dressed in European style, then perhaps it is not possible for me to distinguish a New Briton from a Badu man, a Solomon [Islander] from a Tannese'. He acknowledged that Germany's armchair anthropologists, their comfortable metropolitan categories undisturbed by refractory personal experience, would probably pity him for this admission, but retorted:

Certainly the diagnostics of the races ("[cephalic] index such-and-such, prognathous, breasts flaccid, facial expression treacherous"), [together] with all the [other] vague attributes ... can very well be compiled. Everyone swears by such a book, but the traveller with five sound senses ... will ultimately permit himself [to make] his own judgement, even if it should be different.  

In fact, Finsch's pre-voyage views had been very much those of the anthropologists he now disparaged. His compilation of Neuguinea und...

---

92 Finsch, 'Die Rassenfrage in Oceania', 165.
93 Finsch, 'Die Rassenfrage in Oceania', 164.
94 Finsch, 'Die Rassenfrage in Oceania', 165.
seine Bewohner had followed precisely their technique of making, ‘from ninety-nine books’, ‘a hundredth’; he explicitly acknowledged the limitations of this practice in a letter to Virchow, where he described Meinicke’s Bewohner der Südsee as ‘a very mediocre book, like so many compilations, mine on N[ew] Guinea included’. Moreover, Finsch’s doubts regarding the validity of racial diagnostics had developed only gradually; his description of the men from Ontong Java – ‘[h]air black, straight to softly frizzy’, ‘eyes a fine brown to black-brown’, and so forth – had adhered faithfully to the conventional listings of ‘vague attributes’ which he now discarded as incommensurable with the ever-varying specificities of experience. Finsch may even have been complicit, albeit unwittingly, in Peschel’s erroneous description of Melanesians as ‘blue-black’; Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner, in which Finsch observed that ‘the skin colour, dark brown to blue-black’, featured constantly in existing accounts of Indigenous New Guineans, was amongst the sources acknowledged in Peschel’s Völkerkunde.

‘A completely different race than I had imagined’: Mainland New Guinea

Mainland New Guinea, which Finsch reached early in 1882, had further surprises in store. Though his previous research had prepared him for some variety in language and customs amongst New Guinea’s Indigenous inhabitants, he had expected considerable uniformity of physical appearance and was much excited to find these expectations overturned. In a letter to Virchow dated January 1882, he declared that he was ‘very glad to have gone through with the plan to visit New Guinea in spite of all obstacles, as these Papuans are a completely different race than I had imagined’. The schooner on which he was travelling made landfall at the coast opposite Yule Island, some 160 km north of Port Moresby, and Finsch’s first encounter with the area’s inhabitants was sufficient to convince him that ‘a

---

95 Letter from Otto Finsch to Rudolf Virchow, 26 August 1880, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.
96 Finsch, ‘Die Rassenfrage in Oceania’, 165; idem, ‘Bemerkungen über ... Ontong-Java’, 110-1.
97 Finsch, Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner, 39; Peschel, Völkerkunde, 364-6.
visit in New Guinea' had been 'absolutely necessary' for his 'Papuan studies'. Here he had 'made the acquaintance', he later declared, of 'the full extent of the very substantial variations with respect to skin colour and hair formation'. His struggles to make sense of this extraordinary physical heterogeneity clearly reflect Fabian's notion of the 'ecstatic' dimension of encounter, which Ballard defines as an 'excess of experience that confounds anticipation':

These Papuans throw all our beautiful theories of spiral-curl hair [and] dark, almost black skin into complete disarray ... here one finds all gradations from completely straight ... to curly Papuan hair; heads of ringlets, amongst them red-blonde ones, are frequent, Japanese and Jewish physiognomies not uncommon, men with aquiline noses, reminiscent of Redskins ... The situation is the same in relation to skin colour ... the light variety, which I also observed in New Britain, is more frequent and amongst these [were] some individuals so pale that they could almost be taken for suntanned Whites.

Finsch was not the only European visitor to be struck by the physical diversity of this region's inhabitants. Luigi Maria d'Albertis (1841-1901), an Italian naturalist who travelled extensively in New Guinea between 1871 and 1877, described meeting people from the Yule Island and Hall Sound areas who 'seemed to [him] quite a distinct race from the Papuans, both in face and colour', including 'a woman of an almost European type' and another 'of a true Malay type'. In summarising his observations of these areas, he remarked that he had been struck not only by the fact that the people living there 'differ[ed] widely from the inhabitants of ... north-west

---

99 Finsch, 'Ueber seine ... Reisen in der Südsee', 562.
101 Letter from Finsch to Virchow, 30 January 1882, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften; see also Finsch, 'Reise nach Neu-Guinea', 310.
[New Guinea] but 'by the individual differences ... existing among them'. He concluded that they represented 'a mixture of two races, one dark-skinned and crisp-haired, the other with lighter skin and smooth hair'. These he characterised as 'the yellow' and 'the black', though he was careful to note that '[t]he term, yellow, does not exactly express the first, nor does black, the second, and those adjectives must be used comparatively only'. Between these two extremes, the 'preponderating type' exhibited 'every gradation that can result from the mingling of the two principal varieties'.

Wallace's response to these comments in his 1880 review of d'Albertis' monograph New Guinea: What I Did and What I Saw is revealing, both of Wallace's personal priorities and of broader dynamics evident in interactions between field and metropole. Though he praised d'Albertis' 'enthusiasm, boldness, and resource', his 'deep love of nature, great humanity' and 'sympathy with savages', Wallace complained.

The various accounts of the natives given throughout these volumes leave an impression of vagueness that is very unsatisfactory. The mixture of races in various parts of New Guinea is no doubt great, but we cannot help thinking that there is a well-marked Papuan type, and that its headquarters are in this great island. Signor D'Albertis seems to attach too much importance to minor peculiarities. He continually mentions small differences in the features, the hair, the form of the skull, or the stature, as implying a radical difference of race, forgetting that such differences are found among every people and in every country, and that on this principle we might establish a dozen different "races" in Europe.

Clearly it was in Wallace's personal interest to argue for the existence of 'a well-marked Papuan type'; his own descriptions of such a type, contrasting

---

both physically and mentally with a similarly essentialized Malay type, had
been central to his arguments for the existence of two 'distinctly evolved
zoological and anthropological domains' in The Malay Archipelago (see
Chapter One). More broadly, however, his rejection of d'Alberis'
conclusions reflects a strategy commonly employed by late-nineteenth-
century metropolitan savants, whether or not they had travelled themselves.
On the one hand, such savants frequently valorized the physical
achievements of (other) travellers and welcomed the material and
informational collections they generated; on the other, they contested or
dismissed any attempts at independent theorization which did not accord
with their own views.

**Anthropological Results of a Journey in the South Seas**

When Finsch returned to Germany on 28 September 1882 after an absence
of almost three and a half years, he faced similar resistance from
metropolitan anthropologists. It is clear, from the copious letters written
during his travels, that his experiences in Oceania had significantly changed
his views on the reliability of racial diagnostics and the extent of variability
within and between supposedly uniform races; it is equally clear from his
post-voyage publications that he struggled to express these changes in ways
that were comprehensible and acceptable to a metropolitan audience. His
own understanding of the impact of his experiences is acknowledged most
emphatically and unequivocally in the conclusion to 'Die Rassenfrage in
Oceanien', which was written in the immediate context of his encounters in
the field. He challenged his readers to 'imagine to [themselves] a light-
coloured man from Lifu with straight hair', who 'would throw into disarray
all the beautiful characteristics with which I believed, until now, to be able
at least to differentiate Polynesians, Melanesians and Australians', and
closed with the following remark:

> From all that I have seen so far of human races ... I come
more and more to the conviction that they cannot be
distinguished by characteristics on a natural historical basis,
but merge into one another to such an extent that the

---

106 Ballard, "Oceanic Negroes", 183.
difference between Europeans and Papuans ultimately becomes completely unimportant; I must suppose, on the basis of my experiences ... that there exists only one single human species! I do not do this as a favour to the Holy Scripture, nor to Darwin, I adhere simply to the facts.\textsuperscript{107}

Finsch’s certainty on this point, born of the immediacy of his field experiences, was more difficult to maintain following his return to Germany. Ballard suggests that field observers during the nineteenth century ‘were often limited in their capacity to confront or contradict metropolitan theories of race’ and tended to suppress the ‘ecstatic’ dimension of their encounters when aiming for the ‘distanced perspective’ of a published narrative.\textsuperscript{108} Finsch’s attempts to communicate his experiences post-voyage illustrate these conflicting imperatives. His addresses to metropolitan scientific societies and his printed catalogues of his collections navigate awkwardly between systems and facts, theory and experience: on the one hand, his own observations of the complexities of human physical and cultural diversity in Oceania; on the other, the expectations of his audience, their belief in the existence of clear-cut categories of human difference and their desire for systematic information.

‘[T]he challenge of trying to cram personal experience of a highly varied mix of human physical features, lifestyles, and behaviours into neat racial pigeonholes’ saw Finsch explicitly emphasizing the breadth of individual variation within supposedly homogeneous races, the extent to which such races merged and overlapped, and the consequent unreliability of physical features such as skin colour, hair type, or head shape as racial diagnostics, while simultaneously utilizing racial descriptors such as ‘Melanesians’ and ‘Polynesians’ as unproblematic, reified categories, thereby tacitly reassuring his audience of the real existence of these races.\textsuperscript{109} In his 1882 address to the Gesellschaft für Erdkunde in Berlin, for example, he recalled the ‘very considerable variations with regard to skin colour and hair formation’ which

\textsuperscript{107} Finsch, ‘Die Rassenfrage in Oceanien’, 166.
\textsuperscript{108} Ballard, ‘“Oceanic Negroes”’, 159.
had struck him from his ‘first meeting’ with the inhabitants of Hall Sound, coastal south-east New Guinea, but persisted in describing them as ‘Papuans’. He applied the same label – ‘pure Papuans’ – to the inhabitants of the Torres Strait, adding that his contact with ‘the last remnants of three native tribes’ in Cape York had ‘convinced him’ of the ‘dissimilarity’ of Indigenous Australians and Torres Strait Islanders.\textsuperscript{110}

In 1884 Finsch published a ‘descriptive catalogue’ of his collection of ‘face masks of human types [Völkertypen]’ from Oceania under the title \textit{Anthropologische Ergebnisse einer Reise in der Südsee} (‘Anthropological results of a journey in the South Seas’).\textsuperscript{111} His introduction to this catalogue stated that these plaster casts not only furnished ‘complete proof’ of the lack of anthropological justification for considering ‘the so-called Micronesians’ as a separate race, but also demonstrated ‘by numerous examples’ that ‘individual variations’ resulted in ‘the most complete equalization [Ausgleich]’, even between ‘apparently completely distinct races’. He described this, moreover, as ‘a fact which will obtrude itself upon every unbiased observer who has the opportunity to see and compare many tribes of peoples’.\textsuperscript{112} Nevertheless, the body of the catalogue, which listed the names, locations and physical descriptions of those persons who had served as models for his casts, was dutifully divided into racial categories: ‘Polynesians (Micronesians and Polynesians)’, ‘Malays’, ‘Melanesians or Papuans’, a token ‘African Negro’, and ‘Australians’. Finsch also defined the skin colour of his subjects according to Broca’s chromatic table, though he reiterated in a footnote that the table ‘leaves much to be desired and seldom renders the skin colour exactly, as the hues usually fall between two numbers’.\textsuperscript{113}

Although Finsch’s ‘rich collections’ of anthropological material from Oceania included almost 300 skulls and over 200 hair samples, along with

\textsuperscript{110} Finsch, ‘Ueber seine ... Reisen in der Südsee’, 561-2; see also letter from Otto Finsch to Rudolf Virchow, 9 September 1883, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, in which Finsch similarly identifies Torres Strait Islanders as ‘Papuans’. 
\textsuperscript{111} Finsch, \textit{Anthropologische Ergebnisse}, iii.
\textsuperscript{112} Finsch, \textit{Anthropologische Ergebnisse}, x.
\textsuperscript{113} Finsch, \textit{Anthropologische Ergebnisse}, 1 note 1.
‘numerous body measurements, outlines of hands and feet, sketches and some 300 self-made photographs’, he considered his series of 155 plaster casts of ‘native’ faces the pièce de résistance of his collection. These casts represented ‘5 human races from 31 major islands or groups and 61 different localities’ (Fig. 14), including examples of ‘the light-coloured races of the South Seas, that is, Polynesians’, and of ‘Melanesians, that is, dark, negro-like inhabitants of the South Seas’, along with ‘comparative material’ in the form of ‘genuine Australians, Negroes, Chinese, Japanese, and nine different tribes of the Malay Race’.

Figure 14: Extract from Otto Finsch, Anthropologische Ergebnisse einer Reise in der Südsee ... (Berlin: A. Asher & Co., 1884), 78.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>46 Micronesians</th>
<th>. . . . . . . . . . . . . . from 19 localities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 Polynesians</td>
<td>. . . . . . . . . . . . . . &quot; 8 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Malays and relatives</td>
<td>. . . . . . . . . . . . . . &quot; 12 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 Melanesians</td>
<td>. . . . . . . . . . . . . . &quot; 20 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 African Negro</td>
<td>. . . . . . . . . . . . . . &quot; 1 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Australians</td>
<td>. . . . . . . . . . . . . . &quot; 1 &quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The series had originally numbered over 200 items, but as a result of ‘the negligence of a shipping agent’ in Thursday Island a substantial proportion of these, representing people from New Zealand, Cape York and the Torres Strait, were lost; rather than being shipped immediately, as the agent had promised, they had been stowed aboard a ship serving as a warehouse, which subsequently sank, to Finsch’s considerable chagrin. Of the 155 masks remaining, 109 were of adult men, 33 of adult women and 13 of

\[\text{\textsuperscript{114}}\text{Finsch, Anthropologische Ergebnisse, ix-x; see also idem, Systematische Uebersicht, 15-7. For an overview of Finsch’s collections, see idem, Catalog für die Ausstellung für Völkerkunde der Südsee ... (Braunschweig: Albert Limbach, 1883); idem, Catalog der Ausstellung für vergleichende Völkerkunde ... (Bremen: Homyer & Meyer, 1887); Anon., Catalog der ethnologischen Sammlung der Neu Guinea Compagnie, ausgestellt im Kgl. Museum für Völkerkunde, 2 vols (Berlin: Otto v. Holten, 1886); Franz Heger, ‘Vorwort’, in Finsch, Ethnologische Erfahrungen und Belegstücke, 83-5; Markus Schindelbeck, ‘Deutsche wissenschaftliche Expeditionen und Forschungen in der Südsee bis 1914’, in Hiery, Die Deutsche Südsee, 137-8.}\\n\text{\textsuperscript{115}}\text{Finsch, Anthropologische Ergebnisse, 78; idem, ‘Ueber seine ... Reisen in der Südsee’, 564.}\\n\text{\textsuperscript{116}}\text{Finsch, Anthropologische Ergebnisse, vii, x, 25, 42, 66; see also letters from Otto Finsch to Rudolf Virchow, 11 January and 9 September 1883, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.}\\n\]
children (Fig. 15).  

Figure 15: Otto Finsch, ‘Wagi I ... ca. 18 Jahr alt’ (left); ‘Mōa ... Knabe von ca. 9 Jahren’ (centre); ‘Ngapaki Puni, Häuptling des Ngatiawa-Stammes von Pitone bei Wellington’ (right).

Plaster. Photographs H. Howes.

Finsch’s catalogue was published with the support of the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, and Virchow, as its President, wrote the preface. He claimed that of all the anthropological tasks with which Finsch had been entrusted, none had been carried out ‘so completely’ or ‘with such sustained attention’ as the preparation of facial plaster casts. Such a collection, he declared, ‘had never before been produced for any part of the world to anything like the same [degree of] completeness’ and would ‘perhaps never again be produced’ for the South Seas, since the ‘tribes’ represented were ‘rapidly dying off’ and even those ‘sparse remnants’ not yet wholly extinguished were undergoing considerable change as a result of their ‘contact with European civilisation’. This concept of ‘salvage anthropology’ and its impacts on German collecting practices will be discussed further in Chapter Five. Apparently Virchow was not aware of the 51 moulages produced by the French phrenologist Pierre-Marie

---

117 Finsch, Anthropologische Ergebnisse, 78.
118 ‘Wagi I ... ca. 18 years old’; ‘Mōa ... boy of ca. 9 years’; ‘Ngapaki Puni, chief of the Ngatiawa tribe from Pitone near Wellington’, in Finsch, Anthropologische Ergebnisse, 25, 45; see also idem, Catalog der Gesichtsmasken von Völkertypen der Südsee und dem malayischen Archipel, nach Lebenden in Gyps abgegossen in den Jahren 1879-1882 (Bremen: s.n., 1884), n.p. ‘Wagi I’ and ‘Mōa’ are identified as being from Anuapata, south-east New Guinea, ‘Ngapaki Puni’ from Pitone, Aotearoa/New Zealand.
Alexandre Dumoutier (1797-1871), who accompanied Dumont d’Urville on his third and final Oceanic voyage of 1837-40.  

Virchow also praised Finsch’s ‘skill’ and ‘stamina’ in preparing the casts, noting that few travellers before him had possessed sufficient patience or ability to ‘prevail upon people of foreign race’ to submit to anthropommetrical examinations. Given the lengthy and difficult nature of the processes involved, this was hardly surprising. Such casts required the subject to lie still for 40 minutes or more during the application and drying of the plaster. Eyebrows, eyelashes and facial hair, if present, had to be well greased to prevent the plaster from sticking (Dumoutier took the alternative route of persuading his subjects to shave off all their head and facial hair, though this proved difficult in those parts of Oceania where the head was considered *tapu*, inviolable or sacred). Some authorities advised that quills, straws or rubber tubes be inserted into the nostrils to facilitate breathing, though others considered this unnecessary. Even pure plaster emitted heat while drying, causing discomfort to the subject; plaster adulterated with lime could result in serious burns.  

Finsch himself, according to Zimmermann ‘the most famous anthropological plaster caster’, confessed that he ‘sometimes wonder[ed]’ how it had been possible to convince ‘so-called savages, of whose language I did not understand a word’, to undergo what he acknowledged was ‘not

---

121 Virchow, ‘Vorwort’, v-vi.  
precisely [a] pleasant process’. He later recalled that ‘in general a strong dislike prevails against the process of having a cast taken’ and emphasized the ‘enormous trouble and difficulty’, the ‘time and money’ he had ‘spent in obtaining this collection’. Certain Oceanians, he claimed, had demonstrated particular reluctance. Potential subjects in the Marshall Islands were ‘difficult to get’ and would not ‘remain calm’ during the casting process; the ‘Cape York natives’ displayed ‘great shyness’; and the ‘Maoris’ of New Zealand, who had caused the most ‘difficulties’ of all, had cost him ‘many vain [and] expensive attempts’ before a few finally consented to the process, ‘solely ... out of friendship and respect’ for Finsch’s ‘esteemed friend Dr. W. Buller in Wellington’. Even finished plaster casts posed ongoing problems: in the high humidity of Pacific Island environments, the plaster did not dry properly and was subject to mould. Cockroaches and rats caused further damage and transportation was difficult, expensive and risky, as evidenced by the casts lost by Finsch’s Thursday Island shipping agent.

In light of these considerations Virchow was arguably justified in praising Finsch’s ‘extraordinary’ success in obtaining plaster casts as a ‘stroke of luck’ which could not be ‘too highly prized’. He was less enamoured of Finsch’s conclusions, warning, for example, that ‘a craniologist’ like himself would ‘not easily agree’ with Finsch’s suggestion that ‘the Negritos of the Philippines’ should be counted amongst the ‘Melanesians’, or that

---

126 Finsch, ‘Reise nach den Marshalls-Inseln’, 414; idem, *Anthropologische Ergebnisse*, 25, 66. On moulages of Maori compare also letter from Otto Finsch to Rudolf Virchow, 17 August 1881, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften. ‘Dr. W. Buller’ is presumably Walter Lawry Buller (1838-1906), a New Zealand magistrate and ornithologist; the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* records that Buller and Finsch, as fellow ornithologists, were in contact while Finsch was still in Bremen. See Ross Galbreath, ‘Buller, Walter Lawry 1838-1906’, *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, online <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1b46/1>, accessed 20 September 2010.
127 In a letter from Jaluit Finsch reported checking his casts and finding ‘mould, cockroaches, rats! enough to drive me to despair, but I was just able to rescue them’. See letter from Finsch to Virchow, 30 September 1879, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften; Finsch, ‘Reise nach den Marshalls-Inseln’, 414.
Micronesians and Polynesians were not distinct races. This dualism, reflected in Wallace’s response to d’Albertis, was not restricted to anthropological circles. The botanist Joseph Dalton Hooker (1817-1911), in his twenty-year role as Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, reprimanded those amongst his global network of collectors who presumed to describe new plant species from their area, claiming that new species could be defined and described only after comparison with Kew’s extensive collections. Jim Endersby argues that Hooker’s strictures on the dual importance of ‘[l]ong and patient observation in the field’ and ‘much practice in sifting and examining the comparative value of characters’ were at least partly ‘designed to encourage deference to the metropolitan expert while discouraging premature speculation among local botanists’.

Virchow’s conclusion to his comments on Finsch’s plaster casts served essentially the same purpose of policing the boundaries of scientific knowledge and reinforcing metropolitan control over the interpretation of field observations:

Before these points, so important for the question of the origin of races, [can be] fathomed scientifically, a long series of the most laborious and detailed investigations must be carried out. But even if these should not universally confirm the statements of our traveller, produced from [his own] intuition, his actual experiences and especially his plaster casts will nevertheless retain an imperishable worth.

Like Virchow, who concluded his prologue by ‘sincerely recommend[ing]’ Finsch’s plaster casts ‘to the scholarly world and to museum administrations’, Finsch himself understood his casts as a contribution to

---

serious scientific knowledge.\textsuperscript{131} In the introduction to his catalogue he described his intention of making them ‘accessible to the scientific world’ as a ‘most urgent task’, adding that since his return in September 1882 virtually nothing had been published on his ‘rich collections’ of anthropological material.\textsuperscript{132} The casts were advertised both within Germany and further afield, including in the \textit{Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland}, and by 1887 Finsch was able to report that the Museum in the \textit{Jardin des Plantes} in Paris, the Australian Museum in Sydney,\textsuperscript{133} and equivalent institutions in Florence, St. Petersburg and Berlin had acquired complete series, and that the British Museum (South Kensington) and museums in Dresden, Bremen and Leiden were exhibiting selected specimens.\textsuperscript{134} Within Germany, however, the great majority of those who encountered Finsch’s casts did so in an institution seemingly far removed from scientific respectability: Castan’s Panoptikum (Panopticon) in Berlin. The Castan brothers, Louis (1828-1908) and Gustav (1836-1899), displayed the full series of Finsch’s moulages, recast in wax from his original plaster moulds, in their Panoptikum; Louis Castan was also responsible for colouring the casts, in accordance with Finsch’s records and sketches, and for producing and distributing copies to interested institutions.\textsuperscript{135}

\textsuperscript{131} Virchow, ‘Vorwort’, viii.
\textsuperscript{132} Finsch, \textit{Anthropologische Ergebnisse}, ix-x.
\textsuperscript{133} See letter from Otto Finsch to Ernest-Théodore Hamy, 4 February 1883, MS 2255 (Correspondance des années 1878-1883), and letter from [Armand] de Q[uartrefages] to ‘mon cher Hamy’, n.d. [1887], MS 2256 (Correspondance des années 1884-1887), both held under Hamy, Ernest-Théodore (1860-1889): Correspondance, Muséum National d’Histoire Naturelle, Paris; letter from Otto Finsch to Trustees of the Australian Museum, Sydney, 14 February 1884, Anthropology Division, Australian Museum, Sydney.
\textsuperscript{135} Finsch, \textit{Anthropologische Ergebnisse}, xi note 1; idem, \textit{Gesichtsmasken von Völkertypen der Südsee}, 3, 5.
Founded in 1869, Castan’s Panoptikum was originally conceived as a wax museum, comparable to Madame Tussaud’s in London (on which it was based) or the Musée Grévin in Paris.\(^\text{136}\) However, the Castan brothers quickly supplemented the Panoptikum’s waxworks, including both ‘racial busts’ and ‘figures from history and popular culture’, with a range of additional displays: ethnographic objects, medical statues representing ‘diseased and healthy sexual organs’, live performances by ‘freaks and ethnic “rarities”’, along with ‘curiosities such as elephant tusks, mummies, stuffed alligators, and gorillas’.\(^\text{137}\) A ‘chamber of horrors’, containing life-size models of celebrated murderers and assorted instruments of torture, execution and crime, proved particularly enticing, attracting up to 10,000 visitors in a single weekend.\(^\text{138}\) Like its later competitor, the Passagen-Panoptikum (est. 1888), Castan’s Panoptikum blurred the line between popular and scientific spheres of knowledge.\(^\text{139}\) Until their closure under economic pressure from postwar inflation in 1922 and 1923 respectively, these two institutions enjoyed enormous popularity; they attracted crowds of over five thousand people on Sundays and holidays and were presented by tourist guidebooks of the day as ‘important sights’ for visitors to the city.\(^\text{140}\)

Despite their primary function as institutions of popular entertainment, Berlin’s panopticons were intimately linked with the city’s scientific élite. Louis Castan was a founding member of the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie; Zimmermann notes that he ‘often presented his freak-show

\(^{136}\) Angelika Friederic, *Castan’s Panoptikum: Ein Medium wird besichtigt*, Heft 1 (A1) (Berlin: Verlag Karl-Robert Schütze, 2008), 9. The Danish journalist and *flâneur* Carl Muusmann recalled that the 1882 opening of a panoptikon in Copenhagen had been stimulated by ‘[t]he idea … that Copenhagen, which was on the verge of entering into the league of the European metropolises, also ought to have a genuine panoptikon, like Castan’s in Berlin, Grévin’s in Paris, and Madame Tussaud’s in London’. See Mark B. Sandberg, *Living Pictures, Missing Persons: Mannequins, Museums, and Modernity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 121.


\(^{140}\) Zimmermann, *Anthropology and Antihumanism*, 18.
performers at the [Gesellschaft’s] meetings’ and that its members, including Virchow, ‘offered public testimonial to the authenticity’ of these performers.\textsuperscript{141} While the endorsement of Berlin’s scientific establishment served to confer an aura of educational respectability on what later came to be considered lowbrow mass entertainment, the juxtaposition of ‘freaks’ such as ‘giants’, ‘dwarves’ and conjoined (‘Siamese’) twins with representations of, and performances by, members of non-European ‘races’ effectively positioned the latter as merely additional variations on a common theme of deviant human development. Eike Reichardt, who situates the ethnographic spectacles of late nineteenth-century Germany within the broader context of increasing bourgeois enthusiasm for science and popular education, argues that the medical ‘abnormalities’ displayed in the panopticons ‘framed the “racial” busts and ethnographic spectacles as examples of biological difference’, adding that

\begin{quote}
[t]he ethnographic spectacles of Berlin were only possible because anthropologists validated their scientific worth by examining the participants … The presence of scientists was as much a part of the show as the ‘exotic’ actors on display. Specialists observing, measuring, and quantifying the bodies and behaviour of the ‘natives’, frequently in front of audiences, helped legitimate the ethnographic spectacles for the public.\textsuperscript{142}
\end{quote}

\textit{‘A black pleasure traveller’ in Germany, 1882-83}

Finsch’s attempts to present his anthropological observations to the metropolis in concrete and tangible form were not confined to his substantial collections of skulls, hair samples, measurements, sketches, photographs and plaster casts. He returned to Germany in 1882 in the company of a boy of about fifteen from Matupit Island. Although Finsch

\textsuperscript{141} Friederici, \textit{Castan’s Panopticum}, Heft 1 (A1), 11; Zimmermann, \textit{Anthropology and Antihumanism}, 73.

\textsuperscript{142} Reichardt, \textit{Health, ‘Race’ and Empire}, 35-6. For more detailed analyses of the reception of travelling ethnographic performers, specifically an Aboriginal troupe presented by the American impresario Robert Cunningham, by European anthropologists, see Anderson, “‘Three Living Australians’”, 229-55; Roslyn Poignant, \textit{Professional Savages: Captive Lives and Western Spectacle} (Sydney, NSW: University of New South Wales Press, 2004), especially 128-41.
insisted that this boy, whose name he recorded as Tapinowanne Torondoluan (Fig. 16), had accompanied him voluntarily—'[t]he boy would not be refused, despite all the ... warnings from myself and from his countrymen, and climbed on board from the canoe at the last moment, when the ship had already begun to move'—it is clear that he had entertained the idea of returning home with a number of locals in tow from the earliest days of his stay in Matupit.\footnote{144}

**Figure 16: Otto Finsch, 'Herrn Geh. R. Dr. Virchow hochachtungsvoll von Dr. O. Finsch u. Tapinowanne Torondoluan aus Neu Britanien [sic], Bremen 15/6 [18]84'.**\footnote{145}


\footnote{143 Given that the prefix ‘To’ is used amongst the Tolai to denote male names (see Neumann, *Not the Way it Really Was*, xv) and that German ‘w’ is pronounced as English ‘v’, this boy’s name might more accurately be rendered as ‘Tapinowanne Torondoluan’. However, I have retained Finsch’s spelling for the duration of the thesis.  
\footnote{144} Finsch, ‘Tapinowanne Torondoluan’, 423.  
\footnote{145} ‘To Privy Councillor Dr. Virchow, with respect, from Dr. O. Finsch and Tapinowanne Torondoluan from New Britain, Bremen 15/6 [18]84’, photograph accompanying letter from Otto Finsch to Rudolf Virchow, 15 June 1884, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften; see also Finsch, ‘Tapinowanne Torondoluan’, 431.}
One of Finsch’s letters to Virchow, dated 15 August 1880, stated: ‘If you are able to interest people and to mobilize funds, I will bring with me, when I return home, several New Britons and New Irelanders, à la Hagenbeck’.\(^{146}\) This was a reference to Carl Hagenbeck Jr. (1844-1913), a Hamburg animal trainer and dealer who sold animals to zoos and circuses around the world. From the mid-1870s he also began to stage so-called ‘anthropological-zoological exhibitions’ featuring groups of non-Europeans. Nigel Rothfels notes that although ‘the Hagenbeck exotic animal business had been fully operating and open to the public since the early 1850s, it was the traveling exhibitions of indigenous peoples that made Hagenbeck famous beyond the limited environs of Hamburg’.\(^{147}\) The first of these, six Sami who accompanied a shipment of reindeer in 1874 in order to re-enact ‘daily life in Lapland’ for ‘enthusiastic audiences in Hamburg, Berlin, and Leipzig’, were followed in 1876 by what Reichardt describes as a ‘commercial watershed’: ‘a group of “Nubians” from the Egyptian-Sudanese region of Africa’.\(^{148}\) Promoted by means of a flamboyant publicity campaign, Hagenbeck’s Nubian show attracted tens of thousands of spectators in Germany and subsequently travelled to Paris and London.

During the 1870s and 1880s Hagenbeck ‘presented over a dozen different ethnographic spectacles to audiences in major cities throughout Germany’, featuring performers from Greenland and Labrador, Tierra del Fuego, Ceylon, Somalia and Patagonia. Many of these groups included women and children, reflecting Hagenbeck’s preference for exhibitions which simulated ‘daily life’ for his audiences.\(^{149}\) Some shows during the 1880s drew daily crowds of almost a hundred thousand spectators. After 1909, following an extension to his Tierpark in Hamburg-Stellingen, Hagenbeck was able for the first time to stage large performances on his own premises. The most

\(^{146}\) Letter from Finsch to Virchow, 15 August 1880, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.


\(^{149}\) Reichardt, Health, ‘Race’ and Empire, 24-5.
popular, a Wild West show featuring ‘ten cowboys and forty-two Sioux
Indians from South Dakota’s Pine Ridge Reservation’, attracted more than a
million spectators in the summer of 1910 alone.\textsuperscript{150}

Like the performers in the ethnographic and freak-show spectacles in
Castan’s Panoptikum, the participants in Hagenbeck’s exhibitions attracted
the attention and support of Germany’s anthropologists. When an 1880
article in the Magdeburger Zeitung criticized the ‘supposed educative and
scientific value’ of human exhibits, declaring that ‘a feeling of decency
towards other races [Rassenanstand] should prevent us from allowing our
own kind to be [displayed] in zoological gardens’,\textsuperscript{151} Virchow responded:

The feuilletonist is pleased to say from time to time: “It is
certainly very interesting”, as though that were a reproof …
Yes, indeed, these displays of humans are very interesting
for anyone who wants to become clear about … the position
that man occupies in nature, and the development through
which the human race has passed.\textsuperscript{152}

Such displays, Virchow added, held ‘a positive scientific interest of the
highest rank’. He concluded by ‘expressing publicly our particular thanks
to Herr Hagenbeck’ and by requesting him ‘not to allow himself to be
discouraged by attacks of this kind from proceeding in the same way as he
has done hitherto, to the very great benefit of anthropological science’.\textsuperscript{153}

Despite this enthusiastic in-principle support for the public exhibition of
non-Europeans, Finsch’s dreams of returning from Oceania with a troupe of
New Britons and New Irelanders in tow, ‘à la Hagenbeck’, apparently did
not attract the necessary funds. He did, however, present Tapinowanne
Torondoluan to a meeting of the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie
shortly after his return. ‘As expected’, Tapinowanne’s presence ‘aroused a

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{150} Reichenbach, ‘A Tale of Two Zoos’, 55, 60
\textsuperscript{151} Quoted in Rudolf Virchow, ‘Eskimos von Labrador’, Verhandlungen der Berliner
Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte, 12 (7 November 1880), 270.
\textsuperscript{152} Virchow, ‘Eskimos von Labrador’, 270.
\textsuperscript{153} Virchow, ‘Eskimos von Labrador’, 270-1; see also Rothfels, Savages and Beasts, 97-8;
Poignant, Professional Savages, 118.
\end{flushright}
great deal of interest’, yet the Gesellschaft’s members had evidently ‘imagined a Papuan to be something different’; one of them, Robert Hartmann (1832-1893), ‘a great expert on African Negroes’, claimed that if he had met Tapinowanne ‘in Handak, Berber, Khartoum [or] Sennar’, ‘I would at the first glance have taken [him] for [an] ordinary Nigritic’.154 Though Hartmann referred on this occasion specifically to ‘the general physical similarity’ between Tapinowanne and ‘the Nigritics of northeastern Africa’, his earlier monograph, Die Nigritier (‘The Nigritics’, 1879), had applied the term generally to ‘the dark-skinned peoples’ of the African continent, justifying it as a ‘less distracting’ alternative to the ‘unspeakably misused expression “Negro”’.155 Finsch, apparently unwilling to challenge an acknowledged authority despite his own observations of ‘immense’ physical variation amongst Tapinowanne’s compatriots, instead interpreted Hartmann’s comments as confirmation that the verdict of the ignorant masses had, in identifying ‘Melanesians’ as ‘Negroes’, ‘unknowingly hit upon the right thing’.156

It is safe to say that Finsch’s seventeen-page account of his and Tapinowanne’s travels together was probably the first biography of an Indigenous inhabitant of New Britain ever written. However, Tapinowanne, though billed by Finsch as ‘New Pomerania’s first world traveller’, was not the first ‘Papuan’ (at least in the restricted sense of an Indigenous inhabitant of New Guinea or its associated islands) to have travelled to Europe. Wichmann records that six men and a woman from Jobi, on the north coast of Yapen Island, were captured in April 1705 during an attack on the Dutch ships Geelvink, Kraanvogel and Nova Guinea, under the command of Jacob Weyland. Three were subsequently released; the remaining three were taken to Holland, where one of them died and another was recruited as a


155 Hartmann, Die Nigritier, I, vii.

sailor in 1707 under the name of ‘Pieter Geel’. In 1710 Pieter Geel and his surviving compatriot returned to Batavia, then travelled via Amboina to Banda and were permitted to settle there permanently when it became clear that there would be no opportunity for them to return to New Guinea in the foreseeable future.  

More than a century later, in 1816, ‘Dick Papua’, mentioned above, accompanied Raffles to England, according to the latter ‘the first individual of the woolly haired race of Eastern Asia’ to do so.  

Dick departed from London with Raffles in October 1817 and arrived with him in Bencoolen (Bengkulu, Sumatra), but his subsequent movements remain unknown.

Wichmann’s description of the travels of Pieter Geel and his fellow Yapen Islanders contradicts Smithies’ claim that Dick’s fifteen-month stay in London was ‘the first record of a native of New Guinea having personal contact with one of the states of Europe’. Nevertheless, Dick’s presence was influential in perpetrating unflattering textual and pictorial representations of, and generalisations about, Papuans. The surgeon and anatomist Sir Everard Home (1756-1832), based on his physical examination of Dick, supplied Raffles with a list of ‘particulars’ – skin colour, hair type, facial features, even buttock and leg shape – in which ‘[t]he Papuan differs from the African Negro’. The aquatint of Dick which appeared in Raffles’ History of Java, identified only as ‘A Papuan or Native of New Guinea 10 years old’, was subsequently appropriated first by Crawfurd and then by Quatrefages to support both authors’ classifications of Papuans as a ‘dwarf’ or ‘pygmy’ people.  

Crawfurd, Ballard notes, despite being ‘entirely aware’ that the illustration’s original subject was in fact a ten-year old slave’, nevertheless presented the aquatint as evidence

---

157 Wichmann, Entdeckungsgeschichte, I, 144 note 6.  
158 Raffles, History of Java, II, cxxv.  
that Papuans generally were characterized by a ‘puny stature’ and ‘feeble frames’. Physical examination and pictorial representation thus served to misrepresent both Dick and the Indigenous inhabitants of his country of origin by ‘creating a general type from a known and named individual’.

Figure 17: Johannes Ranke, ‘Das Papua-Mädchen Kandaze. Nach Photographie von C. Günther in Berlin’.  

Woodcut. Photograph H. Howes.

The first Indigenous New Guinean in Germany appears to have been a girl, ‘Kandaze’ (Fig. 17), who was presented to the members of the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie in February 1876 by the Dutch missionary J. L. (Johannes Lodewyk) van Hasselt (1839-1930) of the UZV. Kandaze’s age at the time was given as fifteen or sixteen years. Her name, a German variant of Candace, appears in the New Testament story of the Apostle Philip’s meeting and baptising ‘an Ethiopian man, a eunuch of great

---

162 Ballard, ‘“Oceanic Negroes”’, 171.
163 Ballard, ‘“Oceanic Negroes”’, 172.
authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians’ (Acts 8:27) and was also sometimes applied to the legendary Queen of Sheba; its selection by the UZV missionaries underscores the deep-seated and often unthinking association of Papuans with black Africans by late nineteenth-century Europeans. According to van Hasselt, who identified her as ‘belonging to the tribe of the Beakkers [Biaks]’, she had been kidnapped and enslaved as a young child by members of another tribe, was then bought out of slavery by one of van Hasselt’s fellow missionaries, C. F. F. Mosche, and subsequently joined van Hasselt’s household as a domestic servant.

Kandaze’s story was not unique. The British zoologist and geographer Francis Henry Hill Guillelmaid (1852-1933), who visited van Hasselt’s house in Doreh Bay during an extended zoological expedition aboard the yacht *Marchesa* (1882-84), noted:

> Children are bought by the missionaries wherever possible, and brought up as Christians from their earliest infancy, and it is in this way alone that any real success is possible. It is not easy to obtain them, however, since the natives are unwilling to sell their own, and hence orphans or the offspring of slaves alone come into the hands of the missionaries.

The contrasting descriptions of Kandaze supplied by van Hasselt and by Virchow, printed side by side in the pages of the *Verhandlungen* (‘Proceedings’) of the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, illustrate the divergent meanings which could be extracted from a single Indigenous body by different discourses. This is not to imply that anthropological and evangelical thought were mutually exclusive; one need only consider the claim of one early missionary in western New Guinea that ‘[t]he Papuan

---


167 F. H. H. Guillelmaid, *The Cruise of the Marchesa to Kamschatka & New Guinea: with notices of Formosa, Liu-Kiu, and various islands of the Malay Archipelago*, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1886), I, 274. Guillelmaid prefaced his remark with the observation that the Doreh mission had been less than successful in its endeavours: ‘[t]he entire result of twenty-eight years of mission-work and the sacrifice of many lives is but sixteen adult and twenty-six child converts’.

167
stands on the lowest rung of the ladder of humanity, and many a person who has not ruled out all prospect of civilization and rebirth for other deeply sunken heathen peoples considers this race, at least, to be far too brutalized for anything bordering upon religion ever to be planted among them.\textsuperscript{168} However, van Hasselt’s introductory spiel to the members of the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie focused primarily on a description of his protégée’s moral characteristics, particularly to the extent that they differed from those of her compatriots. Though he claimed (his one concession to the interests of physical anthropology) that Kandaze was in appearance ‘a type of the Papuan people’, it was for him far more important to assert that ‘the expression of her face forms a considerable contrast with [those of] some of her tribespeople. The wildness, brutality and yet timidity which characterise some of the natives of New Guinea have almost vanished in her’.\textsuperscript{169} He continued in a similarly evangelical strain:

> Overall I have observed that those natives who, without necessarily belonging to our domestic staff, attach themselves more to us, come often to us and learn to know the life of a Christian household, gradually become somewhat gentler, somewhat quieter, than those of their tribespeople who turn brusquely away from us and that this is reflected also in the[ir] expression[s].\textsuperscript{170}

Returning to Kandaze, van Hasselt counted to ‘the good side of [her] character’ ‘willingness, devotion and scrupulous honesty (something very seldom found in a Papuan)’; to the bad, her occasional ‘stubbornness and capriciousness,\textsuperscript{171} prominent, but less pleasant Papuan traits’. ‘Cleanliness and orderliness’, he added, ‘still have to be taught her daily’.\textsuperscript{172}

\textsuperscript{168} Anon., quoted in Kamma, “Dit wonderlijke Werk”, I, 139; see also Rutherford, ‘The Bible Meets the Idol’, 255.
\textsuperscript{169} van Hasselt, ‘Papua’s von Neu-Guinea’, 61.
\textsuperscript{170} van Hasselt, ‘Papua’s von Neu-Guinea’, 61-2.
\textsuperscript{171} Launiglichkeit, van Hasselt’s choice of word here, translates literally as ‘wittiness’ or ‘humourousness’. However, in the context of the sentence, and given that German was almost certainly not the missionary’s first language, it is probably safe to assume that he meant Launenhaftigkeit, ‘moodiness’ or ‘capriciousness’.
\textsuperscript{172} van Hasselt, ‘Papua’s von Neu-Guinea’, 62.
While not precisely phrenological, van Hasselt’s assertions of the *visibly* beneficial effects of a Christian education resembled comments made by Quoy and Gaimard, who sailed with Freycinet on the *Uranie*. Assisted by the German physiologist and founder of phrenology Franz Joseph Gall (1758-1828), who examined the six skulls with which they returned from Rawak (Lawak, off the north coast of Waigeo), Quoy and Gaimard produced an unflattering generalisation of the ‘moral and intellectual faculties’ of the *Papous*, including supposed ‘dispositions to theft’, a ‘tendency to superstition’, and a ‘penchant for murder’, but added that they were ‘capable of education’ and needed only ‘to exercise and develop their intellectual faculties in order to hold a distinguished rank among the numerous varieties of the human species’.173 Similar comments were made by Robert Fitzroy (1805-65), Captain of the *Beagle*, who claimed that the ‘features’ of the young Fuegians he had annexed in 1830 ‘were much improved by altered habits, and by education’.174

In contrast, the members of the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie were primarily concerned with Kandaze’s physical peculiarities, particularly in comparison with those assumed to be typical of similarly dark-skinned (and thus possibly related) ‘Negrito’ and ‘Negro’ people. Van Hasselt’s comments were not discussed by his audience. Instead, Virchow, who had conducted a physical examination of Kandaze prior to the meeting, described in detail her cranial structure, emphasising particularly its divergence in form from those he had seen of ‘Negrito’ individuals; her ‘relatively light colouring’, surprising since ‘the depictions which had reached us had prepared us far more to assume a very dark colouring to be typical of the Papuan race’, but partly explained by van Hasselt’s assertion that Kandaze had become ‘considerably paler in the more northerly climate,

in which she has already stayed for some time'; also her hair, which, although of 'a wonderfully wavy texture', nevertheless 'differ[ed] very noticeably from the real Negro hair', having nothing of the latter's 'properly woolly, twisted character'. The anatomist Gustav Theodor Fritsch (1837-1927), who had also examined Kandaze, concluded that her 'variations ... from the African Nigritic type' were 'very considerable' and that both 'the form of the hair' and 'of the mammae' indicated that 'the Papuan race' should be 'considered as higher in comparison to the Africans'. Photographs of Kandaze, both 'clothed and exposed to the hips', were offered to the Society's members, courtesy of Fritsch, at a cost of one mark per page. Kandaze's feelings under this intense and merciless scrutiny can only be guessed at. Virchow, commenting on the 'extraordinarily variable' flow of blood to her facial vessels, noted that 'Kandaze is highly sensitive, very bashful and very excitable, and one sees continually in her colouring the changing of the emotions'; he added in passing that her 'large and shining dark brown eyes have not only an intelligent but a gentle expression'.

In contrast to van Hasselt's comments on Kandaze, which were taken down verbatim, Finsch's remarks about Tapinowanne's 'intellectual qualities, his homeland and ... the agriculture [practised] there' were apparently not considered worth recording in any detail. It was Hartmann, the acknowledged 'expert on African Negroes', whose impressions of Tapinowanne's 'striking' 'physical similarity to the Nigritics of north-east Africa' and the consequent likelihood of 'a potential former connection of the black races' took centre stage, notwithstanding the fact that his knowledge of Oceanian people was limited to 'a Queensland Australian', encountered in Marseille in the company of 'three ... black sailors from Senegal', 'a Fijian' seen in Hamburg, and a troupe of 'Queenslanders' who had recently performed 'with the boomerang' in the Berlin Zoological

---

177 Virchow, in van Hasselt, 'Papua's von Neu-Guinea', 64-5.
178 Bastian et al., 'Begrüssung von Finsch, lebender Neu-Britannier', 527.
Garden. Once again, established authority trumped personal experience in the arena of metropolitan science.

‘Waste paper’ and ‘plaster casts of faces’: The afterlives of encounter

Finsch’s departure for north-east New Guinea in 1884 prevented him from completing the comprehensive ‘work of travel’ he had intended to produce from his 1879-82 experiences. His exploratory duties, carried out at the behest of the Konsortium zur Vorbereitung und Errichtung einer Südsee-Insel-Compagnie, left comparatively little time for anthropological or ethnological activity, but he nevertheless assured Virchow in December 1884 that he had ‘collected and made notes as much as I was able to’. Along with a few skulls from the Moresby Group and Teste (Wari) Island – ‘probably the last, since these areas are now missionized and consequently there are no more skulls to be had’ – Finsch had gathered observations and samples relating to ‘skin colouration, type, hair and so forth’, including examples of ‘completely straight hair from genuine Melanesians and from the Solomons, as well as from the coast of New Guinea’. He reiterated his earlier conclusions about the physical variability of New Guinea’s Indigenous inhabitants, arguing that ‘[n]either skin colour nor hair formation provide substantive characters for the Papuan race, which ... distinguishes itself most notably by [its] great individual variation’, and adding that he had ‘repeatedly seen genuine Pauans (i.e. not half-castes or similar) whom anyone would take to be a European, if they were not dark’. He also emphasized the considerable overlap between the two supposedly distinct races occupying Oceania, assuring Virchow:

[M]y current experiences of the Polynesian-Melanesian peoples have only confirmed my earlier ones. There are certain Melanesian areas, e.g. the Trobriand group, where

---

179 Bastian et al., ‘Begrüssung von Finsch, lebender Neu-Britannier’, 528; see also Poignant, Professional Savages, 131-2.
180 Finsch, Systematische Uebersicht, 17.
181 Letter from Otto Finsch to Rudolf Virchow, 26 December 1884, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.
182 Letter from Finsch to Virchow, 26 December 1884, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.
183 Letter from Finsch to Virchow, 26 December 1884, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.
one no longer knows: are they Polynesians or Melanesians?\textsuperscript{184}

Finsch concluded his letter with the prediction that he would probably never be able to publish all of his observations and that his ‘many careful records’ would be condemned to remain ‘waste paper’. He lamented the possibility, asserting that ‘they have above all the merit of the completest impartiality and contain a great deal which in a few years, with the advance of civilisation, will be completely lost’\textsuperscript{185}. Given his subsequent difficulty in obtaining a satisfactory post and his inability to obtain recognition as a scholar, rather than simply a collector, in German anthropological circles, the remark was a prescient one. His closest approach to a comprehensive work of travel, the 1888 monograph *Samoafahrten* (‘Samoa journeys’), was written for a general audience and dominated by accounts of his colonial explorations.

Despite the comparatively limited opportunities, in such a book, for Finsch to emphasize the specifics of his ethnological credentials, he still asserted the existence of New Guinean physical heterogeneity and criticised those metropolitan savants who failed to acknowledge it. Though he persisted in describing ‘the Pauans’ as being ‘closest to the genuine Negroes’, he added that ‘eminent anthropologists, who indeed have no personal acquaintance with Pauans’, were wrong in ‘attributing to them a black or bluish-black colour’ and that ‘although in general a dark colouring predominates, black can by no means pass as a characteristic of the whole race’. He himself had observed Papuan skin ranging from ‘the light tones of the Polynesians and even the Malays’ through deep brown to ‘the black of a typical Negro’, as well as several individuals ‘as white as Europeans’. He acknowledged that it was difficult to accustom oneself to finding ‘such considerable variations in colour within a single race’, not to mention the ‘great individuality of physiognomy’ which made it still more ‘difficult to determine a comprehensive racial characteristic’, but added that racial mixing was ‘not

\textsuperscript{184} Letter from Finsch to Virchow, 26 December 1884, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.
\textsuperscript{185} Letter from Finsch to Virchow, 26 December 1884, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.
historically verifiable'; rather, he suggested, physical variability itself should be considered a characteristic of the Papuan race. He concluded by emphasizing the necessity of subordinating theory to experience.  

[T]he savants will have to accustom themselves not to hold too firmly to earlier views on the stability of colour, and will do well to refrain from philosophical meditations regarding the origination of such differences via mixing, as these fall merely within the realm of speculation and do not advance precise science.

Finsch’s extensive physical anthropological collections, most of which remained in the possession of the Museum für Völkerkunde (‘Ethnological Museum’) in Berlin, received minimal scholarly attention following his return to Germany. Adolf Bastian (1826-1905), the Museum’s first Director, believing that ‘the physical unity of the species man’ had already ‘been anthropologically established’ and that the task of ethnology was to illustrate ‘the psychic unity of mankind’, prioritized the collection and display of material culture over items such as skulls, bones, hair samples and body measurements. In addition, the ‘salvage mentality’ which informed Bastian’s ethnological project ‘privilege[d] collecting over everything else, including the itemizing, cataloging, and ordering of artefacts’, and the Museum’s collections soon outgrew its physical and material limits to a chaotic degree, forcing Berlin’s ethnologists to combine or remove various collections. In the resulting confusion, some of Finsch’s collections, notably 297 skulls and 232 hair samples, were mislaid,

---

186 Finsch, Samoafahrten, 41-2.
187 Finsch, Samoafahrten, 42-3.
189 Penny, ‘Bastian’s Museum’, especially 102-10; idem, Objects of Culture, 163-214.
the latter permanently.\footnote{See Finsch, Systematische Uebersicht, 15; letters from Otto Finsch to Felix von Luschan, 5 and 8 April 1896, 1 January, 16 February and 7 June 1908, NL Luschan: Otto Finsch, Staatsbibliothek Berlin; correspondence between Hans Virchow, Karl von den Steinen, Felix von Luschan, Otto Finsch, Wilhelm von Bode and Generalverwaltung der Königlichen Museen, Berlin, 4 September 1908 – 26 May 1909, Sig. 12, BGAEU-MUS, Archiv der Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte, Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte, Berlin. The original file has been lost since 2005, but the archive’s electronic records contain a detailed summary of its contents.}

Virchow, to whom Bastian had assigned the scientific redaction of the skulls, produced only a few brief notices.\footnote{Rudolf Virchow, ‘Ueber Schädel- und Tibiaformen von Südsee-Insulanern’, Verhandlungen der Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte, 12 (17 April 1880), 112-9; idem, ‘Ueber mikronesische Schädel’, Monatsberichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, 8 December 1881, 1113-43; see also Finsch, Systematische Uebersicht, 94-5.}

Finsch eventually obtained exclusive publication rights for his collection of skulls, following protracted communications with the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, but apparently made no use of them; his last major monographs were devoted instead to the material culture of Oceania.\footnote{Finsch, Ethnologische Erfahrungen und Belegstücke, described objects collected by Finsch and held by the Kaiserlich-Königliches Naturhistorisches Hofmuseum in Wien (‘Royal and Imperial Museum of Natural History in Vienna’); idem, Südseearbeiten. Gewerbe- und Kunstgefühl, Tauschmittel und ‘Geld’ der Eingeborenen... (Hamburg: L. Friedrichsen & Co., 1914) was based on Finsch’s personal collections.}

His departure for New Guinea in 1884 had interrupted the imminent publication of an ‘Album of types of peoples from the South Seas’, containing 250 original photographs with explanatory text; a manuscript of ‘Anthropological observations from the western South Seas’, which ‘endeavour[ed] to represent the physical habit, physiognomy, hair formation and skin colouring of the various races and tribes, with particular consideration of individual variations’, also languished unpublished.\footnote{Finsch, Systematische Uebersicht, 71, 73.}

Finsch’s ‘plaster casts of faces of types of men’ thus remained his most publicized contribution to the physical anthropology of Oceanian people.\footnote{Finsch nevertheless believed that the scientific community, both in Germany and elsewhere, had displayed insufficient interest in his plaster casts; see Finsch, Systematische Uebersicht, 15-7, 124.}

Ironically, these casts continued to promote a neatly essentialized, racially categorized view of these people long after Finsch’s personal encounters in Oceania had convinced him that such categories were only remotely representative of the diversity he had experienced.
Chapter Three

Other customs, other crania: Discourses of social and somatic difference

This chapter stands back from the close empirical field studies of the two previous chapters to examine two profoundly entangled strands in nineteenth-century racialist thought. The first understood human difference primarily from a socio-cultural perspective and assessed non-Europeans on the basis of their adherence to, or divergence from, European manners and customs. The second viewed human difference through a biological lens and classified non-Europeans according to physical features such as skin colour, hair type and skull shape. Both strands of thought were fundamentally Eurocentric, typically assuming that Europeans represented the most advanced stage of human development, either with respect to the superiority of their civilisation or to the perfection of their physical form. Correspondingly, both commonly ranked non-Europeans in descending order, with those groups considered to deviate most dramatically from European ideals of civility or beauty being relegated to the lowest rungs on the ladder of cultural or physical development respectively.

While aspects of these two strands of thought have been touched upon in Chapters One and Two, the following discussion supplies a fuller picture of the ways in which the socio-cultural and biological perspectives on human difference overlapped, intertwined, and mutually reinforced or (more rarely) challenged each other, both in theory and in practice. It thus forms the background for Chapters Four and Five, which consider in detail specific manifestations of these two strands of thought in the works of Meyer and Finsch respectively. Chapter Four examines Meyer’s craniometrical studies, in particular those based on his collections of Papuan skulls from Kordo, Supiori Island, and Rubi, south Cenderawasih Bay. I discuss Meyer’s hopes and expectations in undertaking these studies, the processes by which he rendered this cranial material knowable to a wider audience, the conclusions he reached, and the responses these studies attracted from his colleagues. Major themes of this chapter include the significance of field experience in truth and authority claims, the various ways in which skulls were valued, and the inherent subjectivity of the processes and practices which constituted the science of craniometry.

Chapter Five turns to representations of civilisation and savagery in Finsch’s writings, focusing predominantly on his depictions of the Indigenous inhabitants of New Britain.
I trace important aspects of his received ideas about savagery, as revealed in behaviour and in physical appearance, and consider the ways in which these ideas interacted with, and were challenged by, his personal experience. I discuss particularly the impacts of Finsch’s prolonged acquaintance with Tapinowanne Torondoluan, the young Tolai boy who joined him on his departure from Matupit Island and accompanied him back to Germany, as well as the significance of Finsch’s colonial involvement and his views on the value and threatened status of cultural originality.

Theoretically, at least, the socio-cultural and biological strands of thought in nineteenth-century science were represented by distinct areas of scientific study, each encompassing different themes, specific skills, and particular objects of inquiry. Considerations of manners and customs developed into the fields of ethnology and ethnography, which had as their object the systematic description and comparison of the lifestyles, beliefs, habits and practices of the globe’s various populations. Although non-European languages, literatures and oral traditions also attracted a significant degree of interest, nineteenth-century practitioners of ethnology and ethnography concentrated above all on the collection of material culture: utensils, weapons, clothing, ornaments, and objects of artistic or spiritual significance. In contrast, biologically-based perspectives on human difference can be traced through the disciplines of morphology and comparative anatomy to the physical anthropology (German Anthropologie, French anthropologie) of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which aimed to divide the world’s populations into biologically distinct ‘races’ or ‘types’. To facilitate their researches, physical anatomists collected, measured and compared bodies in both flesh-and-blood and proxy versions: skulls and skeletons, hair and soft tissue samples, outlines of hands and feet, plaster casts (moulages) of faces and other body parts, and detailed descriptions of the stature, build, physiognomy, skin and eye colour of individuals from various populations. ‘The distinction between ethnology and physical anthropology’, Penny notes, ‘was consistently maintained in the German tradition’; physical anthropology, though initially the dominant discipline, had ceded to ethnology in prominence by the end of the nineteenth century.¹

Differences also existed in the categories and classifications applied by practitioners to the objects of their studies. Manners-and-customs descriptions and their more

institutionalised forms, ethnology and ethnography, commonly applied a savagery-
civilisation binary which could then be broken up into stages reflecting, for example,
supposedly typical lifeways (hunting and gathering, herding, agriculture, commerce and
industry) or materially-circumscribed periods of development (Stone Age, Bronze Age,
Iron Age). Physical anthropology preferred a Negro-White binary and a range of
subcategories based on a single physical feature or a combination of features; favoured
distinctions included those relating to skin colour (white, yellow, black), hair type
(straight, wavy, curly, woolly) and skull shape (dolichocephalic or long-headed versus
brachycephalic or broad-headed).

In practice, however, these two strands of thought were profoundly entangled and
slippages from one to the other were common. Even the earliest classifications of
humankind associated certain physical characteristics with particular habits and social
customs. The tenth edition of Linnaeus’ *Systema Naturae* (1758), for example, divided
the single species *Homo sapiens*, ‘Knowing man’, into four major varieties, each of
them characterised by a combination of physical features and behavioural traits. Within
this scheme, *Homo americanus* (‘American man’), *Homo europaeus* (‘European man’),
*Homo asiaticus* (‘Asiatic man’) and *Homo africanus* (‘African man’) could be
distinguished by their skin colour, hair colour and type, and other facial features; by
their clothing or other ornamentation; by their temperaments and abilities; or by the
forces which governed them (Americans, supposedly, were governed by custom,
Europeans by ceremony, Asians by opinion, Africans by their will alone).² These
varieties, Linnaeus explained, varied according to ‘culture’ and ‘place’; they were
therefore accidental and ephemeral, in contrast to genera and species, which he
described as fixed ‘work[s] of nature’.³ Buffon, too, described the ‘nations’ which
comprised the human species according to both ‘physical differences and “moral”
specificity’, though he ‘avoided systematic labelling or formal classification’ and did
not believe in the existence of biological races.⁴

² Caroli Linnaei [Carl Linnaeus], *Systema Naturae per regna tria naturae ... Tomus I*, 10⁶ edn (Holmiae:
Impensis Direct. Laurentii Salvii, 1758), 20-3.
³ Linnaei, *Systema Naturae*, 10⁶ edn, 20; idem, *Systema Naturae per regna tria naturae ...*, 12th edn
⁴ Claude Blanckaert, ‘Buffon and the Natural History of Man: Writing History and the ‘Foundational
‘Race’ and the Biologisation of Human Difference’, *Journal of Pacific History*, 40:3 (December 2005),
334.
The following paragraphs should not be understood as offering a comprehensive overview of intellectual developments in the study of humankind, either in the Enlightenment era or during the long nineteenth century. Rather, I aim to highlight some of the major trends in European thinking about human difference between the mid-eighteenth and late nineteenth centuries. I identify clusters of ideas influential in shaping socio-cultural and biological perspectives on human difference and consider their relation to the intellectual climate of late nineteenth-century Germany in general and the topics discussed in Chapters Four and Five in particular. Importantly, I emphasise that these clusters of ideas did not exhibit sufficient coherence or rigidity to merit any classification as discrete 'theories' or 'systems'. Instead, they were subject to multiple transformations and varying articulations at different times and within different contexts. As Douglas has stressed, any attempt to track these transformations and articulations must tread carefully if it is to acknowledge 'continuities and genealogical links' without oversimplifying the heterogeneity resulting from 'uneven discursive shifts, ambiguous reinscriptions, and partial recursions'.

'From rudeness to civilization': Ethnology and developmentalism

Socio-cultural perspectives on human difference were profoundly shaped during the Enlightenment by a cluster of ideas which, since they commonly posited a single upward trajectory for human social development, I loosely term 'developmentalist'. A prominent strand in this cluster of ideas, variously termed 'stadial' or 'four stages theory', was formulated from the late 1750s in an influential series of 'theoretical or conjectural' histories by a number of Scottish civic humanist philosophers, including Sir John Dalrymple (1726-1810), Henry Home, Lord Kames (1696-1782), Adam Ferguson (1723-1816) and Adam Smith (1723-1790). These histories sought to explain the origins of 'civilized society' by comprehensively 'charting ... human development through certain common stages'. Dugald Stewart, who coined the term 'Theoretical or Conjectural History' in his Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith (1793), identified as its underlying impetus the wish to answer the 'interesting question, by what gradual steps the transition [had] been made from the first simple efforts of

---

5 Douglas, 'Notes on 'Race' and the Biologisation of Human Difference', 338; idem, 'Science and the Art of Representing "Savages"', 163.
uncultivated nature, to a state of things so wonderfully artificial and complicated',
which arose from a comparison of 'our intellectual acquirements, our opinions,
manners, and institutions, with those which prevail among rude tribes'.

Given the lack of 'direct [documentary] evidence' required to answer this question –
'for long before that stage of society when men begin to think of recording their
transactions, many of the most important steps of their progress have been made' –
Stewart suggested that it was necessary to substitute 'fact' with 'conjecture', to consider
'in what manner' the men of the past were 'likely to have proceeded, from the principles
of their nature, and the circumstances of their external situation'. Like its 'more
conventional narrative form', the conjectural method of history also attempted to
construct intelligible sequences of events and to find evidence for such sequences; but
whereas the sequences described in narrative history were considered 'unique and
particular', those outlined by conjectural history were 'deemed to be typical'.

Like their French contemporaries, notably the economist and statesman Anne-Robert-
Jacques Turgot, baron de l'Aulne (1727-1781), who independently developed similar
arguments from the early 1850s, the conjectural historians of the Scottish
Enlightenment built on the work of the French political philosopher Charles-Louis de
Secondat de Montesquieu (1689-1755). Based on Montesquieu's De l'esprit des lois
('On the spirit of laws', 1748), which had linked the 'infinite diversity of laws and
customs' amongst the world's populations to their subsistence practices, they proposed
that actual past or present communities, characterized economically by means of
subsistence, were positioned at various stages along a universal ladder of improvement
'from rudeness to civilization'. In contrast to Montesquieu, however, who had
'tended to conceptualize the social world more in spatial than in temporal terms', the
Scottish conjectural historians 'displaced' the French philosopher's 'primary axis of
cultural comparison ... by ninety degrees, from the horizontal (or spatial) to the vertical

---

7 Stewart, 'Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith', xli-xlii (emphasis original).
8 Stewart, 'Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith', xli-xlii.
9 Höpfi, 'From Savage to Scotsman', 19-20, 23 (emphasis original).
10 On the contributions of Turgot and other French thinkers to stadial ideas, see Meek, Social Science and the Ignoble Savage, 68-98.
11 Charles-Louis de Secondat de Montesquieu, De l'esprit des lois, Nouvelle édition, 4 vols (London: s.n, 1777 [1748]), I:cxxxvi, II:31-60, 139-57; Bronwen Douglas, 'Seeing Races: Confronting "Savages" in
Terra Australis: Voyages of Flinders, Bass, and Baudin 1795-1803', unpublished manuscript; Rendall,
The Origins of the Scottish Enlightenment, 123; Adam Ferguson, An Essay on the History of Civil Society
(Dublin: Boulter Grierson, 1767), 2; see also Meek, Social Science and the Ignoble Savage, 68-98.

179
The idea that it was possible to reconstruct ‘earlier phases of civilization’ by using ‘data derived from the observation of peoples still living in “earlier” stages of development’ in place of traditional historical evidence reflects one element of the conception identified by Fabian as being ‘of particular importance’ in the development of anthropology, namely, that ‘relationships between parts of the world’ could be ‘understood as temporal relations’ and that ‘[d]ispersal in space’ therefore directly reflected ‘sequence in time’.

The most widely accepted version of Scottish stadialism posited four stages of human social development. Smith declared in his 1762 lectures on jurisprudence that ‘mankind’ passed through ‘four distinct states’: ‘1st, the Age of Hunters; 2ndly, the Age of Shepherds; 3rdly, the Age of Agriculture; and 4thly, the Age of Commerce’. Other conjectural historians, however, specified only three stages. Dalrymple’s *Essay Towards a General History of Feudal Property in Great Britain* (1757), for example, identified ‘hunters and fishers’ as the ‘first state of society’, followed by ‘the discovery of pasturage’ and subsequently ‘the art of agriculture’. Lord Kames’ *Historical Law-Tracts* (1758) also posited these stages. Ferguson, whose approach to the comparative history of man focused on moral potential rather than material progress, distinguished savage, barbaric and polished societies. Despite these variations, most Scottish conjectural historians agreed that the stages of human social development, once identified, could readily be extrapolated to the world’s various populations. Kames claimed that the ‘progressive changes’ from one stage to the next could be traced ‘in all nations’, while John Millar’s *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* (1779, first published in 1771 as *Observations Concerning the Distinction of Ranks in Society*) described the transition ‘from ignorance to knowledge, and from rude, to civilized manners’ as a ‘natural progress’ displaying a ‘remarkable uniformity in ... [its] several steps’.

---

17 Kames described the second stage as ‘the shepherd life’.
19 John Millar, *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks; or, an inquiry into the circumstances which give rise to influence and authority in the different members of society*, 3rd edition, corrected and enlarged (London: John Murray, 1779 [1771]), 3-6.
Stadial ideas of human development could comprehend a wide variety of attitudes towards non-Europeans. On the one hand, they were consistent with the common tendency of Late Enlightenment theorists to acknowledge the potential equality and perfectibility of all human beings. Most of the Scottish philosophers espoused Millar’s universalist principle that ‘Man is every where the same; and we must necessarily conclude, that the untutored Indian and the civilized European have acted upon the same principles’.  

Although not all of them assumed a single trajectory of progress (see below), those who did effectively relegated existing ‘nations’ deemed ‘barbarous or savage’ to the status of a ‘cradle’ from which ‘polished nations’ could ‘form a just notion of [their] progress’, a ‘mirrour’ reflecting ‘the features of our own progenitors’.  

Though stadial theory emphasized different modes of production, rather than variations in physical appearance, as critical in ‘determining the character of a society’, it could nevertheless be deployed in arguments for the natural inferiority of non-white people, as the following footnote from the 1753 edition of David Hume’s (1711-1776) essay Of National Characters demonstrates:

There never was a civiliz’d nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences ... Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen, in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction betwixt these breeds of men.

‘The state of Nature was the reign of God’: Primitivism and developmentalism

Glyndwr Williams, in his discussion of mid eighteenth-century Oceanic voyages and concurrent debates on human origins and development, contrasts the social developmentalism emerging from stadial theory with that influenced by the earlier primitivist school of thought. Unlike the primitivist thinkers of the Enlightenment, Williams asserts, who ‘had postulated a state of nature, uniform in all parts of the world,

19 John Millar, Observations Concerning the Distinction of Ranks in Society (London: Printed by W. and J. Richardson, for John Murray, 1771), iii. This sentence is lacking in the third edition of Millar’s work (Douglas, ‘Seeing Races’, n.p.).
in which the eternal truths of the universe were known and evident to men before they became sophisticated and corrupt', most Scottish stadialists 'saw man’s movement from his earliest state as being a progression, not a decline or degeneration'. Primitivism wistfully queried 'whether the early stages of mankind’s existence were not superior to ... the current state, whether men, morally at least, might not have degenerated rather than advanced'; stadial theory discussed the mechanisms, the chains of causes and effects, by which ‘civilized’ man ... had developed from his ‘savage’ ancestors'. While primitivism, despite its numerous extravagances, ‘taught some observers to assess Indigenous peoples against their own background, not against the standards of contemporary Europe’, stadial theory insisted that non-Europeans ‘[conform] to western ideals of progress and development’ or be judged accordingly.

Williams’ discussion, though not without merit, overstates the differences between ‘wistful’ primitivism and the ‘chillier assumptions’ of stadial thought, while simultaneously glossing over significant variation within each of what he depicts as two separate and homogeneous ‘theories’. A series of progressively superior stages of development was certainly characteristic of ‘the best-known Scottish historically based philosophical arguments about human nature’, but it was not mandatory; Aaron Garrett cites as evidence criticisms of ‘Hume’s arguments on behalf of commercial society’ in the writings of Ferguson, Kames, William Smellie and John Gregory. Nor were ideas of decline and degeneration entirely foreign to the Scottish philosophers. Kames, whose ‘portrayal of the Ossianic Scots ... is perhaps the clearest example of the idea of the “noble savage” in late-eighteenth century thought’, and James Burnett, Lord Monboddo, who felt that human society had declined since the Classical period, represent important exceptions to what Williams depicts as a general Scottish assumption of unilinear human progress.

---

23 Williams, ‘Seamen and Philosophers’, 3; see also Hüpfi, ‘From Savage to Scotsman’, 29-31.
24 Williams, ‘Seamen and Philosophers’, 12, 19.
Primitivism, too, was no monolithic phenomenon. Bernard Smith identifies 'two forms of the primitivistic approach to Pacific peoples', both of which varied spatially and temporally.28 'Soft' primitivism, 'closely associated with deistic thought and neo-classical values', was 'applied mainly to the inhabitants of the Society Islands', who were thought to live in a 'state of innocence' enjoying the bounty of an earthly tropical paradise.29 'Hard' primitivism, on the other hand, which 'viewed the life of nature as a renunciation of the luxuries and excesses of civilization in which the virtues of endurance and courage were called into continuous operation by the vicissitudes of daily life', preferentially emphasised the austerity and fortitude of 'such peoples as the Fuegians, the Maoris, and the Australian aborigines'.30

Although the application of 'soft' or 'hard' primitivism to particular Oceanian people was guided in part by whether their 'natural setting' was perceived to favour luxurious ease or arduous toil, it also varied in accordance with the experiences of particular navigators and with 'the changing spiritual temper of the times'.31 Smith connects the 'fundamental revision in European thought concerning the nature of savages' at the end of the eighteenth century, for example, both to the increasing influence of evangelical opinion and to 'the wide publicity given to massacres and atrocities perpetrated upon navigators', including Cook and Marc-Joseph Marion du Fresne (1724-1772), by 'hostile natives'.32 He also outlines the various qualities which primitivism in its multiple guises could bestow upon Oceanian people: whereas the earliest European visitors to Polynesia, including Samuel Wallis (1728-1795), Bougainville and Cook, tended to emphasise the islanders' 'admirable physique' and 'freedom from social constraints', George Keate's (1729-1797) Account of the Pelew Islands (1788) and Watkin Tench's (1758-1833) Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson (1793) described 'savage[s] of sensibility' distinguished by their 'moral and spiritual qualities', their 'generosity of feeling and nobility of soul'.33 In Revolutionary France, savages were 'endowed with [those] virtues' – self-discipline, courage, endurance – 'that good republicans aspired to'; in the art and literature of the nineteenth century, the

29 Smith, European Vision and the South Pacific, 6-7, 25, 32.
30 Smith, European Vision and the South Pacific, 6-7, 126.
31 Smith, European Vision and the South Pacific, 25, 110.
32 Smith, European Vision and the South Pacific, 7, 32, 86, 99-100; see also Douglas, 'Climate to Crania', 43-4.
freedom-loving, patriotic and emotional ‘romantic savage' epitomised qualities 
‘treasured by the romantics'.  

Both primitivist and developmentalist ideas were influential in Germany. The French 
writer Michel Eyquem de Montaigne (1533-1592) – whose essays Des Cannibales (‘Of 
cannibals', 1578-80) and Des Coches (‘Of coaches', 1585-88) compared the supposedly 
‘civilised’ societies of France and Spain unfavourably to those of the New World – 
headed Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's (1749-1832) list of his favourite authors in 
sixteenth-century France. The writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), 
likewise admired by Goethe, were received with such general enthusiasm in Germany 
that Rousseau believed his reputation to be greater there than in France. His Discours 
sur l'Origine de l'Inégalité (‘Discourse on the origin of inequality', 1754), which relied 
heavily on Des Cannibales for its praise for humankind's état sauvage and valorisation 
of the ‘natural' over the ‘civilized', was read and discussed by Moses Mendelssohn 
(1729-1786), Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781) and Johann Gottfried von 
Herder. Although Arthur O. Lovejoy and Ter Ellingson have convincingly 
demonstrated that Rousseau was not strictly a primitivist and that his association with 
the ‘noble savage' myth is erroneous, the Discours sur l'Inégalité was nevertheless 
‘characterized by a great deal of wavering between conflicting tendencies'. Rousseau 
‘sometimes [wrote] what, taken apart from their general context, sound[ed] like 

\[34\] Smith, European Vision and the South Pacific, 110, 247-8, 251-2. 
\[35\] Carl Hammer, Jr., 'Montaigne and Goethe Record their Italian Journeys', The South Central Bulletin, 
36:4, Studies by Members of SCMLA (Winter 1976), 147; see also Victor Bouillier, 'Montaigne et 
Goethe', Revue de littérature comparée, 5 (1925), 572-93; idem, ‘Montaigne en Allemand: Christoph 
Bode, son grand traducteur', Revue de littérature comparée, 13 (1933), 5-13; Hugo Friedrich, Montaigne 
(Bern: A. Francke, 1949), 193, 205-6. All quotations from Montaigne's essays are taken from Donald 
Frame, trans., The Complete Essays of Montaigne (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1958), 
150-9, 685-99. 

\[36\] Quoted in Carl Hammer, Jr., Goethe and Rousseau: Resonances of the Mind (Lexington, Kentucky: 
\[37\] Dudley M. Marchi, Montaigne among the Moderns: Receptions of the Essais (Providence and Oxford: 
Berghahn, 1994), 61; Hammer, Goethe and Rousseau, 10-31, 63, 65, 75; Frederic C. Tubach, 
'Perfectabilität: der zweite Diskurs Rousseaus und die deutsche Aufklärung', Études Germaniques, 15 
(1960), 144-151. 

\[38\] Arthur O. Lovejoy, ‘The Supposed Primitivism of Rousseau's Discourse on Inequality', Modern 
Philology, 21:2 (November 1923), 172 and passim; Ter Ellingson, The Myth of the Noble Savage 
(Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2001); O. H. K. Spate, Paradise Found and Lost 
(Rushcutters Bay, NSW: Australian National University Press, 1988), 245-6, 379 note 48. Ellingson (xv, 
8, 21-2) traces the concept of the 'noble savage' to Marc Lescarbot, a French lawyer-ethnographer, whose 
Histoire de la Nouvelle France (1609) stated that 'sauvages sont vrayement nobles [savages are truly 
noble]'; the exact phrase first appeared in English in John Dryden's seventeenth-century drama The 
Conquest of Granada by the Spaniards (1672).
enthusiastic eulogies of the primitive state' and was interpreted as a primitivist even by his contemporaries, as Voltaire's letter on receiving the Discours indicates.\textsuperscript{39}

British writers were also influential in perpetrating primitivist ideals. Alexander Pope's (1688-1744) Essay on Man (1733-34), which idealised '[t]he state of Nature' as 'the reign of God', was much lauded in eighteenth-century Germany for its literary excellence and spawned numerous translations, but was also taken seriously as a philosophical work, in part because of perceived similarities with Leibniz's Théodicée (1710), and attained widespread publicity through the analyses of Mendelssohn and Lessing.\textsuperscript{40} Gascoigne suggests that the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the time at which the German Enlightenment was 'developing its characteristic forms', was marked by an 'increasing [German] interest in British thought' and corresponding challenges to French philosophy, a development he attributes partly to the 'more radical and less evolutionary' path taken by the later French Enlightenment and partly to Germany's connection with the British monarchy.\textsuperscript{41}

The works of the Scottish philosophers were also influential in Germany. Michel Malherbe notes that in the period between 1760 and 1800 'more than forty titles' by Scottish philosophers 'were translated into German ... and the delay between publication in Britain and translation in Germany became shorter and shorter'.\textsuperscript{42} Although titles on literary criticism and civil philosophy were particularly popular, several of the texts translated presented explicitly stadial models of human social development and discussed the 'rude nations' of the New World and elsewhere in the context of conjectural history, notably Adam Ferguson's Essay on the History of Civil Society (1767) and Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations (1776). Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's (1770-1831) teleological account of history and contrastive opposition of the family and the market-based 'civil society' as social units owed much to the writings of the Scottish school, in particular Hume's Treatise of Human Nature (1739-40), despite

\textsuperscript{39} Lovejoy, 'Rousseau's Discourse on Inequality', 173, 179 note 2.
\textsuperscript{41} Gascoigne, 'The German Enlightenment and the Pacific', 142.
\textsuperscript{42} Michel Malherbe, 'The Impact on Europe', in Broadie, The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment, 300-1.
conjectural history’s emphasis on ‘unintended consequences’.

Other German philosophers known to have been influenced by Scottish philosophy during this period include Herder and Kant.

‘Race is everything’: Transformations in the race-civility relationship, 1750-1880

Both primitivist and developmentalist ideas were co-opted and transformed within the ‘major discursive shift’ identified by Douglas between 1750 and 1880, which saw ‘prevailing Enlightenment ideas about externally induced variation within an essentially similar humanity’ metamorphose into ‘a science of race that reified human difference as permanent, hereditary, and innately somatic’.

A significant consequence of this shift was that the environmental logic of the Enlightenment era, which had allowed civility to be interpreted as a causal factor in physical differences, was increasingly reversed to make civilisation a product of race. Buffon, a prominent example of the earlier logic, attributed the ‘great differences between men’ primarily to the ‘diversity of climate’ and its influence on food and lifestyle, but later suggested that the improved nutrition and ‘plentiful reproduction’ associated with ‘the process of becoming civilized’ could serve to ‘enable and sustain [human] organic improvement’.

Similarly, François Péron (1775-1810), zoologist on Nicolas Baudin’s (1754-1803) Australian voyage of 1800-04, proposed a causal link between ‘physical constitution’ and ‘social organization’ or its supposed ‘absence’ in relation to the ‘savages’ of Van Diemen’s Land, reasoning that their physical ‘weakness’ resulted from the unsatisfactory diet and lifestyle inherent to ‘the savage state’ and that the ‘abundance’ of an improved ‘social state’ could be expected to effect positive physical transformation.

The consequences of the later, racial logic are condensed in the Scottish anatomist Robert Knox’s (1791-1862) infamous pronouncement that ‘Race is everything:

---


45 Douglas, ‘Climate to Crania’, 33.


47 Douglas, ‘Climate to Crania’, 112.
literature, science, art, in a word, civilization, depend on it'.

48 Stocking observes that the connotations of adjectives such as ‘savage’, ‘barbarous’ or ‘uncivilized’ in the Victorian era ‘were no longer what they had been before 1800'; the ‘imputation of inferiority’ they carried, ‘although still in the first instance cultural, was now in most cases at least implicitly organic as well’.49 Darwinian evolution, he argues, interacted with evolutionary ethnology and polygenist ideas about race ‘to support a raciocultural hierarchy in terms of which civilized men, the highest products of social evolution, were large-brained white men, and only large-brained white men, the highest products of organic evolution, were fully civilized’.50 As a result of the ‘linkage’ between biological and cultural hierarchies and their co-option into the hardening racial logic of the later nineteenth century, ‘savagery, dark skin, and a small brain and incoherent mind’ all became ‘part of the single evolutionary picture of “primitive” man’.51

Within the German context this shift found recognisable expression most prominently in the writings of Ernst Haeckel. As already detailed in Chapter Two, Haeckel’s extensive publications on human evolution outlined a hierarchical scale which assigned predetermined capacities for cultural development to human races or species (he did not distinguish between the two) displaying particular combinations of physical characteristics.52 The processes of natural selection which governed the emergence of new species in the plant and animal kingdoms, Haeckel suggested, also functioned as ‘the lever of all human cultural progress’, and the ‘infinite ascendency’ of the ‘white human species in the struggle for existence’ could ‘for the most part’ be attributed to its ‘adaptation to the favourable conditions of existence’ supplied by Europe’s ‘temperate climate’ and ‘eminently advantageous geographical formation’.53 Although this argument resembled certain suggestions made by Darwin in his Descent of Man (1871) – namely, that the ‘intellectual faculties’ of mankind had ‘gradually [been] perfected through natural selection’, that the successful ‘supplanting’ of ‘barbarous nations’ by ‘civilised’ ones was largely a result of the superiority of the latter’s ‘arts, which are the

products of the intellect, and that 'a cool climate', which led to 'industry and the various arts', could be considered 'highly favourable, or even indispensable' to progress in the 'scale of civilisation' - Haeckel's formulation of the relationship between race and culture displayed a more explicit biological determinism than the ambiguous connection proposed by Darwin.\(^{54}\)

The influence of racio-technically-informed developmentism was still more evident in Haeckel's later monograph *Die Lebenswunder* ('The wonders of life', 1904). Here Haeckel asserted that 'culture', which 'exalt[ed] man ... high above the animals' and 'infinitely increased the value of his life', belonged 'for the most part' only to 'the higher human races'; the faculty of 'reason', which made culture possible, was 'imperfectly developed' or non-existent amongst the 'lower' races or 'Naturvölker' and the value of their individual lives correspondingly lower.\(^{55}\) Following the Scottish-Australian educator, writer and philosopher Alexander Sutherland's *On the Origin and Growth of the Moral Instinct* (1898), Haeckel divided humankind into 'primitive peoples or “savages”, barbaric peoples or semi-savages', 'civil' or 'civilised peoples' and 'cultural peoples', according to both physical features and modes of subsistence.\(^{56}\) He claimed that 'many practical blunders' in Germany's 'newly acquired colonies' could have been avoided by 'a more thorough knowledge of the low inner life [Seelenleben] of natural peoples' and criticised the 'idealistic opinions' of German metaphysicists whose 'abstract ideal man' corresponded 'very little to the real facts'.\(^{57}\)

It is important to note, however, that Haeckel's views on the relationship between biological race and the capacity for civilisation were not representative of the prevailing climate of opinion in late nineteenth-century Germany.\(^{58}\) As mentioned in Chapter Two, the most respected authors of anthropological and ethnological works generally adhered to an emphasis on essential human similarity rather than fundamental difference. Oscar Peschel's 1874 monograph *Völkerkunde*, which explicitly opposed Haeckel's 'artificial system' of classification, deserves further attention for several reasons. Firstly, it was recognised by Peschel's contemporaries as a particularly

---


\(^{55}\) Ernst Haeckel, *Die Lebenswunder. Gemeinverständliche Studien über Biologische Philosophie* ... (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1904), 449-50.


\(^{57}\) Haeckel, *Die Lebenswunder*, 450.

\(^{58}\) See Massin, 'From Virchow to Fischer', 96; Richards, *The Tragic Sense of Life*, 277-341 passim.
influential work. His successor as editor of *Das Ausland*, Friedrich Anton Heller von Hellwald (1842-1892), described it as an ‘epoch-making book, arguably … the first strictly scientific attempt at an ethnology in Germany’, adding that it had been ‘immediately acknowledged on all sides’ and that the production of a second edition was necessary only weeks after its initial publication.59 This view was echoed by a reviewer in the *New York Times*, who described the 1876 English translation, published under the title *The Races of Man and their Geographical Distribution*, as ‘one of the most profound and exhaustive works of its class in any language’.60 Secondly, Peschel’s *Volkerkunde* exercised a formative influence on Finsch’s thinking about human social development, as Chapter Five explores in greater detail.

Finally, Peschel’s exegesis of the relationship between environmental conditions and human biology was less determinate than Haeckel’s and indicates the diversity in views existing within the fields of late nineteenth-century German anthropology and ethnology. On the one hand, Peschel was amenable to certain aspects of Darwinian theory, particularly in the application of historical methods to geographical and geological problems.61 He described the ‘extinction’ of particular human ‘sports [Spielarten]’, including the ‘redskins’ of the Americas and ‘the olive-coloured Polynesians’, as a ‘natural process’, claiming that their rapid disappearance was due primarily not to the undeniably destructive influences of alcohol, introduced disease and ‘individual deeds of violence’, but to a certain ‘weariness of life’ which had supposedly taken possession of them ‘as soon as a white face appeared’.62 On the other hand, Peschel’s explanation of social development, which used the analogy of a rose-bush in various stages of bud, flower, and fruit, presented buds (earlier forms) and flowers (later forms) as coeval states rather than stages in a sequence of inevitable extinction and replacement:

Let us ... imagine that someone who had never before seen roses were to stumble upon a group of these plants in an advanced stage of growth; alongside ripening fruits he would then discover at the same time fading flowers, blooms at every stage of development, opening and unopened buds, sprouts with swelling knots, and finally new eyes at the bases of the leaves. If, therefore, he carefully follows the gradual transitions, the life course of the plant lies fully opened before him: past, present and future [forms] do not follow one another, rather they exist simultaneously.63

Peschel added that although it was ‘possible to say amongst which human tribes the oldest, or rather the most archaic, conditions may still be observed today’, ethnologists could ‘no longer expect to encounter peoples ... at the bud stage’; it was erroneous to designate existing populations as ‘savages’ or ‘natural peoples’, since the ‘natural condition of the human race’ had ‘certainly passed beyond our observation [and] even our imagination’.64 For taxonomic purposes he adopted a version of Blumenbach’s Totalhabitus, acknowledging that ‘all physical characters ... vary considerably within the same human species’ and recommending that ‘all predominating characteristics ... be considered when dividing the human species into major groups or races’. On this basis he identified ‘seven [human] groups, races, subspecies or species, however one wishes to express [it]’; although he defined these seven groups primarily according to physical characteristics, he considered social and political factors important and described ‘the assessment of the civic, moral and intellectual development of the individual races’ as ‘an indispensable task of ethnology’.65 He also opted for a compromise between environmental influence and biological determinism, arguing that the ‘maturity’ of ‘various human societies’ did not correspond ‘rigidly’ to the ‘varying abilities of the races’ but was dependent partly on the favourable or unfavourable nature of their ‘place of residence’.66

‘With skull in hand’: The craniologist as ‘chronicler of the human race’

In contrast to Peschel’s willingness to adopt Darwinian evolutionary theory for ethnological studies, the disciplines of comparative anatomy and physical anthropology,

63 Peschel, Völkerkunde, 147-8.
64 Peschel, Völkerkunde, 147-8.
65 Peschel, Völkerkunde, 337.
66 Peschel, Völkerkunde, 338.
which professed an explicitly biological perspective on human difference, proved more resistant to evolutionary perspectives. In Germany this resistance can largely be attributed to the influence of Virchow, ‘the dominant force in German physical anthropology’ for over three decades.67 Darwin’s theory of evolution, Virchow insisted, belonged in ‘the realm of philosophical speculation’; the ‘observation of available processes’ produced no evidence for ‘the transformation of existing races and species’. Although he was sympathetic to a monogenetic view of human origins and acknowledged that races, like species, were ‘classificatory constructions’ rather than real phenomena, Virchow asserted that human races were stable, at least within the time period accessible to natural historical methods, and that ‘hybrids’ existed but ‘transitions between individual races’ did not.68 This position, which closely resembled Broca’s adherence to ‘an analytic of races founded on the principle of their almost atemporal fixity’, conflicted fundamentally with Meyer’s enthusiasm for the writings of Darwin and Wallace, his interest in the ‘modification of life forms’, and his suggestions that differences in skull form between particular populations need not rule out the possibility of ‘an original relationship’.69 Similarly, Virchow’s insistence on the insuperable cranial differences distinguishing Negritos from Melanesians and Micronesians from Polynesians served to counter Finsch’s assertion that ‘human races’ could not ‘be distinguished by characteristics on a natural historical basis’.70

Like the Scottish conjectural historians, Virchow suggested that traditional document-based historiography had ‘its particular limits’. It was ‘mute’, he argued, ‘when we pose questions about those times in which there were as yet no history books ... when there was not yet any writing at all’. However, whereas the Scottish philosophers had advocated the construction of intelligible sequences of events from a knowledge of human nature and external circumstances, Virchow asserted that when the temporal limits of documentary evidence had been reached, ‘the writer of history must relinquish his rights to the natural historian, or, if he does not wish to do this, he must become a

67 Massin, ‘From Virchow to Fischer’, 83.
69 Blancaert, ‘Le « Manuel opératoire » de la raciologie’, 150 (emphasis original); Meyer, Auszüge, 1; idem, ‘Anthropologische Mittheilungen’, 89.
natural historian himself and learn to read from the book of Nature’. The natural historian, he declared, would then become ‘the chronicler of the human race for those periods of time when there was as yet no other history than that which was passed from mouth to mouth’; and he would do so ‘[w]ith skull in hand’. Virchow explained the preference for skulls as objects of anthropological study partly on ideological and partly on pragmatic grounds. On the one hand, anthropologists treated craniological characteristics as the primary physical markers of race because they believed that ‘the head and especially the skull, the repository of the brain, represent[ed] the noblest part of the body’. On the other, craniological investigations were often the only ones possible when ‘Quaternary Man and his descent’ was the object of inquiry; in most cases, ‘a skull or … part of a skull’ were the only parts of Quaternary Man to have survived the ravages of time.

‘Cranial characteristics of lower human races’: Craniology and developmentalism

Virchow’s 1875 essay ‘Ueber einige Merkmale niederer Menschenrassen am Schädel’ (‘On several cranial characteristics of lower human races’) offers considerable insight into the linkages made between cranial and social development. In this essay, Virchow identified the attempt to ‘determine the place of man’, in nature and in (pre)history, as the foremost endeavour of both anthropology and ethnology, particularly following the ‘powerful stimulus’ given to these researches by the publication of Darwin’s *Origin of Species*. He noted that the investigations undertaken in consequence of this stimulus appeared to be producing an ‘ever more general conviction’ of the real existence of some ‘human races or tribes of lower organisation and lower abilities, and others of more perfect organisation and higher abilities’, but added that it was not certain ‘whether this result [had] been obtained in an unprejudiced way’. ‘[C]ordial advocates’, not only ‘amongst the missionaries’ but ‘amongst the scientific travellers’, could be found for ‘[a]llmost every tribe’ which had been ‘demoted on account of its

in inferiority', and although Virchow suggested that the 'warm heart[s]' of some of these advocates might have led them to 'overlook certain negative aspects' of the people in question, he also recognised that their opponents had almost always 'gone to work with insufficient material and often with a preconceived opinion'.

The limitations imposed by insufficient material and preconceived opinions, Virchow acknowledged, had definite implications for physical anthropology. Both prehistoric and ethnological investigations had 'almost invariably' been undertaken in the expectation that they would find 'an ascending sequence from lower to higher tribes and races', that the lower tribes and races would be 'earlier' chronologically, and that 'the lowest tribes of the present would resemble the oldest tribes of the past'. Following Darwin, researchers including Haeckel and Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895) had also constructed 'phylogenetic genealogical trees' reflecting the belief that 'direct succession' connected 'the lowest human tribes' to 'the highest genera of mammals'.

Though Virchow acknowledged that these beliefs were 'attractive', he criticised their lack of foundation in solid fact. Those tribes considered to occupy 'the lowest rung of the human family tree', he pointed out, were precisely those about which so little was known 'that every new voyage of discovery brings the system into disarray'. He named amongst these disruptive new discoveries Georg August Schweinfurth's (1836-1925) reports of the 'Akka', supposedly a pygmy people of Central Africa, Karl Semper's (1832-1893) and Andreas Fedor Jagor's (1816-1900) accounts of the Negritos of the Philippines, and descriptions of the Papuans of New Guinea - 'that black tribe' whose name had 'almost universally' been considered to express 'the deepest inferiority' since the end of the seventeenth century - supplied by Meyer and Miklouho-Maclay. Physical anthropology, Virchow continued, lacked the 'breadth and certainty of empirical records' that would permit 'a sharp demarcation of all tribes and races'; 'typical distinguishing characteristics', by which anthropologists could determine with certainty 'whether a particular individual belonged to one nationality or another'.

remained unidentified, not only for 'the lowest-seeming primitive peoples' but for 'the most highly developed cultural peoples'.

This difficulty was particularly evident amongst 'the apparently homogeneous group of the Papuans'. Recent reports, Virchow observed, had identified 'at first the Australians, then the Melanesians, finally the Mincopies and the Negritos' as separate groups, and even this hope of having 'established a definite order' was then disrupted by an increasing awareness of the great 'multiplicity of variations' existing amongst the inhabitants of 'the individual islands and island groups'. Nor was it clear whether these variations reflected 'a crossing of different races' or were merely the result of 'fluctuations in individual development'; the former assumption was difficult to prove when 'all historical points of reference' were lacking, while the latter had been so little investigated that there was no certain knowledge of 'the entire magnitude of the individual fluctuations possible [within] even a single, seemingly pure stock'.

Despite this cautious approach, Virchow expressed no doubt that 'typical distinguishing characteristics' existed and could be identified with sufficient research. Nor did he doubt the existence of 'higher' and 'lower' races; he cautioned only that it would be necessary first 'to ascertain the entire breadth of individual fluctuations occurring within [each of] the separate tribes' before conclusions regarding 'the higher or lower character of the race or the stock' could be made from 'individual cases'. Noting that the skull, 'the bony casing of the brain', stood 'in the forefront of [anthropological] attention', Virchow declared that nothing was 'more desirable than to find specific ethnognomonic characteristics on the human skull' which could be used to 'determine the position of a particular individual or ... of a certain population'.

A cautious and consciously empirical researcher, Virchow was critical of those comparative anatomists who interpreted 'theromorphs' ('process[es] of development which, instead of producing the typical human form', generated 'a typical animal

---

82 Virchow, 'Ueber einige Merkmale niederer Menschenrassen', 3.
83 Virchow, 'Ueber einige Merkmale niederer Menschenrassen', 3.
84 Virchow, 'Ueber einige Merkmale niederer Menschenrassen', 4.
85 Virchow, 'Ueber einige Merkmale niederer Menschenrassen', 8.
86 Virchow, 'Ueber einige Merkmale niederer Menschenrassen', 8. The Oxford English Dictionary does not recognise 'ethnognomonic' as a noun, but includes an entry for the combining form -gnomy, used to form 'nouns denoting techniques resembling physiognomy either in their use of external inspection of physical attributes or in their supposed power to provide otherwise hidden knowledge'. See '-gnomy, comb. form', OED Online (Oxford University Press, November 2010), online <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/251983?redirectedFrom=gnomy>, accessed 16 February 2011).
and ‘foetal characteristics’ as evidence that the crania displaying these ‘abnormalities’ automatically occupied a ‘lower position’ on the scale of human development.\textsuperscript{87} Demonstrating ‘the animal-like or ... foetal character of certain deviations from the typical human formation’, he argued, was not sufficient to justify the conclusion ‘that the individual in question had experienced an impairment in [his] development or that his formation was a lower one’. Rather, it must also be shown that this formation was connected with ‘a complication or an impairment or a deficiency in the function, in the use of the [body] part, [or] in [its] operation’.\textsuperscript{88}

Importantly, however, Virchow recognised socio-cultural factors as proxy indicators for the absence, if not the presence, of such complications, impairments and deficiencies. He concluded a lengthy analysis of the Os incae, a small bone of irregular shape whose presence indicates a persistent transverse suture of the skull and was considered by many of his contemporaries ‘a characteristic of lower races’, by observing that such an interpretation appeared questionable when one took into account the fact that of all people it was ‘the Peruvians, a cultural people of very autonomous character’, who were particularly ‘susceptible to this condition’.\textsuperscript{89} ‘A [single] glance at the Peruvian skulls from Pancatambo [Paucartambo, Cusco Region, Peru] sufficed, in his opinion, to prove ‘that an epactal skull [could] attain a very favourable development’.\textsuperscript{90} Since it was the cultural achievements of ‘the ancients of Peru’ which had attracted the particular admiration of nineteenth-century savants,\textsuperscript{91} Virchow’s conclusion was essentially that evidence of cultural ‘savagery’ or ‘civilisation’ could reflect biological simplicity or sophistication. He made a similar point in regard to the inhabitants of ‘the East Asiatic island world’, remarking that although he had nowhere observed the totality of ‘anomalies’ under consideration ‘more frequently than amongst skulls from the Sunda Islands and the Philippines’, those savants who wished to see in this admission further evidence for Malay descent from the orang-utan should take into consideration the ‘weighty objection’ that such a view would require them to ‘portray as the most subject

\textsuperscript{88} Virchow, ‘Üeber einige Merkmale niederer Menschenrassen’, 113.
\textsuperscript{89} Virchow, ‘Üeber einige Merkmale niederer Menschenrassen’, 110.
to animal-like atavism’ precisely ‘that race which, compared to the black races of the East, appears [to be] a cultural race’.  

**The confusions of craniometry**

Despite these evident entanglements of anatomical investigations and conjectures regarding social development, and despite Virchow’s recognition of the role of preconceived opinions in physical anthropology, craniometry, as a set of practices ‘ostensibly based on observation and measurement’, was understood and presented by its proponents as an objective science. In this respect it fell under the broader system of scientific values outlined in Broca’s ‘General instructions’, discussed in the previous chapter, which contrasted standardized measurements and methodical descriptions favourably with the ‘more or less exact impressions’ to be expected from travellers uninitiated in ‘the practices of anthropological investigation’. Similarly, both Virchow and Meyer believed that ‘objective’ quantitative data were superior to more ‘subjective’ qualitative material, particularly when the latter displayed evidence of contradiction or ambiguity. Virchow concluded his 1872 article ‘Ueber die Methode der wissenschaftlichen Anthropologie’ (‘On the methods of scientific anthropology’) by quoting the French physician, statistician and anthropometrician Louis-Adolphe Bertillon (1821-1883), who admonished his colleagues that where cranial forms were concerned, it was not ‘commentary and impressions’ but ‘number’ and ‘measurement’ that were ‘the indispensable characteristics of scientific truth’. Meyer’s last major craniological publication, *24 Menschenschädel von der Oster Insel* (‘Twenty-four human skulls from Easter Island’, 1901), took early travellers’ accounts seriously as sources of anthropological and ethnographic information, but noted that many such accounts contradicted one another and suggested that the ‘statistical information’ they contained was more valuable scientifically than their authors’ ‘potentially subjectively coloured judgements’.

In theory, at least, the practice of craniology was straightforward: the craniologist measured skulls and ‘compare[d] the data obtained with those ... supplied by other

---

However, the process of measuring skulls was in fact fraught with difficulties. Since skulls are irregular rather than geometrical objects, ‘modes of measurement were necessarily idiosyncratic and not readily comparable’. There was little agreement on how skulls should be measured and on which measurements should be considered the most significant, either between scientists within a single (national or sub-national) community or between communities. Most craniologists adopted the cephalic index, designating the ratio of the breadth of the skull to its length, and the dichotomy of dolichocephalic (long-headed) and brachycephalic (short-headed) skulls proposed by the Swedish natural historian Anders Adolf Retzius (1796-1860). However, different instruments and measuring techniques could produce significant variation in the results, so that, for example, a skull considered brachycephalic by one researcher could be identified as dolichocephalic by another. Chapter Four describes one example of such confusion. The set of values considered to fall into either the dolichocephalic or brachycephalic categories also varied substantially between individual researchers. As late as 1887, John George Garson, Anatomical Assistant at the Royal College of Surgeons and Lecturer on Comparative Anatomy at Charing Cross Medical School, expressed his hopes for ‘an uniform system of measurement and of nomenclature’, adding that ‘[u]ntil] lately great differences in measuring the length and breadth, and of classifying the cephalic index have existed among anthropologists’.

In addition, the process by which ‘normal’ and ‘reliable’ cranial specimens were selected for craniometrical study allowed considerable scope for individual priorities and socially-constructed understandings of normality to influence the results of supposedly objective investigations. I trace these processes in more detail in Chapter Four, focusing specifically on the ways in which contemporary understandings of gender, class and criminality were manifested in Meyer’s craniological publications.

Although not all nineteenth-century savants were equally convinced of the value of craniometry, the lack of a standardized methodology and consequent difficulties in comparing the results of different studies delayed a fuller realisation of its shortcomings.

---

as a method for the production of racial knowledge. A craniometric conference was held in Munich in 1877 and another in Berlin in 1880, yet it was not until 1882 that German anthropologists were able to agree upon a common method for measuring skulls.\textsuperscript{101} At the 13\textsuperscript{th} General Congress of the German Anthropological Society, held in 1882 at Frankfurt am Main, Virchow, Johannes Ranke (1836-1916) and Julius Kollmann (1834-1918), at that time the three most influential physical anthropologists in Germany, presented to the Society a craniometric methodology closely modelled on that developed by the naturalist Hermann von Ihering (Jhering) (1850-1930).\textsuperscript{102} Central to this standardized methodology, which became known as the Frankfurter Verständigung (‘Frankfurt Agreement’), was the so-called deutsche Horizontalebene (‘German horizontal’), a line running ‘from the upper borders of the [auditory] meatus to the lowest borders of the orbits’: that is, above the ear hole and beneath the eye socket (Fig. 18).\textsuperscript{103} In addition, the Agreement continued to accept a number of other measurements made independently of this plane, both ‘so that numerous and valuable older measurements’ might not be ‘rendered valueless’ and because the German horizontal could not be determined exactly in severely damaged skulls, notably prehistoric specimens. Nevertheless, the German horizontal became the basis from which most other measurements could then be taken, including ‘the direct length of the cranium, the height, the maximum breadth, the breadth of the forehead … the angle of inclination of the foramen magnum [and] the profile angle of the face’.\textsuperscript{104}

According to Zimmermann, the Frankfurt Agreement was of considerable symbolic importance for the discipline of physical anthropology. In the process of ‘working out a uniform procedure for craniometric studies of race’, he argues, German physical anthropologists ‘institutionalized their own methods’ and constructed a ‘technical basis’ for their scientific community. The craniometric methods adopted under the Agreement ‘represented a commitment to collaborative work among a wide range of amateurs and professionals’. By identifying ‘a common method for measuring skulls’, therefore,


\textsuperscript{102} Julius Kollmann, Johannes Ranke and Rudolf Virchow, ‘Verständigung über ein gemeinsames craniometrisches Verfahren’, \textit{Archiv für Anthropologie}, 15 (1884), 1-8; Massin, ‘From Virchow to Fischer’, 91; Zimmermann, \textit{Anthropology and Antihumanism}, 91.

\textsuperscript{103} Kollmann et al., ‘Verständigung über ein gemeinsames craniometrisches Verfahren’, 1, 7; Garson, ‘The Frankfort Craniometric Agreement’, 74.

German anthropologists simultaneously ‘worked out a collective identity as natural scientists of humanity’.  

Figure 18: J. G. Garson, ‘Four diagrams illustrating some of the cranial measurements recommended by the Frankfort Conference. Reproduced from the “Archiv für Anthropologie” by the courtesy of the German Anthropological Society, through Professor J. Ranke, of Munich’.  

Woodcut. Reproduction courtesy JSTOR.

Despite its significance, however, the Frankfurt Agreement did not end craniometrical controversies, especially those between German physical anthropologists and their peers of other nationalities. Many of the objections raised were canvassed in Garson’s 1885 report on the Agreement to the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland. Although Garson described German anthropologists’ endeavours ‘to come to a general agreement among themselves as to a method of measuring skulls’ as ‘laudab[le]’, he regretted their application of ‘such terms as “German” and “our” to

105 Zimmermann, Anthropology and Antihumanism, 88.
craniometrical questions’, arguing that nation-specific language of this kind would tend “to destroy that feeling of unity which has always existed among scientific men”. In addition, he suggested that the Agreement had “been drawn up with little consideration of what has been done by other anthropologists over the world, save that of a few in Germany”. Garson’s own opinion was that the extensive researches of Broca’, which had “been adopted by anthropologists generally over the whole world”, ought rather to have been “taken as the basis” for “any code of craniometrical measurements”. The Frankfurt Agreement, he felt, was arbitrary: it inexplicably “ignored” certain “[i]mportant measurements, which yield marked results in comparing skulls of different races”, and altered “methods of measuring accepted by anthropologists generally ... without any reason being given for the change”.

Garson also objected to the selection of the German horizontal as the primary measurement. Although he believed, in agreement with some German physical anthropologists, that the ‘condylo-alveolar plane’ (running between the occipital condyles and the tooth-sockets of the upper jaw) was a more natural horizontal, since it represented more closely “the axis of vision when this is horizontally directed”, this was not his primary criticism. Rather, Garson argued, the most ‘decided objection to the adoption of the Frankfort [sic] plane in preference to the condylo-alveolar’ was that aligning a skull with the ‘Frankfort plane’ (German horizontal) was ‘more difficult’ and required ‘a more complicated apparatus’. In his opinion, ‘simple and accurate instruments, easy of application’, were particularly ‘desiderate objects’ in anthropological research, and it was a matter for regret that the authors of the Frankfurt Agreement had not always kept this ‘in view’. The advantages of measurements taken in relation to the German horizontal, he argued, were ‘chiefly theoretical’ and the measurements themselves could only be obtained ‘with any degree of accuracy by means of complicated and costly apparatus, suitable only for the laboratory, and not even then ... except after repeated control measurements’.


Garson further criticised the authors of the Frankfurt Agreement for classifying ‘indices of the chief dimensions of the skull’ – notably the length-breadth (cephalic), height, orbital, nasal and palatal indices – in ways which differed from ‘measurements universally used’, claiming that such a step would ‘cause confusion’, ‘detract from the value of certain convenient terms’, and effectively separate ‘anthropologists in Germany … from those in the rest of the world’. Although Zimmermann asserts that the Frankfurt Agreement ‘represented a commitment among [German] anthropologists to a relatively open discipline’, since ‘the points used to determine the German horizontal … were relatively easy to find for those with little training’ and the method, which he describes as ‘flexible and easy-to-use’, could be used to measure any head, whether living or dead, Garson’s criticisms suggest that contemporary observers did not necessarily share these views.

Meyer’s paper on his collection of Papuan skulls, published in three instalments between 1875 and 1878, preceded the Frankfurt Agreement and the general adoption of Ihering’s methodology in Germany. However, Meyer had not hesitated to use the Ihering-Spengel craniometer, a version of Ihering’s craniometer, to measure his Papuan skulls, since he saw it as ‘practical’ and constructed ‘on a rational basis’. Although he anticipated considerable resistance to this innovation from those researchers already ‘accustomed to [other] method[s]’, Meyer nevertheless considered the general adoption of the Ihering-Spengel craniometer very desirable, particularly because he believed that it sought ‘to preclude, as much as possible, subjective assessment with regard to the selection of vantage points’ and consequently allowed ‘a direct comparison of the numerical values obtained’. This was a considerable advantage when contrasted with the existing state of affairs, in which craniologists wishing to compare ‘the results of various researchers’ had first to discover which particular method those researchers had used – a ‘frequently difficult’ task – and then to ‘reduce the measurements’ to a common unit, which in the absence of the original object from which they had been taken was often impossible.

Difficulties resulting from incompatible methodologies were central to the craniometrical disagreements between Meyer and the French anthropologists Quatrefages and Hamy, discussed in more detail in Chapter Four. After several years of

---

mutual scientific bickering, it eventually became clear that much of the divergence in their interpretations of these skulls could be traced to the different craniometrical methods they employed. In response to this discovery, Meyer, who had previously acknowledged that it would be necessary for him to repeat his measurements ‘according to other accepted methods’ if the Ihering-Spengel craniometer ‘should not be generally adopted’, undertook to measure his series of Papuan skulls again, this time using the ‘French method’.

Although Meyer does not appear to have adhered to his intention of publishing these results in ‘one of the forthcoming numbers of the Revue d’anthropologie’, his first-hand experience of the confusion caused by methodological incompatibility probably influenced his favourable reception of the Frankfurt Agreement; he was quick to announce his accession to it and adhered to the methodologies it prescribed in at least one subsequent publication.

By the end of the nineteenth century, however, Meyer had largely lost faith in the ability of craniometry to produce meaningful racial knowledge. Although his growing conviction that the ‘practice of describing a skull in detail’ would ‘never achieve anything profitable’ resonates with the broader ‘crisis of classical physical anthropology’ compellingly described by Benoit Massin, it was also grounded firmly in his own experience. The following chapter examines Meyer’s craniological publications, particular those relating to his collection of skulls from Kordo and Rubi (see Chapter One). Through a focus on Meyer’s methodological approach to this material, I illustrate the dissonances between regional, empirical perspectives on human difference and global, deductive taxonomies and consider the continuing significance of Meyer’s field experience in his craniometrical truth claims.

117 Meyer, Die Philippinen ... Negritos, 86; Massin, ‘From Virchow to Fischer’, 106-14.
Chapter Four

‘On one hundred and thirty-five Papuan skulls’:
A. B. Meyer and contested craniology

The practice of describing a skull in detail will never achieve anything profitable and burdens the literature [on the subject] beyond measure.¹

When Meyer announced in November 1873 that he was returning from his five-month sojourn in north-west New Guinea with ‘about 150 Papuan skulls’ and ‘a considerable number of long bones [and] pelvises’, his announcement raised no small interest in Europe’s scientific circles.² Anthropological material from New Guinea was scarce in Europe, and craniological material was considered ‘exceptionally valuable’.³ Moreover, as already mentioned in Chapter One, the inhabitants of New Guinea and surrounding islands, along with so-called Negrito groups in mainland Southeast Asia and the Malay Archipelago, stood at this time ‘at the forefront of ethnological interest’.⁴ Meyer’s material collections, his eyewitness accounts, and especially his cache of skulls, estimated to outnumber ‘all the Papuan skulls existing in Europe and America, taken together’, offered his colleagues the tantalising possibility of being able, ‘at last’, ‘to obtain a secure anatomical basis for the evaluation of this race’.⁵

These high hopes notwithstanding, the results of Meyer’s travels and the conclusions he reached failed in many respects to correspond either to his expectations or to those of his colleagues. In fact, Meyer himself experienced a significant change in attitude to the value of cranioetry (skull measurement) in determining racial identities and relationships. His initially buoyant hope that the skulls he had collected would ‘extend our knowledge by a considerable step’ gradually gave way over the next twenty years to the gloomy conviction that ‘the practice of describing a skull in detail will never achieve anything profitable, and burdens the literature [on the subject] beyond measure’.⁶ In this chapter I compare the conclusions Meyer reached in his publications on physical anthropology and craniology with the responses of his colleagues and their differing interpretations of his material. I focus particularly on the French anthropologists

¹ Meyer, Die Philippinen ... Negritos, 87.
⁵ Virchow, ‘Papua-Schädel von Darnley Island’, 175.
⁶ Meyer, ‘Ueber die Papua’s und Neu-Guinea’, 307-8; idem, Die Philippinen ... Negritos, 87.
Quatrefages and Hamy, whose understandings of Papuans differed markedly from those of Meyer, and on the heated and protracted discussion on this topic which developed between the three men. This episode exemplifies the widely varying interpretations which differences in methodology, research priorities, instrumentation, and national paradigms of knowledge could produce from a single set of data. It also illustrates the dissonances which resulted when regional, empirical perspectives on human difference gathered by travellers such as Meyer clashed with the global, deductive taxonomies favoured by metropolitan savants. In addition to these major themes, this chapter includes discussions of the priority of presence, as exemplified by the significance of field experience for Meyer’s truth claims; the various ways in which skulls were valued, as both scientific and museological objects; and the imbrications of pathology, gender, class, criminality and race in Meyer’s craniological studies.

*A spirit of disruption*: Meyer’s collection in historical context

Meyer’s visit to New Guinea coincided with a period of disruption and readjustment of European understandings of the identity and typical characteristics of Papuans. Recent publications had begun to destabilise the assumption that ‘black’ Oceanians, including the inhabitants of New Guinea, were a homogeneous race of dark-skinned, woolly-haired, long-headed primitives. The most significant of these, Wallace’s *Malay Archipelago*, continued to portray Papuans as physically homogeneous, and yet his departures from existing stereotypes of ‘black’ Oceanian physical appearance did not go unnoticed by his German readers. Virchow, as Chapter One has mentioned, considered these divergences surprising ‘in the highest degree’; he noted particularly that the noses of New Caledonia’s Indigenous inhabitants, characterised in ‘most’ reports as ‘short … [with] the bridge flattened, the tip pointing upwards, the nose as a whole concave’, represented ‘the most complete opposite’ to the typical Papuan nose – ‘large, stately [and] aquiline … [with] the tip hanging down’ – described by Wallace.\(^7\)

The unexpected physical features of Wallace’s Papuans prompted Virchow to question the accuracy of ‘earlier descriptions’. Because such descriptions ‘start[ed] from the presumed identity of all black Oceanic races’ and then ‘extended that which was observed in one place to all regions’, Virchow condemned them as ‘completely unusable’. For example, the description of Papuans compiled by the Bohemian-Austrian philologist and ethnographer Friedrich Müller (1834-1898) from observations

\(^7\) Virchow, ‘*Ueber Schädel von Neu-Guinea*’, 68.
gathered during the voyage of the Austrian frigate Novara (1857-59) gave the Papuans ‘a broad, flat, concave nose throughout’, directly contradicting Wallace’s descriptions. Such contradictory claims, Virchow concluded, demonstrated ‘how carefully one must judge the distribution of races within this island world’. 

Publications such as The Malay Archipelago introduced a ‘spirit of disruption’ into the ‘seemingly uniform conditions’ previously presumed to exist amongst the ‘black-skinned’ people of Oceania. This disruption was strengthened by what Virchow described as an influx of new anthropological material ‘streaming in … in recent times’ from Oceania, mainland Southeast Asia and the Malay Archipelago. Comparative examinations of cranial and skeletal material, much of it supplied by Meyer, bolstered Virchow’s conviction of ‘black’ Oceanian heterogeneity. In May 1872 he acknowledged receipt of a collection of skulls and stone weapons from Celebes, sent by ‘Dr. A. B. Meyer of Hamburg, one of our old students’. In July of the same year the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie purchased from Meyer a further collection of human remains: this comprised 11 skeletons and 35 skulls excavated from Negrito graves during Meyer’s six-month stay in the Philippines, as well as two skulls from New Guinea, collected in Astrolabe Bay by Miklouho-Maclay and transferred to Meyer in Manila by officers of Miklouho-Maclay’s transport to New Guinea, the Russian corvette Vitiiaz.

The skulls from Celebes were few in number: Meyer had sent seven skeletons, six of them belonging to adults. Some skulls were damaged, and there were indications that most had undergone artificial deformation. None of these factors deterred Virchow from stating ‘positively’ that ‘the Negritos of the Philippines’ had ‘no connection to the Negroes of Africa’ and showed ‘just as little’ affinity ‘to the black race in New Holland, New Guinea and New Caledonia’. His examination of the skulls from Astrolabe Bay

---

produced similar conclusions. Contrary to the long-held belief ‘that all [the] black aboriginal populations’ of Oceania, mainland southeast Asia and the Malay Archipelago ‘belonged to a single race, and were merely members of a single stock’, the cranial material supplied by Meyer, along with the written accounts of another German traveller-naturalist, Andreas Fedor Jagor, had ‘established’ the Negritos as a ‘people ... absolutely distinct from the black population[s] of both Africa and Melanesia’.\textsuperscript{14}

Virchow declared that ‘closer comparisons’ between the Negro populations of Southeast Asia and those of Melanesia did ‘not appear to be in any way admissible’. He believed that this statement was sufficiently illustrated by the skulls at hand: ‘place a Negrito or Aeta skull next to our New Guinea skull’, he asserted, ‘and even the unpracticed will notice how great the differences are’.\textsuperscript{15} He consequently proposed a natural division separating the northern and southern ‘group[s] of black tribes’, given that these two groups had not displayed any evidence of a ‘closer relationship or connection’, ‘at least up to the present time’.\textsuperscript{16} He likewise illustrated a second division, that between ‘the black Melanesians’ and ‘the so-called Austral Negroes’, via comparison of crania. The ‘extraordinary dissimilarity’ between an ‘Australian’ skull – ‘very narrow and long in form, but ... of exceedingly massive ... and strong bone structure’ – and a Negrito skull – ‘relatively short and broad, at the same time dainty and delicate’ – was ‘easily recognisable’, he claimed, ‘even at a distance’.\textsuperscript{17} While Virchow selectively consulted travellers’ accounts in order to bolster, or occasionally to debunk, a particular craniological interpretation, by and large the skulls were considered to speak for themselves.

\textit{‘A completely typical species’: Small samples and bold conclusions}

Meyer’s promised collection of Papuan skulls, therefore, was relevant to some of the most salient anthropological questions of the day. The scientific value of the collection was further increased by its size. Meyer claimed to be returning with ‘about 150 skulls’ (he later revised the number down to 135) and suggested by way of comparison that ‘all the Papuan skulls ... scattered about in the world’s museums and collections’ at the

\textsuperscript{14} Virchow, ‘Ueber Schädel von Neu-Guinea’, 65.
\textsuperscript{15} Virchow, ‘Ueber Schädel von Neu-Guinea’, 66.
\textsuperscript{17} Virchow, ‘Ueber Schädel von Neu-Guinea’, 67.
time of his return would amount to less than 100 specimens.\textsuperscript{18} Certainly even the most eminent nineteenth-century scholars wishing to study Papuan skulls had previously been obliged to content themselves with far more modest samples. Joseph Barnard Davis (1801-1881), a medical doctor and member of the British Royal Society, described in his \textit{Thesaurus Craniorum} (1867) and its supplement (1875) a personal collection amounting to ‘1,700 specimens, mostly crania’; Wallace declared it ‘by far the most extensive in existence’, while one of Davis’s obituarists, the British surgeon and comparative anatomist William Henry Flower (1831-1899), considered the ‘time, labour, and money’ spent in amassing it Davis’s ‘greatest service to science’.\textsuperscript{19} Yet even Davis’s celebrated collection included only four skulls supposedly from New Guinea, along with six from New Caledonia, three from the Loyalty Islands, ten from the New Hebrides and ‘four skulls of Salomon [sic] Islanders’.\textsuperscript{20} Von Baer’s \textit{Über Papua und Alfuren}, considered by both Meyer and Finsch one of the century’s most important contributions to the physical anthropology of New Guinea, was based primarily on nine skulls held in the collection of the Imperial Saint Petersburg Academy of Sciences (see Chapter Two).\textsuperscript{21} Quoy and Gaimard’s 1824 paper on the ‘physical constitution of the \textit{Papous}’ was based on a mere six skulls.\textsuperscript{22}

Two other notable craniologists, the skilled Dutch draftsman and anatomist Gerard Sandifort (1779-1848) and the German anatomist and anthropologist Johann Christian Gustav Lucae (1814-1885), each had access only to a single skull. Sandifort, the son of a Professor of Anatomy in Leiden, described and illustrated the ‘skull of an inhabitant of the region of New Guinea, which is commonly called [the] Land of the Papous’, in his comparative craniological work \textit{Tabulae Craniorum Diversarum Nationum} (1838-}

\textsuperscript{18} Meyer, ‘Ueber die Papua’s und Neu-Guinea’, 307-8; Meyer, ‘Ueber hundert fünfzund dreissen Papüa-Schädel’, I, 59-83. As Meyer provides no explanation of what happened to the missing fifteen skulls we may assume that the original figure of 150 was an estimate rather than an exact count.


\textsuperscript{20} Barnard Davis, \textit{Thesaurus Craniorum}, 303-15.


\textsuperscript{22} von Baer, \textit{Über Papua und Alfuren}, 58.
which was praised by a contemporary reviewer as an ‘exceedingly important work’ for the ‘natural history of man’. The skull, which had been ‘sent as a gift’ by a Doctor J. Heppener to S. J. (Sebald Justinus) Brugmans (1763-1819), Professor of Botany, Natural History, Chemistry and Medicine at the University of Leiden, was held in the collection of the University’s Anatomical Museum. Lucae, who taught at Frankfurt’s premier medical and artistic institutions and published over thirty papers on craniology, pressed the single Papuan skull available to him into double service, featuring it in his *Zur organischen Formenlehre* (‘On organic morphology’, 1844) and again in the second instalment of *Zur Morphologie der Rassenschädel* (‘On the morphology of race skulls’, 1864). The skull, labelled ‘A Papuan from the island of the same name, in Molukkos’, had been sent to the Senckenbergische naturforschennde Gesellschaft (‘Senckenberg Nature Research Society’) by Dr. Doebel, the town physician in Batavia. Lucae believed that Doebel’s reference to ‘the island of the same name’ was ‘obviously’ an allusion to ‘the island [of] New Guinea’, though he acknowledged that New Guinea was not usually considered to belong to the Moluccas.

Many craniologists of the early to mid-nineteenth century displayed little hesitation in drawing bold and far-reaching conclusions on both the origins and the mental and psychological characteristics of Papuans from their infinitesimal samples. This was partly for want of more abundant material, but also because they tended to expect little variation between individuals believed to belong to a single race. Chapter Two has already canvassed Quoy and Gaimard’s unflattering generalisations about Papuans’ ‘moral and intellectual faculties’ and von Baer’s assertion that at least two ‘types of

---


24 Sandfjort, ‘Cranium incolae Novae Guineae’, n.p.; van Heiningen, *Gerard Sandfjort in Twee Werelden*, 218-9. The skull is now held in the Anatomisch Embryologisch Instituut, Faculteit Geneeskunde, Rijksuniversiteit Leiden (‘Anatomical and Embryological Institute, Faculty of Health Sciences, National University of Leiden’).


27 Jahoda states that ‘there was little understanding of the need for adequate samples’ in craniology until ‘well into the latter part of the nineteenth century’ and that many craniologists during this period ‘assumed a high degree of homogeneity’ within the races they claimed to be studying. Jahoda, ‘Intra-European Racism’, 41-2.
curly-haired inhabitants' existed in New Guinea.\textsuperscript{28} Lucae claimed that the Papuan skull in his possession was '[d]istinguished ... by its animal form' and that its 'blunt nose', 'large orbital cavities' and 'protruding jaws' produced a 'lively' resemblance to 'the orangutan'; he added that it displayed the 'greatest similarity' with 'the heads of the inhabitants of New Holland, particularly in King George Harbour and Jervis Bay', described in the \textit{Atlas} from Dumont d'Urville's voyage in the \textit{Astrolabe}, but had very little in common with 'the New Hollanders in Blumenbach's \textit{Decades ... from the neighbourhood of Botany Bay}'.\textsuperscript{29} He later compared the same skull with 'six skulls of Australian Negroes', donated to the Senckenbergische naturforschende Gesellschaft by Consul Wilhelm Kirchner in Sydney, and six European skulls, with respect to such considerations as the height of the forehead, the position of the brain, and the degree of prognathism, generally to the advantage of the European skulls and the disadvantage of the Australian and Papuan specimens.\textsuperscript{30} Although Lucae did not explicitly extrapolate his conclusions to the larger populations under study, the very fact that he considered it worthwhile to compare such small numbers of skulls indicates that he expected his findings to be of broader relevance. Virchow was more explicit, basing his claims for a division between 'black Melanesians' and 'so-called Austral Negroes' on a mere two Aboriginal skulls from different regions of Australia, which he believed displayed sufficient similarities to confirm the Indigenous inhabitants of Australia as 'a completely typical species'.\textsuperscript{31}

\textbf{Craniological sceptics: Wallace and Waitz}

Not all nineteenth-century savants were so sanguine. Both Wallace and Waitz, whose considerable influence on Meyer's anthropological thought was discussed in Chapter One, were cautious of attributing undue significance to craniological studies. I have already described Waitz's rejection of solely cranial classifications and his arguments for the necessity of considering other physical characters in order to produce a natural division of mankind. The fundamental aim of a natural division of this kind, Waitz asserted, was not simply to group 'the human tribes [\textit{Menschenstämmen}] according to their similarity', but rather to arrange them 'according to their internal relatedness' or 'affinity of stock [\textit{Stammverwandtschaft}]'.\textsuperscript{32} While such a division could be undertaken from 'three different major standpoints', namely 'the natural-historical, the linguistic

\textsuperscript{28} von Baer, \textit{Uber Papuas und Alfuren}, 58.
\textsuperscript{29} Lucae, \textit{Zur organischen Formenlehre}, 46-7.
\textsuperscript{31} Virchow, 'Ueber Schädel von Neu- Guinea', 67.
\textsuperscript{32} Waitz, \textit{Anthropologie der Naturvölker}, I, 258.
and the historical’, the results obtained from each standpoint frequently contradicted one another: in particular, those yielded by ‘the natural-historical basis for division’ ‘repeatedly disagree[d]’ with those produced by ‘the study of languages’.

Waitz favoured the latter, claiming for it the ability to produce ‘relatively certain information’ on the relatedness of human populations. In contrast, he argued, divisions produced from the ‘anatomical standpoint’ could ‘hardly claim to be more than mere ... groupings according to external similarities’, partly because ‘the methods of skull measurement [had] not yet reached the desirable degree of perfection’, but mostly because the existence of ‘consistent anatomical differences’, either between ‘large groups of peoples’ or ‘within individual nations’, was ‘doubtful’.

Previous attempts to produce ‘a natural-historical division of humankind’, Waitz observed, had rested to a great extent on ‘the presupposition that the typical major forms possess a high degree of constancy’. However, the great variety of classifications produced by different authors revealed the ‘weakness’ of the basis upon which such attempts were founded. Further proof of the dangers of attempting to ‘classify according to the external habitus alone’ was furnished by the fact that those authors who had done so had ‘fallen into the grossest errors’. Waitz also questioned the assumption that a ‘higher degree of constancy’ was to be found in skull form than in such characters as hair type and skin colour, arguing that the form of the skull ‘within the same people’ exhibited considerable variability.

Despite his reservations, Waitz did not dismiss completely the potential of craniology to contribute to human classification. Though he spoke scathingly of ‘the fables of phrenology’, he disclaimer any wish to ‘disparage’ the ‘meritorious’ efforts which had been made in ‘the precise investigation of race skulls’. ‘Very probably’, he added, ‘a national form of the skull’ actually existed ‘for every people’. This statement was not entirely consistent with his previous declaration that the ‘sphere of variation’ within ‘individual people or races’ was ‘as great as that of the whole human race’, and that this had been demonstrated by ‘precisely those [authors] who have occupied themselves

---

34 Waitz, Anthropologie der Naturvölker, I, 259-60.
35 Waitz, Anthropologie der Naturvölker, I, 252.
36 Waitz, Anthropologie der Naturvölker, I, 252-3.
37 Waitz, Anthropologie der Naturvölker, I, 261.
38 Waitz, Anthropologie der Naturvölker, I, 265, 267.
most insistently with the investigation of race skulls’. Nevertheless, Waitz cautioned, inferences of consanguinity or difference from ‘similar’ or ‘deviating skull form[s]’ respectively were doubtful: ‘similar forms occur amongst the remotest peoples ... while considerably different [ones] are to be found amongst peoples whose internal relatedness cannot be denied, unless one has already accepted, unproven, the doctrine ... that the shape of the skull is an absolutely certain criterion of race’. The human skull being ‘the most accessible’ and, ‘as it appeared, the most characteristic object of investigation’, on account of its supposed ‘relationship ... to the psychical qualities of man’, had come to be ‘too exclusively considered as a permanent mark of race’. It was thus ‘highly necessary’ that ‘the remaining physical characters’ be no longer neglected, for ‘a satisfactory picture of the peculiarities of the races’ could be produced only when such characters were considered ‘all together’. Although Waitz appended to his discussion ‘a brief list of [skull and body] measurements which appear to be reliable [and] are of anthropological interest’, including those published by Retzius, Freycinet, Sandifort and Lesson, he concluded that ‘[f]or more certain and more consistent results’ had been obtained from ‘the study of language’.

Wallace, whose Malay Archipelago included an appendix ‘On the Crania and the Languages of the Races of Man in the Malay Archipelago’, selected from Barnard Davis’s ‘interesting and valuable’ Thesaurus Craniorum a series of measurements of Malay, Papuan, Polynesian, Australian and Negro skulls, in order to determine ‘whether the forms and dimensions of the crania of the Eastern races would in any way support or refute [his] classification of them’. Although he acknowledged that there were ‘only four true Papuan crania in [Barnard Davis’s] collection’, Wallace also included in this category a number of skulls attributed to ‘natives of the Solomon Islands, New Caledonia, New Hebrides, and the Fijis’, all of which he considered to be ‘decidedly of Papuan race’. He preceded his analysis of these measurements with the following cautionary paragraph:

---

39 Waitz, Anthropologie der Naturvölker, I, 251, 265.
40 Waitz, Anthropologie der Naturvölker, I, 265-6.
41 Waitz, Anthropologie der Naturvölker, I, 266-7.
42 Waitz, Anthropologie der Naturvölker, I, 267.
45 Wallace, The Malay Archipelago, II, 469.
A few years ago it was thought that the study of Crania offered the only sure basis of a classification of man. Immense collections have been formed; they have been measured, described, and figured; and now the opinion is beginning to gain ground, that for this special purpose they are of very little value ... It is certain, too, that though Cranioscopy [sic] has been assiduously studied for many years, it has produced no results at all comparable with the labour and research bestowed upon it. No approach to a theory of the excessive variations of the cranium has been put forth, and no intelligible classification of races has been founded upon it.\textsuperscript{46}

Despite these words of warning, Wallace then proceeded to compare the cranial capacity, width-length and width-height ratios of the selected skulls (Fig. 19), concluding that ‘the Australians have the smallest crania, and the Polynesians the largest: the Negroes, the Malays, and Papuans not differing perceptibly in size ... [which] accords very well with what we know of their mental activity and capacity for civilization’.

Figure 19: Alfred Russel Wallace, ‘Summary of the dimensions of ... crania’.\textsuperscript{47}

\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Number of Crania} & \textbf{Capacity} & \textbf{W : L} & \textbf{H : L} \\
\hline
88. Malays (66 male) & 60 to 91 & .70 to .92 & .72 to .90 \\
28. Papuans (23 m.) & 66 ,, 80 & .65 ,, .85 & .71 ,, .85 \\
156. Polynesians (90 m.) & 62 ,, 91 & .69 ,, .90 & .68 ,, .88 \\
23. Australians (16 m.) & 59 ,, 86 & .57 ,, .80 & .64 ,, .80 \\
72. Negroes (38 m.) & 66 ,, 87 & .64 ,, .83 & .65 ,, .81 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

He added that, despite the ‘enormous’ amount of ‘individual variation’ between skulls of the same race, Barnard Davis’s measurements ‘agree[d] well’ with the conclusions he had arrived at from his own observations of ‘physical and mental characters’; namely, ‘that the Malays and Papuans are radically distinct races; and that the Polynesians are most nearly allied to the latter’ (a curious claim, given that the figures for Malays and Polynesians in the above table are almost identical).\textsuperscript{48} However, the considerable overlap between the ‘Malay’ and ‘Papuan’ categories, together with Wallace’s own

\textsuperscript{46} Wallace, The Malay Archipelago, II, 467.
\textsuperscript{47} Wallace, The Malay Archipelago, II, 469.
\textsuperscript{48} Wallace, The Malay Archipelago, II, 470.
acknowledgement that the capacity of the Papuan skulls was 'so nearly identical with some of the Malayan groups as to offer no clear points of difference', suggest that his claim for a radical distinction between Malays and Papuans was a predetermined one.49 Although his conclusions from these measurements were boldly stated, Wallace conceded that only 'a much more extensive series of crania' would have the potential to 'furnish tolerably reliable race-characters' and that skulls 'would never be of any use in single examples, or even when moderate numbers only could be compared', 'owing to the large amount of individual variation'.50

Wallace and Waitz were thus largely in agreement on the problematic nature of cranial comparison and the degree of individual variation. They differed, however, on the value of philological studies: although Wallace had 'collected a considerable number of vocabularies' during his travels, he admitted that he had been 'able to draw very few conclusions' from them.51 He was also reluctant to consider 'resemblances of words' as any 'proof of affinity of the people who use those words', stating that the languages of the Malay Archipelago had been 'much modified by long intercommunication among the islands'.52 Wallace explained the anomaly of 'tribes ... decidedly of Malay race, as the people of Ternate, Tidore, and Batchian', being found to 'speak languages [just] as decidedly of a Papuan type' by suggesting that the tribes in question had 'originally immigrated to these islands in small numbers, and by marrying native women acquired a considerable portion of their language'.53

Influenced by these two savants, Meyer began his anthropological career with a cautious faith in the value of craniology as a tool for racial taxonomy. Nevertheless, the fact that he returned with so vast a collection of crania indicates that he perceived sufficient value in them to undertake willingly both the labour and danger of their acquisition and the trouble and expense of their transport. This value did not lie solely in their potential contribution to racial science; even a young and inexperienced traveller could hardly have failed to realise that such a collection would undoubtedly increase his own standing within the scientific circles of Europe's metropoles. As already stated, the Indigenous inhabitants of New Guinea were considered to stand at this time 'at the forefront of ethnological interest', the most influential authors on the topic were calling

49 Wallace, The Malay Archipelago, II, 469; see also Ballard, "Oceanic Negros", 182-4, 186.
explicitly for more skulls to be collected, and even those who were openly sceptical of craniology did not rule out the possibility that more extensive materials might furnish useful information. Von Baer had concluded *Über Papuas und Alfuren* with the remark that ‘individual skulls and photographs’ would not suffice for an understanding of the inhabitants of New Guinea and surrounds, and that in order ‘to gain a sound insight into the distribution of the various larger tribes of the human race’, it would be necessary to ‘seek to establish the intermediate form, or the type, from many [skulls].’

Meyer’s travels certainly gained him the attention and respect of his colleagues. His movements in the Philippines and New Guinea had been regularly reported in the meetings of the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie; extracts from his letters had been published in their proceedings; and his previous contributions of skeletal material had been received and discussed with a flattering degree of interest. After returning from a visit to examine a collection of skulls from New Guinea and the Torres Strait Islands in the Royal College of Surgeons, London, Virchow enthused:

> I can confirm … that all the Papuan skulls existing in Europe and America, taken together, hardly approach in number the skulls which Hr. Meyer now possesses. We may therefore cherish the hope that it will at last be possible to obtain a secure anatomical basis for the evaluation of this race.

Well aware that the skulls would prove as valuable to his budding career as they were to the scientific interests of his patron, Meyer was careful to clarify that they were not destined to augment the holdings of the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie. He acknowledged that his collection ‘would be most comprehensively utilised in [Virchow’s] hands’, but declared that he could not ‘deny’ himself ‘the opportunity to make it known’ personally, adding that he hoped to ‘be so fortunate as to be able to carry out [his] investigations under [Virchow’s] eyes and thereby to partake of [his] advice’. This conciliatory wish, however, was not to be realised: in 1874, only a year after his return, Meyer was appointed Director of the Museum in Dresden and took his skulls with him.

55 Virchow, ‘Papua-Schädel von Darnley Island’, 175.
56 Letter from A. B. Meyer to Rudolf Virchow, 22 October 1873, NL Virchow, Nr. 1429, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften. These lines were omitted from the published version (Meyer, ‘Über die Papua’s und Neu-Guinea’, 306-9).

214
‘Skulls from the East Indian Archipelago’: Provenance and purity

Between 1875 and 1878, Meyer published an article in three instalments on his Papuan skulls in the Museum’s in-house journal *Mittheilungen des königlichen zoologischen Museums zu Dresden* under the title ‘Über hundert fünf und dreissig Papúa-Schädel von Neu-Guinea und der Insel Mysore (Geelvinksbai)’ (‘On one hundred and thirty-five Papuan skulls from New Guinea and the Island of Mysore (Geelvink Bay)’). This article represents his most protracted contribution to the discipline of craniology and will be discussed in detail in subsequent sections of this chapter. Meyer’s first craniological publication after his return from New Guinea, however, was an article entitled ‘Einige Bemerkungen über den Werth, welche im Allgemeinen den Angaben in Betreff der Herkunft menschlicher Schädel aus dem ostindischen Archipel beizumessen ist’ (‘Some remarks on the value which in general is to be attributed to statements relating to the provenance of human skulls from the East Indian Archipelago’, 1874).57 This article did not mention Meyer’s own collection of skulls explicitly, yet his remarks served to enhance its scientific value by emphasizing the inadequate or incorrect provenances assigned to skulls from maritime Southeast Asia in existing European collections and the errors such skulls could engender in the works of unwary scholars. Although the previous sections of this chapter have demonstrated the significance of *quantity* for collectors of human crania, the *quality* of cranial specimens was equally important, particularly the accuracy with which their geographical and ethnic origins could be identified. This ‘authenticity of provenance’, Dirk Spenneman notes, was considered ‘crucial’ if the crania in question were to contribute to ‘the debate on human evolution and the nature of the perceived differential development status of human races’.58

Meyer’s article identified two separate issues in regard to cranial provenance. The first related to errors, either unintentional or deliberate, in identifying the skulls’ place of origin. Most skulls from the East Indian Archipelago reached Europe via Holland and were brought back by ‘returning officials, traders, soldiers, sailors and the like’, very few of whom were ‘particular’ in designating their trophies’ provenance. Those who

---


had 'received a direct commission' or were fulfilling 'the request of a savant', Meyer asserted with touching confidence, 'naturally' brought back with them what their client had requested; but the majority of such skulls found their way into the possession of dealers, most of whom were only interested in selling them 'as well as possible' and would not scruple to forge provenances to achieve their purpose. A colleague in Leiden, Meyer continued, having seen 'with [his] own eyes' the former curator of the anatomical cabinet '[writing] the word “Russus” on the skull of a genuine inhabitant of Leiden' in order to obtain a higher price for it, had 'become somewhat sceptical in the matter of labels'. Such considerations reduced 'the value of statements regarding the origin[s] of East Indian [Archipelago] skulls almost to nil' and rendered such specimens, whether held by museums or contained in private collections, 'almost worthless as race skulls'. Meyer was not the only collector to acknowledge these difficulties; almost a decade later, Finsch wrote to warn the members of the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie against relying upon the 'ethnological identification' of crania arriving in Europe from Batavia. The 'flourishing' trade in skulls there, most of which were 'unearthed from old churchyards' or sourced from hospitals, had already caused 'hopeless confusion', and Finsch's own observations of the extent to which hospital corpses were 'mixed up' had convinced him that all skulls originating from this source were 'worthless'.

Meyer's second caveat was both more complex and more nebulous. It related specifically to the requirements of racial science (Rassenlehre) and the need to identify and select racially 'pure' crania. Although it was crucial that specimens intended for use as 'race skulls' be selected 'according to a strictly scientific method' and that their provenance be confirmed with absolute certainty, preferably by 'documentary evidence', Meyer considered it still more important that studies in racial science be based only on 'pure race skulls' rather than 'hybrid forms'. Such skulls should 'have belonged, with a probability bordering on certainty, to that particular tribe or race whose name they bear', unless one had access to a collection 'so extensive' that its average could not be significantly affected by individual misattributions. At the time of

60 Meyer, 'Einige Bemerkungen über den Werth ...', 238.
63 Meyer, 'Einige Bemerkungen über den Werth ...', 236, 238.
writing, however, students of maritime Southeast Asian craniology had not been blessed with such an embarrassment of riches. Even ‘with the best will in the world’, it was often impossible to determine with precision a skull’s provenance, but ‘wise selection’, ‘close knowledge and consideration of the local conditions’ and constant scrutiny of the reliability of one’s sources could help ensure that the material selected would be usable for racial science.\textsuperscript{64}

Meyer also decried the practice of describing skulls by their place of origin, for example, ‘Menado-skull’ or ‘Manila-skull’. He accused its perpetrators of writing under the ‘delusion’ that they were offering ‘something that distinguishes these particular skulls from those with other names’, or even that the skulls in question were necessarily ‘representative of a tribe, a people, a race’.\textsuperscript{65} Not so, argued Meyer: in a settlement like Menado (Manado, North Sulawesi), ‘a great number of different peoples and races’, both residents and visitors, mingled together and produced ‘descendants’ who were then classed anthropologically as ‘Menadorese’, though their ancestors could include ‘Javanese, Ternateese, Tidorese, Buginese, Sangirese, Chinese, Arabs, Europeans and many others’. Similarly, a ‘Manila-skull’ could be the product of a centuries-old ‘mishmash’ of ‘Tagals, Visayans, Chinese, Spaniards, Englishmen, Americans [and] Germans’. Such classifications were ‘just as absurd’ as the idea of ‘a Vienna-, Berlin- or London-skull’ and were ‘completely unusable’ for purposes of racial science.\textsuperscript{66}

Uncertainties in regard to cranial provenance concerned both collectors in the field and savants in the metropoles. These concerns were not limited to students of physical anthropology; inaccuracies could mar even non-biological investigations. For example, on the basis of three skulls held by the Wiesbaden Museum, all with their teeth filed to a point and marked ‘Madura’ (Madura Island, East Java Province), ‘Menado’ and ‘Macassar’ (Makassar, South Sulawesi) respectively, Virchow had concluded ‘that the custom of filing down the teeth laterally is prevalent across a large area in the Malay Archipelago and is by no means a peculiarity of the black tribes’.\textsuperscript{67} Given the evidence available, Meyer added, ‘this distinguished researcher’ could have reached no other conclusion. However, Virchow’s conclusion assumed that the three skulls had actually originated from the locations specified and had also ‘belonged to individuals who, in

\textsuperscript{64} Meyer, ‘Einige Bemerkungen über den Werth ...’, 236.
\textsuperscript{65} Meyer, ‘Einige Bemerkungen über den Werth ...’, 235.
\textsuperscript{67} Meyer, ‘Einige Bemerkungen über den Werth ...’, 241.
common with their forebears’, had been ‘born in these three places’. It was ‘far more likely’, suggested Meyer, that the skulls’ exotic provenances had been bestowed upon them by an unscrupulous European dealer and that they thus served only to ‘mislead’ researchers ‘less familiar with local circumstances’.68

Emphasizing these issues served to enhance the value of Meyer’s own collections. His skulls represented not only quantity but quality; given the prevailing lack of certainty that ‘all the skulls identified in our museums with the label “New Guinea” ... really originate from there’, Meyer’s ‘craniological collections’ could claim ‘all the more significance’.69 His letters to Virchow indicate that he was well aware of the latter’s desire for certainty of provenance and emphasized the value of his own collections of crania in this respect, even to the extent of casting doubt on other collectors’ contributions. For example, he warned Virchow not to ‘give credit implicitly’ to Miklouho-Maclay’s claim that the two skulls from Astrolabe Bay supplied by the officers of the Vitiæz ‘originated from the “Maclay Coast”’. Although Astrolabe Bay was not so large as to make a more specific designation of provenance necessary, it was by no means certain that ‘these two skulls really originate[d] from the area which is called “Maclay Coast”’; the officers of the Vitiæz had landed, during their surveying activities, at sites that Miklouho-Maclay had ‘never reached’. Meyer added that he was ‘in correspondence’ with both the ship’s Commandant and one of the officers and would be willing to request from them further information on the skulls’ provenance if Virchow considered the matter important.70 Although Meyer framed the issue as relating to the accuracy of scientific data, it is evident that he was simultaneously endeavouring to establish himself as a reliable source of such data, both by casting doubt on competing collectors and by emphasizing his own connections with others considered reliable sources of information.

‘A pure Papuan population’: The credentials of Meyer’s crania

These strictures on the importance of accurate provenance and the worthlessness of hybrid skulls made it necessary for Meyer to establish the authenticity and purity – the scientific credentials – of his own collection of crania. Before commencing his explanations of the measurements made, therefore, he prefaced the first instalment of

70 Letter from A. B. Meyer to Rudolf Virchow, 6 December 1873, NL Virchow, Nr. 1429, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.
‘On one hundred and thirty-five Papuan skulls’ with an extended declaration of the reasons for his conviction that they derived from representatives of ‘a pure and unmixed Papuan race’, along with a discussion of the possibility that any of the skulls could have belonged either to ‘a race which [had] originated from an intermixture between Papuans and Malays’ or ‘even to pure Malays’.71 His conclusions on these points were based on a combination of his own observations, his knowledge of the region’s history and his understandings of Papuan cultural practices, including funeral rites, ancestor worship and head-hunting.

Meyer commenced by stating where he had obtained the skulls. Of a total of 135 specimens, he had acquired 112 in ‘the large Papuan settlement Kordo on the island [of] Mysore [Biak-Supiori], that elongated island in the Geelvink Bay which protects it to the north from ... the billows of the open ocean’, and the remaining 23 in ‘a small settlement by the name of Rubi and its vicinity, at the southern tip of Geelvink Bay’. These two locations, he noted, differed in their historical contacts with the Malay world: while Kordo had been ‘visited [on a] yearly [basis] by Malay traders’ for ‘a considerable time’, such traders had apparently not penetrated ‘as far south as Rubi’, or else their visits had been of so ‘temporary’ a nature as not to leave any ‘news’ of their presence. Meyer’s use of the word **Kunde**, ‘news’ or ‘tidings’, in this context suggests that he had attempted to obtain information on possible previous visits by Malay traders from the inhabitants of Rubi themselves.72

Malay settlements, Meyer declared, did not exist in either Kordo or Rubi. Rather, both locations were inhabited by ‘a pure Papuan population’, similar to that described in his ‘Anthropologische Mittheilungen’ (see Chapter One).73 Although he did not claim to know where the Kordo and Rubi Papuans had originated and when (or indeed whether) they had migrated to their current places of abode, Meyer considered these questions irrelevant: their ‘external physical habitus’ alone was sufficient evidence – ‘perhaps the only proof, but [a] perfectly well-founded [one]’ – that they belonged to ‘a race’ which stood ‘in emphatic contrast’ to that of the Malays and had as much ‘right’ to ‘the designation of “unmixed Papuans”’ as ‘any other [race] anywhere in New Guinea or the neighbouring islands, where unmixed Papuans live’.74 In contrast, the inhabitants of

---

Waigeo and 'the smaller Papuan islands more towards the west' were 'apparent from the first glance' as 'an indubitable hybrid race [Mischrace] between Malays and Papuans'. As discussed in Chapter One, Meyer's considerations of the 'external physical habitus' of the Papuans he had encountered had led him, in his 'Anthropologische Mittheilungen', primarily to negative conclusions: Papuan 'body size' and 'skin colour' both varied 'within a considerable range', while their 'physiognomy' was polymorphic to such a degree that its 'characteristics' could not be summarised 'in a few words'. Evidently, however, he did not consider these conclusions to be at odds with his assertion that the 'external physical habitus' of the Rubi and Kordo Papuans contrasted 'emphatic[ally]' with that of 'the Malays', or with the further implication that 'pure' and 'mixed' races could be distinguished simply by seeing them.

It is worth digressing briefly at this point to note that Finsch made similar claims in an article entitled 'Ueber weisse Papuas' ('On white Papuans', 1883), in which he described several 'natives with a skin colour as light as that of Europeans' whom he had encountered 'on the south-east coast of New Guinea'. Although Finsch claimed that a 'commixture with white blood in the case of any of these individuals [could] be only a remote possibility', his reasons for this claim were not clearly explained and appeared to rest essentially on the validity of his own observations. Thus, he claimed to have met 'only one hybrid offspring [Mischling] from a Papuan mother and a white father ... who, like all hybrids of whites and coloureds, could immediately be recognised as such'. In contrast, the 'blonde, straight hair' of the 'white Papuans' he had encountered had 'nothing to do with a putative intermixture with whites, as such hair is found now and then amongst pure, dark Papuans in New Guinea'. The 'physiognomy' of one such white Papuan, a man named Kwarinam from 'the fishing village [of] Hula in Hood Bay', was described as 'completely European', even though there was 'no question of any admixture of blood'. Finsch also stated that he had initially believed a 'Maori woman ... in the retinue of King Tawihao [Tāwhiao] in Waikato', the only 'other case of albinism' he had observed 'in the South Seas', to be 'a

---

76 Meyer, 'Anthropologische Mittheilungen', 110.
78 Finsch, 'Ueber weisse Papuas', 205.
79 Finsch, 'Ueber weisse Papuas', 205.
80 Finsch, 'Ueber weisse Papuas', 205.
81 Finsch, 'Ueber weisse Papuas', 206.
European woman, but found, and the information I gathered confirmed this, that she was a full-blood Maori'. While Finsch, unlike Meyer, was not invariably confident in his ability to identify ‘pure’ and ‘mixed’ races by sight, as Chapter Two has demonstrated, the problematic and essentially circular logic of racial purity informed both men’s writings.

Having established the racial purity of the Papuans from whose communities he had obtained skulls, and hoping that he had thereby ‘invalidate[d] [those] objections which could be made, and which ... certainly would have been made, if they had not been dealt with from the outset’, Meyer proceeded to discuss the racial purity of the skulls themselves. He believed that those skulls sourced from ‘the graves of the inhabitants’ were without doubt ‘pure Papuan skulls’; no Malays had reached Rubi, and the possibility that ‘an aberrant Malay ... might have settled’ in Kordo, ‘lived on peaceful terms with the Papuans, died a peaceful death and been buried like a Papuan’ was ‘unlikely to the highest degree’, particularly since the population of Kordo was not yet on such friendly terms with the Malays as the inhabitants of the Doreh area and ‘would hardly tolerate an intruder of this kind’.

Not all of Meyer’s skulls, however, came from local graves; some were ‘the skulls of enemies, captured by the inhabitants and kept as trophies, hung up in the[ir] huts’. In order to vouch for the racial purity of these particular skulls, it was necessary for Meyer to explain who ‘the enemies of these Papuans’ were. Predominantly, he claimed, these were ‘also Papuans’, both ‘the mountain-dwellers, with whom the coast-dwellers live in [a state of] constant feud’, and neighbouring coastal tribes. His own observations supplied sufficient proof of the ‘perpetual [state of] war’ existing amongst ‘the Papuans occupying this island [Biak-Supiori]’: in order to protect themselves from attacks from the mountain-dwellers, the inhabitants of Kordo had surrounded their village with ‘pointed [pieces of] bamboo, about a foot long, stuck into the earth’, to such an extent that two-thirds of Meyer’s Malay hunters, who went barefoot, had been ‘laid low with foot wounds’ within a few days. Even Meyer, with his ‘sturdy European

---

shoes’, found the area ‘too dangerous to roam around’. Although Meyer did not identify the source of his information, it is certainly conceivable that he had obtained, or believed that he had obtained, this explanation of the bamboo spikes from local Papuans. He added that the Papuans’ desire to obtain trophy skulls for their huts was ‘a well-known fact’ and that the practice of head-hunting was ‘prevalent across large areas of the East Indian Archipelago’.

Given that the enemies of the Kordo Papuans were predominantly other Papuans, Meyer continued, it was reasonable to conclude that the majority of the skulls in his collection which had been obtained as trophies would also be ‘pure Papuan skulls’. Even the ‘most distant military expeditions which could be undertaken at sea from Kordo and Rubi’ would not extend ‘beyond the region of the pure Papuans’; consequently, Malay skulls could only have reached either location as trophies via Malay ‘trading expeditions’ whose members had then been ‘murdered’ by locals. On this point Meyer seems to have grossly underestimated Papuan seafaring capacities, at least with reference to Kordo. C. L. M. Penders notes that a ‘two-way traffic of pirates and traders between the Moluccas and the northern shores of western New Guinea’ had existed since the 15th century at least, that the ‘inhabitants of the Raja Empat [sic] … and Schouten Islands’, including Biak, had ‘built up a particularly fearsome reputation in this context’, and that the ‘westward Numfoor-Biak settlements are known to have regularly conducted raids deep into the Moluccans [sic] and far beyond, including Timor, Gorontalo, Salayar Island (off south Sulawesi), and even east Java’. Wichmann’s Entdeckungsgeschichte likewise mentions several references to Papuan pirates in texts predating Meyer’s voyage.

Although Meyer might not have been aware of the potential for Papuan piracy, he certainly had firsthand knowledge of their oarsmanship; this is evidenced by his description of an expedition up the Jarotwar River, cited in Chapter One. He also emphasised the ‘relative spatial proximity’ of New Guinea and the Philippines (a

---

85 Meyer, ‘Ueber hundert fünf und dreissig Papúa-Schädel’, I, 62; see also idem, Auszüge, 5; idem, Bericht über eine Reise nach Neu-Guinea, 14.
89 Wichmann, Entdeckungsgeschichte, I, 279, 284, 308; II, 76-7.
location more distant than, for example, Ternate in the Moluccas, where Meyer had hired a number of crew members he described as ‘Malay’) in a letter to Virchow on the connections between Negritos and Papuans, published in the Zeitschrift für Ethnologie in 1875.\textsuperscript{90} Meyer described ‘two circumstances’ that had convinced him of this connection: his encounter with the occupants of ‘a small rowing boat’ which had reached New Guinea after being carried off course from the Sangi Islands in northern Celebes, and reports of a Ternatean trading expedition which had been ‘driven (in the absence of a storm)’ from Jobi ‘as far as Mindanao’ (Philippines) and from there had eventually returned to Ternate via Makassar.\textsuperscript{91} The fact that Meyer emphasized these events when hypothesizing a relationship between Negritos and Papuans, but dismissed them from his considerations of the ways in which Malay skulls could potentially have entered New Guinea, suggests that he was not immune to the temptation to select those facts which best supported his argument.

Having asserted that Malay skulls could have reached New Guinea only via trading expeditions, Meyer stated that in Rubi this possibility did not apply, since no trading expeditions had come so far south into Geelvink Bay. His confidence in making such a sweeping statement is astonishing, taking into account the fact that Europeans entering the region more than four centuries earlier had benefited from Malay knowledge of the Papuan territories to the east (see Introduction), not to mention the possibility of earlier Malay-Papuan contacts over many centuries. Amongst the Kordo crania, however, Meyer acknowledged that the presence of Malay skulls was at least conceivable, ‘for the Malays sometimes lose their lives on these trading expeditions’. Although both hearsay and Meyer’s own experience suggested that the inhabitants of Jobi were particularly ‘notorious in this respect’ and that the population of Kordo was ‘far less belligerent and bold’, ‘battles’ between Malay traders and local Papuans also occurred in Kordo, ‘mostly in consequences of differences during slave trading’. Again, Meyer considered his own experience – the reluctance of Kordo’s inhabitants to let him and his companions land – ‘the most speaking proof’ of this.\textsuperscript{92}

Despite these admissions, Meyer considered it highly unlikely that any of the 112 skulls he had obtained from Kordo had belonged to Malays. Those skulls removed from graves had belonged to the relatives of local Papuans; as for those kept as trophies, he

\textsuperscript{90} Meyer, ‘Über die Beziehung zwischen Negritos und Papua’, 47.
\textsuperscript{91} Meyer, ‘Über die Beziehung zwischen Negritos und Papua’, 47-8.
\textsuperscript{92} Meyer, ‘Über hundert fünf und dreissig Papua-Schädel’, I, 63.
had enough respect for the Kordo Papuans' trading abilities to believe that they would certainly not have brought him 'the skull trophies of Malays, so valuable to them, as long as there were any others to sell', nor that they would have offered him a Malay skull without first 'making [him] aware of the value of the same and without demanding far more for it than for skulls of members of their own race'. 93 Although Meyer's analysis of Papuan behaviour and motives in this case clearly relied on Eurocentric understandings of property and racial difference, he nevertheless credited the inhabitants of Kordo with considerable agency in the selection and provision of particular skulls.

The main purpose of Meyer's lengthy discussion, however, was not to highlight the agency of the Papuans during these transactions, but to neutralise 'from the outset' any suggestion that his 135 skulls might not be 'suitable for determining the type of the Papuan race skull'. By describing the circumstances of his acquisition of this 'material' as extensively as possible, Meyer hoped to remove any doubts which might arise amongst those of his readers unfamiliar with the 'locality and circumstances' of its collection, and to 'impose upon every man' a 'conviction of [its] value' for scientific study. 94 Similar intentions, I suggest, underlay earlier claims made in his 'Anthropologische Mitteilungen' regarding the likelihood of '[i]ntermixtures' between Papuans and Malays. These, he declared, were 'completely out of the question' in the areas he had visited: Malay settlements did not exist and had never existed, and the yearly contacts with 'Malays who conduct trade in New Guinea' could not have 'influence[d] the type of the [Papuan] race in the slightest'. Firstly, only 'very few Malays' came into question relative to 'the entire [Papuan] population'; secondly, only 'an exceptionally small fraction of Papuans' came into contact with these Malays; thirdly, this 'contact' was 'a very superficial one', 'chastity' being 'very strictly observed amongst the Papuans'; and finally, even allowing for the possibility of a few isolated cases of 'sexual intermixture', any such influence would be 'very quickly obliterated by further intermixture of the progeny with pure Papuans'. 95

'A thoroughly preliminary treatment': Quantification and tabulation

Having laid the groundwork of his craniological investigations, Meyer proceeded to present his findings. The first instalment of 'Über hundert fünf und dreissig Papúa-
Schädel included tabulated data containing 'over 4000 direct measurements and more than 1500 values obtained by calculation', representing the application of 43 separate categories or 'rubrics'. These included the capacity, greatest horizontal circumference, profile (facial) angle, length, breadth and height of each skull, as well as measurements of particular cranial elements (such as length and breadth of the foramen magnum, horizontal circumference of the frontal bone, height and breadth of the orbital cavity) and calculations derived from combinations of individual measurements (for example, the length-breadth, length-height, breadth-height and maximum-minimum breadth indices).

Figure 20: A. B. Meyer, 'Papúa-Schädel' (detail).

Lithograph. Photograph H. Howes.

A further column of 'Comments' detailed those peculiarities of each individual skull which Meyer considered necessary for a fuller understanding of particular measurements. The article also included three plates, each containing reproductions of five selected skulls. Moreover, each of these five skulls was depicted from five separate vantage points: in profile, en face, from the rear, from above and from below (Fig. 20). These depictions represented orthographic, true-to-scale projections obtained from a version of Lucae's dioptr, modified by the zoologist Johann Wilhelm Spengel (1852-1921), which Meyer then reduced in size with a pantograph.

---

100 A dioptr is '[a]n instrument for obtaining drawings of the skull by projections'; 'diopter, n.', *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, November 2010), online <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/53109?redirectedFrom=diopter#>, accessed 15 December 2010. Helmke Schierhorn describes Lucae's dioptr as consisting of 'two observation frames of equal size, each equipped with an identical reticle [grid], which were mounted at a certain distance in front of the object [to be sketched] ... The corresponding part of the object was fixed above two axially located points situated vertically [with respect] to the image plane and [was then] drawn on a sheet of paper featuring a corresponding reticle. By means of this orthographic parallel projection it was possible to produce
Meyer described this mass of data as ‘a thoroughly preliminary treatment’ of the cranial material in question. He envisaged it as merely the precursor to a ‘major scientific work of travel’ which would include ‘specific description[s], discussion[s] and depiction[s] of each individual skull’, as well as ‘outlines of the original projection[s]’ of the skulls ‘in life-size’. The appearance of this major publication, however, still lay at some distance in the future, and Meyer, despite the distractions of his ‘manifold official duties’ as Director, had determined to make at least ‘the principal numerical values – the raw material’ available in published form, along with ‘brief remarks accompanying each skull’, some ‘more general conclusions’ and ‘figurative renditions of individual skulls’. He had been moved to do so, he claimed, partly because he felt that he had ‘no right to withhold from the public’ what was ‘perhaps the most important [material] yet available for the determination of the skull type of the genuine Papuan’, and partly in response to ‘the wish[es] of [his] colleagues, made known [to him] in the most diverse ways’. Meyer referred specifically to Girard de Riaile’s discussion of his ‘Anthropologische Mittheilungen’ in the Revue d’Anthropologie (see Chapter One); this had been written, he felt, ‘in a somewhat petulant tone’, quite ‘without cause’, and Girard de Riaile had attempted to ‘set himself up as Quatrefages’ defender, without being equipped with sufficient technical knowledge to discuss the topic critically’.

The second instalment of ‘Über hundert fünf und dreissig Papúa-Schädel’ appeared in 1876, accompanied by an article on Meyer’s collection of Papuan jawbones by E. Tüngel, a medical doctor based in Hamburg who had also assisted in measuring the skulls. Tüngel had previously published an article on Meyer’s miscellaneous assortment of 134 Papuan skeletal bones (predominantly leg and arm bones and ribs); this had appeared alongside the first instalment of ‘Über hundert fünf und dreissig Papúa-Schädel’, together with a discussion of Meyer’s collection of Papuan pelvic


bones by F. Winckel, Director of the Royal Maternity Hospital in Dresden. Although a detailed discussion of Tüngel’s and Winckel’s contributions to Papuan physical anthropology lies outside the scope of this chapter, it is worth noting that both authors were prepared to draw broader conclusions from their data than Meyer was from his. Winckel, for example, concluded that ‘the Papuans appear to be somewhat superior to the Javanese women [measured by Zaaijer] with regard to the height of the ilium’, that ‘the pelvises of the Papuans, in particular the women, have the same fine and delicate structure as those of the Javanese women’ and that ‘the surface [area] of their ilia is less than [it is] amongst European women’s pelvises’.

Tüngel claimed that the Papuan femora he had examined had ‘in general a more slender character, compared with the European [ones]’, and were ‘smaller and lighter in all dimensions’, while a ‘transitional form’ between Papuan and European tibias could be found in ‘the lower leg bones of the Javanese’. His discussion of Papuan jaws and mandibular joints was still more positive in its conclusions; in response to a recently-published consideration of nine Papuan skulls by Virchow, Tüngel declared that the ‘form of the surface of the mandibular joint at the temporal bone, described by Virchow as peculiar to the Papuans’, was ‘only present in a small number’ of the skulls he had examined, that this supposed peculiarity ‘also appear[ed] more or less frequently in skulls of other tribes’ and consequently was ‘not an attribute of lower races’, and that the Papuan mandibular joint did not ‘differ from that of other tribes’ in its ‘form’, but only ‘by a more pronounced formation of all parts in individual cases’. Although the examples of jawbones available to him were ‘exceptionally variable in [their] external habitus’, their ‘forms and masses in general’ did not by any means ‘yield support’ for the ‘assumption’ that the Papuans ought to be relegated to ‘a low position in the series of peoples’, since ‘pithecoid characteristics’ were ‘almost completely absent’. In contrast to these bold statements, Meyer himself drew virtually no general or comparative conclusions from his extensive series of cranial measurements, as the following sections discuss.

---


108 Presumably a reference to T. [Teunis] Zaaijer, Untersuchungen über die Form des Beckens javanischer Frauen (Haarlem: de erven Loosjes, 1866).

109 Winckel, ‘Einiges über ... die Becken der Papúa’s’, 88.


111 Tüngel, ‘Über das Kiefergelenk ... der Papúa’s’, 205, 212.

112 Tüngel, ‘Über das Kiefergelenk ... der Papúa’s’, 216.
Meyer’s second instalment explained that the previous instalment had listed the skulls according to their catalogue numbers, which in turn were dependent on where and when he had acquired them. This was deliberate: although he could, ‘with ease’, have devised any number of alternative ‘[r]ational arrangements’ for the skulls, their optimal arrangement would vary depending on ‘the point of view and opinions of the investigator’ and the questions their investigations were designed to answer. He believed, therefore, that it would be preferable to supply the data in the form of a ‘raw material’ which, ‘assembled without a preconceived opinion’, would allow ‘every man … to group it as he wishes’ and could function as ‘the starting point for all further considerations’.113 This discourse of objectivity and factuality, which remained central both to Meyer’s own craniological studies and to his criticisms of others’ works, is discussed in more detail below. Meyer added, however, that the ‘raw material’ he had assembled ‘required a certain supplementation, inspection and arrangement’ in order to facilitate such ‘further considerations’. The results of these explanatory and sorting processes dominated the second instalment. Nevertheless, he again cautioned that these communications were ‘by no means exhaustive’ and that he hoped to supply ‘further explanations, critical investigations and general consequences, with [due] consideration of the literary material’, at a later stage.114

Sexing skulls, criminalizing crania: The subjectivity of statistical analysis

Meyer’s arrangement of this cranial ‘raw material’ commenced by listing, for each skull, the probable gender and age of the individual to whom it had belonged, its weight, and its ‘putative storage place’ before he had acquired it.115 Although Meyer admitted that the gender of a skull could not always be identified with absolute certainty, he did not believe that ‘an absolutely certain identification’ was never possible and that one could at most speak of ‘probability’.116 ‘[D]ifferences between the sexes’, he suggested, were ‘retained amongst more savage peoples’ in a ‘more strongly differentiated’ form ‘than [they are], for example, amongst us’.117 His own observations indicated that ‘the occupations of both sexes remain[ed] better separated’ amongst the Papuans and that although Papuan women also worked, sometimes ‘a great deal’, their work was ‘not heavy, that is, not such as would imprint on them, over the

course of time, a masculine type’. These descriptions of Papuan gender roles are not entirely consistent with the claim, in Meyer’s ‘Anthropologische Mittheilungen’, that Papuan women displayed great stamina ‘in [both] walking and mountain-climbing, [despite being] weighed down with heavy loads, with which the men invariably encumber them’.

In contrast to ‘the women of our working class’, Meyer continued, he had ‘never seen robust ... or even mannish women [Mann-Weiber] in New Guinea’ and suspected that such women would also be ‘rare amongst the Malay peoples’ he had visited. Similarly, Papuan men ‘always’ dedicated themselves to ‘the more laborious tasks’, including ‘so-called military expeditions’, fishing, hunting, tree-felling and house-building; though they ‘never’ worked with such exertion as ‘our tradesmen’, they invariably worked ‘harder than the women’. (Why such putative sexual divisions of labour should influence the shape of the head is something that Meyer did not discuss.) No Papuan man, Meyer claimed, could exhibit the ‘feminine type’ supposedly ‘adopted[ed]’ and subsequently ‘bequeath[ed]’ by those European men who, by substituting ‘sedentary’ or intellectual occupations for hard physical work, ‘further blurred the difference’ between male and female. In ‘a series of Papuan skulls such as the one at hand’, then, one might ‘at most’ confuse the skull of ‘a younger male for [that of] a female’, but it would ‘hardly ever’ be possible to ‘take a female skull for a male one’. Although Meyer did not include any explicitly derogatory remarks about feminine men or masculine women in this discussion, his normative delineation of socially acceptable gender roles and their connection with a preferred ‘type’ or physiology indicate the extent to which culturally-conditioned understandings could influence supposedly objective scientific investigations.

The normative assumptions underlying Meyer’s analyses of cranial gender become still more evident in a lengthy footnote to page 167. Here Meyer explained that, in order to obtain an approximate idea of the percentage by which ‘one could perhaps err in ... an estimation of this sort’, he and his friend Dr. Birch-Hirschfeld, Prosector at the Dresden Municipal Hospital, had examined ‘117 criminals’ skulls’ from the Museum’s

---

collection,\textsuperscript{123} ‘determined the sex of each’ and recorded their ‘conjecture[s]’. They then checked these conjectures against documentary records of the skulls’ actual sex:

The result of this procedure was, that we abstained from a decision for 16 of the 117 skulls, described the sex of seven as “probably male”, which proved to be correct, described one as “probably female”, which was, however, male, were mistaken twice in the case of the remaining 14 women ... [and] seven times in the case of the 79 men, [and] thus determined [the sex] incorrectly nine times from a total of 93 skulls, that is, approximately 10 per cent.\textsuperscript{124}

Meyer explained, however, that he and Birch-Hirschfeld had ‘proceeded summarily, made [their] decisions ... very quickly’, and had ‘not abstained’ from verdicts which, in the absence of a similar control, they would have hesitated to make for Papuan skulls. Furthermore, it should not be overlooked that ‘these criminals’, most of whom had ‘spent a very large part of their lives in jail’, had been unable to ‘develop unimpeded ... with respect to sexual characteristics’. Amongst ‘the seven men whom we had taken for women’, he suggested, were some ‘who might have acquired a feminine type’ in the same way as he had previously outlined for sedentary men. As for ‘the two Mannweiber amongst the 14 women’, these had perhaps been ‘preconceived by nature with a habitus which steered them involuntarily into their criminal courses’. The skulls in question, Meyer concluded, were thus ‘to some extent pathological skulls’.\textsuperscript{125}

Given that the Museum’s collection of criminal skulls included specimens listed as ‘murderers’, ‘thieves’, ‘arsonists’, ‘suicides’, ‘fornicators’, ‘whores’ and ‘idiots’, along with others accused of ‘nymphomania’, ‘hysteria’, ‘onanism’ and ‘religious mania’, it is clear that their categorisation as ‘pathological’ reflected equally culturally-bound views


of what constituted normal, healthy, acceptable behaviour.\textsuperscript{126} While this ‘secular rationalism’, Charles E. Rosenberg suggests, freed its subjects from ‘a measure of personal guilt’ by reinterpreting behaviours previously considered morally reprehensible as ‘the product of hereditary endowment or disease process[es]’, it simultaneously functioned as ‘a powerful mediator of dominant social, political and moral values’, policing the boundaries of class and gender categories and enforcing socially acceptable behaviour.

Meyer’s description of these criminal skulls as somehow ‘pathological’ has numerous ramifications for such broader issues as the social definition of deviance, the mutual imbrication of race and gender constructions, and the biologisation of social phenomena, which I can touch on only fleetingly here.\textsuperscript{127} On the one hand, Meyer’s correlation of criminality and pathology echoes Rosenberg’s description of a nineteenth-century ‘expansion of disease boundaries so as to include patterns of behavior that might have been dismissed as perverse or criminal in earlier generations’, a ‘framing in medical terms of matters that had been previously construed as essentially moral’.\textsuperscript{128} On the other, it foreshadows that ‘critical reaction to the repressive norms of Imperial Germany’ during the 1880s which Paul Weindling understands as ‘a response to the crisis of industrialization as experienced by urban bourgeois elites’.\textsuperscript{129} Eugenics’ ‘alternative models for a rational and scientifically based society’, Weindling argues, attempted to conceptualise social problems such as venereal disease, vagrancy and alcoholism in biological terms rather than moral or political ones, to apply ‘the categories of hereditary biology … to everyday life’.\textsuperscript{130} Either way, it is evident that German physical anthropologists of the late nineteenth century had not ‘reject[ed] the fables of phrenology’ as conclusively and completely as Waitz had optimistically

\textsuperscript{126} ‘Anthropologische Sammlung Inventar 1’, Katalograum, A. B. Meyer-Bau, Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden, 10-28 passim.
\textsuperscript{129} Weindling, \textit{Health, Race and German Politics}, 19.
\textsuperscript{130} Weindling, \textit{Health, Race and German Politics}, 19-20.
assumed, and that they had retained the tendency to assume that ‘strong connection’ between the form of the skull and the ‘psychic qualities of man’ which he had condemned as ‘obscure and unknown’.  

‘A material as normal as possible’: The production of craniological data

In addition to his extended discussion of cranial gender, Meyer further listed the skulls’ ‘probable age’; the weight of each skull, minus its lower jaw (if present), in grams; and the ‘putative storage place’ of each skull before he had acquired it, whether hut, grave, or open-air cemetery (Todtenfeld). Having explained these categories and summarised the information in tabular form, he then proceeded to demonstrate how one might ‘utilise’ it. To begin with, he divided the skulls, identified by their catalogue number, by gender. Of the specimens, 57 were identified as male, 33 as female, and the remaining 45 as more or less ‘doubtful’. Only those skulls whose gender was not in doubt, Meyer declared, could be used ‘to obtain reliable conclusions with respect to the typical Papuan skull’; he could perhaps have included ‘a considerable percentage’ of the remaining skulls as being reasonably ‘well definable’, but had preferred ‘to stand on firm ground’ and ‘operate with a smaller, albeit still considerable quantity’ of specimens than to use ‘a larger and less reliable’ sample. The next step was to divide the skulls by age; this left only 117 skulls available for ‘further operations with regard to the determination of the typical skull form’, since those belonging to youths, children, or individuals of uncertain age could not be included. Meyer then grouped the skulls according to weight, at first in total, then omitting the ‘damaged’, ‘young’ and ‘children’s’ skulls. Separated by sex, the results showed ‘a significant plus amongst the men, amongst whom most skulls weigh between 600 and 800 grams ... while amongst the women most [skulls] vary between 500 and 600 [grams]’. A further breakdown of skull weight according to both gender and storage location produced additional tables and confirmed the overall result of ‘a plus amongst the men’.

The statement that the skulls of Papuan men were, on average, larger than those of Papuan women, though not particularly revelatory, represented essentially Meyer’s sole conclusion from a weighty seven pages of number-crunching. He then turned to the

---

131 Waitz, Anthropologie der Naturvölker, I, 266-7.
possibility of ‘further classifications’. If results ‘as pure as possible’ were to obtained, it would be necessary to ‘put aside’ not only those skulls already excluded as being of indeterminate age or gender, but also any specimens which could be considered ‘pathologically suspect’. This included ‘artificially deformed’ skulls, those displaying ‘premature synostosis’ (fusion of the sutures) and those which appeared ‘conspicuously asymmetrical’. Further complications ensued with respect to the final category, given that Meyer deemed ‘a large proportion’, perhaps as much as 40 per cent, of his 135 skulls ‘asymmetrical’, but promptly discounted most of these as being ‘asymmetries which fall absolutely within the realm of normal development’. A total of 49 skulls, he concluded, were to be eliminated from further investigations on account of ‘doubtful gender determination’, ‘insufficient age’, and the presence of ‘defects’, ‘pathological manifestations’ or ‘other inadequacies’. This process of culling left 54 male and 32 female skulls which Meyer judged to represent ‘a material as normal as possible’, a ‘reliable basis for further considerations’.

The remainder of the second instalment was occupied predominantly by tabulations of various measurements, performed first on all skulls, then on the 86 ‘normal’ specimens. Meyer contented himself largely with descriptive commentary and drew only a very few, mostly negative, conclusions. Thus, for example, over 50 per cent of the Papuan skulls were ‘afflicted with anomalies of the temporal region (speaking from the point of view of our own race)’. The presence of an abnormal epactal bone could not be used to draw ‘any conclusion of an impairment to the development of the brain’, since the formation in question appeared in only four skulls, coincidentally ‘precisely those ... with the largest and ... the smallest capacity’; and, although the presence of such an epactal bone ‘appear[ed] to indicate an absolute enlargement of the occipital plate’, at least in ‘the male skulls’, he did not believe that the material permitted ‘more general, stringent conclusions’. ‘[O]n the one hand’, a larger sample would be needed; ‘on the other, we are considering here developmental results ... produced by such complicated relationships of growth that every case ought rather to be considered separately’.

139 Janet Browne has described a comparably ‘intense preoccupation with figures’, ‘derisively called Tabellenstatistik’, in relation to nineteenth-century biography, arguing that the processes of counting and tabulating were perceived as a way of imposing order on the material at hand and signalling ‘that the natural historian was in control of his subject’. See Janet Browne, ‘A Science of Patterns’, in The Secular Ark: Studies in the History of Biogeography (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 73–7.
Meyer’s meticulous measurements, cautious conclusions, and extensive explanations of instruments used and procedures followed reflect a quite extraordinary commitment to professional transparency and an evident desire to make his work accessible to the wider scientific community. Nevertheless, the process of selection by which he reduced his original collection of 135 skulls to the most ‘normal’ and ‘reliable’ specimens illustrates the extent to which both individual priorities and socially-constructed understandings of normality could influence the material chosen for ‘objective’ craniometrical study.

The third instalment of ‘Über hundert fünf und dreissig Papúa-Schädel’ began by considering ‘whether the persistence of the two large sutures of the forehead and occiput could be considered as the expression of an ethnic contrast’, as Virchow had previously suggested.\textsuperscript{141} Meyer noted that ‘of 120 [adult] skulls, only three show[ed] a complete persistent frontal suture’, but added that he considered the 135 skulls available to him insufficient in number to determine the incidence of this phenomena ‘conclusively’ for ‘comparative craniological investigation[s]’.\textsuperscript{142} The following 22 pages contained yet more tabulated measurements. In conclusion, Meyer stated that he felt that his measurements had done justice to von Baer’s declaration, chosen as the motto for this series of publications, that the craniologist must ‘seek to establish the intermediate form, or the type, from many [skulls]’.\textsuperscript{143} He added ‘a word of justification’ for having published ‘so many figures’: he had not done so ‘out of love for [these kinds] of publications, which indeed are abominated – perhaps not always with reason – by many’, but rather ‘from the wish to make this material completely accessible to everyone for all time’. In a further justification of his methodology, he stated that he had therefore ‘first displayed the material raw, unprocessed’, by ‘list[ing] all measurements objectively in a random sequence’; he had then shown his reader the path he had followed ‘to determine the normal adult skulls, separated according to sex’, and only then had he commenced the ‘processing’ of this ‘raw material’. At every step, he asserted, his concern had been that every reader could ‘check how [he had] reached [his] results’.\textsuperscript{144} He added that he planned to ‘reserve the further discussion and evalution of the results communicated thus far’ for subsequent instalments, and closed


\textsuperscript{142} Meyer, ‘Über hundert fünf und dreissig Papúa-Schädel’, III, 386.

\textsuperscript{143} Meyer, ‘Über hundert fünf und dreissig Papúa-Schädel’, III, 409.

\textsuperscript{144} Meyer, ‘Über hundert fünf und dreissig Papúa-Schädel’, III, 409.
with a few paragraphs on the advantages and disadvantages of the various methods available for creating visual reproductions of crania.\textsuperscript{145}

\textit{‘On the ethnology of New Guinea’: National paradigms of knowledge}

Despite Meyer’s assurances, a fourth instalment of ‘Über hundert fünf und dreissig Papúa-Schädel’ did not eventuate, nor did the promised ‘extensive scientific work of travel’ make its appearance. Although this inconsistency can be attributed primarily to the all-consuming nature of Meyer’s duties as museum director, his doubts regarding the value of such publications might also have impinged. Between 1876 and 1880, however, evidence of ongoing rivalry, misunderstandings, and ill-feeling between Meyer and members of the Société d’Anthropologie de Paris, already apparent in Girard de Rialle’s criticisms of Meyer’s ‘Anthropologische Mittheilungen’, continued to accumulate sporadically in footnotes and small paragraphs of rectification. The \textit{Archiv für Anthropologie}, for example, reported that Hamy had called Meyer, at the International Geographical Congress in Paris, ‘a simple tourist’. No, Hamy had made no such statement; he would have considered such a statement foolish in the extreme. Well, then, Hamy had accused Meyer of ‘merg[ing] all the types in [New Guinea] into one single type, which he called Papou, but by admitting that some New Guineans were tall and others short, he had thereby recognised the existence of the Papou and of the Negrito’. Yes, Hamy admitted, he had contested Meyer’s theory of the unity of the Papuan race, because it did not appear to him to be compatible with his own observations from various anthropological museums; however, it had never been his intention to belittle Meyer’s scientific achievements. In fact, he, Hamy, had twice written to Meyer, hoping to obtain ‘valuable information’ and to receive permission to study Meyer’s craniological collections, ‘of whose importance he was convinced’; both letters had gone unanswered.\textsuperscript{146} Meyer retorted that he had never received the first letter, which had been addressed to Vienna; had answered the second, placing his entire collection at Hamy’s disposal; and had received a grateful reply. He did not wish it to be thought that he would deny, or had ever denied, the use of his material to anyone; indeed, he had had a notice to this effect printed in the Proceedings of the Société


d'Anthropologie, though the latter 'had taken account of [his] wishes only in the most unsatisfactory manner'.

Figure 21: Armand de Quatrefages and Ernest-Théodore Hamy, 'Pl. XIX: I - II Crâne de négrito de Rawak, III - IV Crâne de Papoua du Port Doréï (Nouvelle Guinée)' (left); 'Pl. XXIII: I - II Crâne d'Alfouro de la Nouvelle Guinée, III - IV Crâne d'un insulaire de Pyunipet (îles Carolines)' (right).


Quatrefages' and Hamy's *Crania Ethnica* (1882) continued this scholarly tit-for-tat. The authors, whose stated aim was 'to make known, with the greatest possible precision, the morphological characteristics of the skull of various ethnic groups', and to distinguish these groups by means of 'a classification founded solely on the characteristics of the skull [la tête osseuse]', defined the 'Négrito race, strictly speaking', as separate from the 'Négrito-Papou', 'Tasmanian', 'Papoua', and 'Australian' races. They described Meyer as a stubborn individual who had steadfastly 'refused to admit ... the coexistence in Oceania of two large groups of Negroes which almost all of his predecessors have distinguished'. 'In his eyes', they continued, 'the Blacks which we designate under the name of Négritos and those which

---

148 'Plate XIX: I – II Skull of Negrito from Rawak, III – IV Skull of Papuan from Port Doréï (New Guinea); 'Plate XXIII: I – II Skull of Alfuro from New Guinea, III – IV Skull of an islander from Pyunipet (Caroline Islands)', in Quatrefages and Hamy, *Crania Ethnica*, II, Planches XIX, XXIII.  
we call *Papous* are nothing but the varieties of a single race, within which he even includes the Australian populations.* Quatrefages and Hamy asserted that the ‘German savant’ was ‘no more troubled’ by the fact that ‘the skull types could be as different, one from the other, as [those] shown on Plates XVIII, XIX and XXIII of our Atlas’ (Fig. 21) than he was by ‘the widely differing external characteristics confirmed by all the voyager-naturalists and [even] by himself’. Contrary to their own analysis, which understood these contrasts as signalling separate racial categories, Meyer ‘wish[ed] to see’ in them nothing more than ‘variations which he compares to those of the Europeans, taken *en masse’*. The phrase ‘he does not wish to see [*il ne veut voir*]’ indicates that Quatrefages and Hamy believed that Meyer’s analysis represented the subjective product of preconceived ideas, not an alternative interpretation of the same data from a different methodological standpoint.*

Personal animosities also came into play: Meyer had used ‘the work of one of us’ as ‘an excuse … to attack, quite strongly, what he calls artificial divisions’.* This is presumably a reference to comments in Meyer’s ‘Anthropologische Mittheilungen’, mentioned already in Chapter One, which described Quatrefages’ definition of ‘true Papuans’ as an ‘arbitrary selection of one Papuan type as the typical form for the race’ and characterised him as an armchair anthropologist who believed that questions relating to the relatedness of the various Oceanic ‘black races’ could be decided ‘merely with a pair of callipers in the hand, or when the wider source of experience is derived only from books’.*

Although *Crania Ethnica* was first issued as a complete volume in 1882, successive sections had been published in ten instalments from 1873 onwards. The criticisms of Meyer included in the section on the *Négrito-Papou* race, which appeared in 1876, attracted a response in 1880, when a letter written by Meyer appeared in the *Bulletins* of the Société d’Anthropologie under the title ‘Sur l’ethnologie de la Nouvelle-Guinée’ (‘On the ethnology of New Guinea’).* It was read to the members of the Société by the physician-anthropologist Paul Topinard (1830-1911), who had visited Meyer in Dresden and returned with three casts of Papuan skulls from his series. Meyer’s letter explained that he had specifically chosen these skulls as being ‘three of the four …

---

150 Quatrefages and Hamy, *Crania Ethnica*, I, 205.  
151 Quatrefages and Hamy, *Crania Ethnica*, I, 205.  
152 Quatrefages and Hamy, *Crania Ethnica*, I, 205.  
which MM. de Quatrefages and Hamy, in their *Crania ethnica* ... have considered as belonging to the *Négrito-Papou race*. He included a summary of his measurements of the cephalic index, adding that he ‘would like very much to give French anthropologists the opportunity to examine for themselves at least the casts of those skulls which depart from the series, so that they would be better able to judge whether it is necessary for them to be so completely separated from the rest as [Quatrefages and Hamy] wish [them to be]’. Topinard, however, pointed out that neither Quatrefages nor Hamy had seen these skulls themselves; they had declared them to be evidence of ‘the extension of the Negrito race into New Guinea’ on the basis of Meyer’s published figures alone. Yet Meyer had measured the skulls using Lhering’s method (see Chapter Three) rather than the ‘ordinary method’ favoured by ‘the great majority [of craniologists] in France, in England, in Italy, in Russia [and] in Germany’. When Topinard remeasured the skulls in question according to this ‘ordinary method’, he found that it produced cephalic indices smaller by three to six units than those obtained via Lhering’s ‘unhappy method’. Consequently, of the three skulls thought by Quatrefages and Hamy to be brachycephalic (and thus of Negrito race), one was ‘in reality’ mesaticephalic and the other two dolichocephalic. Topinard concluded that ‘compar[ing] figures obtained by different methods’ constituted ‘the greatest danger in craniology’ and could result in ‘the most serious illusions’. It is difficult to imagine a more compelling example of the degree to which racial ‘realities’, and the knowledge which informed them, were in fact constructed, individually, culturally and technologically.

Although the impetus for Meyer’s letter was primarily craniological, he also dwelt at some length on the issues of scientific authority, ocular demonstration and the primacy of field experience. He raised these issues in response to the appearance of the first volume of *Les Polynésiens* (‘The Polynesians’, 1880), authored by Pierre-Adolphe Lesson, junior surgeon-naturalist on the *Astrolabe* (1826-29). Following Girard de Rialle, Lesson had criticised Meyer’s assertion ‘that the Arfakis do not differ constitutionally from the tribes of the coast’, suggesting that this conclusion simply reflected Meyer’s perception that ‘all the blacks, without exception, of New Guinea, of Malaysia, of the Philippines, etc.’, represented ‘nothing but the varieties of a single

---

Meyer, who read in Lesson’s criticisms the insinuation that his conclusions had been formed on the basis of ‘a preconceived opinion’ or by doing ‘violence to the facts’, responded by reproducing in French a passage from his letter to Virchow ‘concerning the connections between the Negritos of the Philippines and the Papuans of New Guinea’.\(^{159}\) Having related his meeting with Miklouho-Maclay in Tidore (see Chapter One) and their discussion of the physical similarities between the Papuans currently in view, those of Astrolabe Bay, and the Negritos of the Philippines, he declared: ‘It was, therefore, a current observation [une observation actuelle] which first gave me the idea of the intimate connection between these races, and I did not set out with a preconceived idea on this question.’\(^{160}\)

To disprove a further damning claim by Lesson, namely that he had ‘probably’ not known ‘how to observe either precisely or scientifically’, Meyer cited passages from the works of ‘other observers and savants’ who agreed with him on the similarities between New Guinea’s mountain and coastal tribes. These included Emile Blanchard’s _Anthropologie_ volume of the 1837-40 voyage of the _Astrolabe_ and Zélée, Quatrefages’ and Hamy’s discussions of ‘Alfourous Arfakis’ in their _Crania Ethnica_, and comments made by Miklouho-Maclay.\(^{161}\) Lesson had defended Quatrefages’ restriction of the term ‘true Papous’ to ‘those who are dolichocephalic’, claiming this as evidence that Quatrefages was ‘better acquainted’ than Meyer ‘with the works of his precursors’; Meyer retorted that Lesson’s suggestion that he had probably ‘never had the opportunity to see the Arfakis at close quarters’ proved only that Lesson himself was ‘poorly informed’ and insufficiently familiar with ‘the writings of MM. Beccari, d’Albertis, Rosenberg and others’, all of whom had visited New Guinea more recently, and for longer periods of time, than Lesson.\(^{162}\)

**The Negritos of the Philippines: Querying the methodologies of racial science**

The issues of scientific authority, the primacy of field experience, and the value of craniology in the production of racial knowledge all reappear in Meyer’s 1893 monograph on the Negritos of the Philippines, specifically those sections discussing the

---

distribution of Negritos (an English version of these sections, brought up to date by Meyer and translated by C. S. Fox, was published in 1899 under the title The Distribution of the Negritos in the Philippine Islands and Elsewhere). Multiple references were made to the errors committed by ‘Quatrefages and Hamy, who establish a race on a few somewhat varying skulls’. Although Meyer acknowledged that Quatrefages was ‘one of the most prolific writers on the Negritos’ and that the Crania Ethnica contained ‘very detailed researches’, he was sceptical of Quatrefages’ ‘partially very fanciful view[s] on the Negrito question’, specifically the French anthropologist’s belief ‘that traces of the Negritos are to be found almost everywhere from Vorderindien [South Asia] to Japan and New Guinea, and that Negritos and Papuans (“Négrito-Papous”) live together in New Guinea and elsewhere, blended and mixed, distinct from the actual Papuans’. Meyer’s monograph was not written with the express intention of discrediting Quatrefages’ and Hamy’s work, and yet it is fair to say that these two Frenchmen typified all that he most disliked in anthropological writing: a tendency to draw firm conclusions from insufficient data, a methodology which favoured laboratory-based studies over personal observations in the field, and a focus on the human cranium to the exclusion of any other forms of physical, cultural or linguistic evidence.

In contrast, Meyer’s examination of the Negritos emphasised particularly the continuing existence of uncertainties and knowledge gaps, the limitations of craniological and other research tools, and the importance of experiential evidence and extended field research in all branches of anthropology, not only its physical aspects. He reiterated the centrality of his own field experiences in determining his opinions on the relatedness of Papuans and Negritos, employing particular experiences to contradict Quatrefages’ and Hamy’s assertions directly. They had listed ‘the tribe of the Karoons’, in north-west New Guinea, as belonging to the ‘Negrito-Papuan race’; Meyer responded that he had ‘lived amongst the Negritos of the Philippines for weeks at a time’ and had had a Karoon (Marcus, see Chapter One) as his ‘constant companion’ in New Guinea for four months, ‘but yet I am supposed never to have noticed that a man of a completely different “race” stood before me!’ Twenty years had passed since Meyer had set foot in either New Guinea or the Philippines, and yet he continued to base his scientific

---

163 Meyer, Die Philippinen ... Negritos, especially 67-87; idem, trans. C. S. Fox, The Distribution of the Negritos in the Philippine Islands and Elsewhere (Dresden: Stengel & Co., 1899).
164 Meyer, Die Philippinen ... Negritos, 86.
165 Meyer, Die Philippinen ... Negritos, 71 note 1.
166 Meyer, Die Philippinen ... Negritos, 86.
authority on his familiarity with local people and local conditions, stating that although other researchers might previously have asserted the ‘racial identity’ of Negritos and Papuans, he and Miklouho-Maclay ‘belonged to the few who advocated this shared identity on the grounds of a personal acquaintance with both peoples’. Nor did Meyer privilege knowledge derived from field presence only in relation to himself. He dismissed Quetrefages’ and Earl’s assertions regarding the occurrence of Negritos in Borneo, stating that Dalton, the author of the source upon which they drew, had himself described the people in question as ‘wild Dyaks’ and that since Dalton had ‘lived for eleven months by the Coti River’, no-one had the right ‘to rechristen his Dayaks Negritos’.

In a dramatic reversal of his earlier hopes that the 135 skulls he had collected represented ‘perhaps the most important material yet available for the determination of the skull type of the genuine Papuan’, and that they would ‘extend our knowledge by a considerable step’, Meyer ultimately damned the ‘practice of describing a skull in detail’ as one that ‘will never achieve anything profitable and burdens the literature [on the subject] beyond measure’. He still maintained, as had both Waitz and Wallace, that ‘a sufficiently large series of skulls from a single tribe’ would produce ‘closed sequences of figures [including] all transitions’, but added that in the absence of such material and the ‘fragmentary knowledge’ of the present it was ‘by no means necessary for science to set up such daring hypotheses’. This present stage of knowledge, he predicted, ‘with its groping [in the dark], its daring hypotheses, and above all its poverty of facts’, would rightly be looked back on as ‘the childhood stage of anthropology’. The unfortunate combination of an ‘exceedingly fragmentary and completely unsatisfactory knowledge of the facts’ with ‘the inexterminable obsession’, particularly amongst craniologists, to ‘explain the most difficult things, to depict them as smoothly and palatably as possible, and to generalise prematurely’, meant that instead of the ‘many-coloured carpet’ envisaged by von Baer, depicting ‘the history of the distribution of the entire human race’, nothing was produced but ‘a patchwork that tore time and time again’.

---

167 Meyer, *Die Philippine ... Negritos*, 84.
168 Meyer, *Die Philippine ... Negritos*, 72.
170 Meyer, *Die Philippine ... Negritos*, 86.

241
It is important to note that Meyer did not consider the weaving of such a carpet of facts an impossible aim *per se*. He still adhered to the objectivist belief in a body of facts simply awaiting discovery by an observant fieldworker in order to produce reliable knowledge. Rather, his criticisms of Quatrefages, Hamy and their ilk centered on methodological issues. Firstly, craniology alone was not an adequate foundation for racial knowledge: it was dangerous, in Meyer’s opinion, ‘to attach too much importance to the skull form in [regard to] the race question, and to demand proofs from it which it cannot provide’.  

The ‘external physical habitus of the Negritos’ was in general ‘almost identical to that of the Papuans’, and in comparison to this ‘great congruence’, differences in particular features, such as skull form or body size, were of little importance. Secondly, information on all aspects of Negrito life, not merely their physical anthropology, was lacking. ‘In general’, Meyer asserted, ‘we find ourselves in great ignorance with regard to the Negritos of the Philippines ... we do not possess a real knowledge of their customs and mores and their language’. This lack of knowledge was easily explained by the observation ‘that all explorer-travellers and resident writers [had] only ever visited the Negritos very briefly’, whereas gaining ‘a real insight into their psychological life and customs’ would require ‘not only a great deal of time, but also considerable self-abnegation’. Meyer therefore called urgently for ‘an able scholar [to] dedicate himself to this difficult task, before these people have died out and also before they have lost still more of their originality than has already occurred’.

The ‘noblest task of the present [day]’ was ‘to collect material for the future’, and Meyer declared that if his monograph should inspire ‘even one competent researcher’ to dedicate himself to the study of the Negritos, he would consider his purpose in writing ‘completely attained’.

The concerns raised in this call for urgent research – that particular races, such as Negritos, were doomed to certain extinction, and that ‘primitive’ people in general were rapidly losing their (physical and cultural) originality through contact with European civilisation – were shared by the great majority of Meyer’s contemporaries. I discuss these anxieties in more detail in Chapter Five. However, the fact that these twin threats of death and disruption were widely perceived to be destroying irreplaceable anthropological and ethnographic material helps to explain why Meyer’s actions as a

172 Meyer, *Die Philippinen ... Negritos*, 87.
173 Meyer, *Die Philippinen ... Negritos*, 85.
175 Meyer, *Die Philippinen ... Negritos*, 87.
Museum Director revealed a far stronger commitment to the collection of skulls than some of his later writings might suggest. A close examination of Meyer’s correspondence during his employment in Dresden demonstrates that Meyer guarded those skulls already in his possession and actively endeavoured to acquire further specimens. These actions indicate that skulls, for Meyer, had a value beyond their increasingly dubious craniometrical worth.\footnote{For a comparative study of the various values assigned to skulls in anthropological and museological contexts, see Ricardo Roque, \textit{Headhunting and Colonialism: Anthropology and the Circulation of Human Skulls in the Portuguese Empire, 1870-1930} (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), especially 103-51.}

\textit{The greatest … collection in Germany': Skulls as museological objects}

As Director of the Königlich Zoologisches und Anthropologisch-Ethnographisches Museum in Dresden, Meyer was responsible for expanding the museum’s holdings and for preserving existing collections. Both concerns are reflected in a series of letters relating to a request from the Dresden Kunstkademie (‘Academy of Art’) to borrow skulls from the museum’s collection. In March 1882, the members of the Academic Council wrote to the Museum’s Board of Directors stating that they intended to ‘institute a special anatomical sketching class’ at the Kunstkademie and believed that ‘the duplicates from the [Museum’s] cranial collection’ would serve as ‘eminently suitable teaching aids’ for this purpose. Would the Museum consider loaning these duplicates to the Kunstkademie, and if so, under what conditions?\footnote{Letter from Akademische Rath to Generaldirektion der Königlichen Sammlungen für Kunst und Wissenschaft, 24 March 1882, Signatur 67/8 Ministerium für Volksbildung (MfVobi) No. 19306, Acta, die ethnographisch-anthropologische Sammlung btr. 1882-1887, Sächsisches Staatsarchiv – Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden.} Meyer, having been informed by the Board of Directors of the Kunstkademie’s request, replied at length, arguing that no cranial collection could be said to contain duplicates ‘as such’, since many ‘cranio logical questions’ could only be answered by the use of ‘a large statistical material’. For example, he had used ‘the 117 criminal skulls in the Dresden collection’ as comparative material with regard to incomplete fusion of the frontal suture amongst his collection of Papuan skulls; when researching ‘the question of the divided malar bone’, a characteristic ‘attributed particularly to the Japanese’, he had examined ‘all 898 skulls in the collection’.\footnote{Letter from A. B. Meyer to Generaldirektion der Königlichen Sammlungen für Kunst und Wissenschaft, 27 March 1882, Sig. 67/8 MfVobi No. 19306, Sächsisches Staatsarchiv – Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden; Meyer, ‘Über hundert fünf und dreissig Papu-Schädel’, III, 385-6; idem, ‘Das geteilte Wangenbein’, \textit{Verhandlungen der Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte}, 13 (12 November 1881), 330-3.} For such investigations, he argued, it was
not the case that ‘ten skulls fewer’ would have made no difference; on the contrary, ‘every additional skull increases the value of all those already present’._179_

Moreover, Meyer added, in the event that ten skulls or so were to be removed, it would be ‘practically impossible’ to select only specimens which could be identified ‘beforehand’ and ‘with certainty’ as lacking any potential utility for subsequently ‘deciding a scientific question’. ‘[C]ompletely normal’ skulls, even assuming that such things existed – ‘for the concept of normality in this field is an abstraction’ – would be ‘of value as so and so many normal skulls amongst so and so many abnormal ones’; ‘pathological skulls’ could only be used for teaching purposes if their abnormal features were ‘very pronounced’, and such specimens were ‘uncommon’. As for ‘skulls of foreign race’, Meyer considered giving away such valuable objects ‘questionable’, given the ‘current situation of anthropology’. Not only did objects of this kind ‘increase in value from day to day’, due both to ‘the foundation of new anthropological museums’ and to ‘the decline in the purity of human races’, but ‘the value of a series of race skulls’ also increased, rather than decreasing, in proportion to the number of skulls it contained, since the aim of racial science was ‘to abstract the type from as large a number [of specimens] as possible’. _180_

Although Meyer grudgingly agreed to ‘the release of a couple of skulls’, he remained unhappy with the results. _181_ The gentlemen of the Kunstkademie requested a total of seven skulls, ‘five French and two Russian’, from a collection obtained from ‘the battlefield near Leipzig’ (presumably remnants of the Battle of Leipzig, 16 – 19 October 1813, a critical turning-point in the Napoleonic Wars). _182_ These skulls, Meyer complained, represented ‘the best shaped and best preserved’ of the 150 or so on offer; their loss would inflict ‘a real injury’ to the collection as a whole, since the removal of

---

_179_ Letter from A. B. Meyer to Generaldirektion der Königlichen Sammlungen für Kunst und Wissenschaft, 27 March 1882, Sig. 67/8 MfVobi No. 19306, Sächsisches Staatsarchiv – Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden.

_180_ Letter from Meyer to Generaldirektion, 27 March 1882, Sig. 67/8 MfVobi No. 19306, Sächsisches Staatsarchiv – Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden.

_181_ Letter from Meyer to Generaldirektion, 27 March 1882, Sig. 67/8 MfVobi No. 19306, Sächsisches Staatsarchiv – Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden.

the ‘most normal’ specimens would deprive the suite of ‘one of its characteristics’.183 He proposed as an expedition that the skulls be lent to the Kunstkademie for a period of three years only, on the understanding that the Academic Board would undertake to purchase their own specimens ‘in the interim’, a process wherein he would be ‘only too happy to assist’.184

Meyer consistently exerted himself in the interests of the Museum’s collections, targeting valuable anthropological and ethnographic material from private collectors and other institutions, and frequently requesting funds over and above those allocated for yearly purchases. In September 1877, during a visit to Nuremberg, he viewed a collection of human skulls, skeletons and moulages assembled by the traveller-naturalist Hermann von Schlagintweit (1826-1882) and in 1878 obtained permission to purchase it for the Museum as ‘extremely valuable research material’.185 The collection comprised 21 skeletons from various ‘tribes’ inhabiting India and Ceylon (Sri Lanka), 54 skulls from the same and other areas, including Tibet and Hawai‘i, along with ‘275 moulages of racial heads’, ‘30 casts of hands [and] seven of feet’, representing ‘all the tribes of Asia and Polynesia which the Brothers Schlagintweit have visited’.186 Wilhelm Rossmann, expert adviser (vortragender Rath) to the Museum’s Board of Directors, approved the purchase, noting that the collection was ‘exceptionally interesting’ and united ‘scientific significance’ with ‘a very strong appeal for the general public’ – ‘something which is not unimportant for a public museum’. He considered the skulls

183 Letter from A. B. Meyer to Anon., 20 April 1882, and from idem to Generaldirektion der Königlichen Sammlungen für Kunst und Wissenschaft, 14 August 1882, Sig. 67/8 MfVobli No. 19306, Sächsisches Staatsarchiv – Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden.
184 Letter from A. B. Meyer to Anon., 20 April 1882, Sig. 67/8 MfVobli No. 19306, Sächsisches Staatsarchiv – Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden.
186 W. Roßmann, ‘Bericht über das Angebot des Herrn v. Schlagintweit-Sakülünlsky’, 9 February 1878, Sig. 67/7 MfVobli No. 19305, Sächsisches Staatsarchiv – Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden. Hermann von Schlagintweit and his brothers Adolf (1829-1857) and Robert (1833-1885) were selected, on the recommendations of Alexander von Humboldt and Wilhelm IV, to lead an expedition to the western provinces of India. The expedition, which commenced in 1854 and lasted over two years, was a joint Prussian-British enterprise involving the Prussian royal family, the East India Company and the Royal Society. See Mayr, ‘Schlagintweit-Sakülünlski, Hermann von’, online <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd119074117.html>, accessed 29 March 2011.
especially desirable, 'since our cranial collection already enjoys a scientific reputation and such a speciality deserves to be cultivated'.

In his Annual Report on the Anthropological and Ethnographic Collections for 1880, Meyer noted that the Anthropological Division had been 'augmented by 148 objects', including '48 human skulls and skeletons from East India, the South Seas ... etc.', '68 hair samples from the Indian Archipelago and Australia', 'five racial busts from the South Seas', and '27 photographs from Java and Palau'. The Ethnographic Division had received 662 objects, most of them from Africa, America, the East Indian Archipelago and Oceania. Meyer also warned that 'ethnographical objects' were 'rapidly becoming scarcer' and that it might be 'more advantageous for the State' to invest substantial funds immediately than to delay, only to find that the prices of such objects had increased 'tenfold'. He explained these increases in price as a consequence of disappearing cultural originality amongst 'even the remotest peoples', coupled with increasing competition between ethnographic museums.

In August 1881, Meyer wrote to the Board of Directors requesting additional funding to purchase from the Museum Godeffroy in Hamburg 'a collection of objects from the South Seas'. He had gathered that the Museum was likely to be disbanded in the near future and that its management wished to 'divest themselves' of duplicates which could 'serve as a source of income for the current maintenance of the collection'. Under these extraordinary circumstances he considered his request for an additional 600 marks to purchase the objects offered justified, on the grounds that 'the islands of the South Seas' were 'rapidly being integrated into the circle of culture' and 'the products of the natives' would soon be 'completely displaced by European and American wares'. His success in this respect was indicated by the Annual Report for 1882, in which the gains of the Anthropological Division (18 skulls and skeletons, three moulages, 45 hair samples and 19 photographs) were dwarfed by the 964 objects obtained for the

---

187 Roßmann, 'Bericht über das Angebot des Herrn v. Schlagintweit-Sakunilinsky', 9 February 1878, Sig. 67/7 MfVobi No. 19305, Sächsisches Staatsarchiv – Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden.

188 A. B. Meyer, 'Jahresbericht der Anthropologisch-Ethnographischen Sammlung pro 1880', January 1881, Sig. 67/7 MfVobi No. 19305, Sächsisches Staatsarchiv – Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden.


190 Letter from A. B. Meyer to Generaldirektion den Königlichen Sammlungen für Kunst und Wissenschaft, 23 August 1881, Sig. 67/7 MfVobi No. 19305, Sächsisches Staatsarchiv – Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden.
Ethnographic Division from Europe, Asia, Africa, America, Oceania and the Malay Archipelago. Meyer utilized this report to request ‘an increase in funding for purchases’ from the Board of Directors, arguing again that ‘ethnographic and anthropological objects’ were becoming ‘rarer and more expensive from day to day’ and that the Swedish archaeologist and anthropologist Hjalmar Stolpe (1841-1905), who had reported favourably on the Dresden Museum during his 1880-81 tour of the principal ethnographic museums and private collections in Europe, had taken as the maxim for his report the words periculum in mora (‘danger in delay’), ‘whereby he wished to say that it is high time to collect material on the spot, since soon almost everything original in this field will have vanished from the earth’.

Meyer also attempted to secure the services of the Imperial Admiralty for the benefit of the Dresden Museum. In 1883 he compiled a ‘Memorandum on Desiderata of the Royal Ethnographic Museum in Dresden, with respect to the regions with which the Ships of the Imperial German Navy come into contact’. The Museum, he explained, wished to increase its holdings according to four major considerations, including the desire to ‘procure, as quickly and comprehensively as possible’, objects representative of those tribes currently ‘undergoing extinction’, and to expand the Museum’s collections relating to ‘particular racial regions’, namely ‘the Malay, Melanesian and Polynesian world[s]’. Much of the memorandum consisted of detailed lists of desirable ethnographic objects, which for the South Seas included everything from ‘carvings and figural sculptures’, through weapons, clothing, jewellery, ‘ornamented utensils’ and ‘ordinary (unadorned) ethnographic objects’, to ‘[d]ecorated skulls ... kept as trophies’, lists of ‘tattoo patterns encountered on ... individual islands, together with information about their meaning’, ‘parts of houses (beams, tympana and the like) on which continuous carvings are found’, and even the moai of Easter Island, which, Meyer suggested, could perhaps be ‘rescued’ and brought to Germany ‘as the obelisks were brought from Egypt to England and America’. Meyer emphasized, however,


193 Meyer, Denkschrift über Desiderata, 14-8.
that 'human skulls and parts of [skulls], as well as entire skeletons, from all parts of the world', were also 'an important desideratum of the Anthropological Museum in Dresden'; that extensive collections, which could help to 'determine the anthropological type of the population in question', were of particular scientific importance; and that 'the greater the number [of skulls] from one and the same locality, the greater the value of the suite'.

A letter written by Meyer in 1900 to the *American Anthropologist* confirms the value he attributed to skulls as museological objects. He wrote in response to a recent article on the Anthropological Museums of Central Europe; the article’s author, George A. Dorsey (1868-1931), curator of the Field Columbian Museum (now the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution), had mentioned only Berlin and Vienna when discussing the anthropological collections of Germany and Austria. Meyer hastened to assert that the Dresden collection was 'the greatest public anthropological collection in Germany, covering over 2000 skulls, a great series of skeletons, busts, and samples of hair, besides possessing the most complete set of anthropometric instruments I know of'. Specifically, the collection contained:

> About 40 skeletons of the races of the earth, chiefly from the East; about 2000 skulls, among them ... about 500 Melanesians [and] 350 Philippine islanders ... about 130 criminals and insane, about 600 of the various European races ... besides many single bones from different parts of the earth. There are about 500 casts of busts, heads, skulls, brains, and single parts of the body, including 63 specimens of criminals and insane, about 150 of races, 120 of celebrated persons ... about 250 samples of hair from various races, chiefly Eastern, and about 50 anthropometric instruments of all kinds. The entire collection numbers about 3000 catalogued specimens.

---

Twenty-four human skulls from Easter Island

Meyer’s last major craniological publication, *24 Menschenschädel von der Oster Insel*, illustrates the tensions between his enthusiasm for skulls as museological objects and his ambivalence towards them as objects for the production of racial knowledge. This work, produced in collaboration with J. Jablonowski, his assistant in the museum’s Anthropological Division, dealt with a series of skulls collected on Easter Island (Rapa Nui) in 1882 by the German naval vessel *Hyäne*. At the combined behest of Meyer and Bastian, at that time Director of the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin, the *Hyäne* returned with an assortment of ethnographical objects, including 49 skulls. Of these, 25 went to Berlin, the remaining 24 to Dresden.198 Though Meyer and Jablonowski measured and commented in detail only on the 24 skulls held in Dresden, they also discussed the approximate number of Indigenous inhabitants on Rapa Nui, their putative origins, oral traditions of migration and physical appearance, and included details of cranial material from Rapa Nui held in other European collections.

Much of the impetus for publication related to professional competition. Disagreements over an equitable division of the *Hyäne’s* collections had produced considerable tension between the Directors of the two museums.199 Meyer had rejected Bastian’s suggestion that the Berlin Museum receive three-quarters of the objects, arguing that the stimulus for the expedition had come from Dresden and that ‘a more equitable sharing between Berlin and Dresden’ was particularly justifiable since ‘the Berlin collections enrich themselves at every opportunity from similar sources, while other German museums with the same rights have been coming away completely empty-handed for years’.200 Unfortunately his attempts to exert ‘diplomatic pressure’ on Bastian were unsuccessful and the Dresden Museum had no other option than ‘to accept that which Professor Bastian [thought] proper to give away’.201 The final allocation of approximately one-third of the ‘Easter Island ethnographica’ to Dresden was at least better than the division originally proposed, though it included none of ‘the unica, which [were] in part the most

---

199 See Buschmann, *Anthropology’s Global Histories*, 22-3, for an account of this episode in the broader context of competition between Germany’s ethnological museums.
200 Letter from Meyer to Generaldirektion der Königlichen Sammlungen für Kunst und Wissenschaft, 3 April 1883, Sig. 67/8 MfVobi No. 19306, Sächsisches Staatsarchiv – Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden (emphasis original).
201 Letter from A. B. Meyer to Generaldirektion der Königlichen Sammlungen für Kunst und Wissenschaft, 20 April 1883, Sig. 67/8 MfVobi No. 19306, Sächsisches Staatsarchiv – Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden.
Meyer and Jablonowski’s introduction hinted at these institutional tensions, but emphasised their wish to respond to an earlier publication by Wilhelm Volz, which had examined the full series of 49 skulls. Volz’s discussion of the skulls, they argued, was both ‘very brief’ and ‘not free of inaccuracies’, and the Dresden museum, as the institution responsible for instigating the collection of the material in question, consequently had the ‘moral obligation’ to ‘publish these skulls … in a form which corresponded to their scientific worth’.

Meyer and Jablonowski’s discussion of the Easter Island skulls emphasised their limitations as much as, if not more than, their possibilities. They stressed again the primary necessity, in ‘the realm of physical anthropology’, of obtaining ‘a rich body of objective facts’; their use of the noun Gewinnung, which refers predominantly to processes by which natural materials are extracted from their surroundings for human use – stone quarrying, land reclamation, oil distillation – indicates their objectivist belief in a body of anthropological ‘facts’ existing independently of human knowledge or perception. At the same time, they warned that the ‘speculative utilisation’ of these observations would probably ‘have to be confined within the most modest limits possible for a long time to come’, and indeed might ultimately ‘prove to be unfruitful’. They drew attention to the difficulties arising from a sparse and often contradictory body of literature, emphasising that the accounts available ‘often contradict[ed] one another’ and that, far from being able to ‘ascertain something reliable’ about such questions as the size of Rapa Nui’s population, their origins, and their collective physical appearance, it was frequently necessary to ‘expose these contradictions without being able to resolve them.’

Following the presentation of detailed measurements and descriptions of each skull, the authors stressed that any ‘general conclusions on the composition of the human group’ represented by ‘so small a material’ could be made ‘only with the greatest caution and restraint’. Their lengthy ‘series of summarizing considerations of individual anatomical and metrical characteristics of the skulls’, they declared, was intended only to ‘simplify the work of future investigators, by examining and grouping the “raw material” along particular

---

202 Letters from A. B. Meyer to Anon., 1 June 1882, and from idem to Generaldirektion der Königlichen Sammlungen für Kunst und Wissenschaft, 3 April 1883, Sig. 67/8 MfVob No. 19306, Sächsisches Staatsarchiv – Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden.
204 Meyer and Jablonowski, 24 Menschenschädel von der Oster Insel, 1.
205 Meyer and Jablonowski, 24 Menschenschädel von der Oster Insel, 1.
206 Meyer and Jablonowski, 24 Menschenschädel von der Oster Insel, 2.
207 Meyer and Jablonowski, 24 Menschenschädel von der Oster Insel, 57.
lines'; they did not 'consider [their] results in any way as final'. In contrast, Volz’s far-reaching conclusions regarding 'the origins of the Easter Islanders and the relationships between the South Sea peoples in general' were by no means 'sufficiently well-founded' and suffered from 'the fundamental error' of endeavouring 'to produce, at all costs, concrete results of universal significance'.

**Papuan language and Papuan race: The linguistic turn and its consequences**

Having denied for years that Papuan physical variability necessarily indicated mixed racial descent, Meyer eventually changed his views on linguistic grounds. He was influenced primarily by publications emerging from the 1898 Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits. Sidney Herbert Ray (1858-1939), the team’s linguist, had argued in the Expedition’s series of reports for the existence of 'a Papuan language family in British New Guinea, beside and between [the] Melanesian languages'. The idea was not an entirely new one: the possible existence of non-Melanesian languages in New Guinea had been mooted as early as 1868 by Müller in his analysis of the ethnographic material collected during the voyage of the *Novara*.

In a subsequent paper on the topic, Müller argued that the 'unity of language and difference of race' between Melanesians and Polynesians could only be explained satisfactorily by the assumption that the Melanesians (defined as 'the inhabitants of the entire series of islands from New Caledonia ... up to and including New Guinea, Salwatty [Salawati], Balanta [Batanta], Gebe ... and [those] of the Fiji Islands') constituted 'a mixed race' and were 'physically Papuans and linguistically Malayo-Polynesians'. However, while Müller’s arguments were based on armchair studies, Ray’s conclusions were derived from extended investigations in the field and thus spoke directly to Meyer’s insistence on the priority of presence.

The anthropological conclusions which accompanied Meyer’s change of heart are particular significant. In Meyer’s opinion, Ray’s identification of a Papuan language family automatically implied the existence of a Papuan race: ‘The Papuan language

\[209\] Meyer and Jablonowski, *24 Menschenschädel von der Oster Insel*, 1, 106.
must correspond to a Papuan race in the narrower sense [of the word]. Although such a race had ‘often been claimed’ to exist in the past, Ray’s study was the first, Meyer asserted, to furnish sufficient evidence to support the claim. It followed that practitioners of both anthropology and ethnology must ‘adjust [their] assumptions and perceptions’ in accordance with these ‘new circumstances’. Anthropologists should seek “‘Papuans’ in the narrower sense [of the word]” – in other words, ‘unmixed tribes [Völkerschaften], more easily distinguished from the “Melanesians” and exhibiting a closer physical resemblance to ‘the Aetas of the Philippines, the Semangs and Mincopies’ – in New Guinea’s ‘unknown’ interior. Should these Papuans in their pure form prove to have been ‘completely absorbed’ by the surrounding population, it would be necessary to ‘deduce their former presence’ in other ways. Ethnologists should attempt to separate ‘the actual Papuan element from the Malayo-Polynesian (Melanesian)’ via comparative methods. Meyer emphasised that he had previously considered it premature to offer an opinion on ‘whether the Papuans, i.e. the inhabitants of New Guinea’, should be considered ‘a homogeneous race with a great breadth of variation’ or ‘a mixed race’, but that Ray’s discovery of the Papuan language family had finally inclined him to the view that they were ‘a mixed race of “Negritos” and Malays in the wider sense’. He ‘looked forward with impatience’, he added, to further explorations of the interior which might discover representatives of the ‘Negrito element’ in the ‘old[er], more stable form’ which persisted in the Philippines, the Andaman Islands and Malakka.213

The results of Meyer’s volte-face also illuminate some of the complexities connecting metropolitan and field-based anthropology.214 In combination with a number of earlier publications, Meyer’s 1893 monograph on the Negritos of the Philippines had established him as an authority on the subject.215 Alfred Cort Haddon (1855-1940), the

---

leader of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Strait, reviewed the 1899 English translation of Meyer’s monograph favourably, praising the author for offering a ‘valuable corrective’ to the ‘specious generalisations’ of de Quatrefages and others. Although Haddon, contra Meyer, was disposed to believe that the physical diversity of ‘the natives of New Guinea’ was evidence of ‘a crossing of different elements’, he admitted that he himself had ‘not seen or heard of any trace of Negritos as such’ in New Guinea and concluded that the most pressing need was for ‘observation in the field’ which would provide ‘further evidence’.  

By 1910 Haddon believed that this evidence had been found: W. R. Ogilvie-Grant, the London-based secretary of the British Ornithologists’ Union Expedition to Dutch New Guinea (1910-11), had just reported the expedition’s ‘Discovery of a Pigmy Race’. Haddon, discussing this ‘discovery’ in *Nature*, advanced Meyer’s response to Ray’s recognition of a Papuan linguistic family as supporting evidence in ‘the confirmation of the existence of pygmies in New Guinea’.

Haddon clearly considered ‘Negrito’ to be synonymous with ‘pygmy’; the Negritos were ‘characterised’, he declared, ‘by having short ulotrichous (woolly) hair, very dark skin, moderate brachycephalism, and pygmy stature’. Meyer, however, never explicitly described the Negritos as a ‘dwarf’ or ‘pygmy’ people and was dubious about attributing any particular stature to them as characteristic. He acknowledged that the name itself, which he attributed to the Spanish (though in fact *Negrillo* was the earlier form in Spanish texts), meant ‘little Negroes’, and described those he had met as being ‘of small and slender build’, but added that Kamis Birahi had refused to ‘admit any difference’ between them and the inhabitants of New Guinea, ‘even in regard to their short stature, as he had seen in New Guinea many tribes equally short’. His 1893 monograph, which included a section on the physical characteristics of the Negritos, registered further confusion. Although the Negritos of the Philippines ‘appeared small in general’, there were also ‘taller individuals, even amongst the

---

219 Haddon, ‘New Guinea Pygmies’, 433 (emphasis mine).
women’; he could not have described at least one-third of the 40 or so Negrito residents of the Imbuntungbató settlement he visited as ‘conspicuously small in comparison with the Malays’. On the one hand, ‘one sees proportionally more small Negritos than small Malays’; on the other, there were ‘also very many [Malay] people just as small’. Equally small individuals could likewise be found, ‘albeit infrequently’, amongst the Papuans of New Guinea. The very fact that Meyer could refer to ‘small Negritos’ without considering it a tautology indicates that for him, at least, ‘Negrito’ as a signifier did not necessarily imply ‘pygmy’ stature.\textsuperscript{222} In addition, a footnote added to the English translation of Meyer’s monograph stated that he ‘consider[ed] it an error in method to presume pygmy races … in nearly every case where undersized individuals occur’.\textsuperscript{223}

Haddon, however, having identified the two as inseparable, could (and did) transfer to the putative ‘pygmies’ of interior New Guinea the various ‘material and bodily markers’ associated with hoary Western Pygmy mythologies and the ‘Pygmy “character profile” contained in African travel writing from the 1870s to the 1890s’.\textsuperscript{224} His works on the Tapiro – the ‘pygmies’ identified by the British Ornithologists’ Union Expedition – ‘play[ed] a crucial role in cementing the status of the Tapiro and conferring academic respectability on the expedition’s results’.\textsuperscript{225} The nexus between the fieldwork and the publications of Ray, Meyer and Haddon, though it represents only one element in the invention of the Tapiro as ‘pygmies’, nevertheless illustrates the complexity and multidirectionality of the relationships through which metropolitan anthropology and field experience informed, reinforced, challenged, and – ultimately – mutually constituted one another.

Seen in parallel, Meyer’s rejection of craniometry as an effective producer of racial knowledge and his acceptance of the existence of a Papuan race based on linguistic studies also indicate the pervasiveness, tenacity and adaptability of race as an epistemological paradigm. Meyer questioned his colleagues’ conclusions on race, on the basis of their methodology and their thoroughness, but he did not question the existence of race itself or the physical reality of races. In the next chapter I focus on yet another manifestation of the racial paradigm, this time in relation to its profound

\textsuperscript{222} Meyer, \textit{Die Philippinen ... Negritos}, 35.
\textsuperscript{223} Meyer, \textit{The Distribution of the Negritos}, 87 note 1.
\textsuperscript{224} Ballard, ‘Collecting Pygmies’, 129.
\textsuperscript{225} Ballard, ‘Collecting Pygmies’, 146.
entanglement with broader discourses of human politico-social development, savagery and civilisation. I investigate connections and contradictions between developmentalist markers of social progress, valorisations of the ‘natural’ in critiques of modern society, the impact of personal experience, and the ambiguous influences of a German colonial context in the writings of Otto Finsch.
Chapter Five

‘In no way ... savages’: Civilisation and savagery in the writings of Otto Finsch

In no way do these people earn the name of savages, even if all of them run around stark naked. People who ... understand commerce as perfectly as do the New Britons, cannot very well be called ‘savages’.1

In this chapter I return to Finsch’s depictions of various Indigenous groups encountered during his travels in Oceania. Rather than focusing on physical appearance, as in Chapter Two, I discuss here the ways in which these depictions deployed concepts of ‘savagery’ and ‘civilisation’ to paint a predominantly positive or negative picture of the people in question. I concentrate particularly on the inhabitants of Matupit Island, East New Britain, amongst whom Finsch lived for seven months, and on the young Matupit Islander Tapinowanne Torondoluan (see Chapter Two), who accompanied Finsch back to Germany from his first Oceanic voyage. Finsch’s positive impressions of Tapinowanne in particular, and of the Matupit Islanders in general, contrasted sharply with broader German and European discourses on civilisation which understood cultural practices such as nakedness and cannibalism as unequivocal signs of savagery. Such discourses tended to view human differences as more political or civic than physical and classified populations with reference to socio-cultural and lifestyle elements rather than to skin colour, hair type, or facial features. As Chapter Three has demonstrated, perspectives on human difference as primarily socio-cultural, moral and intellectual were profoundly entangled with those which emphasised somatic and biological difference and underlay the obsessive projects of collection and measurement discussed in Chapters Two and Four. Since these discourses were also mutually reinforcing and the racial hierarchies they produced were remarkably similar, the rare instances in which one was permitted to challenge the other – as, for example, Finsch’s claim that the New Britons were ‘by no means savages’, despite their ‘negro-like’ appearance, nakedness, and cannibalism – are particularly interesting.

---

Figure 22: Map showing German South Seas Protectorates, 1884-1914.²

Map courtesy of Karina Pelling, ANU Cartographic & GIS Services, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University.

Finsch’s depictions of Oceanian savagery and civilisation were complicated by his colonial involvement. Following his second voyage, which led to the declaration of north-east New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago as German protectorates (Fig. 22), he quickly became embittered by the inadequacy of the employment offered him and the lack of recognition he received for his involvement in Germany’s colonial

² Although the German flag was first raised in the Bismarck Archipelago, Kaiser-Wilhelmsland and the Marshall Islands in 1884, the borders of the Altes Schutzgebiet (‘Old Protectorate’), also known as Deutsch-Neuguinea (‘German New Guinea’), were not finalised until 6 April 1886. The Caroline, Mariana and Palau Islands were purchased from Spain under an agreement that came into force on 30 June 1899; together with the Marshall Islands, they comprised the Inselgebiet (‘Island Territory’). Samoa was divided between Germany and the United States under an agreement finalised in March 1900. All of Germany’s South Seas Protectorates were occupied by Allied forces shortly after the outbreak of war in 1914 and were permanently renounced when Germany signed the Treaty of Versailles on 28 June 1919. See Gründer, ‘Die Voraussetzungen des deutschen Kolonialismus’, 44-7, 49-50; Ludolf Pelizaeus, Der Kolonialismus: Geschichte der europäischen Expansion (Wiesbaden: Marix Verlag, 2008), 222-5; Krauß, ‘Deutsch Neu-Guinea’, in Heinrich Schnee, ed., Deutsches Kolonial-Lexicon, 3 vols (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1920), I, 315ff., online <http://www.ub.bildarchiv-dkg.uni-frankfurt.de/Bildprojekt/Lexikon/Standardframeseite.php>, accessed 29 March 2011; Anon., ‘Inselgebiet der Südsee’, in Schnee, Deutsches Kolonial-Lexicon, II, 99, online <http://www.ub.bildarchiv-dkg.uni-frankfurt.de/Bildprojekt/Lexikon/Standardframeseite.php>, accessed 29 March 2011; Wahl, ‘Erwerbung der deutschen Kolonien’, in Schnee, Deutsches Kolonial-Lexicon, I, 578, online <http://www.ub.bildarchiv-dkg.uni-frankfurt.de/Bildprojekt/Lexikon/Standardframeseite.php>, accessed 29 March 2011.
endeavours. His consequent determination to emphasise what he felt were under-
recognised services to German colonialism coloured his later publications and might 
have intensified the positivity of his depictions of the colony’s inhabitants.

Although Finsch’s first Oceanic voyage predated any active colonial involvement, the 
formative impacts of colonial ideals on his perceptions cannot be ruled out; Susanne 
Zantop has convincingly argued that the eventual drive towards German colonial 
annexation was influenced by precisely such ‘colonial fantasies’.3 Using a range of 
primary texts, including Finsch’s 1865 monograph, his correspondence with Virchow 
during his voyages, and a number of shorter publications intended for a general (non-
scientific) audience, I discuss the ways in which his depictions of Oceanian people were 
influenced by his familiarity with pre-existing discourses of civilisation, his 
involvement with the German colonial project, and his personal encounters, as well as 
by the opportunities and constraints of the various genres in which he was writing.

‘The civilisable spirit of these people’: Finsch and civilisation pre-voyage

Finsch’s 1865 monograph reveals an early preoccupation with civilisation in an 
ethnological context. His summary of New Guinea’s Indigenous inhabitants, drawn 
from French and Dutch voyage accounts, focused as much on Indigenous behaviour and 
demeanour as on physical appearance. This was by no means uncommon; Douglas 
notes, in fact, that almost all general texts on race during this period also focused on 
behaviour and lifestyle. More racialist voyagers like Dumont d’Urville and Péron gave 
considerable attention to demeanour, as did even the most determined racialists amongst 
the savants, including Jean-Baptiste-Geneviève-Marcellin Bory de St-Vincent (1778-
1846) and Broca, primarily because they saw demeanour as a reflex of race. Given that 
even philanthropists like Prichard and Waitz also wrote as if they believed in the 
physical reality of races, the difference between racialists and philanthropists is better 
understood as being one of emphasis rather than of fundamental belief.4 Moreover, the 
two strands of thought, socio-cultural and biological, tended to reinforce one another’s 
conclusions, as Chapter Three has discussed. In Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner, for 
example, Finsch used the term Wilden, ‘savages’, interchangeably with ‘Papuans’ and 
‘natives’. However, he also argued that the Papuans in general could ‘by no means be

3 Susanne Zantop, Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family, and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770-
4 Bronwen Douglas, pers. comm., 20 March 2011; see also idem, ‘Foreign Bodies in Oceania’, 5-10; 
idem, ‘Climate to Crania’, 41-4, 51-5, 66-8; idem, “Novus Orbis Australis”, 111-2, 122-5; Anderson, 
“Three Living Australians”, 236-7.
counted amongst the raw barbaric peoples', 'although not all tribes ... possess[ed] an equal degree of development [Bildung]
\footnote{5}. The ambiguity of this statement is intensified when one considers that the German noun Bildung, derived from late Old High German bildunga, 'creation' or 'formation', could refer to both physical and socio-cultural development.\footnote{6}

At some points, particularly in the book's introductory sections, Finsch was prepared to generalise very broadly about the Papuans, describing them *en masse* as 'lazy' and 'insolent', 'a mistrustful, malicious population', and referring to 'the faithlessness of the natives, of which almost every expedition can give an example'.\footnote{7} In his 'Specific descriptions of the tribes observed' by various travellers, however, he explicitly differentiated these 'tribes' on the basis of physical appearance, customs, and material culture. Though he recounted in considerable detail several encounters between Indigenous New Guineans and Dutch voyagers,\footnote{8} he simultaneously portrayed the often violent outcomes of these encounters as resulting primarily from qualities inherent in the Papuan character – 'wildness', 'falseness and cunning' – rather than from the specific circumstances of encounter and the aims and (mis)understandings of individual participants.\footnote{9} In combination with the 'ethnographic present' tense employed for his general descriptions of the various tribes, the 'reductive normalizing' tendency of this approach resonates with Pratt’s analysis of manners-and-customs descriptions which 'fix the Other in a timeless present where all “his” actions and reactions are repetitions of “his” normal habits'.\footnote{10} To the extent that such depictions portray the people described 'not as undergoing historical changes in their lifeways, but as having no lifeways at all, as cultureless beings', Pratt argues, they are complicit in the processes of deterrioralization and colonial appropriation, even when they '[reject] the rhetoric, and probably the practice, of conquest and subjugation'.\footnote{11}

\footnote{5}{Finsch, *Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner*, 39-40.}
\footnote{6}{‘Bildung cf. 205’, in Währig-Burfeind, *Währig Deutsches Woerterbuch*, 274.}
\footnote{7}{Finsch, *Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner*, 2, 11.}
\footnote{8}{Much of Finsch’s description of the inhabitants of Princess Marianne Strait, for example, consisted of his retellings of one encounter narrated by Lieutenant J. Moder of the Triton and another told by Lieutenant D. H. Kolff of the Dourga; his assessments of the inhabitants of Geelvink Bay and those of Humboldt Bay were explicitly based on the reports of the 1849-50 Circe and 1858 Eina expeditions respectively. See Finsch, *Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner*, 50, 52-7, 123-46; Moder, *Verhaal van eene Reize*, 22-9; Müller, *Verhandelingen over de Natuurlijke Geschiedenis ... Land- en Volkenkunde*, 36-9; D. H. Kolff, *Reize door den weinig bekenden zuidelijken Molukschen Archipel ...* (Amsterdam: G. J. A. Beijerinck, 1828), 351-3.}
\footnote{9}{Finsch, *Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner*, 6, 58.}
\footnote{10}{Pratt, ‘Scratches on the Face of the Country’, 120-1.}
\footnote{11}{Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturaiton* (Routledge: London and New York, 1992), 53.}
Nevertheless, Finsch’s use of eyewitness accounts as his principal sources meant that his own account frequently emphasised, rather than concealed, the face-to-face encounters upon which such generalisations were based. His descriptions of these encounters utilised the past historic or preterite tense, locating them and their participants temporally in a specific historical moment. Although Finsch sometimes made relatively clear divisions between historical descriptions of specific encounters and ahistorical ‘manners-and customs’ accounts in *Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner*, the transition between the two was at other times abrupt and unexpected, occurring from paragraph to paragraph or even from sentence to sentence. In the following example, the sudden eruption of the historical past tense suggests the presence of a coeval observer and disrupts the description of the Uru-Languru Papuans as *sui generis* configurations of features set in a temporal order different from that of their describer.\(^{12}\)

The inhabitants of Uru-Languru Bay are in general less strongly built than the previously described tribes of the south-west coast ... The skin colour ... is the same as that of the inhabitants of Aiduma, the hair ... several inches long, reddish-black and curly ... The ugly nose ornaments are no longer worn here, nor is tattooing or filing the teeth to a point customary, for which reason they have a much better exterior than the other tribes, though they are inferior to the naked Papuans of Humboldt Bay in their intellectual abilities. The facial features of some *expressed* goodwill, those of others clearly mistrust, passion and vengefulness.\(^{13}\)

Although *Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner* unproblematically accepted Western civilisation as inherently superior, it did not explicitly promote colonisation, though Finsch couched his reservations in pragmatic rather than ideological terms. He lamented the current limits to European explorations of New Guinea, stating that ‘we know ... only the coasts of this great land, and these only at a few points’, but added that increased knowledge ‘appears still to lie very far off’, since New Guinea’s ‘mistrustful, treacherous population’ and ‘fever-bearing air’ would continue to hamper attempts to

---


\(^{13}\) Finsch, *Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner*, 73-4 (emphasis mine).
penetrate further inland. As for its suitability as a colony, the ‘unhappy attempts at a settlement’ made by the Dutch ‘in the years 1828-1835’ were not promising, and even if the latter’s failure could be attributed largely to its ‘unhappily chosen location’, ‘our earth, after all, offers in abundance places just as good, if not better, for colonisation’. New Zealand, ‘for which a great and prosperous future is undoubtedly in store’, was Finsch’s chosen example. New Guinea, by comparison, offered little prospective foothold for European civilisation:

Where the merchant cannot send his ships to trade, supported by a willing population inclined to peaceful occupations, but, hindered everywhere by lazy, insolent inhabitants, can only achieve his aims with difficulty, there civilisation and better customs will not take root for a long time to come.

Finsch hoped, nevertheless, that the ‘enlightened Dutch Indies government’ would take responsibility for ‘a permanent occupation of New Guinea at a suitable spot’ and was confident that ‘all scholars’ would ‘certainly align themselves whole-heartedly’ with this wish,

as it is only in this way that we can obtain scientific information about a land whose inhabitants and products are of such great importance for the researcher, and as it is, after all, the only way in which, little by little, European customs and culture can spread.

Civilisation and culture, not physical appearance, dominated Finsch’s comparisons of various Papuan tribes. Based on the positive accounts of the Dutch *Etna* expedition, he claimed that the ‘Papuans of Humboldt Bay’, though they initially made ‘the impression of a crowd of naked, crude savages’, revealed in the course of a ‘longer acquaintance … truly astonishing and good qualities’ which ‘proved that these savages possess a very active mind and great perception’. Although they lacked ‘the good nature and trustfulness of the often childlike South Sea Islanders’, Finsch was confident that

---

19 Finsch, *Neu- Guinea und seine Bewohner*, 133
‘benign and judicious handling’ would ‘certainly make very useful people of them’. Their good qualities became more apparent by comparison: ‘How high do they not stand above the semi-bestial tribes along Princess Marianne Strait or even the stupid natives of Australia’? Lieutenant Modera’s description of the mutually violent conclusion to an initially promising encounter between members of the 1828 Triton and Iris expedition and local Papuans at the mouth of Princess Marianne Strait on the south coast confirmed the latter, Finsch declared, as ‘undoubtedly the crudest and most savage tribes of New Guinea’, whose ‘feigned friendliness’ might transform at any moment into ‘treacherous attacks’. In contrast, the Humboldt Bay Papuans’ willingness to trade with and assist the Etna’s crew displayed their ‘civilisable spirit’ and ‘favourable predispositions’. As Earl’s correlation of ‘the discrepancies ... in the narratives of different voyagers’ with ‘the circumstances under which their communications [with Papuans] took place’ (see Introduction) suggests, these positive and negative evaluations are themselves countersigns of particular instances of Indigenous behaviour, generalized and essentialized as levels of civilisation.

Moral judgements also extended to descriptions of physical appearance. The Princess Marianne Strait Papuans, though ‘a very muscular and powerful breed of men [Menschenschlag]’, possessed a ‘fairly unpleasant exterior’, characterised by ‘protruding lips’ and a ‘flat nose with wide open nostrils’; their ‘black glittering eyes’ revealed ‘only a bestial voracity’. Lips, nose and nostrils recall the ‘set of purportedly “Negro” characteristics’ which by this time had become ‘the negative standard in the description and comparison of human beings’; following the 16th-century consolidation of the Atlantic slave trade, Douglas argues, the ‘stereotypical figure of “the Negro”’ commonly elicited a response of ‘ingrained aversion’. The Humboldt Bay Papuans, however, were described as ‘much more powerfully and handsomely built than the other Papuan tribes’; their ‘dark fiery eyes’, though they simultaneously expressed ‘courage and slyness’, also ‘reveal[ed] a much more developed mind’. In contrast to the features of the inhabitants of Princess Marianne Strait, the ‘thick’ lips and ‘somewhat broad’

---

20 Finsch, Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner, 133-4.
21 Finsch, Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner, 133.
22 Finsch, Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner, 50, 52-4; Modera, Verhaal van een Reize ..., 22-9.
23 Finsch, Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner, 134.
25 Finsch, Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner, 50.
noses of the Humboldt Bay Papuans did not give them ‘a positively unpleasant appearance’; on the contrary, there were, ‘amongst the more daintily built girls and women’, often individuals who, particularly with the advantage of ‘a somewhat lighter skin colour’, could be described as ‘quite passable beauties, even according to our perceptions’. These correlations of approved lifestyles and behaviours with attractive exteriors represent a particularly blatant mutual entanglement of physicalist and developmentalist criteria.

The influence of developmentalist ideas on Finsch’s pre-voyage exegesis of Indigenous New Guineans is clearly evident in both Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner and its condensed version, ‘Skizzen von Neuguinea’, published in 1886. Though his remarks on physical features in the former tended towards a generalised ‘Papuan’ appearance, he emphasised the differences in lifestyle between people who, ‘although almost identical in colour and figure, nevertheless in language and customs form completely separate wholes’ and described this ‘diversity of people, in all their doings and in such close contact with one another’, as ‘one of the most remarkable aspects of New Guinea’. Like Peschel (see Chapter Three), he also attributed much of this diversity to external and contingent factors rather than internal and predetermined ones. Finsch, however, focused less on the influence of environment than on the effects of New Guineans’ historical contacts with other people, comparing the tribes of the south-west coast, forced by constant slave raids ‘into a more or less nomadic life’, with the ‘more regular and even artistically laid out villages and plantations’ of tribes on ‘the most distant north-east coast, whither the feared hongi fleets have not yet penetrated’. He also admitted that people subjected to the frequent slave raids of both neighbouring tribes and Moluccan war fleets might have good reason to be suspicious of foreigners. This suggestion, at least in the absence of an explicitly Lamarckian model positing the

---

27 Finsch, Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner, 137.
28 Finsch, Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner, 47.
inheritance of acquired characteristics, existed in tension with his claims that qualities such as ‘wildness’, ‘falseness and cunning’ were intrinsic to the Papuan character.\(^{30}\)

In ‘Skizzen von Neuguinea’ this emphasis on lifeways was still more pronounced. With the exception of a short paragraph suggesting that the Papuans’ physical appearance indicated an affiliation to ‘the Negro type’, Finsch’s descriptions of ‘the various Papuan tribes’ focused almost exclusively on their customs and material culture and ranked them according to these considerations. The people living ‘along the Princess Marianne Strait in the south-west’, who went ‘completely naked, with the exception of a loin-covering’, had no ‘fixed abodes’, and obtained their food from ‘hunting’ and ‘various wild-growing fruits’, were ‘without doubt the crudest’ of the Papuan tribes; ‘in them’, claimed Finsch, ‘we behold those so-called savages who are becoming ever rarer on our planet’. In contrast, the residents of the Utanate River area on the south coast, who besides inhabiting ‘large, albeit exceedingly crude huts’ had canoes and domesticated pigs, displayed ‘a higher [level of] development’. The ‘very little known mountain peoples of the interior’ differed only from the coast dwellers in ‘still [being] completely naked savages’.\(^{31}\) Finsch’s application of the term ‘naked’ to people who covered their genitals and often wore tattoo and diverse bodily decorations reveals his concept of ‘nakedness’ as profoundly culture- and class-bound, as the following discussion of the inhabitants of Matupit Island further illustrates.\(^{32}\)

‘Cannibals in New Britain’: The paradoxical Matupit Islanders

Following his return to Germany in 1882, Finsch’s first publication for a general audience was an article entitled ‘Menschenfresser in Neubritannien’ (‘Cannibals in New Britain’), which appeared in 1883 in the \textit{Illustrierte Zeitung}. The article was accompanied by a full-page depiction of a cannibal feast based on Finsch’s own eyewitness sketch (Fig. 23). Although Finsch’s experiences of New Britain had not extended ‘beyond the boundaries of Blanche Bay and the north coast’, he extrapolated his own observations of the inhabitants of Matupit Island to describe the ‘New Britons’ in general, a terminology I adopt in the following paragraphs.\(^{33}\)

\(^{30}\) Finsch, \textit{Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner}, 40, 78.

\(^{31}\) Finsch, ‘Skizzen von Neuguinea’, 205.


\(^{33}\) Finsch, ‘Ueber seine ... Reisen in der Südsee’, 560; see also letters from Otto Finsch to Rudolf Virchow, 27 October 1880 and 3 May 1881, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.
Finsch commenced his discussion of New Britain’s ‘cannibals’ with an imagined encounter between himself, newly returned from his first Oceanic voyage, and a counter-chorus of ‘sentimental ladies’ who plied him with questions: ‘And so these poor people go quite naked? That must surely be terrible for them? What a lamentable life! Oh, do please tell us something of these savages!’ By responding to these questions with another question – ‘What do you understand by “savages”? ’ – Finsch effectively established the remainder of the article as a dialogue between expectation and observation, ‘savagery’ and ‘civilisation’. In this dialogue he undertook to challenge and deconstruct what he assumed to be his readers’ preconceptions on scientific, socio-economic, moral and experiential grounds.

As prominent, if contested, markers of savagery, nakedness and cannibalism were key concepts in this dialogue. Cannibalism headed the article’s title; nakedness appeared in its opening sentence. In 1880, writing to Virchow from Matupit, Finsch had already asserted that the nakedness of the island’s inhabitants could not necessarily be construed as implying savagery:

In no way do these people earn the name of savages, even if all of them run around stark naked. People who have complete and beautifully tended plantations, who lay out ornamental gardens and possess other, almost artistic works, who are very accomplished in song and dance, and who above all understand commerce as perfectly as do the New Britons, cannot very well be called ‘savages’.\(^{36}\)

In ‘Menschenfresser in Neubritannien’ Finsch reiterated this point. He emphasized the New Britons ‘regulated cultivation of the soil’, their possession of ‘a medium of exchange corresponding to our money’, namely ‘shell-money (Diwarra)’\(^{37}\), their ‘rich language’ and ‘love of music’, and concluded that ‘mere nakedness is therefore neither a criterion for the developmental stage of a human race nor an indication of its primitive state’. In fact, he added, he had not met ‘any actually savage people in the South Seas’ and doubted whether ‘such people may still be found anywhere on earth’. Science, asserted Finsch, had ‘renounced’ the ‘inappropriate word’ ‘savage’, preferring ‘nowadays’ to speak ‘at most of lower or higher developmental stages or of primitive states of the human race’. As noted above, Peschel, whom Finsch subsequently quoted, had already declared that the designation of current populations as ‘savage’ had ‘arisen from an erroneous view’ and that the term ‘natural peoples [Naturvölker]’ was equally inaccurate: ‘at most’, he argued, ‘we may speak of semi-cultural peoples [Halbculturvölker]’.\(^{38}\) Both terms, of course, were profoundly ethnocentric. Though it is difficult to determine with certainty the relative influence on Finsch’s ideas of his field experience vis-à-vis his ethnological readings, the contrast with Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner, which referred to Indigenous New Guineans interchangeably as ‘Papuans’, ‘natives’ and ‘savages’, is striking. His willingness to decouple nakedness from savagery with regard to the Matupit Islanders also contrasts markedly with his descriptions in ‘Skizzen von Neuguinea’, where the two – as in the case of the ‘completely naked’ Princess Marianne Strait Papuans, who embodied the fast-

---

\(^{36}\) Letter from Finsch to Virchow, 27 October 1880, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.

\(^{37}\) A. L. Epstein gives the local name of this form of shell currency as tambu; Neumann gives tabu or tambu. According to Albert B. Lewis, shell currency was called diwara on Duke of York Islands and New Ireland, tambu on New Britain. Finsch, however, consistently applied the term diwara [sic] to the shell currency used on Matupit Island. See A. L. Epstein, Matupit: Land, Politics, and Change among the Tolai of New Britain (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1969), 8, 14-5, 230-45 passim; Neumann, Not the Way it Really Was, 182-90; Albert B. Lewis, Melanesian Shell Money in Field Museum Collections (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1929), 12 note 1.

\(^{38}\) Peschel, Völkerkunde, 147.
disappearing category of ‘so-called savages’, and the ‘naked savages’ of the interior were presented as virtually inseparable.39

Having countered, on both economic and scientific grounds, the supposition that the New Britons’ nakedness could be equated with savagery, Finsch next addressed the question from a moral perspective. ‘Despite their nakedness’, he claimed, ‘we find amongst the New Britons a chastity and morality which can be termed exemplary, particularly among the female sex’.40 Dipsomania was ‘completely unknown’ in New Britain; marriage, ‘although polygamous’, ‘appears to be bound by strict laws’; ‘household theft occurs but rarely, housebreaking arguably never’, despite the considerable temptations afforded by the wealthy and their ‘heaped-up treasures of shell-money’.41 Finsch’s challenge here to what was evidently a widely accepted link between nakedness and (moral) savagery, particularly with regard to relations between the sexes, again echoed Peschel; the latter had argued that the Bushmen of southern Africa, ‘although naked’, were governed by ‘strict chastity’ and that this, along with ‘the tenderness with which they woo a maiden’ and the fact that ‘they marry only from affection’, placed them ‘high above countless other peoples’.42 Nevertheless, Finsch’s emphasis on morality as a determinant of cultural ranking, along with his willingness to perceive it even amongst unclothed populations, did not derive solely from his readings of Peschel. In Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner, for example, he claimed that although the inhabitants of Kaimani (Kaimana) Bay wore no clothing beyond ‘the so-called Tjdako, [made] of cloth or bast, as a covering for the genitals’, ‘great morality’ prevailed amongst them: ‘an adulteress’ was ‘immediately cast out by her husband’ and although polygyny was ‘permitted, one seldom finds men who possess more than one wife’.43 He added that ‘thefts occur very infrequently and in regard to honesty one can accord these Pauans only praise’.44

Having enumerated the specific moral virtues of the ‘Cannibals in New Britain’ – a topic to which I shall return shortly, with particular attention to contrasting assessments

---

42 Peschel, Völkerkunde, 149.
43 Finsch, Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner, 80, 82.
44 Finsch, Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner, 82.
of Polynesian and Micronesian societies — Finsch launched into a generalised and idealised comparison between their supposedly simple wants and carefree lifestyle and the artificial encumbrances of ‘civilized’ European society:

The longer one lives amongst these savages, the more one finds that they are in fact very happy people, in some respects much happier than us. They know no care, no convenience, no burdensome constraint, they know nothing of politics, subservience, dependence, they need not contend with daily anxieties to win their bread and do not consider themselves superior to others by virtue either of physical or of spiritual merits.45

Although echoes of the earlier primitivist texts discussed above are clearly apparent here, this particular manifestation is interesting both on account of its comparatively late appearance and in consideration of the author’s unusual degree of experience of the society he was idealising. Neither Montaigne, nor Pope, nor Rousseau had any first-hand experience of the societies they discussed; their observations were gleaned from the works of other travellers. Cook’s observations on ‘the Natives of New-Holland’, supposedly ‘far more happier than we Europeans’, enjoying ‘a Tranquillity which is not disturb’d by the Inequality of Condition’ and ‘furnish[ed]’ by earth and sea with ‘all things necessary for life’, were derived principally from contacts made between 17 June and 3 August, when the Endeavour remained at the mouth of the Endeavour River undergoing repairs.46 Significantly, these comments occur in Cook’s retrospective ethnographic survey of ‘The Natives of this Country’ and are out of character with the remainder of his text.47 Bougainville’s descriptions of Tahitian society, particularly those aspects which charmed him, reflected the experiences of a mere nine days, though he was obliged to ‘introduce some drastic revisions into the second edition of his book’ as a result of his conversations with Ahutoru, the brother of a Tahitian chief who accompanied him to Paris.48

47 Smith, European Vision and the South Pacific, 126-7; Williams, “Far more happier ...”, 499-509 passim; idem, ‘Seamen and Philosophers’, 12-3.
Finsch, in contrast, had lived on Matupit for more than seven months, and by his own account had ‘endeavoured to become as closely acquainted with [the Matupit Islanders] as possible’, creeping ‘into their huts’ and ‘eagerly’ observing ‘all kinds of activities ... from pig slaughters to burials’. It is scarcely credible that he could have failed to obtain, during this time, at least some inkling of such elements of Tolai society as the ferocious competition for status and ranking through giving, feasting, and the accumulation of tambu; the power and fear inspired by sorcerers, duk-duk and other persons to whom ritual potency was attributed; and the heavy differentials of age and gender, any or all of which make a mockery of his claim that Matupit’s inhabitants knew nothing of ‘politics, subservience [or] dependence’ and did not recognise superiority on either physical or spiritual grounds. I suggest, therefore, that Finsch’s seemingly naïve depiction of Indigenous life on Matupit should be interpreted rhetorically rather than literally. By presenting Matupit’s inhabitants as essentially ‘happier’ than Europeans, he was able to access a pre-existing discourse through which prevailing assumptions of European cultural superiority could be challenged and negatively-viewed attributes such as nakedness reconstructed as irrelevant, if not explicitly positive.

I have not been able to establish whether Finsch was acquainted with the writings of Montaigne, Pope, or Rousseau at first hand. However, since the ideas expressed in these and similar works remained influential amongst educated Germans generally, they constituted a common cultural vocabulary to which he could appeal for a positive interpretation of non-Europeans. Williams has noted that ‘a sympathy and respect for primitivism which extended from the classical writers to the more recent accounts of the North American Indians’ was ‘embedded in the Western European intellectual heritage’ and that since examples of such primitivism ‘abounded, in poetry and prose, in fact and fiction’, it would have been ‘difficult for a literate person to avoid them totally’. At the very least, Finsch had evidently read Peschel’s Völkerkunde, and despite his criticisms of its author as an armchair anthropologist with an excessive faith in clear-cut, constant racial characteristics (see Chapter Two), he quoted Peschel repeatedly in

---


50 See Epstein, Matupit, 13-24, 138-250 passim; Neumann, Not the Way it Really Was, 141-55, 183-203.

51 Williams, ‘Far more happier ...’, 507.
'Menschenfresser in Neubritannien' to support his arguments for the 'happiness' of the New Britons.

Peschel, it is true, denied that humankind had degenerated from an original 'golden' age characterised by 'the highest physical, intellectual and moral advantages'; he condemned as outdated and inaccurate the 'Rousseauian fantasies' which had supposedly led travellers such as Georg Forster to depict the Indigenous inhabitants of Oceania as 'a happy race [Geschlecht], true to the state of nature, not yet cheated of the human ideal by the aberrations of culture'. Nevertheless, he evinced a degree of sympathy with those Indigenous individuals who, though fully cognisant of the advantages of civilisation, still returned by preference to their former way of life. He identified what he believed to be several examples of such individuals, including 'Jemmy Button' (o'rundel'lico), one of several Fuegians taken hostage in 1830 by Captain Robert Fitzroy of the Beagle, and 'Bungari' (Bungaree), a Broken Bay man who accompanied Matthew Flinders (1774-1814) to Moreton Bay in 1799 and on his circumnavigation of Australia from 1802-03. Apparently Peschel was unaware that Bungaree, who subsequently tried to mediate between the Indigenous Australians living north of Port Jackson and the expanding British colony, could hardly be said to have returned to his 'former way of life'. Explicitly contradicting the adherents of that 'uncharitable anthropological school' which saw in such cases evidence that 'differently coloured people' belonged to a separate species, Peschel declared instead that 'accustoming hunting tribes to a sedentary way of life' was difficult not because they were incapable of living 'in our way', but because they did not want to: 'we observe with amazement that the so-called savage man prefers life in freedom to all the advantages and comforts of civilisation [Gesittung]'.

Although Finsch shared with earlier primitivists a common admiration for the superiority of unspoiled natural man, his visions of this natural man were not identical to theirs. A comparison of Finsch's description of the New Britons with Montaigne's

---

52. Peschel, Völkerkunde, 137-8. For a more critical view of the Forsters' supposed primitivism, see Spate, Paradise Found and Lost, 259-61.
55. Peschel, Völkerkunde, 156.
account of the Tupinamba of coastal Brazil in *Des Cannibales*, according to R. A. Sayce "a key passage in the formation of the myth of primitivism and the noble savage", reveals several key differences in this respect. Montaigne's cannibals, based on the reports of the missionary Jean de Léry and the cosmographer André Thévet, represented the antithesis of European 'culture' and were defined primarily by what they lacked, being

a nation ... in which there is no sort of traffic, no knowledge of letters, no science of numbers, no name for a magistrate or for political superiority, no custom of servitude, no riches or poverty, no contracts, no successions, no partitions, no occupations but leisure ones, no care for any but common kinship, no clothes, no agriculture, no metal, no use of wine or wheat.

With the exception of religion, this 'series of negations' denied 'every basic institution of European society'. Finsch's cannibals, by contrast, with their well-developed systems of agriculture and their 'perfect' understanding of commerce, ranked extremely highly on a stadial model of development. They could not plausibly be differentiated from Europeans on the basis of their mode of subsistence. Instead, Finsch, quoting from Peschel, emphasised their supposed freedom from the restrictions and encumbrances of 'bourgeois' society, employing specifically industrial metaphors:

We are all servants of society, painstakingly trained from our youth to perform the function of a wheel, often merely that of a shaft or screw, in the wheelwork of bourgeois life. The Botocudo, the Australian, the Eskimo alone enjoy freedom.

Even this passage was not entirely compatible with Finsch's description of the New Britons' way of life. The 'Botocudo', 'Australian' and 'Eskimo', whose freedom Peschel contrasted with the servitude supposedly experienced by his German readers,
were amongst the people he enumerated as being commonly considered to exhibit the ‘lowest standards of civilised behaviour [Gesittungszustände]’, along with ‘the Hottentots and Bushmen in South Africa’, ‘the Vedda in Ceylon’, ‘the Mincopie[s] in the Andamans’ and ‘the Fuegians’. 61 Although Peschel admitted that it was possible that savants, by ‘demeaning’ these ‘stocks [Menschenstämme] ‘below all others’, had ‘merely committed blunders’, and that the ‘very incomplete’ knowledge of their languages impeded a more accurate assessment of ‘their intellectual ideas [ihrer geistigen Vorstellungen]’, he nevertheless consigned them to future extinction, primarily on the basis of their mode of subsistence. Those who ‘live[d] from hunting or fishing’ and ‘inhabit[ed] islands’ would ‘before long fall victim to race death [dem Racentode]’; even the extinction of ‘herdsman tribes [Hirtenstämme]’ could not be excluded, and for ‘the Hottentots and all [the] North Siberian nomads’, at least, Peschel considered this their ‘certain fate’. 62

Civilisation and its discontents: Lebensreform, nature and nakedness

Nevertheless, in the same way that Cook’s survey of Indigenous Australian life can be seen to indicate his ‘responsive[ness] to those aspects of primitivistic thought which viewed the life of nature as a renunciation of the luxuries and excesses of civilization’, Peschel’s and Finsch’s praises of primitive freedom functioned as mirrors, allowing them to reflect upon and criticise aspects of German society. 63 The dissatisfaction they expressed foreshadowed later developments in German culture, notably the Lebensreform (lifestyle reform) movement which emerged in response to the industrial, military and technological changes experienced in Germany under Kaiser Wilhelm II (1888-1918). Thomas Rohkrämer considers the various ‘Wilhelminian reform movements’ which constituted Lebensreform as being ‘of central importance for the history of the critique of civilisation’. 64 While the origins of Lebensreform, which aimed to counteract the perceived degenerative effects of modern urban living by promoting a healthy and natural lifestyle, have primarily been identified in ‘the numerous closely related strategies for self-improvement that emerged in Europe during the nineteenth century, such as abstinence, dietary reform, vegetarianism, natural health

61 Peschel, Völkerkunde, 148.
62 Peschel, Völkerkunde, 153.
63 Smith, European Vision and the South Pacific, 126.
and homeopathy’, Lebensreform also included a significant element of naturism or nudism (Freikörperkultur or Nacktkultur).65

The Sonnenorden (‘Order of the sun’), a cult of sun-worshipping, solely coconut-eating nudists who eventually found a home on Kabakon Island in the Bismarck Archipelago, represented one of the most extreme expressions of Lebensreform discontent with rapid modernisation and the ‘nerve-wrecking life of culture’.66 Sven Mönter explicitly associates this choice of location by the cult’s founder, August Engelhardt (1877-1919), with primitivist idealisations of Oceania expressed in the scientific and philosophical writings of savants and travellers including Rousseau, Alexander von Humboldt and Goethe.67 The latter, he notes, was recorded by his close friend Johann Peter Eckermann (1792-1854) as having expressed the following sentiments:

We old Europeans … are all more or less thoroughly badly off; our situation is much too artificial and complicated, our diet and way of life lacks the correct nature, and our social intercourse is without love and goodwill. Everyone is genteel and courteous, but no-one has the courage to be cordial and true, so that an honest person with natural inclinations and sentiments is in a very bad position. One might often wish to be born on one of the South Sea Islands as a so-called savage, to be able at least once to experience the human existence absolutely pure, without base aftertaste.68

Within the Lebensreform movement, Rohkrämer argues, the concept of ‘naturalness [Natürlichkeit]’ functioned as a ‘normative standard’ for bourgeois reformers attempting to measure ‘the deficits of modern society and find ways to improve it’. I suggest that Finsch’s New Britons, Montaigne’s Tupinamba and Goethe’s South Sea

66 Mönter, Following a South Seas Dream, especially 29-48.
67 Mönter, Following a South Seas Dream, 49-63.
Islanders filled a comparable position in these writers’ critiques of their own sociocultural contexts.69

However, as already indicated, the concept of the ‘natural’ idealised by Finsch differed from that celebrated by Montaigne and Goethe. While Montaigne’s cannibals and Goethe’s South Sea Islanders were lauded precisely because they supposedly lacked the ‘artificial’ trappings of Western culture, Finsch’s paean to the New Britons rested first and foremost on his recognition of cultural similarities. Montaigne’s cannibals were ‘wild, just as we call wild the fruits that Nature has produced by herself and in her normal course’; ‘still very close to their original naturalness’, still ruled by the ‘laws of nature’, they could thus enjoy the ‘pure and simple’ naturalness of a society in stark contrast to the ‘artifice’ of Montaigne’s own.70 Similarly, Goethe’s ‘so-called savage[s]’ were to be envied for lacking the artifice, complication and falsehood which lent a ‘base aftertaste’ to ‘human existence’ in European society.71 For Finsch, however, the pre-eminent proof that the New Britons were not savages lay in their possession of precisely these elements of artifice. Their knowledge of agriculture and commerce, two classic markers of progress in social developmentist thought, supplied the foundation upon which his subsequent defence of their less savoury characteristics was built. Indeed, in his later monograph *Samoafahrten* Finsch extrapolated this principle to apply to ‘the Papuans’ *in toto*; their ‘cultivation of the land’, he argued, represented ‘a characteristic of the whole race’ and an ‘advantageous’ proof of ‘the higher grade of their civilised behaviour’, which ‘neither nakedness nor cannibalism’ could attenuate. He added, in a burst of cultural relativism well beyond that of his earlier works (see below), that the ‘latter two evils’ were ‘such only in our eyes; in reality, however, [they are] practices passed down by custom, independent of civilised behavior and morality’.72

Although Rohkrämer notes that isolated attempts to ‘reconfigure life in a more healthy and natural manner’ were already in evidence by ‘the first third of the nineteenth century’, *Lebensreform* as a recognisable social movement gained momentum only during the Wilhelminian period and the term itself did not appear until the 1890s.73 When writing ‘Menschenfresser in Neubritannien’, however, Finsch had other models

available to him for the idealisation and invention of nakedness. Textual and visual records from the voyages of Bougainville (1766-69) and Cook (1768-71) had compared the Tahitians to figures from classical Greek mythology. In this context nakedness could be rendered unexceptionable even to a European audience, as evidenced by Bougainville’s celebrated description of a young Tahitian girl who, having gained the ship’s quarterdeck, ‘carelessly dropt a cloth, which covered her, and appeared to the eyes of all beholders ... as Venus ... to the Phrygian shepherd, having, indeed, the celestial form of that goddess’.  

Nakedness also gained positive connotations through artistic conventions of ‘ideal’ or ‘heroic nakedness’, traceable to the Renaissance period, according to which allegorical and mythical figures, historical persons and even contemporaries were depicted as naked ‘in order to remove them from the sphere of the everyday’. Nikolaus Himmelmann argues that such nakedness was considered to ‘free’ the subject ‘from everything modish and time-bound’, allowing a depiction of ‘timeless naturalness’, and that Renaissance and post-Renaissance artists who portrayed nude subjects were universally understood as ‘adopting an antique practice’. The ‘ideal, indeed the spiritual character’ of naked depiction was ‘emphatically affirmed’ by the German art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768) and transmitted, through his influential Die Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums (‘The history of the art of antiquity’, 1764), to later savants including Lessing, Herder, Goethe and Kant.

Finsch’s descriptions of the New Britons, however, avoided classical allusions. Such images of ‘soft primitivism’, as Chapter Three has discussed, were more commonly associated with eastern than with western Oceanic societies; they also reflected a ‘golden age’ view of the natural which did not correspond to developmentalist models. Biblical references, however, though decreasingly relevant for scientific interpretations of human origins and development, still resonated with a general audience. Finsch correspondingly underscored his explicit appeal to a secular utopia with implicit references to a religious one. His idealised New Britons, living under supposedly

---

76 Himmelmann, Ideale Nacktheit, 13.
77 Himmelmann, Ideale Nacktheit, 15, 16 note 10.
‘paradisiacal conditions’, conjured up images of Edenic innocence which were reinforced in his later publications.\textsuperscript{78}

Although unclothed as in Paradise, these people never offend with indecencies; indeed, they possess a good nature that in general is roundly denied such creatures, burdened as they are with the original sin of cannibalism.\textsuperscript{79}

**‘Notorious ... cannibals’: Negotiating anthropophagy in New Britain**

As the above passage indicates, the ‘original sin of cannibalism’ proved more difficult to negotiate than the comparatively venial sin of (supposed) nakedness. In *Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner*, Finsch had defended New Guinea’s inhabitants against a blanket charge of cannibalism, but had unproblematically associated the practice *per se* with savagery. He acknowledged that ‘[a]mongst all savage peoples notorious as man-eaters the Pauans are mentioned first’, but added that ‘although it cannot be denied that they are still very crude in their customs’, the accusation of anthropophagy ‘by no means applies to the entire population’. He dismissed ‘vague rumours’ ‘that the Pauans devour their captives and the inhabitants of the Van Dammen Bay their own dead’ as simply ‘untrue’ in the absence of ‘definite accounts ... from any trustworthy man’.\textsuperscript{80} His ‘specific descriptions’ of various ‘tribes’, he concluded, clearly demonstrated that the Pauans possessed ‘a great deal of natural intelligence’ and ‘with regard to their intellectual development’ could by no means be relegated to ‘the lowest level’.\textsuperscript{81} Although Finsch did not say so explicitly, the sequence of his arguments at this stage, that is, pre-fieldwork, certainly implied that cannibalism was synonymous with both savagery and low intelligence. Before he could advance a positive thesis regarding the Pauans’ intelligence he felt obliged first to deny that they were cannibals.

The New Britons, therefore, presented a problem. Finsch’s private correspondence with Virchow from the field was matter-of-fact, remarking only: ‘cannibalism remains in

\textsuperscript{78} Finsch, ‘Menschenfresser in Neubritannien’, 445.
\textsuperscript{79} Finsch, ‘Tapinowanne Torondoluana’, 432.
\textsuperscript{80} Finsch, *Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner*, 48-9. The reference to Van Dammen Bay is drawn from A. Goudswaard, who states that ‘the land Wandammeng [sic]’, which lies ‘south of Muismar and Rhun’, is ‘erroneously called by the Dutch name van Dammen on some maps’. Goudswaard’s map is titled ‘Schets van de Geelvinks- Wandammings- of Groote Baai’ (‘Sketch of Geelvinks-, Wandammings-, or Great Bay’), indicating that the names Geelvink(s) Bay and Van Dammen Bay were used interchangeably. See A. Goudswaard, *De Papoea’s van de Geelvinksbai* (Schiedam: H. A. M. Roelants, 1863), 7.
\textsuperscript{81} Finsch, *Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner*, 48-9.
vogue even today, but since missionaries arrived the people do not like to speak about it.\textsuperscript{82} In subsequent publications targeting a general audience, however, cannibalism became an ‘abhorrent custom’, an ‘infamous practice’, a ‘disgrace’ blemishing an ‘otherwise well-disposed people’. Such expressions enabled Finsch to conform to the moral outrage expected by his audience, while also maximising the titillation value of his material. Well aware of the horrid fascination which cannibalism exercised over the German imagination, he deliberately emphasised its presence in his writings, regardless of his personal views on the subject. In 1866, ‘Skizzen von Neuguinea’ had already introduced New Guinea’s Indigenous inhabitants to the readers of the *Illustrierte Zeitung* as ‘notorious … cannibals’, though Finsch cautioned that no ‘reliable’ reports of such a custom had yet been produced.\textsuperscript{83}

Finsch’s own travels were to produce such reports. On 7 March 1881, less than a month before his departure from Matupit, he ‘had the rare opportunity’ to become acquainted with the Islanders’ ‘horrible cannibal practice[s] from personal experience’.\textsuperscript{84}

Alerted by an unusual movement amongst the male population, I discovered upon enquiring that they were on the point of cutting up a slain man at the other end of the island. I arrived just in time to witness the dreadful spectacle. To my amazement no wild howl of victory was raised, as one expects from ‘savages’; on the contrary, everything proceeded as quietly as though something quite ordinary were taking place. The picture, which I sketched from the life, represents the scene, as the victors, or rather the murderers, cut up the body of the slain man in workmanlike fashion in the shallow waters of the bay, smoking their pipes meanwhile, the young man with the flute plays his sweetest airs, just as usual, and the crowd squat on the strand as spectators.\textsuperscript{85}

The shift to the historic present tense midway through Finsch’s description served to emphasise his presence as observer, as did his claim that the sketch accompanying this article was taken ‘from the life’. Art historians might question the extent to which a woodcut produced from Finsch’s original sketch could be considered a ‘picture … from

\textsuperscript{82} Letter from Otto Finsch to Rudolf Virchow, 27 October 1880, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-
Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.
\textsuperscript{83} Finsch, ‘Skizzen von Neuguinea’, 205.
\textsuperscript{84} Finsch, ‘Menschenfresser in Neubritannien’, 445.
\textsuperscript{85} Finsch, ‘Menschenfresser in Neubritannien’, 445.
the life"; in addition, the sketch as a whole resembles a narrative compilation, a "meld[ing]" of several "separate scenes" or tableaux, rather than the naturalistic reflection of a single scene. Nevertheless, the unmistakable forms of the volcanic Dawapia Rocks (Beehives) arising from the bay in the background suggest that the basic elements, at least, were captured on the spot.

Neither Biblical nor primitivist writings explicitly defended cannibalism. Failing this, Finsch, like others before him, aimed to relativise it. Montaigne, though he had acknowledged the "barbarous horror" of cannibal acts, argued that the atrocities perpetrated during the French Wars of Religion (1562-98), still "within fresh memory", demonstrated that his own compatriots "surpass[ed]" the Tupinamba "in every kind of barbarity" and that there was "more barbarity in ... tearing by tortures and the rack a body still full of feeling, in roasting a man bit by bit, in having him bitten and mangled by dogs and swine", than in "roasting and eating him after he is dead". Later writers, though they did not necessarily emphasise the barbarity of their own culture to a comparable extent, continued to insist that cannibalism per se did not necessarily indicate moral savagery. Cook, for example, explained the cannibal practices he observed amongst the Maori as a product of "custom", adding that they could not be "charged with" a "Savage disposission" and "appear[ed] to have but few Vices - ".

Rather than "taking cannibalism to define savagery", Nicholas Thomas observes, Cook's characterisation of cannibalism as "customary" actually served to "exempt the Maori from savagery"; his "overall judgement" of the Maori was not shaped by his observations of cannibal practices but by the friendly treatment he experienced. By "treat[ing] cannibalism as one topic, and Maori character and civility as a separate one", Cook was able to "[dissociate] people he liked from a particular practice that repelled him". Similarly, Finsch acknowledged the New Britons' "dark sides, above all the repulsive man-eating", but added that he had found them "to be in general far better than

---

86 van Groesen, "Changing the image of the South Pacific", 80-1; see also Douglas, "Art as Ethno-Historical Text", 84-5; Govor, Twelve Days at Nuku Hiva, 187-9.
89 James Cook, quoted in Thomas, Discoveries, 107.
90 Thomas, Discoveries, 107.
91 Thomas, Discoveries, 212, 255.
their reputation’ and that their cannibal habits were by no means incompatible with
civilised virtues.92

‘A morality below that of the natives’: The dark side of white presence
Finsch’s attempt to rehabilitate the New Britons’ reputations functioned as a double-
edged sword. Not only could the New Britons prove better than their reputation;
civilisation, contrary to the rosy picture suggested by his praises of it in Neu-Guinea
und seine Bewohner, could prove worse. The ‘Kanaka’ of New Britain, Finsch asserted,
remained a ‘human being’ despite the ‘paradisiacal conditions’ of his existence and
shared, as such, ‘the weaknesses of our species’: ‘hatred, love, revenge, avarice, envy’.
Further ‘dark sides’ included the absence of a ‘sense of honour’ and a lack of ‘gratitude’
and ‘loyalty’. Although the ‘trustfulness’ of the New Briton could sometimes ‘blaze up
into heartfelt emotion’, he was unable to comprehend ‘any absolute trust; he lies, cheats
and is perhaps deceitful towards his white friend’. This last, however, Finsch declared,
could well be attributed to the ‘unhappy experiences’ which from the first had marred
the relationship between the ‘New Briton’ and the ‘white man’. Those whom ‘the
desire for profit and the love of adventure’ had first drawn to these regions were
‘certainly … not the best elements’, and Finsch’s own experience confirmed the
continuing presence of ‘notorious individuals, who with the help of powder and lead
play [at being] little autocrats’.93 He later described his time in Matupit as ‘perfectly
peaceful’, but added that ‘there was no shortage of murder and manslaughter, needless
to say from both sides’, and that his own experiences offered ‘a great many examples’
of ‘truly questionable men, with a morality below that of the natives’, amongst ‘the
representatives of civilisation’ in New Britain.94

In Samoafahrten, his account of his colonial explorations, Finsch used similar examples
to argue for the necessity of colonial rule. He asserted that ‘the recruitment of natives
as workers, the so-called “labour trade”’, had caused a great deal of ‘mischief’ and
‘contributed substantially to bloody disputes with the natives, for which the latter were
by no means always to blame’. During his own stay in New Britain, he added, ‘five
whites were slain in my neighbourhood alone’, all of whom ‘had provoked their [own]

Following Dorothy Shineberg, many ‘island-centred’ Pacific historians have rejected such ‘retaliation-only’ interpretations, on the grounds that reducing Indigenous violence towards non-missionary or non-official Europeans to ‘blind revenge for the atrocities committed by the white man’ implicitly denies local agency and ignores the possibility of ‘other [local] reactions … to contact with foreigners’.

Finsch, however, represented these five killings as an inevitable consequence of the ‘blood vengeance’ which had come into force when ‘the first trader set foot on the soil of New Britain and shot the first natives’. Since then ‘a great deal of blood [had] flowed in the Bismarck Archipelago and murder [had] been committed on both sides’. The ‘new German era’, Finsch concluded, would curb this bloodshed and ‘set strict limits on the arbitrary encroachments of individuals upon life and property’. Ironically, his bête noire, the British Wesleyan Methodist missionary George Brown (1835-1917), discussed in more detail below, argued for British annexation of New Guinea on precisely the same grounds.

Finsch was not alone in these sentiments. George Steinmetz identifies a similar ambivalence in the ethnographic portraiture and imagined colonial policy of the German naval doctor and ethnographer Augustin Krämer (1865-1941). Steinmetz interprets Krämer’s photographs of nude Samoan women as ‘an oblique gesture of protest against the missionaries’ refashioning of Samoan tradition’ and suggests that they underscored his ‘goal of reversing the tide of history through a kind of salvage colonialism’. Though ‘by no means a rabid colonial enthusiast’, Krämer believed that ‘only a European-run state could shield Indigenous people’ from the ‘baleful’ influence of settlers and missionaries and that ‘true colonization’, as he imagined it, could ‘help the colonized rather than simply promoting “depopulation” and cultural destruction’. Such sentiments also bear comparison with the ‘humanitarian representations of island

---

95 Finsch, Samoafahrten, 24; see also letter from idem to Virchow, 27 October 1880, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.


97 Finsch, Samoafahrten, 24-5.

98 Helen Bethea Gardner, Gathering for God: George Brown in Oceania (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2006), 89-100.


100 Steinmetz, ‘The Uncontrollable Afterlives of Ethnography’, 264 (emphasis original).

conditions’ which, Jane Samson argues, underlay the ‘moral empire British representatives sought to make in the Pacific islands’ and which, while disagreeing on the desirability of colonisation, unanimously identified ‘white villains’, including ‘beachcombers, escaped convicts, and traders’, as ‘responsible for the most troubling aspects of culture contact’.\(^{102}\) Shineberg’s critical evaluation of missionary literature as ‘source material for a trading history’ both prefigures and qualifies these claims, tracing the connection between missionary hostility to sandalwood traders as ‘successful competitors for influence among the islanders’, the consequent desire amongst missionary writers ‘to press the connection between the bad behaviour of sandalwood traders and Melanesian hostility’, and the resulting overemphasis of a ‘retaliation-only’ interpretation of Indigenous violence.\(^{103}\)

Importantly, in contrast to British condemnations of such ‘villains’ as ‘threats to “Christianization and Civilization”’, Finsch’s judgements, like Krämer’s, applied not only to traders but to Christian missionaries.\(^{104}\) Like Krämer, Finsch believed that Indigenous cultural practices actively discouraged by missionaries would soon be lost to ethnographic knowledge. Finsch’s antipathy, however, was also based in part on his personal knowledge of far more violent missionary-Indigenous contacts than those lamented by Krämer. A startling revelation followed Samoafahrten’s description of the reciprocal ‘murder[s]’ committed in the Bismarck Archipelago by traders and locals:

The war of retaliation undertaken in the year 1878 under the aegis of the Wesleyan Mission, or rather [that] of the Rev. George Brown, claimed … numerous victims amongst the natives, who will not forget.\(^{105}\)

In April 1878, two and a half years before Finsch’s arrival in New Britain, Brown had responded to the killings of four Fijian mission teachers by leading a retaliatory raid against villagers in the Gazelle Peninsula.\(^{106}\) Helen Gardner describes the raid not merely as ‘an aberration in Brown’s missionary life’ but as an event ‘without precedence in the modern missionary movement’.\(^{107}\) Shortly after arriving in Matupit,
Finsch wrote to Virchow detailing his own understanding of the raid, in language which made his personal sympathies very clear:

Brown ... is given great credit from various sides for having shot dead ... more than 200 innocent savages, in expiation of 4 slain Viti [Fijian] teachers whom he had sent into the interior in order to see the ‘men with tails’, in whom the New Britons themselves do not believe.\(^{108}\)

Along with the considerably inflated death toll, Finsch’s reference to ‘men with tails [geschwänzten Menschen]’, whose existence, though it had previously preoccupied Brown, had no direct connection to the Fijian mission teachers’ inland excursion, suggests that this story had grown in the retelling.\(^{109}\) Nevertheless, Finsch evidently deduced that Brown’s raid had been a brutal and disproportionate response to a problem of his own making. In ‘Menschenfresser in Neu-Britannien’ he repeated this assessment, stating that the teachers had been killed because, ‘contrary to the warnings of the coast-dwellers’, they ‘had ventured too far into the interior amongst hostile communities’.\(^{110}\) He further condemned the mission’s proselytising efforts as unsuccessful and unlikely to effect any positive changes with respect to cannibalism in New Britain: ‘neither the Christian “King” nor the coloured missionaries’ had ‘raised [any] objection’ to the feast Finsch had witnessed, and ‘the mission with its 55 native calico-Christians’ had ‘just as little influence’ in New Britain as ‘the few whites’ who had settled there. On the contrary, Finsch argued, the man consumed during the feast

---

\(^{108}\) Letter from Finsch to Virchow, 27 October 1880, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften (emphasis original).


was himself essentially a victim of the missionaries, since the attack in which he had been captured was merely the latest in a series provoked by Brown’s earlier raid.

Finsch’s analysis of Indigenous involvement in these intercultural conflicts largely corresponds to the ‘humanitarian description of island conditions’ outlined by Samson, which espoused ‘a benevolent, protective view of islanders’ and persistently ‘put white agency at the center of the story, confining islanders’ motives to an easily understood “retaliation theory”’.[11] However, counteracting this tendency to centralize white agency, Finsch recognised the possibility for other motives than retaliation in episodes of Indigenous violence. When George Brown’s mission had ‘raised the banner of war’ against the inhabitants of the interior, ‘a great number of the natives followed that flag against their own brothers’, primarily, Finsch claimed, because of the prospect of ‘rich booty, namely in [the form of] shell-money’. In a further acknowledgement of Indigenous agency, he also identified the lack of ‘powerful chiefs’ in New Britain as the main obstacle to the phasing-out of cannibalism. He compared its situation to ‘Fiji, now completely Christianized’, where ‘man-eating’ had been far more prevalent and its ‘rapid eradication’ accomplished ‘only through the authority of the chiefs’.[112]

Comparison of Finsch’s pre- and post-voyage writings reveals a marked change in his attitude to Christianity, particularly as it related to Indigenous life. Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner had expressed support for the efforts of Ottow and Geissler, describing them as ‘two self-sacrificing men … sincerely filled with the noble purpose of their calling’, whose ‘fearful privations and toils’ deserved ‘the fullest respect’. Finsch acknowledged that, at the time of writing, ‘no results have actually been achieved to speak of’, despite the missionaries’ ‘seven years’ labour’, but attributed this to the effects of illness and to competition from Indigenous prophets.[113] If Ottow and Geissler ‘might yet experience the joy of seeing their untiring zeal bear fruit’, he added, he ‘would not begrudge it them’, as their ultimate success in this regard would also be of ‘incalculable value for the entire future of New Guinea’. [114] No such good wishes, nor any such sympathy for the mission’s lack of success, appeared in his letter from Matupit; instead, he questioned even the necessity of Christian teachings to the New Britons’ wellbeing. Contra Peschel, who claimed that the ‘spiritual freedom’ enjoyed

---

by inhabitants of ‘cultural nations [Kulturstaaten]’ counterbalanced the loss of personal freedom entailed in the transition from a nomadic to an industrialised life and that ‘the so-called savage’ trembled constantly before ‘hideous dream[s]’ and ‘the childish fear of ghosts’, Finsch asserted that the New Briton knew ‘no fear of any god, idol, [or] fetish’ and was not dismayed by ‘natural phenomena’ such as ‘storms [or] solar and lunar eclipses’. He was not ‘without superstitions’, but one could hardly begrudge him those, given the superstitious beliefs still persisting ‘in many districts of our Fatherland’. It was not ‘spiritual [geistige] freedom in Peschel’s sense’ that ‘natural man’ lacked, ‘but rather all that we understand by Geist’ – a notoriously untranslatable German word incorporating, roughly, the concepts of ‘spirit’, ‘mind’ and ‘intellect’. Yet even the ‘intellectual [geistigen] pleasures’ which ‘delight our hearts’, Finsch claimed, were not essential to the New Briton’s happiness: ‘he does not miss them, for he does not require them’.

Finsch’s confident assessment of intellectual and spiritual life in New Britain is not entirely convincing, particularly given his earlier admission that he had encountered ‘a good many serious difficulties’ during his anthropological and ethnographical researches, particularly ‘on account of the language’; there was ‘no white [man]’ in Matupit who understood the local language(s) ‘even remotely perfectly’ and it was therefore ‘not possible to investigate all customs ... a great many points remain obscure’. It is evident, however, that his personal attitude to Christianity was at best ambivalent, despite sporadic references to Christian clichés such as ‘paradisiacal conditions’, ‘Adamite costume’ and ‘original sin’ in his post-voyage publications. In later life, at least, he seems to have made little secret of this fact; his obituarist Friedrich Cunze noted in 1917 that Finsch ‘was not greatly churchly; he sought and found God in nature, he had little time for mission’. Precise changes in his attitude to Christianity in general are difficult to trace with confidence, particularly given the relatively generic nature of his statements in Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner. Moreover, Finsch’s dislike of Brown may later have increased in response to the latter’s attempts to

118 Letter from Finsch to Virchow, 27 October 1880, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.
120 Cunze, ‘Professor Dr. Otto Finsch †’, 25. The draft version of this obituary, with a letter of acceptance to Cunze from the magazine’s editor, Dr. Paul Zimmermann, can be found under Finsch H VIII A: 1130, Stadtarchiv Braunschweig.
interfere with Germany’s colonial ambitions by agitating for British annexation of the western Pacific and alerting British authorities to the intentions of the Neu-Guinea Compagnie.\textsuperscript{121} Nevertheless, Finsch’s vehement and repeated condemnations of Brown’s retaliatory raid, which predate his involvement with the Neu-Guinea Compagnie, indicate that his opposition to missionary activities stemmed primarily from personal experience.

\textit{‘Stained and spoilt by civilization and Christianity’: Salvage as moral endeavour}

As a humanist, Finsch deplored the violence associated with some trade and mission activities in Oceania. As an ethnologist, he regretted what he saw as their disruption and destruction of Indigenous life and culture. This concern with cultural originality and its loss was already implicit in \textit{Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner}, though it did not lead him at that stage to express any apprehension regarding the consequences of European colonisation or settlement. In assessing the intellectual development of the Papuans in general, Finsch felt obliged to exclude the inhabitants of Doreh from consideration, stating that they had been ‘too much influenced’ by their ‘long contact with foreigners.’\textsuperscript{122} His claim that Papuans could ‘by no means be counted amongst the raw barbaric peoples’ rested on his analysis of the inhabitants of Humboldt Bay, who, ‘far from all communication and out of range of the dangerous hongi fleets, have without doubt most [closely] preserved their original type [\textit{Urtypus}].’\textsuperscript{123}

In the course of his travels, however, Finsch became increasingly aware of the transformations in Indigenous culture that followed European contact. From Honolulu, O’ahu, his first port of call in Oceania, he wrote to Virchow, describing his observations of introduced species in Maui and their impacts on native flora and fauna and traditional culture:

[My time in Maui] showed me, as expected, the great poverty of the fauna ... Like the people, so too the native animal species are dwindling, and some must have ceased to exist long before they could have come under the eye of the observer. As domesticated animals (pig, sheep, goat) run wild, so the forests disappear, and with them the animals ...

With the Ohio-tree, for example, those beautiful red birds will vanish

\textsuperscript{121} Gardner, \textit{Gathering for God}, 89-99.
\textsuperscript{122} Finsch, \textit{Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner}, 40.
\textsuperscript{123} Finsch, \textit{Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner}, 40.
which in former times were used to make the magnificent kings’ cloaks and feather garlands. The natives, quasi traditionally and true to the old custom, content themselves with artificial ribbons representing those yellow and red feather decorations. Most natives have forgotten the names of the native animals; only a few retain the old art of catching them.\textsuperscript{124}

Finsch’s regret for the island’s vanishing fauna did not prevent him from acquiring his own specimens; on the contrary, his conviction that ‘the entire native fauna of the Hawaii Islands’ was ‘inexorably approaching utter extinction’ spurred him on to further acquisitions.\textsuperscript{125} On the north face of Haleakala, at a height of some 5400 feet, he ‘had the rare pleasure of being able to observe, in their natural surroundings, the forms of those rare birds previously known to me only from stuffed specimens’, and himself ‘bagged’ one of the ‘beautiful red birds’ mentioned above, ‘the magnificent “Drepanis coccinea”’ (\textit{Vestiaria coccinea}, ‘i’iwi or scarlet honeycreeper).\textsuperscript{126} The same conviction of inexorable extinction informed his attitude towards ethnological collection and was bolstered by the statements of eminent metropolitan authorities. Finsch recalled Bastian’s ‘warning word[s]’ that it was necessary, ‘with regard to ethnology, to save what can still be saved, before it is altogether too late’, adding regretfully that it was ‘already too late’ for Hawai’i; he had been ‘unable to collect anything further, for what little remains from ancient times is held in private hands’.\textsuperscript{127}

The notion that the world’s ‘natural’ people were threatened with imminent extinction (cultural, if not physical) by the spread of European civilization, and that it was therefore imperative to ‘salvage’, before their inevitable demise, as much physical, material and linguistic data about them as possible, was commonly accepted amongst ethnologists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Penny, who describes ‘the breakneck pace of acquisitions and the incessant call for ever-bigger museums’ as characteristic of German ethnological endeavours during this period, suggests that these trends were motivated primarily by the realization that the same ‘technological

\textsuperscript{124} Letter from Otto Finsch to Rudolf Virchow, 26 July 1879, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften; idem, ‘Bericht über die Insel Oahu’, 326-7.
\textsuperscript{125} Finsch, ‘Ueber seine ... Reisen in der Südsee’, 555 (emphasis original).
\textsuperscript{127} Finsch, ‘Ueber seine ... Reisen in der Südsee’, 555.
advances’ that allowed ethnologists to locate ‘an array of previously “unknown” peoples’ were simultaneously ‘contributing to the rapid destruction of these peoples and their material culture’. As a consequence of this realization, Germany’s ethnologists ‘focused on locating and collecting as much material culture as possible’ while maintaining a concurrent dialogue of extreme urgency, of the need ‘to act quickly’. These priorities, which were used in 1872 by Bastian and his colleagues to justify the establishment of Berlin’s Museum für Völkerkunde and were still being expressed some forty years later, survived ‘generational and theoretical shifts’ and ‘fundamentally shaped both ethnographic museums and the science of ethnology in Germany’.

Although this kind of ‘salvage anthropology’ reflected a genuine ‘concern with the rapid change inherent in modern conditions’, it inevitably encouraged rapacious and indiscriminate collecting practices. Metropolitan ethnologists urged their colleagues in the field to gather more, better and rarer objects; travelling collectors were understandably frustrated when they found themselves unable to obtain desired items and tempted to exaggerate the rarity of those they had obtained. The foreword to an 1883 catalogue from an exhibition of Finsch’s ‘ethnological collections from Micronesia and Melanesia’, for example, emphasized the ‘great pains’ with which they had been assembled and the particular interest attached to the ‘admirable products’ of ‘still untouched natural peoples’, who not only produced them with ‘few and imperfect tools’ but were themselves already ‘disappearing more and more’.

As Penny observes, and as the above reference to ‘untouched natural peoples’ suggests, the ‘jargon of authenticity’ which characterised salvage anthropology framed as most desirable those ‘peoples whose material culture showed the fewest traces of mixing or change’. Meyer’s remarks on korwar, discussed in Chapter One, indicate this

---

128 Penny, Objects of Culture, 29-30.
129 Penny, Objects of Culture, 30.
130 Penny, Objects of Culture, 33.
132 Vorstand des Vereins für Naturwissenschaft zu Braunschweig ['Board of Directors of the Braunschweig Association for Natural Science'], in Otto Finsch, Catalog für die Ausstellung für Völkerkunde der Südsee ... (Braunschweig: Albert Limbach, 1883), 1.
preference: he noted that the Papuans of Doreh ‘love[d] to carve and to paint wooden figures to sell to foreigners’, but added that such ‘pious fraud[s]’ could easily be distinguished from ‘genuine’ korwar by ‘the freshness of [their] manufacture’ and the softer, lighter wood from which they were made. Similarly, Finsch’s observations that Hawaiians ‘content[ed] themselves with artificial ribbons’ in place of their traditional ‘yellow and red feather decorations’ indicate that he perceived such changes not as cultural transformation or adaptation but as cultural loss. He voiced similar concerns in New Zealand, declaring that the Maori were ‘degenerating more and more’ and had ‘lost of their originality in every way’.

At the great festival of King Tawihao [Tāwhiao] more than 200 warriors had double-barrelled shotguns, but not three were to be seen with greenstone mere and fewer than five with mere made of whalebone. There were no more than perhaps ten or twelve old carved wooden weapons, fewer than ten women who wore a tiki, and only the long greenstone ear-bobbles were frequent, but the Maoris buy these from the whites, who cut them according to old models.

Finsch’s regret may partly be understood as the natural irritation of a thwarted collector. He commented that the loss of Indigenous hunting practices on Maui meant that ‘the travelling naturalist is dependent on his own resources, and how difficult it is to collect only he who has seen these forests ... knows’, and complained that in New Zealand ‘reasonably good objects’ were ‘hardly to be had’ and only at ‘colossal prices’, since ‘the people themselves’ retained ‘so few of their products from the good old days’. Nevertheless, his reflections in Hawai‘i and New Zealand, if not untinged by self-interest, do suggest an increasing awareness of the potential range of European impacts.

135 Letter from Finsch to Virchow, 26 July 1879, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.
137 Finsch, ‘Reise nach Neuseeland’, 335. Mere refers to a ‘short flat Maori war club of hard wood, whalebone, or greenstone’, tiki to a ‘large wooden image of Tiki, the creator and first created being of the Maoris and Polynesians, or of an ancestor; also, a small, usually greenstone, image of the same, worn as a charm or ornament’. ‘mere, n.6’, OED Online (Oxford University Press, November 2010), online <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/116728?rskey=VgmyH6&result=6&isAdvanced=false>, accessed 17 November 2010; ‘tiki, n.’, OED Online (Oxford University Press, November 2010), online <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/201960?redirectedFrom=tiki>, accessed 17 November 2010.
138 Finsch, ‘Reise nach Neuseeland’, 335.
on Oceanian cultures and a gradual nuancing of the enthusiasm for the spreading of European culture and customs expressed in *Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner*.

The rhetoric of salvage anthropology was already associated with Finsch’s first Oceanic voyage prior to his departure. A letter of introduction given to him by the Secretaries of the Königliche Akademie der Wissenschaften (‘Royal Academy of Sciences’) in Berlin, the administrative body for the Humboldt-Stiftung, listed Finsch’s aims (in somewhat idiosyncratic English) as ‘to make observations on, and to form collections of, all sorts of natural objects; to inquire into the present state of the Aborigenes [sic] of [the Micronesian Islands] ... and to gather relics of that fast out-dying race’. In his own work the same rhetoric is particularly evident in his 1882 address to the Gesellschaft für Erdkunde, where it served to emphasize the urgency of his voyage and the value of his collections. In Micronesia, he told his audience, it had been ‘necessary to save what could still be saved, before the ever-increasing influence of trade and of mission had utterly destroyed the last vestiges of the former natural life of these island-dwellers’. For some islands ‘it was already too late’, but on others he had ‘succeeded in gathering valuable notes and collections ... at the last moment, so to speak’. From Milli (Mili) and Arno Atolls, for example, he had successfully ‘rescue[d]’ a specimen of ‘those seagoing canoes, made of the breadfruit tree, with which the Marshall Islanders justly obtained the reputation of capable seafarers’. He predicted that it would, ‘in a few decades’, ‘probably be the last’ of its kind, since ‘a great deal of the individuality of the natives’ had ‘disappeared through the influence of the whites’ and the ‘present generation’ had ‘already lost the art of building such ... canoes’, preferring instead to use ‘European ships’ when travelling between islands. The Gilbert Islanders, whom Finsch considered ‘superior’ to their Marshallese neighbours both ‘physically and in many other respects’, had successfully preserved ‘more originality’ than the latter, but were being ‘ruin[ed]’ by their ‘enjoyment of brandy, abundantly imported’; Finsch was therefore pleased to have ‘secure[d] a considerable number’ of their ‘handsome canoes’, ‘extremely dangerous weapons, set with sharks’ teeth’, and ‘curious suits of armour,

---

140 Finsch, ‘Über seine ... Reisen in der Süßsee’, 553-4.
141 Finsch, ‘Über seine ... Reisen in der Süßsee’, 554.
142 Finsch, ‘Über seine ... Reisen in der Süßsee’, 557.
woven from coconut fibres’, ‘for here, too, it will soon be too late’.\textsuperscript{143} Kusai (Kosrae) had been ‘completely Christianized’; the inhabitants ‘spoke English, to a greater or lesser extent’, and ‘despite this considerable civilization’ were ‘quickly nearing [their] end’, their ‘total number’ scarcely amounting to three hundred. Nevertheless, Finsch, glad that he had still been in a position to do so, had discovered and collected remnants of their ‘former culture’.\textsuperscript{144}

Although Finsch authored this particular prefiguration of Alan Moorhead’s ‘fatal impact’ theory of European-Oceanian contact while his impressions of his first voyage in the region were still fresh, his conviction of its accuracy did not waver over the years.\textsuperscript{145} Shortly before the publication of his monograph \textit{Ethnologische Erfahrungen und Belegstücke aus der Südsee} (‘Ethnological experiences and proofs from the South Seas’, 1893), he wrote to an unnamed correspondent:

I am at last bringing my ‘Ethnologische Erfahrungen aus der Südsee’ to its conclusion and am currently working on the difficult chapter ‘Micronesia’, a book of which only a few pages remain, as the original has for the most part been tattered, stained and spoilt by civilisation and Christianity. Thus one can only collect the shards and attempt to glue them laboriously together, as Schliemann does his pots.\textsuperscript{146}

These gloomy descriptions of disruption and loss contrasted markedly with Finsch’s impressions of New Britain and New Guinea. Having treated his audience in the Gesellschaft für Erdkunde to an unremittingly negative picture of Micronesian cultural corruption, Finsch introduced Melanesia to them as ‘a new world’, particularly ‘with regard to the population, which, barring certain things, has as yet retained its entire originality’.\textsuperscript{147} The Melanesians, he added, ‘still went naked and were man-eaters, but they knew neither dipsomania nor syphilis, a proof of the extent to which they have so

\textsuperscript{143} Finsch, ‘Ueber seine ... Reisen in der Südsee’, 558.
\textsuperscript{144} Finsch, ‘Ueber seine ... Reisen in der Südsee’, 558-9.
\textsuperscript{146} Letter from Otto Finsch to Unknown, 25 March 1892, Finsch H VIII A: 1130, Stadearchiv Braunschweig. The German archaeologist Johann Ludwig Heinrich Julius Schliemann (1822-1890) excavated the prehistoric cities of Troy, Mycenae and Tiryns between 1871 and 1890. Friedrich Cunze, Finsch’s obituarist, compared Finsch to Schliemann as ‘an autodidact and, as it was previously called in English, a self-made man’. See Justus Cobet, ‘Schliemann, Johann Ludwig Heinrich Julius’, in \textit{Neue Deutsche Biographie}, vol. 23 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2007), 83-6; Cunze, ‘Professor Dr. Otto Finsch †’, 24.
\textsuperscript{147} Finsch, ‘Ueber seine ... Reisen in der Südsee’, 560.
far resisted the influence of the white man'. Here the twin concepts of nakedness and cannibalism functioned as positive markers of Melanesian cultural originality, contrasting with the negative indicators of cultural corruption – dipsomania and syphilis – representing the consequences of white contact with Indigenous Micronesian and Polynesian societies. The juxtaposition of the Polynesian-corrupt-immoral and Melanesian-pure-moral constellations in Finsch’s address to the Gesellschaft für Erdkunde elucidates his particular praise of the New Britons’ ‘exemplary’ chastity and imperviousness to alcohol in ‘Menschenfresser in Neubritannien’.

The depictions of Melanesian morality in ‘Menschenfresser in Neubritannien’ also accumulate meaning through a comparison with the 1880 paper ‘Über die Bewohner von Ponapé’ (‘On the inhabitants of Ponapé [Pohnpei]’), Finsch’s first article-length publication incorporating observations from his travels. Four of this article’s 32 pages were dedicated to Ponapean sexual customs, which Finsch described with overtones of disgust: he pronounced the island’s inhabitants equally ‘robust’ and ‘bestial’ with respect to ‘the realm of the sensual’ and condemned practices designed to enhance women’s sexual pleasure as ‘repugnant and abhorrent experiments’. Having established, with a prurient attention to detail, that Ponapean women were ‘entirely devoid of chastity and bashfulness’, and further asserting that ‘chastity, modesty and honour in our sense [of the words] were absolutely nonexistent’ amongst Micronesians generally, Finsch took it upon himself to ‘refute the claim, postulated in so many books’, that these qualities had only begun to disappear following contact with whites. The ‘escaped, undisciplined’ sailors and whalers so frequently blamed as ‘the authors of all evil towards the poor naked savages’ might well have committed ‘a number of injustices in earlier years’, but this was only half the story; the islanders, Finsch declared, received ‘great advantages’ from their ‘traffic with whalers’, both through the opportunity to ‘turn their surplus of yams, chickens [and] pigs to account’ and as a result of their access to ‘a quantity of things and tools useful to them’. The strangers’ ‘desire for girls, pretty girls’, probably led to ‘bloody dissensions’ only in ‘exceptional cases’; on the whole, ‘the natives would have complied with this desire as

148 Finsch, ‘Über seine ... Reisen in der Südsee’, 560.
[something] completely self-evident’, all the more willingly as they were able to profit from it.\textsuperscript{153}

While this frank acknowledgement of Indigenous agency in Micronesian–European encounters challenges Samson’s emphasis on the ‘humanitarian’ tendency to centralise ‘white agency’ in explaining the consequences of encounter, Finsch did not recognize Micronesian agency as a positive attribute.\textsuperscript{154} The islanders’ negotiation and accommodation of foreign desires, their incorporation of white visitors and their material culture into existing networks of trade and exchange, were for Finsch signs of their susceptibility to moral corruption. Melanesians had successfully ‘resisted the influence of the white man’; Micronesians had succumbed to it.\textsuperscript{155} The days of Ponapé’s ‘small native population’, he concluded, were numbered, and the island’s wealth would only ‘experience vigorous development’ following settlement by ‘enterprising whites’ with the ability to ‘exploit [it] in a judicious manner’.\textsuperscript{156} Despite Finsch’s ambivalent acknowledgement of Ponapean agency, his first impressions from the Marshall Islands, whose ‘population’ had ‘already forfeited a great deal of its individuality through the influence of the mission’ and was undergoing simultaneously the processes of ‘Europeanisation’ and, ‘like almost all Polynesians’, of ‘extinction’, persisted essentially unchanged throughout his subsequent descriptions of Micronesian and Polynesian people.\textsuperscript{157}

Just as the cultural-cum-moral corruption Finsch deplored amongst Micronesian societies was accompanied by a rhetoric of material disappearance, so the cultural-cum-moral purity he lauded in Melanesia overlapped with and reinforced a narrative of material abundance. He informed the Gesellschaft für Erdkunde that he had discovered in New Britain ‘a field [Arbeitsfeld] … only too rich in every respect’, a point he had already emphasised when writing to Virchow shortly after his arrival in Matupit to request that further funds be made available, ‘as [this is] … so rich a territory in every respect that I intend to remain here longer’.\textsuperscript{158} If he were to continue to work as he had during ‘the first 14 days’ of his stay, he added, ‘I should be good for nothing in a couple

\textsuperscript{153} Finsch, ‘Ueber die Bewohner von Ponapé’, 319.
\textsuperscript{154} Samson, \textit{Imperial Benevolence}, 25, 29.
\textsuperscript{155} Finsch, ‘Ueber seine … Reisen in der Südsee’, 560.
\textsuperscript{156} Finsch, ‘Ueber die Bewohner von Ponapé’, 332.
\textsuperscript{157} Letter from Finsch to Virchow, 30 September 1879, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.
\textsuperscript{158} Finsch, ‘Ueber seine … Reisen in der Südsee’, 560; letter from Finsch to Virchow, 15 August 1880, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.
of months. The urge to preserve all the [items] collected is so great, and as an individual one is so powerless with respect to it, that one wears oneself out'.

In Port Moresby the local Papuans had likewise 'forfeited little of their individuality thus far', both 'because the London Mission Society does not operate so destructively upon the customs and traditions of the natives as do the Wesleyans and Hawaiians' and 'because trade, with the exception of a couple of small trepang-fishers, is to be considered precisely nil'. Here, Finsch had had 'ample opportunity to observe the life of pile-dwellers, in part still deep in the Stone Age', and to capture these observations in material form through 'numerous collections, plaster casts, sketches, photographs and so on'.

This avid collection of Oceanian material culture, coupled with lamentations for its rapid disappearance, continued throughout the subsequent colonial period. For example, during an official visit in 1900 to the village of Lambon, Siar Island, New Mecklenburg (New Ireland Province), the then Governor of German New Guinea Rudolf von Bennigsen (1859-1912) inquired whether the locals 'still had stone weapons' and was told that these had 'long ago' been given away 'to the ships'.

He recounted the incident as 'a speaking example of how quickly the natives of the South Seas divest themselves of their beautiful, ethnographically valuable tools and weapons upon contact with Europeans, in order to exchange them for European trinkets or to replace what they have lost with poor imitations of European metal tools'.

Nevertheless, although von Bennigsen's plaints reveal that European concerns about originality and its loss were also applied to Melanesian societies, echoes of the contrasts between Melanesian originality and Micronesian-Polynesian Europeanisation expressed in Finsch's writings continued to influence anthropological research until well into the twentieth century. Thomas demonstrates that the 'readiness to adopt ... Western goods and practices' for which Polynesian societies had been praised by nineteenth-century writers led to their being perceived as 'heavily acculturated' and thus 'of limited interest

159 Letter from Finsch to Virchow, 15 August 1880, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.

160 Finsch, 'Über seine ... Reisen in der Süßsee', 562


to anthropologists. Melanesians, on the other hand, who had initially attracted criticism for ‘conservatively and intransigently’ resisting Western influence, were subsequently seen to have preserved thereby ‘many authentic and traditional tribal societies’, a perception reflected in the ‘enormous discrepancy between the intensity of ethnographic studies in Papua New Guinea … and the sporadic and isolated character of Polynesian research’.

‘This black boy could … serve as an example to many a white one’

I conclude this chapter with an examination of Finsch’s most unusual publication, his seventeen-page biography of the young Matupit Islander Tapinowanne Torondoluan. This work, titled ‘Tapinowanne Torondoluan: Eine Plauderei aus vorkolonialer Zeit Neupommerns’ (‘Tapinowanne Torondoluan: A conversation from pre-colonial New Pomerania’), was first published in 1902 as part of the anthology Unter dem Dreizack: Neues Marine- und Kolonialbuch für Jung und Alt (‘Beneath the trident: A new naval and colonial book for young and old’). The book, intended for the edification and amusement of a general audience, included poems about seafaring life and anecdotes from the German colonies, as well as more factual pieces discussing navigation, naval signal codes, and the state of Germany’s overseas trade.

‘Tapinowanne Torondoluan’ is at one level an (auto)biographical account of the author’s travels with the eponymous ‘Tapino’, who joined Finsch on his departure from Matupit Island at the end of March 1881, accompanied him on his subsequent travels through Australia, New Zealand, British New Guinea, Java, Ceylon, Italy and Germany, and returned home again after an absence of almost three years. Along with his own impressions of Indigenous life in New Britain, Finsch recounted Tapino’s responses to his encounters with various facets of ‘civilised’ society, as well as civilised society’s responses to the anomaly of a ‘black pleasure traveller’. Although Finsch was by profession a scientist, his lively, personal, self-consciously subjective account differs markedly from what Pratt terms the ‘scientistic, information-oriented branch of travel writing’ which ‘played an extremely important role in producing the domestic subjects of nineteenth-century European capitalist expansion’ and constituted ‘the hegemonic


295
form of othering ... on the imperial frontier'. The discursive agenda of the informational tradition rendered the narrator invisible and converted the subjects of narration into a timeless and homogenised ‘Other’. In contrast, and despite Finsch’s intimate involvement with the German colonial project, ‘Tapinowanne Torondoluan’ has more in common with Pratt’s antithetical category of ‘dramatic’ or ‘sentimental’ travel literature, in which ‘[t]he traveler is the protagonist of the journey and the primary focus of the account’. Finsch’s role as protagonist, however, is shared with — and, in some respects, subordinate to — that of Tapino, a known and named individual whose transformation from ‘naked black boy’ to dapper ambassador for German culture both complemented and challenged Finsch’s colonial ambitions.

Not surprisingly, Finsch’s own priorities and preoccupations colour his account. The publication of ‘Tapinowanne Torondoluan’ in 1902 corresponded with a period of considerable dissatisfaction and unhappiness in his personal life. Following his involvement in the Neu-Guinea Compagnie’s land acquisition venture of 1884-85, he had rejected their offer of employment as station manager in the Bismarck Archipelago, considering it an inadequate recognition ‘for having purchased the whole of Kaiser Wilhelmsland ... for a few hundred marks’ worth of trade goods’. He likewise turned down the Directorship of the Colonial Museum subsequently offered to him by the Neu-Guinea Compagnie, thereby souring his relationship with them permanently. After a fruitless search for employment suitable to his talents in Germany, Finsch eventually accepted a position as Head of the Ornithological Division of the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie in Leiden, ‘a meagrely salaried post’ which provided him and his family — a wife and daughter — with ‘only a modest livelihood’. He found the Museum, ‘a large warehouse without [any] noticeable scientific life’, distinctly dreary, regretted having had to abandon his ethnological endeavours, felt himself to be ‘in exile’ from his ‘Fatherland’ and chafed under the belief that his achievements in acquiring ‘the largest and most beautiful of [Germany’s] South Seas
colonies’ had gone unrecognised and unrewarded. It is not surprising, then, that ‘Tapinowanne Torondoluan’ should present a positive assessment of the New Britons, Germany’s newly acquired colonial subjects, as likeable, non-threatening, civilisable beings. Nor is it surprising that Finsch should emphasise the ‘arbitrariness and lawlessness’ of Tapino’s homeland during his first visit there, the better to contrast it with the ‘new era of peace and civilisation’ supposedly accompanying German rule, which his ‘successful travels and investigations’ in the Samoa had in turn made possible. The fact that ‘Tapinowanne Torondoluan’ was reprinted in pamphlet form by the Abteilung Braunschweig der Deutschen Kolonialgesellschaft (‘Braunschweig division of the German colonial society’) as their contribution to the 1907 Kolonialfest (‘Colonial festival’) further underscores its perceived effectiveness as a colonial advertisement.

The piece also allowed Finsch to highlight his ability to deal successfully with Indigenous people. He stated that his generous payments for his acquisitions, ‘[e]ven beetles, snails, earthworms and suchlike worthless things’, along with his consistent donation of gifts for every burial he attended, had ‘won the hearts and the trust of the blacks’; that he had soon become ‘well-liked by [both] old and young’; and that his seven-months’ stay had been ‘completely peaceful’, despite the New Britons’ ‘evil reputation’ as ‘naked savages’ and cannibals. It was, he added, ‘a congenial duty’ for him ‘to advocate for the[se] natural people, still relatively unadulterated [unverfälscht] at that time’, and to ‘depict them in word and image as faithfully as possible’. Finsch’s emphasis here on the naturalness of the New Britons contrasts markedly with his acknowledgement of their cultural sophistication in ‘Menschenfresser in Neubritannien’. A single reference, in ‘Tapinowanne Torondoluan’, to the New Britons’


174 See also letter from Finsch to Virchow, 5 October 1899, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften; Cunze, ‘Professor Dr. Otto Finsch †’, 25.


practice of charging interest for loans of shell money – 'a remarkable indication of a [state of] culture which one would least of all have expected [to find] amongst these “savages”' – is overwhelmed by descriptions of their good nature and lack of sophistication. Finsch’s desire to underscore the harmlessness of New Britain’s Indigenous population and the benefits which would accrue to them from the protection of a German colonial project in which he felt a proprietorial interest.

Finsch’s description of Tapino, therefore, served in many respects to represent in microcosm traits that he wished to portray as characteristic of New Britain’s Indigenous population as a whole. Suggestions that Tapino, although ‘useful as a hunter’, ‘lacked stamina, like all Kanakas’, or that his ‘bold resolution’ to accompany Finsch on his onward voyage reflected ‘an outstanding effort of energy for a Kanaka, particularly of this age’, illustrate this tendency. They certainly bore little relation to reality, given the huge numbers of Islanders, Melanesians as well as Polynesians and Micronesians, who had long been eager to sail on European vessels. Dorothy Shineberg and David Chappell observe that most trading vessels in the region were mainly crewed by Islanders by the mid-nineteenth century. Finsch’s essentializing comments, however, could be positive as well as negative: for example, he praised Tapino’s ‘steadfast’ adherence to ‘the native virtue of abstemiousness’ when exposed to the ‘previously unknown’ temptations of civilization, ‘such as ... the enticements of sweetmeats or strong drink’, a commendation reminiscent of his earlier eulogies on Melanesian sobriety. Finsch’s attribution of Tapino’s many praiseworthy character traits to natural ability rather than to the beneficial influence of European civilization displayed a comparably positive essentialism:

In conduct, politeness, courtesy, orderliness, obedience and so on this black boy could truly serve as an example to many a white one. And this was not all newly learnt through contact with our customs, but arose for the most part from the easy intelligence and ability which so many of this talented race possess.

178 Finsch, ‘Tapinowanne Torondoluan’, 422.
180 Shineberg, They Came for Sandalwood, 190-8; David A. Chappell, Double Ghosts: Oceanian Voyagers on Euroamerican Ships (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1997), especially 22-40.
With respect to the impact of Finsch’s voyage experiences on his work, it is worth noting briefly that while some of the qualities in this list resonate with earlier characterisations of the ‘Papuan’ temperament in *Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner*, others challenge them. The reference to Tapino’s ‘easy intelligence and ability’, for example, parallels Finsch’s earlier attribution of ‘a great deal of natural intelligence’ to New Guinea’s Papuans.\(^{183}\) On the other hand, the ‘conduct, politeness, courtesy [and] obedience’ of his protégé contrast markedly with the compilations of ‘deceitful’, ‘treacherous’ and ‘vengeful’ behaviour in his pre-voyage monograph.

A notable aspect of Finsch’s publications for a general audience, including both ‘Menschenfresser in Neubritannien’ and ‘Tapinowanne Torondoluan’, is the relative invisibility of race. ‘Menschenfresser in Neubritannien’, for example, states that ‘[a]ll Melanesians, the inhabitants of New Britain, New Ireland, the Solomons, Santa Cruz Group, New Hebrides and so forth, belong to a single race, but they do not constitute a people [*Volk*]’; even the inhabitants of New Britain, Finsch explains, are ‘divided linguistically into many tribes’.\(^{184}\) The physical characteristics of this ‘Melanesian race’ are not discussed, presumably because Finsch considered them self-evident. ‘Tapinowanne Torondoluan’ is still less concerned with the nuances of biological race: ‘Melanesia’ is mentioned once only, and the inhabitants of New Britain are thereafter described as either ‘Kanakas’ or ‘Blacks’. Assessments of the various people mentioned, though expressed in hierarchical terms, do not rest explicitly on race but relate to the presence or absence of ‘culture’, as indicated through customs (nakedness, cannibalism), mode of subsistence (agriculture), and demeanour (conduct, politeness, courtesy, orderliness, obedience). Finsch’s judgements of the people encountered in the Cape York Peninsula, the Torres Strait and south-east New Guinea, expressed through Tapino’s eyes, emphasise the differences in lifeways amongst these ‘brown and black people, externally so similar to [Tapino’s] tribesmen in Blanche Bay’. Tapino, apparently, scorned the ‘Australian Negroes’ for their lack of possessions, especially ‘huts and plantations’; he was unimpressed by their ‘manner of flinging the spear with a throwing stick’ and hardly considered them to be ‘people’ at all. In contrast, the ‘island-dwellers in the Torres Strait, naked Papuans like his countrymen’, made ‘a far more favourable impression’ on him: ‘what beautiful canoes, even [some] with two


outriggers and sails!" As for his 'dark brothers in New Guinea', it was the novelty of their 'houses on poles, in the water as well as on land', which earned them Tapino's 'highest respect'.

Returning to Tapino as representative of the ideal colonial subject, it is also significant that his relationship to Finsch is from the first portrayed as one of subordination; as Thomas has suggested of the young Maori man who persuaded Dumont d'Urville to take him on as 'an active but docile maritime worker', Tapino exemplified for Finsch 'the place that ... Pacific islanders would ideally occupy, in an evolving colonial order in Oceania'. He attracted Finsch's attention initially as 'one of the most useful' of the 'Boys' who, in return for shell-money, spotted live birds, located fallen specimens and collected 'sundry small creatures'. Following their departure from Matupit, Tapino continued to assist Finsch in his collecting activities and was also required to undertake cooking and other daily tasks. Though his role was thus essentially that of a servant, Finsch's language suggests a more paternalistic emphasis. Tapino is variously termed 'lad' or 'boy', the 'protégé' to Finsch's 'foster father'; on one occasion, following an episode in which Tapino runs away and then returns, Finsch refers to him as the 'prodigal son' and himself as Tapino's 'white father'. Although this language is typical of the colonial paternalism which saw its subjects as eternal children, Finsch's adoption of it was perhaps more natural given Tapino's relative youth.

Clearly, then, part of Finsch's purpose in writing 'Tapinowanne Torondoluan' was to promote the necessity of German intervention in New Britain, the natural virtues of the area's inhabitants, and his own involvement in the success of this colonial project. To understand the biography as purely a product of pre-existing colonial and primitivist discourses, however, would be to ignore the real existence and impact of the encounters described. In addition to its narrative of colonial boosterism, Finsch's account recorded

185 Finsch, 'Tapinowanne Torondoluan', 426.
186 Thomas, 'Dumont d'Urville's Anthropology', 56-8.
187 Finsch, 'Tapinowanne Torondoluan', 422.
189 Finsch, 'Tapinowanne Torondoluan', 420, 428, 432.
190 Writing to Virchow in 1881, Finsch described Tapino as 'a pretty New Briton of c. 12 years'; in 'Tapinowanne Torondoluan' he suggested that Tapino was 'perhaps 13 to 14 years old' when they met in Matupit and 'around fifteen' by the time they returned to Berlin. See letter from Otto Finsch to Rudolf Virchow, 17 August 1881, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften; Finsch, 'Tapinowanne Torondoluan', 419, 422.
his genuine affection and admiration for Tapino the person, frequently linking his perceptions to specific events and incidents:

At all events my Tapino was second to no child reared in civilization in good nature and good-heartedness ... Always ready and willing to help, he was also always glad to share with other children, even titbits which most of ours would have kept for themselves. It was touching at his departure in Hamburg when he handed over to me at the last minute a beautiful Japanese parasol, which he loved with all his heart, with the words ‘for Senta’ – his most beloved little friend in Bremen (Fig. 24).  

**Figure 24: Otto Finsch, ‘Tapino in Bremen mit Senta und Anna’**. 

The above photograph, which places Tapino in a protective position, possibly implying some authority over the two younger girls, tellingly illustrates the complex hierarchies resulting from the imbrications of race, gender, age and ‘civilisation’ (represented in

---

this case by ‘correct’ use of European clothing). Unfortunately, a fuller examination of these hierarchies lies beyond the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, like the Methodist Mission postcard, ‘Study in Black and White’ (c. 1908), analysed by Thomas, this portrait of Tapino, Senta and Anna emphasises Tapino’s humanity and equates the three subjects depicted ‘in human worth’. 193

The device of viewing his own experiences through the eyes of a foreign protagonist also allowed Finsch to present these experiences in a new light and even to offer some mild criticisms. For example, although the simple exchange of the ‘few cockatoo feathers in his hair’ for a ‘fine suit and jaunty hat’ served to transform Tapino from ‘naked black boy’ into ‘newly civilised youth’, Finsch’s gently sarcastic commentary – ‘Yes, yes! Clothes make the man!’ – simultaneously drew attention to the superficiality of this veneer of civilisation, a point emphasized by the suggestion that his ‘black boy’ could ‘serve as an example to many a white one’. 194 In fact, Tapino appears to advantage in several of his encounters with whites. The street boys of Naples hurl rotten fruit at him, disproving Finsch’s solemn assurances that ‘the white boys … would not harass him’; their German peers attract Tapino’s criticism for engaging in ‘all kinds of horseplay’ and ‘not always [being] kind to their weaker companions’, on whose behalf Tapino ‘always intervened’. 195 The stuffy bureaucrat who facilitates the pair’s entry to Berlin proves incapable of comprehending a ‘black pleasure traveller’. 196 Even in Finsch’s home region, the Silesian provincials titter fearfully at the arrival of a ‘moor’ and ‘man-eater’ in their midst; schoolchildren flee – ‘He’s coming, he’s coming!’ – until they are enticed back by curiosity and discover ‘the harmlessness of the dark stranger’, who soon becomes ‘a popular, indeed a sought-after playmate’, impressing his new friends with his spear-throwing and flute-playing abilities. 197 Their initial fear, succeeded by favourable impressions, mirrors Finsch’s own discovery of the New Britons’ ‘good nature’, which coexisted with their cannibal practices and became apparent only with the advantage of an insider’s perspective: ‘Admittedly, to appreciate this, one must penetrate more into [their] family life or … have been foster father for some time to a black boy’. 198

193 Thomas, Colonialism’s Culture, 129-33.
197 Finsch, ‘Tapinowanne Torondoluan’, 430.
In addition to his positive assessments of Tapino’s abilities and character, Finsch’s account also displayed a continuation of the concern for his protégé’s wellbeing which had already appeared during his travels. Writing from Sydney in August 1881, he took the opportunity of informing Virchow that ‘the arrangement of [hairs on] the scalp’ amongst Melanesians was ‘just as it is amongst us’, adding:

You will best be able to satisfy yourself on this [point] from my boy Tapinowanne, a pretty New Briton of ca. 12 years, whom I am bringing with me especially for you ... Unfortunately he is ill at present, I fear [suffering] from a chest infection, and that makes me anxious, although I have a good doctor for him.¹⁹⁹

The suggestion that Tapino was intended primarily as an object of anthropological interest was reiterated in ‘Tapinowanne Torondoluan’. Although Finsch was careful to stress that Tapino had accompanied him of his own free will, he added that the desire ‘to make available to Science ... a real live Papuan’, ‘a living representative of [his] race’, for observation and measurement had been ‘the main reason to take Tapino with [him]’.²⁰⁰ Nevertheless, when Tapino again developed a lung infection while staying at Finsch’s ‘bachelor residence’ in Bremen, Finsch found himself wondering what he would do if his protégé were to die. Which creed would ‘offer the dead stranger, the heathen, a final resting place’? Or should he dedicate the corpse to anatomical investigation, like that of ‘the Australian who had died shortly before in Berlin’²⁰¹? Deeply affected by Tapino’s fevered ravings of home, ‘never in his [own] language, but in [his] usual broken English’, Finsch’s response was definite:²⁰²

No! For all [my] respect for Science, the boy had become too dear to me for that. Never! Then I thought again of [his] relatives on the little island in the South Seas ... they are all waiting eagerly, and if Tapino never returns, it will be clear that the ‘Dota’ (Doctor) has simply sold him.²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ Letter from Finsch to Virchow, 17 August 1881, NL Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.
²⁰¹ I have not yet been able to identify the person to whom this refers.
With the assistance of Finsch's 'dear friend Dr. Thorspecken', however, Tapino returned to health, 'and the convalescence of a hot summer banished the last fears of any evil aftermath'. Finsch arranged for his return to Matupit before the next winter via 'a direct ship from Hamburg', accompanied by 'a great number of useful and useless objects', including a Hawaiian military cap and a botanists' specimen container. With Tapino’s departure fast approaching, Finsch realised for the first time 'how much [he] would sometimes miss the boy':

We had been together almost 2 ¼ years, a fine time [in which] to get to know each other. Hardly marred by discord, our relationship had developed of its own accord into a friendly [and] sometimes even an affectionate one ... we had been through a good deal together, at sea and on land.

Although, according to Finsch’s observations, ‘Kanakas’ were ‘not excessively tender-hearted’, when he ‘pressed [Tapino’s] hand for the last time’ on board the schooner that was to take him home ‘and bade him “good bye for ever”’, the latter ‘could no longer hold back his long-suppressed tears’. ‘In truth’, Finsch added, ‘this parting also affected me very deeply’.

'Tapinowanne Torondoluau' concluded with a description of the eponymous hero's triumphant return home. Lionized by his friends and relatives, sought out even by the inhabitants of distant villages, he became 'a lecturer, indeed an itinerant preacher', who 'helped to spread a great deal of light amongst his countrymen'. This account was challenged by Eduard Hernsheim, who recorded in his journal only that Tapino, 'in spite of several years spent among Germans ... had learnt no German but only bad pidgin English, and made a very poor impression in his strange get-up'. Although Finsch attributed his information to an unnamed naval officer residing in Matupit at the time of Tapino's return, there is obvious colonial social capital in his congratulatory declaration that 'this Kanaka lad’s journey, arranged by myself and at my expense', had

---

204 Finsch, 'Tapinowanne Torondoluau', 434.
206 Finsch, 'Tapinowanne Torondoluau', 435.
207 Finsch, 'Tapinowanne Torondoluau', 435.
208 Finsch, 'Tapinowanne Torondoluau', 435.
209 Sack and Clark, Eduard Hernsheim, 85.
produced an enthusiastic native promoter of Germany’s reputation and significance’. Nevertheless, despite Finsch’s investment in the German colonial project and his dedication to primitivist ideals, both of which are evident in his account, his depiction of Tapino was undeniably influenced by his extended and predominantly positive personal encounter with the named and known Tapinowanne Torondoluan.

Social developmentalism, cultural relativism and romantic primitivism combine in Finsch’s writings in ways which are alternately mutually reinforcing, contradictory, and ambiguous. His selection of particular traits for emphasis can partly be explained by the context and intentions of his texts: thus, the New Britons’ agricultural and commercial sophistication served to disprove charges of savagery and to counterbalance negatively-viewed aspects of their society, in particular nakedness and cannibalism, but it was their simplicity and natural goodness which were highlighted when Finsch’s aim was to justify the legitimacy and benevolence of the German colonial project. Racial ideas, though generally implicit rather than explicit in these texts, vary in their relationship to Finsch’s developmentalist hierarchies. At times the two strands, implicitly racial and explicitly developmental, served to reinforce one another: for example, the suggestion that the Indigenous inhabitants of the Cape York Peninsula were so lacking in the trappings of culture that they could hardly be considered ‘people’. At other times Finsch’s developmentalist hierarchies challenged deep-seated racial assumptions, most notably in his assertions that the New Britons could simultaneously be physically indistinguishable from ‘Negroes’ and culturally very advanced. As I observed with regard to Meyer, the process of disentangling Finsch’s experiences from his research and collection agendas, his philosophical commitments and his colonial interests is not a straightforward one. Nevertheless, close comparative readings of his pre- and post-voyage publications suggest that he drew on social developmentalism, cultural relativism and romantic primitivism alternately in order to support the positive impressions gained from his personal experiences of those people he termed ‘New Britons’, both in his seven months on Matupit Island and during his subsequent years in the company of Tapinowanne Torondoluan.

---

Conclusion

History is not the past, any more than anthropology is the different. History is a conscious relationship between past and present; anthropology is a conscious relationship between familiar and strange. In re-presenting the past, in re-constructing the different, there is no avoiding our present or ourselves.¹

The preceding chapters have shown that both Meyer and Finsch profoundly altered their beliefs about race and human difference as a result of their encounters with actual Oceanian people. These alterations are particularly visible in their communications from the field, composed amid the immediacy and abundance of new and unsettling impressions and experiences. Finsch’s impetuous dismissal of the opinions of respected metropolitan anthropologists, his excited declarations that the Papuans of coastal south-east New Guinea were ‘a completely different race than [he] had imagined’ and threw ‘all our beautiful theories … into complete disarray’, and his grand conclusion that ‘human races … merge into one another to such an extent that the difference between Europeans and Papuans ultimately becomes completely unimportant’, clearly attest to the significance of his field experiences in reshaping his ideas about the breadth of individual variation within supposedly homogeneous races and the extent of overlap between them. The differences in his pre- and post-voyage assessments of nakedness and cannibalism as diagnostics of savagery similarly demonstrate the transformative influence of positive personal encounters on his received ideas. Meyer’s insistence that the essentialised ‘Papuan’ form described by Wallace could not justifiably be represented as ‘the typical one … because one continually encounters other physiognomies which do not correspond to it at all’ indicates the strength of the challenge which personal experience could pose to received ideas, particularly given Meyer’s great respect for Wallace’s work. The fact that both Meyer and Finsch continued to derive authority and expertise from their field experiences long after they had returned to the metropole further emphasises the importance they assigned to these experiences.

The extent to which Meyer’s and Finsch’s field experiences were permitted to challenge the ideas of others is more difficult to assess. In the majority of cases their attempts to change prevailing opinions appear to have fallen on deaf ears. Virchow, with whom

¹ Dening, Islands and Beaches, 3.
both travellers had close and prolonged professional contact, was a particular culprit. He maintained that 'the narrow, long, downward-hanging nose' described by Wallace formed 'the most unique aspect of the Papuan face', ignoring Meyer's observations of 'other physiognomies'. He opposed his expert opinion, as late nineteenth-century Germany's pre-eminent craniologist, to Finsch's suggestions that the Negritos of the Philippines could be considered Melanesians, or that there was no anthropological justification for classifying 'the so-called Micronesians' as a separate race; Finsch's 'intuition', Virchow implied, was no match for the 'laborious and detailed investigations' required to fathom such matters 'scientifically'. His fellow craniologists in France disputed Meyer's conclusions on similar grounds: Meyer's having 'visited and lived in Malaysia and New Guinea' was 'not enough', Girard de Rialle declared, 'to reduce to nothing, with one word or one stroke of the pen, the great anthropological value of the cephalic index'. Even Finsch's attempts to convince the German reading public of the sophistication of Tolai society were doomed to failure: the same volume in which 'Tapinowanne Torondoluan' appeared in print for the first time also featured an essay on Germany's colonial possessions which dismissed the inhabitants of the entire Bismarck Archipelago with the single noun, 'cannibals'.

The intractable opposition to Meyer's and Finsch's unorthodox opinions expressed by these metropolitan savants may partly be explained by their desire to reassert their own authority, to police the boundaries of scientific knowledge and to reinforce metropolitan control over the interpretation of field observations. More broadly, however, I suggest that both Meyer and Finsch had the misfortune to have undertaken their fieldwork at a time when the alterations wrought to their understandings of race as a result of their field experiences did not correspond to the dominant currents of German anthropological thought – or, indeed, those of Euro-American anthropology generally. A century earlier, or thirty years later, these same views might well have attracted more support. For example, Finsch's insistence on a 'single human species' in which the various subdivisions 'merge[d] into one another', like Meyer's emphasis on the variability of Papuan 'body size' and 'skin colour' and the irreducible 'polymorphism of their physiognomy', recalled the conclusions of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, who had maintained that the process of dividing the human species into 'varieties' was necessarily an 'arbitrary' one, since each 'variety of men' transitioned so 'gradually' to

---

the next that it was virtually impossible to ‘determine boundaries between them’. Meyer’s and Finsch’s criticisms of metropolitan anthropologists’ neat racial categories similarly foreshadowed Franz Boas’s (1858-1942) influential critiques of static racial typologies, drawn from his studies of physical plasticity and the instability of human ‘race-types’. Virchow, however, who disputed the existence of transitional forms and based his craniometrical studies on the assumption that human races were relatively stable, was less receptive to such interpretations. Felix von Luschan (1854-1924), Extraordinary Professor of Anthropology at the University of Berlin from 1900 and Divisional Director (Africa-Oceania) at the Museum für Völkerkunde from 1904-08, who took over ‘the task of politically controlling the “scientific truth”’ in German anthropological circles after Virchow’s death in 1902, was similarly unsympathetic towards presumptuous travellers. He had studied medicine and anthropology with Broca and insisted that field observations could not substitute for craniometrical knowledge, describing ‘the measurement of living [subjects]’ as ‘only a very imperfect surrogate for the measurement of skulls and skeletons.’

Both Meyer and Finsch appear to have become relatively peripheral to subsequent German-language anthropological and ethnographic studies of Oceania in general and New Guinea in particular. In Meyer’s case this can largely be explained by the fact that his travels were undertaken in what was then Dutch New Guinea. It is no surprise, therefore, that the few references to his studies of New Guinea mostly appear in the works of Dutch or Dutch-speaking anthropologists. Ironically, many of these authors co-opted Meyer’s work to undertake studies, or support conclusions, with which he would undoubtedly have had little sympathy. Wichmann, for example, reached the

---

3 Blumenbachii [Blumenbach], De Generis Humani Varietate Nativa, 40-41; idem, De Generis Humani Varietate Nativa, 3rd edn, 308, 322.


5 Massin, ‘From Virchow to Fischer’, 92.

6 Felix von Luschan, Beiträge zur Völkerkunde der deutschen Schutzgebiete ... (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer (Ernst Vohsen), 1897), 9.

conclusion that western New Guinea had been ‘touched by the Semitic wave’, albeit ‘to a very minor extent’, listing Meyer as one of many observers of ‘Semitic physiognomies in New Guinea’. J. P. Kleiweg de Zwaan noted Meyer’s identification of ‘three types’ amongst the Papuans, but claimed that Meyer had explained ‘the Papuan type of the Geelvink Bay’ as the result of ‘an admixture of Caucasian or Hindu blood’. Neither of these authors showed any awareness that Meyer had explicitly disavowed the necessity of concluding, from the diversity of Papuan facial forms, that they were a mixed race. A third anthropologist, Hendrik Cornelis Bos, mentioned Meyer in his craniometrical investigation of the inhabitants of the Schouten Islands, precisely the kind of detailed descriptive study that Meyer had declared unprofitable and burdensome.

H. L. Shapiro’s later paper on ‘The Physical Relationships of the Easter Islanders’, which drew on Meyer and Jablonowski’s 1901 study of Easter Island crania, adhered more closely to Meyer’s cautious approach to craniometric data but also displayed the persistence of racial thinking in relation to Oceanian people. As late as 1940, Shapiro could still contextualise his investigation as the latest in a series of ‘attempts to assign the Easter Islanders to their proper place in the racial hierarchy of Oceania’, stating that although previous ‘craniological investigations of Easter Island racial affinities’ had not reached any ‘unanimity of opinion’, his own ‘series of anthropometric measurements’, carried out on individuals ‘rigidly selected ... for their purity of descent’, indicated ‘that the Easter Islanders are definitely Polynesians’.

Finsch’s Oceanic researches do not appear to have received even the limited attention accorded to Meyer’s writings. His own involvement with the colonial ventures of the Neu-Guinea Compagnie had helped open up a rapidly expanding ethnographic frontier, the fertility of which as a field for further research soon made his own collections and observations redundant. As stated in Chapter Two, most of Finsch’s extensive physical anthropological collections remained in the possession of the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin, where they received minimal scholarly attention, partly due to Adolf Bastian’s lack of interest in anthropological investigations and partly as a result of the chaos caused by his indiscriminate accumulation of ‘salvaged’ artefacts. In this

---

8 Wichmann, Bericht über eine ... Reise nach Neu-Guinea, 120 note 12, 121.
9 Kleiweg de Zwaan, De Rassen van den Indischen Archipel, 187-8.
10 Bos, Bijdrage tot de Anthropologie ... der Schouten-Eilanden, especially 36-140, 162-87.
12 See also Buschmann, Anthropology’s Global Histories, 12-28.
13 Karl Hauser, who wrote his doctoral dissertation on craniological material collected by Finsch during his second Oceanic voyage, regretted that ‘so valuable a collection’ had not been retained in its entirety.
respect Meyer was more fortunate than Finsch. Meyer, who had the advantage of private means, was able to retain the bulk of his collections in his own possession and could thus exercise substantial control over their subsequent use. In addition, his tertiary training in medicine and natural sciences allowed him to interpret and publish his cranial material in a format which could gain him the acknowledgement, if not the agreement, of his peers in an increasingly institutionalised discipline. Finsch, by contrast, was dependent on others for funding and was consequently obliged to relinquish the bulk of his collections to others. Those resulting from his first voyage, as already mentioned, were requisitioned by the Museum für Völkerkunde, those from his second voyage were sold to the same museum by the leader of the Neu-Guinea Compagnie, Adolf von Hansemann, to the Company’s considerable profit.14

Finsch’s efforts to make the transition from travelling collector to metropolitan savant in the field of ethnology were equally unsuccessful. His first major scientific publication after returning from his colonial ventures, the monumental Ethnologische Erfahrungen und Belegstücke aus der Südsee, received only lukewarm responses from the two ethnological heavyweights who reviewed it. J. D. E. (Johannes Diedrich Eduard) Schmeltz (1839-1909), Director of the Rijks Ethnographisch Museum (‘Imperial Ethnographic Museum’) in Leiden and former Curator at the Museum Godeffroy in Hamburg, contradicted Finsch’s suggestion that tattooing should simply be understood as ‘bodily embellishment’ and had nothing to do with ‘religious and other views’; significantly, he also pointed out that although Finsch had spent almost a year on Jaluit, his comments regarding ‘the tattooing of the Gilbert Islanders’ were in fact the result of only ‘thirty days’ observation’.15

Von Luschan, who mentioned Finsch’s monograph in his Beiträge zur Völkerkunde der deutschen Schutzgebiete (‘Contributions to the ethnoogy of the German protectorates’, 1897), contradicted Finsch’s suggestions that the forms of carvings from New Ireland depended merely on the sculptor’s ‘whim and imagination’ and that any suggestion that

by the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin, but that ‘12 skulls, a third of the holdings, were given away as so-called “duplicates”’. Karl Hauser, ‘Das kranio logiche Material der Neu-Guinea-Expedition des Dr. Finsch (1884/85) und eine Schädelserie aus Neu-Irland’, Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde genehmigt von der philosophischen Fakultät der Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin (Berlin: Max Günther, 1906), 1.

they were shaped by ‘deeper thought[s]’ stemmed entirely from ethnological overanalysis. Not so, von Luschan declared: although Finsch’s views had been ‘the generally prevailing ones’ for almost the past ten years, ‘the experts [die Fachleute]’ were now beginning ‘to incline towards other perceptions’. ‘For us’, he continued, ‘whim, caprice and grotesque fancy are no longer the co-creators of such works; we seek instead ... to comprehend their real meaning’. Unlike the complex significance of the New Ireland carvings, the ‘real meaning’ of von Luschan’s criticisms could hardly be clearer: he and his metropolitan peers represented the circle of Fachleute (experts, professionals, or specialists) from whose company Finsch, damned with faint praise as a ‘perceptive observer’, a ‘diligent naturalist’ and ‘collector par excellence’, was excluded.

Meyer was more successful in reinventing himself post-voyage. During his thirty years as Director of the Königlich Zoologisches und Anthropologisch-Ethnographisches Museum in Dresden, he gained an international reputation and received favourable reviews for publications on topics ranging from the history, technology and archaeology of jade to the script used by the Manguianes of Mindoro in the Philippines. Late in life, however, his reputation was tarnished by the circumstances of his departure from the Directorship. In November 1904, on the basis of an anonymous accusation of misconduct, he was suspended from his duties as Director; in May 1906 he was dismissed from his position following disciplinary proceedings. Contemporary newspaper reports of the affair are both sensationalised and occasionally

---

16 von Luschan, Beiträge zur Völkerkunde der deutschen Schutzgebiete, 76; Finsch, Ethnologische Erfahrungen und Belegstücke, 133.
17 von Luschan, Beiträge zur Völkerkunde der deutschen Schutzgebiete, 76.
contradictory.²⁰ Arnold Jacobi (1870-1948), who replaced Meyer as Director, offered a more balanced assessment of his predecessor. He criticised Meyer’s ‘impulsive’ temperament, ‘insufficiently guided by a knowledge of human nature’, his ‘unequal treatment’ of staff members, his ‘imprudent disregard’ for administrative regulations and his occasional evidence of ‘business sense’ (the majority of the accusations related to misappropriation of funds), but added that Meyer’s enemies had also envied his professional success and that an ‘impartial evaluation’ ought to ‘place [Meyer’s] achievements, rather than his transgressions, in the foreground’.²¹ However, the circumstances of Meyer’s dismissal evidently influenced the opinions of his colleagues. A file of von Luschan’s papers, containing correspondence from Meyer, includes a copy of an article from the Dresdner Anzeiger reporting Meyer’s trial and dismissal, together with the following addition to one of Meyer’s letters: ‘This is A. B. MEYER, at that time Director of the Museum in Dresden, later cashiered due to dishonesty’.²²

Much of the more recent suspicion surrounding Meyer’s work can be attributed to the scathing assessment of his travels in New Guinea by the Netherlands-based German geologist Arthur Wichmann.²³ Wichmann devoted over eleven pages of his Entdeckungsgeschichte to Meyer, accusing him not only of inaccuracies and inconsistencies but of deliberate fabrications, and concluded with the following blistering paragraph:

Truth and fiction are altogether intertwined in [Meyer’s] travel reports to such an extent, that in some cases it is completely impossible to separate them … No naturalist will have the right henceforth to appeal to any of

---

²¹ Jacobi, Fünfzig Jahre Museum für Völkerkunde, 50-1.
Meyer’s statements ... Within science, however, the name of this man, to whom truthfulness has never been anything other than a overused commodity, will live on for centuries as a chilling example.\textsuperscript{24}

The few recent scholars to pay any attention to Meyer appear to have accepted Wichmann’s assessment of him uncritically.\textsuperscript{25} Wichmann, however, was by no means an objective observer and indeed had good reason to wish to discredit Meyer’s achievements: in 1903, some years before his \textit{Entdeckungsgeschichte} appeared in print, he had led a Dutch expedition to the self-same region of New Guinea that Meyer had visited thirty years earlier.\textsuperscript{26} In direct contradiction of his own statement that ‘[n]o naturalist’ would ‘have the right ... to appeal to any of Meyer’s statements’

Wichmann’s report on this expedition cited Meyer’s anthropological observations where they confirmed his own, while simultaneously dismissing his geographical achievements.\textsuperscript{27}

Some recent scholars have suggested that Wichmann’s attacks were motivated partly by antisemitism.\textsuperscript{28} This possibility is supported by the fact that Wichmann’s attack on Meyer in the \textit{Entdeckungsgeschichte} commences with a footnote stating that the latter’s ‘real name is Aron Baruch Meyer’, a claim for which I have found no independent evidence.\textsuperscript{29} Even if this were the case, conversion to Christianity (frequently involving the adoption of a non-Jewish name) was far from uncommon amongst German Jews in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{30} Pragmatic considerations, including the desire ‘to conform, escape stigma, gain professional rights, bolster social status, win a government or academic post, [or] marry’, underlay many such

\textsuperscript{24} Wichmann, \textit{Entdeckungsgeschichte}, II, 178.
\textsuperscript{26} Redactie, ‘Nieuw-Guinea expeditie’, \textit{Tijdschrift van het Koninklijk Nederlandsch Aardrijkskundig Genootschap}, 2. ser., 20 (1903), 719-36; Wichmann, \textit{Bericht über eine ... Reise nach Neu-Guinea}.
\textsuperscript{27} Wichmann, \textit{Bericht über eine ... Reise nach Neu-Guinea}, 120 note 12, 207-8 note 2, 352 note 4, 364-5.
\textsuperscript{29} Wichmann, \textit{Entdeckungsgeschichte}, II, 167 note 1.
conversions and represented a perfectly explicable strategy in a society characterised by latent antisemitism.31 Wichmann, however, compared Meyer with other notorious producers of ‘fabricated and counterfeited voyages’ – notably Theodor Mundt-Lauff, later exposed as the ‘professional swindler Friedrich Ludwig Theodor Mundt’, and John A. Lawson, tentatively identified as Robert Henry Armit (1844-?), whose Wanderings in the Interior of New Guinea (1875) evoked storms of protest as one of the most widely read and circulated pseudo-factual accounts of New Guinea – thereby implying that Meyer had adopted a false name for deceitful purposes.32

Meyer himself admitted that his maps and descriptions contained inaccuracies. As I have already mentioned in Chapter One, he stressed in the preface to his published travel journal extracts that he had not undertaken his voyages with geographical activities in mind and that his ‘geographical sketches’ of New Guinea had always been secondary to his ‘principal activity’ of ‘making zoological, anthropological and ethnographical observations and building up collections’. He hoped that this explanation would excuse ‘the manifold inadequacies and, as the future will show … the manifold inaccuracies of [his] maps’, but repeated that he considered them ‘only a first draft, capable of much improvement’. Since he did not envisage being able to publish a more comprehensive account of his travels in the foreseeable future, he hoped that his maps, faulty as they were, and a ‘simple extract from [his] journal’ would perhaps be ‘welcome here and there’, particularly to other aspiring travellers; had he himself had access even to ‘a similarly defective geographical work’ during his travels, he would have ‘been able to improve it with ease’ and would ‘certainly have [been able to move] more quickly from place to place’.33 These admissions, I argue, invalidate Wichmann’s bitterest accusations. It is also worth emphasising that earlier criticisms of the accuracy of Meyer’s travel accounts were expressed in far milder terms, that Wichmann’s accusations were contested by several of his contemporaries, and that

31 Amos Elon, The Pity of It All: A Portrait of Jews in Germany, 1743-1933 (London: Penguin, 2004), 81-90, 229-31. For a detailed example of the barriers, both institutionalised and informal, which confronted the career aspirations of unconverted Jews in the late nineteenth century, see Thomas Rink, Doppelte Loyalität: Fritz Rathenau als deutscher Beamter und Jude (Hildesheim, Zürich, New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 2002), 37-55.


33 Meyer, Auszüge, 1.
Wichmann was notorious as a ferocious and unforgiving critic, even amongst his close associates.  

As for Finsch, it is possible that his lack of career success was partly the result of his involvement in Germany’s colonial project (see also Chapter Four). Buschmann suggests that the Russian traveller-naturalist Miklouho-Maclay, who had lived for 15 months on the north-east coast of New Guinea and took a personal interest in the wellbeing of Indigenous New Guineans, was the first to cast doubt on Finsch’s ethnological abilities. Miklouho-Maclay had been active in frustrating Queensland’s attempted annexation of south-east New Guinea in 1882, and in October 1884 had written to Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898) urging him, ‘in the name of justice and humanity’, to ‘induce the Great Powers … to take under their protection the rights of the dark natives on the islands of the Pacific … against the shameless injustices and cruel exploitation … not only of the English, but of the whites in general!’ Rumours of Germany’s annexation of north-east New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago, circulating in Australia in January 1885, consequently took Miklouho-Maclay unpleasantly by surprise.

What was worse, the annexations had been carried out by Otto Finsch. The two had previously met in Sydney during Finsch’s first voyage, at which time Finsch had gained an impression of the Russian naturalist as ‘a very interesting, peculiar person’ who appeared to be ‘very capable in his field’. (With regard to the impact of field experience on received ideas, it is worth noting here that Finsch’s opinion of Miklouho-

---


Maclay had improved markedly on making his personal acquaintance; he had previously described the Russian, ‘according to everything that I [have] heard’, as ‘a boasting, sauntering naturalist playing at science, which given his nationality does not surprise me’. In the reports and publications detailing his second voyage, however, Finsch stated that he had sought out Miklouho-Maclay deliberately, hoping to obtain information useful for the intended German annexation of north-east New Guinea. He added that his selection of Astrolabe Bay as a first port of call was partly based on Miklouho-Maclay’s description of the area as ‘very rich’, and that his friendly reception and successful acquisition of land there were chiefly due to local perceptions of him as a ‘Maclay-Germania’, a ‘brother’ of Maclay’s.

On 9 January 1885, Miklouho-Maclay cabled Bismarck directly with the bald message: ‘Maclay coast natives reject [G]erman annexation’. Three days prior, he had sent a letter to the editor of the Melbourne Argus, stating that a Russian claim to New Guinea’s north-east coast would be ‘much more valid’ than the reported German one. The crew of the Vitiaz, his transport to New Guinea, had hoisted the Russian flag at Port Constantine in 1871; moreover, he ‘scarcely believe[d] that Dr. Finsch, not knowing the dialect of the Maclay coast, could make the alleged purchase of land, which has led to the report of a German annexation of the north coast of New Guinea’. In a subsequent letter to the Russian newspaper Novosti, published in English translation in the Pall Mall Gazette and the Sydney Morning Herald, Miklouho-Maclay repeated this claim in still more forceful terms, ‘strongly doubt[ing] whether Dr. Finsch, who did not know any of the dialects spoken by the natives on the Maclay coast, could have acquired from them the portion of land which was the basis of the German annexation of the northern coast of New Guinea’. Buschmann suggests,

38 Letter from Otto Finsch to Rudolf Virchow, 4 September 1880, NL. Virchow, Nr. 607, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.
therefore, that ‘[w]hat started as an attack on the righteousness of German annexations became ... a serious attack on Finsch’s ethnographic abilities’.42

While Miklouho-Maclay certainly endeavoured to cast doubt on Finsch’s linguistic competence, it is not clear to what extent his criticisms were accepted by a German audience. Many German newspapers focused their responses on Miklouho-Maclay himself, accusing him of ‘anti-German’ sentiment, expressing suspicion of his motives and allegiance – he had unwisely described ‘Great Britain’ as ‘[t]he only power from which the natives of the island groups of the Pacific Ocean can expect justice’ – and suggesting that his ‘ill-considered’ protests were not supported by the Russian government and had made him a laughing-stock.43 Praise for Finsch was forthcoming particularly from colonial enthusiasts, but at least one of his fellow German traveller-naturalists also expressed admiration: the widely-travelled and much-decorated explorer Wilhelm Joest (1852-1897) remarked in the Kölnische Zeitung that Finsch had shown himself to belong to that ‘higher’ class of explorers ‘who overcomes and conquers all justified and unjustified prejudices, all the obstacles which place themselves in his way, by the spell of his personality alone ... without resorting to weapons of murder’.44

Others in the German anthropological community were perhaps more ambivalent about Finsch’s involvement in Germany’s colonial project. As Buschmann, Penny, Weindling and Zimmermann have all pointed out, the relationship between anthropology and colonialism was a fraught and contradictory one: anthropologists condemned colonialism, implicitly or explicitly, as a threat to the survival of unique cultures, but were simultaneously dependent upon colonial institutions for the success of their

salvage endeavours. The technological advances that facilitated their access to ‘empirical evidence’, in the form of previously ‘unknown’ people, were catalysts of fundamental and irreversible changes to the lives and material cultures of these people; the global networks that lubricated the wheels of ethnological endeavour were equally responsible for spreading the ‘European “civilization”’ whose ‘homogenizing power’ German ethnologists struggled to outrun. Neither Virchow nor Bastian could afford to ‘ignore the advantages deriving from Germany’s colonial venture and the agencies connected with the colonial expansion’, yet as political liberals they both ‘oppose[d] outright colonial annexation on a political level’. Drawing on Penny’s analysis of the hostile response to political statements made in ethnological circles by the Czech collector Alberto Vojtěk Frič (1882-1944), I suggest that the leading lights of Germany’s anthropological-ethnological community were uncomfortable with Finsch’s vocal and practical support for German colonialism because it blurred the ‘rhetorical division between politics and science’ which they ‘carefully guarded’ and threatened to ‘expose the disparity between [their] cosmopolitan visions, their purported liberal humanism, and the realities of collecting in a colonialist world’.

In the end, both Finsch and Meyer can be seen as men whose own understandings of human difference were profoundly reshaped by their field experiences, but who struggled to communicate these changes to influential colleagues in the metropole. From confident metropolitan authors to astonished travelling observers to tenacious but marginalized returnees, their career trajectories illustrate, on the one hand, the extent to which field experience could modify pre-existing beliefs; on the other, the limits placed on effective communication of such modifications by a rigid professional vocabulary, essentialist tools and technologies, and an epistemologically and ideologically un receptive audience. Within their own lifetimes, as this thesis has demonstrated, traveller-naturalists like Meyer and Finsch were frequently obliged to subordinate unruly personal experience to the demands of metropolitan authority. In retrospect, however, it is their accounts of their experiences and encounters in the field which retain a crucial force and freshness; the works of armchair anthropologists, by contrast, appear bizarre to today’s eyes and might even seem laughable if they had not been so.

46 Penny, Objects of Culture, 29-30.
48 Penny, Objects of Culture, 126-30.
deeply implicated in human suffering. Countersigns of Indigenous presence, though they were largely excluded from the construction and perpetuation of metropolitan anthropological knowledge, nevertheless have value as reminders that human agency was at work on both sides of historical encounters. Europeans, including Meyer and Finsch, had the advantage in reporting such encounters to their audiences in the metropoles, but they controlled neither the encounters themselves nor their Indigenous participants.
Bibliography

Archival sources

Archiv der Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte, Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte, Berlin

Australian Museum, Sydney
Anthropology Division.

Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München

Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften

Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde
Reichskolonialamt Sig. R 1001/2365: Akten betreffend Forschungsreisen nach Neu Guinea, Februar 1908 – Juni 1914.


*Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden*


*Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, Paris*

MS 2255 (Correspondance des années 1878-1883), Hamy, Ernest-Théodore (1860-1889): Correspondance.

MS 2256 (Correspondance des années 1884-1887), Hamy, Ernest-Théodore (1860-1889): Correspondance.

*Sächsisches Staatsarchiv – Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden*

Signatur 11125 Ministerium des Kultus und öffentlichen Unterrichts No. 19305, Acta, die ethnographische und die anthropologische Sammlung betr. 1875-1881.

Signatur 67/7 Ministerium für Volksbildung (MfVobi) No. 19305, Acta, die ethnographische und die anthropologische Sammlung betr. 1875-1881.


*Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (Handschriftenabteilung)*


Sig. Darmstaedter, Asien (1876): Finsch, Otto.

*Stadtarchiv Braunschweig*


*Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig*

Published sources – primary


Anon. (1831) *The Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, of the Year 1830*. London: Baldwin and Cradock.


— (1904) [Untitled]. *Dresdner Nachrichten*, 314 (12 November), 2.


— (1906) Oertliches und Sächsisches. *Dresdner Nachrichten*, 139 (22 May), 9.

(1911) Notes and News [death of Dr. Adolf Bernhard Meyer]. *Auk*, 28 (October), 519.


(1875) *Supplement to Thesaurus Craniorum: Catalogue of the skulls of the various races of man in the collection of Joseph Barnard Davis*. London: Printed by Taylor and Francis for the subscribers.


[Bernier, François] (1684) Nouvelle division de la Terre, par les différentes Espèces ou Races d’hommes qui l’habitent, envoyée par un fameux Voyageur à M.
l'Abbé de la *** à peu près en ces termes. *Journal des Sçavans*, 24 April, 133-140.


Blanchard, Emile (1854) *Voyage au pôle sud et dans l'Océanie sur les corvettes l'Astrolabe et la Zélée; exécutée ... pendant les années 1837-1838-1839-1840 sous le commandement de M. J. Dumont-d'Urville ... publié ... sous la direction supérieure de M. Jacquinot ... Anthropologie*. Paris: Gide et Baudry.


British Association for the Advancement of Science (1874) *Notes and Queries on Anthropology, for the Use of Travellers and Residents in Uncivilized Lands*. London: Edward Stanton.


Unternommen in den Jahren 1815, 1816, 1817 und 1818 ..., 3 vols (Weimar: Hoffmann), III, 3-179.


Cunze, Friedrich (1917) Professor Dr. Otto Finsch †. Braunschweigisches Magazin, 23:3 (March), 21-25.


——— (1871) The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex, 2 vols.

London: John Murray.


(1883) *Catalog für die Ausstellung für Völkerkunde der Südsee (Stiller Ocean), bestehend in den ethnologischen Sammlungen aus Micronesien und Melanesien von Dr. O. Finsch*. Braunschweig: Albert Limbach.


Koloniausbuch für Jung und Alt (Bielefeld and Leipzig: Velhagen & Klasing), 419-435.


—— (1909) Gedenktage der Forschungsreise mit dem deutschen Dampfer „Samoa“. Deutsche Kolonialzeitung, 28 (10 July), 469.


Fitzroy, Robert (1839) Narrative of the Surveying Voyages of His Majesty’s Ships Adventure and Beagle Between the Years 1826 and 1836: Describing their Examination of the Southern Shores of South America, and the Beagle’s Circumnavigation of the Globe, 3 vols. London: Henry Colburn.


——— (1786) Muthmaßlicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte. *Berlinerische Monatsschrift*, 7 (January to June), 1-27.


——— (1925) *De Rassen van den Indischen Archipel*. Amsterdam: J. M. Meulenhoff.


Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm von (1718) Lettre de Mr. Leibniz à Mr. Sparwenfeld [1697]. In Joachim Friedrich Feller, ed., Otium Hanoveranum, sive, Miscellanea, ex ore & schedis Illustris Viri, piae memoriae, Godofr. Guilielmi Leibnitti ... (Lipsiae: Johann Christiani Martini), 32-39.

Le Maire, Jacob (1622) Ephemerides sive descriptio navigationis Australis institutae Anno M. D. X. CV. Ductu & moderamine fortissimi Viri Iacobi Le Maire, duarum navium, quorum una Concordia, altera Cornu dicta fuit, Praefecti. In Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas, Novvs Orbis, Sive Descriptio Indiae Occidentalis ... (Amstelodami: apud Michaelem Colinivm), Folios 46-81.


Linnaei, Caroli [Carl Linnaeus] (1737) Critica Botanica in qua nomina plantarum generica, specifica, & variantia examini subjiciuntur, selectoria confirmantur, indigna rejiciuntur; Simulque doctrina circa denominationem plantarum traditur, seu Fundamentorum Botanicum pars IV. Lugduni Batavorum: apud Conradum Wishoff.


335


--- (1876) Berichtigung. Archiv für Anthropologie, 9, 106.


(1779 [1771]) *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks; or, an inquiry into the circumstances which give rise to influence and authority in the different members of society*, 3rd edition, corrected and enlarged. London: John Murray.


Montesquieu, Charles-Louis de Secondat de (1777 [1748]) *De l'esprit des lois*, Nouvelle édition, 4 vols. London: s.n.


(1905) A. B. Meyer's Doorkrusing van Nieuw-Guinea op zijn smalst.


(1874) _Völkerkunde_. Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot.

Pinkerton, John, ed. (1808-14) _A General Collection of the Best and Most Interesting Voyages and Travels in All Parts of the World; Many of which are now first translated into English. Digested on a new plan_, 17 vols. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Browne.


Quoy, Jean-René Constant, and Joseph-Paul Gaimard (1824) _Voyage autour du monde ... exécuté sur les corvettes de S.M. l'Uranie et la Physicienne pendant les années 1817, 1818, 1819 et 1820 ... Zoologie_. Paris: Pillet aîné.


Singelmann, Konsul (Carl) (1909) Prof. Dr. Finsch's Anteil an der Erwerbung des deutschen Südseeschutzgebietes. *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung*, 42 (16 October), 689-692.

Soemmerring, Samuel Thomas (1784) *Über die körperliche Verschiedenheit des Mohren vom Europäer*. Mainz: s.n.


Winckel, F. (1875) Einiges über die Beckenknochen und die Becken der Papúa’s. Mittheilungen aus dem königlichen zoologischen Museum zu Dresden, 1, 85-89.


Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.


——— (1993) Buffon and the Natural History of Man: Writing History and the
‘Foundational Myth’ of Anthropology. History of the Human Sciences, 6:1,
13-50.

Claude Blanckaert, ed., Le terrain des sciences humaines: instructions et

voyageurs de la Société d’Anthropologie de Paris (1860-1885). In Claude
Blanckaert, ed., Le terrain des sciences humaines: instructions et enquêtes
(XVIIIe-XXe siècle) (Paris: L’Harmattan), 139-173.

——— (2003) Of Monstrous Métis? Hybridity, Fear of Miscegenation, and
Patriotism from Buffon to Paul Broca. In Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall, eds,
The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France (Durham and London: Duke
University Press), 42-70.


Years of ‘First Contact’ Among the Ankave-Anga (Papua New Guinea). In Margaret
Jolly, Serge Tcherekézoff and Darrell Tryon, eds, Oceanic Encounters:

Ethnology of East Indies History, Hindu-Balinese Culture, and Indo-European

Bouillier, Victor (1925) Montaigne et Goethe. Revue de littérature comparée, 5,
572-593.

——— (1933) Montaigne en Allemand: Christoph Bode, son grand traducteur.

Boule, Pierre H. (2003) François Bernier and the Origins of the Modern Concept of
Race. In Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall, eds, The Color of Liberty: Histories

Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race, 6th edn (Walnut Creek, CA:
AltaMira Press), 13-23.


November, 17.


—— (n.d.) Oceanian Encounters and a Phrenologist’s Predicament: Anthropology, Race, and Dumont d’Urville’s Final Voyage (1837-1840). Unpublished manuscript.


—— (forthcoming) Race, Place and Civilisation: Colonial Encounters and Governance in Oceania.


Eich, Jakob (1925) Theodor Waitz’s „Anthropologie der Naturvölker“. Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde der Philosophischen Fakultät der Universität Bonn.


Commission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, ed., Neue

Germer, Ernst (1961) Miklucho-Maklai und die koloniale Annexion Neuguineas durch
das kaiserliche Deutschland 1884. In Dietrich Drost and Wolfgang König, eds,
*Beiträge zur Völkerforschung: Hans Damm zum 65. Geburtstag* (Berlin:
Akademie-Verlag), 153-170.

Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag.

Flamingo’s Smile: Reflections in Natural History* (New York and London: W.
W. Norton), 291-305.

Govor, Elena (2010) *Twelve Days at Nuku Hiva: Russian Encounters and Mutiny in
the South Pacific.* Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press.

Schouten, his Circumnavigation, and the De Bry Collection of Voyages.
*Journal of Pacific History*, 44:1 (June), 77-87.

deutschen Kolonialismus. In Hermann Joseph Hiery, ed., *Die Deutsche


Hagener, Michael (2003) Skulls, Brains, and Memorial Culture: On Cerebral
Biographies of Scientists in the Nineteenth Century. *Science in Context*,
16:1/2, 195-218.


Hammer, Carl, Jr. (1973) *Goethe and Rousseau: Resonances of the Mind.* Lexington,
Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky.

——— (1976) Montaigne and Goethe Record their Italian Journeys. *The South
Central Bulletin* 36:4, Studies by Members of SCMLA (Winter), 147-149.

Haneveld, G. T. (1961) De medische aspecten van het verlies van Nederlands eerste
nederzetting op Nieuw-Guinea, Fort du Bus 1828-1835. *Nieuw-Guinea
Studien*, 5:2 (April), 104-110.

Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.


Liebersohn, Harry (2003) Coming of Age in the Pacific: German Ethnography from Chaminso to Krämer. In H. Glenn Penny and Matti Bunzl, eds, Worldly...


Shellam, Tiffany (2009) *Shaking Hands on the Fringe: Negotiating the Aboriginal World at King George’s Sound*. Crawley, WA: University of Western Australia Press.


Williams, Glyndwr (1979) Seamen and Philosophers in the South Seas in the Age of Captain Cook. The Mariner’s Mirror, 65, 3-22.


Online resources

Anon. (n.d.) Das Ausland 1. 1828 – 66. 1893. Online
  <http://www.haraldfischerverlag.de/hfv/Einzelwerke/das_ausland.php>,
  accessed 21 September 2010.
——— (n.d.) Mehrbändige Werke: Das Ausland (1828-1893). Online
  <http://www.degruyter.de/cont/glob-neutralMbw.cfm?rc=35865>, accessed 21
  September 2010.
  <http://www.lexikon-und-encyklopaedie.de/meyerskonversationslexikon
——— (1876) New Publications. The Races of Man and their Geographical
  Description. From the German of Oscar Peschell [sic]. New-York: D.
  DA133E63BBC4C52DFB467838D669FDE>, accessed 16 October 2009.
  (Leipzig und Wien: Verlag des Bibliographischen Instituts),
  Korrespondenzblatt zum 9. Band, 1027. Online
  <http://www.retrobibliothek.de/retrobib/seite.html?id=109624&imageview=true>,
  accessed 20 September 2010.
  und Wien: Verlag des Bibliographischen Instituts), 582-589. Online
  <http://www.retrobibliothek.de/retrobib/seite.html?id=112360>, accessed 7
  February 2011.

Archief Almelo (n.d.) Huwelijken 1840-1849, Stad Almelo: Peitsch, Georg Joseph,
11-06-1840, aktenummer 12. Registers van de Burgelijke Stand Stad Almelo:
Marriages 1818-1913. Online
  emid=52&sub=detail>, accessed 14 July 2010.

Baldner, Jean-Marie, and Didier Mendibil (n.d.) Les expositions ethnologiques.
  Trésors photographiques de la Société de géographie. Online

  Oost. Collecties: Bibliotheek van de Universiteit van Amsterdam. Online


Appendix One
Biographies of key figures

BAER, Karl Ernst von (1792-1876)
Baltic German anatomist and embryologist, considered the founder of modern embryology and the most eminent morphologist of his day. He was dubbed the 'Humboldt of the North' for his wide-ranging interests in parasitology, anthropology, and the classification and physiology of animals and plants. Von Baer studied zoology in Würzburg with the anatomist Ignaz Döllinger (1770-1841). From 1817 he lectured in anatomy and zoology at the University of Königsberg. In 1834 he relocated to Saint Petersburg, where he was an active member of the Imperial Saint Petersburg Academy of Sciences for almost 30 years. He acted as Privy Councillor for the Ministerium für Volksaufklärung ('Ministry for Public Enlightenment') from 1862-67 and sought to restructure the Russian tertiary education system.49

BROCA, Paul (1824-1880)
French physician-anatomist, founder of the Société d'Anthropologie de Paris and the École d'Anthropologie. The son of a surgeon, Broca studied at the Calvinist Collège in Sainte-Foy-la-Grande before taking degrees in literature (Paris) and mathematics (Toulouse). In 1841 he was admitted to the Faculté de Médecine of the École Pratique in Paris as a pupil of anatomy, becoming Prosector in 1848 and Doctor of Medicine in 1849. In 1867 he was nominated Professor of Surgical Pathology to the Faculté. Broca founded the Société d'Anthropologie in 1859 and was elected as General Secretary in 1863, a position he held until his death. In 1872 he established the journal Revue d'Anthropologie and in 1876 founded the École d'Anthropologie. In addition to numerous publications on physical anthropology (especially craniology), hybridity, and ethnology, he pioneered the study of cerebral morphology and investigated topics including surgery on cancer and aneurysm, neuroanatomy, neurophysiology and neuropathology.50

50 Anon., 'Dr. Paul Broca', Science, 1:8 (21 August 1880), 93; Anon., 'Memoir of Paul Broca', Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 10 (1881), 242-61; J. Feller, 'Broca (Paul)', in M. Prevost and Roman d'Amat, eds, Dictionnaire de Biographie Française, vol. 7 (Paris: Librarie Letouzey et Ané, 1956), 383-4; Pierre Huard, 'Paul Broca (1824-1880), avec une bibliographie des travaux de Broca par Samuel Pozzi (1846-1918)', Revue d'histoire des sciences et de leurs applications,
FINSCH, Otto (1839-1917)

German ornithologist, traveller-naturalist, museum curator and colonial pioneer. Finsch worked as assistant at the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie in Leiden, Holland, from 1861. In 1864 he joined the Gesellschaft Museum in Bremen, Germany, as curator of the natural historical and ethnological collections. He became the Museum’s director in 1876, but resigned in 1879 to travel to Oceania, funded by the Humboldt-Stiftung für Naturforschung und Reisen in Berlin. From 1879-82 he travelled and collected in Hawai‘i, Micronesia, New Britain, south-east New Guinea, New Zealand and Java. From 1884-85 he returned to Oceania as leader of an expedition sent out to locate land for German colonies by the Konsortium zur Vorbereitung und Errichtung einer Südsee-Insel-Compagnie, later the Neu Guinea Compagnie. His explorations in the steamer Samoa led to the declaration of north-east New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago as German protectorates. Finsch was subsequently unable to obtain satisfactory employment, either in the administration of the new colony or back in Germany, and returned in 1897 to the Rijksmuseum in Leiden. In 1904 he accepted a position as curator of the ethnological collection at the Städtisches Museum in Braunschweig, where he remained until his death in 1917.51

HAECKEL, Ernst (1834-1919)

German biologist, evolutionary morphologist and Naturphilosoph, principal German populariser of Charles Darwin’s works. Following studies in comparative anatomy and zoology in Berlin, Haeckel was appointed Extraordinary Professor of Comparative Anatomy in Jena in 1862; in 1865 he transferred to the Faculty of Philosophy, where he founded a Zoological Institute. In addition to substantial monographs on animal morphology and systematics, he published numerous works on human evolution, notably Generelle Morphologie der Organismen (‘General morphology of organisms’, 1866), Natürliche Schöpfungsgeschichte (‘Natural history of creation’, 1868) and Anthropogenie; oder, Entwicklungsgeschichte des Menschen (‘Anthropogeny; or, the evolutionary history of man’, 1874). The latter two publications were great popular

successes. Haeckel also travelled extensively, undertaking zoological researches in the Canary Islands (1866-67), Java and Sumatra (1900-01).\(^{52}\)

**HAMY, Ernest-Théodore (1842-1908)**

French surgeon and ethnologist. Hamy was born in Boulogne and received his medical training in Paris. He was appointed Secretary of the Société d’Anthropologie in 1867 and held the position of President in 1884 and 1906. In 1882 he founded the journal *Revue d'Ethnographie* and in 1893 the Société des Americanistes de Paris. Hamy was also responsible for reorganising the Muséum d’Ethnographie and the Muséum National d’Histoire Naturelle. In 1892 he succeeded his friend and colleague, Armand de Quatrefages, in the chair of Anthropology at the latter museum. He travelled abroad in 1867 as attaché to the Commission Égyptienne de l’Exposition Universelle and in 1869 to assist in the inauguration of the Suez Canal. In addition to the two-volume *Crania Ethnica* (1882), a comparative craniology of human ‘races’ written in collaboration with Quatrefages, Hamy published on palaeontology, comparative anatomy, ethnology, and the history of geography and cartography.\(^{53}\)

**LUSCHAN, Felix von (1854-1924)**

German anthropologist and archaeologist. Von Luschan studied medicine in Paris and Vienna. In 1881 and 1882 he accompanied the archaeologist Otto Benndorf (1838-1907) to Anatolia (now Turkey) and Asia Minor. He completed a doctorate in ethnology in 1882 and in 1885 was appointed Directorial Assistant at the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin. In 1900 he was appointed Extraordinary Professor at the University of Berlin; in 1904 he became Director of the Museum’s Africa-Oceania Division and was active in expanding its collections. He subsequently undertook expeditions to South Africa (1905), New Zealand (1914) and the United States (1914-15). Von Luschan published extensively on archaeological, anthropological and ethnological topics.\(^{54}\)

---


MEINICKE, Carl Eduard (1803-1876)

German geographer. Meinicke studied philology, geography and history in Berlin. Following teaching positions in Prenzlau and Jena, he became Director of the Prenzlauer Gymnasium (‘Prenzlau Grammar School’) in 1852. He researched and published widely in the fields of history, historical ethnography and physical geography. His main areas of interest were Australia and Oceania; his monographs *Das Festland Australien* (1837), *Die Südseevölker und das Christentum* (1844) and *Die Inseln des Stillen Ozeans* (1875-76) are considered the first standard geographical works on these regions.\(^{55}\)

MEYER, Adolf Bernhard (1840-1911)

German-Jewish traveller-naturalist and museum director. Meyer studied medicine and natural sciences at the universities of Göttingen, Vienna, Berlin and Zürich. During his studies he translated into German many of Alfred Russel Wallace’s works. Following Wallace’s example, Meyer travelled to Celebes and the Philippines in 1870-71 and to north-west New Guinea in 1873, returning with substantial anthropological, ethnographic and natural history collections. From 1874 to 1906 he was Director of the Naturhistorisches Museum in Dresden, Germany, renamed the Königlich Zoologisches und Anthropologisch-Ethnographisches Museum in 1879. Meyer was active in expanding the museum’s collections and implemented numerous technical improvements for their display and preservation. He published extensively in the fields of anthropology, ethnography, linguistics, museology, prehistory and zoology.\(^{56}\)

PESCHEL, Oscar (1826-1875)

German geographer and ethnographer. Peschel studied law and history in Heidelberg and Leipzig. In 1854 he became managing director of the weekly journal *Das Ausland*, at that time Germany’s only geographical journal. In 1871 he was appointed to the chair of Geography in Leipzig. Together with Richard Andree (1835-1912) he published Germany’s first national atlas, the *Physisch-Statistischen Atlas des Deutschen Reiches* (1876-78). His monograph *Völkerkunde*, first published in 1874, reached its

---


seventh edition by 1897 and was translated into English (1896), Swedish (1890) and Russian (1896).57

QUATREFAGES, Armand de (1810-1892)
French natural historian and anthropologist. Following studies at Tournon and Strasbourg, Quatrefages practiced medicine at Toulouse, where he held the chair of Zoology. In 1839 he moved to Paris and devoted himself to scientific studies, particularly anthropology. He was elected Professor of Natural History at the Lycée Napoléon in 1850, became a member of the Académie des Sciences in 1852, and in 1855 was called to the chair of Anthropology and Ethnography at the Muséum national d’Histoire naturelle. Quatrefages undertook several scientific expeditions to the Atlantic and Mediterranean coastlands, Italy and Sicily, and published on zoological, anthropological and ethnological topics. His major publications in the field of anthropology include *La Race Prussienne* (‘The Prussian race’, 1871); *Crania Ethnica* (1882), written in collaboration with Ernest-Théodore Hamy; and *Histoire Générale des Races Humaines* (‘General history of human races’, 2 vols, 1886-89).58

VIRCHOW, Rudolf (1821-1902)
German cellular pathologist, left-liberal politician, public health reformer and first President of the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte. Virchow practised as an assistant at the Charité in Berlin, as a pathologist in Würzburg and later as a doctor in Asia Minor and Egypt. His studies of goitre and cretinism in Bavaria led to a lasting interest in the growth and development of the human skull and brain. He took a decisive interest in the Berliner Gesellschaft’s collection and analysis of human remains and animated, guided and directed numerous collectors. Virchow was a member of the Berliner Stadtverordnetenversammlung (‘Berlin City Council Assembly’) from 1859 and had substantial involvement in the canalisation of the city and the establishment of new hospitals. From 1862 he was a member of the Abgeordnetenhaus (‘House of Representatives’) and from 1880 a member of the Reichstag. Politically he was markedly democratic, working to oppose the death

57 Gärtnert, ‘Peschel, Oscar Ferdinand’, 209-10
penalty, combat anti-Semitism and develop a good relationship between the new German Reich and France. He also introduced a ‘normal working day’, a reform of school education, and a state guarantee for the provision of medical care.\(^{59}\)

**WAITZ, Theodor (1821-1864)**


**WALLACE, Alfred Russel (1823-1913)**

English traveller-naturalist, zoogeographer, evolutionary theorist and social critic. Wallace gained a good practical education in technical trades, including surveying, drafting and map-making, and developed an amateur interest in natural history while still young. In 1843 he was appointed Master at the Collegiate School in Leicester, where he had access to a good library. In 1848, inspired by William H. Edwards’s *A


Voyage up the River Amazon (1847), he departed England for Pará (now Belém) at the mouth of the Amazon, remaining in the region for four years. He lost all his collections from this expedition in 1852 when the brig on which he was returning caught fire at sea. Wallace then travelled to the Malay Archipelago, where he remained for eight years (1854-62). His account of these travels, The Malay Archipelago (1869), was hugely successful and encouraged numerous naturalist explorers to follow in his footsteps.

During his time in the Malay Archipelago, Wallace also arrived independently at the notion of natural selection and was credited as its co-founder when his paper on the topic was read together with extracts from Darwin’s writings at a meeting of the Linnaean Society in July 1858. Wallace continued to publish copiously throughout his later years and by the end of his life was one of the best-known scientists in the world.61

---

Appendix Two

Dates of Meyer’s and Finsch’s Oceanic voyages

Adolf Bernhard Meyer

6 July 1870  Departs for Batavia (Jakarta)
end September 1870  Stationed in Manado, Celebes (North Sulawesi, Indonesia)
[October] 1871  Departs for Philippines
[May] 1872  Departs Philippines for London
June 1872  In London
July 1872  In Vienna
14 November 1872  Departs Vienna with Kamis Birahi
17 December 1872  Arrives Singapore
31 December 1872  Departs Singapore
8 January 1873  Arrives Makassar, Celebes
26 January 1873  Departs Makassar
2 February 1873  Arrives Ternate
3 March 1873  Departs Ternate
13 March 1873  Arrives Kwai, Doreh Bay, north-west New Guinea; visits Mansinam
14 March 1873  Visits Andei (Andai)
17 March 1873  Departs [Kwai] for Mafoor (Numfoor Island)
24 March 1873  Departs Mafoor for Mysore (Biak-Supiori Islands)
25 March 1873  Arrives Kordo (Korido), Supiori Island
5 April 1873  Departs Kordo for Jobi (Yapen Island)
8 April 1873  Arrives Ansus (Ansas), Yapen Island
29 April 1873  Departs Ansus
3 May 1873  Arrives Rubi (Irubi), south Cenderawasih Bay
16 May 1873  Departs Rubi
18 May 1873  Arrives Nappan (Napan)
20 May 1873  Visits Weueli
3 June 1873  Arrives Passim (south-west Cenderawasih Bay)
8 June 1873  Departs on expedition across the New Guinea mainland
12 June 1873  Reaches MacCluer Gulf
13 June 1873  Departs MacCluer Gulf
16 June 1873  Arrives Passim
18 June 1873  Visits open-air graveyard near Passim
19 June 1873  Departs Passim
21 June 1873  Arrives Andei
22 June 1873  Sends expedition to the Arfak Mountains
4 July 1873  Expedition returns from Arfak Mountains
17 July 1873  Departs Mansinam
27 July 1873  Arrives Ternate
7 August 1873  Departs Ternate
10 October 1873  Arrives Vienna

Otto Finsch – first Oceanic voyage (1879-82)

April 1879  Departs Germany
[June] 1879  Arrives Honolulu, via San Francisco; visits O‘ahu, Maui
30 July 1879  Departs Honolulu for the Marshall Islands
21 August 1879  Arrives Jaluit (Bonham) Atoll, Marshall Islands
November 1879  Departs Jaluit for Gilbert (Kingsmill) Islands
January 1880  Returns to Jaluit
Feb - March 1880  Visits Caroline Islands, including Kosrae and Pohnpei
July 1880  Departs Jaluit for New Britain
end July 1880  Arrives Matupit Island, via Nauru and Ontong Java
end March 1881  Departs Matupit Island with Tapinowanne Torondoluan
end April 1881  Arrives Sydney, Australia
mid-May 1881  Departs Sydney for New Zealand
mid-August 1881  Returns to Sydney
end September 1881  Arrives Thursday Island, Torres Strait
December 1881  Visits Cape York Peninsula, Australia
January 1882  Departs for New Guinea; visits Freshwater Bay, Hall Sound,
  Keppel Bay, then settles inland near the Laloki River
[July] 1882  Departs for Thursday Island
end July 1882  Arrives Thursday Island
August 1882  Arrives Batavia
28 September 1882  Arrives Naples, via Singapore and Ceylon (Sri Lanka)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 June 1884</td>
<td>Departs Bremen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 July 1884</td>
<td>Arrives Melbourne, Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 September 1884</td>
<td>Departs Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 September 1884</td>
<td>Arrives Mioko, New Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 October 1884</td>
<td>Departs Mioko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 October 1884</td>
<td>Arrives Constantinhaven, Astrolabe Bay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 October 1884</td>
<td>Raises German flag at Constantinhaven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 October 1884</td>
<td>Departs Constantinhaven for Mioko, via Friedrich Wilhelmshafen (Madang)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 November 1884</td>
<td>Departs Mioko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 January 1885</td>
<td>Arrives Cooktown, Australia, via Trobriand and d'Entrecasteaux Islands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 January 1885</td>
<td>Departs Cooktown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 February 1885</td>
<td>Arrives Mioko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 March 1885</td>
<td>Departs Mioko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 April 1885</td>
<td>Returns to Mioko, following explorations of mainland New Guinea's south-east coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 May 1885</td>
<td>Departs Mioko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 May 1885</td>
<td>Returns to Mioko, following explorations of the north-east coast between Astrolabe Bay and Humboldt Bay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 July 1885</td>
<td>Arrives Cooktown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 July 1885</td>
<td>Departs [Cooktown]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 August 1885</td>
<td>Arrives [Bremen]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>