CHAPTER 28

MASTERS IN THE TROPICS

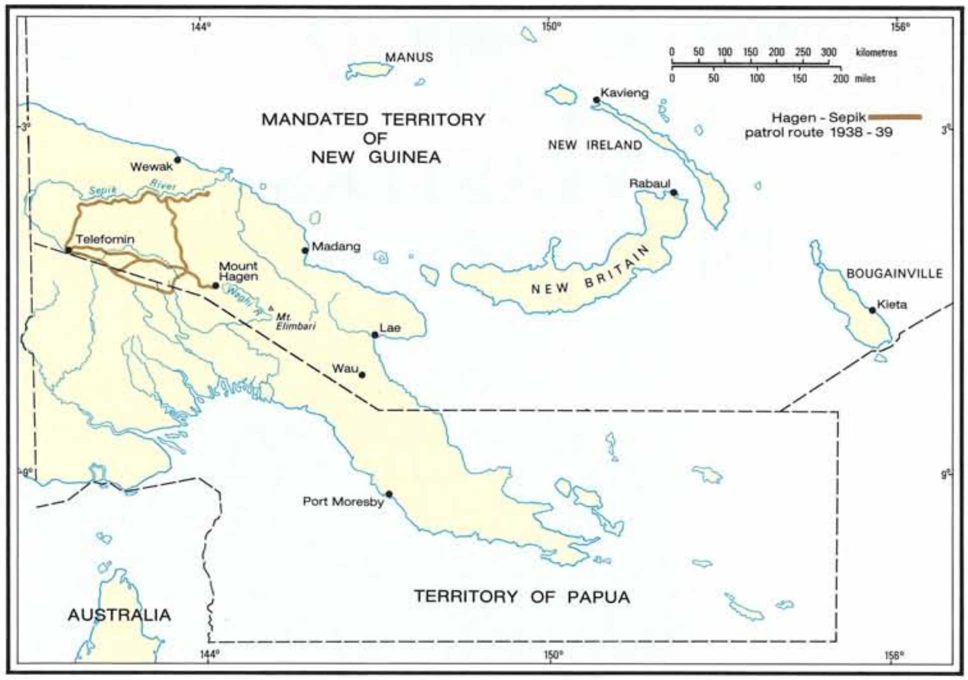
HANK NELSON

THE AUSTRALIANS who governed in the Mandated Territory of New Guinea had almost nothing to do with the other Australians in the Territory of Papua. Having taken New Guinea by force in 1914, the Australians retained it in the peace settlements at the end of the war. In Papua Sir Hubert Murray was in his thirty-third year of office. He retained his reputation as an innovative and benign administrator of 'natives', but in fact he presided over a poor and languid backwater. He looked with disfavour on the Mandated Territory to his north where there were more white people, more Asians, more economic activity, and more extreme behaviour among the Australians of that peculiar frontier society.

NEW GUINEA

In the Mandated Territory the most frequent meetings between Australians and New Guineans were as employers and employees, as *masta* and *boi* (man) or as *misis* and *boi*. Whether they worked for the church, the state, the family or private gain, nearly all adult members of the white community gave daily instructions to New Guinean servants. The *Official handbook* of the Territory compiled in 1937 assured its readers that 'The average bungalow home requires from three to five native servants; the essentials, at any rate, are the cook, laundry boy (in many cases a casual employee) and the house boy ...' A health inspector recruited in Parramatta for £380 a year, or a surveyor from Bendigo or Longreach, expected to have such a household when he shifted to work in Australia's most northern territory. By 1938 over 4400 New Guinean men were working under indenture as domestic servants in the *mastas'* town bungalows in Rabaul, Madang and Kavieng, in the spreading plantation homes along the coasts, or in the frontier nipa palm shacks. There was one servant for every white man, woman and child in the Territory. All the New Guinean men indentured into domestic service had to be over, 'or apparently over', the age of twelve.

Territory of New Guinea one-shilling coin issued by the Australian administration in 1938. The hole was so that New Guineans could wear the coin on a string around their necks though they rarely did so.



N. DUFFEY, ANU

The household orders passed to a *boi*, rarely to a *meri* (woman). Only 57 single New Guinean women were signed on as domestic servants. Another 1000 married women had accompanied husbands to their place of work and were separately employed, but many of these were working in gardens. How many women and men from nearby villages were employed on a casual basis is unknown. Beyond the bungalows and their separate *boi* houses another 37 000 New Guineans served as indentured labourers on the plantations, the mining fields and for commercial firms. Nearly all the New Guineans who had 'made paper' (signed a contract) worked for the 4000 members of the white community. The habit of command was more than just a characteristic of behaviour among Australians in the Territory.

When Australians in the Territory addressed their servants they acted in a way which immediately distinguished them from almost all Australians south of Torres Strait, and it was by the manner in which they carried out their role as *masta* that other white residents of the Territory were most likely to judge them. The Native Labour Ordinance expressed the formal limits of correct behaviour between employer and employee. It was constantly amended to bring both sides closer to an illusory ideal: the *mastas* would be strict and compassionate, able to command without recourse to violence, scrupulous in meeting commitments over pay and food, and paternalistic in their concern for the health and welfare of their labourers. The *bois* would be hardworking, unobtrusive, obedient, even respectful, and appreciative of the benefits derived from regular meals, medical care and peace.

The frequency with which the courts had to compel conformity with the Native Labour Ordinance showed the gap between the reality and the ideal in *masta–boi* relationships. By far the most frequent offence that brought white men before the courts was bashing labourers. In the twelve months before 1 July 1938 twenty-two were charged with 'assaulting a labourer', and another twenty-one were charged under the Queensland Criminal Code with 'assaulting natives'. Another European was taken before the supreme court and found guilty of the unlawful killing of a labourer and sentenced to two months' imprisonment with hard labour. The courts were not troubled by the occasional cuff on the ear or kick

NATIVE LABOUR AND NATIVE RIGHTS

Difficulties of Holding the Balance in Papua
Letter to the Editor

"L.H.W." in his article in the March P.I.M., on the ruining of native labour in New Guinea and Papua, certainly deals with a subject which is causing no little concern to those who are using native labour in those places . . .

As the majority of men in N.G. and Papua are Australians, very few indeed have ever had the chance of working native labour before going to those places. But the great majority conscientiously try to get the hange of things, and, give a chance, they will work the boys efficiently and humanely . . .

Boys are continually leaving their work and laying complaints against overseers on trivial matters, because they consider they have the "Government" on their side. As long as they think this way, they will continue to be insolent and indolent; to go to the Government with trivial charges against white men; and to resent any reprimanding they get. Justice is one thing—over-zealous officialdom, plus red tape, is entirely another.
I am, etc.,

OVERSEER
Samarai, Papua, 9/5/1938
Pacific Islands monthly, 22 June 1938

up the loin cloth: only incidents that went beyond the behaviour acceptable to most *mastas* went before a magistrate. The next most frequent cause taking white people before the courts was being in possession of an unregistered firearm, and there were only ten such cases during the year.

The most common offence of New Guineans was the desire to escape the demands or the fists of their employers: over 1000 deserted during the year. For labourers who did stay at work the indenture system imposed a mass of legal constraints. Over 100 men were charged with failing to show reasonable diligence, another 100 with behaving in a threatening manner, and 69 with disobeying a reasonable order. The labourer who evaded the provisions of the Native Labour Ordinance by always being present, obedient and diligent, still risked being fined or gaoled under the comprehensive petty controls of the Native Administration Regulations. The most common offence was breaking the curfew: over 700 men were convicted of being absent from their quarters between the hours of 9 pm and 6 am. Others were convicted of being a non-resident entering town boundaries, of having been deported from a district and having returned without authority, or of riding a bicycle without a written permit. Most forms of leisure could be an offence: 285 New Guineans were charged with gambling (usually playing the card game 'lucky'), 85 with drinking or possessing intoxicating liquor, and 64 with creating a noise after 9 pm. Playing football in a residential area was illegal, and for New Guineans adultery was an offence. The discriminatory legislation and the parade of offenders before the courts were evidence of the difficulty of imposing an alien social order on the diverse and dynamic communities under Australia's Mandate.

The vision of a new order came closest to realisation in Rabaul. There, in the administrative capital on the north of New Britain, it was possible to see how the rules relating to movement, mixing, labour and the curfew worked to separate the races in the location of their homes, in the type of work they did and in their leisure. There, the New Guineans got the baths ready, laid out the white suits, cooked the meals, cut the lawns, dug the drains, fetched and carried, worked the wharfs and carted away the nightsoil. 'It has been truthfully written', the *Official handbook* stated, that 'the function of the white man in a tropical country is not to labour with his hands, but to direct and control a plentiful and efficient supply of native labour ...' The confidence of those who made and approved that assertion was not shaken when they went ashore at Cairns and Townsville on their way south and saw other Australians living in a tropical country without black men to cut cane or work wharfs. The 1500 members of Rabaul's Asian community, the residents of 'Chinatown' and 'Malaytown', were expected to be the small shopkeepers and hawkers, the carpenters and tailors, and among the foremen supervising the black labourers implementing the white man's civilising plans. In spite of the frequency with which members of the white community told each other that this was the proper ordering of society, and in spite of the constant legislative plugging of leaks, there were always slight but alarming signs of disorder.

THE BRAIN OF THE NATIVE

By a Medical Correspondent

Many white residents in the Western Pacific are of opinion that the Melanesian native's brain is so constructed that it fails to function in the way expected of it. This opinion is quite correct; the grey matter of the savage, of his half-civilised descendant, differs very markedly from that of the European ...

It cannot be doubted that our present methods of educating natives require revision, for the results have often proved them to be unsound. At the same time, no one can deny the rapid progress in the control of animal instinct that contact with Europeans has produced in our South Sea subjects. Two generations has in many instances turned a race of cannibals into decent members of society. *Pacific Islands monthly*, 21 Feb 1938.

Evidence that the *mastas* enforced obedience with violence kept recurring. A succession of visitors noticed the 'cuffing' and were repelled by the talk of flogging. At least every two years a case of particular savagery came before the supreme court and the public was presented with the detail of a white man knocking a labourer senseless and then kicking the life out of him, or having a man tied, spread-eagled and flogged. The white community was forced to keep shifting its defence of such behaviour, from outright denial, to arguing that such incidents were either trivial or exceptional, to admitting that violence was unavoidable, and finally to claiming that the white man who thrashed the 'flash coon' was a public benefactor, the keeper of that precious commodity, 'white prestige'.

Many of the men who bashed their labourers were sick, frightened and disillusioned. Few Europeans now died of malaria or blackwater fever, but many suffered recurrent attacks of fever with headaches, high temperatures, dreams, shaking and listless aftermath. And in the twenty years of the Australian Mandate twenty white men were killed by New Guineans, enough to confirm the belief among white men that to survive they had to be forever firm and vigilant. The limited capacity of most white people to communicate with New Guineans made the turbulence of the labour line more unpredictable and more frightening. In 1938 copra averaged £11 10s a ton, much higher than it had been in the depth of the depression years, but still less than half the price it had been in the early 1920s, when most of the Australian returned servicemen had made the decision to take a nation's reward and apply for property seized in New Guinea from their recent enemy. Now many of the planters were over forty years old, deeply in debt, and unable to realise funds by selling the asset that had consumed their energy, capital and dreams.

Failure to be comfortable in their role as *mastas* was even more disturbing for some Australians. White people were said to be superior, to have prestige, and to be able to assert authority by their very presence. But many Australians found themselves ill-equipped to be aloof and exacting. They came from a society that prided itself on informality and equality. They wanted to distinguish their rule from that of older colonial powers. Particularly when new to the Territory, Australians had a strong desire to be liked by the people they ruled. Inevitably they placed themselves under stress. They could not be informal and joke with their servants and then give commands as the *mastas*. Most relationships with New Guineans became a succession of confrontations in which they shouted, bullied and sometimes bashed. Those few Australians who did direct their labourers without fear or violence were mistakenly thought to be typical; in fact they were exceptional, and their presence deepened the disillusion of the majority. Most *mastas* were forced into rationalisation: the natives preferred the true *mastas* who used the cane, outsiders would never understand, and all would be well if various misguided do-gooders in the League of Nations, the government, the missions and university anthropology departments kept away.

In any case the hierarchy of the races was being disturbed by economic and technical changes. In the 1930s New Guineans around Rabaul began buying trucks. As the *Annual report* for 1937–38 conceded, 'The money earning capacity of these trucks is really astonishing ... £80 above expenses in six weeks'. If some New Guineans spoke English, drove trucks and had money, it was difficult to justify discrimination against New Guineans on cultural grounds, but the white community at large still clung to the argument that it would take thousands of years for the blacks to catch up to the 'advanced races'.

There were other causes of unease in the white community. Where in Australia the land was exposed, old, stable, vast, brown, eroded and rounded, in New Guinea it was hidden under a mass of rainforest, swamp or kunai grass, and it trembled and threatened. Visible earth was a sign of recent trauma: the scar of a mud slide or the lava and ash of a violent eruption. The insecurity of the inhabitants of Rabaul had been brought home to them on Saturday 29 May 1937, when a series of tremors climaxed in roaring explosion as Vulcan, then Matupit, volcanoes sent clouds of choking dust, ash and mud across the town. Nearly 700 Europeans, 1000 Asians and 5000 New Guineans panicked and fled, or quietly trudged up Namanula hill through the swirling smoke, or defiantly settled to twelve days free drinks in the Cosmopolitan Hotel. Two Europeans, one Chinese and over 400 New Guineans were burnt and buried in the ash falls.

After a fortnight the residents began shifting back into Rabaul. They saw symbols of regeneration in the bursts of flowers from the broken frangipani trees, but they themselves could not escape 'that everlasting feeling of uncertainty'. The government cleared a site ten kilometres from town as an emergency evacuation centre and stocked it with segregated supplies of tents, food and medical supplies for 'European and Asiatic residents'. An adjoining area was set aside where 'all natives' could make shelters from the material in the surrounding 'bush country'. If the volcanoes went up again, the races were going to suffer separately. Following expert vulcanological advice and the report of a committee of enquiry, the Australian government decided that the Territory's administrative headquarters would have to be shifted, but it could not decide when or where. Rabaul, its political prominence about to end and its commercial dominance threatened by the development of the goldfields of the mainland, remained as the largest concentration of white men within a thousand kilometres.

More distant forces threatened Australians in New Guinea. Australians might assert that the Mandated Territory was theirs by right; indeed, they claimed, it would have been theirs from 1884 had Britain been less languid and Bismarck less cunning. W.M. Hughes as minister for External Affairs denounced any suggestion of appeasing Germany by returning its Pacific colonies as 'suicidal' and 'craven', but in New Guinea Australians responded to Hitler's demands with nervous discussion. They thought they heard New Guineans muttering that soon the old *mastas* would be back, and they looked with increased suspicion on the German Lutheran and Catholic missionaries who worked in the Territory. Always a reminder of the dispossessed enemies and seen as competitors for the loyalty of villagers, the 412 German missionaries easily outnumbered the 96 British and 40 American evangelists. In New Guinea the disputes of distant Europe had an immediacy not known in Australia.

The Japanese community of only 50 people was less conspicuous, but Australians in New Guinea were conscious of their proximity to the growing strength of the Japanese. Rabaul was closer to the Japanese base of Truk in Micronesia than it was to Cairns. Without any military personnel or installations, the Australians were aware of their vulnerability. They stood unprotected in the pathway of the long-feared yellow hordes. Frequent paragraphs in the *Rabaul Times* warned of Japan's aggressive intentions, and the owner of the *Times* wrote privately to the paper's manager at the end of 1938 that Japan was 'only waiting to take what she wants when the European powers are at each other's throats'.

Neither in law nor in fact did Australians possess New Guinea. Under article 22 of the Versailles peace treaty Australian New Guinea was said to be inhabited by a people 'not yet able to stand by themselves' and Australia accepted responsibility for 'their well-being and development' as a 'sacred trust'. The committee which toured New Guinea in 1938 to consider whether the Territories of Papua and NewGuinea should be combined under one administration decided that 'when the inhabitants of New Guinea are fit for independence, the Commonwealth must be prepared to give it to them'. For a metropolitan power to nurture the political growth of a colonial people and then relinquish power was still a revolutionary idea. But in New Guinea the proposition engendered almost no debate: the few Australians able to conceive the possibility of independence placed it so far in the future that practical people had no need to be concerned about it.

Yet Australians in the Territory could not claim to be pioneers advancing the Australian frontier. In some ill-defined way they were beyond Australia. Settlers did not want the honour given to their British counterparts as civilisers on the lonely outposts of a vast and glorious empire, and government officers were uneasy about such a role. Almost no Australians in New Guinea had come to think of the Territory as home. They saw beauty and fascination in a prolific and unstable land, and many took pride in their immediate tasks, but they knew that fundamentally they were visitors.

Numbers, not laws, convinced most Australians that the country was not theirs. They were a minority living on the edge of an alien land and people. Many anthropologists, including the pioneer women of the discipline, Mead, Blackwood, Powdermaker and Wedgwood, had published the results of their fieldwork in the Territory, but they had done little to enlighten the general community and were not accepted as people who 'really understood the natives'. Among the white community there was a fear, articulated in times of stress, that New Guineans might one day conspire to murder the *mastas* in their beds.

Villager at Songura, southern Highlands, south of the route of the Hagen-Sepik patrol. He wears a bonnet of cassowary feathers heightened by a chook feather mounted on a porcupine quill, and a pig tail from one ear. Photograph by Bill Gammage.

Whenever members of the white community wanted to demonstrate that the government was failing to impose good order on New Guineans, or that New Guineans were taking advantage of the slackness of the ignorant newcomers, they pointed to a supposed increase in sexual attacks on white women. In the fantasies of Australians in Rabaul the virtuous white woman lay within a protective circle of 'white prestige', and the 'black peril' was an anarchic force constantly lusting to despoil her—and shatter the foreigners' dominance. In the 1920s it became an offence to enter or be in a dwelling with 'intent to indecently insult a female inmate'. In principle it did not follow that a man caught in a house necessarily intended sexual insult; in fact a New Guinean found guilty of trespass in a house containing a white woman was presumed to have sexual intent. In 1934 it became illegal for a European woman to 'voluntarily permit a native, other than a native to whom she is married, to have carnal knowledge of her'. As a member of the legislative council explained, one white woman agreeing to sexual relations with a New Guinean would 'undermine the whole moral fabric of the Territory'. The white community expected the courts to protect its privileges, and the judges disappointed only the most rabid. In the 22 years of the Mandate 57 New Guineans were charged with being illegally in a dwelling when a white woman was present, 54 were convicted, and nearly all were given the maximum penalty of twelve months hard labour and a whipping.

The Australians in New Guinea might have felt more secure had they known more about the Territory in which they lived, but they were geographically as well as socially peoples of the margin. By 1938 only one-third of the total area nominally under Australian rule was said to be 'under control', another third was 'under influence' or had been 'penetrated by patrol', and the rest was just white space on the map. At home Australians could claim that they clung to the coast because their continent possessed only a fertile rim. In New Guinea, however, some of the highest concentrations of populations and the most productive lands were in the interior. Only in 1933 had Australians first stood on the divide near Mount Elimbari and looked into the greatest of the populous highland valleys, the Wahgi, with everywhere the smoke of village fires, clusters of houses, and squares of carefully worked garden lands on the hillsides. The 1938 pattern of Australian administration with every district headquarters on the coast reflected the fact that the governors came from the sea and prized their links with home. Almost all the food and all the alcohol and news valued by the *kiaps* (government officers) and settlers came from overseas.

Above.
Patrol officer John Black and a personal servant, Siauwuti, trading with local people near Mount Hagen in the western highlands in February 1938. They are buying pit pit (left) and sugar cane (centre). Local people were not allowed to go beyond the roped area.

Below.
By September Black's part of the patrol had reached Eliptimon hamlet, near Telefomin, an area not previously contacted by Europeans. Constable Kenai of Manus shows the newly-contacted Telefomin people photographs of themselves taken a day or so before, and developed at night by Black. Kologei, of the Rai coast east of Madang and Black's personal servant, looks on. Photograph by J. Black, 1938.

In March Assistant District Officer James Taylor, Patrol Officer John Black, and Medical Assistant C.B. Walsh and their police and carriers left Mount Hagen, the most westerly of the government's highland bases, on the last and longest of the epic exploring patrols. On 17 December they were attacked and a carrier, 'a fine young man Kwinjil of Mogei Kwivi', was killed when an arrow hit him in the chest. It was characteristic of Taylor that he would name the carrier and know his home community; Kwinjil can stand for those thousands of anonymous carriers of many previous patrols. The patrol celebrated Christmas in Telefomin, and its members faced another six months of walking before they were back in Mount Hagen. Hundreds of young village men had to be stopped from joining the patrol, and some people walked 100 kilometres into Mount Hagen to meet the strangers and the new ways. Driven by the same curiosity, adventurousness, venality and hope of reward that drove restless Australians to find a way into the interior, New Guineans were also helping to dispel the ignorance of the foreigners who sustained an uneasy dominance of the coasts.

PAPUA

Rabaul, with its smoking volcano, lush growth to the water's edge, Chinatown, Malaytown, and mixed-race community in 'creamytown', was exotic to visiting Australians. Port Moresby was disappointingly familiar. At the end of the dry season in November brown and bleached grass covered the hills, dust swirled in the streets, smoke from Papuans' burning-off added to the humid haze on the southeast winds, and water had to be trucked from the Laloki River to rescue the town's dwindling supplies. The buildings rising beyond the wharf and its humped cargo sheds were like those of any isolated north Queensland port, and even Government House, with its high stumps, long verandah and galvanised iron roof, was just another tropical Australian bungalow.

Papua was an extension of the Australian frontier in a way that the Mandated Territory was not. Of the 1500 white people in Papua, over half were born in Australia and most of them came from Queensland. In Mandated New Guinea nearly half the Australians came from New South Wales, and Victorians were as numerous as Queenslanders. Where the Germans had encouraged Asian migration to create a buffer between themselves and the Melanesians, the one Chinese family in Papua and the descendants of Japanese pearlers and early Filipino and Malay settlers were too few to form a distinctive community.

Some Australians knew Papua as their homeland, but were uncertain what to call themselves. 'Anglo–Papuan', an echo of Anglo–Indian, had been tried and discarded, and 'Territorian' had not become popular. Sons of long-term residents were among the best known of Sir Hubert Murray's frontier patrol officers, his 'outside men'. Jack Hides, Ivan, Claude and Alan Champion had all been born in the Territory, had their early education at the tiny Port Moresby European school, gone to Australia, and returned to serve in district administration.

The number of white residents in Papua had been almost stable for a decade, and was just a couple of hundred greater than it had been on the eve of the Great War. Only in Port Moresby and Samarai were Europeans concentrated in sufficient numbers to have a doctor, a schoolteacher, regular cricket matches and a matrons' and spinsters' fancy dress ball. The rest of the white people were spread over an area larger than Victoria, and although they met infrequently on wharves and boats they sustained a sense of community. The new people arriving from 'south' to search for oil were immediately recognised as outsiders.

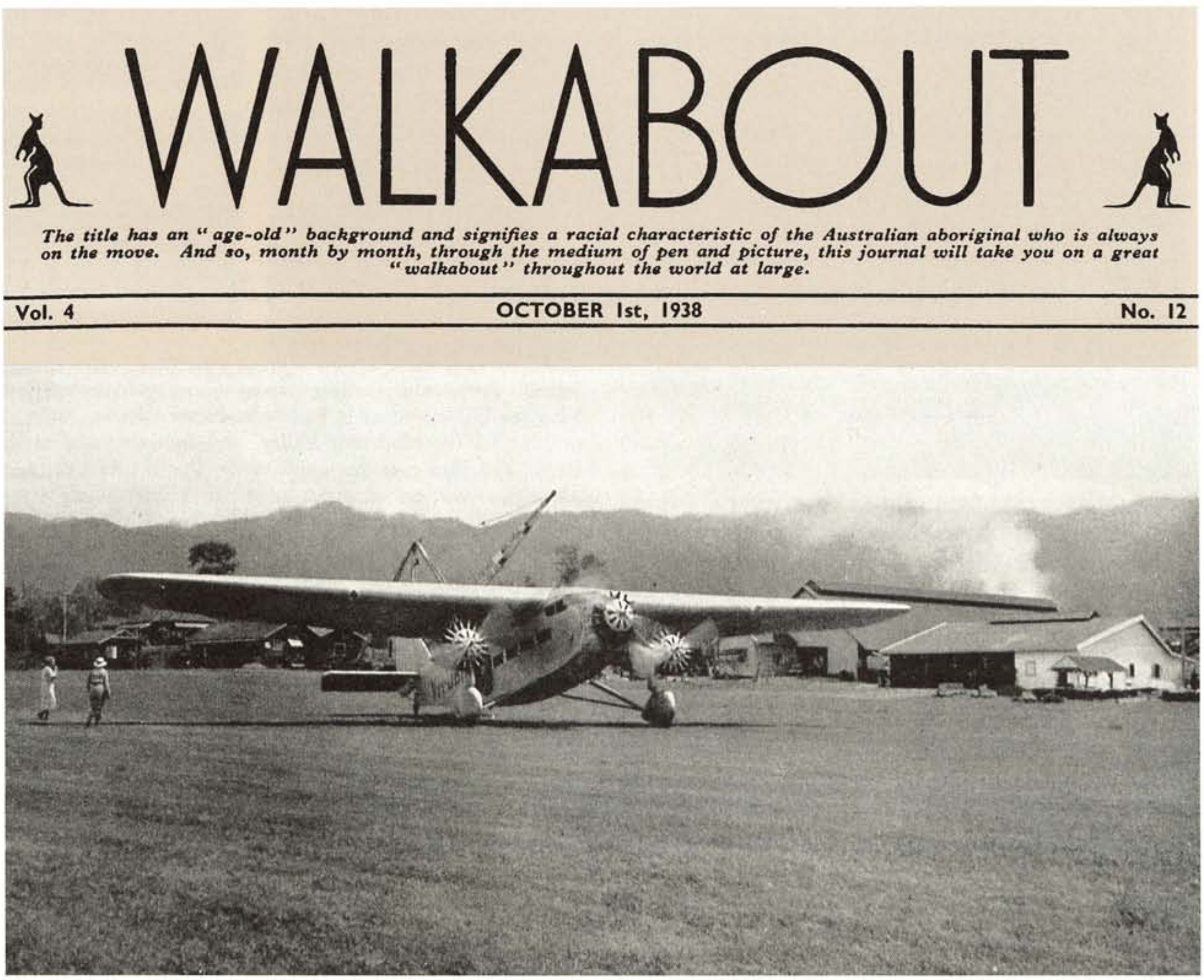
In 1937–38 Papua produced £108 000 worth of gold, the highest amount in 50 years of continuous mining. Cuthbert's Misima goldmine in the Louisiade Archipelago may have been the only company concerned with exploiting Papua's primary resources to be showing a profit. Papuans using the methods of small-scale alluvial miners won for themselves over £1000 on the worked-out fields of Milne Bay. But Papua's mining industry returned only one-twentieth of the gold taken from the Morobe district of the Mandated Territory. Papua's copra production was about one-tenth of that in New Guinea. The total government revenue in Papua was just under £200 000, and a quarter of it came from a commonwealth grant. New Guinea's £500 000 revenue was raised entirely within the Territory. Just 46 men from cadet patrol officers to resident magistrates made up the entire field staff of the Papuan government service. In 1937 Claude Champion and F.W.G. Anderson had built a camp on Lake Kutubu. The first government station in the Southern Highlands, Kutubu was serviced by air. The trek from the south coast had taken Champion and Anderson eight weeks: the flying boats did the trip in half an hour. About half Papua's 500 000 people were sufficiently well known to government officers to have their names recorded in a village census.

Postage stamps issued to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the declaration of British New Guinea. In 1906 it formally came under Australian control and became known as Papua. Australia accepted the mandate to administer New Guinea in 1921.

GAMMAGE COLLECTION

Although, or because, they made little money, the white residents of Papua had grown more benign than their neighbours in the Mandated Territory. Sir Hubert Murray's bitter enemies of twenty and thirty years before had died or mellowed. When the minister in charge of Territories, W.M. Hughes, arrived at Port Moresby in June it was a leading planter, Arthur Jewell, who proclaimed at the public reception that Murray had made Papua 'pre-eminent in the eyes of the world'. Hughes said Murray 'had set the world a fine example of how native people should be handled'. Australians in Papua had come to appropriate for themselves a share of Murray's considerable reputation as an enlightened administrator of natives.

Whereas most white residents of New Guinea were often aggressive and aggrieved when they spoke of Melanesians, Australians in Papua expressed a self-congratulatory paternalism. When Port Moresby's weekly newspaper, the *Papuan Courier*, published a guide to Port Moresby it thought it 'also noteworthy that the book [was] entirely produced in Papua by Papuan native labour'. The director of public works stated in his report for 1938–39 that at Samarai all maintenance work 'not of an intricate nature' had been 'carried out by native artisans' in the absence of their white superiors. Papuan planters, who paid a slightly higher wages and held their *bois* on a shorter indenture than growers in New Guinea, told the commonwealth committee of enquiry into the amalgamation of


WALKABOUT

The title has an "age-old" background and signifies a racial characteristic of the Australian aboriginal who is always on the move. And so, month by month, through the medium of pen and picture, this journal will take you on a great "walkabout" throughout the world at large.

Vol. 4 OCTOBER 1st, 1938 No. 12

This photograph, taken on the landing ground at Bulolo, was used by Walkabout *magazine to illustrate the dropping of stores from the air for the Hagen–Sepik patrol at Hoiyeria. The technique of landing supplies without a parachute was pioneered at Hoiyeria.* Walkabout, *1 Oct 1938.*

the two territories that they were satisfied with their labourers. The New Guinea planters complained that labour was too expensive and inefficient.

In Papua the committee found strong opposition to combining with New Guinea from both businessmen and government officers. A *Papuan Courier* editorial said that whenever Papua's government acted in 'an absent minded way' to benefit only public servants, there was a public outcry and the government adjusted its policy. That, the *Papuan Courier* decided, was better than the likely alternatives: direct rule from Canberra or less responsive officials administering an amalgamated territory. Most of Papua's white residents would have agreed with the *Papuan Courier*. Murray, in a letter to his brother Gilbert, commented shrewdly on the arguments outside Papua for amalgamation, 'never, on one single occasion, has there been the slightest reference to the natives—it is all aviation, defence, oil, gold, development, copra . . .'

The Australians living in Papua and New Guinea exaggerated their differences. The Papuans may have lived under a more benign administration; but petty discriminatory legislation applied in both territories and the same basic indenture system influenced relations between *masta* and *boi*. The government provided no schools for Papuans, and its £3300 subsidy to the mission schools in 1937–38 was derived from a tax on Papuans themselves. Only 77 Papuan students in 1938 passed the grade five primary school examination, the highest level tested by the visiting Queensland inspector. When the members of the committee of enquiry on amalgamation asked whether they should consult Papuans or New Guineans they were told that 'on a subject of this kind native opinion did not exist'. Murray was still reading in several languages on anthropology, law and administration, and he was still an aggressive defender of Papuan rights, but he was doing little to advance their economic and political power.

Man from the Minj area of the central Highlands ready for a sing sing. *Raggiana bird of paradise, rifle birds, red parrots and chooks have gone to make his magnificent headdress. He also wears a pig tusk, and gold lip mother of pearl, baler and cone shells traded from the coast, and tree oil from the southern Highlands, to make his skin shine. Photograph by Bill Gammage.*

As residents of a commonwealth territory the Australians in Papua had no immediate fears about their constitutional future. Many, including Murray, thought that one day Papua would be an Australian state, and all thought the Australian connection was strong enough to protect them from talk of 'independence' such as was heard in India and the Philippines. But they shared the fear of the white community in New Guinea that Australians on the mainland would not awake in time to protect them from a Japanese invasion they were certain was coming. In 1938 there were no defence installations, no regular army personnel, and probably not one machine gun in the entire Territory. Murray directed cutting cynicism at the commonwealth defence plan for Papua. Privately he delighted in the absurdity of being instructed to withdraw inland to Kokoda and 'harass the invader by guerilla warfare'. He was 76, his son was about to be retired from the British army because of his age, he had no stores or weapons other than police rifles, and he would be responsible for non-combatants less able to cross the Owen Stanley ranges than himself. Officially, he said he did not presume to comment on the defence plan, 'doubtless an excellent one': he merely pointed out that it would be possible 'to carry it out in all its details'.

Peter Purves Smith, born in Melbourne in 1912 and educated at the Geelong Grammar School and the Jervis Bay Naval College, studied art in London in the mid-1930s. In 1938, aged 26, he made his second overseas trip, during which he painted Nazis at Nuremberg. *The art historian Bernard Smith comments that Purves Smith's painting, while strong in formal organisation, 'can be droll, whimsical and, at times, sharply satirical'. Oil on canvas.*
QUEENSLAND ART GALLERY