

**Contested Labors:
New Guinean Women and the German
Colonial Indenture, 1884-1914**

by

Emma L. Thomas

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Doctoral committee:

Professor Emerita Kathleen Canning, Chair
Professor Geoff Eley
Professor Nancy Rose Hunt, University of Florida
Professor George Steinmetz

Emma L. Thomas

elt@umich.edu

ORCID iD: 0000-0001-7089-0027

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the complex social, cultural, and political worlds occupied by laboring New Guinean women under German colonial rule. It traces women's lives and labors within the colony's system of "cheap" contract labor—from their near-invisibility in the official records of the ruling chartered company (1884-1899) to their centrality in divisive colonial debates that characterized later periods of imperial governance (1899-1914). In so doing, this project reveals the significance of women's labors—broadly conceived—to fundamental questions of German colonial governance embedded in evolving understandings of race, gender and sexuality. It thereby intervenes in historiographies of colonial (Papua) New Guinea and the Pacific more broadly by demonstrating that what had conventionally been understood as a masculine plantation labor force was undergirded by highly gendered and racialized regimes of sexual exploitation and unpaid reproductive labors. Moreover, this dissertation elucidates the ways in which New Guineans negotiated European claims to their laboring, racialized, and often eroticized bodies, and confronted and contested German efforts to align local understandings of gender, sexuality, family, and labor with imperial concerns.

Informed by a theoretical literature that understands the colony as a site of embodied “contact,” this dissertation draws attention to the quotidian and highly embodied nature of New Guinean women’s experiences of colonial power in multiple, concrete, and heterogenous sites of colonial interaction. These sites include recruitment ships, plantations, mission stations, administrative centers, and the home of white colonists, as well as vernacular village spaces: sites in which a diversity of colonial actors made varying claims to women’s productive, sexual, and reproductive labors. Reading indentured women’s court testimonies against the grain of government correspondences, colonists’ and travelers’ writings, mission reports, and scientific texts, this dissertation sheds new light on the dynamic relationships between developments in colonial rule and shifting, often competing European representational strategies that worked to legitimize imperial interventions into subaltern life cycles.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Word was circulating in the German colony of New Guinea in 1887 of a woman of about twenty-three years of age who was said to go by the name Sialê. Originally from Nusa, she now found herself in Kures, over 200 miles from home. An outsider, Sialê was taunted and avoided by the women of Kures and treated “impudently” by the men.¹ A Russian trader had come across Sialê in July while paying a visit to Kures, and later that month reported the matter to an imperial judge, Georg Schmiele.² The trader believed Sialê had previously been serving as an indentured laborer on a plantation in Queensland, Australia. When her indenture had come to an end, a Brisbane-based vessel under the supervision of a British government agent was supposed to repatriate her to Nusa along with other returning Nusa laborers. The government agent, so the trader informed Schmiele, had used a crew from Kures on board the vessel, and when they stopped at Nusa to return the laborers, the crew

¹ A. Rosenthal, Barawon, to Georg Schmiele, Mioko, 26 July 1887, Bundesarchiv Berlin (hereafter: BArch): Reichskolonialamt; R 1001/2299, 136-137. “Kures” also appears rendered as “Kuras” in a number of publications. The different spellings are cross referenced in the index of Arthur Wichmann, *Entdeckungsgeschichte von Neu-Guinea, 1885-1902*, vol. 2 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1910), 926.

² The trader, A. Rosenthal, is identified as a Russian in Karl Baumann, Dieter Klein, and Wolfgang Apitzsch, *Biographisches Handbuch Deutsch-Neuguinea, 1882-1922: Kurzlebensläufe ehemaliger Kolonisten, Forscher, Missionare und Reisender* (Fassberg: Baumann, 2002), 388.

used “threats and violence” to keep Sialê and her possessions on board the vessel and informed the government agent that she did not wish to go ashore. The government agent then took her and the crew to Kures, where, by the time of the trader’s visit about a week later, Sialê had been “deprived of her things and offered for sale.”³

Sialê was just one example of what Schmiele believed to be a broader practice occurring in the German colony: ships repatriating New Guinean laborers from plantations in Britain’s Pacific empire frequently neglected to return them to their homes. In the case of Sialê—whom Schmiele referred to simply as “a woman”—this practice had resulted in her enslavement by the people of Kures, he wrote. Making matters worse, these British ships brought infectious diseases into Germany’s Western Pacific colony. One such ship had already brought with it an outbreak of dysentery (or something similar; Schmiele could not be sure), which had resulted in many deaths in the vicinity of European settlements. A Wesleyan missionary suggested that the vessel responsible for the outbreak had been returning New Guinean indentured laborers from Fiji in late 1886, but his mission colleague had doubts about this account, since the disease had been raging in the area since the arrival one month earlier of a German naval gunboat.⁴

For the German colonial administration in New Guinea, the problem was chiefly that British vessels were illegally recruiting and irregularly returning laborers from the islands that Germany had claimed as part of its empire in 1884. In Berlin, the director of the German New Guinea Company, Adolph von Hansemann, expressed his concern over the matter to the German chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, insisting that measures be taken to ensure that

³ Rosenthal, Barawon, to Schmiele, Mioko, 26 July 1887, BArch: R 1001/2299, 136-137.

⁴ Georg Schmiele, Kerawara, 9 December 1888, *ibid*, 134-135.

British vessels complied with German regulations governing the movements of ships and people through its colonial possessions.⁵ The British Foreign Office flatly denied that British vessels had been engaged in recent recruiting activities in the German colony, pointing out in July 1888 to the German ambassador in London “that the recruitment of labourers from New Britain, New Ireland and the adjacent Islands was prohibited to vessels belonging to Queensland and Fiji some years ago.”⁶ British ships had carried their last transports of New Guinean laborers from these islands to plantations in Queensland and Fiji in 1884, prior to German annexation, the Foreign Office insisted. The last ships returning surviving laborers from Queensland departed in March and September of 1887, and those “few natives of those Islands who may not have already been returned” from Fiji would be returned without “accident or difficulty” to the German colony.⁷

Over the course of these experiences and correspondences—from an on-the-ground colonial encounter between a European trader and a Nusa woman, to a diplomatic affair conducted among titled European men in and between metropolitan centers—the story of the single, female laborer known here only as Sialê receded from archival view. She may have been missed by her people in Nusa and remembered as an outsider by those of Kures. Her situation may also have left a lasting impression on the trader who first reported her case to the imperial judge. The judge may have recalled the name Sialê, even though she became an unnamed “woman” returned to “the wrong place” in his writing.⁸ But at the level of an international affairs in which competing European empires established colonial boundaries,

⁵ Adolph von Hansemann, Berlin, to Otto von Bismarck, 5 May 1888, *ibid.*, 84-85.

⁶ Lord Salisbury, Foreign Office, London, to Count Hatzfeldt, 16 July 1888, *ibid.*, 100-101.

⁷ Salisbury to Hatzfeldt, 14 March 1889, *ibid.*, 151-155; British Foreign Office to Hatzfeldt, 9 April 1889, *ibid.*, 165-167. On mortality rates among indentured laborers, see Ralph Shlomowitz, “Mortality and the Pacific Labour Trade,” *The Journal of Pacific History* 22, no. 1 (1987): 34-55.

⁸ Schmiele, Kerawara, 9 December 1888, BArch: R 1001/2299, 134-135.

her story served only to signal alleged breaches of Germany's claims to rule in its recently acquired Pacific empire.

This dissertation returns our focus to the sites of on-the-ground colonial encounter and interaction in order to shed light on the lives and labors of New Guinean women under German colonial rule. It presents a history of the colonial labor regime that formed the foundation of German rule in New Guinea, of the New Guinean women who participated in it, and of the ways in which gender and sexuality informed that system both in policy and practice. When Germany laid claim to New Guinea and its surrounding islands in 1884, it assumed for itself the "task of educating [the islands' peoples] to labour" for German commercial interests in the Pacific.⁹ This "task" remained central to German rule in New Guinea after the imperial administration took over governance from the New Guinea Company in 1899 until its effective end in 1914.¹⁰ For this reason, it was imperative that British vessels like that which transported Sialê promptly ceased recruiting New Guineans from within the German colony to labor on plantations in Britain's Pacific empire. Henceforth, the German colonial administration concluded in 1885, "natives" from the German colony could only be recruited to work as laborers within the colony itself or in German Samoa, and only under the supervision of German officials.¹¹ The orderly return of laborers was also important if New Guineans were to be induced to sign indenture contracts and work for foreign interests: earlier abuses of the "labor trade," the Germans maintained,

⁹ Peter Sack and Dymphna Clark, eds. and trans., *German New Guinea: The Annual Reports* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1979), 19.

¹⁰ John Moses, "Imperial Priorities in New Guinea, 1885-1914," in *Papua New Guinea: A Century of Colonial Impact, 1884-1984*, ed. Sione Lātūkefu (Port Moresby: National Research Institute and the University of Papua New Guinea, 1989), 165. As Sebastian Conrad has demonstrated, the task of "educating to work" was central to imperial Germany's ambitions both at home and in the colonies. Sebastian Conrad, *Globalisation and the Nation in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 77-143.

¹¹ Sack and Clark, eds. and trans., *German New Guinea*, 20.

had “led among the natives to an embittered attitude towards all whites.”¹² Missteps like those taken in Sialê’s case, then, could imperil Germany’s colonial enterprises in the Pacific. Yet, the fleeting, almost elusive traces they left in a complex archive can still reveal much about the quotidian experiences born of colonial interaction.

Like Sialê, many of the women at the center of this study were participants in a system of “cheap” migrant labor, recruited to serve expanding European economic and imperial interests across the Pacific Ocean in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹³ An estimated 1.5 million Pacific Islanders and a further 0.5 million Asians worked as indentured laborers in the Pacific between 1863 and the outbreak of World War II.¹⁴ They were transported from their homes principally to provide labor for European-owned plantations in Fiji, Queensland, New Caledonia, and Samoa.

Like the larger Pacific labor trade, the German colonial indenture in New Guinea was a system based on labor migration, relocating New Guineans from their local villages predominantly to work on copra (dried coconut meat) plantations in other parts of the colony. This system was based on a logic shared by the German colonial administration and other European imperial powers that held that Islanders would not feel compelled to labor for whites in their homelands where they had access to local subsistence economies.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ There is a significant body of scholarship on the Pacific “labor trade,” the bulk of which focuses on the trade in Melanesian laborers to colonial Queensland. For overviews, see Clive Moore, “Revising the Revisionists: The Historiography of Immigrant Melanesians in Australia,” *Pacific Studies* 15, no. 2 (1992): 61-86; Doug Munro, “The Labor Trade in Melanesians to Queensland: An Historiographic Essay,” *The Journal of Pacific History* 28, no. 3 (1995): 609-627.

¹⁴ Doug Munro, “The Origins of Labourers in the South Pacific: Commentary and Statistics,” in *Labour in the South Pacific*, eds. Clive Moore, Jacqueline Leckie, and Doug Munro (Townsville, QLD: James Cook University, 1990), xxxix-li.

Rupturing Islanders' access to the resources they had at home was a necessary step toward exploiting their labors, so the argument went.¹⁵ It also made desertion a less appealing option for laborers.¹⁶ Between 1884 and 1914, at least 85,000 New Guineans had served as indentured laborers in the German colony, working for plantation and trading companies, the administration, and the missions, typically on a three-year contract. About another 15,000 had worked as day laborers.¹⁷ The vast majority of these laborers were recruited during the period of German imperial governance, from 1899 to 1914. This was a period marked by the establishment of new government stations, the spread of foreign-owned plantations and concomitant alienation of New Guinean lands, and increased efforts to "pacify" local populations in and around Germany's expanding colonial settlements. As historian Stewart Firth has shown, the imperial administration, particularly under the governorship of Albert Hahl (1902-13), implemented systems of taxation, mandatory and *corvee* labor, and appointed village middlemen, known as *luluais* and *tultuls*, in order to recruit ever-greater numbers of New Guineans into the indentured labor force. As German colonial demands for New Guinean laborers grew, efforts to recruit became increasingly coercive.¹⁸

From the outset, the labor trade had its European critics, who saw it as little other than an extension of the slave trade, a view that has found support among some subsequent historians. Hugh Tinker, writing of the overseas transportation of indentured Indian

¹⁵ See, for example, "Mittheilungen für Ansiedler aus dem Schutzgebiet von Deutsch-Neu-Guinea," sent by the governor of German New Guinea, Albert Hahl, to the Colonial Division of the Foreign Office, Berlin, 2 October 1901, BArch: R 1001/2262, 25.

¹⁶ Doug Munro, "The Pacific Islands Labour Trade: Approaches, Methodologies, Debates," *Slavery and Abolition* 14, no. 2 (1993): 87.

¹⁷ Stewart Firth, "The Transformation of the Labour Trade in German New Guinea, 1899-1914," *The Journal of Pacific History* 11, no. 2 (1976): 51.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 51-65.

laborers, exemplified this position with his characterization of the system as nothing other than “a new system of slavery.”¹⁹ In the Pacific, “blackbirding” became shorthand for this slavery-like system of forced labor migration in which laborers were “recruited” largely through acts of violence, kidnapping, and trickery.²⁰ Many scholars, however, have critiqued such accounts for their failure to take Pacific Islanders’ role in the labor trade into consideration. Inspired by Jim Davidson’s call to shift the focus of enquiry from imperial centers to the islands of the Pacific, a number of Canberra-based scholars in the 1960s and 1970s produced “Island-centered” histories that complicated the straightforward interpretation of the labor indenture as slavery.²¹ Their accounts argue that abduction and deceit were not enduring features of the trade and that Islanders voluntarily signed on as indentured laborers in ever-greater numbers, attracted by promises of adventure and trade goods.²² Their works have productively challenged Eurocentric narratives of imperial activity by placing Pacific Islanders’ “agency” at the center of their analyses.²³

As historical anthropologist Margaret Jolly has pointed out, however, the central debate in historiographies of the Pacific labor trade has been “constructed from the

¹⁹ Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974).

²⁰ See Reid Mortensen, “Slaving in Australian Courts: Blackbirding Cases, 1869-1871,” *Journal of South Pacific Law* 4 (2000): 7-37.

²¹ Jane Samson, “Fatal Choices? Morrell’s and Scarr’s Imperial Histories,” in *Texts and Contexts: Reflections in Pacific Islands Historiography*, eds. Doug Munro and Brij V. Lal (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2006), 17-28; Moore, “Revising the Revisionists,” *Pacific Studies* 15, no. 2 (1992): 61-86.

²² The seminal texts are Dorothy Shineberg, *They Came for Sandalwood: A Study of the Sandalwood Trade in the South-West Pacific, 1830-1865* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1967); Deryck Scarr, “Recruits and Recruiters: A Portrait of the Pacific Islands Labour Trade,” *The Journal of Pacific History* 2 (1967): 5-24; Peter Corris, *Passage, Port and Plantation: A History of Solomon Islands Labour Migration, 1870-1914* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1973).

²³ Walter Johnson’s observation that scholars’ efforts to “give the slaves back their agency” were politically urgent in New Social Histories of the 1960s and 1970s, but no longer possess the political salience they did then, are pertinent here. His critique that the term “agency” brings with it “a notion of the universality of a liberal notion of selfhood, with its emphasis on independence and choice” is relevant also for drawing attention to the racialized and gendered constructs underpinning liberal ideas of autonomy and selfhood. See Walter Johnson, “On Agency,” *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 1 (2003): 113-124.

viewpoint of the male recruit,” despite evidence that women constituted a significant minority of indentured Melanesians.²⁴ As was the case with Sialê, who worked as a plantation laborer in Queensland, the presence of New Guinean women who labored within the German colony has been diminished or obscured in metropolitan archives and subsequently overlooked in many scholarly analyses.²⁵ Yet, as was also the case with Sialê, female recruits did leave traces in colonial archives, written and visual. Photographs of “*Arbeiterinnen*” (female laborers) and “*Plantagenarbeiterinnen*” (female plantation laborers) supplemented contemporary studies of German New Guinea (for example, see figure 1.1), even when those same studies posited the laborer as male. As this dissertation demonstrates, the same is true of the colonial written archive: evidence about female laborers abounds, enabling new insights into colonial labor regimes and their specifically gendered dimensions.

²⁴ Margaret Jolly, “The Forgotten Women: A History of Migrant Labour and Gender Relations in Vanuatu,” *Oceania* 58, no. 2 (1987): 119-139, quotation: 124.

²⁵ The most thorough and insightful study of the labor indenture in German New Guinea is Stewart Firth’s, but indentured women still occupy a marginal place in this study, appearing primarily as objects of imperial policy debates. See Stewart Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1983), especially 112-135. Hermann Hiery invariably treats New Guinean laborers as normatively male, writing that “the Melanesian laborer placed not only the power to dispose of his labor, but the entire circumstances of his life, under the supervision of his European employer for a certain period of time. He was not a slave, however, [...] he had also entered into this [state] voluntarily and was paid for it.” See Hermann Joseph Hiery, *Das deutsche Reich in der Südsee (1900-1921): Eine Annäherung an die Erfahrungen verschiedener Kulturen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 89. Hiery’s published collection of “pictures from the German South Seas,” however, includes several photographs of New Guinean women who are identified as female plantation laborers, and others who appear to have worked as domestic laborers. See Hermann Hiery, *Bilder aus der Deutschen Südsee: Fotografien 1884-1914* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2005), 170, 190-193.



Angeworbene Arbeiterinnen aus Neu-Mecklenburg und Umgegend.

Figure 1.1. "Recruited female laborers from Neu Mecklenburg and surrounding area."

This image accompanied ethnographer Richard Thurnwald's 1910 report "The Native Labor Force in the South Sea Protectorate" ("Die eingeborenen Arbeitskräfte im Südseeschutzgebiet"), published in the German colonial journal, *Koloniale Rundschau*.

In German New Guinea, as in Melanesia more generally, women were recruited into the colonial labor indenture in much smaller numbers than men.²⁶ As German colonial reports did not differentiate laborers according to gender, precise figures for the number of New Guinean women recruited into the indenture are unknown.²⁷ While a draft version of the New Guinea Company's labor ordinance from July 1887 allowed for the recruitment of "healthy [...] men, women, boys, and girls between the ages of fourteen and sixty," the official ordinance, enacted on 15 August the following year, erased any gender differences.²⁸ This ordinance merely stated that "only healthy people may be recruited, who are sufficiently physically developed and are not frail as a consequence of advanced age."²⁹ Reports on German colonial recruitment efforts from the New Guinea Company period indicate that "a few women" were among the first laborers recruited from the Bismarck Archipelago and the northern Solomon Islands to work for German interests on Kaiser Wilhelmsland.³⁰ Yet the

²⁶ Historians estimate that women made up between 4 and 10 percent of indentured Melanesian laborers. The lower estimate comes from Clive Moore's study of Solomon Islanders in Queensland. See Clive Moore, *Kanaka: A History of Melanesian Mackay* (Port Moresby: Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies and University of Papua New Guinea Press, 1985), 49. Shineberg (*The People Trade*, 92) gives the higher figure in her study of laborers transported to New Caledonia, most of whom were ni-Vanuatu. The numbers given by Corris for Queensland fall inside this range at 6.2-8.7 percent (*Port, Passage and Plantation*, 46), as do those provided by Jeff Siegel, who suggests that women constituted 5.5 percent of Melanesians transported to Fiji from Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, and the Bismarck Archipelago between 1876 and 1911. See Jeff Siegel, "Origins of Pacific Islands Labourers in Fiji," *The Journal of Pacific History* 20, no. 1 (1985): 54.

²⁷ German colonial officials' own estimates of numbers of women recruited into the indenture could differ considerably. For instance, the station chief at Käwieng, Franz Boluminski, estimated that 1,000 women had been recruited from Neu Mecklenburg between 1905 and 1907, whereas Hahl believed the number to be 625. See Boluminski, Käwieng, to Hahl, Herbertshöhe, 19 October 1907, BArch: R 1001/2310, 88; Hahl, "Betrifft: Bevölkerungsrückgang in Neu-Mecklenburg," Herbertshöhe, to the State Secretary of the Imperial Colonial Office, Berlin, 25 October 1908, BArch: R 1001/2311, 52.

²⁸ The draft ordinance, dated 26 July 1887, can be found at BArch: R 1001/2299, 12.

²⁹ "Verordnung betreffend die Anwerbung und Ausführung von Eingeborenen des Schutzgebietes der Neu Guinea Compagnie als Arbeiter. Vom 15. August 1888, *Nachrichten über Kaiser Wilhelms-Land und den Bismarck-Archipel* (1888): 124. This ordinance, as Peter Sack writes, "remained the backbone of labour law in German New Guinea throughout the period of company rule." Peter Sack, *Phantom History, the Rule of Law, and the Colonial State: The Case of German New Guinea* (Canberra: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University, 2001), 309.

³⁰ *Nachrichten* (1888): 154, and (1893): 29.

New Guinea Company's 1888 labor regulations acknowledged the presence of female laborers only with regards to their accommodations in the colony's labor depots. Unmarried women and "girls over twelve years of age" were to be provided separate houses, or compartments sectioned off from the men's and families' quarters with "thick walls."³¹ It is possible that the "thirty women and girls" who were among the 227 laborers contracted to work in Friedrich Wilhelmshafen (Madang) in the early 1890s passed through such accommodations on their way to being "chiefly employed for cleaning and in road maintenance."³² On the basis of available data, it is reasonable to estimate that by 1914, at least 4,900 New Guinean women had worked for foreign interests in the colony, laboring on plantations, at trading, government, and mission stations, and in the homes of white colonists, mostly under indenture contracts. It is possible that the number of New Guinean women who served as indentured laborers under German rule was as high as 8,500.³³

Archival evidence provides some insights into the reasons that New Guinean women became indentured laborers under German colonial rule. Trickery, kidnapping, and violent episodes persisted throughout the German colonial period and coercion on the part of plantation owners, labor recruiters, and village middlemen were also factors.³⁴ For example,

³¹ "Verordnung betreffend die Arbeiter-Depôts im Schutzgebiet der Neu Guinea Compagnie. Vom 16. August 1888," *Nachrichten* (1888): 141.

³² Sack and Clark, eds. and trans., *German New Guinea*, 73.

³³ The lower estimate of 4,900 draws on Siegel's calculation that women constituted 4.9 percent of laborers recruited from the New Guinea islands (prior to German annexation) for British colonial Fiji. See Siegel, "Origins of Pacific Islands Labourers," 53. Given Siegel's much higher figure (17.3 percent) for women recruited from New Ireland (Neu Mecklenburg), and intensive recruiting there under the Germans, that figure is likely too conservative. The Australian military officer J. J. Cummins estimated in 1921 that New Guinean women never constituted more than 10 percent of indentured laborers during the period of German colonial administration, suggesting a maximum number of around 8,500. See J. J. Cummins, Brisbane, to the Prime Minister, 24 November 1921, National Archives of Australia, Canberra (hereafter: NAA): Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Central Office; A4, Correspondence files; NG8.

³⁴ See, for example, NAA: Imperial Government of German New Guinea; G255, Correspondence files; 572: Stationsgericht zu [Rabaul]. Akten gegen Tom Miller in Makurapan wegen Zuwiderhandlung gegen die Arbeiterverordnung (1911); NAA: G255, 1098: Kaiserliches Bezirksgericht zu Friedrich-Wilhelmshafen. Akten

Lanthe, a woman from Lihir who was recruited in 1913, reported that she had not wished to sign on but had been “strongly encouraged” to do so by the local *tultul* who received the ten marks “beach payment” for her recruitment.³⁵ Some women signed on with their partners or husbands, especially as Hahl’s administration began to restrict the recruitment of single women from parts of the colony amid colonial anxieties about depopulation in the years prior to World War I.³⁶ One girl recruited in 1913, whom the recruiter himself noted was “still a child,” apparently signed on willingly with her husband, though the authorities in Rabaul refused to recognize her marital status on account of her age.³⁷ Conversely, a woman named Mante might have used a recruiter’s visit to her home on Tanga to escape her husband, whom she claimed beat her (a claim he denied when he appeared in a court in Rabaul and successfully demanded her return).³⁸ In some villages small groups of women signed on together, without village men, but perhaps motivated by the same promises of adventure and opportunity that also drew New Guinean men into indenture.³⁹

Focusing on female recruits and women who became otherwise embroiled in colonial labor regimes, this dissertation builds upon insights provided by Jolly and others who have challenged the marginalization of Pacific Islander women within historiographies of

in der Strafsache gegen den Pflanzungsleiter Emil Hofmann, Siar, wegen Vergehens gegen die Anwerberverordnung (1914). Oral histories corroborate this. See Otto Manganau, “My Grandfather’s Experience with the Germans,” *Oral History* [Port Moresby] 1, no. 6 (1973): 8-9; Richard Scaglion, “Multiple Voices, Multiple Truths: Labour Recruitment in the Sepik Foothills of German New Guinea,” *The Journal of Pacific History* 42, no. 3 (2007): 345-360.

³⁵ Lanthe’s statement, Rabaul, 28 July 1913, NAA: G255, 331; Kaiserliches Bezirksgericht zu Rabaul. Akten in der Strafsache gegen Paulsen wegen Vergehens gegen [die] Anwerberverordnung (1913).

³⁶ On the policy debate concerning the recruitment of unmarried women, see Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans*, 112-135.

³⁷ Richard Paulsen’s statement, Rabaul, 31 July 1913, Tinmara’s statement, Rabaul, 28 July 1913, and Richard Gebhard’s ruling, 31 July 1913, Rabaul, NAA: G255, 331.

³⁸ Kuangkake’s statement, Rabaul, 29 June 1911, and Georg Stuebel’s ruling, 21 July 1911, NAA: G255, 572.

³⁹ See for example, existing lists of laborers recruited for the New Guinea Company in 1902, NAA: G255, 565; and for Forsayth & Co. in 1904, NAA: G255, 566.

indentured labor. This small but important body of scholarship has demonstrated the need to bring gendered analyses to bear upon prevailing conceptions of voluntarism and violence that are central to scholarly debate about the indenture.⁴⁰ Adopting such an approach sheds new light on the history of German New Guinea and the labor system that formed the economic, social, and political basis of German colonial rule. Shifting our attention to laboring New Guinean women helps to reveal the gendered forms of exploitation that indisputably characterized the German colonial indenture and its inherent potential for violence. It also reveals the multiple labors—productive, sexual, and reproductive—that New Guinean were expected to perform on and off the plantation. While these dimensions of German rule in New Guinea too often remain eclipsed within historiographies that focus on normatively male plantation laborers, they are essential to understanding how German colonial labor regimes not only conditioned relations of race, but those of gender and sexuality as well.

This dissertation further intervenes into debates about colonial labor regimes in the Pacific by expanding the focus beyond the moment of recruitment itself, and beyond the predominating context of the plantation.⁴¹ Rather than a history of “contact” in the sense of

⁴⁰ On indentured Melanesian women in the British and French Pacific, see Jolly, “The Forgotten Women”; Kay Saunders, “Melanesian Women in Queensland, 1863-1907: Some Methodological Problems Involving the Relationship between Racism and Sexism,” *Pacific Studies* 4, no. 1 (1980): 26-44; Shineberg, *The People Trade*, 90-115. On indentured Indian women in British Fiji, see Brij V. Lal, “Kunti’s Cry: Indentured Women in Fiji Plantations,” *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 20, no. 3 (1985): 55-71; Vicki Luker, “A Tale of Two Mothers: Colonial Constructions of Indian and Fijian Maternity,” *Fijian Studies: A Journal of Contemporary Fiji*, special issue 3, no. 2 (2005): 357-374. On Polynesian women workers, see Caroline Ralston, “Women Workers in Samoa and Tonga in the Early Twentieth Century,” in *Labour in the South Pacific*, eds. Clive Moore, Jacqueline Leckie, and Doug Munro (Townsville, QLD: James Cook University, 1990), 67-77.

⁴¹ The editors of a 1993 collection of essays note the need to shift scholarly attention away from the moment of recruitment and onto recruits’ experiences as laborers, though the focus of their volume remains fixed on plantation laborers. See Brij V. Lal, Doug Munro, and Edward D. Beechert, *Plantation Workers: Resistance and Accommodation* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1993), vii. Doug Munro noted in 1982 the need to expand analyses of labor in the colonial Pacific beyond that narrowly defined by plantation labor and expressed

an originary instance of colonial encounter, or “first contact,” this study instead posits an understanding of colonial processes as sustained forms of interaction and mediation, of shifting and unstable alliances, in which New Guineans—many women among them—as well as Europeans contested and reconfigured relations of power, violence, and subordination.⁴² In this sense, the term “contact” retains some heuristic value in understandings of colonialism. For literary scholar Mary Louise Pratt, for example, colonial “contact zones” are physical and imagined spaces, manifest in myriad genres of European travel writing in which “disparate cultures” interacted within highly asymmetrical relations of power.⁴³ This dissertation, however, turns to Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton’s understanding of colonial contact zones as sites of *embodied* interaction. They suggest that an approach that focuses on the gendered, raced, classed, and sexed aspects of bodies in—and *as*—“contact zones” allows us to shift our focus of empire away from foreign policy or “gentlemanly capitalists” and onto “the material effects of geopolitical systems in everyday spaces, family life, and on-the-ground cultural encounters.” Gender emerges as a central category of analysis, they suggest, as colonialism “produces gender itself as a terrain of contested

regret that in a 1990 essay on labor in the Pacific, he in fact replicated these narrow analytic parameters. See Munro, “The Origins of Labourers,” xli.

⁴² Although the notion of “first contact” has quite recently been used in the context of Papua New Guinea, scholars have critiqued it on several grounds, including the way in which it privileges encounter with Europeans/whites, who, as Matt Matsuda has masterfully demonstrated, are only among the more recent of outsiders that Pacific Islanders have encountered. See Bob Connelly and Robin Anderson, *First Contact* (New York: Viking, 1987); Matt K. Matsuda, *Pacific Worlds: A History of Seas, Peoples, and Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). For critiques and caveats on the concept of “first encounter,” see Margaret Jolly and Serge Tchekézoff, “Oceanic Encounters: A Prelude,” in *Oceanic Encounters: Exchange, Desire, Violence*, eds. Margaret Jolly, Serge Tchekézoff, and Darrell Tryon (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2009), 1-36; and Margaret Jolly, “The Sediment of Voyages: Re-memembering Quirós, Bougainville and Cook in Vanuatu,” in *ibid.*, 57-111; Klaus Neumann, “‘In Order to Win Their Friendship’: Renegotiating First Contact,” in *Voyaging through the Contemporary Pacific*, eds. David L. Hanlon and Geoffrey M. White (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 171-204. On sustained interaction as historical method, see Nancy Rose Hunt, *A Colonial Lexicon of Birth Ritual, Medicalization, and Mobility in the Congo* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 24.

⁴³ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 7.

power.”⁴⁴ Like the historiographical shift away from metropolitan centers and onto Pacific Islands, this approach offers new vantage points on subaltern experiences and the limits of state power. Drawing attention to the corporeal, it allows for an understanding of subaltern women’s highly embodied experiences of colonial power in multiple, concrete, and heterogenous sites of colonial interaction.

Informed by these approaches, this dissertation advances what Matthew Fitzpatrick and Peter Monteath have recently called “microhistories of German frontier entanglements.”⁴⁵ In a move perhaps analogous to Ballantyne and Burton’s, Fitzpatrick and Monteath suggest the importance for histories of German colonialism to focus on the variety of state and non-state actors—European and non-European—engaged in the everyday interactions that shaped the German colonial contact zones in heterogenous ways. While attentive to the weight of the imperial state, theirs is an approach invested in capturing “the heterogeneity of the modes of exchange between Germans and non-Europeans, which ran the full gamut of experiences from eliminatory violence to intermarriage.”⁴⁶ It is an approach which resonates with Georges Balandier’s much earlier observation that a “colonial

⁴⁴ Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, “Introduction: Bodies, Empires, and World Histories,” and “Postscript: Bodies, Genders, Empires: Reimagining World Histories,” in *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History*, eds. Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 406, 6, 419. For further reflections on the body in history and historiography, see Kathleen Canning, “The Body as Method? Reflections on the Place of the Body in Gender History,” *Gender & History* 11, no. 3 (1999): 499-513. Many scholars have demonstrated that gender and sexuality are integral categories to histories of colonialism. See, for example, Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Philippa Levine, ed., *Gender and Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, eds., *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility, and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

⁴⁵ Matthew P. Fitzpatrick and Peter Monteath, “The Savagery of Empire,” in *Savage Worlds: German Encounters Abroad, 1798-1914*, eds. Matthew P. Fitzpatrick and Peter Monteath (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 2.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

situation” is marked by heterogeneity among both vernacular society and European colonial society. The latter is marked by often-mutually antagonistic “factions”—the colonial administration, but also mission societies, commercial interests, and others—pursuing competing agendas and “native policies” and engendering “varied reactions” from those whom they claimed as colonial subjects.⁴⁷

Such an approach contributes to a body of scholarship on German colonialism which has expanded dramatically in the decades since the 1990s. This important research has countered an older orthodoxy that considered German colonialism to be a marginal affair—one that was, at least, largely inconsequential to the history of the German nation state.⁴⁸ Germany’s status as a “latecomer” to overseas colonial expansion and its short tenure as a colonial power when compared to other European empires previously led scholars of modern Germany to dismiss or ignore its colonial pasts as lacking the domestic significance that made colonialism integral to the histories of some other European nations.⁴⁹ The indisputable importance of Germany’s subsequent histories of Nazism and Holocaust perpetration also worked to minimize academic and broader public reckonings with Germany’s colonial pasts.⁵⁰ Although Hannah Arendt was quick to see a connection between

⁴⁷ Georges Balandier, “The Colonial Situation: A Theoretical Approach,” in *Social Change: The Colonial Situation*, edited by Immanuel Wallerstein (New York: Wiley, 1966), 34-61. For a comparative analysis of German colonialism that is attentive to colonial “factions,” see George Steinmetz, *The Devils Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007).

⁴⁸ Geoff Eley, “Germany and its Colonies: Margins and Metropole,” *Werkstattgeschichte* 55 (2010): 63-71; Geoff Eley, “Empire by Land or Sea? Germany’s Imperial Imaginary, 1840-1945,” in *German Colonialism in a Global Age*, eds. Bradley Naranch and Geoff Eley (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 19-45.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* For further discussion, see Sara Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox, and Susanne Zantop, “Introduction,” in *The Imperialist Imagination: German Colonialism and Its Legacy*, eds. Sara Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox, and Susanne Zantop (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1998), 1-7; Nina Berman, Klaus Mühlhahn, and Patrice Nganang, “Introduction,” in *German Colonialism Revisited: African, Asian, and Oceanian Experiences*, eds. Nina Berman, Klaus Mühlhahn, and Patrice Nganang (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2014), 2-9.

⁵⁰ Friedrichsmeyer, Lennox, and Zantop, “Introduction,” 4-5; Sebastian Conrad, *German Colonialism: A Short History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1.

European imperialism and fascism (and Stalinism), she had very little to say about Germany's own colonial exploits or colonial atrocities more broadly.⁵¹ More recently, however, scholars have attested to the extent to which "colonial fantasies" resonated within the metropole before, during, and after Germany's time as a formal colonial power.⁵² Others—gesturing to Arendt—have drawn new, provocative lines of inquiry linking Germany's genocidal violence in Southwest Africa (Namibia) to its atrocities under Nazism and its overseas colonialism to continental expansionism. This approach, too, draws attention to the persistence of imperialist ideologies and practices in the European context.⁵³

Sara Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox, and Susanne Zantop's 1998 anthology, *The Imperialist Imagination*, in many ways served as a catalyst for the recent wave of research on German colonialism.⁵⁴ With contributions coming mainly out of literary studies, this volume demonstrated the pervasiveness of imperialist "mentalities and imaginary configurations" within German metropolitan society and cultural production during and well after its time as a colonial power.⁵⁵ This volume promptly followed Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler's influential *Tensions of Empire*, which signaled new directions in research on

⁵¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 2nd ed. (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1958). Arendt mentions German atrocities in German East Africa ("German Southeast Africa" in Arendt; today mainly Tanzania, Rwanda, and Burundi) on two occasions (pages 134 and 185). She is silent on Germany's genocide of the Herero and Nama in German Southwest Africa and dismisses in a footnote (130 fn 16) the "unequalled atrocities" committed by the Belgians in Congo, considering them to be "atypical" and thus "too unfair an example for what was generally happening in overseas possessions." For an excellent critical appraisal of Arendt's thoughts on empire, see A. Dirk Moses, "Das römische Gespräch in a New Key: Hannah Arendt, Genocide, and the Defense of Republican Civilization," *The Journal of Modern History* 85, no. 4 (2013): 867-913.

⁵² See especially, Susanne Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family, and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770-1870* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); Friedrichsmeyer, Lennox, and Zantop, eds., *The Imperialist Imagination*.

⁵³ See, for example, Jürgen Zimmerer, "The Birth of the *Ostland* out of the Spirit of Colonialism: A Postcolonial Perspective on the Nazi Policy of Conquest and Extermination," *Patterns of Prejudice* 39, no. 2 (2005): 197-219; Volker Langbehn and Mohammad Salama, *German Colonialism: Race, the Holocaust, and Postwar Germany* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); Shelley Baranowski, *Nazi Empire: German Colonialism and Imperialism from Bismarck to Hitler* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁵⁴ Friedrichsmeyer, Lennox, and Zantop, eds., *The Imperialist Imagination*.

⁵⁵ Friedrichsmeyer, Lennox, and Zantop, "Introduction," 22.

empire and colonialism more broadly and compelled scholars to bring metropole and colony together in a “single analytical frame.”⁵⁶ The impacts of these works are evident in recent works on German colonialism, which now reveal the extent to which the presence of Germany’s overseas colonies manifested in metropolitan national identities, parliamentary politics, scientific research, and all manner of popular culture.⁵⁷ Scholars like Martha Mamozai, Lora Wildenthal, Birthe Kundrus, and more recently Livia Rigotti (Loosen) have demonstrated the importance of gender and sexuality to both settler colonial groups abroad and colonial agitators in the metropole, showing how white women could exploit racial hierarchies to advocate for an expanded sphere of female public participation within the German empire.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 15.

⁵⁷ Some of the most important works not explicitly discussed here are: Eric Ames, Marcia Klotz, and Lora Wildenthal, eds., *Germany’s Colonial Pasts* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005); Andrew Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); H. Glenn Penny, *Objects of Culture: Ethnology and Ethnographic Museums in Imperial Germany* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); H. Glenn Penny and Matti Bunzl, eds. *Worldly Provincialism: German Anthropology in the Age of Empire* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003); Sebastian Conrad and Jürgen Osterhammel, eds. *Das Kaiserreich transnational: Deutschland in der Welt, 1871-1914* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2004); Steinmetz, *The Devils Handwriting*; Rainer F. Buschmann, *Anthropology’s Global Histories: The Ethnographic Frontier in German New Guinea, 1870-1935* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2009); Andrew Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Conrad, *Globalisation and the Nation*; Michael Perraudin and Jürgen Zimmerer, eds. *German Colonialism and National Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2011); John Phillip Short, *Magic Lantern Empire: Colonialism and Society in Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012); David Ciarlo, *Advertising Empire: Race and Visual Culture in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge Harvard University Press, 2011); Berman, Mühlhahn, and Nganang, eds., *German Colonialism Revisited*; Bradley Naranch and Geoff Eley, eds., *German Colonialism in a Global Age*.

⁵⁸ Martha Mamozai, *Schwarze Frau, weiße Herrin: Frauenleben in den deutschen Kolonien* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1989); Lora Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001); Birthe Kundrus, *Moderne Imperialisten: Das Kaiserreich im Spiegel seiner Kolonien* (Köln: Böhlau, 2003); Birthe Kundrus, “Weiblicher Kulturimperialismus: Die imperialistischen Frauenverbände des Kaiserreichs,” in *Das Kaiserreich transnational*, eds. Conrad and Osterhammel, 213-235; Livia Loosen, *Deutsche Frauen in den Südsee-Kolonien des Kaiserreichs: Alltag und Beziehungen zur Indigenen Bevölkerung, 1884-1919* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2014); Livia Rigotti, “German Women in the South Sea Colonies, 1884-1919,” in *Explorations and Entanglements: Germans in Pacific Worlds from the Early Modern Period to World War I*, eds. Hartmut Berghoff, Frank Biess, and Ulrike Strasser (New York: Berghahn, 2019), 213-236. Also see the essays collected in Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst and Mechthild Leutner, eds., *Frauen in den deutschen Kolonien* (Berlin: Christoph Links Verlag, 2009). Similar dynamics have been observed in the case of German women

While these valuable studies have shed much light on histories of German colonialism, in focusing largely on white metropolitan and settler colonial contexts, they have also (re)produced some historiographical asymmetries and lacunae. As Jürgen Zimmerer has stated: “analyzing and explaining the dreams of the colonizers is not sufficient for understanding colonialism. It tells us nothing, for example, about the colonized, let alone telling the story from their perspective.”⁵⁹ Approaching a similar historiographical problem from a different perspective and in a Pacific context, Anne Dickson-Waiko noted in 2007, that while white, European women in the colonies were increasingly gaining recognition in historiographies of empire, the “experiences of the colonized other” were still in need of “urgent investigation, so that the colonized other can also move on to the postcolonial.”⁶⁰ As a project bringing a rigorous consideration of subaltern women to bear on the history of German colonialism, this dissertation endeavors to contribute to that important project.

missionaries. See Katharina Stornig, *Sisters Crossing Boundaries: German Missionary Nuns in Colonial Togo and New Guinea, 1897-1960* (Mainz: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013).

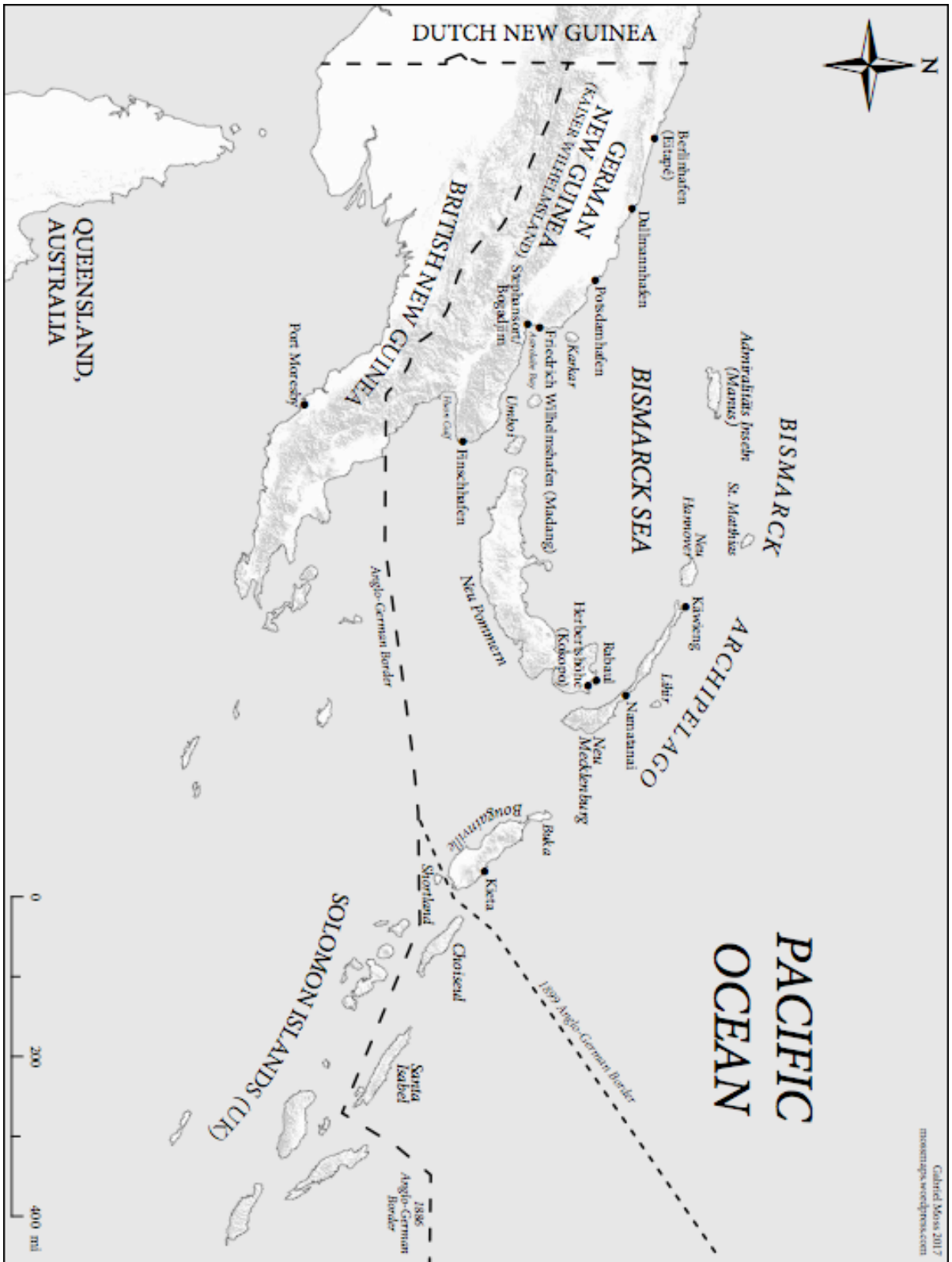
⁵⁹ Jürgen Zimmerer, in Lora Wildenthal, et al., “Forum: The German Colonial Imagination,” *German History* 26, no. 2 (2008): 253. Some important exceptions are Berman, Mühlhahn, and Nganang, eds., *German Colonialism Revisited*; Michelle R. Moyd, *Violent Intermediaries: African Soldiers, Conquest, and Everyday Colonialism in German East Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014). In the field of Pacific history, the “Canberra school’s” island-centered approach has shed important light on the lives and experiences of Islanders under German rule. Key works in this regard are Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans*; Peter J. Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders under German Rule: A Study in the Meaning of Colonial Resistance* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1978). For works on the German colonial Pacific more generally, see John Anthony Moses and Paul M. Kennedy, eds., *Germany in the Pacific and Far East, 1870-1914* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1977); Hiery, *Das deutsche Reich in der Südsee*; Hermann Hiery, ed., *Die deutsche Südsee, 1884-1914: Ein Handbuch* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2001); Hiery, *Bilder aus dem deutschen Südsee*; Hermann Hiery and John Mackenzie, eds., *European Impact and Pacific Influence: British and German Colonial Policy in the Pacific Islands and the Indigenous Response* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, I.B. Tauris Publications, 1997); Miriam Kahn and Sabine Wilke, “Narrating Colonial Encounters: Germany in the Pacific,” *The Journal of Pacific History*, special issue 42, no. 3 (2007): 293-297; Berghoff, Biess, and Strasser, eds., *Explorations and Entanglements*.

⁶⁰ Anne Dickson-Waiko “Colonial Enclaves and Domestic Spaces in British New Guinea,” in *Britishness Abroad: Transnational Movements and Imperial Cultures*, eds. Kate Darian Smith, Patricia Grimshaw, and Stuart Macintyre (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2007), 206. Lora Wildenthal has also made the point that, despite increasing attentiveness to gender in the field of German colonialism (especially in the wake of Ann Laura Stoler’s pioneering work), “there is still little work on actual women on all sides of the German colonial encounter.” See Lora Wildenthal, et al., “Forum: The German Colonial Imagination,” 262-263.

The Setting

This study is situated principally in what the German empire named the “Old Protectorate” of German New Guinea—an equatorial zone of the Western Pacific lying between the equator and the Tropic of Capricorn in what is today considered part of the Oceanian region of Melanesia. In 1884, Germans began raising the imperial flag on the islands situated in this region, some of which already housed the trading stations of Germany’s Pacific commercial interests. Germany’s annexation of these territories was formalized on 17 May 1885, when the German empire granted an imperial charter to the German New Guinea Company to rule the islands. The Protectorate of the New Guinea Company, as this colonial holding was officially known, consisted of the northeastern part of the island of New Guinea, the islands referred to today as New Britain, New Ireland, New Hanover/ Lavongai, the Duke of York Islands, and the Admiralty Islands/Manus. Under German colonial rule, the northeastern part of New Guinea was named Kaiser Wilhelmsland, after the German emperor, and the major outlying islands were now collectively referred to as the Bismarck Archipelago, after the German chancellor. These islands assumed the names of Neu Pommern (New Britain), Neu Mecklenburg (New Ireland), Neu Hannover (New Hanover/Lavongai), Neu Lauenburg (the Duke of York Islands), and the Admiralitäts Inseln (Admiralty Islands/Manus). The following year, in 1886, the northern Solomon Islands of Bougainville, Buka, the Shortland Islands, Choiseul, and Santa Isabel, were added to German New Guinea. With the exceptions of Bougainville and Buka, Germany ceded its northern Solomon possessions to Britain in 1899 in exchange for Britain abandoning claims to Samoa, which had been at the center of German commercial interests in the Pacific since the 1850s. The ceded islands are today part

of the Solomon Islands, while those that Germany retained after 1899 are now part of Papua New Guinea. The German colony shared a border to the south with British New Guinea, annexed in 1884 and administered as the Australian Territory of Papua after 1906. To the west, Kaiser Wilhelmsland bordered Dutch New Guinea, claimed by the Netherlands in the 1820s as part of the Dutch East Indies (figure 1.2).



Global Maps, 2017
 maps.maps.worldpress.com

Figure 1.2. The Old Protectorate of German New Guinea

Throughout the period of German colonial rule, the German empire distinguished the “Old Protectorate” from the “Island Territory” to the north. The latter consisted of the Micronesian islands of Nauru, Palau, and the Marshall, Caroline, and Mariana Islands—today encompassing the states of Nauru, Palau, the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia, as well as the United States territory of the Northern Marianas. Germany claimed the Marshall Islands in 1885, which it administered as a separate colony, expanding to include Nauru in 1888. In 1899, German empire purchased the Caroline Islands, including Palau, and Mariana Islands, excluding Guam, from Spain. They were placed under the administration of German New Guinea as the “Island Territory.” It was only in 1906 that Germany added the Marshall Islands and Nauru to German New Guinea, where they too fell under the designation of the “Island Territory.” The Island Territory and Old Protectorate continued to operate as separate budgetary entities until 1910, and the two effectively functioned as separate colonies despite their official common groupage under the “Protectorate of German New Guinea.” Of particular relevance to the present study are the rather different “native policies” that the Germans pursued in each of these areas: if the people of the Island Territory might become consumers of Western goods, those of the Old Protectorate were to be mobilized as laborers for German interests.⁶¹ As will be elaborated below, these differences drew upon established European divisions of the Pacific that were racialized as well as gendered. In what follows, “German New Guinea” or sometimes “New Guinea” thus signifies those colonial holdings that the Germans designated as the Old Protectorate. Correspondingly, I use the demonym “New Guinean” to refer broadly to the

⁶¹ Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans*, 2. As George Steinmetz has aptly demonstrated, Germany pursued marked different “native policies” across its colonial empire, which were to a large degree grounded in precolonial European ethnographic knowledge. See Steinmetz, *The Devils Handwriting*.

peoples of this territory who were subjects of the German colonial state—peoples whose descendants would today identify as Papua New Guineans. “Kaiser Wilhelmsland” indicates that part of the island of New Guinea that constituted the mainland of the Old Protectorate.

Numbering over 600 in total, the islands of New Guinea have long been home to peoples who speak a diversity of Papuan and Austronesian languages, who maintain various origin stories, and who engage in a range of different cultural practices. The terrains that have supported these peoples are similarly diverse, shaped by the Pacific Ring of Fire. Sandy coves punctuate vast coasts whose rocky shorelines prohibit landfall in many places. Low-lying coral atolls are countered by the New Guinea Highlands, mountain ranges that soar to over 14,000 feet and are traversed by numerous rivers and tributaries. These landscapes, many covered with dense rainforest, meant that European penetration in the islands remained shallow. German New Guinea was a coastal colony, its administrative and commercial centers largely limited to the areas of the Gazelle Peninsula of northern Neu Pommern, overlooking Blanche Bay; to the Neu Lauenburg Islands situated in Saint George’s Channel between Neu Pommern and Neu Mecklenburg; and to locations on Kaiser Wilhelmsland’s north coast rendered accessible by gulfs, bays, and harbors. The diversity of New Guinea’s peoples, as far as the German New Guinea Company was concerned, was a mixed blessing. On the one hand, “it reduce[d] the danger which might arise if a group of larger tribes were to join forces to attack or resist the sparsely occupied [European] settlements.” On the other, it presented “an obstacle to winning over the people peacefully,” as in each new place, colonists would have to learn local languages “afresh.”⁶²

⁶² Sack and Clark, eds. and trans., *German New Guinea*, 19.

Over time, Europeans would learn more about the social and cultural diversity of the region. They would note the matrilineal family structures that characterized societies in many places in the Bismarck Archipelago, and would wrestle with what this meant for gender relations there. In Kaiser Wilhelmsland, around the place the Germans called Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, Europeans observed New Guinean men who were said to guard “their women” jealously from the recently-arrived white foreigners. Still further up the coast, near Eitapé (or Berlinhafen), a missionary ethnographer would be called upon to attest to colonial administrators the seemingly preposterous assertion that, there, a woman could marry without her father’s permission. This diversity, and European attempts to grapple with it, make New Guinea a particularly fertile terrain from which to interrogate culturally contingent understandings of gender, sexuality, race, and labor within a larger transnational frame.

On the islands of the Bismarck Archipelago, the men of the New Guinea Company also found people largely conversant in Tok Pisin (New Guinea Pidgin), who were accustomed to white traders and labor recruiters, and who were familiar with Fiji, Samoa, and Queensland as destinations in the Pacific labor trade.⁶³ Two German trading firms, Hensheim & Co. and the Samoa-based Deutsche Handels- und Plantagen-Gesellschaft (German Trading and Plantation Company, DHPG), were already established in the Duke of York Islands (Neu Lauenburg), on the Gazelle Peninsula, and at Nusa in northern New Ireland (Neu Mecklenburg).⁶⁴ The Samoan-American “Queen” Emma Coe and with her common-law

⁶³ Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders under German Rule*, 119. Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans*, 28.

⁶⁴ For an overview of German commercial activity in the Pacific, see Stewart Firth, “German Firms in the Western Pacific Islands, 1857-1914,” *The Journal of Pacific History* 8 (1973): 10-28. On Hensheim, see Franz Hensheim, *Südsee-Erinnerungen (1875-1880)* (Berlin: A Hofmann & Co., 1885); Jakob Anderhandt, *Eduard Hensheim, die Südsee und viel Geld: Biographie*, 2 vols. (Münster: Monsenstein und Vannerdat, 2012).

partner, Thomas Farrell, had also established themselves as copra trader in the islands. Several years later, with the help of her Danish brother-in-law, Richard Parkinson, Emma established a commercial plantation empire on the Gazelle Peninsula, relying largely on the labors of workers imported from the northern Solomon Islands.⁶⁵ Mission societies were also present in the Bismarck Archipelago at the time of German annexation. The Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Mission had established its first station in the Duke of York Islands in 1875, staffed mainly by British and Anglo-Australian missionaries and Fijian, Tongan, and Samoan mission teachers. From there, they expanded their operations to the Gazelle Peninsula. The Sacred Heart Mission (Herz Jesu Mission) came later, in 1882, originally to minister to the Catholic survivors of the failed colonization scheme (or swindle) concocted by the French Marquis de Rays, who purported to be establishing a “Nouvelle-France” in the Bismarck Archipelago.⁶⁶ Other mission societies, both Lutheran and Catholic, would follow.

⁶⁵ Coe was Emma’s maiden name. She was also known at various stages in her life by the last names Farrell, Forsayth, and Kolbe. See Toeolesulusulu Damon Salesa, “Emma and Phebe: ‘Weavers of the Border,’” *Journal of Polynesian Society* 123, no. 2 (2014): 145-168; Jim Specht, “Traders and Collectors: Richard Parkinson and Family in the Bismarck Archipelago, P.N.G.,” *Pacific Arts* 21/22 (2000): 23-38. For a more popular account, see R. W. Robson, *Queen Emma: The Samoan-American Girl Who Founded an Empire in 19th Century New Guinea* (Sydney: Pacific Publications, 1979). Richard Parkinson authored the magisterial tome, *Dreissig Jahre in der Südsee: Land und Leute, Sitten und Gebräuche im Bismarckarchipel und auf den deutschen Salomoinseln*. (Stuttgart: Strecker und Schröder, 1907). Farrell’s origins are unclear. Sources identify him variously as an “Anglo-American,” an “Irishman by birth,” an Englishman, a New Zealander, and an Australian, or “Australian colonist.” See, respectively, “Die Entwicklung der deutschen Interessen in der Südsee während der Jahre 1880 bis 1885,” *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung* 3 (1886): 368; G. Truppel, “Die Aussichten im Bismarck-Archipel,” *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung* 5 (1888): 287; Otto Finsch, *Samoafahrten: Reisen in Kaiser Wilhelms-Land und Englisch-Neu-Guinea in den Jahren 1884 u. 1885 an Bord des deutschen Dampfers “Samoa”* (Leipzig: F. Hirt & Sohn, 1888), 21-22; Stephen Winsor Reed, *The Making of Modern New Guinea, with Special Reference to Culture Contact in the Mandated Territory* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1943), 98; Salesa, “Emma and Phebe,” 151; Clive Moore, *New Guinea: Crossing Boundaries and History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2003), 116. It seems clear that Farrell traveled extensively before meeting Emma in Apia, Samoa, and moving with her to the Bismarck Archipelago. For more on Farrell during his time in the Bismarck Archipelago, see Vicki Barnecutt, “Thomas Farrell: Trading in New Ireland,” in *Hunting the Collectors: Pacific Collections in Australian Museums, Art Galleries and Archives*, eds. Susan Cochrane and Max Quanchi (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2007), 120-129.

⁶⁶ Under the Marquis de Rays’s scheme, several hundred people, mostly French, but also Belgians, Italians, and other European nationals, departed Europe for New Ireland between 1880 and 1881. Many died, and most of the survivors—among them about 200 Italians—immigrated to Australia. See Bill Metcalf, “Utopian Freud: The Marquis de Rays and La Nouvelle-France,” *Utopian Studies* 22, no. 1 (2011): 104-124; Peter Biskup, ed., *The*

In so far as they assisted in “gaining mastery over the natives peacefully,” they were useful to administrators of the New Guinea Company.⁶⁷

Neither missionaries nor labor recruiters or traders had established a permanent presence on the northeast mainland of New Guinea by the time the Germans laid claim to it, but some peoples of the Rai Coast had several years earlier become acquainted with the Russian scientist, Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay.⁶⁸ It was here, on Kaiser Wilhelmsland, that the Berlin-based New Guinea Company’s founder, Adolph von Hansemann, envisioned the establishment of a thriving settler colony, a “Germany in Melanesia.”⁶⁹ Company vessels and German naval gunboats followed.⁷⁰ Between 1885 and 1886, at Finschhafen, Hatzfeldthafen, and Constantinhafen, the New Guinea Company established stations with the stated purpose of entering “into relations with the natives by barter trade and by engaging them in regular work, to experiment with the cultivation of useful tropical and European plants, to prepare for settlement and to serve as bases for the Administration when organized.”⁷¹ In September 1888, the colony was declared open for settlement. However, the New Guinea Company’s plans of attracting settlers, particularly Germans who had already emigrated to Australia and “who possessed some capital” with which to establish their own plantations, was never

New Guinea Memoirs of Jean Baptiste Octave Mouton (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974). Octave Mouton, a Belgian national, was among the survivors. He arrived in the Bismarck Archipelago at age fourteen with his father, Maximilien, eventually settling on the Gazelle Peninsula where he established himself as a copra trader.

⁶⁷ Sack and Clark, eds. and trans., *German New Guinea*, 12.

⁶⁸ Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans*, 22, 28. On Miklouho-Maclay, see Elsie May Webster, *The Moon Man: A Biography of N. N. Miklouho-Maclay* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Sheila Fitzpatrick, “On the Trail of Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay: A Russian-Australian Encounter with the Antipodes,” in *The Atlantic World in the Antipodes: Effects and Transformations since the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Kate Fullagar (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), 166-184.

⁶⁹ Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans*, 27.

⁷⁰ Sack and Clark, eds. and trans., *German New Guinea*, 4, 8; Peter Sack, “A History of German New Guinea: A Debate about Evidence and Judgement,” *The Journal of Pacific History* 20, no. 2 (1985): 93.

⁷¹ Sack and Clark, eds. and trans., *German New Guinea*, 4.

realized. The Company's own annual report for 1888-89 stated with evident disappointment that the few who did come to the Protectorate, were "artisans without means who wished to enter the Company's service for wages."⁷² With the failure of large-scale German settlement in the islands, German New Guinea became a plantation colony, with the cultivation of coconut palms for the production and export of copra ultimately forming the basis of its economy.⁷³

Oceania, Melanesia, and the Division of the Pacific

For the late anthropologist, Epeli Hau'ofa, Oceania was best understood as a "sea of islands." Large communities of exchange traversed oceanic spaces, engaging people, wealth, knowledge, and arts in endless circulation. This was a world "that bred men and women with skills and courage that took them into the unknown, to discover and populate all the habitable islands east of the 180th meridian."⁷⁴ When Europeans first ventured into these waters many thousands of years after these early crossings, they formed different ideas about the region. Theirs was not a vision of Oceanian unity, but of division. They drew "imaginary lines" across the ocean, assigning peoples to places, demarcating them from

⁷² Sack and Clark, eds. and trans., *German New Guinea*, 42.

⁷³ Peter Sack, "German New Guinea: A Reluctant Plantation Colony?" *Journal de la Société des océanistes* 42, no. 82 (1986): 109-127.

⁷⁴ Epeli Hau'ofa, "Our Sea of Islands," in *A New Oceania: Rediscovering Our Sea of Islands*, eds. Eric Waddell, Vijay Naidu, and Epeli Hau'ofa (Suva: School of Social and Economic Development, The University of the South Pacific, in association with Beake House, 1993), 2-16, quotation: 10.

others, and diminishing Oceania in size, richness, and importance through acts that reduced it to “tiny isolated dots in a vast sea.”⁷⁵

The imaginary lines drawn by European navigators and naturalists place the islands of this study within the region now designated as Melanesia. It is a region that encompasses the Maluku Islands to the west of New Guinea, New Guinea and its surrounding islands, extending southeast to the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, and New Caledonia. “Island Melanesia” denotes the islands beyond the large mainland of New Guinea Island: “the chain of archipelagos, islands, atolls, and reefs” stretching from Manus to New Guinea’s northeast, southward to New Caledonia, wrapping around the Coral Sea.⁷⁶

First used in the nineteenth century, the name “Melanesia” draws on the Greek word *melos*, referencing the dark-skinned people of these Western Pacific islands. Already in the sixteenth century, European travelers to the western parts of this region had noted what they considered to be physical similarities between its peoples and those of Guinea in West Africa. The name “New Guinea”—first adopted by the Spanish in 1545—signaled that this place was home to “black” Oceanians, although the Maluku people used the word “Papua” to refer to the place and its people and some Spanish and Portuguese travelers had already adopted the name.⁷⁷ Europeans contrasted these dark-skinned Islanders in the Western Pacific with those of fairer complexions whom they observed in the Eastern Pacific. Epitomized by the people of Tahiti, with whom eighteenth-century European travelers

⁷⁵ Ibid., 7. Also see Margaret Jolly, “Imagining Oceania: Indigenous and Foreign Representations of a Sea of Islands,” *The Contemporary Pacific* 19, no. 2 (2007): 508-545. Matt Matsuda and Nicholas Thomas are among those scholars whose works deftly illustrate Hau’ofa’s expansive vision of Oceania. See Matsuda, *Pacific Worlds*; Nicholas Thomas, *Islanders: The Pacific in the Age of Empires* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

⁷⁶ Moore, *New Guinea*, 5.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 1; John Dademo Waiko, *A Short History of Papua New Guinea* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993), 17.

claimed to have had convivial encounters, these peoples of the east came to be known as “Polynesians”—a term that had earlier designated all of Oceania.⁷⁸ For instance, Johann Reinhold Forster, the German naturalist who accompanied James Cook on his second voyage, wrote in his 1778 publication, *Observations Made during a Voyage round the World*, of “two great varieties of people in the South Seas.” He identified the peoples of Tahiti, the Marquesas, Tonga, Rapa Nui, and Aotearoa/New Zealand, as “the one more fair, well limbed, athletic, of a fine size, and a kind benevolent temper.” Forster’s other “variety,” or “race,” inhabiting New Caledonia and Vanuatu, was the “blacker, the hair just beginning to become woolly and crisp, the body more slender and low, and their temper, if possible, more brisk, though somewhat mistrustful.”⁷⁹ For observers like Forster, skin tone and physique indicated temperament and distinguished distinct “races” of Pacific peoples inhabiting equally distinct Oceanian regions.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Europeans had increasingly accepted the division of Oceanian peoples into two “races”: the “copper-colored” Polynesians in what is now Polynesia and Micronesia, and the “black race,” or “Oceanic Negroes” of New Guinea, Island Melanesia, and Tasmania (Van Diemen’s Land).⁸⁰ Though the French botanist and

⁷⁸ On the Melanesia/Polynesia divide, see Nicholas Thomas, “The Force of Ethnology: Origins and Significance of the Melanesia/Polynesia Division,” *Current Anthropology* 30, no. 1 (1989): 27-41; Geoffrey Clark, ed., “Dumont d’Urville’s Division of Oceania: Fundamental Precincts or Arbitrary Constructs?” *The Journal of Pacific History*. Special issue 38, no. 2 (2003). On European and, especially, German visions of Tahiti and Polynesia, see Steinmetz, *The Devils Handwriting*, esp. 243-288. The Tahitian navigator, Tupaia, joined James Cook aboard the *Endeavour*, producing maps and interpreting Polynesian languages for the Europeans on this voyage.

⁷⁹ Johann Reinhold Forster, *Observations Made during a Voyage round the World*, eds. Nicholas Thomas, Harriet Guest, and Michael Dettelbach (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1996), 153. For more on Forster during Cook’s second voyage, see Anne Mariss, “Johann Reinhold Forster and the Ship *Resolution* as a Space of Knowledge Production,” in *Explorations and Entanglements*, eds. Hartmut Berghoff, Frank Biess, and Ulrike Strasser, 127-152.

⁸⁰ The designations of a “copper-colored” race and “black race” of “Oceanic Negroes” were used by Edme Mentelle and Conrad Malte-Brun at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Mentelle and Malte-Brun suspected that the people of mainland Australia (New Holland) likely constituted a “third race.” See Bronwen Douglas, “Foreign Bodies in Oceania,” in *Foreign Bodies: Oceania and the Science of Race, 1750-1940*, eds.

navigator, Jules Dumont d'Urville, is often credited with coining the term "Melanesia" in the 1830s, his compatriot, the naturalist Jean Baptiste Bory de Saint-Vincent, had already employed the term "Mélaniens" to mean the "black" peoples of the Pacific.⁸¹ Dumont d'Urville's legacy is to be found in his schema of four Oceanian divisions: Polynesia, Micronesia, Malaysia, and Melanesia.⁸² However, he retained Forster's notion that these regions were inhabited by two distinct "races": "the Melanesian race," which he believed to be "a branch of the black race from Africa"; and the "coppery Polynesian race," descended from "the yellow race of Asia."⁸³ Europeans situated Oceanian "races" hierarchically.⁸⁴ White men like Dumont d'Urville considered Polynesian and Micronesian peoples to be more civilized, more attractive, and of higher intelligence, than those Melanesians. The latter, wrote Dumont d'Urville, had complexions "sometimes almost as black as that of the Kaffirs" and were "organized into tribes or clans" rather than the more recognizable (to Europeans) stratified forms of governance and "well-ordered monarchies" they encountered to the east.⁸⁵

The basic tenants of a discernable difference, if not opposition, between Melanesian and Polynesian peoples have proven tenacious. So, too, have their hierarchical implications,

Bronwen Douglas and Chris Ballard (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2008), 8; Chris Ballard, "'Oceanic Negroes': British Anthropology of Papuans, 1820-1869," in *ibid.*, 157-201. On the many permutations in European theories of race in Oceania, see Douglas and Ballard, eds., *Foreign Bodies: Oceania and the Science of Race, 1750-1940*; Hilary Howes, *The Race Question in Oceania: A. B. Meyer and Otto Finsch between Metropolitan Theory and Field Experience, 1865-1914* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2013).

⁸¹ Serge Tcherkézoff, "A Long and Unfortunate Voyage towards the 'Invention' of the Melanesia/Polynesia Distinction, 1595-1832," *The Journal of Pacific History*, special issue 38, no. 2 (2003): 178.

⁸² "Malaysia," in Dumont d'Urville's schema, encompassed the Sunda Islands, the Maluku Islands, and the Philippines, while "Melanesia" also included mainland Australia and Tasmania, whose inhabitants occupied "the lowest rung" in Dumont d'Urville's racial hierarchy. Jules-Sébastien-César Dumont d'Urville, "On the Islands of the Great Ocean," trans. Isabel Ollivier, Antoine de Biran, and Geoffrey Clark, *The Journal of Pacific History*, special issue 38, no. 2 (2003): 163-174.

⁸³ Dumont d'Urville, "On the Islands of the Great Ocean," 173.

⁸⁴ Tcherkézoff, "A Long and Unfortunate Voyage," 175-196.

⁸⁵ Dumont d'Urville, "On the Islands of the Great Ocean," 164, 166.

which, despite various reappropriations of the terms by Pacific Islanders, have had enduring legacies within and beyond Oceania.⁸⁶ The renowned American anthropologist, Marshall Sahlins, for instance, notably expounded the Melanesia/Polynesia divide in his influential 1963 article “Poor Man, Rich Man, Big-Man, Chief.” Focusing on political structures in Pacific cultures, Sahlins opposed egalitarian, competitive political systems in Melanesia (“big-man” systems) with stratified chiefdoms in Polynesia.⁸⁷ Sahlins used the language of “evolution” and “development” to describe these systems, characterizing Melanesian political structures as “underdeveloped” and discerning “an upward west to east slope in political development in the southern Pacific.”⁸⁸ These echoes of imperial discourses have not gone unnoticed. Epli Hau’ofa, born in the Territory of Papua to Tongan missionary parents, has called Sahlins’s article “a clever, thoughtless and insulting piece of writing”—part of a long pedigree of Euro-American literature on Oceania that has “romanticised Polynesians and denigrated Melanesians.”⁸⁹ Others have challenged the straightforward division of Pacific worlds into

⁸⁶ The Papua New Guinean politician, Bernard Narokobi, championed “the Melanesian way” in 1980 not as something grounded in Western racial typologies, but as “a total cosmic vision of life in which every event within human consciousness has its personal, communal, spiritual, economic, political and social dimensions. It is, by its very nature, inherently open to change.” Quoted in Nicholas Thomas, “Melanesians and Polynesians: Ethnic Typifications Inside and Outside Anthropology,” in *In Oceania: Visions, Artifacts, Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 153. Thomas points out such discourses about “the Melanesian way” draw their influences from African philosophies of Negritude, rather than from European thinking. On the ways in which racist implications of European divisions of Oceania reverberate within Oceania, see Epli Hau’ofa, “Anthropology and Pacific Islanders,” *Oceania* 45, no. 4 (1975): 286, and, more generally, Hau’ofa, “Our Sea of Islands,” 2-16.

⁸⁷ Marshall D. Sahlins, “Poor Man, Rich Man, Big-Man, Chief: Political Types in Melanesia and Polynesia,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 5, no. 3 (1963): 285-303.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 286.

⁸⁹ Epli Hau’ofa, “Anthropology and Pacific Islanders,” *Oceania* 45, no. 4 (1975): 286-87. Also see Thomas, “The Force of Ethnology,” 27-41. In the published comments accompanying Thomas’s 1989 article, Sahlins stated that he “would not defend the crude progressivist arguments” he made in “Poor Man, Rich Man, Big-Man, Chief,” but simultaneously decried the “torturous allegation” that modern anthropologists who use the terms “Melanesia” and “Polynesia” purvey “a sublimated or ‘suppressed’ modality of an older bigotry.” See *ibid.*, 36-37. In addition to being used by Pacific Islanders, the terms remain legitimate idioms across many academic disciplines, anthropology included. The “modality of an older bigotry” was in coupling them to purported stages of “development.”

distinct regions, arguing that it fails to take into account the diversity of social and political models that exist across Oceania and which often fail to conform to the Melanesia/Polynesia, big man/chief divide.⁹⁰

As scholars have also demonstrated, however, these enduring Oceanian divisions were never exclusively grounded in European understandings of geography and race; they were also highly gendered constructs.⁹¹ At least since Cook's voyages, as Jolly has argued, gender was "crucial in delineating a difference between Pacific peoples," underpinning Europeans' contrasting assessments of the Pacific's east and west.⁹² Johann Forster's "observations" from Cook's second voyage are illustrative. Among the Tahitians, wrote Forster, were to be found "the most beautiful variety of the first [Oceanian] race," their faces "generally regular, soft, and beautiful." Tahitian women possessed "an open, cheerful countenance," were "in general finely, nay delicately shaped. The arms, hands, and fingers of some are so exquisitely delicate and beautiful, that they would do honour to a Venus of Medicis."⁹³ Evident here are European discourses of the "noble savage" and the "South Sea

⁹⁰ See Bronwen Douglas, "Rank, Power, Authority: A Reassessment of Traditional Leadership in South Pacific Societies," *Journal of Pacific History* 14, no. 2 (1979): 2-27; Thomas, "The Force of Ethnology," 27-41; Christophe Sand, "Melanesian Tribes vs. Polynesian Chiefdoms: Recent Archaeological Assessment of a Classic Model of Sociopolitical Types in Oceania," *Asian Perspectives* 41, no. 2 (2002): 284-296.

⁹¹ Margaret Jolly, "Women of the East, Women of the West: Region and Race, Gender and Sexuality on Cook's Voyages," in *The Atlantic World in the Antipodes*, ed. Fullagar, 2-32; Margaret Jolly, "From Point Venus to Bali Ha'i: Eroticism and Exoticism in Representations of the Pacific," in *Sites of Desire, Economies of Pleasure: Sexualities in Asia and the Pacific*, eds. Lenore Manderson and Margaret Jolly (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 99-122; Robert Tobin, "Venus von Samoa: Rasse und Sexualität im deutschen Südpazifik," in *Kolonialismus als Kultur: Literatur, Medien, Wissenschaft in der deutschen Gründerzeit des Fremden*, eds. Alexander Honold and Oliver Simons (Tubingen: A. Francke Verlag, 2002), 192-220; Serge Tcherkézoff, "A Reconsideration of the Role of Polynesian Women in Early Encounters with Europeans: Supplement to Marshall Sahlins' Voyage around the Islands of History," in *Oceanic Encounters*, eds. Jolly, Tcherkézoff, and Tryon, 113-160; Steinmetz, *The Devils Handwriting*, 248-252, 266; Michael Sturma, *South Sea Maiden: Western Fantasy and Sexual Politics in the South Pacific* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002).

⁹² Jolly, "Women of the East," 2-32.

⁹³ Forster, *Observations*, 154.

maiden” which take Polynesia as their reference point.⁹⁴ It is no coincidence, as scholars have pointed out, that early European voyagers, even before Cook, encountered on these islands women whom they believed to be granting them “personal favours” (although more violent mechanisms may well have been at work).⁹⁵ For white, European men, the Islanders’ apparent hospitality was linked to Islander women’s supposed sexual availability in ways that coded the (Eastern) Pacific as sensual, exotic, and feminine in European imaginaries. These imaginaries endure, evident even in some more recent historiography on the German Pacific, which presents tropes of “South Sea girls,” “Pacific-libertarian sexual views,” and German colonists who “were ‘connoisseurs’ of the *joie de vivre* that the South Seas once offered.”⁹⁶

European visions of the Western Pacific evoked a different set of gendered tropes. In contrast to the feminization of what became known as Polynesia, and in contrast to Edward Said’s insights on Western Orientalist discourse, white, European men tended to portray Melanesians—men and women—in masculine terms.⁹⁷ They emphasized Melanesians’ bellicosity, their consistent displays of “stubborn defiance and strong antipathy towards the Europeans, who have almost always had grounds to regret their encounters with these

⁹⁴ For further analyses of these tropes, see Steinmetz, *The Devils Handwriting*, 243-315; Sturma, *South Sea Maiden*.

⁹⁵ Samuel Wallis, quoted Steinmetz, *The Devils Handwriting*, 247. For a rereading of these sexual encounters which calls into serious doubt the narratives crafted by European travelers, see Tcherkézoff, “A Reconsideration of the Role of Polynesian Women,” 113-159.

⁹⁶ Hiery, *Das deutsche Reich in der Südsee*, 46, 53, 57. Hiery’s claim that Pacific Islanders (“in contrast to Europeans”) viewed sexuality “as something natural” (30 n 25) is problematic given complex and varied cultural prohibitions (*tabus*) surrounding sexuality, as well as cultural practices surrounding initiation, marriage, widowhood, etc. It also evokes the notion of “natural peoples” (*Naturvölker*) as distinct from European “cultured peoples” (*Kulturvölker*). Also see Hermann J. Hiery, “Germans, Pacific Islanders and Sexuality: German Impact and Indigenous Influence in Melanesia and Micronesia,” in *European Impact and Pacific Influence*, eds. Hiery and MacKenzie, 299-323.

⁹⁷ Jolly, “Women of the East,” 7; Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

treacherous hosts.”⁹⁸ The trope of cannibalism predominated.⁹⁹ Whereas, in the Eastern Pacific, European men frequently took the sexual freedom that local men ostensibly allowed women as an indicator of women’s relatively high social status and thus a measure of the Islanders’ relatively high levels of “civilization,” in the Western Pacific women appeared degraded by local men and sexually unavailable to white men, indicating a prevailing savagery.¹⁰⁰ As Johann Forster’s son Georg, also a naturalist on Cook’s second voyage, wrote: “It is the practice of all uncivilized nations to deny their women the common privileges of human beings, and to treat them as creatures inferior to themselves.”¹⁰¹ Johann himself thought the Kanak women of New Caledonia, like other women in the region, to be “under the humiliating and disgracing predicament of drudges.” Their features were “coarse” and “with thick lips and wide mouths,” their faces lacked anything “agreeable or pleasing.”¹⁰² The ni-Vanuatu women on Tanna generally possessed “a fine outline” before childbearing, but they were “all ill-favoured, nay, some are very ugly.”¹⁰³ Forster likened the people of Malakula (Mallicollo) to monkeys and considered the women to be “ugly and deformed.” As he noted elsewhere in his descriptions of Oceania’s “second race,” the women “were here likewise obliged to act the part of pack-horses, in carrying provisions for their indolent

⁹⁸ Dumont d’Urville, “On the Islands of the Great Ocean,” 169.

⁹⁹ The sensational trope of Melanesian cannibalism was leveraged in many late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century publications on (German) New Guinea. See, for example, Herbert Cayley Webster, *Through New Guinea and the Cannibal Countries* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1898); Carl Ribbe, *Zwei Jahre unter den Kannibalen der Salomo-Inseln: Reiseerlebnisse und Schilderungen von Land und Leuten* (Dresden: Elbgau-Buchdruckerei, 1903); Heinrich Schnee, *Bilder aus der Südsee: Unter den kannibalischen Stämmen des Bismarck-Archipels* (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1904); Elisabeth Krämer-Bannow, *Bei kunstsinnigen Kannibalen der Südsee: Wanderungen auf Neu-Mecklenburg 1908-1909* (Berlin: Verlag Dietrich Reimer, 1916).

¹⁰⁰ Margaret Jolly, “‘Ill-Natured Comparisons’: Racism and Relativism in European Representations of ni-Vanuatu from Cook’s Second Voyage,” *History and Anthropology* 5 (1992), 331-364.

¹⁰¹ Georg Forster, *A Voyage Round the World*, vol. 2, eds. Nicholas Thomas and Oliver Berghof (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2000), 537.

¹⁰² Forster, *Observations*, 159-162.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 163-164.

husbands, and to do all the most laborious drudgery in the plantations.”¹⁰⁴ The New Guinean women who are at the center of this study moved in a colonial milieu in which these discourses were embraced, adapted, and negotiated.

The Chapters

This dissertation navigates the complex interactions of European representational strategies, practices, and policies, and the social, cultural, and political worlds in which New Guinean lived and labored under German colonial rule. It begins with an analysis of late-nineteenth-century writings produced by white, German and European men, revealing the ways in which these authors construed New Guinean gender relations around the category of labor and rewrote vernacular practices surrounding marriage in a capitalist lexicon. As Chapter Two demonstrates, ubiquitous European representations of bridewealth exchange as a capitalist market transaction in which women and their labors were “bought” and “sold,” evoked gendered tropes of the “savagery” of vernacular cultures. They also produced European understandings of New Guinean women’s bodies and labors as commodity items.

The multiple and contentious implications of these commodity logics resonate throughout Chapters Three, Four, and Five, which explore New Guinean women’s experiences in diverse and concrete sites of colonial interaction. Although many white, European men in the colony decried bridewealth practices as indicative of New Guinean women’s low social status and degradation within vernacular cultures, as Chapter Three

¹⁰⁴ Forster, *Observations*, 164.

demonstrates, many male colonists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries considered women's bodies and labors to be items also available to them through purchase or other means. From remote trading stations to colonial centers, European men exploited a multiplicity of New Guinean women's labors. Conceptions of marriage sometimes figured in these arrangements, often understood by outsiders as temporary and commoditized by bridewealth.

Chapter Four examines missionary attempts to intervene in the intimate and familial lives of New Guineans through their efforts to reconfigure marriage and establish laboring, Christian, New Guinean families in accordance with European ideals. Missionaries in German New Guinea also mobilized bridewealth practices and both utilized and evaded the colonial labor system in pursuit of their agendas. The fifth chapter analyzes the colonial questions of how, when, and whether to police sexual contact between male European colonists and female colonial subjects. Colonists' desires to regulate and minimize this kind of sexual contact manifested in the establishment of a controlled sex industry and debates about marriage law in the German colony. However, when indentured New Guinean women charged white, European men of rape in German colonial courts, the colonial state revealed itself to be rather more permissive of the sexual violence that white, male colonists perpetrated against New Guinean women.

The final chapter returns the focus to colonial discourses by analyzing early twentieth-century colonial anxieties about depopulation and its consequences for the colonial labor force. Focusing on the gendered tropes that littered contemporary medical-ethnographic studies, this chapter argues that during this period, colonial administrators and concerned interlocutors radically revalued New Guinean women's bodies and labors,

increasingly emphasizing their value for the biological reproduction and economic subsidization of the labor force. This revaluing of New Guinean women by the German colonial administration at once exposed and obscured the violences that the colonial indenture exercised against local women and their communities more broadly. At the same time, it both revealed and troubled the capitalist logics of growth underpinning German colonialism in New Guinea.

CHAPTER 2

Bridewealth, European Imaginaries, and the Commodification of New Guinean Women's Labors

In his 1891 publication on German colonial New Guinea, the traveler and journalist, Hugo Zöller, declared that in Germany's recently annexed Western Pacific colony, New Guinean men "obtained" women "like commodities." On Kaiser Wilhelmsland men were said to have "bought" women with trade goods, whereas in the Bismarck Archipelago, women were "usually purchasable only with *diwarra*." Zöller's reference to *diwarra*, a shell valuable used in the Bismarck Archipelago, perhaps alerted his readers to New Guinean practices of bridewealth exchange that predate colonialism, yet his mention of trade goods signals a context of colonial interaction in which New Guinean women and men negotiated new forms of power and wealth. His observations suggest new geographies and economies ushered in by colonialism. In a colonial center like Neu Lauenburg, where the German trading firms Godeffroy & Sohn (later the DHPG) and Hensheim & Co. had established stations in the mid-1870s, "a woman costs at least sixty marks." Further afield "in outermost Neu Mecklenburg," where the European colonial presence was, at the time of Zöller's visit to New Guinea, limited to remote trading stations and transitory visits by labor recruiters, "a young girl can yet be

had for ten to twelve marks.” Because New Guinean men considered it shameful to work in their home villages, Zöllner wrote, they “bought” women as wives whose purpose it became to perform the labors of maintaining gardens and homes.¹

Zöllner had arrived in the islands in 1888, just three years after Germany had officially claimed them for its overseas empire, and the same year that the governing New Guinea Company declared the colony open for European settlement. Zöllner’s first port of call in the German colony was Finschhafen on Kaiser Wilhelmsland, where the New Guinea Company had established its main station three years earlier on land that belonged to the Yabim people.² From there, he embarked upon a series of expeditions along the Astrolabe Bay, to the islands of the Bismarck Archipelago and northern Solomon Islands, and most famously into New Guinea’s mountainous hinterlands, where he bestowed upon the ranges and peaks the names of Bismarck, as well as the chancellor’s children.³ A correspondent for the liberal-democratic newspaper, the *Kölnische Zeitung*, Zöllner had previously traveled to South America and the Caribbean, Egypt and West Africa, and would soon proceed to German East Africa (Tanzania, Rwanda, and Burundi) as a relentless promoter of what he called

¹ Hugo Zöllner, *Deutsch-Neuguinea und meine Ersteigung des Finisterre-Gebirges: Eine Schilderung des ersten erfolgreichen Vordringens zu den Hochgebirgen Inner-Neuguineas, der Natur des Landes, der Sitten der Eingeborenen und des gegenwärtigen Standes der Deutschen Kolonisationsthätigkeit in Kaiser-Wilhelms-Land, Bismarck und Salomoarchipel, nebst einem Wortverzeichnis von 46 Papuasprachen* (Stuttgart: Union Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1891), 295.

² Of the German alienation of Yabim land, Zöllner wrote: “The sites now occupied by the houses, warehouses, gardens, and plantations of Finschhafen previously belonged to the Yabim [*Jabim*]. However, the people there have gradually been bought out, so that they have had to retreat a few thousand meters further inland.” He went on to note, however, that the Yabim did not understand why the whites had come to their land, and that the big man, Makiri, believed that the whites would leave. *Ibid.*, 12, 14.

³ *Ibid.* For a summary of Zöllner’s travels, see Arthur Wichmann, *Entdeckungsgeschichte von Neu-Guinea, 1885-1902*, vol. 2 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1910), 478-480. The Bismarck Range makes up the northeastern part of New Guinea’s Central Highlands. Zöllner believed he was naming the tallest peak after Otto von Bismarck (Mount Otto), but the tallest peak is actually Mount Wilhelm, which Zöllner named for Bismarck’s youngest son. Zöllner also named peaks after Bismarck’s other two children, Herbert and Marien, and named other features of New Guinea’s landscape after German colonial administrators (Reinhold Kraetke and Julius Winter)—as well as himself.

“Germany’s great colonial era.”⁴ The writings of this “unabashed colonialist” were widely consumed by the *Kölnische Zeitung*’s metropolitan readerships, and a national lecture tour and multiple published books detailing his travels abroad, including in German New Guinea, rapidly followed.⁵

This chapter is not about Zöllner, however, but about European colonial discourses surrounding New Guinean practices of bridewealth, vernacular gender relations, and gendered divisions of labors to which he contributed. Yet Zöllner is, in several ways, a useful figure with which to begin a discussion of the European representational strategies that constituted these colonial discourses. Like Zöllner, European representations of New Guinean peoples traveled: formulated during on-the-ground encounters that were perhaps fleeting, these discourses circulated among colonists in German New Guinea’s small colonial enclaves, and between sites of colonial encounter and metropolitan milieux.⁶ Like Zöllner, these discourses also served to promote and legitimize European colonial incursions, as Edward Said and many scholars since have shown.⁷ As the late Papua New Guinean literary scholar, Regis Tove Stella, has stated, colonial discourses “advanced and deployed a racialized knowledge to provide moral justification for imperial domination. Such knowledge was inherently partial and unstable, enunciating Europe’s cultural supremacy, privileging its

⁴ Hugo Zöllner, *Als Journalist und Forscher in Deutschlands grosser Kolonialzeit* (Leipzig: Koehler & Ameland, 1930). German East Africa also included small parts of what are today Kenya and Mozambique.

⁵ John Phillip Short, *Magic Lantern Empire: Colonialism and Society in Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 5.

⁶ The term “colonial enclaves” comes from Anne Dickson-Waiko, “Colonial Enclaves and Domestic Spaces in British New Guinea,” in *Britishness Abroad: Transnational Movements and Imperial Cultures*, eds. Kate Darian Smith, Patricia Grimshaw, and Stuart Macintyre (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2007), 205-230. For an example of how colonial discourses circulated between colony and metropole, see Karl Vieweg, *Big Fellow Man: Muschelgeld und Südseegeister: Authentische Berichte aus Deutsch-Neuguinea 1906-1909* (Weikersheim: Verlag Josef Margraf, 1990), 4.

⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

epistemological traditions, and suppressing other forms of knowledge.”⁸ In a similar vein, historian Jennifer Morgan has described European representations of non-Europeans as a “lexicon of conquest and exploration.” While her work focuses on early-modern European representational strategies of West African women, her observation that this lexicon constructed non-European women’s *laboring* bodies as crucial signifiers of racial difference has resonance for the Pacific.⁹

Oceanian women’s labors were a central category through which eighteenth-century European travelers—invariably white men—came to know, order, and divide Pacific worlds. As Margaret Jolly has demonstrated, white, European men’s understandings of labor and its appropriately gendered divisions were deeply enmeshed with their appraisals of Islander women’s social status, sexual allure, and sexual availability to European travelers.¹⁰ In the Eastern Pacific, they viewed the labors performed by the “copper-colored” women in *tapa* (barkcloth) production as a feminine art, perhaps resembling needlepoint.¹¹ This contributed to Europeans’ feminization of Polynesia and stood in stark contrast to their portrayals of Melanesian women’s work. Johann Forster, for example, described ni-Vanuatu women as “pack horses,” who were compelled to carry “provisions for their indolent husbands, and to do all the most laborious drudgery in the plantations.” They were “ugly and deformed,” in his estimation.¹² His son, Georg, similarly described Melanesian women as

⁸ Regis Tove Stella, *Imagining the Other: The Representation of the Papua New Guinean Subject* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2007), 13.

⁹ Jennifer Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 1-49, quotation: 23.

¹⁰ Margaret Jolly, “Women of the East, Women of the West: Region and Race, Gender and Sexuality on Cook’s Voyages,” in *The Atlantic World in the Antipodes: Effects and Transformations since the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Kate Fullagar (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), 2-32.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹² Johann Reinhold Forster, *Observations Made during a Voyage round the World*, eds. Nicholas Thomas, Harriet Guest, and Michael Dettelbach (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1996), 164.

“drudges and beasts of burden” and speculated that “the laborious tasks which they are forced to perform” contributed to “lessen their stature.”¹³ In the Western Pacific, as Jolly has noted, eighteenth-century European travelers portrayed women as the degraded property of their male kin, whose labors cultivating crops and carrying water were “not aestheticised but bestialised.”¹⁴

This chapter builds on these insights and argues that in German colonial discourses, New Guinean customs of bridewealth exchange played a critical and formative role in early colonists’ attitudes toward New Guinean women and vernacular cultures more broadly. When German and other European observers recorded their impressions of the New Guinea islands beginning in the late nineteenth century, they did so with recourse to these established, yet mutable, discourses on Melanesian cultures. While these discourses rendered gender and labor inseparable in German colonial texts, ubiquitous references to bridewealth—the transference of wealth from the groom’s family to the bride’s, usually within a broader system of reciprocity—produced understandings of New Guinean women’s bodies and labors as commodity items. As was the case with Zöllner, many white, European men writing in or about German New Guinea applied a capitalist logic of “buying” and “selling” women in marriage to their understandings of vernacular bridewealth practices. They did so even while they pretended to be describing pre-capitalist peoples, whom they designated “*Naturvölker*”—natural peoples. In German New Guinea, this capitalist logic

¹³ Georg Forster, *A Voyage Round the World*, vol. 2, eds. Nicholas Thomas and Oliver Berghof (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2000), 537.

¹⁴ Jolly, “Women of the East,” 9. On the colonial trope of Melanesian women as “drudges” and “beasts of burden,” also see Bronwen Douglas, “Encounters with the Enemy? Academic Readings of Missionary Narratives on Melanesians,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43, no. 1 (2001): 37-64; Bronwen Douglas, “Provocative Readings in Intransigent Archives: Finding Aneityumese Women,” *Oceania* 70, no. 2 (1999): 111-129.

underpinned a colonial situation predicated on Europeans' exploitation of New Guinean peoples and their labors.

To date, European representations of New Guinean women in the German colony have received little scholarly attention. In an analysis of German colonial writings produced by colonial officials, scientists, and missionaries, Verena Keck has noted that "gender was used as a central criterion in the evolutionary ranking of peoples" by Europeans. She observes that when Europeans discussed New Guinean women, it was in their perceived relations to men. They portrayed women as either oppressed within male-dominated vernacular cultures or sexualized if laboring for European interests. However, Keck leaves vernacular gender relations and their colonial representations largely unexamined since "little attention is paid to New Guinean women in the [German colonial] literature."¹⁵ It is certainly the case that early writings by Europeans portrayed the islands of the Western Pacific in predominantly masculine terms, revealing both the limited nature of European travelers' interactions with Melanesian women and European men's assumptions about gendered social orders.¹⁶ The prevailing tropes of the New Guinean as savage, animalistic, or childlike and in need of education—predominantly to be acquired through laboring for European interests—not only served to legitimize colonial interventions, but also contributed to construction of the New Guinean "native" as a male subject.¹⁷ Stella's study of anglophone colonial representations of New Guineans largely confirms the predominating

¹⁵ Verena Keck, "Representing New Guineans in German Colonial Literature," *Paideuma: Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde* 54 (2008): 62. For a slightly expanded discussion of German colonial representations of New Guinean women, see Verena Keck, "Das Bild des Neuguinensers in deutschsprachigen Publikationen von 1884 bis 1914," M.A. thesis (University of Basel, 1985), 163-167.

¹⁶ Jolly, "Women of the East," 7.

¹⁷ For a discussion of this colonial gender construct, see Oyèrónkẹ Oyèwùmí, "Colonizing Bodies and Minds: Gender and Colonialism," in *Postcolonialisms: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism*, eds. Gaurav Desai and Supriya Nair (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 339-361.

focus on men and masculinity in colonial discourses.¹⁸ Representations of New Guinean women play a marginal role in this study, emerging only in narratives of the Pacific War, and then as sexualized figures who were constructed with reference to Polynesia, rather than Melanesia.¹⁹

Yet, as this chapter demonstrates, colonial discourses from German New Guinea were far from silent on New Guinean women. Colonists described them frequently, routinely focusing on their bodies, their labors, and what they perceived to be vernacular gender relations. Theirs were not observations of individual women, their lives, ideas, experiences, and dreams, but colonists' and travelers' impressions of "women" *en masse*. Zöllner acknowledged he had not found it possible to study "the intellectual and emotional lives" of New Guinean women, but he wrote about them nonetheless.²⁰ As Liz Connor has observed in another colonial context, colonial discourses were a space "divested of individual women" whose place "was then supplanted by types, tropes, obfuscations and sometimes outright lies."²¹ While this chapter's principle focus is on German-language discourses, it begins with an analysis of the English-language writings produced by a Wesleyan missionary who arrived in the Bismarck Archipelago as German trading firms were securing their footing in the islands, but prior to German annexation. It would be a mistake to draw too-rigid a distinction between source materials on the basis of language, or even their European

¹⁸ Regis Tove Stella, *Imagining the Other: The Representation of the Papua New Guinean Subject* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 147-150. On page 149, Stella cites telling passages from two fictionalized war stories: in *North to Rabaul* (1979), author Christopher Wood describes a woman who "looked like a Gauguin painting, bare breasts, a single cowrie shell dangling between them;" Peter Pinney, in *The Glass Cannon: A Bougainville Diary, 1944-45* (1990) describes a woman as "An erotic Tahitian fantasy, as unexpected in these tribal wilds as a peacock in a pigpen."

¹⁹ Stella, *Imagining the Other*, 13; Jolly, "Women of the East," 2-32.

²⁰ Zöllner, *Deutsch-Neuguinea*, 73.

²¹ Liz Connor, *Skin Deep: Settler Impressions of Aboriginal Women* (Crawley, WA: University of Western Australia Publishing, 2016), 27.

authors' national origin. As mentioned, these discourses traveled. They were also articulated and circulated "on the ground" in a colonial situation that was necessarily polyglot. Translation should be seen as one of the modes of circulation and reiteration through which certain tropes stabilized and endured.

"Many Curious Customs Regarding Women"

Missionaries provided some of the earliest written accounts of New Guinean cultures and marriage customs and vernacular practices of bridewealth exchange. The Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Mission had maintained a permanent presence in the Bismarck Archipelago for a decade by the time of German annexation. The English Reverend George Brown, a veteran of Pacific missionization, arrived in the Duke of York Islands (later Neu Lauenburg) together with eight Fijian and two Samoan mission teachers in August 1875. They established the mission's first station at Port Hunter (Balanawang Harbour) and soon extended their reach further across the coasts of the Bismarck Archipelago.²² In December 1878, Benjamin Danks, joined the mission in the Bismarck Archipelago, accompanied by his wife, Emma. This British-born Australian in his mid-twenties served as a missionary in the Archipelago for the next eight years, stationed mainly at Kabakada, on the north coast of the

²² For an account of the mission's early history, see George Brown, *George Brown, D.D.: Pioneer-Missionary and Explorer: An Autobiography* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1908); John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania* (Geneva: World Council of Churches in association with the Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1982), 206-229. On Brown, see Margaret Reeson, *Pacific Missionary George Brown, 1835-1917* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2013).

Gazelle Peninsula, on land belonging to the Tolai people.²³ During this time, he recorded his observations of local marriage practices, which he termed the “many curious customs regarding women.”²⁴

Danks provided an account of Ia Wawaluk, “a bright girl” who was “training for the ordinary duties of maid” at the mission station in Kabakada, in order to illustrate these “curious customs regarding women.”²⁵ He told Ia Wawaluk’s story as follows:

One day we were dismayed to hear that she had been sold, and that she must go to her husband on a fixed day. She stamped her foot and indignantly said she would not go, a determination in which I encouraged her. Her purchaser was a very old leading man from a place called Tokirebera. He had seen the girl a day or two before, admired her youthful beauty, and being rich had offered a price hard to resist. He was a toothless, failing old man of a very debased type. We encouraged the girl in her refusal as we considered that our mission house, rightly or wrongly, was a place of refuge.²⁶

This was not the end of Ia Wawaluk’s story, however. According to Danks, Ia Wawaluk’s “people” captured her one day beyond the mission station’s fence. They “dragged her to her village where she was subjected to much abuse on the part of the women, and to a beating

²³ On Danks, see Wallace Deane, *In Wild New Britain: The Story of Benjamin Danks, Pioneer Missionary. From his Diary* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1933). Tolai is the name by which the Kuanua-speaking people who constitute the main cultural group of the Gazelle Peninsula and Duke of York Islands now identify. Indicating a collective identity, the term is of relatively recent origin, dating perhaps to the mid-1930s. Earlier, these peoples were named after their various home villages or places. I am thus applying the name anachronistically here to refer to the ancestors of the people who today call themselves Tolai. See Arnold Leonard Epstein, *Matupit: Land, Politics, and Change among the Tolai of New Britain* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1969), 13. In German colonial sources, Tolai were often referred to “*Uferleute*” or “*Küstenbewohner*,” indicating their proximity to the coasts. The toponym “Livuan” was also used.

²⁴ Benjamin Danks, “Women and Marriage Customs in New Britain,” ed. Wallace Deane, [manuscript, 1886,] Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales (hereafter: ML); Methodist Overseas Mission Archive (hereafter: MOM); Benjamin Danks papers; 238, folder 3, 1.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 1. Tolai names preceded by “Ia” (or “Ja” in many sources), like Ia Wawaluk, are, with rare exceptions, females’ names. Males’ names are preceded by “To,” unless the name itself begins with a “T.”

²⁶ *Ibid.*

from the men.” Her clothes—a marker of Christian propriety for the missionaries—were “torn from her while the men stood round making ribald remarks.” Days later, Ia Wawaluk’s people “dragged” her past the mission station, striking her with their fists and feet and “jeering and laughing” as she struggled. Ia Wawaluk managed to escape them, however, and “fled to us in the Mission House.” Danks was able to fend off Ia Wawaluk’s brother, who approached bearing a spear. Ultimately, Danks wrote, “I saw there was nothing for it but to ransom her.” He did not say what this ransom involved, but once her family agreed to Danks’s terms, Ia Wawaluk was “free and safe” to remain to at the mission house.²⁷

Danks’s description of the “curious custom” of marriage on the Gazelle Peninsula evoked tropes that were widely employed by Europeans in the Western Pacific: inappropriate age differences, with young girls married off to “debased” old men; bridewealth “payments” made for girls or women that their families would not readily refuse; violence and degradation perpetrated by Islanders against “their” women; and women who appear overwhelmingly (and despite Ia Wawaluk’s apparent protest and valiant escape effort in Danks’ narrative) as victims, “sold” into marriage rather than being free to marry for love.²⁸ Writing from the perspective of a man engaged in the work of redeeming souls, Danks emerges as Ia Wawaluk’s savior and the mission station provides her a “place of refuge” from her heathen family—her brother in particular. Aside from this religious register of redemption, which Chapter 4 explores in greater detail, Danks’ story of Ia

²⁷ Ibid., 1-2.

²⁸ Douglas, “Encounters with the Enemy?” 37-64; Douglas, “Provocative Readings in Intransigent Archives” 111-129; Margaret Jolly, “*Braed Praes* in Vanuatu: Both Gifts and Commodities?” *Oceania* 85, no. 1 (2015): 66-67.

Wawaluk is illustrative of a larger (masculine) colonial discourse: “White men are saving brown women from brown men.”²⁹

The location of Ia Wawaluk’s story, Kabakada, is an important aspect of Danks’ narrative of local savagery. Danks’ predecessor at Kabakada was the Fijian missionary, Reverend Sailasa Naucukidi. Just months before Danks’ arrival in the Bismarck Archipelago, Sailasa and three Fijian mission teachers were murdered on the Gazelle Peninsula. People belonging to an “inland tribe” under the leadership of a local big man, Talili, were said to be responsible, killing and cannibalizing Sailasa and the teachers when they ventured into the hills behind the mission’s coastal stations.³⁰ Historians have claimed that Talili understood the missionaries’ presence to be a threat to his control over the supply of European trade goods from the coast into the hinterlands.³¹ Reverend George Brown, however, believed Talili had killed his mission men “simply because they were foreigners, and the natives who killed them did so for no other reason than their desire to eat them, and to get the little property they had with them.”³² In response to the murders, Brown organized a bloody punitive expedition, which he carried out with the help of resident white men, including traders for Godeffroy and Hearnheim, as well as mission teachers, and locals “well-disposed”

²⁹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 92-93. In her analysis of missionary texts, Bronwen Douglas discusses “the stereotype of Melanesian women as inert victims of male savagery, ripe for rescue and conversion, both religious and social.” See Douglas, “Encounters with the Enemy?” 50.

³⁰ George Brown, Sydney, to Commodore Wilson, 9 September 1879, ML: Reverend George Brown papers; A 1686/vol. 18 [microfilm: CY 1365]. Brown renders the big man’s name “Taleli,” but most other sources spell his name “Talili.”

³¹ Peter J. Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders under German Rule: A Study in the Meaning of Colonial Resistance*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1978), 122.

³² George Brown, *George Brown, D.D.: Pioneer-Missionary and Explorer: An Autobiography* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1908), 258.

to the mission.³³ These men burned villagers' homes to the ground, seized *diwarra*, and killed or wounded an estimated 90 to 100 people.³⁴ These were actions that Brown deemed necessary "for the protection of our own lives and the lives of the innocent men, women, and children who were dependent upon us."³⁵ When Danks arrived at Kabakada, he considered the local people "to be very wild" and thought himself to be witness to "the awful filth of heathen fetishism."³⁶ He visited the nearby former home of Sailasa, where Sailasa's wife still resided, and where the wives of the murdered missionaries had been at the time of the murders. "Here must have sat the brave women while they expected death," Danks recalled thinking. "Only a little clearing, yet surrounded by wild, lustful men who shouted their insulting messages; threatening them with death and the oven. What hours of anguish!" Those who would criticize Brown for the violence he perpetrated should "look upon the awful faces of these wild men; and imagine what those hours must have been to those poor women, and the critics would then know something of the great responsibility which rested upon him," Dank wrote.³⁷ Again, the trope of white men rescuing brown women from brown men is evident in Danks' narrative about Kabakada, suggesting that the violence unleashed in the area shortly before his arrival might have colored Danks' telling of Ia Wawaluk's betrothal and escape.

³³ George Brown, *George Brown, D.D.: Pioneer-Missionary and Explorer: An Autobiography* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1908), 258.

³⁴ The estimate of people killed or wounded in this punitive expedition is Brown's own. See George Brown's journal entry, dated 24 April 1878, ML: Reverend George Brown papers; A 1686/vol. 13 [microfilm: CY 2762].

³⁵ George Brown, *George Brown, D.D.: Pioneer-Missionary and Explorer: An Autobiography* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1908), 258. For Brown's own account of these events and the international responses that followed, see *ibid.*, 252-287. On these events, also see Brenda Johnson Clay, *Unstable Images: Colonial Discourse on New Ireland, Papua New Guinea, 1875-1935* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 58-60; Peter J. Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders under German Rule: A Study in the Meaning of Colonial Resistance*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1978), 122-123.

³⁶ Wallace Deane, *In Wild New Britain*, 23, 93.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

Writing more generally of his observations of marriage among the Tolai of the Gazelle Peninsula and neighboring islands, Danks presented a somewhat different picture of familial and social relations and the role of wealth exchange in marriage. The usual practice of marriage on the Gazelle Peninsula, according to Danks, worked in accordance to “time-honoured rules.”³⁸ Either the would-be groom or his friends would select a woman for marriage. They would determine an amount of bridewealth measured out in *diwarra*, also called *tabu* or *tambu*. They would string together this valuable, made of nassa shells that were acquired through trade networks, before winding it into a coil or tying it to a spear or pole. This, they would present to the family of the woman whom the man intended to marry.³⁹ The visitors and woman’s relatives would chew betel nut (*buai*) together before discussing the proposal of marriage.⁴⁰ The men would offer valuables as bridewealth in an amount, according to Danks, usually “sufficiently tempting” to avoid “the shame of haggling” and to secure the women’s relatives’ approval of the marriage. If the amount of *diwarra* were considered by the family to be inadequate, “haggling ensues.” In this process, wrote Danks, the “virtues and excellencies of the girls are extolled, and contrariwise, her personal blemishes and defects are emphasised, according to the view-point of the bargainers—not a very edifying procedure.” Following this process, and assuming that the bridewealth was deemed mutually satisfactory, the would-be bride would either go at once to the home of her new husband or could “be allowed by arrangement to remain for a considerable time with

³⁸ Danks, “Women and Marriage Customs in New Britain,” ML, MOM: 238, folder 3, 12.

³⁹ On *diwarra*, *tabu*, and other valuables of the Bismarck Archipelago, see Benjamin Danks, “Commerce and Currency in New Britain, Duke of York Islands, and New Ireland,” ed. Wallace Deane, [manuscript 1886,] ML, MOM: 238, folder 3, 1-17; Klaus Neumann, *Not the Way it Really Was: Constructing the Tolai Past* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1992), 183-190.

⁴⁰ On the role of *buai* in Tolai life, see Neumann, *Not the Way it Really Was*, 90.

her friends.”⁴¹ Such a decision was dependent on the age of bride, with girls married at a young age remaining with their relatives. In either case, “mighty feasts are prepared by the relatives of the girl for the relatives of the young man, and *vice versa*.”⁴²

On the Duke of York Islands, Danks wrote, a “more magnificent marriage feast” would be held to celebrate the marriage of “persons of influence.”⁴³ Women of the entire district would prepare food, pigs would be slaughtered, and “large quantities of shell-money” would be brought and placed on display along with the food. Women would also bring gifts for the bride: “digging sticks, indicating her duty on the plantations; shells of various kinds, beads, necklaces, and whatever they may think necessary for a wife to possess.” Feasting and festivities marked these occasions. Friends of both the bride and groom would build a house for the new couple. Young men would present the groom with sums of *diwarra*, in order, wrote Danks, that he may “pay back the debt incurred by him in purchasing his wife.” Danks thought this custom to be unique to the Duke of York Islands, believing that on the Gazelle Peninsula, it was usual for a man’s father or uncle to secure the bridewealth, indebting the groom to him until it could be “repaid.”⁴⁴

Although Danks employed a language of “payment” to describe bridewealth, his descriptions of marriage customs in the Bismarck Archipelago are quite far removed from the notions of “buying” and “selling” he and others used to characterize these exchanges. While he wrote that Ia Wawaluk of Kabakada “had been sold” for “a price hard to resist,” suggestive of a market transaction in which, as Zöllner wrote, women were obtained “like

⁴¹ Danks, “Women and Marriage Customs in New Britain,” ML, MOM: 238, folder 3, 12.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

commodities,” Danks’ descriptions of marriage more broadly are suggestive of ways in which marriage and bridewealth are embedded in social relations and reciprocal exchange.⁴⁵ The tension between these different conceptions of bridewealth—or “bride price,” to use Danks’ term—is crucial to this chapter’s analysis of German colonial discourses and has been the subject of anthropological debate for almost a century. It is to these debates that the next section turns.

Anthropology, History, and Language

The terms “bridewealth” and “bride price” have long been the subject of scholarly controversies in anthropology. As early as the 1920s, critics rejected the term “bride price” precisely because they deemed the concept of “price” erroneously to equate exchanges of wealth upon marriage with acts of buying and selling akin to commercial, market transaction.⁴⁶ Discussing bridewealth societies in Africa, anthropologist E. E. Evans-Pritchard, argued:

There are very good reasons for cutting the term [“bride price”] out of ethnological literature since at best it emphasizes only one of the functions of this wealth, an economic one, to the exclusion of other important social functions; and since, at worst, it encourages the layman to think that “price” used in this context is

⁴⁵ A similar account of marriage practices can be found in Richard Parkinson, *Dreissig Jahre in der Südsee: Land und Leute, Sitten und Gebräuche im Bismarckarchipel und auf den deutschen Salomoinseln* (Stuttgart: Strecker und Schröder, 1907), 63.

⁴⁶ E. Torday, “Bride-Price, Dower, or Settlement,” *Man* 29 (1929): 5-8; E. E. Evans-Pritchard, “An Alternative Term for ‘Bride-Price,’” *Man* 31 (1931): 36-39; George Dalton, “‘Bridewealth’ vs. ‘Brideprice,’” *American Anthropologist* 68, no. 3 (1966): 732-738.

synonymous with “purchase” in common English parlance. Hence we find people believing that wives are bought and sold in Africa in much the same manner as commodities are bought and sold in European markets. It is difficult to exaggerate the harm done to Africans by this ignorance.⁴⁷

The critique was that the term “bride price” worked to obscure bridewealth’s role in establishing and reinforcing social relations by rendering it instead as an impersonal, market transaction of the kind produced by capitalist economies. Critics of the term further argued that this obfuscation was a dangerous thing in the hands of colonial policymakers and lawmakers who denounced vernacular marriage practices as the “buying” and “selling” of women, in short: “slavery.”⁴⁸ Colonial misconceptions of vernacular cultures translated readily into harmful colonial policy, they suggested.⁴⁹

As this chapter demonstrates, European colonists and travelers in German New Guinea also characterized vernacular bridewealth practices as the “buying” and “selling” of women. The early twentieth-century anthropological critiques of the term “bride price” drawn from fieldwork in Africa are thus also germane in the context of colonial Melanesia. While bridewealth can serve an economic function, critics like Evans-Pritchard stressed the need to situate the economic within a broader nexus of social relations. The social functions of bridewealth are multiple and differ from across societies, serving variously to solidify and legalize bonds between husband and wife and their families by involving them in privileges and obligations (as Danks’ accounts reveal), to legitimize children born of the marriage, and sometimes to compensate a woman’s family for the loss of her labors.⁵⁰ In (Papua) New

⁴⁷ Evans-Pritchard, “An Alternative Term for ‘Bride-Price,’” 36.

⁴⁸ Torday, “Bride-Price, Dower, or Settlement,” 6.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 6; Evans-Pritchard, “An Alternative Term for ‘Bride-Price,’” 36.

⁵⁰ Evans-Pritchard, “An Alternative Term for ‘Bride-Price,’” 36-39.

Guinea, bridewealth can be seen “to establish or sustain relations of equivalence between the parties to a marriage, to make affinity the basis of commodity exchange, but *not* to transform brides themselves into commodities.”⁵¹ Drawing on his fieldwork in Papua New Guinea, anthropologist Roy Wagner asserts that like “cargo” or products of gardening, bridewealth is seldom thought of by Melanesians as “simple material wealth.” Rather, these are things that embody “the central meaning of human relations for Melanesians, and that we tend to interpret in materialist, economic terms.”⁵² Wagner’s “we” draws attention to an interpretive disjuncture between Melanesian understandings of bridewealth and those of outside observers who tend, as Evans-Pritchard argued, to emphasize the economic—and misconstrue it as market transaction—to the point of obscuring the social relations in which economic ones operate.

Central to discussions of bridewealth is the distinction between gift and commodity that has received so much attention from anthropologists, especially in the wake of Marcel Mauss’s *The Gift*, originally published in French in 1925. Mauss contended that in “archaic” societies (by which he meant non-Western ones), the gift was part of a total social system based on exchange, obligation, and reciprocity in which social relations were grounded and maintained.⁵³ Drawing on theories advanced by anthropologists and political economists,

⁵¹ Colin Filer, “What Is This Thing Called ‘Brideprice?’” *Mankind* 15, no. 2 (1985): 171. Emphasis in original. Filer is paraphrasing the views expressed by Kenneth Undah of Southern Highlands Province, who weighed in on a debate about bridewealth conducted in the form of a series of letters published in Papua New Guinea’s *Post-Courier* newspaper between October 1979 and January 1980.

⁵² Roy Wagner, *The Invention of Culture*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 32. Emphasis in original.

⁵³ Marcel Mauss. *The Gift*, trans. Jane I. Guyer, forward by Bill Maurer (Chicago: Hau Books, 2016). Subsequent literature on the gift includes C. A. Gregory, *Gifts and Commodities* (London: Academic Press, 1982); Marilyn Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991); Harry Liebersohn, *The Return of the Gift: European History of a Global Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

the economic anthropologist of Papua New Guinea, Chris Gregory, has noted essential differences between gift and commodity exchange. Following Mauss as well as Marx, Gregory posits that if “commodity exchange is an exchange of alienable things between transactors who are in a state of reciprocal independence,” then gift exchange “is an exchange of inalienable things between transactors who are in a state of reciprocal dependence.”⁵⁴ According to Gregory, “Things and people assume the social form of objects in a commodity economy while they assume the social form of persons in a gift economy.”⁵⁵ Despite this contrast between gift and commodity economies, Gregory noted that objects could move between each of these different spheres.

While the term “bridewealth” might, as Martha Macintyre has recently argued, signify “Anthropological queasiness about the commoditisation of women,” the term “has no currency” among contemporary Papua New Guineans who use the Tok Pisin term “*braid prais*.”⁵⁶ Some anglophone commentators therefore prefer the term “bride price” or its Melanesian Pidgin cognates: *braid prais* or *braitprais* in Papua New Guinea’s Tok Pisin or *braed praes* or *braedpraes* in Vanuatu’s Bislama and the Solomon Islands’ Pijin, for example.⁵⁷ Yet, anthropologists Andrew Strathern and Pamela Stewart have noted that although Tok Pisin speakers use may use the word “*braitprais*,” that usage does “not imply acts of total buying and selling.” Although they suggest that the term “bride price” has utility in the context of Duna society, where the wealth given by the groom’s family is given unilaterally

⁵⁴ Gregory, *Gifts and Commodities*, 12.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁵⁶ Martha Macintyre, “Money Changes Everything: Papua New Guinean Women in the Modern Economy,” in *Managing Modernity in the Western Pacific*, eds. Mary Patterson and Martha Macintyre (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2011), 93.

⁵⁷ See, for example, Jolly, “*Braed Praes* in Vanuatu,” 63-87.

rather than reciprocally, they stress that “bridewealth” should always be borne in mind to signify the broader social contexts in which wealth is given.⁵⁸

In recent decades, however, Melanesians and others have critiqued bridewealth precisely as something that commodifies and objectifies women; as something that increasingly *does* indeed resemble “acts of total buying and selling.”⁵⁹ Some have noted that bridewealth is increasingly understood by participants very much as “bride price”—“a commercial transaction in which women’s bodies and persons were ‘acquired’ at a ‘price’ that was showing every sign of being sensitive to market forces,” as Martha Macintyre has stated.⁶⁰ The substitution of traditional valuables with cash and consumer goods is seen as playing an instrumental role in the commodification of bridewealth. A debate that ensued between October 1979 and January 1980 in the form of letters published in Papua New Guinea’s daily newspaper highlighted these concerns.⁶¹ As one male writer from Madang (officially called Friedrich Wilhelmshafen in German colonial times) asked his fellow citizens:

Tell me if any boy and his relatives anywhere in this country at this time have paid the bride price with only shell money and traditional food, not with the type of money we have today plus bags of rice, cartons and cartons of beer, bales of sugar, etc. These things were not introduced into this country for this purpose, ... to misuse them as payment for human beings.⁶²

⁵⁸ Andrew Strathern and Pamela J. Stewart, *Empowering the Past, Confronting the Future: The Duna People of Papua New Guinea* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 39.

⁵⁹ See, for example, Neumann, *Not the Way it Really Was*, 187; Macintyre, “Money Changes Everything,” 108; Jolly, “*Braed Praes* in Vanuatu,” 63-87

⁶⁰ Macintyre, “Money Changes Everything,” 108.

⁶¹ Filer, “What Is This Thing Called ‘Brideprice?’” 163-183.

⁶² Quoted in *ibid.*, 177.

While this writer understood payments in cash and commodity items to subvert the function of bridewealth and transform it into the sale of women, other Papua New Guineans have seen the substitution of traditional valuables with cash as commensurate with Papua New Guinea's modern, cash economy: "what am I working for—shell money or cash?" asked one male interlocutor. Within this view, cash simply replaces traditional values without affecting the social meanings of bridewealth.⁶³ Whatever the veracity of these competing claims, they reveal that the substitution of vernacular wealth like shell valuables, pigs, tools, and food with cash and consumer goods has served to make bridewealth in Melanesia increasingly contentious, with some commentators maintaining that practice.

Islanders and anthropologists have thus suggested that in the contexts of contemporary Melanesia's capitalist markets, "bride price" is "an increasingly legitimate idiom"—one that expresses the lexical and ideological equivalence of "buying" trade goods at a store and women in marriage.⁶⁴ Women, as well as men, make this critique. Some Huli women of Hela Province in the New Guinea Highlands, have commented that bridewealth, and its monetization, makes them feel like they are "*olsem maket*" (like market goods), as Holly Wardlow has shown.⁶⁵ In the opinion of one Manus woman living in Port Moresby, while bridewealth used to function as an exchange that joined families together, it is now

⁶³ Quoted in *ibid.*, 178. Also see Dan Jorgensen, "Money and Marriage in Telefolmin: From Sister Exchange to Daughter as Trade Store," in *The Business of Marriage: Transformations in Oceanic Matrimony*, ed. Richard A. Marksbury (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993), 57-82; Martha Macintyre, "Money Changes Everything: Papua New Guinean Women in the Modern Economy," in *Managing Modernity in the Western Pacific*, eds. Mary Patterson and Martha Macintyre (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2011), 108.

⁶⁴ Margaret Jolly, *Women of the Place: Kastom, Colonialism and Gender in Vanuatu* (Chur: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1994), 132. Also see Jorgensen, "Money and Marriage in Telefolmin," 57-82; Roselyn Tor and Anthea Toka, *Gender, Kastom and Domestic Violence: A Research on the Historical Trend, Extent and Impact of Domestic Violence in Vanuatu* (Port Vila: Department of Women's Affairs, 2004), 29-30.

⁶⁵ Holly Wardlow, *Wayward Women: Sexuality and Agency in a New Guinean Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), especially 127, 150, 227. Hela Province was formerly—at the time of Wardlow's study—part of Southern Highlands Province.

“like buying a car”: it makes the groom’s family think that they “own” the wife, she said.⁶⁶ References to consumer goods, especially luxury items like beer and vehicles are now widespread in Melanesian complaints about contemporary practices surrounding bridewealth. One ni-Vanuatu woman, Helen Masing, to give a final example, wrote in 1990: “Brideprice makes me feel like I am a motorboat or a truck that someone buys, it makes my family greedy and wanting a bigger price; it makes my parents-in-law angry if I am barren or do not produce a son and it makes my husband think that I must always obey him.”⁶⁷ Masing’s critique was not just about the commodification of women, but also about the sexual, reproductive, and patriarchal implications that these transactions could entail.

Violence emerges as a pressing concern in contemporary discourses about bridewealth in Melanesia. In Papua New Guinea, “family violence” has recently been signaled as an “emergency,” with an estimated two-thirds of women experiencing gendered violence at the hands of male partners.⁶⁸ In light of these shocking figures, many citizens, as well as international scholars and non- and inter-governmental organizations are increasingly pointing to bridewealth as something that is dangerous to women.⁶⁹ Within these discourses,

⁶⁶ Quoted in Macintyre, “Money Changes Everything,” 111.

⁶⁷ Helen Masing, “Braed Praes,” in *Who Will Carry the Bag? Samfala Poem We i Kamaot long Nasonal Festival blong ol Woman long 1990* (Port Vila: Vanuatu Nasonal Kaonsel blong ol Woman, Festival Infomeson mo Pablikeson Komiti, 1991), 12. English translation in Miranda Forsyth, *A Bird that Flies with Two Wings: Kastom and State Systems in Vanuatu* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2009), 14.

⁶⁸ Human Rights Watch, *Bashed Up: Family Violence in Papua New Guinea*, 4 November 2015, online: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/11/04/bashed/family-violence-papua-new-guinea> (accessed 20 August 2018); Margit Ganster-Breidler, “Gender-Based Violence and the Impact on Women’s Health and Well-Being in Papua New Guinea,” *Contemporary PNG Studies: DWU Research Journal* 13 (2010): 21-22.

⁶⁹ Cyndi Banks, “Contextualizing Sexual Violence: Rape and Carnal Knowledge in Papua New Guinea,” in *Reflections on Violence in Melanesia*, eds. Sinclair Dinnen and Allison Ley (Annandale, NSW: Hawkins Press, 2000), 83-104; Anou Borrey, “Sexual Violence in Perspective: The Case of Papua New Guinea,” in *Reflections on Violence in Melanesia*, eds. Sinclair Dinnen and Allison Ley (Annandale, NSW: Hawkins Press, 2000), 105-118; Margaret Jolly and Christine Stewart, with Carolyn Brewer, eds. *Engendering Violence in Papua New Guinea* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2012); Aletta Biersack, Margaret Jolly, and Martha Macintyre, eds., *Gender Violence and Human Rights: Seeking Justice in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2016); Human Rights Watch, *Bashed Up: Family Violence in Papua New Guinea*, 4 November 2015, online: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/11/04/bashed/family-violence-papua-new-guinea>

men are accused of maintaining that their bridewealth “payments” authorize their use of violence against their wives, while the problems associated with returning bridewealth in cases of divorce are understood to keep some women trapped in abusive marriages.⁷⁰ Where cash has replaced other forms of wealth in bridewealth, critics point to the displacement of “custom” by capitalism, drawing attention to the subordination and marginalization of women within the capitalist economy, with cash seen as a male good obtained through wage labor.⁷¹ The processes of Christianization that have accompanied capitalism in Melanesia have also been viewed as playing a role in intensifying conflicts between women and men, with Christian domestic ideals of husband and wife cohabitation replacing separate men’s and women’s houses. These newer living arrangements have increased men’s ability to exert “daily and punitive control over the household” and wives’ sexuality and fertility.⁷² Some have also linked bridewealth and gender violence to the spread of HIV, maintaining that bridewealth makes men feel singularly in charge of “sexual decision-making” and increases instances of marital rape.⁷³

It is evident that the debate about the terms “bridewealth” and “bride price” is not simply of nomenclature, but about how historical processes have conditioned contemporary

(accessed 20 August 2018); Office of the High Commission for Human Rights, “Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women Finalises Country Mission to Papua New Guinea,” United Nations Human Rights, Port Moresby, 26 March 2012, online:

<https://newsarchive.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=12013&LangID=E> (accessed 20 August 2018).

⁷⁰ Filer, “What Is This Thing Called ‘Brideprice?’” 163-183. Margaret Jolly, “Introduction: Engendering Violence in Papua New Guinea: Persons, Power and Perilous Transformations,” in *Engendering Violence in Papua New Guinea*, eds. Margaret Jolly and Christine Stewart, with Carolyn Brewer (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2012), 14.

⁷¹ Jolly, *Women of the Place*, 138. Macintyre, “Money Changes Everything,” 95.

⁷² Jolly, “Introduction,” in *Engendering Violence*, 16.

⁷³ Marie, an NGO researcher in Goroka, quoted in Macintyre, “Money Changes Everything,” 111. Also see Katherine Lepani, “Proclivity and Prevalence: Accounting for the Dynamics of Sexual Violence in the Response to HIV in Papua New Guinea,” in *Gender Violence and Human Rights: Seeking Justice in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu*, eds. Aletta Biersack, Margaret Jolly, and Martha Macintyre (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2016), 159-196, especially 170.

Melanesian cultures and engendered social change. As Melanesians have “encompassed” processes of colonialism, capitalism, and Christianization, they have transformed the “shape and content” of bridewealth, as Edward LiPuma has noted.⁷⁴ Since, as Marilyn Strathern has argued, gender in Melanesian societies is produced through, and about, exchange and social relations, these transformations are necessarily also gendered.⁷⁵ As suggested above, they have impacted relations between men and women, and have also shaped subjectivities in profound ways. If gender has its meaning in social relations, then Melanesians’ encompassment of “commodity dynamics,” introduced first through colonial capitalism, “are interwoven with experiences and expressions of gendered personhood,” as Rachel Morgain and John Taylor have written.⁷⁶ It is to these commodity dynamics and their gendered dimensions that the remainder of this chapter turns, considering the colonial discourses that accompanied and bolstered colonial capitalist incursions in German New Guinea.

“Ein käufliches Objekt”

The language of commodity in European representations of women in New Guinea’s bridewealth societies, as we have seen with the Wesleyan missionary, Danks, was coterminous with foreign commercial and missionary incursions into the islands. Portrayals of New Guinean bridewealth as a form of capitalist exchange in which women assumed the

⁷⁴ Edward LiPuma, *Encompassing Others: The Magic of Modernity in Melanesia* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000), 3.

⁷⁵ Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift*.

⁷⁶ Rachel Morgain and John P. Taylor, “Transforming Relations of Gender, Person, and Agency in Oceania,” *Oceania* 85, no. 1 (2015): 4.

status of commodity items are ubiquitous in foreign writings from the period of German colonialism. In late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century representations produced by white, European men, New Guinean women were characterized as “*ein käufliches Objekt*”—a purchasable object.⁷⁷ The term that German writers most commonly employed to describe bridewealth was “*Kaufpreis*”—purchase price: a term that situates bridewealth squarely in the realm of commercial transaction.⁷⁸ German colonialists used the term to describe New Guinean marriage practices involving bridewealth across the Bismarck Archipelago, the northern Solomon Islands, and Kaiser Wilhelmsland. They used the same term to refer to the purchase of goods like copra, which New Guineans traded with European colonists.⁷⁹ Michel Panoff has pointed out that in the Tolai lands of the Gazelle Peninsula and Neu Lauenburg, Europeans would have observed *tabu* and *diwarra* being used in the trade of betel nut, coconuts, and other goods at local markets. This perhaps contributed to the conflation of bridewealth with money, and women with goods, in European imaginaries already predisposed to see “savage customs” at work in the islands of the Western Pacific.⁸⁰ The use

⁷⁷ Louis Couppé, “Aus der Herz-Jesu Mission. (Apost. Vikariat Neupommern.—Deutsche Südsee.)” *Hiltruper Monatshefte zu Ehren unserer lieben Frau vom hh. Herzen Jesu* 10, (1893): 51.

⁷⁸ Zöller, *Deutsch-Neuguinea*, 295; Bernhard Hagen, *Beobachtungen und Studien über Land und Leute, Their- und Pflanzenwelt in Kaiser-Wilhelmsland* (Wiesbaden: C. W. Kreidel’s Verlag, 1899), 226; Ernst Tappenbeck, *Deutsch-Neuguinea* (Berlin: Wilhelm Süsserott Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1901), 43-44, 88-89; Ernst Hesse-Wartegg, *Samoa, Bismarckarchipel und Neuguinea: Drei Deutsche Kolonien in der Südsee* (Leipzig: J. J. Weber, 1902), 192; Carl Ribbe, *Zwei Jahre unter den Kannibalen der Salomo-Inseln: Reiseerlebnisse und Schilderungen von Land und Leuten* (Dresden: Elbgau-Buchdruckerei, 1903), 141; Heinrich Schnee, *Bilder aus der Südsee: Unter den kannibalischen Stämmen des Bismarck-Archipels* (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1904), 96-99; P. A. Kleintitschen, *Die Küstenbewohner der Gazellehalbinsel (Neupommern—deutsche Südsee): ihre Sitten und Gebräuche* (Hiltrup: Herz-Jesu-Missionshaus, 1906), 194, 196, 198; Parkinson, *Dreissig Jahre in der Südsee*, 62, 66; Emil Stephan and Fritz Graebner, eds., *Neu-Mecklenburg (Bismarck-Archipel): Die Küste von Umuddu bis Kap St. Georg. Forschungsergebnisse bei den Vermessungsfahrten von S. M. S. Möwe im Jahre 1904* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1907), 107, 109-110.

⁷⁹ Kleintitschen, *Die Küstenbewohner der Gazellehalbinsel*, 100.

⁸⁰ Michel Panoff, “Y eut-il des esclaves en Nouvelle-Bretagne? Une critique des témoignages?” *Journal de la Société des océanistes* 85, no. 2 (1987): 140. While Panoff’s analysis focuses on discourses of “slavery,” this insight is also germane to discourses on bridewealth. I am thankful to Catherine Combes for her translation of this text.

of the term “purchase price” to draw equivalences between bridewealth and market transactions was also common across variety colonial factions: administrators, planters, missionaries, medical personnel, traders, and travelers like Zöller. This commoditizing discourse, therefore, was a colonial discourse broadly shared by European commentators on German New Guinea.

Zöller’s claim that in both the Bismarck Archipelago and on Kaiser Wilhelmsland, New Guinean men “obtained” women “like commodities [*Ware*]” finds its equivalent in a range of texts produced by German colonists and reproduced by metropolitan commentators. One early colonist, the Silesian aristocrat, Pan-Germanist, and avid colonialist, Joachim Graf von Pfeil, produced strikingly similar accounts in his 1899 publication, *Studien und Beobachtungen aus der Südsee (Studies and Observations from the South Sea)*.⁸¹ Describing bridewealth, Pfeil wrote that “The purchase price [*Kaufpreis*] fluctuates [...] enormously. For fourteen fathoms of *diwarra* one can still have a woman of low quality. For premium goods [*Primawaare*], as defined by the Kanakas, one would perhaps pay 200 fathoms of *diwarra* or more.”⁸² While Zöller drew attention to the ways in which new colonial economies and geographies impacted vernacular values of bridewealth, in Pfeil’s account, bridewealth is rendered as a bride’s “price,” dependent on the “quality” of the “goods” being “bought.”

Pfeil’s use of the term “Kanaka” to refer to New Guineans—a term common among European colonists to describe Melanesian laborers—demonstrates that he shared the widespread European view that the peoples of German New Guinea were a latent labor force

⁸¹ On Pfeil’s involvement with the Pan-German League, see Geoff Eley, *Reshaping the German Right: Radical Nationalism and Political Change after Bismarck* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 287-288.

⁸² Joachim Friedrich von Pfeil, *Studien und Beobachtungen aus der Südsee* (Braunschweig: Friedrich Vieweg und Sohn, 1899), 28.

to be exploited for European colonial interests.⁸³ Pfeil arrived in German New Guinea in December 1887, having taken up a position with the New Guinea Company after spending time in German East Africa with the infamous Carl Peters. As with Zöllner the following year, Pfeil arrived first at the company's station at Finschhafen. From there, he went to Kerawara, an island in the Neu Lauenburg Group, where he served as overseer for the New Guinea Company's station. He quit the company's service in 1880, soon returning to Africa. Pfeil's role in the New Guinea Company revolved around recruiting New Guineans into the German colonial labor force. He "demanded" for the German colonies, including New Guinea, "no less and no more than a form of forced labor for the native," since the realization of Germany's "expansionist needs" and colonists' economic successes were "possible only with the aid of the natives' labor."⁸⁴ Settlers should be granted greater latitude to use corporal punishment on laborers, he argued, and systems of taxation (as were in force in German East Africa) should be introduced in German New Guinea to "forcibly educate the native to work."⁸⁵ The station at Kerawara served as an administrative hub for the recruitment of laborers from the Bismarck Archipelago to Kaiser Wilhelmsland.⁸⁶ In his role as station overseer at Kerawara, Pfeil undertook several trips to Neu Mecklenburg in order to investigate the potential for recruiting laborers from that island. On one such trip in 1888, he recruited "a number of very handsome, strong people, among whom were also a few women," to serve for a year as laborers at Kerawara.⁸⁷ They were part of German colonial capitalism.

⁸³ See Clive Moore, *Kanaka: A History of Melanesian Mackay* (Port Moresby: Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies and University of Papua New Guinea Press, 1985).

⁸⁴ Pfeil, *Studien und Beobachtungen aus der Südsee*, 244-245.

⁸⁵ See the review by Dr. H. Pastenaci, *Tägliche Rundschau*, 13 December 1899. This reviewer wholeheartedly endorsed Pfeil's proposals, declaring him an "outstanding expert" on the subject of colonial politics. A copy is located at Bundesarchiv Berlin (hereafter: BArch): Joachim Graf von Pfeil papers; N 2225/140, 3.

⁸⁶ Schnee, *Bilder aus der Südsee*, 69.

⁸⁷ *Nachrichten über Kaiser Wilhelms-Land und den Bismarck-Archipel* (1888): 154.

Pfeil noted in passing that among the people of Neu Mecklenburg, “as among all wild tribes,” a disproportionate “burden of labor” befell the women.⁸⁸ Others made similar observations. Because the men of the Bismarck Archipelago perceived work as “almost a dishonor,” Zöller asserted, they obtained women through marriage and barter often for the sole purpose of exploiting their labors for “the majority of all agricultural and domestic work.”⁸⁹ On Kaiser Wilhelmsland, Zöller observed women whom he described as men’s “property.” This world traveler asserted that as with “all natural peoples [*Naturvölker*],” the women of Kaiser Wilhelmsland were “a kind of beast of burden” (*Lasttier*) who were charged with majority of field labor. “It is incumbent upon the women to sow, plant, weed, harvest and generally do all other agricultural work except for clearing,” which, as a form of (what Zöller deemed) “heavy labor,” befell the men.⁹⁰

The authors of a 1902 volume published as part of the authoritative *Allgemeine Länderkunde* (*General Regional Geography*) series echoed these notions, quite possibly relying on Zöller’s earlier writings. According to authors Wilhelm Sievers and Willy Kükenthal, German professors of geography and zoology, respectively, since “labor on [village] plantations was provided predominantly by women” in the Bismarck Archipelago, men would often “buy” women “solely for this purpose.” Whether with *diwarra* or barter, women could be “bought” for the amount of “about ten to sixty marks,” these authors asserted. Once “bought,” women became the “movable property” of their husbands.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Pfeil, “Neu-Mecklenburg,” 77, in BArch: Joachim Graf von Pfeil papers; N 2225/134.

⁸⁹ Zöller, *Deutsch-Neuguinea*, 295.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 73-74.

⁹¹ Wilhelm Sievers and Willy Kükenthal, *Australien, Ozeanien und Polarländer*. 2. ed. (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1902), 298.

Neither Sievers nor Kükenthal had ventured to New Guinea or elsewhere in Melanesia, yet their writings formed part of the standard work on the subject.

Yet, even the long-term resident of the Gazelle Peninsula, Richard Parkinson, expressed similar views in his masterwork *Dreissig Jahre in der Südsee* (*Thirty Years in the South Seas*). According to Parkinson, within (matrilineal) Tolai society, each man was the “absolute master” of his wife or wives.⁹² This planter, trader, amateur ethnographer, and some-time New Guinea Company administrator came to the Bismarck Archipelago from Samoa in 1882, where he had been an employee of the German firm Godeffroy. He departed Samoa with his wife Phebe Parkinson (néé Coe) to join Phebe’s sister, “Queen Emma,” in the Bismarck Archipelago. As one of very few white men resident in the islands during the early years of German colonial rule, it is unsurprising that Zöllner became acquainted with Parkinson during his travels, especially since Emma’s plantation estate at Ralum served as a social hub for European colonists and travelers in the islands.⁹³ In addition to visiting Emma’s estate, which Richard Parkinson helped manage, Zöllner and Parkinson undertook a trip to the northern Solomon Islands, on which they were joined also by Pfeil and the company administrator, Georg Schmiele (whom we will meet again in Chapter 4).⁹⁴ It is entirely likely, therefore, that Zöllner’s own writings on bridewealth and the position New Guinean women occupied within vernacular societies were formulated in conversation with these other white, European men. Zöllner’s claim that on Kaiser Wilhelmsland, women were men’s “property” (*Besitz*), resonates with Parkinson’s assertion that within Tolai society

⁹² Zöllner, *Deutsch-Neuguinea*, 73; Parkinson, *Dreissig Jahre in der Südsee*, 61.

⁹³ See Stewart Firth, “Albert Hahl: Governor of German New Guinea,” in *Papua New Guinea Portraits: The Expatriate Experience*, ed. James Griffin (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1978), 29.

⁹⁴ Zöllner, *Deutsch-Neuguinea*, 290-293, 338; Parkinson, *Dreissig Jahre in der Südsee*, 453-454.

“The woman is [the man’s] property [*Eigentum*] and has to work for him”⁹⁵ Like colonialists, colonial discourses traveled across seas and oceans.

Understanding bridewealth as a crucial signifier of women’s low social status among the “*Naturvölker*” of New Guinea, these white, European men considered it anathema to the “civilized” norms of the self-designated “*Kulturvölker*” (“cultured peoples”).⁹⁶ As scholars of empire and colonialism have pointed out, European proponents of colonization frequently mobilized tropes of the supposedly poor standing of women in non-European, vernacular societies as evidence of social backwardness which functioned to legitimize European colonial incursions into non-European worlds as part of European imperial “civilizing missions.”⁹⁷ This was evident in the narrative of the Wesleyan missionary, Danks, who claimed to have provided the young Tolai woman, Ia Wawaluk, with a “place of refuge” where she would be “free and safe” from her heathen family who had “sold” her in marriage to a “debased” old man.⁹⁸

The matrilineal family structures that characterized some New Guinean societies proved vexing to white, European men who were determined to characterize New Guinean women as subjugated, degraded, and “owned” by their menfolk. Where land tenure followed matrilineal systems of descent, like in Neu Mecklenburg, Pfeil acknowledged that since

⁹⁵ Zöllner, *Deutsch-Neuguinea*, 73; Parkinson, *Dreissig Jahre in der Südsee*, 61.

⁹⁶ On Europeans’ construction of the oppositional categories of “*Naturvölker*” and “*Kulturvölker*” in the context of German empire, see Andrew Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 150.

⁹⁷ Partha Chatterjee, “Colonialism, Nationalism, and Colonialized Women: The Contest in India,” *American Ethnologist* 16, no. 4 (1989): 662-663; Barbara Bush, “Gender and Empire: The Twentieth Century,” in *Gender and Empire*, ed. Philippa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 98; Oyèwùmí, “Colonizing Bodies and Minds,” 339-361. On how German colonial violence was enmeshed with a “civilizing mission,” see Matthew P. Fitzpatrick and Peter Monteath, “The Savagery of Empire,” in *Savage Worlds: German Encounters Abroad, 1798-1914*, eds. Matthew P. Fitzpatrick and Peter Monteath, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 5.

⁹⁸ Danks, “Women and Marriage Customs in New Britain,” ML, MOM: 238, folder 3, 1.

women could and did possess their property, they occupied a social position that was “not so low as among many other peoples.” Although women were barred from participating in important decision-making processes, Pfeil wrote, their property rights allowed them to be “completely independent” of their husbands. Neu Mecklenburg women *were* “beasts of burden,” saddled with the bulk of horticultural labor, Pfeil maintained, but this, he thought, also elevated their social standing, since men—who would do no more work than absolutely necessary—were dependent on their wives’ labors to provide for their basic needs.⁹⁹ Zöller expressed similar views. He suggested that although “the female Papuan is as much a tormented beast of burden as the Negress [*Negerweib*], to whom all the labor falls,” systems of inheritance granted the women of Kaiser Wilhelmsland greater rights than African women possessed. Although he believed that in German New Guinea bridewealth meant that men “bought” women just like “commodities,” he now entertained the possibility that they were not the *same* commodity as African women—something akin to capital investment for Europeans.¹⁰⁰ Not all European commentators agreed with these assessments, however. Heinrich Schnee, who served as an imperial judge and deputy governor in German New Guinea in the later years of the nineteenth century, for instance, considered it “most improbable” that “matriarchy” (as he called it) had ever manifested as women’s social dominance. Inverting Pfeil’s schema, Schnee argued that “because the women across the Bismarck Archipelago assume a subordinate position and have to function as drudges [*Arbeitstiere*] for their lazy husbands,” they necessarily occupied a low social status. A rich man who could provide the “purchase price” of twenty to one hundred fathoms of *tabu* could

⁹⁹ Pfeil, “Neu-Mecklenburg,” 77, in BArch: N 2225/134.

¹⁰⁰ Zöller, *Deutsch-Neuguinea*, 263-264.

even “achieve ownership of multiple women, who, through their labor, secure a lazy, easy life for their lord,” Schnee believed.¹⁰¹ Despite their varied interpretations of what bridewealth meant for gender relations in German New Guinea, women’s labors were, for all, a crucial signifier of social status.

White men’s understandings of bourgeois, European norms underpinned negative assessments of New Guinean family structures and marriage, prompting comparisons that elevated European practices above those of the Western Pacific and reinforced the imagined opposition between *Kulturvölker* and *Naturvölker*. Schnee, a lawyer and colonial administrator from Saxony-Anhalt, reflected upon “the buying of women” in German New Guinea and concluded that New Guinean women “appear more as beasts of burden than as wives in the European sense”: “Everywhere, the main part of the work falls to the women.”¹⁰² Given the labors that befell New Guinean women, German colonists lapsed readily into equations of the “buying of women” with slavery, which rendered differences between New Guinean marriage systems, family structures, and divisions of labor particularly stark. As one German trader concluded, on Bougainville, in the northern Solomon Islands, the “woman is more the man’s slave and beast of burden than a comrade and companion.”¹⁰³ On the Gazelle Peninsula, rather than a “wife in good times and bad,” a husband regarded his wife “only as a slave and drudge,” one Catholic missionary declared.¹⁰⁴ These opposing ideas about European and New Guinean marriage had their counterpart in lexical differentiations between European and New Guinean women. While German writers referred to European

¹⁰¹ Schnee, *Bilder aus der Südsee*, 96.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 38-39.

¹⁰³ Ribbe, *Zwei Jahre unter den Kannibalen*, 141.

¹⁰⁴ Kleintitschen, *Die Küstenbewohner der Gazellehalbinsel*, 202.

women as “*Frauen*” (women), all discussed here frequently employed the term “*Weiber*” (perhaps best rendered as “females”) to describe New Guinean women—a term that carries pejorative connotations and gestures toward the bestial.

From the prevalence of references like this, it seems evident that white, European men found their encounters with gendered divisions of labor that failed to conform to bourgeois expectations confronting. For the founder of the Wesleyan mission in the Bismarck Archipelago, George Brown, these practices constituted fertile terrain for social, as well as religious conversion.¹⁰⁵ Brown recalled that during a visit to Neu Mecklenburg, his Islander crew insisted that he should pay local women for carrying yams for them. Brown wrote that he “absolutely refused either to pay them or to allow them to carry the yams at all. I told our people that it was not our custom to allow women to carry heavy loads, whilst the men walked beside them not carrying anything at all.”¹⁰⁶ (See figure 2.1.) These encounters animated white, European men’s ideas about gender as well as class in order to bolster their own claims to be bringing “civilization” to islands in the form of colonial incursion and intervention.

¹⁰⁵ This borrows from Douglas’s observations that stereotypes of Melanesian women as victims presented missionaries with subjects “ripe for rescue and conversion, both religious and social.” Douglas, “Encounters with the Enemy?” 50.

¹⁰⁶ Brown, *George Brown*, 186.



Figure 2.1. “It was not our custom to allow women to carry heavy loads.” The Wesleyan Reverend George Brown’s view of “native women” in Neu Mecklenburg (then New Ireland) “returning from work,” c. 1875-1881. Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, PXA 924.

European men’s thoughts of Africa, sustained by travels as much as established discourses that held Melanesians to be “Oceanic Negroes”—“*Neger*” and “*Negerweiber*” in many German sources—likely provoked conjecture about slavery and its place in New Guinean societies.¹⁰⁷ Zöller believed that instances of slavery of the kind known “in Africa”

¹⁰⁷ On the term “Oceanic Negroes,” see Bronwen Douglas, “Foreign Bodies in Oceania,” in *Foreign Bodies: Oceania and the Science of Race, 1750-1940*, eds. Bronwen Douglas and Chris Ballard (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2008), 8; Chris Ballard, “Oceanic Negroes’: British Anthropology of Papuans, 1820-1869,” in *Foreign Bodies: Oceania and the Science of Race, 1750-1940*, eds. Bronwen Douglas and Chris Ballard (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2008), 157-201. There is a lexical ambiguity in German, with “*Neger*” meaning both “Negro” and “Black.” At

were rare in Germany's Western Pacific colony, even while he maintained that in the Bismarck Archipelago and on Kaiser Wilhelmsland women were treated as commodity items.¹⁰⁸ When reflecting on bridewealth, others questioned whether "full slavery" was practiced, or rather "a type of bondage."¹⁰⁹ A German trader proclaimed that in the northern Solomon Islands "the woman is man's slave, she has to cultivate the fields, perform most of the housework, and tend to raising the children."¹¹⁰ Another, who had worked as a plantation assistant for the New Guinea Company at Stephansort, wrote that New Guinean women went from being their mothers' helpers during their girlhood to being "not much more than the drudge of her master and lord, who buys her from her parents for a few boars' tusks and other bits and pieces."¹¹¹ A Catholic Bishop on the Gazelle Peninsula who was convinced that women there were "a purchasable object," asserted that Tolai men charged women with all the "dirty work" [*saure Arbeit*] and regarded them as "not much more than slaves and beasts of burden."¹¹² He maintained these negative assessments of gendered divisions of labor in New Guinean even as he, like some others, detailed the labors that both women *and* men contributed toward the production of crops.

least one German writer did away with any ambiguity, using the term "nigger" to mean New Guineans. See Stefan von Kotze, *Aus Papuas Kulturorgen: Südsee Erinnerungen*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, F. Fontane & Co., 1911). Andrew Zimmerman is instructive on the ways in which these ambiguities, slips, and mistakes played out in the transnational contexts of German empire. See Andrew Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

¹⁰⁸ Zöllner, *Deutsch-Neuguinea*, 295.

¹⁰⁹ Sievers and Kükenthal, *Australien, Ozeanien und Polarländer*, 298.

¹¹⁰ Ribbe, *Zwei Jahre unter den Kannibalen*, 100.

¹¹¹ Hans Blum, *Neu-Guinea und der Bismarckarchipel: Eine wirtschaftliche Studie* (Berlin: Schoenfeldt & Co., 1900), 27-28.

¹¹² Louis Couppé, "Aus der Herz-Jesu Mission. (Apost. Vikariat Neupommern.—Deutsche Südsee.)," *Hilfruper Monatshefte zu Ehren unserer lieben Frau vom hh. Herzen Jesu* 10, (1893): 51; Couppé, "Aus der Herz-Jesu-Mission. (Apostol. Vikariat Neupommern—Deutsche Südsee.) Bericht des Missionsbischofs," *Hilfruper Monatshefte* 9 (February 1892): 22.

There were Europeans who were less inclined to condemn outright New Guinean marriage practices. One was Stefan von Kotze, whose book, based on his experiences in German New Guinea from 1887 to 1892 as an employee of the New Guinea Company and first published in 1905, was generally considered to be a humorous account of German colonialism under New Guinea Company rule.¹¹³ Kotze noted that “the ‘purchase’ of a girl is not a type of slave trade, rather the customary form of marriage.”¹¹⁴ Situating the word “purchase” in quotation marks, he drew attention to a disjuncture between European understandings of capitalist exchange and vernacular practices of marriage, much like anthropologist Roy Wagner did decades later.¹¹⁵ This disjuncture, as we have seen, was one that was lost on the majority of German men who recorded their tales of colonial New Guinea. Schnee, who firmly believed that the women of New Guinea occupied a sorry and subordinate position in vernacular societies nevertheless also rejected the equation of bridewealth as practiced on the Gazelle Peninsula with slavery. He insisted “One should not imagine, when the discourse is about the payment of a purchase price for the woman to her uncle, that the woman is a will-less object who is bargained like a slave.” Schnee observed that women on the Gazelle Peninsula could also exercise their own agency within and with regard to marriage: “If a suitor does not please a girl, she simply refuses him,” he wrote. Further, under certain circumstances, she could also leave her husband and return home. He cited a case in which a woman had had six suitors, each of whom was prepared and able to

¹¹³ Kotze, *Aus Papuas Kultur morgen*. For assessments of the work’s humor, see Walter E. Roth, et al., *Venus Oceanica: The Sexual Life of South Sea Natives* (New York: the Oceanica Research Press, 1935), 131; Jens S. Lyng, *Our New Possession: Late German New Guinea* (Melbourne: Melbourne Publishing Co., 1920), 156; Karl Baumann, Dieter Klein, and Wolfgang Apitzsch, *Biographisches Handbuch Deutsch-Neuguinea, 1882-1922: Kurzlebensläufe ehemaliger Kolonisten, Forscher, Missionare und Reisender* (Fassberg: Baumann, 2002), 203.

¹¹⁴ Kotze, *Aus Papuas Kultur morgen*, 112.

¹¹⁵ Wagner, *The Invention of Culture*, 32.

provide the required bridewealth. She, however, refused them all, and eventually married a seventh suitor, leaving him shortly thereafter to elope with an eighth man. This situation was “rather complicated,” as the eighth suitor could not “repay” the “rather high purchase price” that the woman’s husband had “paid” to her uncle, but the husband demanded “either the woman or the purchase price.”¹¹⁶ Schnee did not provide details of how this particular situation was resolved, but he highlights the ways in which New Guinean women could exercise autonomy in matters of marriage.¹¹⁷

As the tropes of the “beast of burden” (*Lasttier*) and “drudge” (*Arbeitstier*) suggest—with both German terms connoting animals—comparisons of New Guinean women with livestock punctuated German men’s writings on women’s labors and bridewealth customs. Women were “haggled over as if a head of cattle,” a Catholic missionary who arrived in German New Guinea at the turn of the century contended.¹¹⁸ With these tropes, they emphasized the bestial through descriptions of women’s bodies deformed through burdensome labor. The Catholic missionary described the “poor woman” of the Gazelle Peninsula, who had to haul heavy crops from the garden to the coast, while the men carried little more than a bush knife and pipe: “Laden like a beast of burden,” he wrote, “she goes along bent over and laboriously.”¹¹⁹ Zöllner believed “excessive labor” contributed a rapid aging among New Guinean women, which soon left their bodies resembling “scarecrows.”¹²⁰ Describing the women near Finschhafen, Kotze wrote of how their “Youthful charms

¹¹⁶ Schnee, *Bilder aus der Südsee*, 99.

¹¹⁷ Compare Hermann Hiery’s claim, also referring to the Gazelle Peninsula, that “Traditionally, divorce was only an option the husband.” Hermann Joseph Hiery, *Das deutsche Reich in der Südsee (1900-1921): Eine Annäherung an die Erfahrungen verschiedener Kulturen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 180.

¹¹⁸ Kleintitschen, *Die Küstenbewohner der Gazellehalbinsel*, 202.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 97-98.

¹²⁰ Zöllner, *Deutsch-Neuguinea*, 72.

disappear quickly,” under the burdensome labors of maintaining plantations and gardens on steep and jungled mountainsides. Women took on a deformed appearance, according to this account: their bodies “become spindly, with a misshapen abdomen,” compounding the abhorrence of teeth stained “dirty red” from betel nut.¹²¹ Adding to bestialization of women’s bodies and labors, Kotze described the ways in which a woman would carry her “youngest offspring” on her back, whom the mother would feed “in that she throws a once veritably classically sculpted breast over her shoulder with an impatient jerk and carries on with her work.”¹²²

Spared of the heavy labors imposed upon them, these authors suggest, the women of German New Guinea could be rescued from premature aging and bodily deformation. Their erotic value could be preserved. Some noted that the women of the northern Solomon Islands were not only more trusting and forthright than their counterparts on Kaiser Wilhelmsland, they were also “laden with less work, and therefore more beautiful.”¹²³ Amidst the prevailing tropes of “beasts of burden” and “drudges” so far discussed, some white, European men thus also veered into erotic registers when describing the women of German New Guinea. On occasion, Zöllner described “the womenfolk of our South Sea Protectorate” as “black-brown beauties,” even though he maintained that “in our opinion they do not look nearly as feminine as European women.”¹²⁴ For him, the women of the northern Solomon Islands with their “often veritably lovely” faces, were the “prettiest women of the German Protectorate,”

¹²¹ Kotze, *Aus Papuas Kultur morgen*, 44-45.

¹²² Ibid. Jennifer Morgan has noted that the trope of women suckling infants over their shoulder was ubiquitous in early modern European depictions of West African women, indicating (to Europeans) their aptitude to work and raise children at the same time. This, she argues, made them suited to enslaved labor in the eyes of Europeans. Morgan, *Laboring Women*, 12-49.

¹²³ Sievers and Kükenthal, *Australien, Ozeanien und Polarländer*, 312.

¹²⁴ Zöllner, *Deutsch-Neuguinea*, 72-73.

perhaps because less burdened with labor. Yet on Kaiser Wilhelmsland, too, he found pleasing “the girls of Bogadjim,” with their “dazzling white teeth.”¹²⁵ Further east along the coast of Kaiser Wilhelmsland, by the German colonial settlement of Finschhafen, Kotze described women dressed in “a type of short double apron made of colored fibers, layer upon layer.” Walking along narrow jungle paths, one might “come across a train of young girls, walking in single file.” He described their “slender, supple figures, with smiling features, short, wooly hair and sparkling teeth, the black-brown skin lustrous from bathing in the sea.” Even as they carried bags full of yams or sweet potatoes, Kotze compared these young women favorably to classical sculpture, their attire to “coquettish tutus” which “danced and quivered with every step.” For Kotze, the sight of these “lovely, shy” New Guinean women provoked a faint feeling of envy of what he called New Guinea’s “unpropertied class.”¹²⁶ These tangents into exotic and erotic registers suggest that German fantasies of the Pacific lingered behind discourses of Melanesian savagery, occasionally surfacing—even to describe laboring New Guinean women.

For the most part, white, male colonists ignored the ways in which German colonialism was already affecting New Guinean women’s labors in the late nineteenth century. A Catholic missionary on the Gazelle Peninsula, however, noted with mixed feelings how women were navigating new colonial geographies and economies. Like others who knew about the thriving market places there, he admired the Tolai for their eagerness to engage in trade with the whites who had come to the coasts. He considered this to be a positive effect of the colonial administration’s suppression of “bloody conflicts” among

¹²⁵ Ibid., 72.

¹²⁶ Kotze, *Aus Papuas Kultur morgen*, 44.

“previously antagonistic tribes.”¹²⁷ A contemporary, and former employee of the New Guinea Company, agreed, attributing the gratifying situation on the Gazelle Peninsula to the wise policies pursued there by the imperial judge, Albert Hahl. The “entrepreneurial” Tolai, these men agreed, had recognized colonists’ needs for yams, taros, and bananas, and have tended their gardens accordingly in order to be able to bring these goods to market.¹²⁸ Yet, while these white, European men celebrated the growing importance of the market in this colonial situation, they noted that it was the women who bore the burden of this changing colonial economy. It was the women who carried their produce of their gardens along the mountains paths that led to the marketplaces, often a baby on their breast adding to their “heavy burden.”¹²⁹ The missionary lamented that since the men refused to carry much more than a bush knife and a pipe, “the poor women have to haul the heavy baskets of fruit to the coast.” Without dwelling too long on the economies of colonial capitalism undergirding this situation, the missionary evoked the familiar trope of the New Guinean woman, stooped and under her heavy load, “laden like a beast of burden” (figure 2.2).¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Kleintitschen, *Die Küstenbewohner der Gazellehalbinsel*, 97.

¹²⁸ Blum, *Neu-Guinea und der Bismarckarchipel*, 29-31.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹³⁰ Kleintitschen, *Die Küstenbewohner der Gazellehalbinsel*, 97.



Figure 2.2. “Laden like a beast of burden, she walks along stooped and laboriously.” The Catholic missionary, P. A. Kleintitschen described women of the Gazelle Peninsula bringing their produce to coastal marketplaces to trade with European colonists. Kleintitschen, *Die Küstenbewohner der Gazellehalbinsel* (1906).

Conclusion

This chapter has examined how white, European colonial discourses have historically framed gender relations in the Pacific, in this case New Guinea. It has argued that European discourses on gender and women took New Guinean societies’ gendered divisions of labor and practices of bridewealth exchange as evidence of the “savagery” of vernacular culture, with “savagery” functioning as a legitimizing narrative for colonial incursion. Inherent to

these legitimating narratives is the denial of Oceanian women's subjecthood in their own right. Oceanian women are always depicted in relation to men, as the figure of the "native" is coded male in the collective European imagination. This erasure of women's subjecthood, discursively and materially, enables their representation as "beasts of burden," degraded and maltreated by New Guinean men intent on exploiting their labors. Collective sexualization of New Guinean women, as more or less desirable to white, European men, based on gendered labor and whether or not they are "coarsened" by work, was also present. Thus, the exonerative "white men save brown women from brown men" myth persisted. Inconvenient details, such as matrilineal social traditions were dissembled or dismissed.

The commodity language of "buying" and "selling" in white, European men's accounts of bridewealth, such as those produced by Danks and Zöller, reflected and produced the imperialist and capitalist paradigms within which these writers were positioned, and which New Guinean women increasingly found themselves navigating. Even as white, European men purported to describe pre-capitalist *Naturvölker*, the capitalist logics they applied to vernacular cultures, and gender relations in particular, underpinned a colonial situation predicated on European exploitation of New Guinean peoples and their labors. Despite the colonial categories of "native" and "laborer" being coded as normatively male, as the following chapter demonstrates, colonial discourses that cast women as commodity items available for "purchase" reverberated in on-the-ground colonial encounters in which male colonists made claims to the bodies and labors not only of New Guinean men, but women as well.

CHAPTER 3

“Every European Does the Same”: Entangled Economies of Sex and Labor from Company Rule to Imperial Administration

My mother was one of his young virgins—all Germans did that, all the colonial white men, and they had to be virgins—it is nothing, why do white men make so much of it? They had to be beautiful as well as virgins. They went to the village chiefs, the *lululai* [sic] or *kukurai*, and they would buy them, usually two or three at a time—often swapped them for an axe or a gun. Those bloody Germans, they had the time of their lives, five or six women feeding them, waiting on them, and the women liked saying they “belonged to So-and-So Master,” and getting new things.¹

In 1903, a former Catholic missionary of the Sacred Heart Mission in the Bismarck Archipelago wrote a heated letter to the German colonial court in Herbertshöhe (Kokopo), which was at the time German New Guinea’s colonial capital. The former missionary was writing to defend himself against charges brought against him by his erstwhile mission

¹ Natalie (“Nati”) Wahlen, quoted in Jan Roberts, *Voices from a Lost World: Australian Women and Children in Papua New Guinea before the Japanese Invasion* (Alexandria, NSW: Millennium Books, 1996), 109.

brothers, who claimed he had coercively taken two Tolai women as “concubines.”² Protesting that only “an inquisition tribunal” would find him guilty of such charges, the former missionary, who was now working as a planter, complained: “why do these holy people rise up only against me when every European does the same? From the Imperial Governor down to the last trader, many gentlemen have or have had native women in their service.”³ Over a decade earlier, a German colonist had similarly noted “the large number of Europeans who keep Kanaka girls as servants.” This aristocratic employee of the New Guinea Company speculated that given how widespread this practice was among white, European men in the colony, it was only due to New Guinean women’s knowledge of abortion that “half-colored” offspring were “extremely rare.”⁴

The term “cohabitation,” used by some historians to describe arrangements like those implied by a fallen missionary and a colonial nobleman, gestures productively toward the intimate, domestic realms of colonial rule.⁵ It urges attentiveness to the quotidian nature of relationships and exchanges often produced between white, European men (and sometimes women) and New Guinean women and men. It can also problematically obscure rather than reveal a range of possible scenarios and sexual economies, some marked by affection, some

² Johann Eberlein brought the charges against Assunto Costantini. See Johann Eberlein, Takabur, to the Imperial District Court, Herbertshöhe, 20 June 1903, National Archives of Australia, Canberra (hereafter: NAA): Imperial Government of German New Guinea; G255, Correspondence files; 18: Kaiserliches Bezirksgericht zu Herbertshöhe. Akten in der Strafsache gegen den Pflanze Assunto Costantini zu Gunanur wegen Bedrohung (1903-1904).

³ Assunto Costantini, Gunanur, to the Imperial Court, Herbertshöhe, 6 November 1903, NAA: G255, 18.

⁴ Joachim Graf Pfeil, *Studien und Beobachtungen aus der Südsee* (Braunschweig: Friedrich Vieweg und Sohn, 1899), 31.

⁵ Hermann J. Hiery, “Germans, Pacific Islanders and Sexuality: German Impact and Indigenous Influence in Melanesia and Micronesia,” in *European Impact and Pacific Influence: British and German Colonial Policy in the Pacific Islands and the Indigenous Response*, eds. Hermann J. Hiery and John M. MacKenzie (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1997), 302.

by force.⁶ Historian Hermann Hiery's claim that "The practice of co-habitation between European men and indigenous women was certainly the rule" echoes the remarks from colonial interlocutors quoted above, yet it tells us little about the experiences of either the women or men who occupied these colonial situations.⁷ Ann Laura Stoler has shown how for South East Asia terms like "cohabitation" suggest "more social privileges than most women who were involved in such relations would have enjoyed."⁸ In German New Guinea, too, as this chapter demonstrates, these women's positions were often precarious, structured by colonial economies and exigencies. It is also not instructive to speak, as Hiery does, of colonists who "lived with local women" and those who "actually married them," especially without an explanation of what marriage might *actually* have meant.⁹ As Carina Ray argued, in colonial situations, terms denoting marriage could signify radically different things, including customary marriage, concubinage, or prostitution.¹⁰ "Marriages of convenience" was the phrase used by one white, European man to describe his relationships with New Guinean women, suggesting pragmatism as well as temporariness. But this phrase, too, glossed over profound differences between the various arrangements he made with women, and sometimes their families, in German New Guinea.¹¹ A trader in the then-German Shortland Islands used the term "concubinage," and stated that "black women" and alcohol

⁶ Nancy Rose Hunt, *A Nervous State: Violence, Remedies, and Reverie in Colonial Congo* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 45.

⁷ Hiery, "Germans, Pacific Islanders and Sexuality," 302.

⁸ Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 49.

⁹ Hermann Joseph Hiery, *The Neglected War: The German South Pacific and the Influence of World War I* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995), 3.

¹⁰ Carina E. Ray, *Crossing the Color Line: Race, Sex, and the Contested Politics of Colonialism in Ghana* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2015), 7.

¹¹ Gábor Vargyas, *Data on the Pictorial History of North-East Papua New Guinea* (Budapest: Ethnographical Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1986), 42.

were the “sole pleasures” available to men on their “remote stations.” “[I]f the black better half no longer wants to comply,” he added, “she does not take it badly if her husband [*Gemahl*] reminds her that she is to obey with the help of the cane.”¹² He highlighted the centrality of sex, transience, and violence to these colonial arrangements.

Other registers were also in play. As the former missionary’s reference to “service” and the aristocrat’s more overt reference to “servants” suggest, New Guinean women’s labors were embedded in these arrangements. As we have seen in Chapter One, white, European men frequently understood bridewealth within a capitalist logic that imagined New Guinean women’s bodies and labors as commodities “bought” and “owned” by New Guinean men. While they generally decried this as a purportedly “native” custom, this chapter argues that many white, European men in the colony in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also considered women’s labors to be commodities obtainable through their own relations with New Guinean women. The German trader in the Shortland Islands, for instance, also wrote of “various black ladies” who “officially” bore the names “laundress, cook, gardener, housemaid, and chambermaid.”¹³ While these titles elide the sexual, they should not be understood merely as euphemisms, for they point to a range of labors that Islander women performed in the service of white colonists, as scholars like Judith Bennett and Livia Loosen have noted.¹⁴ At the New Guinea Company’s first station at Kerawara, Stefan von Kotze wrote of being able to obtain the “handsome commodity” of a “black house girl” for twenty or thirty fathoms of *diwarra* who could soon acquire sewing and laundering

¹² Carl Ribbe, *Zwei Jahre unter den Kannibalen der Salomo-Inseln: Reiseerlebnisse und Schilderungen von Land und Leuten* (Dresden: Elbgau-Buchdruckerei, 1903), 81-82.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁴ Judith A. Bennett, *Wealth of the Solomons: A History of a Pacific Archipelago, 1800-1978* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1987), 71; Livia Loosen, *Deutsche Frauen in den Südsee-Kolonien des Kaiserreichs: Alltag und Beziehungen zur Indigenen Bevölkerung, 1884-1919* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2014), 371-373.

skills.¹⁵ A resident of Kaiser Wilhelmsland stressed that New Guinean “wives” were “needed, suffice it to say for the odd jobs around the household, for keeping the house tidy, for washing and looking after the underwear.”¹⁶ During his travels in German New Guinea, Hugo Zöllner learned of one French trader in the Bismarck Archipelago who was said to have “bought no fewer than six wives [*Ehegattinnen*]” whose unpaid labor the trader would use to prepare copra for sale.¹⁷ These examples suggest that European men exploited a multiplicity of New Guinean women’s labors and that these labors were enmeshed in broad and varied conceptions of colonial relations between white, European men and New Guinean women. Conceptions of marriage sometimes figured, and these were also sometimes understood by outsiders as temporary arrangements commoditized by bridewealth.

This chapter thus posits a broad understanding of New Guinean women as part of the colonial labor force, revealing that economies of sex and labor were always entangled in the German colony. Policy directives issued in 1890 by the government-appointed imperial commissioner of German New Guinea, Fritz Rose, explicitly support such an understanding. Arriving in the colony in late 1889 to assume the new position of imperial commissioner, Rose wrote in February of the following year to Bismarck, outlining a series of amendments he insisted be made to the New Guinea Company’s 1888 labor ordinance.¹⁸ The existing set

¹⁵ Stefan von Kotze, *Aus Papuas Kultur morgen: Südsee Erinnerungen*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: F. Fontane & Co, 1911), 111.

¹⁶ Vargyas, *Data on the Pictorial History of North-East Papua New Guinea*, 43. On the labors New Guinean laundresses performed for German colonists, also see Karl Vieweg, *Big Fellow Man: Muschelgeld und Südseegeister: Authentische Berichte aus Deutsch-Neuguinea 1906-1909* (Weikersheim: Verlag Josef Margraf, 1990), 95-96.

¹⁷ Hugo Zöllner, *Deutsch-Neuguinea und meine Ersteigung des Finisterre-Gebirges: Eine Schilderung des ersten erfolgreichen Vordringens zu den Hochgebirgen Inner-Neuguineas, der Natur des Landes, der Sitten der Eingeborenen und des gegenwärtigen Standes der Deutschen Kolonisationsthätigkeit in Kaiser-Wilhelms-Land, Bismarck und Salomoarchipel, nebst einem Wortverzeichnis von 46 Papuasprachen* (Stuttgart: Union Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1891), 295.

¹⁸ Rose, Finschhafen, to Bismarck, Berlin, 13 February 1890, Bundesarchiv Berlin (hereafter: BArch): Reichskolonialamt; R 1001/2960, 60-89.

of regulations governing the recruitment of laborers in the colony, as previously mentioned, acknowledged the presence of female laborers only in reference to accommodations in the colony's labor depots, by mandating separate quarters or "compartments" for indentured women and girls.¹⁹ Rose now questioned the narrow definition and scope of "the term 'laborer'" as it related to the ordinance: "Does it encompass every labor and service relation that a native has to a white, including the acquisition [*Erwerbung*] of a native woman in accordance with local customs as a housekeeper (concubine)?"²⁰ While Rose was cautious not to place "undesirable" constrictions on the New Guinea Company's labor practices, he determined that "the recruitment of such native girls" henceforth fall under the labor ordinance.²¹

Rose's gloss from "housekeeper" to the parenthetical "concubine" draws attention to what was doubtless an understanding common among white, European men in the colony that collapsed New Guinean women's sexual, productive, and household labors. Understandings of bridewealth surfaced in his phrase "in accordance with local customs." It was Rose's belief that extending the labor ordinance to include women "acquired" by European colonists in this way would be in the interest of "preserving the natives and the public peace." Furthermore, Rose maintained, it would grant New Guinean women the protections offered by the ordinance "for regular and voluntary recruitment."²² This directive suggests that colonists were engaging New Guinean women in an informal labor economy in numbers significant enough to prompt a reconsideration of colonial labor

¹⁹ "Verordnung betreffend die Arbeiter-Depôts im Schutzgebiet der Neu Guinea Compagnie. Vom 16. August 1888," *Nachrichten über Kaiser Wilhelms-Land und den Bismarck-Archipel* (1888): 141.

²⁰ Rose, Finschhafen, to Bismarck, Berlin, 13 February 1890, BArch: R 1001/2960, 66.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 81.

²² *Ibid.*

policies. It further suggests that this “recruitment” was not always voluntary. To describe these women as “more sexual partners and local advisors than laborers,” as Hiery has, overlooks their subordinated status as laborers, the gendered modalities of violence and exploitation that characterized this colonial situation, and the multiple labors New Guinean women were tasked with on and off the colony’s plantations.²³

The Hungarian Naturalist

“At first light on the morning of New Year’s Day, 1896, the Norddeutscher Lloyd steamer *Stettin* came into port at Friedrich Wilhelmshafen,” the then-young lawyer and future Imperial Governor Albert Hahl would decades later recall.²⁴ While Hahl traveled onward to the Bismarck Archipelago to take up his position as imperial judge, his fellow passenger on board the *Stettin*, the Hungarian naturalist Lajos Biró, traveled from Friedrich Wilhelmshafen along the Rai Coast, establishing a research post near the Rhenish Mission station at Bogadjim.²⁵ Biró had been sent by the National Museum in Budapest to collect insect specimens in the German colony. He spent the next seven months in the Astrolabe Bay area, where people’s fond memories of their old friend Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay, the Russian naturalist who had visited the coast in the 1870s and 80s, had informed their initially

²³ Hermann Joseph Hiery, *Das deutsche Reich in der Südsee (1900-1921): Eine Annäherung an die Erfahrungen verschiedener Kulturen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 41. For an albeit brief analysis more attentive to colonial power structures and the violences they engender, Loosen, *Deutsche Frauen*, 370-371.

²⁴ Albert Hahl, *Governor in New Guinea*, eds. and trans., Peter Sack and Dymphna Clark (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1980), 1.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 5; Albert Hoffmann, *Lebenserinnerungen eines rheinischen Missionars*, vol. 1, *Auf dem Missionsfeld in Neu-Guinea* (Wuppertal-Barmen: Verlag der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft, 1948), 157. Both sources follow Hungarian name order: Hahl refers to “Biro Lajos,” Hoffmann to “Biolajus.”

favorable reception of the white men who followed.²⁶ Following German annexation, the New Guinea Company subsidiary, the Astrolabe Company, struggled to establish tobacco plantations here, the cultivation of which depended on imported Chinese and Malay “coolie” laborers, men and women. From Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, Biró visited the nearby islands of Siar, Ragetta (Kranket), Beliao (Beliau), and ventured inland to the Hansemann Mountains, so named after the New Guinea Company’s founder. On the island of Bilibili (Bilbil) he encountered female pot makers, whose famed earthenware formed part of vast trade networks stretching along the coast and outward to the Bismarck Archipelago (figure 3.1).²⁷

²⁶ Peter Lawrence, *Road Belong Cargo: A Study of the Cargo Movement in the Southern Madang District, New Guinea* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1964), 66-67.

²⁷ Lajos Biró, *Német-Uj-Guineai (Astrolabe-Öböl) néprajzi gyűjtéseinek leiró jegyzéke. Beschreibender Catalog der ethnographischen Sammlung Ludwig Biró's aus Deutsch Neu-Guinea (Astrolabe-Bai)* (Budapest: Hofdruckerei V. Hornyánszky, 1901), 93; Patricia May and Margaret Tuckson, *The Traditional Pottery of Papua New Guinea* (Sydney: Bay Books, 1982), 163-165.

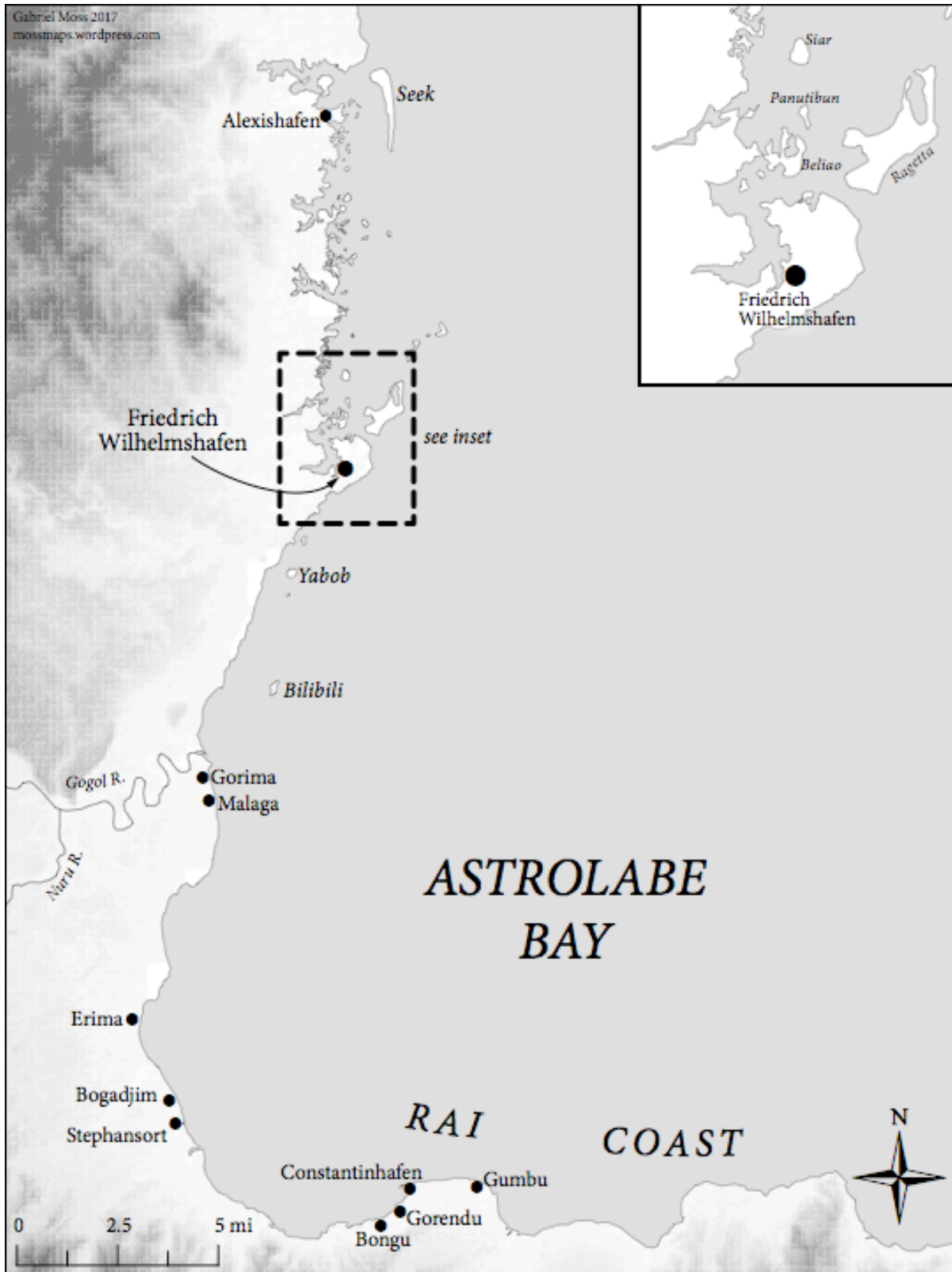


Figure 3.1. The Astrolabe Bay area, Kaiser Wilhelmsland. Inset map shows Friedrich Wilhelmshafen and the neighboring islands of Siar, Panutibun, Beliao, and Ragetta.

Biró traveled farther afield as the year progressed, westward along the north coast of New Guinea to Berlinhafen (Eitapé/Aitape) and nearby islands, close behind the Catholic Society of the Divine Word, which, in 1896, was establishing their presence on the island of Tumleo and on Kaiser Wilhelmsland. In 1897, Biró returned to Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, and further along the Rai Coast, to Erima, and once again to Bogadjim/Stephansort, from where he accessed the mountain villages of Uom, Wale, and the coastal village of Bongu, where the Rhenish missionaries had founded a station in July 1896.²⁸ Following an interlude in Singapore, Biró returned to German New Guinea. He went to Simbang, where the famed Lutheran missionary, Johann Flierl had established the Neuendettelsau Mission's first station in October 1886, and to Sattelberg, which had subsequently become that mission's base, elevated above the malarial zone that had plagued the missionaries at Simbang and had forced the New Guinea Company to abandon its operations at nearby Finschhafen. In 1899, malaria research brought the pioneer of tropical medicine, Robert Koch, to German New Guinea and the next year Biró accompanied him on an expedition to the Bismarck Archipelago. Biró stopped a while at the Witu (Vitu/French) Islands, where he met the islands' most famous resident, the Dane, Peter Hansen, who had faced accusations of rape and brutality and was renowned for keeping a "harem" of Islander women.²⁹ After these travels through the colony, Biró returned to Kaiser Wilhelmsland in early 1901.³⁰

²⁸ See August Hanke, "Bericht über die Entwicklung der Rheinischen Mission in Neuguinea," 8 November 1912, Vereinte Evangelische Mission, Bestand Rheinische Mission (hereafter: RMG): 3.014 b; Missionarskonferenzen: Referate (1909-1936).

²⁹ James Griffin, Hank Nelson, and Stewart Firth, *Papua New Guinea: A Political History* (Richmond, Victoria: Heinemann Educational Australia, 1979), 44; Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans*, 81-82. For more on Peter Hansen, see William Charles Groves, "Peter the Island King (Peter Hansen)," 1973, Pacific Manuscripts Bureau (hereafter: PMB): 612.

³⁰ This description of Biró's movements during his time in German New Guinea follows the account in Arthur Wichmann, *Entdeckungsgeschichte von Neu-Guinea, 1885-1902*, vol. 2 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1910), 641-643.

Biró's mobility and transience was typical of many colonial figures, and it bore on the kinds of relationships he, and many others, had with New Guineans, and women in particular. After spending six years in the colony, he left German New Guinea permanently in 1902. Some twenty years later, as Biró was back in Europe and nearing seventy years of age, he recalled the three "Papuan wives" he had had in German New Guinea.³¹ His accounts, originally written in Hungarian and published in a Hungarian newspaper, are romanticized texts that veer frequently into registers intended to titillate his readerships. Biró recalled that while he had not intended to take a wife in the colony, the "pragmatic" "state official" with whom he shared quarters in Friedrich Wilhelmshafen had encouraged him to do so in order that "the virtue of his own wife" might be protected. "He urged me to select a girl by all means more beautiful than his, so that I should have no opportunity to sin against heaven knows which paragraph of the ten commandments."³² It is with humor that Biró recalls this colonial sexual economy.

Marapua was Biró's "second wife." He met her during his stay on one of the Witu Islands, where four Europeans, including Hansen, were stationed, employing Islanders to produce copra for the New Guinea Company. Biró described the "virtual female asylum" that Hansen maintained on the island, claiming that given the common practice of child marriage in the region, girls as young as eleven or twelve would flee here to escape being placed in marriages not of their choosing. A dearth of spring water meant that coconut water had to be consumed, and given that obtaining it "was a female job," Biró took a girl—who appears

³¹ Select writings by Biró have been made available in translation with commentary by Vargyas, *Data on the Pictorial History*. Materials translated in this publication as "My Papuan Wives," "My Second Papuan Wife," and "My Third Papuan Wife" were originally published in 1923. I have corrected some minor typographical errors when quoting from this text, where such corrections have no impact upon the meanings or possible interpretations of the passages quoted.

³² Vargyas, *Data on the Pictorial History*, 44.

in a photograph taken of her to have been no older than those he claimed fled here in *escape* of child marriage—as his wife.³³ Of his marriage to Marapua, Biró wrote: “My pretty was the bloom of a nearby village, her father and mother still alive, so I was anxious to get married properly, entirely in compliance with local tradition.” By way of intermediaries, Biró and Marapua’s mother “agreed upon the wedding presents.” Biró gestured toward the matrilineal structure of Witu society, in which the mother was “the legitimate head of the family,” on whose behalf her brothers, Marapua’s maternal uncles, negotiated. The agreed upon bridewealth consisted of “Three live pigs, then three hatchets, three large knives, three small knives, three plane-irons, three large iron nails and three pounds of tobacco,” to be distributed among Marapua’s relatives. The “crying” and “bellowing” of the wedding party marked the marriage rites. Long after Biró had left Marapua and the Witu islands, he mused: “If I had stayed with you, we could celebrate our silver wedding [anniversary] this year.”³⁴

After returning to Kaiser Wilhelmsland, Biró married Masis, a Bilibili woman. Biró would remember his “third Papuan wife” as “the crown of a diplomatic success,” “won” by advocating for the Bilibili, whose gardens on Kaiser Wilhelmsland were being plundered by laborers employed by the New Guinea Company.³⁵ According to Biró, the Bilibili saw the virtues of having a white man’s “protection,” and asked him to stay on their island, offering him a house and a boat. Biró, however, determined that he also “required a free New Guinean woman as a wife” to reward him for the “great service” he had performed for the Islanders.³⁶ He declined the Bilibilis’ offers of bringing him a Neu Mecklenburg or Malay woman,

³³ Ibid., 47-49. Photograph 55 in this book shows Biró and Marapua. Loosen has also noted Marapua’s evident youth. See, Loosen, *Deutsche Frauen*, 375 fn 108.

³⁴ Vargyas, *Data on the Pictorial History*, 49-50.

³⁵ Ibid., 50-52.

³⁶ Ibid., 51.

implying an indentured women, insisting instead “that they grant me a woman from among themselves.”³⁷ No ceremony or bridewealth marked his marriage to Masis, since such a union was apparently unprecedented on the island “and no custom whatever had yet been established.” In Biró’s telling, this marriage solidified his position among the Bilibili, while Masis prepared his meals and “did the chores, which involved cooking and tidying up.”³⁸

Even in Biró’s sentimental recollections of his time in the German colony, obtaining the labors of New Guinean women appears as much a part of his marriages as was the utility of such arrangements in establishing ties with communities in which he temporarily resided. From collecting water to preparing food and performing household chores, economies of labor were entangled with those of sexuality. The extent to which sexual relationships between white, European men and New Guinean women were bound up with colonial labor regimes, however, is most evident in Biró’s description of his first marriage in German New Guinea. The scene that Biró described regarding his “first wife,” Saghan, is worth quoting at length. Recalling the “state official” who had encouraged Biró to take a New Guinean wife, he wrote:

It was more than easy for him to whet my appetite as a major fresh transport had just arrived from New Ireland [Neu Mecklenburg] directly for the state, so the jealous company men were not permitted to select from the newcomers. I chose my Saghan from among thirty-five companions of her. I had an easy job doing so, as her face and figure was [sic] the most attractive, and this was later acknowledged by every expert European. No dress whatever marred my lovely save for the regular fig leaf, being as she was in her native costume.³⁹

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 52.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 51.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.

With this passage, Biró described the arrival in Kaiser Wilhelmsland of indentured laborers from the Bismarck Archipelago—specifically, from the island of Neu Mecklenburg, which was generally understood to be the colony’s only reliable source of female laborers.⁴⁰ As Dorothy Shineberg has noted, in French colonial New Caledonia indentured women were valued by colonists not only as domestic and plantation laborers, but for their sexual labors in the service of predominantly male colonial society, both European and Melanesian.⁴¹ In the Dutch East Indies, too, as Stoler has shown, company labor policies created an economy in which European men selected indentured women to perform domestic and sexual services, often under their indenture contracts.⁴² In German New Guinea similar entanglements existed. An existing labor recruitment contract reveals that European planters were prepared to pay recruiters a premium for “*single* women”—120 marks compared with ninety marks for a (presumably male) laborer on a three-year contract.⁴³

Biró’s accounts highlight the extent to which the indenture system in the German colony was instrumental in making New Guinean women and their labors available to white, European men: “Our earthly providence the New Guinea Company has seen to it that women of this breed be also around its officials of European descent,” he wrote.⁴⁴ In a place where the white woman was “a rare bird,” “sighted only as wives of Protestant missionaries, [or as]

⁴⁰ “Betreffend den Bevölkerungsrückgang auf Neu-Mecklenburg,” u.d. [c. 1909] BArch: R 1001/2311, 46; Richard Thurnwald, “Die eingeborenen Arbeitskräfte im Südseeschutzgebiet,” *Koloniale Rundschau* 10 (1910): 619.

⁴¹ Dorothy Shineberg, *The People Trade: Pacific Island Laborers and New Caledonia, 1865-1930* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1999), 107.

⁴² Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, 49.

⁴³ Recruiting contract made between Curt A. Schultze and Adolf Jahn, Lebrechtshof, 2 February 1916, NAA: Military Administration of the German New Guinea Possessions; G261, General Correspondence; 6. My emphasis.

⁴⁴ Vargyas, *Data on the Pictorial History*, 43.

Catholic nuns,” women like Saghan, Biró remembered, “were expected to do the chores, to keep our clothes in order, to see to it that the dirty linen were washed in time and clean dresses were always on hand.”⁴⁵ His description of Saghan slips from an account of the displacement of New Guineans that underpinned the indenture into a familiar language that eroticized and exoticized the naked, black female body, conflating women’s productive and sexual labors and subsuming them within the parameters of a coercive labor system.

Tellingly, Biró described the relationship of women like Saghan to the New Guinea Company, which maintained a monopoly on recruiting indentured laborers for Kaiser Wilhelmsland, in familial terms. After mentioning the “few hundred Malay women-workers,” who were imported to cultivate crops like tobacco, and who, according to Biró, were selected as “housekeeper[s]” by “official[s] of higher rank,” Biró elaborated upon the “even more numerous [...] coloured women-workers”—those recruited from within German New Guinea. “These had the Company as their substitute father,” he wrote, “so it stands to reason that the person intent upon marrying was to apply to those quarters.”⁴⁶ The paternalism of colonial rule surfaces in Biró’s narrative, but so do traces of familial structures ruptured and reconfigured by the colonial labor indenture, a system that depended on the transportation of New Guinean women and men and their relocation in distant parts of the colony. Already in 1890, the imperial commissioner Rose had complained to the German Chancellor about the “numerous cases” of female laborers who arrived in Kaiser Wilhelmsland from Neu Mecklenburg, Neu Hannover, and nearby islands suffering from venereal infections. Noting that “grave consequences very quickly emerged among the whites as well as among the

⁴⁵ Ibid., 46.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 44.

native laborers,” Rose, like Biró some six years later, gestured to the ways in which white colonists’ gained access to women’s sexual labors through the German colonial indenture.⁴⁷

Arrangements that women like Saghan entered into with European colonists may have brought with them benefits for indentured New Guinean women. They may have been spared more arduous or tedious labors like clearing roads and lands for commercial cropping, working in sawmills or on company plantations—labors performed by other indentured women as well as men.⁴⁸ Women may also have gained status and wealth in the form of European trade goods. Some “liked saying they ‘belonged to So-and-So Master,’ and getting new things,” as Nati Wahlen, the estranged daughter of a German colonist and planter, Rudolf Wahlen, and an Islander woman known only as Avi, who was likely Rudolf’s laborer, has recalled.⁴⁹ Registers of affection also feature in Biró’s reminiscences. In order to turn Saghan into a “lady of rank,” he took her to the Company storehouse, a place he referred to in jest as “the ladies wear and jewelry shops” that “housed those fabulous valuables beyond the reach of the women of [Neu Mecklenburg] which the ships recruiting workers keep showing off as enticing knick-knacks.”⁵⁰ Here, Biró bought Saghan the red linen from which she would fashion her *lavalava* (loincloth), brightly colored blouses (“the more gaudy the nicer”), and a straw hat which she would decorate with cockatoo feathers (not bird of

⁴⁷ Rose, Finschhafen, to Caprivi, Berlin, 21 October 1890, BArch: R 1001/2301, 79-81. Also see Rose, Finschhafen, to Caprivi, Berlin, 27 September 1890, BArch: R 1001/2301, 9-13.

⁴⁸ See Peter Sack and Dymphna Clark, eds. and trans., *German New Guinea: The Annual Reports* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1979), 73, 93, 142.

⁴⁹ Wahlen, quoted in Jan Roberts, *Voices from a Lost World*, 109. Nati was born in January 1910. She did not know her mother, only that she was a Polynesian and/or Micronesian woman. She had been among many Islanders transported to the Hermit Islands to fulfill Rudolph Wahlen’s desire for plantation laborers. Nati recalls being sent to Gunantambu, formerly Queen Emma’s plantation, on the Gazelle Peninsula, which Rudolph Wahlen purchased from Emma in 1909. Nati appears to have been a ward of Emma’s sister, Phebe Parkinson for some time. Archival evidence also indicates that in December 1922 she was a ward of the Wesleyan Mission in Rabaul. See NAA: Department of Home and Territories, Central Office; A1, Correspondence files; 1925/4666: “Subject: Half Castes. New Guinea,” 1921-1925, 26.

⁵⁰ Vargyas, *Data on the Pictorial History*, 44-45.

paradise feathers, as these were strictly for men). Saghan's outfit was complemented with glass beads in blue and white and porcelain armbands, into which she would slip her clay tobacco pipe. All this, Biró wrote, could be bought for two pounds of American tobacco, a commodity that also made "lavish pocket money" for Saghan.⁵¹

Biró's own accounts of his marriages to New Guinean women draw attention to the temporary nature of these relationships and the sometimes-tenuous positions of women within them. These "marriages of convenience" could not be otherwise, according to Biró, given that differences "in terms of race, colour, custom, lifestyle and outlook" were "so huge between the European and the aboriginal."⁵² Such differences surfaced in the form of conflict when, for instance, Biró failed to conceal an "ethnographic object" taboo to women from his child wife Marapua, or in the "recurrent" arguments he had with Masis when she painted her face and body with coconut oil, charcoal, and red earth.⁵³ Biró seems to have found his wives' "race, colour, custom, lifestyle and outlook" both repellent and alluring, and things over which he could exert control. While he would protest Masis's bodily adornments of ash and earth, he would also insist on photographing Saghan in "local wear"—stripped to the waist and denied her pipe, with her naked torso turned to face his camera. He would note, with apparent indifference, that she was "obviously very much ashamed of herself" in this situation, as "best shown by the way she is wringing her hands."⁵⁴ This act of stripping, of taking from Saghan the goods that denoted her wealth and status as she posed uncomfortably while Biró photographed her is suggestive of the extent to which New

⁵¹ Ibid., 45-46.

⁵² Ibid., 42.

⁵³ Ibid., 50, 53.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 88, and photograph 54.

Guinean women's relations to white colonists were contingent and unstable. In a colonial situation marked by mobility and transience, Biró proclaimed that he had to change his wives as he changed his house.⁵⁵ He married Saghan to "another official" recently arrived in the colony. Saghan's apparent consent suggests her ability to navigate and use colonial structures of power, but elsewhere New Guinean women also took flight.⁵⁶

Rumor and Flight

Outside the colonial towns, Europeans' presence in the German colony was thinly scattered along coastal areas. Trading stations dotted the coast of northern Neu Mecklenburg, colonial outposts of the trading companies like Hensheim & Co. established principally to exploit the island's coconut palms (see figure 3.2). Ships traversed the same coastlines, recruiting Islanders who would serve as indentured laborers elsewhere in the colony or farther afield in German Samoa. High mortality rates on distant plantations, extensions of contracted labor periods, and recruiters' carelessness when returning former laborers created absences that were keenly felt in home villages and exacerbated hostilities that had existed between Islanders and Europeans in Neu Mecklenburg since the early 1880s.⁵⁷ A colonial frontier at least until the turn of the century, Neu Mecklenburg was a place whose white inhabitants, hailing from Scandinavia and Britain as much as Germany, were men who traded for copra

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁵⁷ Peter Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders under German Rule: A Study in the Meaning of Colonial Resistance* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1978), 138-139; Heinrich Schnee, *Bilder aus der Südsee: Unter den kannibalischen Stämmen des Bismarck-Archipels* (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1904), 80-85.

while dealing in rumor and gossip about one another, and often violence against local peoples. Drunkenness fueled sometimes-slanderous accusations and violent outrages.

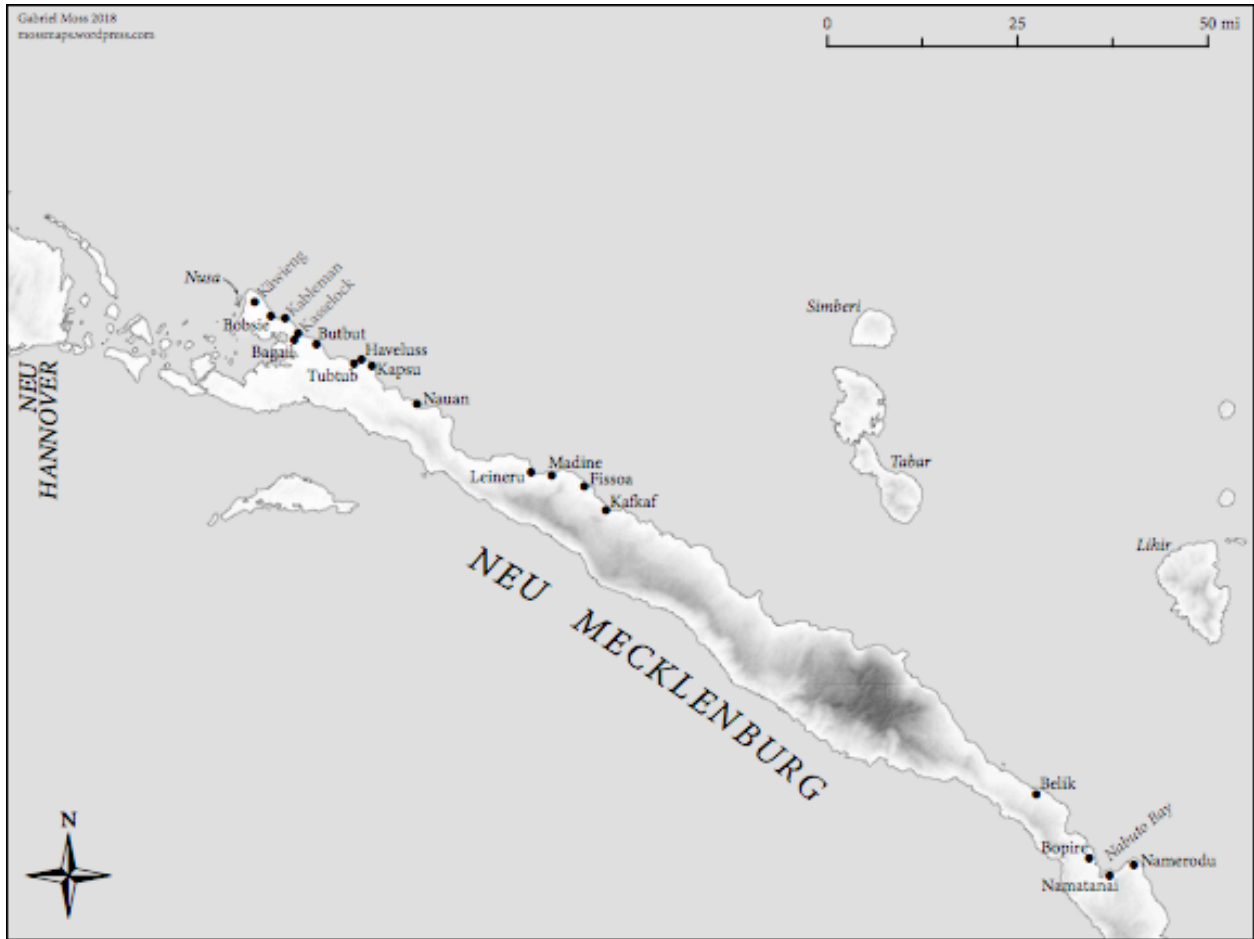


Figure 3.2. Northern Neu Mecklenburg, Bismarck Archipelago

Within this colonial situation, white men were known to make brutal incursions into village spaces, taking women who, equipped with their own knowledge of local geographies could sometimes again take flight. White, European men's misconceptions of bridewealth customs could also prove fatal, as appears to have been the case with a trader named Frank

Bradley.⁵⁸ In July 1889, after he had been stationed at Tubtub for around five months, Bradley informed another trader at Käwieng of his intention to “buy” the “native girl Marankas.”⁵⁹ The trader at Käwieng, himself known to be “a bout drinker and brutally cruel to subordinates and natives when intoxicated,” later learned that Marankas had spent about a day with Bradley—“whether voluntarily or not,” he did not know.⁶⁰ It is unclear whether Bradley might have been seeking to establish closer ties and better trade relations with local villagers through such an arrangement; sources indicate he had so far failed to win the locals’ favor. If that was Bradley’s intention, it was not realized, since a local big man named Tellekot had not approved of the situation and had ordered Bradley killed.⁶¹ Another trader told of how local villagers had, in mid-July, lured Bradley to them by offering to sell him copra, before beating him to death with an ax.⁶² The colonial magistrate, district commissioner, and acting colonial governor, Heinrich Schnee, would later note that a trader might establish “trade with the natives” by “buying himself a woman from the neighboring tribe [...], which according to natives’ conceptions signifies marriage.” However, Schnee stated that most traders were so ill-informed “about the customs and practices of the natives among whom they live,” that “imprudent conduct in matters of women” was likely to “attract the revenge of a native woman’s family or the husband.”⁶³ In the wake of Bradley’s murder, imperial

⁵⁸ Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans*, 53.

⁵⁹ Friedrich Schulle’s statement, on board the *Alexandrine*, 15 October 1889, NAA: G255, 147: Stationsgericht Herbertshöhe.

⁶⁰ This characterization of the Käwieng trader, Friedrich Schulle, comes from his sometime employer, Eduard Hensheim. See Eduard Hensheim, *South Sea Merchant*, ed. and trans., Peter Sack and Dymphna Clark (Boroko: Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, 1983), 97.

⁶¹ Schulle’s statement, on board the *Alexandrine*, 15 October 1889, NAA: G255, 147.

⁶² Alexander Gunderson’s statement, Tubtub, 15 October 1889, *ibid.* Gunderson met a similar fate in April 1891, when he was murdered at Bosso, Neu Mecklenburg.

⁶³ Heinrich Schnee, *Bilder aus der Südsee: Unter den kannibalischen Stämmen des Bismarck-Archipels* (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1904), 259, 261.

commissioner Rose dispatched a navy corvette followed by a police patrol of six New Guinean men and a German officer to exert “considerable influence” in northern Neu Mecklenburg.⁶⁴ It was also shortly after the murder that Rose concluded that it would be the interest of the “public peace” to bring women acquired by white, European men “in accordance with local customs” under the labor ordinance.⁶⁵ Violence nevertheless persisted.⁶⁶

A Kafkaf man named Maranon reported in April 1897 that a Hertsheim trader in Neu Mecklenburg, William Peder Leonard, would “go to the coast where the women were fishing and take one by force” whenever he desired sex. This trader, he said, had also violently abducted a married woman “without paying for her.”⁶⁷ Sometimes notions of bridewealth payments informed white traders’ efforts to acquire Neu Mecklenburg women, but did little or nothing to diminish violence. Henry Martin of Nusa, for example, was said to have attempted “to buy six women” at a trading station further down the coast at Leineru. He was, however, only able to take one woman back with him, and she managed to flee from him a few days later, making her way across the harbor and escaping into the bush. After Martin had threatened to punish the local people if they failed to return her, he shackled her and beat her before himself sending her away. Rumor had it that the same trader had plans to return to the Leineru station to get two more women, but these plans were thwarted when

⁶⁴ Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans*, 53.

⁶⁵ Rose, Finschhafen, to Bismarck, Berlin, 13 February 1890, BArch: R 1001/2960, 66.

⁶⁶ For details on colonial violence in northern Neu Mecklenburg, see Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans*, 53-54; Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders under German Rule*, 138-139.

⁶⁷ Maranon’s statement, Herbertshöhe, 7 April 1897, NAA: G255, 259: Kaiserliches Gericht des Schutzgebietes der Neu-Guinea-Compagnie zu Herbertshöhe. Strafsache gegen den Händler Lundin in Kableman 223, 233^a St.G.B (1897-1898). Leonard was the alias of Edvard Christian Antonius Nielsen Ørtoft. See Karl Baumann, Dieter Klein and Wolfgang Apitzsch, *Biographisches Handbuch Deutsch-Neuguinea, 1882-1922: Kurzlebensläufe ehemaliger Kolonisten, Forscher, Missionare und Reisender*, 2nd ed. (Fassberg: Karl Baumann, 2002), 222.

villagers robbed and destroyed the station, forcing the white traders to take flight.⁶⁸ One trader, who knew about this case, would later report of another, alleging in 1898 that the trader August Coenen had “recruited about twelve women” since his arrival in northern Neu Mecklenburg. His brutal treatment of these “paid for” women compelled each of them to flee, the latest after just a few days, it was said, after Coenen had struck her across the head with a tomahawk.⁶⁹

In 1897, the Hertsheim trader Johann Hermann Lundin came before the imperial court of the Protectorate of the New Guinea Company after a New Guinean deckhand said he had witnessed the intoxicated trader assault a male laborer.⁷⁰ As the court pursued the witness’s story, allegations also emerged suggesting Lundin had abducted a woman known as Caroline from the village near Leineru. One trader said that Lundin and a European sea captain who worked as a labor recruiter, had entered the village with a team of male laborers

⁶⁸ Captain Axel Monrad’s statement, Herbertshöhe, 30 March 1897, NAA: G255, 259. Also see Schnee, *Bilder aus der Südsee*, 84.

⁶⁹ B. Lanser, Nauan Station, to Albert Hahl, Herbertshöhe, 28 June 1898, NAA: G255, 261: Kaiserliches Gericht Herbertshöh [sic], Strafsache gegen August Coenen Händler in Bagail wegen Vergehens des Hausfriedensbruches, Sachbeschädigung, Körperverletzung §§ 123, 223, 303 RStGB. Also see the laborer Bakoi’s statement of August 12, 1898, Herbertshöhe, in this file.

Coenen would several years later father a son with a Neu Mecklenburg woman from the village of Lugagon. Like Nati Wahlen and many other children deemed “illegitimate half-castes” by the colonial authorities, Coenen’s child became a ward of the Wesleyan Mission on the Gazelle Peninsula. See district commissioner Stuebel, Rabaul, to the Imperial District Court, Käwieng, 2 March 1912, and district commissioner Boluminski’s reply, Käwieng, 18 May 1912 in the folder labeled “*Mischlinge*,” NAA: G255, 875. This exchange also revealed that the boy’s mother was, at that time, serving as a laborer in nearby Rabaul. For “illegitimate half-castes” (*unehelichen Mischlinge*) see Hahl, Rabaul, 26 July 1913, *ibid.* Also see Bestattung für den Vormund eines Minderjährigen, NAA: G255, 1150, and Guardian for a Minor, Methodist Mission 24 March 1914 to 21 January 1916, NAA: Military Administration of the German New Guinea Possessions; G283; 1 item only.

For a historian with Hiery’s knowledge of the colonial archives to describe such children as “the living example of a functioning ‘cultural symbiosis’” (Hiery, *Das deutsche Reich*, 41) is not simply “euphemistic,” as Birthe Kundrus has written. Rather, I read it as an attempt to efface the multiple modalities of exploitation and violence that often characterized European men’s sexual access to New Guinean women and the highly ambiguous, often fraught, futures their children faced. See Birthe Kundrus, review of *Das deutsche Reich in der Südsee*, by Hermann Hiery, *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 37 (1997): 706.

⁷⁰ Panke’s statement, Herbertshöhe, 9 February 1897, NAA: G255, 259.

and taken Caroline against her will and against the wishes of the other villagers.⁷¹ Another said he was not sure whether Lundin had “paid for” her, but he “would like to think so.”⁷² Lundin later claimed that he had given the captain trade goods with which “to buy the girl.” Lundin implied that his own wife, presumably also a Neu Mecklenburg woman, had acted as interpreter and intermediary, communicating Caroline’s willingness to go with the men. The captain also gave her *tapsoka* (a shell valuable), he said.⁷³

While Lundin denied accusations that he had taken Caroline by force, he left a trader’s account of what happened next largely unchallenged.⁷⁴ Caroline had been brought to the captain on board his ship. The captain took her with him across the Bismarck Sea as far as the Admiraltäts Inseln. After this journey, the captain returned the ship, with Caroline still on board, to Neu Mecklenburg and lay anchor off the coast of Nusa. Caroline used this opportunity to flee, travelling together with another woman by canoe across the harbor connecting Nusa with mainland Neu Mecklenburg with the intention of then proceeding overland back to her village at Leineru. According to this account, Caroline had got as far as Bobsie, on the northern end of Neu Mecklenburg, where a “colored trader” resided.⁷⁵ On this last detail, Lundin disagreed, believing Caroline to be residing elsewhere.⁷⁶ The people of Leineru were said to be furious at Lundin for having taken Caroline against her will, and the

⁷¹ This was a Captain Seyffert. Recruitment records reveal that in 1895-1897 Seyffert was recruiting laborers for Hernsheim & Co. in Buka and Neu Mecklenburg as captain of the *Else* and *Zoe*. See Districts-Stammrolle für angeworbene farbige Arbeiter, NAA: G255, 555.

⁷² Captain Axel Monrad’s statement, Herbertshöhe, 30 March 1897, NAA: G255, 259.

⁷³ Johann Hermann Lundin’s statement, Herbertshöhe, 28 May 1897, NAA: G255, 259. On *tapsoka* (in this file rendered “tapisurka”) see Richard Parkinson, *Dreissig Jahre in der Südsee: Land und Leute, Sitten und Gebräuche im Bismarckarchipel und auf den deutschen Salomoinseln* (Stuttgart: Strecker und Schröder, 1907), 302.

⁷⁴ Monrad’s statement, Herbertshöhe, 30 March 1897, NAA: G255, 259.

⁷⁵ This “colored trader” was likely the Chinese Ah Hing, who was working at the Bobsie trading station in June 1898. At this time, it was said that one of the women assaulted by Coenen had escaped to Bobsie and was living with Ah Hing. See B. Lanser, Nauan Station, to Albert Hahl, Herbertshöhe, 28 June 1898, NAA: G255, 261.

⁷⁶ Lundin’s statement, Herbertshöhe, 28 May 1897, NAA: G255, 259.

trader there declared that both he and Lundin lived in constant fear that the latter's actions would be met with violent reprisals. Stories circulated that the villagers had threatened to murder the white traders if Caroline was not returned to them. One trader appealed to another to go to Bobsie to "redeem" Caroline and return her to her village to prevent deadly retribution.⁷⁷ Under the full moon in early 1897, villagers attacked the Leineru station, propelling the station's traders into flight, and also dashing the Nusa trader Martin's plans to return to Leineru for more women.

Forty years later, the former imperial governor Hahl, who was in 1897 serving as imperial judge in Herbertshöhe, would attribute the destruction of HERNSEIM & Co.'s Leineru station to "natives from the village of Madine," who "avenged themselves on the natives of Leineru, their hereditary enemies."⁷⁸ The deed was, according to Hahl, an act of revenge against the Leineru people who had in September of the previous year demonstrated their loyalty to the young colonial lawyer by assisting his efforts to suppress the Madines' "extensive raids of pillage and vengeance" that were proving so disruptive to trade and labor recruitment in Neu Mecklenburg. At Leineru, Hahl had commandeered canoes and launched an attack on the village of Madine using an "auxiliary force" of Leineru men. The "bitter fighting" left an untold number of people dead. Survivors fled with firearms, but Hahl's troop captured two hundred cartridges—items apparently stolen by Madine men from the armory in Herbertshöhe. Hahl's narrative of events paints a picture of colonial violence as rooted in masculinist, bellicose New Guinean cultures, characterized by ancient blood feuds and cannibalistic feasts heralded by "a loud chorus of howls" and the beating of

⁷⁷ Monrad's statement, Herbertshöhe, 30 March 1897, *ibid.*

⁷⁸ Albert Hahl, *Gouverneursjahre in Neuguinea* (Berlin: Frundsberg Verlag Föllmer & Esser, 1937), 58. Translation from Hahl, *Governor in New Guinea*, 30.

drums into the night. It is also one of tentative optimism, of New Guinean warriors as loyal collaborators—Hahl’s “allies” in his projects of “pacification.”⁷⁹ Hahl’s account was silent on the question of white traders’ roles in the events, as well as on the fates of Neu Mecklenburg women like Caroline. This is noteworthy, since Hahl was presiding judge when the case against Lundin was heard in the colonial court in Herbertshöhe. It is to German colonial courts’ treatment of cases like this that this chapter now turns.

In the Colonial Courts

It was a New Guinean deckhand named Panke who first reported Lundin’s misdeeds to Hahl in February 1897. Panke did not report Lundin’s abduction of Caroline, rather his assault of a male laborer named Bäreng, who was employed at the Leineru station.⁸⁰ In April, a Kafkaf man, Maranon, who was working as a “police boy” in Herbertshöhe, corroborated key aspects of Panke’s evidence.⁸¹ Maranon had been on board a recruitment ship bound for Herbertshöhe that made its way along the Neu Mecklenburg coast, stopping along the way at villages, including Leineru. Here Maranon had witnessed Lundin beat Bäreng. Maranon said that Lundin had assaulted Bäreng because of an altercation over betel nut, which Lundin had stolen from his laborer. When Bäreng went to retrieve the betel nut, which he had placed on the veranda of Lundin’s house as he was loading copra, Lundin jumped from the veranda and attacked him. Bäreng managed to break away and flee, but the trader Leonard—who,

⁷⁹ Hahl, *Governor in New Guinea*, 18-19.

⁸⁰ Panke’s statement, Herbertshöhe, 9 February 1897, NAA: G255, 259.

⁸¹ Maranon’s statement, Herbertshöhe, 7 April 1897, *ibid.*

Maranon said, routinely sexually assaulted village women as they fished—overpowered him, shackled him, and brought him back to Lundin, who proceeded to kick the shackled Bäreng and punch him until his face was bloodied. According to one witness, the violence halted when the police officer George Schuberth arrived. He wanted to take Bäreng to Herbertshöhe, but Bäreng again managed to break away, and fled, still shackled, into the bush. Another witness stated it was Schuberth himself who placed Bäreng in handcuffs as he escorted him away from Lundin, apparently for his own protection. Lundin then came again for Bäreng, beating him again “with his fists, so that blood came from his nose and forehead.”⁸² Both witnesses agreed that Lundin was drunk when he assaulted Bäreng.

On 28 May 1897, Lundin appeared before Hahl in court to face charges of having “deliberately physically mistreated the laborer” and of having, in cooperation with the labor recruiter, “forcibly exported the native Caroline, for immoral purposes.”⁸³ The language used by the court in reference to this last offense pointed specifically to § 236 of the German criminal code, criminalizing the abduction of a female person without her consent for purposes of sex. Like most paragraphs dealing with crimes against personal freedom that fell under section eighteen of the code, § 236 carried a mandatory prison sentence. Although Lundin denied having taken Caroline by force, he acknowledged that it was possible that in removing Caroline from her home and transporting her across the sea he might have

⁸² Panke’s statement, 9 February 1897, Herbertshöhe, *ibid.*

⁸³ Minutes of the Imperial Court of the Protectorate of the New Guinea Company, Herbertshöhe, 28 May 1897, *ibid.* This imperfect translation of “*um sie zur Unzucht zu bringen*” comes from Geoffrey Drage, trans., *The Criminal Code of the German Empire* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1885), 254. An American translation from 1946 reads “for the purpose of lustful acts.” See *The Statutory Criminal Law of Germany: With Comments: A Translation of the German Criminal Code of 1871 with Amendments, Together with the Most Important Supplementary Penal Statutes and with the Laws Nos. 1 and 11 and Proclamation No. 3 of the Control Council for Germany* (Washington, D.C.: War Department, 1946), 136. While *Unzucht* might be better translated as “fornication,” both of these English translations nevertheless convey German law’s emphasis on concepts of sexual morality and sin, rather than a woman’s right to bodily integrity.

infringed upon the New Guinea Company's ordinance concerning "the transportation of laborers." In this, however, Lundin maintained that he was merely assisting the captain in his effort to take Caroline. He stated before the court that the escaped Caroline should be returned to the captain.⁸⁴

The court reconvened to try the case in February the following year. Now, the court directly cited not § 236 of the criminal code, but § 239, a paragraph that stripped the alleged crime of its gendered dimensions and sexual motivations, but still entailed a mandatory prison sentence if the defendant were to be found guilty. The court never got that far, however. Instead, Hahl ruled in February 1898, that the court would not pursue criminal proceedings against Lundin for allegedly abducting Caroline. Specifically, pursuing such proceedings was "impossible," because, as Hahl wrote, some fourteen years after Germany's annexation of the New Guinea islands, "there exists neither here [in the Bismarck Archipelago] nor in Kaiser Wilhelmsland a prison for Europeans."⁸⁵ The court made no mention of pursuing charges against Lundin or the recruiter for possible violation of the labor ordinance, revealing the limits of imperial commissioner Rose's claim that an extension of the ordinance to women like Caroline would ensure their "regular and voluntary recruitment."⁸⁶

However, the court did pursue charges against Lundin for his assault of the male laborer Bäreng, a man Lundin characterized as "not the best Kanaka [...] that I have experience of."⁸⁷ In his defense for having beaten and kicked Bäreng, bloodying his face,

⁸⁴ Lundin's statement, Herbertshöhe, 28 May 1897, NAA: G255, 259.

⁸⁵ Minutes of the Imperial Court of the Protectorate of the New Guinea Company, Herbertshöhe, 8 February 1898, *ibid.*

⁸⁶ Rose, Finschhafen, to Bismarck, Berlin, 13 February 1890, BArch: R 1001/2960, 66.

⁸⁷ Lundin's statement (original in English), Kableman, 11 March 1898, NAA: G255, 259.

Lundin wrote that two years earlier, on Christmas 1896, Bäreng and “a few more Boys from his Village” had plotted against some other white traders, intending to throw them overboard while at sea. Further, he wrote, a few days prior to the assault, Bäreng had been off trading copra for Lundin, only to return with half of it stolen and two snider cartridges unaccounted for. He admitted that he had punched Bäreng in the face and kicked his body. “Of course it was wrong of me to do so and I must admit that I was more or less under influence of Drinks,” he explained.⁸⁸ Hahl accepted Lundin’s statements of events and, considering his “agitated” and drunken state to constitute extenuating circumstances, Hahl sentenced Lundin to a thirty-mark fine for physically assaulting Bäreng.⁸⁹

Another case from 1903 similarly involved the alleged abduction of a New Guinean woman, whom a trader and New Guinea Company employee, Arthur Sacchi, claimed to have recruited with her consent. Sacchi was working for the New Guinea Company at its station on Tarawai, a small island off the coast of Kaiser Wilhelmsland to the northwest of Dallmannhafen (Wewak), when he took a woman named Mainum from the neighboring village to reside at his house with him. Mainum, told of how on one occasion, as she had been working on the road, Sacchi had tried to take her back to his house with him. “I didn’t want to, and I told him I was not from his place,” she told the court. She said that Sacchi then grabbed her by the hand and dragged her toward his house, despite her cries and resistance. On this occasion, it appears, she returned to her village. But Sacchi came for her a second time, and, under much the same circumstances, took Mainum back to his house. This time, she said, she remained in the house for approximately ten days, until the day that a ship

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Hahl’s ruling, Herbertshöhe, 30 April 1898, *ibid.*

arrived at Tarawai.⁹⁰ Mainum reported that during that time, “Sacchi often used me sexually.” “It’s possible I could have run away,” she said, “but I didn’t want to.”⁹¹

Witnesses corroborated Mainum’s story. A male villager named Mandulla, who had seen Sacchi take Mainum away, agreed that she had screamed and struggled as Sacchi had “dragged” her back to his house.⁹² “Mainum stayed there for a long time (a few days),” he said. “I heard that she didn’t run away, because she feared Sacchi.”⁹³ Another witness, Gumai, who was working for Sacchi as a hunter, said he had seen Sacchi speaking insistently with Mainum before taking her by the hand and “hauling” her back to his house. “Mainum struggled against it, but she went with him,” Gumai told the court. She remained some days in Sacchi’s house: “as she told me, she only stayed because he had told her that he would shoot her if she ran away.”⁹⁴

Sacchi’s own account of events was different. The twenty-four-year-old native of Vilnius, a son of German citizens, said in May 1903 that one Sunday he had seen Mainum sitting on the beach.⁹⁵ He approached her and asked her “whether she’d like to cook rice” for him.⁹⁶ Mainum apparently accepted his offer, so Sacchi asked a male Tarawai elder “whether

⁹⁰ Mainum’s mention of the ship functions as a temporal and spatial marker in her narrative, in much the same way that Richard Scaglion has shown how, in Abelam narrations of past events, “objects and places are most often the touchstones of history.” Richard Scaglion, “Multiple Voices, Multiple Truths: Labour Recruitment in the Sepik Foothills of German New Guinea,” *The Journal of Pacific History* 42, no. 3 (2007): 357.

⁹¹ Mainum’s statement, New Guinea Company Station, Tarawai, 29 October 1903, NAA: G255, 1070: Kaiserliches Bezirksgericht zu Friedrich-Wilhelmshafen. Akten in der Strafsache gegen den Assistenten Arthur Sacchi wegen Menschenraubes (1903-1904).

⁹² For the Melanesian (Sepik) expressions that differentiate between knowledge obtained through seeing and hearing, see Scaglion, “Multiple Voices,” 357.

⁹³ Mandulla’s statement, New Guinea Company Station, Tarawai, 29 October 1903, NAA: G255, 1070.

⁹⁴ Gumai’s statement, New Guinea Company Station, Tarawai, 29 October 1903, *ibid.*

⁹⁵ Sacchi’s parents both possessed German *Reichsangehörigkeit*. In 1901, his mother lived in Königsberg (Kaliningrad), East Prussia. His father had worked in Hamburg prior to his death. Arthur Sacchi had been resident in Hamburg prior to his arrival in German New Guinea. See Sacchi’s statement, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, 18 January 1901, NAA: G255, 963: Kaiserliches Gericht Friedrich Wilhelmshafen. Strafsache gegen den Matrosen Arthur Sacchi wegen Hausfriedensbruch und Misshandlung (1901).

⁹⁶ Sacchi’s statement, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, 2 May 1903, NAA: G255, 1070.

he would mind if Mainum came with me and cooked rice at my house.”⁹⁷ Sacchi told the court that the elder had agreed to his request, so long as Mainum had consented—a statement the elder refuted when questioned by the court.⁹⁸ In Sacchi’s account, after he had obtained Mainum’s consent and the elder’s permission, he went back to his house. Mainum had followed some two hundred paces behind him, joined by a male field hand from her village. “She stayed in my house and I also had sex with her,” he said.⁹⁹ Some three days later, according to Sacchi’s reckoning, the New Guinea Company steamer *Herzog Johann Albrecht* arrived at the Tarawai station. On board was the Seleo station chief, Johann Steffens, who conversed in Malay with Mandulla in the ship’s cabin. Steffens then turned to Sacchi, saying “Well there! There you have it! You can’t stay here, you’ll be beaten to death; you’ve raped a woman.”¹⁰⁰ Steffens again asked Mandulla, this time in Tok Pisin, whether Sacchi had raped a woman. Mandulla then conversed with another man in their vernacular, before replying: “yes.” Sacchi identified Mandulla as “the same native”—the field hand—who had accompanied Mainum to Sacchi’s house. Sacchi explained that the multilingual Mandulla was charged as acting as interpreter, explaining to Mainum “what work she had to do.” Sacchi told the court that Mainum “had not resisted when I used her.” On the contrary, he said, she had on a previous occasion, when she had had a fight in the village, told him that she wanted to go to him. Sacchi maintained that he “notified the station chief of Mainum’s recruitment

⁹⁷ Ibid. In a related civil case, Massui is named as a village elder rather (*Dorfältester*) than the more typical, if erroneous nomenclature: “chief” (*Häuptling*). See NAA: Imperial District Court and Office; G254, Administrative records of German New Guinea; 2: Kaiserliches Bezirksgericht zu Friedrich-Wilhelmshafen. Civilprozessakten in Sachen des Assistenten Arthur Sacchi früher hier jetzt in Herbertshöhe gegen den Ingenieur Johannes Schlenzig in Stephansort, als Bevollmächtigten des Huongolf-Syndikates wegen Forderung (1903).

⁹⁸ Massui’s statement, Tarawai village, 29 October 1903, NAA: G255, 1070.

⁹⁹ Sacchi’s statement, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, 2 May 1903, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

immediately on board the *Herzog Johann Albrecht*,” indicating that Mainum would have, or should have, been registered as an indentured laborer.¹⁰¹

The imperial district court waited a year before deciding not to pursue the case. Although by 1904 a prison for Europeans existed in the colony, meaning a conviction carrying a mandatory prison sentence was now possible to pursue, the court ignored the charge of abduction, and dismissed the accusations of rape.¹⁰² The presiding judge cited Mainum’s apparent failure to flee Sacchi’s house as evidence that “Her resistance can accordingly not have been seriously meant.”¹⁰³ We will encounter these kinds of legal logics again in Chapter 4, but here the court’s decision to pursue neither charges of abduction nor to investigate Sacchi for infringements against the labor ordinance is noteworthy. Yet in spite of the court’s decision against prosecuting Sacchi, his employer, the New Guinea Company, dismissed him for “disciplinary” reasons because he was said to have “abducted a native woman in Tarawai against her relatives’ will.”¹⁰⁴ According to the company, Mainum was now unable to return to her village for fear of being killed, suggesting violation and rupture. Her presence at the company’s station may have threatened operations there. It is also possible that the company simply seized upon this incident as a pretense to be rid of Sacchi, as he himself suspected.¹⁰⁵ When Sacchi’s filed a civil case against the company for loss of income, the same colonial judge in Friedrich Wilhelmshafen who discontinued criminal proceedings against him now ruled in his favor.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² On the existence of a prison for Europeans, see the ruling of the imperial court in Herbertshöhe against Casimir Gangloff, 7 June 1899, NAA: G255, 272: Kaiserliches Gericht Herbertshöhe. Strafsache gegen den Händler Kasimir [sic] Gangloff in Kuna wegen fahrlässige Tödtung (1899-1902).

¹⁰³ Wilhelm Stuckhardt’s ruling, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, 8 April 1904, NAA: G255, 1070.

¹⁰⁴ Johannes Schlenzig, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, to Sacchi, 21 April 1903, NAA: G254, 2.

¹⁰⁵ Sacchi’s statement, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, 2 May 1903, NAA: G255, 1070.

¹⁰⁶ Stuckhardt’s ruling, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, 21 April 1903, NAA: G254, 2.

Several important points emerge from these cases. They point to the ineffectiveness of both the New Guinea Company's labor ordinance and the German Criminal Code to protect New Guinean women whom white, European recruited to perform domestic and sexual labors. These were women whom, according to imperial commissioner Rose, should have been registered as indentured laborers, but in practice this was not always the case. This suggests the presence of a larger, informal colonial labor force in which New Guinean women were participants—whether or not willingly. Finally, even when the means were available to colonial judges to try cases that violated either or both the labor ordinance or the German Criminal Code, it was up to German colonial administrators to enforce these laws. In their hands, however, these laws were often used to protect white, male colonists rather than colonial subjects, particularly subaltern women. As the next section will show, these administrators were sometimes also entangled in colonial economies of sex and labor, and here too, these entanglements could be marked by violence.

A "Papuan Girl"

The New Guinea Company established its third main administrative center in Kaiser Wilhelmsland at the place they named Friedrich Wilhelmshafen in 1892. The place soon became known to the local people as Madang, the name of a small island some 170 miles away in Finschhafen, which, as the company's original main station in New Guinea, had by then become synonymous with the German colonial administration. The New Guinea Company selected the new location for its ease of access to "excellent plantation country,"

and for its protected harbor.¹⁰⁷ The harbor connected the mainland to the nearby islands of Ragetta, Beliao, Panutibun, and Siar. Close ties existed between the patrilineal societies of these islands and those of the mainland, as the Rhenish missionary Gustav Bergmann observed when he founded a mission station on Siar in 1889.¹⁰⁸ Like other coastal peoples, they subsisted on horticulture, fishing, hunting, and trade.¹⁰⁹ With Islanders maintaining gardens on the mainland, villagers constantly traversed this harbor in their canoes, passing close by to the larger vessels that the New Guinea Company, and after 1899, the imperial administration based in Herbertshöhe, used to transport indentured laborers to and from this place.¹¹⁰

In October 1902, a recruitment boat moored in this harbor was the scene of a violent spectacle involving the forceful recruitment of a woman named Geldu from Beliao.¹¹¹ Having received news from a Siar man that Geldu had been “dragged” to the boat, the Rhenish missionary on Siar, Bergmann, hastily sailed into the harbor to investigate. “At the same moment,” he wrote, “the girl came crying and in a state of despair out of the ship’s hold and sprang immediately into my boat.” She was promptly followed, however, by the boat’s captain, Isokichi Komine, who “forcibly dragged the girl back on board, abusive that [Bergmann] had dared to take someone from his ship, where he was supposedly master.”¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Sack and Clark, eds. and trans., *German New Guinea*, 59.

¹⁰⁸ John Garrett, *Footsteps in the Sea: Christianity in Oceania to World War II* (Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific in association with World Council of Churches, 1992), 21.

¹⁰⁹ Hemenstall, *Pacific Islanders under German Rule*, 169.

¹¹⁰ See appeal of the public prosecutor, Hoffmann, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, 27 March 1903, NAA: G255, 16: Kaiserliches Bezirksgericht Friedrich-Wilhelmshafen. Akten betr. die Strafsache gegen den Bootsmann der Ketch “Zabra” Mantoku Komine (1902-1903).

¹¹¹ See NAA: G255, 16.

¹¹² Isokichi Komine, Mantoku’s uncle, is spelled “Isokiche” in this file. For more on Isokichi Komine, as well as other Japanese settlers in German New Guinea, see Hiromitsu Iwamoto, *Nanshin: Japanese Settlers in Papua and New Guinea 1890-1949* (Canberra: Journal of Pacific History, Division of Pacific and Asian History, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, 1999), 1-59.

Bergmann reported that he had asked Geldu whether she wanted to return to Beliao or go to Herbertshöhe, to which “she screamed and cried, ‘I want to go home, I want to go home!’” He proceeded into town and reported the matter to the district judge, whose secretary returned with the missionary to the ship. Despite the boatswain’s repeated efforts to impede them, the two retrieved the now “exuberant” Geldu and returned her to Beliao.¹¹³ As the boat had been dispatched on behalf of the government in Herbertshöhe, and stood in the middle of the busy harbor in full view of New Guineans in their canoes, news of the incident spread quickly across the station of Friedrich Wilhelmshafen and caused a “justifiable sensation,” as one administrator later commented.¹¹⁴

Geldu was on Beliao when this recruitment boat arrived in Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, sent by the imperial judge in Herbertshöhe, Emil Wolff, “to recruit boys from the New Guinea coast for the government.”¹¹⁵ She told of how the captain and his crew had come to Beliao and tried in vain to recruit men for Herbertshöhe. The village men had fled when the captain began ranting and threatening them. Only one stayed behind with Geldu and persuaded her to board the ship out of fear, she said, that the captain or his crew would otherwise set fire to the village. She and her people cried as she left. Those who remained spurned the trade goods offered to them in exchange for her. They refused to smoke the few sticks of tobacco that the recruiter had left behind on Beliao.¹¹⁶ Reporting to the colonial governor, the district judge in Friedrich Wilhelmshafen expressed his certainty that the Beliao people had brought

¹¹³ Gustav Bergmann, Siar, to the mission house, Barmen, 28 October 1902, RMG: 2.140; Gustav Bergmann papers, vol. 1; NAA: G255, 16.

¹¹⁴ Hoffmann, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, 27 March 1903, NAA: G255, 16.

¹¹⁵ Bergmann, Siar, to the mission house, Barmen, 28 October 1902, RMG: 2.140, vol. 1.

¹¹⁶ Geldu’s statement, Imperial District Court, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, 27 October 1902, NAA: G255, 16.

Geldu on board the recruitment boat against her will because of the “extraordinarily high price of two pairs of pigs’ tusks” offered to them by the boat’s captain.¹¹⁷

Adding to the sensational nature of this incident was the involvement of high-ranking German colonial administrators in it. Writing to the Rhenish Mission headquarters in Barmen, Germany, Bergmann reported that Paul Boether, a former employee of New Guinea Company turned imperial judge with the imperial administration, had “bought” the “Papuan girl,” Geldu, using “deceit and threat.”¹¹⁸ Although Boether had “dismissed” Geldu shortly thereafter, prior to returning to Germany on leave, he had “sold” her to his colleague in the Bismarck Archipelago.¹¹⁹ This colleague, the imperial judge Wolff, had now dispatched the recruitment boat to “claim” her. Bergmann was furthermore skeptical that the district judge in Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, who had assured him that forceful recruitment was not permitted in German New Guinea, was ignorant of the situation. He reported to his superiors that he had “absolutely no doubt” that the judge had known “that his colleague in the Archipelago had intentions for this girl, and that during his time here, Boether had sold this girl to Wolff.” Pleased that he had been able to intervene in this situation—a situation he knew was far from unique in the colony—Bergmann rhetorically asked: “But how many tears may be wept when the ships come recruiting and recruit girls for ‘work!’”¹²⁰

Tensions already existed between the administrator Boether and members of the Rhenish Mission Society stationed in the vicinity of Friedrich Wilhelmshafen. In the early weeks of October 1902, Boether had raised the ire of several missionary men when he had

¹¹⁷ Stuckhardt, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, to Hahl, 28 October 1902, *ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Bergmann, Siar, to the mission house, Barmen, 28 October 1902, RMG: 2.140, vol. 1.

¹¹⁹ Stuckhardt, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, to Hahl, 28 October 1902, NAA: G255, 16; Bergmann, Siar, to the mission house, Barmen, 28 October 1902, RMG: 2.140, vol. 1.

¹²⁰ Bergmann, Siar, to the mission house, Barmen, 28 October 1902, RMG: 2.140, vol. 1.

intervened in local marriage affairs on the islands of Rargetta and Ruo (Riwo) in order to marry women to men loyal to him. Islanders' took action to prevent both marriages, which Boether responded to by seizing a canoe and imprisoning its crew of three women, a man, and a child. He was said to have kept one woman captive for several days, "even though she is a mother and pined for her little baby." He also launched a punitive action against the villagers of Ruo, sending in three large boats with police soldiers, placing one man in irons, and abducting the women he wished to marry off. The missionaries also clashed with the administrator when one of them advised his congregation against attending a *sing sing* that Boether had planned as a special performance for his fellow administrators and police soldiers. The *sing sing* took place on a Sunday, a day the missionaries held was not to be desecrated "through heathen dances and nocturnal feasts," creating an "uproar" throughout the night and into the morning. "Several Europeans" had been "totally inebriated," such that the post was not ready for collection when a ship bound for Europe arrived later that day. While Boether accused the missionaries of "direct interference in the interests of the administration" in the *sing sing* matter, the missionaries charged that Boether had "threatened to send police soldiers to drag" Islanders to the event.¹²¹

However, Bergmann's regard for the lawyer had already deteriorated over the course of 1901, when Boether had begun sharing his quarters with "a professor of botany etc." from the Hungarian National Museum. The Hungarian naturalist with whom Boether had shared his house was Lajos Biró—"the filthiest and most indolent inhabitant of the Protectorate," according to Bergmann. Originally the missionaries had wondered why such a seemingly upstanding colonial administrator as Boether, whom Bergmann previously held in high

¹²¹ Bergmann, Siar, to the mission inspector, Barmen, 14 October 1901, *ibid.*

esteem, “particularly so, as he kept no black female in his house,” would have agreed to house “such a man and his black wife besides.” Later, they heard that Boether himself stood “accused of unnatural fornication by the Foreign Office,” and they wondered no longer.¹²² The missionaries were likely referring to allegations that Boether had been seen performing oral sex on a Malay woman. According to a company employee who was serving as public prosecutor, by May 1901, talk of Boether’s “sexual perversions” in relation to this allegation had spread throughout Friedrich Wilhelmshafen. They later became the subject of defamation charges brought by Boether, who had returned to Germany on leave by the beginning of 1902.¹²³ This “delicate matter” seems to have prompted governor Hahl to advise Berlin against allowing Boether to return to the colony, suggesting, as Heike Schmidt has argued for German East Africa, that colonists frequently perceived rumors that worked to undermine the propriety and honor of German masculinity as direct threats to the colonial project.¹²⁴

The missionaries also had reasons to lobby against Boether’s return to the colony. Only after Boether’s departure did local people start “speaking up” about Boether’s activities in the colony, Bergmann reported to his superiors in Barmen. “It now transpires,” Bergmann wrote, “that Boether procured for himself a woman through deceit and threat of imprisonment.” This woman was Geldu, who was apparently “kept” by Boether in his house, after he had threatened her fellow villagers on Beliao with police soldiers, imprisonment,

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ See Peter Sack, *Phantom History, The Rule of Law and the Colonial State: The Case of German New Guinea* (Canberra: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, ANU, 2001), 185-86.

¹²⁴ Ibid.; Heike Schmidt, “Colonial Intimacy: The Rechenberg Scandal and Homosexuality in German East Africa,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 17, no. 2 (2008): 25-59; Heike Schmidt, “Who Is Master in the Colony? Propriety, Honor, and Manliness in German East Africa,” in *German Colonialism in a Global Age*, eds. Bradley Naranch and Geoff Eley (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 109-128.

and arson. It was now abundantly clear to the missionary that Boether was a “filthy man,” even if it were also true that he acted on the initiative of the “completely indolent [*argversumpft*]” Hungarian naturalist, a man who, according to Bergmann, “notoriously suffered from chronic venereal disease.”¹²⁵ On the island of Bilibili, however, where Biró met his “third wife,” Masis, it was Boether who had assisted Biró in his efforts to acquire a woman. This “marriage” that Biró later characterized as “the crown of a diplomatic success,” was, according to Bergmann, described by local peoples as grounded in coercion and deceit.¹²⁶ Boether reportedly threatened to send police soldiers, to imprison Islanders, and to burn down the village if the Bilibili failed to provide Biró with a woman. The “particular woman” that Biró wanted—possibly Masis— was said to have hidden herself in a cave on the beach, plugging the entrance with stones. In response to the colonial administrator’s threats of violence, other Islanders retrieved her and brought her to Boether, who warned her not to say a word to the missionaries, because he also had the power to put them in prison and to summon war ships.¹²⁷

Both the German colonial administrator, Boether, and the Hungarian naturalist, Biró, left the colony with the promise that they would return. Bergmann believed Geldu and the Bilibili woman would not risk getting married to local men for fear of the Europeans’ return. There was also the matter of the pieces of paper that were said to remain on Bilibili and in the house where Boether had lived. On Bilibili, Bergmann suspected that “the woman was made to make her mark through deceit and with a guiding hand” upon this marriage contract.

¹²⁵ Bergman, Siar, to the mission inspector, Barmen, 6 January 1902, and 22 February 1902, RMG: 2.140, vol. 1.

¹²⁶ Vargyas, *Data on the Pictorial History*, 50; Bergman, Siar, to the mission inspector, Barmen, 22 February 1902, RMG: 2.140, vol. 1.

¹²⁷ Bergman, Siar, to the mission inspector, Barmen, 6 January 1902, and 22 February 1902, RMG: 2.140, vol. 1.

Although “just a piece of paper” as far as the missionary was concerned, the Islanders considered this object to possess “great magic,” containing the potential for violent revenge should Boether return.¹²⁸ New Guineans knew the power of paper as an object of colonial rule. In the 1880s, a piece of paper nailed to a coconut tree signaled the expropriation of New Guineans’ lands by the ruling German company.¹²⁹ “*Mekim pepa*” (to make paper) meant signing over one’s labors, and sometimes life, to the indenture—the reason one man refused to make his mark on a court document.¹³⁰ The *Papierhaus* or *haus pepa* was the name for the government building on Kaiser Wilhelmsland, which produced “paper and more paper.”¹³¹ New Guineans knew that paper—a “signature of the state” that, as Veena Das has shown, exemplifies the state’s oscillations between rational and magical modes of being—could be dangerous.¹³² The missionary’s “cajoling and persuasion” would not change the women’s minds.¹³³

The colonial court in Friedrich Wilhelmshafen did not locate these papers: it had evidence of neither marriage nor labor contracts when investigating Geldu’s case, of her being “purchased” by Boether and “ceded” to Wolff.¹³⁴ Yet papers concerning the case of the “Papuan girl” circulated within the colony—between Friedrich Wilhelmshafen and the current capital Herbertshöhe—between the colony and the Rhenish Mission’s headquarters

¹²⁸ Bergman, Siar, to the mission inspector, Barmen, 22 February 1902, *ibid.*

¹²⁹ Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders under German Rule*, 167.

¹³⁰ This man explained that he had already served his indenture and did not want to make a new contract. See police officer and court scribe Fitsch’s note for Matani’s statement, Konstantin-Hafen, 20 May 1903, NAA: G255, 1070.

¹³¹ Richard Neuhauss, *Deutsch Neu-Guinea*, vol. 1 (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1911), 450. Also see Peter Biskup, “Dr Albert Hahl—Sketch of a German Colonial Official,” *The Australian Journal of Politics and History* 14, no. 3 (1968): 344.

¹³² Veena Das, *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*, forward by Stanley Cavell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 162-163.

¹³³ Bergman, Siar, to the mission inspector, Barmen, 22 February 1902, RMG: 2.140, vol. 1.

¹³⁴ Stuckhardt, Friedrich-Wilhelmshafen, 21 March 1903, NAA: G255, 16.

in Barmen, and between Barmen and Berlin, where German New Guinea's former imperial commissioner, Rose, was now employed at the Foreign Office's Colonial Department. Some eight months before Geldu had found herself captive on the recruitment ship bound for Herbertshöhe, Bergmann felt himself compelled to notify Rose of Boether's misdeeds, believing this veteran of the Pacific would prove a sympathetic ally.¹³⁵ Following the recruitment debacle in October 1902, the inspector of the mission house in Barmen wrote privately to Rose. He expressed his grave concerns about Boether's "unsavory" actions on Kaiser Wilhelmsland and reminded Rose of the dangers of spreading "immorality," and with it, "of course inevitably syphilis," among the "natural people" [*Naturvolk*] of New Guinea. The matter was particularly serious, so the mission inspector charged, since it involved "a high-ranking administrator of the German Reich, and a judge no less." The mission inspector presented Rose with an ultimatum: either Rose would "see to it that Herr Boether does not ever return" to German New Guinea, or the Mission Society would make it its "duty either to make this matter public, or to make it known to his majesty the Kaiser."¹³⁶

In German New Guinea, Bergmann, took comfort in the fact that higher-ups would pursue the matter of Boether and his colleague, Wolff. But troublingly, one Sunday in early 1903, memories of Boether surfaced on Siar, when an Islander told Bergmann outright that he would not be attending service at the mission station. Boether had told the Islanders not to listen to the missionaries. The people on the neighboring island of Ragetta didn't listen to the missionaries either, he said. By this time, the colonial mission field was taking its toll on Bergmann. Shortly after arriving in German New Guinea in 1887 he had suffered from

¹³⁵ Bergman, Siar, to the mission inspector, Barmen, 22 February 1902, RMG: 2.140, vol. 1. Also see Bergmann, Siar, to the mission inspector, Barmen, 3 March 1903, *ibid*.

¹³⁶ Dr. A Schreiber, Barmen, to Fritz Rose, Berlin, 16 December 1902, vol.

malaria, and was hoping to be relieved of his station by late 1901 due to his “increasing weakness.”¹³⁷ In early 1903 he found himself unable to travel the short distance from Siar to Friedrich Wilhelmshafen due to illness.¹³⁸ The Islanders’ defiance likely added insult to injury, prompting Bergmann to abandon his planned sermon that Sunday. Instead, he used the service to “speak rigorously” about the departed administrator, Boether, and his colleague, Wolff. Bergmann’s declaration that this was something he “had hitherto not done in the presence of women” suggests a tirade unequivocally focused on sexual morality and the white, European men’s transgressions against it. He believed his preaching had “made a visible impression” among his flock on Siar.¹³⁹

The Colonial Department focused on the sexual too. Replying to the Rhenish Mission in early 1903, Rose stated that the Colonial Department had questioned Boether about his alleged “seduction of a Papuan girl.” Boether had denied that he used any deceit or intimidation, claiming that Geldu had come to him of her own initiative, and with the agreement of her relatives.¹⁴⁰ A year later, the Colonial Department sent another report on the matter to the Rhenish Mission headquarters, throwing its full support behind the colonial officials implicated in the forced recruitment of Geldu. In early 1904 the director of the Colonial Department, Oskar Stuebel, elaborated upon Boether’s claims. He reported that not only had Geldu “offered herself” to Boether, but that she had done so because she had gained a reputation as a sorceress among the Beliao people following the deaths of “several spouses.”¹⁴¹ Neither the missionary sources nor those of the colonial administration in New

¹³⁷ Garrett, *Footsteps in the Sea*, 21; Bergmann, Siar, to the mission inspector, Barmen, 14 October 1901, RMG: 2.140, vol. 1.

¹³⁸ Dr. Hoffmann’s medical report, Friedrich-Wilhelmshafen, 19 March 1903, NAA: G255, 16.

¹³⁹ Bergmann, Siar, to the mission inspector, Barmen, 3 March 1903, RMG: 2.140, vol. 1.

¹⁴⁰ Rose, Berlin, to the mission inspector Schrieber, Barmen, 20 February 1903, *ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Oskar Stuebel, Berlin, Spiecker, Barmen, 2 February 1904, *ibid.*

Guinea mention sorcery, making this claim from Berlin noteworthy for the way in which it redeems its colonial administrator by gesturing to New Guinea irrationality. While Boether's behavior should be neither excused nor condoned, Stuebel asserted, neither did Bergmann have license to make accusations "based in part upon unfounded, arbitrary presumptions." Stuebel was particularly careful to defend the imperial judge in Herbertshöhe, Wolff, who denied that he had made any agreement with Boether concerning Geldu, and furthermore denied that he had "attempted to enter into a sexual relationship" with her. The Colonial Department maintained that Wolff had simply authorized the boat's captain to recruit in his name, believing himself to be "known and liked by the natives of his former district." He had provided the captain with the names of several individuals he believed would be prepared to serve as indentured laborers in Herbertshöhe, Geldu among them. It was clear that the Japanese boatswain had exceeded his "legal authority" in forcefully detaining Geldu on the boat, but Wolff and the district judge in Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, even Boether, were innocent of any wrongdoing, according to Stuebel.¹⁴² While the Colonial Department may have defended the reputations of its colonial administrators, this was not the only instance in which imperial judge Wolff was personally implicated in allegations involving the coercive recruitment of New Guinean women.¹⁴³

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Johann Eberlein, Takabur, to the Imperial District Court, Herbertshöhe, 20 June 1903, NAA: G255, 18.

Conclusion

When Nati Wahlen recalled the behavior of those “bloody Germans” in New Guinea, she highlighted the ways in which New Guinean women’s sexuality and capacities for labor were inseparably intertwined in the thinking and everyday practices of male, European colonists. These men claimed to “buy” women from village big men or *luluais*, often with trade goods. The women “had to be beautiful as well as virgins.” They would be charged with preparing food and performing other domestic duties for their white “Master.” In return, some of these women would enjoy a novel social status and the pleasure of receiving “new things.”¹⁴⁴

This chapter has explored the entanglements of sexual, productive, and domestic labors in a range of colonial contact zones, from remote trading stations to administrative centers. Attentive to the words and experiences of New Guinean women, who, like Nati’s mother, were embroiled in these entangled colonial economies of sex and labor, this chapter scrutinizes the claims produced by white, male colonists and demands a nuanced reading of categories like “cohabitation” and “marriage.” As this chapter has demonstrated, terms like “marriage” often denoted transitory—and sometimes violent—encounters between male colonists and New Guinean women in this colonial situation, and women’s labors always figured centrally in them. Questions of marriage and labor also gripped missionaries in German New Guinea, although their configurations were differently inflected by Christian ideals as well as European gender and familial norms. These missionary configurations and the practices they engendered are the subject of the following chapter.

¹⁴⁴ Wahlen, quoted in Roberts, *Voices from a Lost World*, 109.

CHAPTER 4

Missionary Colonialisms: Marriage, Laboring Families, and Colonial Crises

It was a Tolai big man from Massikonapuka (Masikanapuka) Island named Tilang who, in early 1905, demanded: “The missionaries always preach to us that it is wrong to steal women and children, and now they do it themselves. What should I make of that?”¹ In considering Tilang’s question, this chapter takes us from the Neu Lauenburg Islands and Gazelle Peninsula, with its mountainous hinterlands and outlying islands like Massikonapuka, to the colonial center of Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, and further west along the coast of Kaiser Wilhelmsland to Eitapé, a place the Germans had earlier called Berlinhafen. Along the way, it traces the agendas and activities of missionaries in these sites of colonial encounter, as well as those of the New Guineans with whom they interacted. This chapter is centrally concerned with missionary efforts to intervene in intimate and familial spheres of vernacular life through attempts to reconfigure relations of marriage and labor. It draws attention to the systematic removal of New Guinean children to mission stations on the Gazelle Peninsula

¹ Tilang’s statement, as reported by Georg Heine, Herbertshöhe, 18 March 1905, National Archives of Australia, Canberra (hereafter: NAA): Imperial Government of German New Guinea; G255, Correspondence files; 500 [file labeled “Tongotiol”] (1905).

carried out by the missionaries of the Sacred Heart, who were intent on establishing laboring, Christian, New Guinean families in accordance with European ideals of gender and the family. It also reveals other, less systematic, but perhaps no less violent, attempts of missionaries of the Rhenish and Divine Word missions to interfere in marriages as a way of laying claim to New Guinean women's labors.

Among agents of colonialism, missionaries were particularly invested in, and uniquely positioned to intervene in these more intimate spheres, as many scholars shown.² More sedentary than many colonists, they were better able acquire ethnographic knowledge and learn vernacular languages than those colonists whose pursuits promoted mobility and necessitated only a knowledge of Tok Pisin. Missionaries recognized that with these skills they were able to contribute in particular ways to larger colonial enterprises, and they advocated for themselves on precisely these terms.³ Sometimes, their agendas complemented those of the colonial administration, producing temporary but sometimes tenuous alliances. At other times, however, missionary and administrative agendas fiercely collided, revealing the fraught and fragmented nature of colonial society.⁴ Moreover, as this chapter demonstrates, missionaries' efforts to alter vernacular family relations, whether with or without administrative approval, were liable to produce profound resentments among the people whose lives and labors they targeted for reform. These resentments at

² Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre, "Introduction," in *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact*, eds. Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 6; Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus. "Introduction: Gendered Missions at Home and Abroad," in *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice*, eds. Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999), 11.

³ See, for example, Eberhard Limbrock, Sydney, to Franz von Arenberg, Berlin, 5 February 1900, Bundesarchiv Berlin (hereafter BArch): Reichskolonialamt; R 1001/2575, 91.

⁴ Balandier, "The Colonial Situation: A Theoretical Approach," in *Social Change: The Colonial Situation*, ed. Immanuel Wallerstein (New York: Wiley, 1966), 48.

times produced crises of colonial rule, as New Guineans asserted themselves, sometimes violently, against foreign intrusions and interventions of more intimate kinds.

Missionary, commercial, and administrative interests converged around an investment in “educating” New Guineans to labor, though their various agendas also produced conflict, as well as competition for New Guineans’ labors and loyalties. Stewart Firth noted some time ago that missionary activities in German New Guinea were “an extension of the trading relationship” in which dynamics of recruitment, wealth, and colonial labor regimes shaped missionary and administrative practices.⁵ On a practical level, the mission societies were participants in the larger colonial plantation economy. The Catholic Sacred Heart Mission claimed five plantations spanning 2,889 acres on the Gazelle Peninsula by 1908. The Catholic Divine Word Mission had commercial interests almost as expansive on Kaiser Wilhelmsland, with plantations at Potsdamhafen, Bogia, and Alexishafen requiring the labors of some 500 New Guineans in 1908.⁶ By the same year, the Rhenish Mission had 6,600 coconut palms under cultivation in the Friedrich Wilhelmshafen area.⁷ Further down the Rai Coast, the Lutheran Neuendettelsau Mission expanded its holdings through the purchase of the former New Guinea Company plantation at Finschhafen.⁸ By 1914, the Wesleyans boasted 25,000 coconut palms on their plantation on Ulu in Neu Lauenburg.⁹ While commercial enterprises were intended to raise profits to increase the financial

⁵ Stewart Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1983), 156.

⁶ Peter Hempenstall, “The Reception of European Missions in the German Pacific Empire: The New Guinea Experience,” *The Journal of Pacific History* 10, no. 1 (1975): 56.

⁷ Peter Sack and Dymphna Clark, eds. and trans., *German New Guinea: The Annual Reports* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1979), 298.

⁸ Hempenstall, “The Reception of European Missions,” 56.

⁹ Neville Threlfall, *One Hundred Years in the Islands: The Methodist/Uniting Church in the New Guinea Islands Region, 1875-1975* (Rabaul: Toksave na Buk Dipatmen, The Uniting Church, New Guinea Islands Region, 1975), 83;

independence of the New Guinea missions, missionaries, both Protestant and Catholic, also understood them as a means of producing industrious New Guineans whose heteronormative, Christian families would form the basis of a new colonial society.¹⁰ The ways in which missionaries mobilized broadly shared understandings of vernacular marriage practices and gendered divisions of labor are considered here, as are the ways in which missionaries both utilized and evaded colonial labor laws in their efforts to establish laboring, New Guinean families that conformed to their ideals.

Missionaries and the Bridewealth Question

As previous chapters have shown, New Guinean practices of bridewealth exchange featured prominently in European imaginaries and conditioned the logics and behaviors of many colonists. European missionaries were no exception. Both Protestant and Catholic missionaries, like many European observers, denounced bridewealth as an abhorrent custom in which New Guinean women were sold and bartered as objects or livestock, reduced to “beasts of burden” and sometimes “slaves.”¹¹ Like other colonists, missionaries used what they regarded as abysmal gender relations to deride local cultures and justify

¹⁰ Mary Taylor Huber, *The Bishops' Progress: A Historical Ethnography of Catholic Missionary Experience on the Sepik Frontier* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988), 65; Threlfall, *One Hundred Years in the Islands*, 83; Hempenstall, “The Reception of European Missions,” 55.

¹¹ See, for example, Louis Couppé, “Aus der Herz-Jesu Mission. (Apost. Vikariat Neupommern.—Deutsche Südsee.)” *Hiltruper Monatshefte zu Ehren unserer lieben Frau vom hh. Herzen Jesu* 10, (1893): 51; P. A. Kleintitschen, *Die Küstenbewohner der Gazellehalbinsel (Neupommern—deutsche Südsee): ihre Sitten und Gebräuche* (Hiltrup: Herz-Jesu-Missionshaus, 1906), 202; Benjamin Danks, “Women and Marriage Customs in New Britain,” ed. Wallace Deane, [manuscript, 1886,] Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales (hereafter: ML); Methodist Overseas Mission Archive (hereafter: MOM); Benjamin Danks papers; 238, folder 3, 1.

colonial interventions into New Guinean societies. “Heathen” practices like bridewealth exchange were also regarded by some missionaries as obstacles to Christianization. Whether New Guinean marriage practices could coexist with Christian, European ones vexed some missionaries. “Can we marry people in church even when the girl is bought?” asked the German Wesleyan missionary, Heinrich Fellmann, in 1906.¹² Having by then spent a decade in the Bismarck Archipelago, arriving as part of the Australasian Mission’s efforts to Germanize its staff to appease the colonial administration, Fellmann lamented that despite the mission’s “efforts to the contrary the custom of buying wives is adhered to even by church members.” He asked his superior, Benjamin Danks, whether the mission should withhold Christian marriage ceremonies from New Guineans who practiced “the old custom.”¹³

Yet, like other white, European colonists, for some missionaries in New Guinea, bridewealth practices seemed to present an opportunity for them to further their own interests. Even prior to German colonization, members of the Wesleyan mission realized that bridewealth customs could be used to the mission’s advantage. As early as 1882, Richard Heath Rickard, who had recently arrived at the mission’s station at Raluana on the Gazelle Peninsula, gave *diwarra* to a New Guinean man to “release” a “girl” who would be “the Mission’s servant as long as she wished to be such.”¹⁴ As we saw in Chapter 2, Danks paid a “ransom” to Ia Wawaluk’s relatives to end her betrothal to an “old man of a very debased type,” allowing Ia Wawaluk to remain at the Kabakada mission station where she performed

¹² Heinrich Fellmann, Raluana, to Benjamin Danks, Sydney, 15 May 1906, ML: Heinrich Fellmann papers; CY 4756 (microfilm).

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Richard Heath Rickard, Raluana, to Benjamin Danks, 5 January 1883, ML, MOM: R. Heath Rickard letter book; 328, 181.

maid duties.¹⁵ For some missionaries, then, bridewealth payments made to male family members or to men to whom girls or women were already betrothed were a way of intervening to prevent “heathen” marriages, while also securing potential converts as well as laborers for their mission stations.

Practices like these produced heated arguments among missionaries even of the same mission society. Danks, a staunch opponent of the slavery-like trade in Pacific Islander laborers known as “blackbirding,” could hardly countenance a trade in people within his own mission.¹⁶ Despite Danks’s own tale of paying a “ransom” for Ia Wawaluk, he accused his colleague Rickard of “buying” and “selling” women in the Bismarck Archipelago the early 1880s.¹⁷ Rickard fiercely defended himself and the mission against Danks’s accusations of wrongdoing. He in turn accused Danks of recklessly suggesting that “buying” meant trading, “hence slavery.”¹⁸ Rejecting his colleague’s “insinuation” outright and claiming that Danks’s views on the matter stood in contrast to “the opinion of a majority of Christian brethren,” Rickard wrote to Danks: “Others would mostly ask in the present case is it not redeeming as truly as in the case of the immortalized who bought the negroes from the slave states in America to the free ones. Are our girls bought to be treated as slaves or as adopted children?”¹⁹ Rickard turned Danks’s suggestion that trading in people amounted to slavery on its head. By characterizing local marriage practices as akin to American slavery, Rickard justified the mission’s “buying” of girls and women as an act of liberating them from a life of forced marriage *and* forced labor. He wrote of “girls even begging to be so ‘bought’” so that

¹⁵ Danks, “Women and Marriage Customs in New Britain,” ML, MOM: 238, folder 3, 1.

¹⁶ Wallace Deane, ed., *In Wild New Britain: The Story of Benjamin Danks, Pioneer Missionary, from His Diary* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1933), 246.

¹⁷ Rickard, Raluana, to Benjamin Danks, 5 January 1883, ML, MOM: 328, 183.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 183-184.

they might escape arranged marriages and live on mission stations instead. “If I had diwara [sic] enough and it were possible I should buy all the women in the group and send them to school and train them,” he wrote.²⁰ Rickard informed Danks that, indeed, he intended to “buy” as many girls and women as he could “and thus make good wives for our *lotu* [Christian] boys.”²¹ For good measure, Rickard added in his retort to Danks: “By the way—have you forgotten that you told me when I last visited Kabakada that you intended “to buy a girl from Baining”!!!!—a slave market, where they steal them for that purpose? You are the only one I think who can see that you did not “buy” [the girl] Jurlis as truly as any of our girls have been bought.”²² Accusations of trading in “slaves” clearly carried weight for the Wesleyans, but this exchange between Danks and Rickard also reveals how these malleable discourses could be rallied in support of missionary agendas. For Rickard, bridewealth provided a means of bringing women and girls into the mission’s fold and marrying them off in accordance with Christian ideals. Choosing whom New Guinean women would marry also meant rewarding male converts with “trained” Christian wives.

But what of the slave market in Baining—a mountainous inland region in the northwest of the Gazelle Peninsula—where girls were said to be “stolen” and sold as slaves? Michel Panoff has argued that the idea of a domestic slave in Baining emerged as a dominant colonial discourse on the region in writings produced by Catholic missionaries of the Sacred Heart Mission, especially those of the mission’s head, Louis Couppé.²³ These missionaries spearheaded European encroachments into these hinterlands during the period of German

²⁰ Ibid., 184.

²¹ Ibid., 185.

²² Ibid. Emphasis in the original.

²³ Michel Panoff, “Y eut-il des esclaves en Nouvelle-Bretagne? Une critique des témoignages?” *Journal de la Société des océanistes* 85, no. 2 (1987): 133-155.

colonial rule and made the “redemption” of “slave children” a cornerstone of their system of missionization in German New Guinea. It was with the Sacred Heart Mission’s push inland into Baining country in an effort to reach souls outside of the Wesleyans’ more established sphere of influence that the Catholics “discovered the slavery ‘scandal.’”²⁴ The Baining were a particularly “primitive” people, Europeans said, who were terrorized by the neighboring Tolai of the peninsula’s coastal regions. The Tolai, so the narrative went, would raid Baining villages, taking people as slaves and trading them to other Tolai communities along the coast who would force them to work for them. Baining themselves were said also to participate in this trade.²⁵ This, or something like it, was the slave market Rickard referred to in 1883, but the facts of its existence were refuted by other European colonists.²⁶ This chapter will return to the missionary rhetoric of slavery shortly, but first, it takes us into the Baining Mountains in order to explore the role of bridewealth in the Catholic mission field.

²⁴ Ibid., 138.

²⁵ See, for example, Kleintitschen, *Die Küstenbewohner der Gazellehalbinsel*, 245-270. Depiction of the Baining as particularly “primitive” were commonplace in colonial writings. On the Baining as particularly “primitive,” see for example, Richard Parkinson, *Dreissig Jahre in der Südsee: Land und Leute, Sitten und Gebräuche im Bismarckarchipel und auf den deutschen Salomoinseln* (Stuttgart: Strecker und Schröder, 1907).

²⁶ George Brown, *Melanesians and Polynesians: Their Life-Histories Described and Compared* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1910), 331; Joachim Friedrich von Pfeil, *Studien und Beobachtungen aus der Südsee* (Braunschweig: Friedrich Vieweg und Sohn, 1899), 79.

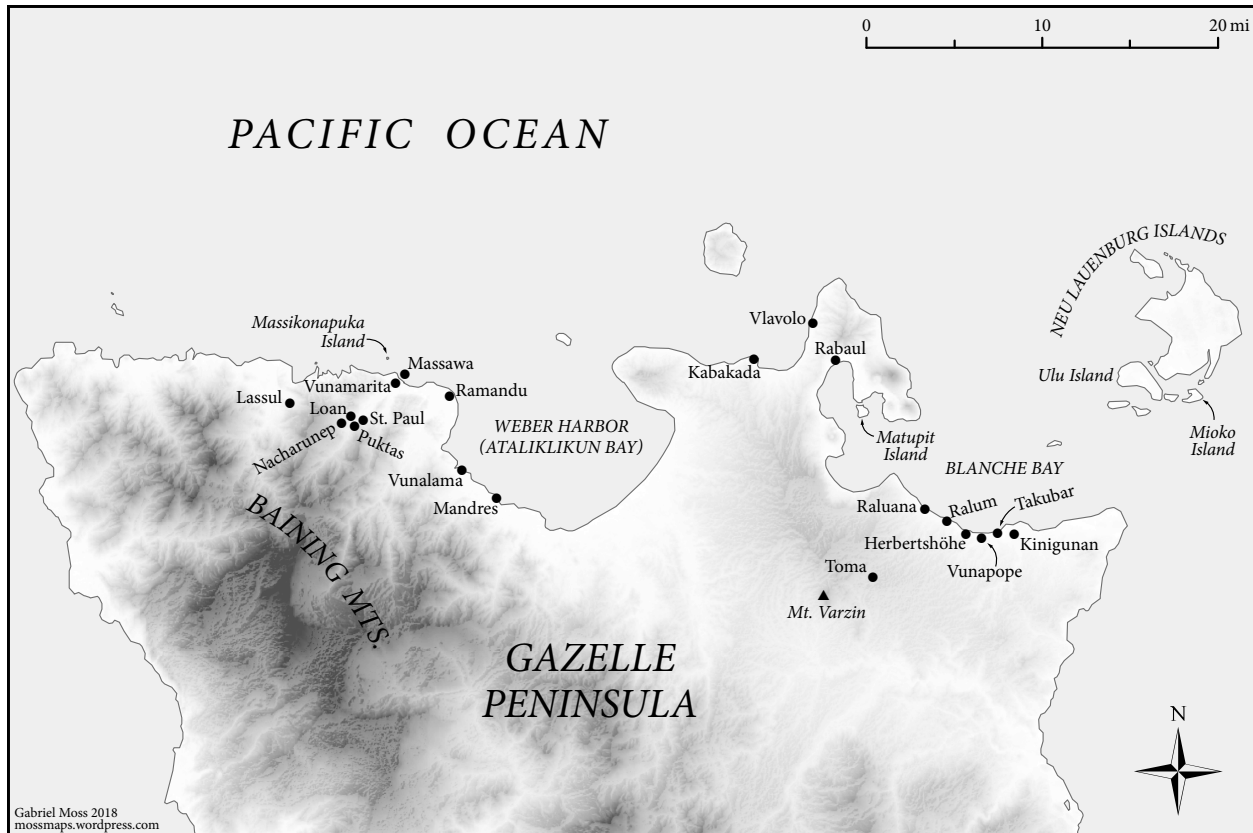


Figure 4.1. The Gazelle Peninsula and Neu Lauenburg Islands. To the northwest of the peninsula are the Baining Mountains, where the Sacred Heart Mission began to establish mission stations in the 1890s, not far from New Guinea Company plantations at locations like Massawa. On the peninsula's northeast are the European settlements around Blanche Bay: the colonial capitals of Herbertshöhe and Rabaul, the trading center of Matupit, where Hershheim was based, Queen Emma's plantation at Ralum, and the Sacred Heart Mission's main station of Vunapope. The Wesleyan, Rickard, was based for a time at Raluana; his colleague, Danks, at Kabakada, west of Rabaul. The DHPG's station was on Mioko, in the Neu Lauenburg group.

The Catholics preached against this "slave trade," as Tilang of Massikonapuka said, telling people that "it is wrong to steal women and children."²⁷ But Tilang's assertion in 1905 that the missionaries themselves were stealing Baining women and children reveals a

²⁷ Tilang's statement, as reported by Heine, Herbertshöhe, 18 March 1905, NAA: G255, 500.

profound gulf between missionaries' ideas and local understandings of bridewealth and adoption. Early that year, fifteen Baining men and women assembled in the Baining village of Loan. They demanded the return of their family members—daughters and sons, brothers, and a wife—all of whom, they said, had been taken by the Sacred Heart Mission. At least thirty-two people, most aged between three and six, some perhaps fourteen years of age, were missing.²⁸ About a month earlier, two men from the mission's village, St. Paul, had come to nearby Loan and forcibly taken the children with them back to St. Paul, the assembled people said. Neither the children's relatives nor the big man had consented to their removal. It was said that the adults of Loan had been performing labor for the colonial administration, building a road to the coast, when the mission's men entered their homes and took their children.²⁹ The men, To Kulen and To Hermann, had told the children's parents that they would be sent to the *kalabus* (prison) if they did not relinquish their children. Out of fear of the Catholics, the parents had not resisted as their children cried and were taken away.³⁰

News of the "stolen" children had reached a New Guinea Company plantation on Massawa (Masava) Island around seven on the morning of 15 March. Tilang, the Massikonapuka big man, had come to the plantation and reported the matter to the plantation manager, Richard Miesterfeldt, and his wife, Sadie (née Macdonald), a woman conversant in the Tolai language.³¹ In the afternoon of the same day, Tongotiol from Loan,

²⁸ My count of thirty-two people is based on my belief that Torung's brother, listed as Lsangass, is probably the same person also listed as Tombass's son, Langrass, although Lsangass was believed to be at Vunapope, and Langrass was found at St. Paul. See NAA: G255, 500.

²⁹ Tongotiol's statement, Herbertshöhe, 18 March 1905, *ibid*.

³⁰ Tongotiol's statement and Tongana's statement, as reported by Georg Heine, Herbertshöhe, 18 March 1905, *ibid*.

³¹ When Elisabeth Krämer-Bannow met the Miesterfeldts in Neu Mecklenburg in 1908, she described Frau Miesterfeldt as "a dark-curved half-Samoan," who assisted her husband with "skill and perseverance in her quite way" and was particularly adept at dealing with the "black laborers." Elisabeth Krämer-Bannow, *Bei kunstsinnigen Kannibalen der Südsee: Wanderungen auf neu-Mecklenbur 1908-1909* (Berlin: Verlag Dietrich

with three other Baining and some Tolai, came to the same plantation and corroborated Tilang's story. In the meantime, the New Guinea Company administrator, Georg Heine, had arrived by barge at the Massawa plantation.³² The news put the settlers on edge. Sadie believed "that the situation in Baining is seriously threatened."³³ Her husband was "certain" that if the children were not returned an uprising would break out among the Baining. It was just seven months since Baining men had murdered ten Catholic missionaries—nine at the St. Paul mission station and one at Nacharunep, a mission station two hours' trek inland from St. Paul.³⁴ The Miesterfeldts had every reason to believe Tilang's warning that if the children were not returned, the Baining would "again wage war against the missionaries at St. Paul."³⁵ Richard Miesterfeldt told Tilang that he would take the Baining men and women who reported their children stolen to Herbertshöhe, where they could convey the matter to the administration. He accommodated the party that arrived in the afternoon in the Massawa plantation infirmary, and Heine transported everyone to Herbertshöhe the following day. Heine also sensed danger, reporting: "I had the impression that the Baining were much aggrieved and that they were very anxious to get their children back. Even the Catholic Tolai [*Uferleute*] appear to consider the removal of the children to be a great injustice."³⁶

In the absence of the mission station's Father, a Brother at St. Paul declared that to his knowledge, the children's parents had signed documents, but those documents, belonging to the Father, were not available to him. Another priest who was at St. Paul stepped

Reimer, 1916), 251. Sadie is identified as one of Queen Emma's clan in Hermann Hiery, *Bilder aus der Deutschen Südsee: Fotografien 1884-1914* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2005), 148.

³² Cited in Richard Miesterfeldt's statement, Herbertshöhe, 18 March 1905, NAA: G255, 500.

³³ Richard Miesterfeldt's statement, Herbertshöhe, 18 March 1905, *ibid*

³⁴ Hubert Linckens, "Die Mordtat auf Neupommern," *Hiltruper Monatshefte* (1904): 496.

³⁵ Sadie and Richard Miesterfeldt's statements, Herbertshöhe, 18 March 1905, NAA: G255, 500.

³⁶ Heine's statement, Herbertshöhe, 18 March 1905, *ibid*.

in. Upon hearing about the matter and being informed about the potentially volatile situation it had created—that “the natives would take their children back by force if they were not handed over to them”—the visiting priest, Father Heinrich van der Aa, determined that “it would be best benevolently to release the children to their parents.” The *lavalavas* that the mission had provided the children, however, were to remain behind. In exchange for at least nine *lavalavas* and a knife that Brother Mathias Folger had given to one boy, the mission released eighteen of the children. Three girls from Vunalama were still missing; according to Tongotiol, they were never at St. Paul. Two boys were to stay with Brother Mathias at Herbertshöhe, it was decided. Eight of the twenty girls who were at the mission station, Father van der Aa seemed to recall, had been “bought” some time ago by the mission “for the purpose of later marriage to mission pupils.” These girls were to remain at the mission, as any claims for their return had to be considered “illegitimate according to the laws and customs of the natives.” One other, a “grown girl,” said she wanted to remain at St. Paul, perhaps to be with her younger, “bought” sisters.³⁷

Father van der Aa’s 1905 claim that the Sacred Heart Mission at St. Paul had “bought” eight Baining girls “according to the laws and customs of the natives” specifically “for the purpose of later marriage to mission pupils” mirrored Rickard’s stated intention in 1883 to “buy” girls and women to marry off to male converts of the Wesleyan Mission.³⁸ Both men understood the “purchase” of New Guinean girls and women as a means of intervening in vernacular family structures, gender relations, and labor regimes in order that they might

³⁷ Knake’s report, St. Paul, 22 March 1905, *ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.* Wesleyan missionaries in British New Guinea similarly targeted women and girls for conversion, which, in practice, meant “grooming them for Christian marriage.” See Michael W. Young, “Suffer the Children: Wesleyans in the D’Entrecasteaux,” in *Family and Gender in the Pacific*, eds. Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre, 108-134.

bring about the family units that would provide the foundation for Christian communities in the Islands. Yet, among the Wesleyans, practices of “buying” New Guinean women who would become pupils, laborers, and Christian wives existed in tension with their desires to eradicate “old customs” and replace vernacular marriage systems and family structures with heteronormative Christian ones. The contradiction troubled Fellmann, who lamented that even church members continued to practice bridewealth exchange. It outraged Danks, who anxiously sought to eradicate “the custom of selling women” in the Wesleyan’s mission field and charged his fellow Wesleyan missionary with slaving.³⁹

The Catholics, however, were much more united in their eagerness to obtain women for their mission through “purchase.”⁴⁰ Panoff has noted a distinction between intentions and practices of the Wesleyans, who sought to use bridewealth as a means of securing Neu Lauenburg’s female inhabitants for the local mission station, and those of the Catholics, for whom the “purchase” of women also meant their removal from homes and relocation to mission stations elsewhere.⁴¹ In 1901, the colony’s first governor of the imperial administration, Rudolf von Bennigsen (1899-1901), noted a difference, too.⁴² While the Wesleyans had, with limited success, sought to eliminate bridewealth among their adherents

³⁹ Deane, ed., *In Wild New Britain*, 167; Stephen Winsor Reed, *The Making of Modern New Guinea: With Special Reference to Culture Contact in the Mandated Territory* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1943), 112.

⁴⁰ On the Wesleyans’ efforts to eradicate bridewealth, see Hermann Joseph Hiery, *Das deutsche Reich in der Südsee (1900-1921): Eine Annäherung an die Erfahrungen verschiedener Kulturen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 253.

⁴¹ Panoff, “Y eut-il des esclaves en Nouvelle-Bretagne?” 133-155.

⁴² Governor Bennigsen was the son of Rudolf von Bennigsen, German national liberal politician and founder of the National Liberal Party. He worked in German East Africa as finance director, often also serving as deputy governor. His most lasting legacy in East Africa was his implementation of a tax on African households. See Heinrich Schnee, ed., *Deutsches Kolonial-Lexikon*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Quelle und Meyer, 1920), 163-64. Peter Hempenstall has described Bennigsen’s method of rule during his short tenure in German New Guinea as “brutally direct and simple: expansion by pacification.” Peter J. Hempenstall. *Pacific Islanders under German Rule: A Study in the Meaning of Colonial Resistance* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1978), 140.

in the Bismarck Archipelago, the Catholics had “sanctioned” it by pursuing their own practice of “buying” women in order to marry them to baptized New Guinean men, Bennigsen observed.⁴³ While rhetoric of New Guinean cultures’ mistreatment of women served both Protestant and Catholic efforts to intervene in local marriages and engineer laboring, Christian families, as the following section shows, tales of a domestic slave trade functioned as a central legitimizing narrative for Sacred Heart Mission.

“How much do you pay for a child there?’ or ‘How much for a girl?’”⁴⁴

Louis Couppé arrived in the Bismarck Archipelago in December 1888 after a stint in British New Guinea. A Frenchman, he later Germanized his name to Ludwig, though German was never among the languages Couppé spoke.⁴⁵ He was appointed vicar apostolic of Neu Pommern in 1889 and was ordained as a bishop the following year. It was under Couppé’s leadership that the Sacred Heart Mission established a firm and enduring presence in the Bismarck Archipelago.⁴⁶ Couppé was an imposing figure: one visitor to the colony described him as “a very tall, strong, portly, energetic man with a long black beard.”⁴⁷ One woman traveler, upon meeting the bishop, “instinctively sensed [his] refinement, skill, knowledge

⁴³ Rudolf von Bennigsen, “Betrifft Reservate und Eherecht der Eingeborenen,” Herbertshöhe, 23 January 1901, BArch: R 1001/2575, 158.

⁴⁴ C. D. Mackellar, *Scented Isles and Coral Gardens: Torres Straits, German New Guinea and the Dutch East Indies* (London: John Murray: 1912), 79.

⁴⁵ Albert Hahl, *Governor in New Guinea*, eds. and trans., Peter Sack and Dymphna Clark (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1980), 8.

⁴⁶ On the mission’s precarious beginnings in the Bismarck Archipelago, see Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans*, 142.

⁴⁷ Mackellar, *Scented Isles and Coral Gardens*, 77.

and power.”⁴⁸ Governor Albert Hahl, himself a Protestant, was one of many who held the Bishop in high esteem.⁴⁹ Determined and autocratic, Couppé proved adept at circumventing those who stood in the way of his work in German New Guinea, negotiating alliances with Hahl’s administration and, when necessary, exerting his power with Catholic interest groups in Berlin. As early as 1890, Couppé defined the mission’s work in New Guinea through three main projects. Firstly, the mission would establish its center on the Gazelle Peninsula at the place the Catholic missionaries called Vunapope (the place of the Pope), a property of 118-acres not far from Herbertshöhe. Secondly, the mission would set about achieving “freedom for the slaves” on the peninsula. Finally, the mission would provide care to the region’s plantation laborers.⁵⁰ If this last project took a back seat for the Sacred Heart missionaries, the first two progressed steadily in tandem, as Couppé turned slavery in his Neu Pommern mission field into a “great international cause.”⁵¹

The first children whom the Sacred Heart Missionaries on the Gazelle Peninsula claimed to have “bought” and “redeemed” from slavery were not girls who would later—ideally—marry male adherents of the mission, but two young boys.⁵² The missionaries named the first of these boys Ludwig, the German variant of Couppé’s own name. The second they called August. Gruesome stories about the boys’ pasts circulated in the Sacred Heart Mission’s journal, *Hiltruper Monatshefte*, as did other stories about the “South Sea Children”

⁴⁸ B. Pullen-Burry, *In a German Colony: Or Four Weeks in New Britain* (London: Methuen, 1909), 75.

⁴⁹ Hahl, *Governor in New Guinea*, eds. and trans., Sack and Clark, 8.

⁵⁰ Rainer Jaspers, “Historische Untersuchungen zu einem Mord an Missionaren auf New Britain (Papua New Guinea) 1904,” *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 63 (1979): 4.

⁵¹ Panoff, “Y eut-il des esclaves en Nouvelle-Bretagne?” 137.

⁵² On the Wesleyans’ strategy of “boy getting,” see Rickard, Raluana, 16 June 1885, to Reverend Kelynack, ML, MOM: 328, 261. For more on August and Ludwig see P. Josef LaKaff, “Die Katechisten,” in *Pioniere der Südsee: Werden und Wachsen der Herz-Jesu-Mission von Rabaul zum goldenen Jubiläum*, ed. Joseph Hüskes (Hiltrup: Missionar vom Hl. Herzen, 1932), 171.

of German New Guinea whom the mission increasingly claimed to be saving from perpetual tribal feuding and slave trading. Missionaries had rescued Ludwig from slave-trading “cannibals,” the journal claimed, paying “good money for him, making him a free person and the property of the church.”⁵³ August came to the mission under slightly different circumstances. The mission journal told of how a European trader had rescued the boy from “wild pirates who still pay homage to the trafficking in and devouring of humans.”⁵⁴ This trader was not a bad man at heart, the journal reported, but he had his flaws. When trade was bad, coconuts too few, or when he was gripped by “tropical fever,” the trader beat the boy. The mission provided August “refuge” from “his master’s resentment,” the *Hiltruper Monatshefte* claimed.⁵⁵ In both boys’ stories, the mission journal mobilized tropes of New Guinean savagery in the forms of cannibalism and slaving and presented the mission as the boys’ salvation.

When Couppé returned to Europe for his ordination in 1890, he took Ludwig and August with him on the long journey. Couppé intended for the boys’ presence in Europe to “stir and inspire the hearts of the missions’ promoters and friends—by virtue of the famous ‘demonstration method [*Anschauungs-Methode*].”⁵⁶ This meant exhibiting the boys before mission benefactors and colonial enthusiasts in Europe in order to raise awareness of—and funds for—the Neu Pommern mission’s program of “redeeming” “slave children” from their savage circumstances. Speaking in Paris at the Basilica of Notre-Dame-des-Victoires, for example, Couppé reminded his audience of the important work that missionaries were

⁵³ “Aus der Südsee-Mission. August und Ludwig,” *Hiltruper Monatshefte* 8 (1891): 71.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

already undertaking in central Africa to suppress slavery. “But Africa is not the only land that must be won for the gospel,” he declared. In the distant islands of the Pacific, vital work still needed to be done to combat cannibalism, savagery, and, above all, slavery, Couppé said, pointing to Ludwig and August as “an example of this barbarous custom.”⁵⁷ He reported that the Sacred Heart Mission on the Gazelle Peninsula had already “bought” ten such children in a single village, adding that “If the means were available, we could easily buy up two hundred such poor creatures.”⁵⁸

In presenting Ludwig and August as rescued “slave children,” Couppé capitalized on contemporary antislavery sentiments in Europe, which were drawing concerned Europeans’ attentions—and charitable contributions—to Europe’s African colonies.⁵⁹ In Germany, the antislavery movement had in the few years leading up to Couppé’s visit served to foster a sense of national unity in the wake of Bismarck’s anti-Catholic *Kulturkampf* and simultaneously to garner national enthusiasm for Germany’s overseas empire.⁶⁰ For a Catholic mission society with foreign allegiances and German imperial entanglements, exhibiting “South Sea children” as “redeemed slaves” in Europe legitimized both the mission’s work in New Guinea and its place within a specifically German colonial empire. For the Sacred Heart Mission, the “great international cause” of antislavery, embodied by Ludwig and August, was therefore also a national one.⁶¹ The *Hiltruper Monatshefte* reported with nationalist zeal about how Ludwig, despite suffering for months from a fever and respiratory

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ “Nachrichten aus den Missionshäusern. Mission von U. L. Frau vom hh. Herzen. Msgr. Couppé in der Kirche U. L. Frau vom Siege zu Paris,” *Hiltruper Monatshefte* 8 (1891): 118.

⁵⁹ Panoff, “Y eut-il des esclaves en Nouvelle-Bretagne?” 139.

⁶⁰ Christopher M. Geissler, “Reinvigorating the Reich: African Slaves, German Saviours and Imperial Identity in the *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung*, 1888-1889,” *Journal of European Studies* 40, no. 1 (2009): 39-57.

⁶¹ Panoff, “Y eut-il des esclaves en Nouvelle-Bretagne?” 137.

infection attributed to exposure to “European air,” delighted in celebrating the Kaiser’s birthday on 27 January.⁶² The report details how he watched the military parade from the window of a Catholic infirmary in Berlin, before reenacting the scene with toy soldiers, a photograph of the crown prince, and the “patriotic pages” of a picture book bearing the inscription: “in the name of the imperial chancellor.” As fatigue set in, the report continued, “he smiled one last time at the crown prince and still in his feverish dream he mumbled the word ‘Kaiser’ and hummed lines from ‘Watch on the Rhine.’” The mission journal proudly concluded that “our little Antipodean” was growing up under Catholic leadership with a “loyal patriotism” for Germany, noting the irony that under the *Kulturkampf* “even Ludwig would likely have placed among the ‘enemies of the Reich!’”⁶³ Patriotic sentiments similarly colored the journal’s account of accepting an “invitation” made by the leading German physician, Dr. Rudolf Virchow, to show Ludwig before an “imposing gathering of researchers” at Berlin’s ethnographic museum.⁶⁴ For Virchow and his colleagues, Ludwig and other colonial subjects had scientific value, and Virchow was reported to have “dealt with Ludwig in detail,” studying his skull and jaw.⁶⁵ For the mission society, Virchow’s invitation would have presented an opportunity to demonstrate the Catholic mission’s worth to German science, perhaps especially to Virchow personally, who had been a vocal supporter of the anti-Catholic *Kulturkampf*.

⁶² “Aus der Südsee-Mission. August und Ludwig,” 71; “Nachrichten aus den Missionshäusern. Nochmals Berlin,” *Hilfruper Monatshefte* 8 (1891): 166-168.

⁶³ “Nachrichten aus den Missionshäusern,” 168.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁶⁵ “Aus der Südsee-Mission. August und Ludwig,” 71. On Virchow’s participation in the *Kulturkampf*, see Andrew Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 58.

Even with its narrative of a Neu Pommern slave trade, the mission faced obstacles. It was Couppé's stated mission to "to buy as many children as our means allow, and to liberate them from slavery, in that we adopt them and educate them in our orphanages according to the teachings and principles of our holy religion."⁶⁶ At the mission, these children would "receive an education appropriate to their abilities and needs," and "learn agriculture on our properties and trades in our workshops." "These children," wrote Couppé, "raised by us with great care and equipped with the necessary skills, will then grow up to be industrious, useful people, will marry and thus form the basis of a new people [*Volk*], reborn through Christianity."⁶⁷ In order to achieve this goal, the mission needed not just boys like Ludwig and August, but also girls. In 1892, Couppé appealed to the mission's supporters for donations to complete the "urgently necessary" work of constructing a cloister for the mission sisters and an orphanage for girls at Vunapope, where the mission brothers had already built a "spacious house" for themselves and an orphanage for boys.⁶⁸ But despite Couppé's appeals to the urgency of this project, acquiring girls to fill their planned orphanage was still a problem for the missionaries: on 1 August 1892, the mission had "collected" fifty-one boys and nine eight girls, aged between five and fifteen.⁶⁹ Couppé was confident this situation would soon change. Before long, he wrote, "the number of redeemed girls will soon reach that of boys, and in the course of a year, our mission will have over one hundred orphan children."⁷⁰ The "urgent" matter that Couppé spoke of was not of housing "orphaned" girls,

⁶⁶ Couppé to the archbishop of Cologne, 1 August 1892, letter published in *Hiltruper Monatshefte* 10 (1983): 99.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 100-101.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 99.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 101.

but of acquiring girls in the first place, who, once removed from the “pernicious influence” of their “heathen” families, would be trained and married to mission boys.⁷¹

The Sacred Heart Mission’s slavery narrative thus assumed a gendered variant. In 1983, Couppé informed the readers of the *Hiltruper Monatshefte* that the children of the Gazelle Peninsula were “either slaves, or orphans, or abandoned, or castoffs,” who were “gladly sold by their masters or relatives.” But female children warranted particular comment:

The girls [...] are all actually slaves. Some are actually called that, that is, those poor creatures captured during a military campaign. The others, who are members of the tribe, admittedly do not bear the name slaves, but they are in reality; because there they belong by law to their maternal uncles, he can sell them, which is what mostly happens. The buyer then has the sole right of disposition over the girls he has bought, and he makes use of her for field labor or for domestic services and numbers her among his women.⁷²

Here, Couppé made a distorted reference to bridewealth within matrilineal Tolai society, in which a girl or woman’s maternal uncle would typically facilitate bridewealth exchange, though it seems unlikely that his readers would have been aware of this. Like many other white, European men, as we have already seen, Couppé equated bridewealth exchange with the “sale” of girls whose work in gardens and homes was thus tantamount to “slave” labor. This false equivalence served the mission’s purposes of acquiring the girls needed to form

⁷¹ Couppé, Kinigunan, to station chief Wasa Mende, Herbertshöhe, 24 April 1894, BArch: R 1001/2571, 91.

⁷² Couppé to the archbishop of Cologne, 1 August 1892, *Hiltruper Monatshefte* 10 (1983): 99.

the “basis of a new people” and obtaining the funds from sympathetic Catholics abroad that would allow them to do so.

Throughout the 1890s, the Sacred Heart Mission vigorously pursued its agenda of “redeeming” “slave” children, while simultaneously establishing new mission stations along the coasts, in the foothills of the Varzin Mountains, and into Baining lands. The mission eagerly publicized reports of its activities in the pages of the *Hiltruper Monatshefte*. By 1891, the Sacred Heart Mission was “commissioning” a big man to “buy” children from the areas around Weber Harbor (Ataliklikun Bay), near the Baining Mountains, and to deliver them to the missionaries.⁷³ In August the following year, Couppé wrote of his desire to acquire a “small car,” which, manned with “a white and six blacks,” could be used to “travel along the coast, so it would be much easier for us to wrest a large number of these poor creatures away from slavery and the abysmal death that is in store for them.”⁷⁴ One Scottish sojourner who passed through German New Guinea around the turn of the century, sailing aboard a ship upon which Couppé and the Hungarian naturalist, Lajos Biró, also traveled, described the mission’s method of “conversion” as follows: “They ‘adopt’ as many small children as possible, educate them, and teach them agriculture and what they can, and when of age marry them.”⁷⁵ This writer remarked: “Now and again when I hear much laudatory talk over German colonisation the devil prompts me to say, ‘How much do you pay for a child there?’ or ‘How much for a girl?’—not that I mean to buy many to take home with me.”⁷⁶

⁷³ “Aus der Südsee-Mission: Altes und Neues aus Neupommern,” *Hiltruper Monatshefte* 8 (1891): 149-50

⁷⁴ Couppé to the archbishop of Cologne, 1 August 1892, *Hiltruper Monatshefte* 10 (1893): 102.

⁷⁵ Mackellar, *Scented Isles and Coral Gardens*, 71.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 79.

The site of the Sacred Heart Mission's main station at Vunapope's was significant. Not only was it a "fertile and very picturesque" piece of land, as Couppé wrote, it was just ten minutes from Herbertshöhe, "where the German imperial commissioner [Fritz Rose] lives, where the steamers call at port, and where the New Guinea Company has a plantation."⁷⁷ Vunapope also bordered Queen Emma's Ralum plantation and stood across the St. George's Channel from the German Trade and Plantation Society's (DHPG) station at Mioko. In April 1890, the New Guinea Company administration had, in response to an ordinance issued in August 1888, established a labor depot attached to the new station of Herbertshöhe in an effort to bring labor recruiting for Kaiser Wilhelmsland under the Company's control, thereby putting an end to the "grave violence" associated with private recruiting.⁷⁸ This meant that indentured laborers recruited from the Bismarck Archipelago and the northern Solomon Islands passed through here before being shipped, for the most part, to plantations on Kaiser Wilhelmsland.⁷⁹

The mission capitalized on this location at the center of colonial governance and German New Guinea's labor trade. With authorization from imperial commissioner Rose, the mission received children brought to Herbertshöhe on labor recruitment vessels belonging to the New Guinean Company, Queen Emma's company, E. E. Forsayth, and the DHPG. The administration left it up to the captains of recruitment ships to determine whether children could be defined as "stolen, robbed, orphaned [*verwandschaftslos*], or otherwise abandoned," or whether they would be in danger if not taken on board. This gave labor recruiters enormous latitude in determining which children to deliver to the mission, which paid for

⁷⁷ Couppé to the archbishop of Cologne, 1 August 1892, *Hiltruper Monatshefte* 10 (1983): 100.

⁷⁸ Sack and Clark, eds. and trans., *German New Guinea*, 32.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 37, 47.

children and considered them “adoptees” of the mission.⁸⁰ In August 1892, Couppé counted seven children from Neu Mecklenburg among the mission’s children, who were likely transported to the Gazelle Peninsula on labor recruitment vessels, perhaps with parents who had themselves been recruited into the indenture.⁸¹

The Sacred Heart Mission’s practice of using the indentured labor system to acquire New Guinean children was controversial within the colony. The Wesleyans charged their Catholic rivals with trading in converts.⁸² The practice also brought the Catholics into conflict with the New Guinea Company administration, but, when, in 1893, the company governor, Georg Schmiele, prohibited the mission from using recruitment vessels to acquire children, Couppé purchased a “delightful little yacht” from Sydney, with which the missionaries would “travel from island to island redeeming the poor slave children.”⁸³ When Schmiele paid particular attention to the mission’s “collection” of girls, Couppé wrote directly to the German chancellor, Leo von Caprivi to register his complaint. Couppé accused Schmiele of hypocrisy, writing that:

The “purchase” of girls and women according to the customs of the natives was, by the way, hitherto carried out by almost all local whites with the joint

⁸⁰ Georg Schmiele, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, to Gustav Bergman, Siar, 3 November 1893, Vereinte Evangelische Mission, Bestand Rheinische Mission (hereafter: RMG): 2.140; Gustav Bergmann papers, vol. 2. In November, Schmiele wrote to the Rhenish missionary at Siar, Gustav Bergman (discussed in Chapter 3) informing him that his predecessor (Fritz Rose) had granted the Sacred Heart Mission permission to collect children encountered in the process of labor recruiting. Schmiele expressed to Bergmann his willingness to extend the same privileges to the Rhenish Mission. Bergman responded that his mission was indeed “prepared” to “receive and raise” such children—particularly if they were boys. On the animosity between Schmiele and the Sacred Heart Mission, see Wasa Mende, “Zur Uebernahme der Verwaltung des Schutzgebietes von Neu-Guinea durch das Reich,” *Koloniales Jahrbuch* 10 (1897): 270-279, here, 274; Peter Sack, *Land between Two Laws: Early European Land Acquisitions in New Guinea* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1973), 89-92.

⁸¹ Couppé to the archbishop of Cologne, 1 August 1892, *Hiltruper Monatshefte* 10 (1893): 99.

⁸² Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans*, 142.

⁸³ “Aus der Herz Jesu-Mission (Apost. Vikariat Neupommern.—Deutsche Südsee,” *Hiltruper Monatshefte* 11 (1894): 323. Also see Adolph von Hansemann, Berlin to Leo von Caprivi, Berlin, BArch, R 1001/2571, 38-42.

knowledge of the Company and officials of the Administration, unfortunately however almost exclusively for the purpose of a disgraceful concubinage. Everyone here knows that Herr Schmiele, even when he officiated here as Imperial Judge and [Governor], possessed at the same time two girls who had been “purchased” in this way (and that) further his Secretary, Herr Herring, keeps a girl who has borne him a child.⁸⁴

With influence in Berlin, Couppé lobbied successfully against colonial policy that divided the Gazelle Peninsula into separate mission districts, denying the Catholics’ access to areas claimed by the Wesleyans.⁸⁵ He also campaigned relentlessly “to be allowed complete freedom *in the entire Protectorate* to seek out and take slave children, orphans, or abandoned children, [and] children whose parents willingly want to entrust them to the mission until they are married.”⁸⁶ This included in those territories that already fell within the Wesleyan mission sphere. Although one Catholic missionary would later describe the New Guinea Company administration’s treatment of the Sacred Heart mission as a “*Neu Pommern Kulturkampf*,” over the course of the 1890s, the administration increasingly acquiesced to bishop’s requests.⁸⁷

As imperial judge in Herbertshöhe, Albert Hahl threw his support behind the mission’s program of “adopting” children to raise on the mission stations. In August 1896, he wrote to Schmiele’s successor as New Guinea Company governor, Hugo Rüdiger, asserting that the mission’s “education of native children” was highly advantageous “from the

⁸⁴ Couppé to Caprivi, 16 July 1893, quoted in *Papers Prepared for the Visit of Pope John Paul II to Papua New Guinea, 7-10th May, 1984* (Port Moresby: Government Printing Office, 1984 [?]), 55.

⁸⁵ Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans*, 142; Hempenstall, “The Reception of European Missions,” 54; Paul Steffen, “Die katholischen Mission in Deutsch-Neuguinea,” in *Die Deutsche Südsee, 1884-1914*, ed. Hermann Joseph Hiery (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2001), 351-352.

⁸⁶ Louis Couppé, Kinigunan, to station chief Wasa Mende, Herbertshöhe, 24 April 1894, BArch: R 1001/2571, 91. Emphases in the original.

⁸⁷ Kleintitschen, *Die Küstenbewohner der Gazellehalbinsel*, 10.

administration's perspective."⁸⁸ Hahl believed that Couppé plan would serve colonial interests as a "primary lever to the development of the Protectorate."⁸⁹ He conceded that tensions had arisen in the past when the Catholics had tried to "collect" children from areas of Neu Mecklenburg in which the Wesleyans already had a strong footing, but believed that this would be resolved by enforcing separate denominational districts in future. Maintaining separate Catholic and Wesleyan spheres was one thing, but Hahl also stressed the importance of separating New Guinean children from New Guinean adults. Separate settlements for children and adults would be necessary, he believed, to prevent children from "quickly reverting to the habits of their tribespeople."⁹⁰ Hahl therefore recommended that the mission be granted permission to obtain land that would enable them to establish such settlements.⁹¹ One such tract of land was in the Baining Mountains, where the Sacred Heart Mission established its "industrial village" at St. Paul in 1898. Hahl supported Couppé's vision of a "system of religious colonization" that would, through education, vocational training, and the creation of industrious Christian families and entire Christian villages, transform the Bismarck Archipelago into "one of the most prosperous and flourishing of Germany's colonies."⁹² Events that took place at St. Paul in 1904 revealed the hubris inherent in this project.

⁸⁸ Hahl, Herbertshöhe, to Rüdiger, 20 August 1896, BArch: R 1001/2574, 13-15.

⁸⁹ Louis Couppé, Kinigunan, to Wasa Mende, Herbertshöhe, 24 April 1894, BArch: R 1001/2571, 93.

⁹⁰ Hahl, Herbertshöhe, to Rüdiger, 20 August 1896, BArch: R 1001/2574, 13-15.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Louis Couppé, Kinigunan, to Wasa Mende, Herbertshöhe, 24 April 1894, BArch: R 1001/2571, 91, 93.

Colonial Crises

The murders of ten Catholic missionaries at St. Paul and Nacharunep at the hands of Baining men in 1904 sent shock waves through European colonial society. With this event in recent memory, the New Guinea Company planter and his wife at Massawa feared more bloody retributions might follow if the Sacred Heart Mission refused to return the children that the people of Loan accused them of having stolen in 1905. Both cases pivoted around the missionaries' efforts to rupture local family structures, systems of marriage, and gendered divisions of labor in order to replace them with those befitting the Catholic's model of "industrious" Christian family units. Historians are in general agreement that the murders of the Sacred Heart missionaries can be attributed, in part, to their zealous efforts to intervene into New Guineans' intimate and family lives in their Neu Pommern mission sphere.⁹³ This, coupled with the mission's alienation of New Guinean lands, and the administration's implementation of short-term, forced labor on the Gazelle Peninsula fueled resentment among the people who were on the receiving end of these colonial incursions.⁹⁴ Indeed, it was one of the missions own "redeemed" children, To Maria, who was behind the attacks, which he carried out together with some other Baining men on August 13. The immediate catalyst for To Maria's decision to murder the missionaries was St. Paul's Father Matthäus Rascher's prohibition against To Maria taking a second wife. Reprisals on the part of the administration were bloody, but contained in comparison to the war that had been sparked in the nearby Varzin Mountains two earlier when some local men murdered a planter's

⁹³ Jaspers, "Historische Untersuchungen zu einem Mord," 1-24; Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders under German Rule*, 147-148

⁹⁴ On forced labor in the Baining Mountains, see Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans*, 143-144.

wife—a European woman—and their child. In retaliation for the murders of the missionaries, the administration killed at least fifteen people in the Baining Mountains, including To Maria.⁹⁵

News of the murders of the missionaries at St. Paul soon reached the Rhenish mission station on Kaiser Wilhelmsland. One missionary at Bongu reflected on the situation. Despite the warnings that Father Rascher had received about the Bainings' plans to murder the missionaries, Rascher "did not want to believe it"—indeed, "he could not believe it." "[I]t was the same for him as for me, when I was informed at the beginning of this year of reports of the existence of a plan to murder us all," this Rhenish missionary wrote. In his estimation, the situation in the Bismarck Archipelago was the same as that on Kaiser Wilhelmsland: "people are sick to death of the whites and everything connected to them. People want, as is also said here, to be alone, that is, untouched by any of the whites' influences."⁹⁶

The Rhenish missionary was referring to the event known as the "Madang Revolt." The event, which has been discussed in greater detail elsewhere, involved a plot made by the people of Siar, Ragetta, Yabob, and Bilibili to put an end to white encroachments onto New Guinean lands and into New Guinean cultures in the area surrounding Friedrich Wilhelmshafen (Madang).⁹⁷ Not only had the New Guinea Company alienated large tracts of land along the coast which threatened New Guinean trade networks and forced people off their gardens, but the Rhenish mission had also been active in its efforts to suppress the male

⁹⁵ For more on the Varzin war and St. Paul, see Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders under German Rule*, 145-150.

⁹⁶ August Hanke, Bongu, to Inspector Kriele, 6 October 1904, RMG: 2.149, August Hanke papers, vol. 2.

⁹⁷ See Peter Lawrence, *Road Belong Cargo: A Study of the Cargo Movement in the Southern Madang District, New Guinea* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1964), 69; Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders under German Rule*, 180-183; Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans*, 82-84. For a "revisionist" interpretation of the event, see Hermann Hiery, "The Madang Revolt of 1904: A Chimera," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 4, no. 2 (1993): 165-180, and for a critique of this revisionism, see Klaus Neumann, "The Stench of the Past: Revisionism in Pacific Islands and Australian History," *The Contemporary Pacific* 10, no. 1 (1998): 31-64.

cult known as *Mesiab*. Both incursions caused resentment. The Islanders planned cross over to Friedrich Wilhelmshafen and the seize weapons housed in the district office's armory, using them to kill all the white men and then taking the white women captive. However, as the Islanders entered Friedrich Wilhelmsland on 16 July 1904 to carry out their plan, the plot was given away by the government physician's "houseboy." No European was injured, but the administration declared a state of martial law and executed six of the ringleaders.⁹⁸ Like the murders in Baining, the plot at Friedrich Wilhelmshafen revealed how fraught relations between white colonists and New Guineans were. Moreover, to the colonists, it revealed just how tenuous their control in German New Guinea really was. The shock of discovering this conspiracy lingered with colonists, and its memory surfaced years later, when the actions of a resident Rhenish missionary again threatened a very fragile peace.

In 1908, Didui was working as a "station girl" at the Rhenish mission's station on the island of Siar, where she was also a pupil at the mission's school.⁹⁹ One day, she walked from the mission station into the village to visit her husband, Gileng, who worked for the colonial administration as a police soldier. Her act of visiting her husband enraged the local missionary, Ernst Weber.¹⁰⁰ She reported that as punishment, Weber "grabbed hold of me and bent me forward," and dealt her "a severe beating on the buttocks with the cane." Several days later, she still bore the welts that Weber's beating had left on her right thigh. Weber then threatened that if she ever again went to the village to visit Gileng, Weber would write to the Kaiser, who would in turn send "police boys" to see to it that both Didui and Gileng

⁹⁸ Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders under German Rule*, 180-183.

⁹⁹ Ernst Weber, Siar, to the Imperial Governor, Albert Hahl, 30 May 1908. RMG: 2.155; Ernst Weber papers.

¹⁰⁰ Gileng's statement, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, 23 September 1908, NAA: G255, 1104: Kaiserliches Bezirksgericht zu Friedrich-Wilhelmshafen. Akten in der Strafsache gegen den Missionar Weber wegen Beleidigung, Verleumdung, versuchter Nötigung, Amtsanmassung, Körperverletzung und Bedrohung mit dem Verbrechen des Totschlages (1908-12).

were killed. Weber then proceeded to make threats about the local district officer, or *kiap*: “I am also a *kiap*,” Weber told her, “and if the *kiap* comes here, I will throw him out.”¹⁰¹

When the administration judicial committee from Friedrich Wilhelmshafen traveled to the island on 24 September to investigate the matter, some twenty or more Siar people—men and women—made a host of allegations about the missionary’s violent behavior. Weber had threatened the island’s men that if they listened to colonial administrative authorities, they would not be allowed to marry. He did not like it when the people “*belong German*” have a wife, they said. Gileng told the district officer: “All the Tamols [men] who want to have a wife don’t come to you, but to Weber, because they are frightened of the *strong paper* which the missionary will use to put them in the *kalabus*.” Women who listened to the administrative authorities, Weber apparently threatened, would be taken by them and used as sexual servants by the “white men.” The missionary had also repeatedly disrupted village festivities and had punished and threatened those who took part, even though the administrator in Friedrich Wilhelmshafen had allowed these *sing sings* to take place. He was said to have imprisoned one man in a room in his house for striking the *garamut*, the large slit drum used to signal the beginning of a *sing sing*. He then made the men work for him for two days without pay. He had punished “small children” at the mission school by making them sit day-long in the sun without food, such that “In the evenings, the children complain to their parents and cry.” He had also threatened Islanders with imprisonment, death, and eternal damnation if they defied his authority. When one man wanted to retrieve his son who was working at the mission, Weber told him he would “go to Satan” when he died. Three women who were “schoolchildren” at the Rhenish mission, but whom the committee noted

¹⁰¹ Didui’s statement, Siar, 24 September 1908, *ibid*.

were, like Didui, “grown, sexually mature girls,” said that the day that Didui visited Gileng, Weber beat them on his veranda with a cane. “Weber was angry because Didui had gone to the village,” they said.¹⁰²

Of particular concern to the administration were remarks that Weber had purportedly made about district officers—*kiaps*—stationed at Friedrich Wilhelmshafen. In his threats to the Siar people, Weber had allegedly repeatedly made statements undermining the authority of the colonial administration’s representatives. The missionary personally claimed responsibility for the early departure of the former district officer, Rudolf Karlowa, and promised that his successor, Benno Scholz, would also be recalled to Germany. According to Gileng, Weber claimed to have written to the Kaiser who had then had the district officer recalled: “I have already had Karlowa taken away (*raus him finished*). His time was not yet over. He was a bad soul. When he dies, he’s going to Satan’s fire.”¹⁰³ Another Siar man claimed that Weber made similar statements to others on the island:

The missionary Weber is said to have told them that if the Kiap allowed them to have a *sing sing*, that didn’t mean anything. They had already seen it with Karlowa. His period of service was not yet over. However, he, Weber, made a *paper* about Karlowa, and he had to go before his time was over (*time belong him no finished jet, hi go namel belong man belong him*). It will be the same with the current *kiap*. I will make a *paper* about him, then he’ll be gone.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Siar Islanders’ statements, Siar, 24 September 1908, and Gileng’s statement, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, 18 September 1908, *ibid*.

¹⁰³ Gileng’s statement, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, 18 September 1908, *ibid*.

¹⁰⁴ Kais’s statement, Siar, 24 September 1908, *ibid*.

As we saw in the previous chapter, antagonisms existed between the Rhenish mission and the administration, particularly with regard to questions of sexual morality. Scholz was outraged at Weber's allegations about his predecessor's "moral unworthiness," and emphasized to Governor Hahl that "Weber had portrayed the governor and district officer as a kind of poor apprentice in the boy-service of the Kaiser." But if the missionary Bergmann's denunciations of the administrator Boether (discussed in Chapter 3) had proven embarrassing for the administration, ultimately prompting a response from the Colonial Department, Scholz considered the actions of Bergmann's successor, Weber, "to constitute a downright danger to the public."¹⁰⁵ The threat of violence, which had peaked in the Friedrich Wilhelmshafen area five years earlier in 1904, colored Scholz's thinking. "Only a few years ago," he wrote to Hahl, "a revolt threatened the lives of the whites (the success of which, as is known, would have directly met the mission women with a horrendous fate." The danger caused by Weber's actions were sufficient for his mission society to relieve him of his post in New Guinea. His violent efforts to intervene into the intimate spheres of New Guineans' lives backfired. Even his fellow missionaries attributed the mission's waning influence over the people of Friedrich Wilhelmshafen to Weber's antics. In Weber's wake, they witnessed with horror the resurgence of that "mightiest bulwark of Papuan heathendom," the *Mesiab* cult, which they believed had been successfully suppressed after the 1904 "revolt."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Benno Scholz, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, to Hahl, Herbertshöhe, 27 May 1909, *ibid.* Scholz was himself a Catholic, see Peter Sack, *Phantom History, The Rule of Law and the Colonial State: The Case of German New Guinea* (Canberra: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, ANU, 2001), 240.

¹⁰⁶ Helmich, Ragetta to the mission inspector, 27 November 1908, RMG: 2.148; Heinrich Helmich papers, vol. 2; Helmich, Halbjarsbericht der Station Ragetta vom 1. Januar bis 30. Juni 1910, 7 July 1910, RMG: 2.148.

Educational Contracts and New Guinean Women's Labors

The Baining people of Loan and the people of the Friedrich Wilhelmshafen area were not alone in contesting missionary interventions into family life and physical and forceful incursions into domestic spaces and homes. Further westward along the New Guinea coast from Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, similar events unfurled that reveal the ambiguous and contested nature of New Guinean women's labors in the German colony. A complaint was first brought to before the station court in Eitapé on 17 August 1909 when four men from the nearby Angel Island accused the Catholic missionary of the Divine Word Mission, Philipp Jäschke with meddling in the Islanders' marital affairs. Three of the men were men of note: the big man Alup was joined by two *tultuls*, Apai and Kilik; the fourth man was Parian, whose marriage to Karielin from the neighboring island of Ali, lay at the heart of the matter.¹⁰⁷

Karielin had come to Angel from Ali to marry Parian "of her own free will," Parian and the *tultuls* agreed.¹⁰⁸ She and Parian had been married three days, and had slept together, Parian said.¹⁰⁹ On the fourth day, Jäschke arrived on Angel, having traveled from his station on Ali by canoe. Karielin was sitting by the door of Parian's house when Jäschke approached. She stood up as Jäschke approached. "*You like goa Ali?*" Jäschke reportedly asked, to which Karielin replied: "No, I want to stay in Angel." Jäschke hit Karielin twice across the face.¹¹⁰ Multiple witnesses described what followed. Karielin, they said, had grabbed hold of the

¹⁰⁷ NAA: G255, 1117: Stationsgericht zu Eitapé. Akten gegen Pater Philip [sic] Jäschke aus Ali wegen Vergehens gegen §239 St.G.B (1909-11). The name of the woman I am referring to as Karielin is rendered even more inconsistently than is usually the case. Karielin was the version of her name recorded by court scribe Steinemann from her husband Parian's testimony. His name also appears elsewhere in the file as Pariau.

¹⁰⁸ Parian, Apai, and Kilik's statements, Eitapé, 25 October 1909, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Parian's statements, Eitapé, 17 October 1910, and Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, 31 December 1910, *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Alup's statement, Eitapé, 16 October 1910, *ibid.*

doorpost of her husband's house with one hand as Jäschke attempted to drag her away by the other.¹¹¹ Parian, who was asleep inside his house awoke when he heard his wife screaming. Looking outside, he saw Karielin clinging to the post and heard her shout: "I don't want to go back to Ali, I want to stay here." Jäschke called two men—Parian believed them to be from Ali—to help him remove Karielin, and he struck the hand with which she was holding onto the post. With the men's assistance, Parian said, Jäschke took Karielin to his canoe, telling her that he would take her to Ali where her father was pining for her.¹¹² However, witnesses saw that Jäschke did not take Karielin the two miles northwestward to Ali, but canoed past it, westward about six miles to the mission's main station on Tumleo Island, off the coast of Eitapé, where the mission's steamer, the *Gabriel*, was anchored. Parian later heard from some Tumleo people that Karielin had been shipped on board the *Gabriel* to Bogia.¹¹³

Jäschke intended Karielin to marry a man named Matapa, a Catholic at the Divine Word's mission station at Bogia, well over two hundred miles away from Karielin's home of Ali, eastward along the New Guinea coast toward Friedrich Wilhelmshafen. Parian was "a heathen," Jäschke said, and as Karielin had been baptized, her marriage to him constituted a violation of the Church's teachings intolerable to the missionary.¹¹⁴ According to Parian, Karielin had told him that she did not want to marry Matapa but wanted to marry him instead.¹¹⁵ The administrator, Hans Rodatz, accepted that Karielin had "of her own will married an unbaptized man from Angel named Parian without the knowledge of the

¹¹¹ Parian's statements, Eitapé, 25 October 1909, and 17 October 1910, and Alup, Apon, and Kilik's statements, Eitapé, 16 October 1910, *ibid.*

¹¹² Parian's statement, Eitapé, 25 October 1909, *ibid.*

¹¹³ Parian and Apai's statements, Eitapé, 25 October 1909, *ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Jäschke's statement, Eitapé, 25 October 1909, *ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Parian's statement, Eitapé, 25 October 1909, *ibid.*

mission.”¹¹⁶ The *tultul*, Apai, agreed.¹¹⁷ Even the senior Catholic missionary, Father Joseph Lörks, who had been stationed in Kaiser Wilhelmsland since 1900, believed that Karielin did not want to marry the man that Jäschke intended for her in Bogia, nor did he want to marry her.¹¹⁸

Jäschke, too, indicated that Karielin had made her own decision to marry Parian—she “tried to marry the heathen,” he said. Yet he repeatedly referred to the Catholic man in Bogia as her “actual groom.”¹¹⁹ He was also eager to voice his opinions about Karielin’s wishes. After speaking with her on Angel, he said, Karielin “then followed me to Tumleo of her own free will, as she wanted to return to Ali.” Once in Jäschke’s canoe, Karielin apparently told him that she did not want to marry Parian and was happy to be getting away from him. “The girl then went of her request to Bogia to marry her actual groom,” Jäschke stated.¹²⁰ An official who later reviewed the case file signaled doubt by placing two question marks in the margins of the page next to Jäschke’s claims to be complying with Karielin’s wishes. Over a year after the incident, after being confronted in court with the witness statements, Jäschke admitted that when he had spoken with Karielin on Angel, she had answered him “impudently.” Agitated, he had hit her in the mouth. He now conceded that Karielin had struggled against leaving the island with him, but only, he believed, because “Karielin was ashamed of herself in front of the Angel and Ali people.” Her shame, according to Jäschke, was the reason she had held onto the doorpost of her husband’s house as Jäschke tried to

¹¹⁶ Hans Rodatz, Eitapé, 31 October 1909, to the imperial administration, Herbetshöhe, *ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Apai’s statement, Eitapé, 25 October 1909, *ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Rodatz, Eitapé 31 October 1909, to the imperial district court, Friedrich Wilhemshafen, *ibid.* On Joseph Lörks, see Paul Steffen, *Missionsbeginn in Neuguinea: Die Anfänge der Rheinischen, Neuendettelsauer und Steyler Missionsarbeit in Neuguinea* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1995), 289.

¹¹⁹ Jäschke’s statements, Eitapé, 25 October 1909, and 17 October 1910, NAA: G255, 1117.

¹²⁰ Jäschke statement, Eitapé, 25 October 1909, *ibid.*

drag her away. Leading her through the village by the hand, Jäschke said, Karielin went “of her own free will” once they had past the last house in the village. “My conduct seemed to me even more justified,” Jäschke said, “when Karielin assured me in the canoe that she was happy to get away from Angel and Ali.”¹²¹

Questions of consent permeated the case, extending to Karielin’s family. A comment made by Parian, for example suggests that Karielin’s father had not consented to their marriage.¹²² The consent of her father, however, played no part in the matter, said the *tultul*, Apai. “Karielin is fully grown [*voll entwickelt*] and according to our views has the right to self-determination.” Even if her father did not approve of the marriage, the *tultul* said, he was not in the position to call it off.¹²³ Did Hans Rodatz, the administrative official in Eitapé, have doubts about this? It appears so, because he consulted on the matter with the missionary ethnographer, Joseph Erdweg, an old New Guinea hand who had arrived in the colony in 1896 and had established the Divine Word’s mission station, St. Joseph, on Tumleo.¹²⁴ Rodatz was able to report to the imperial district court in Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, to which he referred the case, that according to Erdweg, it was indeed true “that a girl’s father has no influence over her marriage.”¹²⁵ When questioned in Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, Jäschke maintained that he had traveled to Angel and retrieved Karielin at the request of the Ali people, because she had gone there against her parents’ will.¹²⁶ But he also declared the relatives of Matapu, the Catholic man at Bogia whom he intended Karielin to marry, also

¹²¹ Jäschke’s statement, Eitapé, 17 October 1910, *ibid.*

¹²² Parian’s statement, Eitapé, 25 October 1909, *ibid.*

¹²³ Apai’s statement, Eitapé, 25 October 1909, *ibid.*

¹²⁴ Joseph Erdweg published extensively on culture and ethnography in his New Guinea mission field. See, for example, Mathias Josef Erdweg, “Die Bewohner der Insel Tumleo, Berlinhafen, Deutsch-Neu-Guinea,” *Mittheilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien* 32 (1902): 274-310, 317-399.

¹²⁵ Rodatz, Eitapé, 31 October 1909, NAA: G255, 1117.

¹²⁶ Jäschke’s statement, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, 31 December 1910, *ibid.*

opposed that union.¹²⁷ It would seem that for Jäschke, the wishes of family—in so far as they can be known—mattered only when they were in accord with his own.

The administrator in Eitapé also raised questions about consent in relation to the mission's activities. Writing to the imperial administration in Herbertshöhe, Rodatz indicated that the case of Jäschke removing Karielin from her home and sending her to the mission station at Bogia was "not the only one of its kind. The mission continually sends grown girls, capable of self-determination, from station to station to be used as laborers by the sisters," he wrote. Furthermore, they did so "without notifying the labor authority." In Rodatz's opinion, the mission's actions constituted a breach of the labor recruitment ordinance, and, on the basis of the ordinance, he felt authorized "to intervene independently against this." Cautious "to avoid the slightest appearance of personal animosity against the mission," however, with which he was on good terms, Rodatz requested "detailed instructions" from Hahl on how to proceed "with regards to the use of women as mission laborers and the rights of the mission to break off or bring about marriages."¹²⁸

Four months later, Hahl replied. The answer to Rodatz's question "about the use of adult female natives by the mission" depended, the governor wrote, on whether the women were taken to the mission station as "pupils" [*Schülerinnen*] or "laborers" [*Arbeiterinnen*]. Such distinctions would have to be determined on a case-by-case basis, he wrote, with contractual provisions that included remuneration suggesting a labor contract, rather than an educational one. According to Hahl, the labor ordinance did not apply to "adult natives" who entered into an "educational contract" with the mission, even when such an

¹²⁷ Jäschke's statement, Eitapé, 17 October 1910, *ibid.*

¹²⁸ Rodatz, Eitapé, 31 October 1909, to the imperial administration, Herbertshöhe, *ibid.*

arrangement included an “obligation to perform labor.” As Hahl put it, “in addition to religious education, the education to work and have a sense of duty is also a significant part of the education provided by the mission.” Whether they be laborers or pupils, Hahl had no objection to “native women” being sent from one mission station to another, so long as it happened “with their consent.”¹²⁹

Rodatz was unable to question Karielin in order to ascertain whether or not she had consented to being sent to the mission station. She was already in Bogia, in the district of the Friedrich Wilhelmshafen court. Nor was it possible for the imperial judge at Friedrich Wilhelmshafen to obtain a statement from her when he visited the Bogia area sometime in early 1910, as the relevant case files were at that time in Herbertshöhe. However, on 9 July, the judge sent word from Bogia that Karielin was back on Ali, that she had not married the man at Bogia, but rather another from Yakamul. Four months later, the imperial station at Eitapé was unable to determine Karielin’s whereabouts. Word was that she was somewhere in the Matapau hinterlands, some forty-five miles east of Eitapé, beyond Yakamul. Police soldiers who had been dispatched on patrol in the area were unable to find her. Five people from Angel had been searching for her for two weeks, without success. The station chief, Schober, had himself attempted to locate her, but her whereabouts eluded him too.¹³⁰ Six weeks later, after Karielin had been requested to appear as a witness in the imperial district court in Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, she was still unable to be found. Schober had “dispatched soldiers after the witness, asked the inhabitants of the entire coast about her, offered rewards for procuring Karielin, all without success.”¹³¹

¹²⁹ Hahl, Rabaul, 1 March 1910, to the imperial station, Eitapé, *ibid.*

¹³⁰ Schober’s note, Eitapé, 1 November 1910, *ibid.*

¹³¹ Schober, Eitapé, 15 December 1910, to the imperial district officer, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, *ibid.*

While Karielin slipped through the hands of missionaries and administrators alike, the “educational contract” remained a tool through which the missionaries made claims to women’s labors. It equally remained a contentious one among administrators who saw it as a nothing more than a disguised labor contract and thus, like Rodatz had, understood the missionaries’ transportation of women between mission stations without official authorization to constitute a violation of the colony’s labor recruitment ordinance. As the administration began to place new restrictions on the recruitment of New Guinean women into the labor indenture (which will be examined in further detail in chapter 6), questions again arose as to the legality of the mission’s recruitment of women under “educational contracts.”

By 1913, some administrators were questioning whether or not women and girls could be transported to mission stations since official labor ordinances now forbade the recruitment of “unmarried girls or married women without the simultaneous recruitment of the husbands.” Administrators pursued this question when a Yakumul man named Wuwu accused the local Catholic father, Heinrich Wörtel, in September 1913 of having “forcefully recruited” his sister Tenjam and transported her aboard the *Gabriel* to the mission station at Alexishafen.¹³² Tenjam was married to Wokau, also from Yakumul, who was laboring for the New Guinea Company in Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, causing an administrator to note the official prohibition on recruiting married women without their husbands.¹³³ Like his colleague Jäschke had done with Karielin, Wörtel challenged Tenjam’s marriage. He claimed that Tenjam was not yet sexually mature and was not yet married to Wokau, only promised

¹³² Wuwu’s statement, Eitapé, 22 September 1913, NAA: G255, 1093: Stationsgericht zu Eitapé. Akten gegen Pater Wörtel in Jakumul (1913-1914).

¹³³ Ibid., and see the margin note on this page.

in marriage. Echoing claims made years earlier by Jäschke, Wörtel purported to be acting in accordance with Tenjam's express desire to be transported to Alexishafen to get out of her proposed marriage.¹³⁴

Tenjam's account of her marriage and transportation to the mission station at Alexishafen differed from both her brother's and Father Wörtel's. She stated in January 1914 that she had not been forcefully recruited but had boarded the *Gabriel* in order to travel to Potsdamhafen. It was here, not in Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, that her husband was working for the New Guinea Company. She had agreed to go with Wörtel, she said, when he told her she would thereby be able visit her husband in Potsdamhafen. But she did not ultimately go to Potsdamhafen. Once at Alexishafen, she chose to stay at the mission on the condition that she would be able to travel to Potsdamhafen to see her husband frequently.¹³⁵ Although a distance of over one hundred miles, such an arrangement could have been easily facilitated given the *Gabriel's* frequent trips between the mission's various stations. Tenjam may have already known this when she arrived in Alexishafen. She would have been familiar with the mission's ship before boarding it in Yakamul and likely also its movements up and down the coast between the mission stations, as her brother was.¹³⁶ The mission's patterns of transporting women between stations may thus have proven useful to some women who were able to use them to maintain contact with family members who themselves had been transported to distant locales through the migratory labor system.

For administrators, however, problems regarding the ambiguous categories of mission laborers and pupils persisted. In a margin note, the district judge in Friedrich

¹³⁴ Wörtel's statement, Eitapé, 17 October 1913, *ibid.*

¹³⁵ Tenjam's statement, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, 21 January 1914, *ibid.*

¹³⁶ Wuwu's statement, Eitapé, 22 September 1913, *ibid.*

Wilhelmshafen, Richard Gebhard, posed the question directly: “Is Tenjam a laborer or pupil?”¹³⁷ He requested to see her contract.¹³⁸ The mission hastened to produce such a contract, having failed to do so when Tenjam arrived at Alexishafen three months earlier. A “copy” of the “educational contract” was penned by one of the mission sisters and forwarded to the district office in Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, bearing Tenjam’s mark.¹³⁹ The contract declared Tenjam’s consent to remain at Alexishafen and receive education from the mission sisters so long as her “fiancé” remained in the service of the New Guinea Company. This document satisfied the district judge. Noting that under the labor ordinance, the Catholic mission did not have permission to recruit married women independently of their husband, the judge declared that Wörtel’s actions *would* constitute a violation of the ordinance “*if it were a matter of recruitment in the sense of the labor ordinance.*” However, the court sidestepped the labor ordinance’s prohibition by declaring in January 1914 that the Catholic mission, as Wörtel’s representative, had accepted Tenjam as a mission pupil rather than as a laborer.¹⁴⁰

Just months after Hahl’s departure from German New Guinea in May 1914, the colonial administration, now headed by acting governor Eduard Haber, received a further complaint about the Divine Word Mission’s recruitment of women. This time, the complaint came from the new Eitapé station chief, Schmaus, and he did not mince his words. He accused the missionary August Becker of having recruited three women from Tjinapelli (Chinapelli)

¹³⁷ Gebhard’s margin note is next to Wörtel’s statement, Eitapé, 17 October 1913, *ibid.*

¹³⁸ Gebhard to the Catholic Mission, Alexishafen, 13 December 1913, *ibid.*

¹³⁹ “Copy” of the “Erziehungs-Vertrag,” St. Michael [Alexishafen], 28 December 1913, *ibid.* The document was written by Sister Valeria Diezen and bore her and Sister Philomena Herzog’s signatures. On the mission sisters, see Katharina Stornig, *Sisters Crossing Boundaries: German Missionary Nuns in Colonial Togo and New Guinea, 1897-1960* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 79.

¹⁴⁰ Ruling of the imperial district court, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, 24 January 1914, NAA: G255, 1093. My emphasis.

for the mission station in Pro, in violation of the labor ordinance. Schmaus rejected—preemptively—any possible claims the mission might make to the women being at the mission on educational contracts. Becker himself, Schmaus claimed, described one of the women, Saiongo, as “eligible for recruitment” [*anwerbefähig*] and wrote of her “labor contract” for the mission station at Monumbo.¹⁴¹ According to Becker, Saiongo and the two other women, Kabatz and Muntrok, had made the five-hour trek from their village to Pro in order to stay with the mission sisters in July. He had concluded a “provisional labor contract” with them before producing an educational contract. Becker pointed out to the colonial authorities that prohibitions on the “recruitment” of women did not apply to the educational contract, nor did he require a permit to recruit.¹⁴² World War I intervened before the case against Father Becker was brought to trial.¹⁴³ However, it reveals that up until the effective end of German colonial rule in New Guinea, the mission’s educational contracts constituted an uncertain and contested category of New Guinean women’s labor.

Conclusion

Marriage was crucial site for missionaries in German New Guinea, intent on reinventing New Guinean families in accordance with European ideals of gender, labor, and the family. The extent to which missionaries’ recruitment of “adoptees” and “pupils” utilized and mirrored

¹⁴¹ Schmaus, “Betrifft: Anwerbeverbot fuer P. Becker S.V.D, Eitapé, to the imperial administration, Rabaul, 19 July 1914, NAA: G255, 1102: Kaiserliches Bezirksgericht zu Friedrich-Wilhelmshafen. Akten in der Strafsache gegen den Pater Becker wegen Vergehens gegen die Arbeiterverordnung (1914).

¹⁴² August Becker, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, 15 August 1914, *ibid.*

¹⁴³ The main trial was scheduled to take place on 10 October 1914. Australian troops invaded Neu Pommern on 11 September, and Eduard Haber surrendered the colony on 17 September.

the colonial indenture system produced tensions between different “factions” of colonial society, despite a shared investment in “educating” New Guineans to labor. For missionaries like Louis Couppé, heteronormative, laboring, Christian families would bring about colonial prosperity. The Sacred Heart mission’s program of removing New Guinean children from their home societies in order to raise them into industrious Christians on the missions thus attracted Hahl’s support. Yet, at other times, missionary incursions into the intimate spheres of vernacular life proved odds with administrative interests in the colony. Nowhere was this more the case than when New Guineans violently protested this incursions and asserted their rights to their lands and life worlds. Themes of marriage and rights appear in the following chapter, too, which turns its attention to the colonial mechanisms through which sexual contact in the colony was both policed and permitted.

CHAPTER 5

Policing and Permitting Sexual Contact:

Prostitution, Sexual Violence, and the Rule of Law

In 1911, Tapilai, a Neu Hannover (Lavongai) woman, appeared with her husband and brother before the German imperial authorities in the capital of German colonial New Guinea, Rabaul. The three worked as indentured laborers on a plantation in the Baining Mountains on the Gazelle Peninsula. Tapilai was employed there as a laundress. Together with Tapilai's two-month-old child, they had walked some sixty miles to the capital to lodge a complaint with representatives of the Imperial Administration against their employers, the brothers Wilhelm and Hermann Bolten, both of whom they charged with having repeatedly raped Tapilai.¹

Cases like Tapilai's lie at the heart of this chapter's concerns with the mechanisms through which interracial sexual contact was both policed and permitted in German New Guinea. Colonial courts like that which Tapilai and her family appeared before in 1911 were

¹ National Archives of Australia, Canberra (NAA): Imperial Government of German New Guinea; G255, Correspondence files; 325: Kaiserliches Bezirksgericht zu Rabaul. Akten in der Strafsache gegen Bolten, Wilhelm, und Bolten, Hermann, wegen Notzucht (1911-1912).

a site of policing in the colony, but, as this chapter shows, colonial law was an instrument of colonial power through which racial hierarchies were contested, but ultimately maintained.

Before turning to the colonial courts, this chapter explores two other sites that were instrumental for the policing of sexual contact between white, European men and female colonial subjects. First, this chapter examines the sanctioned, but nevertheless contested, presence of a semi-official sex industry located at the center of colonial settlement on the Gazelle Peninsula. This industry, staffed by Japanese sex workers, was seen as something of a necessary evil for policing sexual contact between white, European men and local women in these complex contact zones. Next, we turn to colonial attitudes toward state-sanctioned interracial marriage in the colony. Although marriage between Europeans and New Guineans was never officially prohibited in the German colony, it was a topic that was discussed with increasing urgency in the early twentieth century. Marriage law was one way of determining the legitimacy of such unions, though it was blunt instrument in preventing sexual contact between white men and New Guinean women, as many colonists pointed out, and was no impediment to European men who assumed the right to access New Guinean women's bodies.

The violence of some of these sexual encounters is discussed in the final part of this chapter. Here, I analyze several rape cases tried by German colonial courts in order to reveal the gendered nature of colonial violence and discourse, as well as the everyday colonial practices of permitting white European men's violent sexual contact with New Guinean women. As we have seen, many white, male colonists understood the indenture as providing them access to New Guineans' productive and domestic labors, and to the sexual labors of New Guinean women. While Europeans frequently characterized New Guinean women as

“promiscuous,” they also equated their participation in the wage economy of indenture with prostitution. German colonial courts played a crucial role in the codification and normalization of discourses linking New Guinean women’s laboring bodies to their purported sexual promiscuity and proclivities for prostitution. Such categorizations were not only constitutive of a colonial culture that was ultimately *permissive* of sexual violence perpetrated by white, European men against New Guinean women, but also work to obscure the gendered forms of violence that characterized the German colonial labor indenture.

Sanctioned Sex

One of the ways in which the German colonial administration sought to police interracial sex in New Guinea was through prostitution. As Hahl saw the situation in 1904, in a place like Matupit, a small island in Blanche Bay which had been a colonial trading center and transit point in the since the 1870s, it was not “practically feasible to suppress prostitution completely.” It was not the white men of German New Guinea’s European colonial society that were the problem, Hahl implied. Rather, he singled out the “numerous Chinese” who resided at Matupit and to the “brisk through traffic of whites” who passed through this harbor town and whose “social rank” was questionable. The problem also seemed to reside with the “native women” of Matupit, who, Hahl knew, did not “enjoy the best reputation.” Both Hahl and the Catholic bishop, Louis Couppé, had previously discussed the issue of interracial sex and sexual commerce and both agreed that it would be “desirable” to prevent “local natives” from engaging in prostitution around the colony’s harbors. It therefore

seemed prudent to Hahl to sanction a sex industry here, whose workers, imported from outside the colony, could be placed under the careful watch of the colonial administration.²

The idea of establishing a brothel at Matupit came from Ah Tam, a long-time resident of the Gazelle Peninsula, entrepreneurial businessman, and significant figure in the German colony's small Chinese community. Ah Tam had come to the Bismarck Archipelago sometime during the 1870s or 1880s as an employee of the Hamburg-based HERNSHEIM firm.³ His main business interests were in shipbuilding and repair, and by 1904, he employed around thirty to forty Chinese in Matupit.⁴ He paid his taxes to the colonial administration and had obtained the necessary license to operate a bar on the island.⁵ In mid-1904, Ah Tam informed Hahl of his intentions to employ three Japanese women as “servants in his new guesthouse” at Matupit—or, at least, this was the language that Hahl used to describe Japanese sex workers when he explained the situation to the Foreign Office in Berlin later that year. Given the presence of *karayuki-san* in other colonial centers in the Asia-Pacific region at the time, it was language that would have been widely understood.⁶ Hahl had agreed to allow Ah Tam's “employment of the Japanese women” at his “guesthouse” on two conditions: that no complaints about the enterprise would be brought before the administration; and that the

² Albert Hahl, Herbertshöhe, to the Colonial Division of the Foreign Office, Berlin, 23 November 1904, Bundesarchiv Berlin (hereafter: BArch): Reichskolonialamt; R 1001/2991, 74-76.

³ David Y. H. Wu, *The Chinese in Papua New Guinea, 1880-1980* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press), 21.

⁴ Hahl, Herbertshöhe, to the Colonial Division of the Foreign Office, Berlin, 23 November 1904, BArch: R 1001/2991, 74-76.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ D. C. S. Sission, “Karayuki-San: Japanese Prostitution in Australia, 1887-1916,” *Historical Studies* 17 (1977): 474-488; Hiroshi Shimizu, “Karayuki-San and the Japanese Economic Advance into British Malaya, 1870-1920,” *Asian Studies Review* (1997): 107-132. Hiromitsu Iwamoto has noted that *karayuki-san* in German New Guinea did not conform to patterns seen more generally in Southeast Asia, where it could be “a barometer of Japanese prosperity.” In places like Singapore, *karayuki-san* was tightly connected to more general expansions of Japanese businesses; in German New Guinea, it was a direct result of Ah Tam's entrepreneurship. See Hiromitsu Iwamoto, *Nanshin: Japanese Settlers in Papua and New Guinea 1890-1949* (Canberra: Journal of Pacific History, Division of Pacific and Asian History, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, 1999), 58.

Japanese women would submit to regular medical examinations. The agreement between Hahl and Ah Tam was a verbal one—no “explicit document of authorization of any type” for Ah Tam’s Matupit brothel existed, as Hahl explained to the Foreign Office in October 1904.⁷ When Rabaul became the colonial capital in 1910, Ah Tam was also permitted to establish a brothel there, not far from the original site at Matupit. His business expanded, employing perhaps twenty Japanese women by 1914 whose presence in the colony required the administration’s approval.⁸

Hahl’s conditions signaled his concerns with both the moral and public health aspects of policing sexual contact in the colony. In terms of public health, regular medical examinations of prostitutes were intended to keep the spread of venereal disease in check in this difficult-to-regulate colonial center and transit point.⁹ The district administrator in Rabaul, Joseph Klug, agreed with this argument. He declared in 1911 that with a growing white population, the majority of whom were single men, prostitution could not be avoided in the colony, but it could be monitored “through regular hygienic controls.” The establishment of brothels employing Japanese women, he believed was consistent with the “perspectives that control the toleration and barracking [*Kasernierung*] of prostitution in Germany.”¹⁰ However, in 1911, the government physician Dr. Karl Kopp noted that although

⁷ Herbertshöhe, to the Colonial Division of the Foreign Office, Berlin, 23 November 1904, BArch: R 1001/2991, 74-76.

⁸ Margrit Davies, *Public Health and Colonialism: The Case of German New Guinea, 1884-1914* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2002), 68; Daniel J. Walther, *Sex and Control: Venereal Disease, Colonial Physicians, and Indigenous Agency in German Colonialism, 1884-1914* (New York: Berghahn, 2015), 41; Hahl, Herbertshöhe, to the Colonial Division of the Foreign Office, Berlin, 23 November 1904, BArch: R 1001/2991, 74-76.

⁹ Details of how German physicians conducted these medical examinations are lacking. However, a report from 1915 during the period of the Australian Military Administration stated: “These women are examined and a swab taken from the Os Cervix and the Urethra every Saturday morning.” Henry Field-Martell, Health Report, 25 May 1915, Australian War Memorial Archive, Canberra (hereafter: AWM); New Guinea Campaign records (1914-1918 war); 33, 12/6.

¹⁰ Joseph Klug, Rabaul, to Hahl, 13 March 1911, BArch: R 1001/2264, 120.

instances of venereal infection appeared to be declining among Rabaul's "colored" population, "various new infections were to be found among the Europeans." Kopp attributed this to the brothels and saw to it that "controls of the bordello girls were tightened, and informative notices put up at the two local bordellos."¹¹ Another government physician noted the following year a "typical case of lues" apparently acquired at the Rabaul brothel by one obstinate European man whose "haggard" body reacted poorly to the prescribed salvarsan injection.¹² He noted the constant threat to the health of New Guineans and Europeans alike posed by the "too many" men like this who "roam about in the colony with untreated gonorrhoea—also probably here and there with lues acquired elsewhere." Whether this sanctioned sex industry did much to further the general health of the colony thus seems doubtful, and the women who worked in Ah Tam's brothels likely suffered fairly constantly from venereal infections.¹³

Hahl's hope that his administration would not receive any complaints about the brothel was short-lived. Within months of the establishment's opening, a complaint came indirectly to the colonial administration in the form of an article published in a Catholic Westphalian newspaper, the *Münsterische Anzeiger*, in which an anonymous writer had charged Ah Tam's enterprise with moral offenses. Hahl attributed the "questionable article" to Father Bögershausen of the Sacred Heart Mission. Bögershausen's mission station was on Matupit and he was known to Hahl to be a correspondent for the Catholic newspaper. Further, he had already expressed his opposition to Ah Tam's brothel, describing it as a

¹¹ Karl Kopp, "Ärztliche Vierteljahres-Bericht über die Zeit vom 1. Oktober bis 31. Dezember 1911, Rabaul, 31 January 1912, BArch: R 1001/5772, 120-122.

¹² Hermann Runge, "Vierteljahresbericht für die Zeit vom 1. Januar bis 31. März 1912," Herbertshöhe, BArch: R 1001/5772, 159.

¹³ See Field-Martell, Health Report, 25 May 1915, AWM: 33, 12/6.

“disturbance to public morality.”¹⁴ Given Bögershausen’s obsession with matters of sexual morality, Hahl’s suspicions were justified. In the pages of the Catholic mission’s journal, the *Hiltruper Monatshefte*, he charged the rival Wesleyan missionaries with condoning adultery and polygamy among its flock.¹⁵ At the time of the article’s publication, Bögershausen was fervently trying to stamp out polygamy and adultery in his mission field by reporting cases of adultery to the colonial administrations and demanding that women in polygamous marriages leave their husbands.¹⁶ Of particular concern to Bögershausen was the corrupting effect Ah Tam’s establish could have on Matupit Islanders.

This article in the *Münsterische Anzeiger* was the reason that Hahl found himself, in 1904, having to justify the presence of a tacitly sanctioned sex industry in the German colony to the Foreign Office in Berlin. Hahl addressed a concern that the article had raised about “natives” curiously “peeking through cracks in the walls” of the guesthouse to observe the goings on inside.¹⁷ If such a thing had occurred, Hahl asserted, it was only because construction of the building had not yet been completed. Now that it had been, it was impossible to peer into the rooms from the street. In any case, the local people would “hardly be concerned about the whole matter” once their “initial curiosity subsided.”¹⁸ It was in Ah Tam’s interest, he continued, “to keep the natives far from his guesthouse and to avoid

¹⁴ Hahl, Herbertshöhe, to the Colonial Division of the Foreign Office, Berlin, 23 November 1904, BArch: R 1001/2991, 74-76.

¹⁵ “Brief des hochw. P. Bögershausen an den Redakteur der Monatshefte,” Matupit, 25 November 1902, *Hiltruper Monatshefte* (1903): 256.

¹⁶ See, for example, To Kapindik’s statement, 31 December 1904, and Ja Kambara’s statement, 1 February 1905, Herbertshöhe, NAA: G255, 484: Betr. Beschwerde des To Kapindik gegen P. Bögershausen. Also see Peter Sack, *Phantom History, The Rule of Law and the Colonial State: The Case of German New Guinea* (Canberra: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, ANU, 2001), 157.

¹⁷ Hahl, Herbertshöhe, to the Colonial Division of the Foreign Office, Berlin, 23 November 1904, BArch: R 1001/2991, 74-76.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

complaints that would result in the closure of the business.” He suggested in no uncertain terms that Father Bögershausen should keep away, too, if he considered the guesthouse to pose such an offense.¹⁹

Bögershausen did not keep away. A number of white merchants, mostly employees of HERNSHEIM & CO., who patronized Ah Tam’s hotel noticed that the priest was often in the vicinity of the establishment of an evening. One patron suspected that Bögershausen would purposefully position himself on the veranda of a neighboring house late into the night merely in order to “snitch” on the goings on next door.²⁰ Others believed that Bögershausen sent the mission children “to observe the whites” who visited the hotel.²¹ For Bögershausen, the brothel was emblematic of all manner of colonial moral and sexual transgressions. It was not just the presence of Japanese sex workers in Matupit, or even that he had heard that on one day seven white, European men had “messed around” with the Japanese women in an old building. Rather, it was unacceptable to Bögershausen that local children witnessed such goings on through windows and cracks in the walls. Further, he had heard of—and occasionally seen for himself—the hotel’s white, male patrons behaving lewdly toward Matupit women, making “certain gestures with the finger and hand” and trying to solicit sex from them. Whether the whites had already indulged in such “pleasures,” the priest did not

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Erwald Class’s statement, Matupit, 7. March 1905, NAA: G255, 309: Kaiserliches Bezirksgericht zu Herbertshöhe. Akten in der Strafsache gegen Kapitän Carl Messner in Rabaul wegen Erregung öffentlichen Ärgernisses (1905).

²¹ Max Groos’s statement, Erwald Class’s statement, and Emil Timm’s statement, Matupit, 7 March 1905, NAA: G255, 309: Kaiserliches Bezirksgericht zu Herbertshöhe. Akten in der Strafsache gegen Kapitän Carl Messner in Rabaul wegen Erregung öffentlichen Ärgernisses (1905). All three men were (for some time, at least) employed by HERNSHEIM & CO., which was based at Matupit. Incidentally, Erwald Class was the brother of Johanna Fellmann, who was married to the Wesleyan missionary, Heinrich Fellmann.

know.²² Rather than shielding New Guinean women from white, male vice, Bögershausen believed the very presence of the brothel only served to increase that vice, rendering New Guinean women and children susceptible to moral and sexual corruption.

For Hahl, Bögershausen's moral outrage over the Matupit brothel was misguided. Tackling the question of "public morality" directly, Hahl made clear that it was Matupit women, with their ostensibly poor reputations for sexual virtue, who needed the colonial administration's protection. Moreover, in pointing to Matupit's Chinese residents and European sojourners of the lower classes as those chiefly responsible for Matupit women's "reputation," Hahl directed any blame for the sexual exploitation of local women away from members of German colonial society. Given Matupit's proximity to Rabaul's Chinatown and its status as a port town, Hahl warned the Foreign Office that should Ah Tam's business be shut down as a result of Bögershausen's article, "it would not be possible to hinder the furtive, medically uncontrolled, prostitution of native women of Matupi [sic]."²³ By introducing a small number of female sex workers from Japan, who would be subject to regular medical examinations, Hahl believed that both venereal disease and the sexual activities of Matupit women could be brought under increased administrative control.

While Hahl did use a language of public health to justify the prostitution in the colony, and while venereal infection presented a serious problem for the colonial administration, it would be a mistake to overlook the fact that Hahl also explicitly understood a sanctioned sex industry as a means to police sexual contact more broadly.²⁴ Medical surveillance of the

²² Father Bögershausen's statement, 9 March 1905, NAA: G255, 309: Kaiserliches Bezirksgericht zu Herbertshöhe. Akten in der Strafsache gegen Kapitän Carl Messner in Rabaul wegen Erregung öffentlichen Ärgernisses (1905).

²³ Hahl, Herbertshöhe, to the Colonial Division of the Foreign Office, Berlin, 23 November 1904, BArch: R 1001/2991, 74-76.

²⁴ See Margrit Davies, *Public Health and Colonialism*, 67-68.

Japanese women employed in the industry was one aspect of this. But limiting sexual contact between white, European men and New Guinean women was another. These themes will resurface in the context of colonial debates about depopulation and New Guinean women's labors, which the following chapter addresses. This chapter now turns to a different set of debates, those about interracial marriage, which speak to colonial desires to regulate the legal status of sexual contact between white, European men and female colonial subjects.

Marriage Law and the Policing of Interracial Marriages

Chapter 3 has already suggested some of the conceptual ambiguities associated with the terms like "marriage" in these situations, revealing that blanket terms can obscure the wide range of differences that characterized interracial sexual relationships and scenarios in a colonial situation. As far as the German colonial state was concerned, marriage was narrowly defined as that recognized under German law. In German New Guinea, as elsewhere in the German empire, the colonial administration kept accounts of such marriages. At the beginning of 1904, it counted 433 Europeans in the colony, with 113 living in Kaiser Wilhelmsland and 320 in the Bismarck Archipelago, 346 of whom were male and eighty-seven of whom were female. The majority of adult men (291) were unmarried or widowed. Of the forty-three recorded as married, ten were married to women identified by the colonial administration as "coloured or half-blood."²⁵ Six years later, the administration counted

²⁵ Peter Sack and Dymphna Clark, eds. and trans., *German New Guinea: The Annual Reports* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1979), 245.

sixty-two married men in the same territories, nine of whom were recorded as being married to “coloured women.”²⁶ Interracial marriages, as recognized by the colonial state, were thus a minority of officially recognized marriages in the German colony.

While these marriages existed, they were increasingly discouraged, and a downward trend in the instances of such marriages is discernable from the colonial records. The colonial administration’s annual report from 1909, for example, noted the “gratifying tendency” of increasing numbers of European wives moving to the colony, while reporting that “a comparison with the figures for previous years shows the number of marriages with coloured women has declined.”²⁷ At this time, the colonial administration reported only six marriages between European men and “native” women for all of Kaiser Wilhelmsland, the Bismarck Archipelago, and the northern Solomon Islands out of a total of seventy-four married European men and a total European population of 647.²⁸ By 1914, the administration in Käwieng reported that of the sixteen married white men in the district, thirteen were married to white women. All of the remaining three were married to “half-blood wives.” For Käwieng district in Neu Mecklenburg, no marriages between white men and “native” women were reported to exist.²⁹

These statistics obscure a range of possible scenarios, since the administration did not define the ambiguous and mutable terms “native,” “coloured,” and “half-blood” in its reports. “Natives” in German New Guinea could mean people from German New Guinea, but also Melanesian Islanders from outside of the German colony, or those from its Micronesian

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 309.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 309.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 295-296.

²⁹ Peter Sack and Dymphna Clark, eds. and trans., *German New Guinea: The Draft Annual Report for 1913-14* (Canberra: Department of Law Research School of Social Sciences, The Australian National University, 1980), 41.

“Island Territories,” as well as Malay laborers. “Coloured” was an even more capacious term, encompassing at least these categories, and also Chinese, Polynesians, and others who were not classified as white or European.³⁰ The term “half-blood” is equally imprecise. In European colonial society in German New Guinea, the terms “half-blood” and “half-caste” were sometimes used in reference to Queen Emma and her extended Samoan-American family, although they enjoyed the legal status of “Europeans.”³¹ Many of the women of this family married white, European colonial officials. While these unions present interesting cases from which to consider the gendered and racialized nuances of intercultural relationships in the German colony, they occupied neither the social or legal status of unions between European men and Melanesian women.³²

Although the German colonial administration in New Guinea did not prohibit marriages between Europeans and New Guinean colonial subjects like its counterparts in German Southwest Africa, East Africa, and Samoa, it nevertheless took the question of interracial marriage seriously.³³ In October 1912, after the German colonial administration

³⁰ On these (mutable) racial categories in German colonial law, see Sack, *Phantom History*, 367-371.

³¹ See Toeolesulusulu Damon Salesa, “Emma and Phebe: ‘Weavers of the Border’” *Journal of Polynesian Society* 123, no. 2 (2014): 145-167. On the contested nature of the terms “half-blood” and “half-caste” in the context of the German colonial Pacific, see Christine Winter, “Changing Frames: Identity and Citizenship of New Guineans of German Heritage during the Interwar Years,” *The Journal of Pacific History* 47, no. 3 (2012): 347-367.

³² See Salesa, “Emma and Phebe,” 167. Hermann Hiery’s description of the women of Queen Emma’s family (specially, Emma’s sister Phebe Coe) as “indigenous” in the context of German New Guinea is utterly fallacious. See Hermann J. Hiery, “Germans, Pacific Islanders and Sexuality: German Impact and Indigenous Influence in Melanesia and Micronesia,” in *European Impact and Pacific Influence: British and German Colonial Policy in the Pacific Islands and the Indigenous Response*, eds. Hermann J. Hiery and John M. MacKenzie (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1997), 301. Despite the at times fluid and ambiguous social statuses occupied by these women of mixed Samoan descent, they were settler colonists in German New Guinea, and very much a part of European settler society there, as he acknowledges elsewhere. See Hermann Joseph Hiery, *Das deutsche Reich in der Südsee (1900-1921): Eine Annäherung an die Erfahrungen verschiedener Kulturen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 42.

³³ There exists an extensive body of scholarship on the “mixed marriage question” and “race mixing” in the German colonies, particularly for German Southwest Africa. See, for example, Martha Mamozai, *Schwarze Frau, weiße Herrin: Frauenleben in den deutschen Kolonien* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1989), 125-158; Lora Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 77-130; Lora Wildenthal, “Race, Gender and Citizenship in the German Colonial Empire,” in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial*

in Samoa passed a law prohibiting marriages between European men and “native” women in that colony, and with debates on the subject taking place in the German parliament, Hahl questioned whether a similar law should be passed German New Guinea. The Government Council, an advisory body of officials and non-officials representing administrative, commercial, and missionary interests, debated the issue, even though Hahl’s administration recorded no marriages between white, European men and “native” women in its Melanesian territories at that time.³⁴

Members of German New Guinea’s Government Council were overwhelmingly in favor of banning marriages between European men and New Guinean women. Thus, although no such law was ever passed (due in part to the outbreak of war eighteen months later), the opinions expressed among Government Council members are revealing of the ways in which white, male colonists sought to police gendered and racial boundaries. All but one of the men on the Government Council agreed that, while any existing marriages between European men and female colonial subjects ought to continue to be recognized as valid, no such marriages should henceforth be permitted. One member of the Council—a New Guinea Company employee—noted that with increasing immigration of white women to the colony, “it is not difficult to marry a white woman.” Since the colony was now

Cultures in a Bourgeois World, eds. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 263-283; Birthe Kundrus, *Moderne Imperialisten: Das Kaiserreich im Spiegel seiner Kolonien* (Köln: Böhlau, 2003); 219-280; Matthew P. Fitzpatrick, “The Threat of ‘Woolly-Haired Grandchildren’: Race, the Colonial Family and German Nationalism,” *The History of the Family* 14, no. 4 (2009): 356-368; Matthew P. Fitzpatrick, “The Samoan Women’s Revolt: Race, Intermarriage and Imperial Hierarchy in German Samoa,” *German History* 35, no. 2 (2017): 206-228.

³⁴ The administration recorded eight marriages between “whites and half-bloods” in the Melanesian Old Protectorate, however. The situation was somewhat different in the Micronesian Island Territories, with “seven marriage between whites and natives, five marriages between whites and half-bloods, three marriages between half-bloods and natives, and one marriage between half-blood and half-blood.” “Bericht über die 4. Gouvernementsratssitzung der V. Sitzungsperiode am 18. Oktober 1912 im Gouvernementsgebäude in Rabaul,” *Amstblatt für das Schutzgebiet Neuguinea* 4, no. 21 (1 November 1912): 229.

“developed” enough to accommodate white women, he concluded that measures must be taken to “make it impossible” for white men to marry “colored” women.³⁵

The lone dissenting voice came from the Catholic missionary, Johannes Dicks, of the Sacred Heart Mission. While he concurred that relations between whites and “coloreds” brought “disadvantages” and were “not desirable,” he believed it would never be possible entirely “to prevent the sexual contact” between them.³⁶ It was thus preferable that the law be used to *regulate* this contact. He argued on moral grounds, suggesting that, although undesirable, legally-recognized marriages at least provided some basis for Christian, family life. This could only be of benefit to any children such unions might produce, since, he said, they currently grew up in “sad circumstances.”³⁷ This comment reflected a more general understanding among the members of the Government Council that white, European men all too often shirked responsibility for children they fathered with New Guinean women. A member of the colonial administration, the district judge, Gustav Weber (whom we will meet again shortly), disagreed with Dicks’ argument. According to Weber, even if marriage might improve the situation for children born of interracial unions, it should still be prohibited. This was not a question about individuals, he said, “but about the rule of the whole white race.”³⁸ Yet, other members of the Government Council were also sympathetic to the plight of these children. The Council thus resolved that any illegitimate children born of a European man and “native” woman would assume the legal status of the latter (except in cases in which the governor decided to grant them “the same civil rights as a European”), but measures

³⁵ “Bericht über die 4. Gouvernementsratssitzung,” 230.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

would be taken to ensure they were provided with basic care and education.³⁹ Dr. Wilhelm Wendland, a government physician with the German colonial administration, believed such measures were urgently needed, but he nevertheless insisted “that marriage between whites and blacks can be rejected under all circumstances.”⁴⁰

This was not a conversation about the rights of New Guinean women, but rather about the rights and responsibilities of white, European men, including their responsibility to uphold colonial gender and racial hierarchies. The district administrator, Dr. Joseph Klug, who was now based at Herbertshöhe, agreed with the other members of the Government Council (with the exception of Dicks) that marriages between white, European men and female colonial subjects must be prohibited, because, he asserted, in such marriages “the white would be brought to the status of the native.”⁴¹ He agreed with Dicks that sex between “whites and coloreds” could not be prevented, but thought that this was beside the point. The matter, Klug stressed, was “not about extramarital sex but about the question of the possible approval of marriage between whites and coloreds.” It was the latter, not the former, that could and *should* be prevented, he argued.⁴² The assumed rights of white, European men to the sexual access of New Guinean women was not being contested by the men of the Government Council in 1912. As the next section shows, this presumed “right” to sexual contact with New Guinean women, specifically those laboring for white interests under indenture contracts, sometimes manifested as rape. As Toeolesulusulu Damon Salesa has written, “the racist proprieties of New Guinea’s colonial society at once discouraged

³⁹ Ibid., 231.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 230.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

legitimate marriages between Germans and Melanesian women and enabled other—often more exploitative—sexual and domestic relations.”⁴³ New Guinean women, however, *did* contest white, male colonists’ claims to their bodies, which increasingly figured as sexualized in colonial discourses. The next section focuses on three New Guinean women who did just that.

Rape in the Indenture and before the Courts

Whether New Guinean women and men recruited voluntarily or otherwise, there is no doubt that the indenture was a system of labor exploitation through which colonial power structures were configured and maintained. For indentured New Guinean women, these relations were drawn along the axes of gender as well as race. Always a numerical minority on the plantations and colonial stations, and often receiving lower wages than their male counterparts—four marks compared to six marks per month for government laborers in 1904, for instance⁴⁴—colonial indenture rendered them particularly vulnerable.⁴⁵ Demographic and economic aspects of the colonial labor regime may have compelled some to engage in prostitution or to enter into relations with white overseers, as Ann Laura Stoler has shown for the neighboring Dutch East Indies.⁴⁶ As I seek to demonstrate below, however,

⁴³ Salesa, “Emma and Phebe,” 159-160.

⁴⁴ NAA: G255, 566: Verzeichnis der von dem Kapitän Komine, Schiffe Zebra, angeworbenen farbigen Arbeiter.

⁴⁵ As Lukere has argued of British Fiji in “A Tale of Two Mothers,” 361. In German New Guinea, the gender disparity in the indenture was much more acute than in Fiji, where British labor regulations mandated that women constitute at least 40% of indentured laborers.

⁴⁶ Ann Laura Stoler, *Capitalism and Confrontation in Sumatra’s Plantation Belt, 1870-1979* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 31-33. Luise White has demonstrated the close relationship between women’s sex

colonial discourses that characterized indentured women as “prostitutes,” whether or not they received remuneration for sex, worked to obfuscate the sexual exploitation and violence that women faced in the indenture. They also often bore little resemblance to New Guinean women and men’s own accounts of their experiences as indentured laborers.

Placing indentured New Guinean women at the center of my analysis demands a reconsideration of German colonial rule that takes into account the racial politics of empire and the gendered and sexual assumptions and practices of male colonists. Against this background, I turn to colonial courts and their examination of rape cases that New Guineans brought before them. Colonial courts were sites in which New Guinean laborers contested the terms of their indenture and the claims European men laid to women’s productive, domestic, and sexual labors. Seeking out New Guinean women and men’s words in colonial court files enables an interrogation of colonial tropes that worked to exculpate European men accused of perpetrating sexual violence against indentured women. At the same time, these cases reveal much about the assumptions that white, male colonists—both commercial planters and administrative officials, including those charged with enforcing the rule of law—maintained about indentured women.

In order to access New Guinean women and men’s stories about sexual violence in the indenture, this chapter turns to three cases that came before the Imperial District Courts in the colonial capitals of Herbertshöhe and Rabaul, on the Gazelle Peninsula of New Pommern. As seats of colonial governance, Peter Hempenstall has aptly described these

work and colonial labor regimes in Kenya. See Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

towns as “staging posts for the activities of all administrators, from the Governor down.”⁴⁷ My focus, however, is on those colonial administrators in the District Courts charged with the decision making that constituted the rule of law in German New Guinea. Colonial courts provided a site in which indentured New Guineans could and did contest the terms of their labor and the violence inflicted upon them. They were also, I argue, key sites in which tropes of indentured women’s “promiscuity” and “prostitution” worked to exculpate individual colonists accused of rape, and to deny justice to New Guinean laborers. As such, colonial courts were instrumental in establishing and maintaining racial and gender hierarchies that defined the colonial situation. Unlike cases limited to disputes involving “natives,” that were tried at Station Courts, these cases brought before the District Courts were tried under German criminal law.⁴⁸ And whereas New Guinean men charged with the rape of a New Guinean women were variously sentenced to imprisonment with forced labor, fined for compensation in *diwarra* or *tambu*, and sometimes acquitted, I know of no case in which a European man charged with raping a New Guinean woman was convicted of that crime in the German colonial courts.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Peter Hempenstall, “The Neglected Empire: The Superstructure of the Colonial State in German Melanesia,” in *Papua New Guinea*, ed. Lätükefu, *Papua New Guinea: A Century of Colonial Impact, 1884-1984*, edited by Sione Lätükefu (Port Moresby: National Research Institute and the University of Papua New Guinea, 1989), 140.

⁴⁸ For a comprehensive treatment of law in German New Guinea, see Sack, *Phantom History*.

⁴⁹ For cases in which indentured New Guinean women charged New Guinean men with rape, see, for example, Heinrich Schnee’s ruling, Herbertshöhe, 15 April 1899, NAA: G255, 202: Stationsgericht Herbertshöhe. Strafsache gegen Toreren von Wunamamie wegen Nothzucht (1899); Schnee’s ruling, Herbertshöhe, 28 January 1899, NAA: G255, 205: Stationsgericht Herbertshöhe. Strafsache gegen den Hausjungen Kuka in Herbertshöhe aus Neu Hannover wegen Nothzucht (1899); Schnee’s ruling, Herbertshöhe, 6 May 1899, NAA: G255, 201: Stationsgericht zu Herbertshöhe. Strafsache gegen Tokarambele von Kakunai wegen Nothzucht (1899); Schnee’s ruling, Herbertshöhe, 29 August 1899, NAA: G255, 191: Stationsgericht Herbertshöhe. Strafsache gegen Diwito von Neu Hannover wegen Nothzucht (1899); Schnee’s ruling, 30 August 1899, NAA: G255, 192: Stationsgericht Herbertshöhe. Strafsache gegen Ignalangai von Neu Hannover wegen Nothzucht (1899).

In addition to the cases discussed here, see for example: NAA: 255, 1070: Kaiserliches Bezirksgericht zu Friedrich-Wilhelmshafen. Akten in der Strafsache gegen den Assistenten Arthur Sacchi wegen Menschenraubes (1903–4); NAA: G255, 1071: Kaiserliches Bezirksgericht zu Friedrich Wilhelmshafen. Akten in der Strafsache gegen den Offizier der Handelsmarien Jüdtz wegen Körperverletzung und

The relative paucity of source materials chronicling sexual assault is likely a result of the colony's judicial system and the imperial and patriarchal power structures that informed it and were informed by it.⁵⁰ As no criminal police force operated in German New Guinea, only cases brought to the courts' attention were investigated.⁵¹ Colonial courts were often located great distances from the plantations upon which indentured New Guineans were employed. Some laborers walked miles to have their voices heard, while others may have been unwilling or unable to do so.⁵² Available records also reveal that New Guineans often reported sexual assaults to bosses who failed to act upon the complaints.⁵³ Others speak to the fear that New Guinean women, and their husbands, had of reporting sexual assault. Some women remained silent for shame or fear of their husbands' reactions,⁵⁴ while men, and doubtless also women, did not always speak out for fear of further violence from the assailants.⁵⁵ The fact that the Tok Pisin verb for rape—"pulim"—was adopted into the German colonial vocabulary in New Guinea as the regular verb, "pullen," as demonstrated by its frequent use by German colonists in court files and other documents, suggests that this

Hausfriedensbruchs (1903-5); NAA: Imperial District Court and Office; G254, Administrative records of German New Guinea; 108: Kaiserliches Bezirksgericht zu Herbertshöhe. Akten in der Strafsache gegen den Handlungsgehilfen Louis Patterson wegen [Notzucht] (1906). Other cases appear not to have proceeded to trial, or the court files have been lost. See, for example, correspondence of 21 November 1913 concerning Albert Stehr in NAA: G255, 896: Akten der Kaiserlichen Station Käwieng betreffend Haftbefehle. In one 1913 case (NAA: G255, 33), a European man convicted of statutory rape in Ponape (Pohnpei) had his conviction overturned by the Supreme Court in Rabaul.

⁵⁰ Patricia Hayes is instructive on the ways in which androcentric, and I would add, Eurocentric, "attitudes and archives" have worked to obscure colonial histories of sexual violence. See Patricia Hayes, "'Cocky' Hahn and the 'Black Venus': The Making of a Native Commissioner in South West Africa, 1915-46," *Gender & History* 8, no. 3 (1996): 364-392. Catherine Komisaruk reaches a similar conclusion in her study of rape cases in colonial Guatemala. See Catherine Komisaruk, "Rape Narratives, Rape Silences: Sexual Violence and Judicial Testimony in Colonial Guatemala," *Biography* 31, no. 3 (2008): 369-396.

⁵¹ Hermann Hiery, "Traditional and European Concepts of 'Justice' and their Influence on One Another," in *European Impact and Pacific Influence*, eds. Hiery and MacKenzie (London: Tauris, 1997), 172.

⁵² Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans*, 124.

⁵³ Minni's statement, Kieta, 18 February 1910, NAA: G254, 75: Kaiserliches Bezirksgericht zu Herbertshöhe. Akten in der Strafsache gegen Thurm, G., Händler, zuletzt in Kieta wegen Notzucht (1910).

⁵⁴ Waneri's statement, Herbertshöhe, 29 August 1899, NAA: G255, 191.

⁵⁵ Tawui's statement, Herbertshöhe, 28 August 1899, NAA: G255, 192.

form of sexual violence was relatively commonplace in the colony.⁵⁶ In short, the cases discussed here are in many ways exceptional, but the archival evidence that exists indicates that the violence they describe was less exceptional.

Pulus's Story

Pulus worked as an indentured laborer for the German colonial government in Herbertshöhe. She was married to Kinela, also a laborer in Herbertshöhe. I know nothing about her, beyond what was recorded by the Imperial District Court in the colonial capital on 12 February 1906. As was common for indentured New Guineans who appeared before German colonial courts, she gave her testimony in Tok Pisin. Her statement was recorded in German and Tok Pisin (italicized here) by a German court official as follows:

At noon yesterday, as I approached the [government] storehouse to fetch rice, the storehouse foreman, [Waldemar] Kolbe, grabbed me near the huts and dragged me into the storehouse. I told him that he should leave me alone. He said: "*never mind by and by me give you money.*" I tried to get away, but he held onto me tightly, he threw me over the sacks of rice and used me sexually.

⁵⁶ In the German colonial documents, "pulim" is rendered "pull him," consistent with contemporary renderings of many Tok Pisin verb. The German noun form—"Pullung"—also appears in court files. See, for example, Arthur Sacchi's statement, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, 2 May 1903, NAA: G255, 1070: Kaiserliches Bezirksgericht zu Friedrich-Wilhelmshafen. Akten in der Strafsache gegen den Assistenten Arthur Sacchi wegen Menschenraubes (1903-04). Albert Dommès, Erimahafen, 28 July 1908, NAA: G255, 1003: Stationsgericht zu Friedrich Wilhelmshafen. Akten gegen den Chinesen Chang Chin von Stephansort (Erima) wegen Vergehens gegen § 175 R.St.G.B. Wilhelm Bolten's statement, Rabaul, [incorrectly dated] 6 November 1911, NAA: G255, 325. This file also attributed the verb "pullen" to Tapilai and Laimasung, who were Lavongai-speakers not conversant in Tok Pisin. Whether this was the word used by the interpreter, or was rendered thus by the German court scribe, is unclear.

Kolbe had then given Pulus trade goods—two *lavalavas*, two knives, and five sticks of tobacco—and four marks in cash. She told the court that she initially refused these items, but Kolbe had stuck them into her belt. She left the storehouse with the goods and cash and went to find her husband, Kinela.⁵⁷

Kinela was also called to testify before the court. His statement reveals indentured laborers' familiarity with the structures of German colonial governance, and how they used them to make claims as colonial subjects. He told the court that upon talking to Pulus, who had told him about the assault, he discussed the incident with "the other boys," his fellow laborers. They had told him that he "should go to Doctor Hahl and report the matter," which he did. Indeed, it was Governor Albert Hahl, himself a trained lawyer and former imperial judge in Herbertshöhe, who brought this case to the District Court, requesting that it make an inquiry.⁵⁸ The court then summoned Kolbe to appear on rape charges.

Kolbe's testimony gives a sense of both the gendered nature of colonial violence and the colonial logics that worked to obscure it. Kolbe did not deny having had sex with Pulus. He told the court: "As Pulus was opening a sack of rice, I grabbed her on the genitals. She easily acquiesced. I bent her over the sacks of rice and used her sexually. Then I finished weighing the rice and gave her two marks from my wallet." The violence of the assault is suggested in Kolbe's own language—his admission that he "grabbed her on the genitals" and "used her sexually." However, the violence so explicitly depicted in Pulus's testimony is

⁵⁷ Pulus's statement, Herbertshöhe, 12 February 1906, NAA: G254, 106: Kaiserliches Bezirksgericht zu Herbertshöhe. Akten in der Strafsache gegen den Lageraufseher Waldemar Kolbe zu Herbertshöhe wegen Notzucht und Unterschlagung (1906).

⁵⁸ Kinela's statement, Herbertshöhe, 12 February 1906, *ibid.* On Hahl's career in German New Guinea, see Peter Biskup, "Dr Albert Hahl—Sketch of a German Colonial Official," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 14, no. 3 (1968): 342-357.

distorted in Kolbe's statement by the colonist's lascivious gaze. He did not "throw" her, he "bent" her over the sacks of rice (he described the position in some detail for the court), and, he added, Pulus had "smiled cheerily" at him later that day.⁵⁹ At the same time, the routineness of fetching and weighing the rice renders the incident mundane, while his assertions that "she easily acquiesced," and that he had paid her, rationalize his actions by rendering Pulus "easy" and a prostitute.

Many scholars have noted Europeans' tendency in the age of empire to characterize non-European women as sexually promiscuous, a trait that supposedly separated them from Europeans and worked to legitimize colonial control.⁶⁰ While the "black" women of New Guinea were not afforded the same standards of beauty that Germans attributed to Polynesian women in Samoa, they were nevertheless characterized as licentious.⁶¹ Moreover, as indentured women, their laboring bodies were not only sexualized "in the eyes of [the] colonizer," as Philippa Levine argued, but made available to European men.⁶² Kolbe's defense relied on his mobilization of precisely these tropes: Pulus's purported promiscuity and sexual availability coalesced with fantasies that linked her participation in the wage economy to prostitution and that held the monetization of sex to preclude the possibility of

⁵⁹ Waldemar Kolbe's statement, Herbertshöhe, 12 February 1906, NAA: G254, 106.

⁶⁰ Sander Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985); Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).

⁶¹ Robert Tobin, "Venus von Samoa: Rasse und Sexualität im deutschen Südpazifik," in *Kolonialismus als Kultur: Literatur, Medien, Wissenschaft in der deutschen Gründerzeit des Fremden*, eds. Alexander Honold and Oliver Simons (Tübingen: A. Francke Verlag, 2002), 192-220; Margaret Jolly, "Women of the East, Women of the West: Region and Race, Gender and Sexuality on Cook's Voyages," in *The Atlantic World in the Antipodes: Effects and Transformations since the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Kate Fullagar (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), 2-23.

⁶² Philippa Levine, "Sexuality, Gender, and Empire," in *Gender and Empire*, ed. Philippa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 142.

rape.⁶³ As John Kelly reminds us, however, male colonists' enacted fantasies and gazes in lived colonial spaces, often in highly tangible and embodied ways, the violence of which becomes obscured when such colonial tropes are taken at face value. Pulus's testimony draws attention to the violence of the "grasp" rather than assuming the inscribing powers of the colonial gaze. Yet, in the everyday exercise of colonial power, as Kelly has shown, the courts were critical in transforming colonists' understandings of non-Europeans "from fantasy to legal presumption."⁶⁴ It is unclear whether the District Court in Herbertshöhe understood the trade goods and cash laid out before it as evidence enough of Kolbe's versions of events. The judge's ruling was brief: stating simply that the court lacked "reasonable suspicion" of rape, he brought legal proceedings against Kolbe to a close.

Minni's Story

Minni was pregnant when she was allegedly raped by Gustav Thurm, an employee of Hershheim & Co. in Kieta, one of the colony's major trading and plantation firms.⁶⁵ Minni and her husband Willi, from Neu Mecklenburg, worked as indentured laborers on the Hershheim trading station. On 24 January 1910, Willi appeared before Kieta's Imperial Station Chief August Doellinger and reported the following to him:

⁶³ On the monetization of sex as a "justification" for rape, see Koni Benson and Joyce M. Chadya, "Ukubhinya: Gender and Sexual Violence in Bulawayo, Colonial Zimbabwe, 1946-1956," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 31, no. 3 (2005): 587-610.

⁶⁴ John D. Kelly, "Gaze and Grasp: Plantations, Desires, Indentured Indians and Colonial Law in Fiji," in *Sites of Desire, Economies of Pleasure: Sexualities in Asia and the Pacific*, eds. Lenore Manderson and Margaret Jolly (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 72-98, quotation 95.

⁶⁵ Gustav Thurm is erroneously referred to as Georg Thurm by colonial officials throughout the file. See NAA: G254, 75.

In early December or late November Herr Class sent me off to Faisi by boat. When I came back, my wife Minni told me that she had been raped by Thurm, a European working for Class, in his house. The Buka boy Rabes who works for Hershheim & Co. and the Neu Mecklenburg boy Annes, with the Bismarck Archipel Gesellschaft witnessed the incident. Afterwards, Thurm wanted to pay Minni but she didn't accept any payment. Minni was heavily pregnant. A few days ago, my wife went back to hospital, the child died last night. I didn't report the incident to my boss, but my wife did. [Later] I spoke with Herr Class about it and he sent me away.⁶⁶

Almost one month later, when she was out of hospital where she had been recovering from pneumonia, Minni told Doellinger that at the time of the incident:

Thurm sent me into his house to take his dirty laundry off to be washed. I told him that he should put his laundry on the veranda, whereupon he told me yet again that I should fetch his laundry from the house. I went into the house. Thurm followed me at once, grabbed hold of me, chucked me onto the bed, and had sex with me. I struggled and told him I didn't want to have it. I screamed loudly, I couldn't shake him off, he was too strong for me. A boy from the Bismarck Archipel Gesellschaft, Annes, witnessed the event. When I came back out of the house, I went to Herr Class and told him what had happened. Class didn't tell me that I should make a report to the court. Rather, he went to Thurm and spoke with him. I received neither payment nor an apology from Thurm.⁶⁷

Willi and Minni's testimonies speak to the limitations that New Guineans faced as indentured laborers: limitations on their ability to determine their whereabouts, to protect loved ones and themselves from harm, to control the ways in which European "masters"

⁶⁶ Willy's statement, Kieta, 24 January 1910, NAA: G254, 75: Akten in der Strafsache gegen Thurm.

⁶⁷ Minni's statement, Kieta, 18 February 1910, *ibid.*

would exploit their labors. Like Pulus, Minni draws attention to the potentially quotidian nature of colonial sexual violence, as the daily routine of performing one's labor brought New Guinean women into male-dominated German "colonial enclaves," into storehouses with male overseers, and into the homes of male colonists.⁶⁸ Yet they also speak to the ways in which indentured New Guineans could and did contest Europeans' claims to their bodies—laboring, gendered, and sexualized. When Minni and Willi's complaints to their boss fell on deaf ears, they took their case to Doellinger, who had since 1905 served as the local representative of the German colonial administration in Kieta.

Their testimonies reveal other things too: Doellinger's questions to them, not recorded in the case file, can be inferred from their statements. Questions about remuneration and questions about resistance. Motivating these questions were the same assumptions about indentured New Guinean women that Kolbe had rallied to his defense four years earlier. The extent to which Minni had resisted Thurm's advances had apparently occupied Doellinger as he questioned the witness, Annes. Annes largely corroborated Minni's version of events, but suggested that had she screamed louder, "Herr Class and the other people would have had to hear." According to his statement, Minni's initial screams as Thurm "dragged her to the bed" soon gave way to silence.⁶⁹ Doellinger went a step further, however, and put down in writing his assumptions about the indentured woman accusing a white man of rape. In a note dated 1 March, he declared Minni to be "a very promiscuous woman" who had been known "to gallivant about in the bush with other workers."⁷⁰ He forwarded his note

⁶⁸ On "colonial enclaves" as gendered spaces see Anne Dickson-Waiko, "Colonial Enclaves and Domestic Spaces in British New Guinea," in *Britishness Abroad: Transnational Movements and Imperial Cultures*, eds. Kate Darian Smith, Patricia Grimshaw, and Stuart Macintyre (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2007), 205-230.

⁶⁹ Annes's statement, Kieta, 26 February 1910, NAA: G254, 75.

⁷⁰ Doellinger, Kieta, to the Imperial District Court, Herbertshöhe, 1 March 1910, *ibid.*

with the case file to his colleagues in Herbertshöhe, where he presumed Thurm to be residing.

Thurm was in fact in Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, where the district judge questioned him on 27 April. Like Kolbe, Thurm did not deny that he had had sex with Minni, but contested the charge of rape, since, he informed the court, she had agreed to exchange sex for money and had paid her two marks (a claim that Minni and her husband had already disputed). By May, Thurm was residing in Neu Pommern, where the judge, Georg Stuebel, ruled to acquit Thurm of the rape charges. His ruling ostensibly rested on the evidence of Thurm's statement that he had not raped Minni, and on that part of Annes's testimony that claimed, as Stuebel put it, "that Minni did not struggle or scream *during sex*."⁷¹

It is impossible to say whether Doellinger's assessment of Minni's character might have played into the judge's ruling. It is clear, however, that Stuebel himself did not question the individuals involved, but rather based his ruling on a selective reading of the statements provided to him by his colleagues in Kieta and Friedrich Wilhelmshafen. The judge mentioned neither Minni nor Willi's testimonies, detailing the violence of the assault, the death of Minni's child, and her refusal to accept payment. Nor did he mention the witness's testimony describing how Minni had screamed as Thurm "dragged" her to his bed. Rather, he reduced the contradictions of the case to a narrative in which Minni had in all likelihood "acquiesced" to Thurm's advances—a narrative that rested upon the assumption that Minni was indeed a "promiscuous woman." Perhaps Willi, too, believed this, for when the court's verdict was eventually returned to the Kieta station in mid-May, he had since been

⁷¹ Stuebel's ruling, Herbertshöhe, 12 May 1910, *ibid.* My emphasis.

repatriated to Neu Mecklenburg. There is no further mention of Minni in the legal correspondence.

Tapilai's Story

We now return to Tapilai, with whose story this chapter began. On 27 November 1911, she appeared with her husband and brother before the District Court in Rabaul, having absconded from the plantation in Baining where they worked as indentured laborers and made the sixty-mile trek to the colonial capital. The three were originally from Neu Hannover, and neither Tapilai nor her husband, Laimasung, presumably both first-time laborers, were conversant in Tok Pisin. It was thus Bago, Tapilai's brother, who told Stuebel, the same judge who had acquitted Thurm the previous year, "we walked all the way here from Baining to make our complaint." Their complaint was that their employers, the brothers Wilhelm and Hermann Bolten (figure 4.1), had repeatedly raped Tapilai and had beaten her and Laimasung with a cane. They did not want to stay at the plantation, but rather wanted to return to their home in Neu Hannover.⁷²

⁷² Bago's statement, Rabaul 27, November 1911, NAA: G255, 325.



Figure 4.1. The brothers Wilhelm and Hermann Bolten (front and third from the front), “relaxing on the veranda of the Hershheim and Company mess” at Matupit in 1911, the same year that Tapilai and her family brought charges of rape against them in the nearby colonial court at Rabaul. Gash and Whittaker, *A Pictorial History of New Guinea*.

Unlike the cases discussed thus far, Tapilai’s alleged assailants never admitted that they had had sex with Tapilai—Hermann, who was married to a white, German woman, explicitly denied it, telling the court: “I never so much as touched the woman.”⁷³ However, though both contested the rape charges that Tapilai and her family brought against them, they did not deny Hermann’s use of physical violence against her and her husband. Testifying on 14 December, Hermann claimed that Tapilai and Laimasung had brought the rape charges against him as “an act of revenge” because he had “clobbered [them] with a cane.”⁷⁴ Wilhelm concurred that the allegations of rape were false, brought by the laborers “because Tapilai

⁷³ Hermann Bolten’s statement, Rabaul, 14 December 1911, *ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

wanted to get away from my brother.” He added that Tapilai had previously made similar complaints to Hermann in which she claimed to have been raped by male laborers on the plantation, allegations that he equally dismissed as fabricated. Further, he added, “Tapilai’s husband is very jealous.”⁷⁵ Hermann was ultimately convicted and fined forty marks on charges of bodily harm for beating his laborers, not because corporal punishment of laborers was illegal per se, but because he lacked the official authorization to administer such “disciplinary punishment.” Further, as the deciding judge put it, “under no circumstance may female natives be punished with flogging.”⁷⁶ Neither brother was convicted of rape.

Much like Pulus and Minni, Tapilai claimed to have been raped by her employers as she was carrying out her daily labors, in Tapilai’s case, as a laundress. With a government laborer from Neu Hannover acting as her interpreter, Tapilai told the court:

One evening, the accused Hermann Bolten called me into his room, to his bed where he was lying. First he told me to fetch some water for the washstand. When I returned with the water, he came up behind me, pulled off my *lavalava* from behind, and pulled me into his bed, whereupon he had sex with me. He violently raped me twice more besides.

She claimed the assaults had taken place when Frau Bolten was away in Rabaul giving birth, and shortly after Tapilai had herself given birth.⁷⁷ According to her testimony, Wilhelm Bolten had also twice ordered another female laborer to “bring him a woman.” Both times,

⁷⁵ Wilhelm Bolten’s statement, Rabaul, [incorrectly dated] 6 November 1911, *ibid.*

⁷⁶ Gustav Weber’s ruling, Rabaul, 19 February 1912, *ibid.* On colonists’ casual use of corporal punishment, see Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans*, 109-110.

⁷⁷ Hermann and Amalie Bolten’s daughter was born in October 1911, which corresponds with Tapilai’s estimate of when the rapes took place: “not more than two months ago.” See Karl Baumann, Dieter Klein, and Wolfgang Apitzsch, *Biographisches Handbuch Deutsch-Neuguinea, 1882-1922: Kurzlebensläufe von Kolonisten, Forscher, Missionare und Reisender* (Fassberg: Baumann, 2002), 41. Further biographical information on the Europeans mentioned in this paper can also be found in this volume.

the female laborer instructed Tapilai to go to Wilhelm, and both times he had grabbed her by the arm and raped her.⁷⁸

From the outset, the court's attention seems to have been focused less on ascertaining the veracity of the rape charges than with the allegations that Hermann had physically assaulted his laborers with a cane. Noting welts on Laimasung's back and arm, the court had immediately sought the expert opinion of government physician Dr. Karl Kopp. The doctor confirmed that there were "superficial" injuries on Laimasung's arm and torso that had been caused by a blow from a cane. On Tapilai's right upper arm he observed a "small skin ulcer" and an abrasion on her lower back. Were these injuries sustained when Wilhelm grabbed her by the arm, when she was sexually assaulted? Or were they caused by the cane? In Kopp's assessment, the cause of these injuries could not be determined.⁷⁹ But Hermann's testimony of 14 December provided the court with the explanation. According to Hermann, he beat Tapilai because she had been disobedient, had arrived late for work and then "lazed about" instead of working. He had beat Laimasung in self-defense, as the latter, upon hearing Tapilai's screams, had come running over "with a bearing that suggested he wanted to attack me."⁸⁰ Having established this matter, the judge in charge of the case, Eugen Grundler, promptly approved Hermann's request to return Tapilai, Laimasung, and Bago to his plantation.

Early the next year, Hermann signed a summons for Tapilai and Laimasung to reappear in the court in Rabaul as witnesses in the trial against him on charges of bodily harm. The trial date was set for 25 January but was postponed until 19 February on account

⁷⁸ Tapilai's statement, Rabaul, 27 November 1911, NAA: G255, 325.

⁷⁹ Kopp's "Ärztliches Gutachten," Rabaul, 30 November 1911, *ibid.*

⁸⁰ Hermann's Bolten's statement, Rabaul 14 December 1911, *ibid.*

of stormy seas. In the meantime, on 10 February, the court noted that Tapilai had withdrawn her earlier claim that Hermann had “used force against her,” as the district judge Gustav Weber, now trying the case, put it. The judge concluded from this that none of her allegations of sexual assault were to be believed.⁸¹ It would seem, however, that the court had already abandoned its investigation of the rape charges, without making a formal ruling, as from late December the case file only referenced the charge of bodily harm. The court file makes no mention of why Tapilai, then back on the Bolten plantation, might have withdrawn her charges against Hermann. That she fabricated the claims in an attempt to free herself and her husband of their indentures to an abusive employer, as Wilhelm suggested, is one possible explanation. It perhaps does not, however, adequately explain the charges she brought against Wilhelm, her claim to having also been raped by male laborers, or Wilhelm’s reference to Laimasung’s “jealousy.”

Indeed, there is much within the sixty-two pages of this case file that remains unexplained and was doubtless beyond the court’s grasp. Drawing again on Kelly, however, I propose that in constructing coherent narratives out of contradictory ones, in choosing when and when not “to act or even to look,”⁸² German colonial courts in New Guinea sought their answers in the familiar tropes of New Guinean women’s licentiousness and propensity to engage in prostitution on the colony’s plantations. Consider judge Weber’s choice of words: Hermann had not “used force” against Tapilai. Already on 27 November 1911, as the court read back Tapilai’s original statement to her, it is apparent that judge Grundler, like station chief Doellinger in Kieta, asked questions pertaining to payment, jotting down

⁸¹ Weber’s ruling, Rabaul, 19 February 1912, NAA: *ibid.*

⁸² Kelly, “Gaze and Grasp,” 91.

Tapilai's answers in the page margin of the case file. According to these notes, Hermann had asked Tapilai if she wanted money in exchange for sex: "He didn't give me any anyway," was Tapilai's recorded reply. When the court questioned Bago, Grundler asked (and the question is recorded) "whether the witness [Tapilai] willingly had sex" with the defendants. When Bago replied that the defendants had used force against Tapilai, Grundler noted that "the witness gives the impression that he is untrustworthy."⁸³

The court's questioning of the claimants and Weber's concluding remarks on the charges of rape suggest that while these German colonial judges refused to believe New Guinean laborers' rape claims, they did not doubt that indentured women "willingly" engaged in sex with European overseers, for money or otherwise. What is noteworthy in this case is that these suggestions of indentured women's promiscuity and engagement in prostitution persist despite the defendants'—or at least Hermann's—own claims to the contrary. I suggest that the defendants' claims to what might be considered sexual propriety mattered less to the court than the judges' own assumptions that held Tapilai, Pulus, and Minni, and other indentured women to be sexually available to European men.⁸⁴ Unlike the beatings that Hermann had given Tapilai and Laimasung, the sexual "use" of indentured women's bodies not only failed to contravene official labor regulations, it received tacit official sanction in colonial courts. Within a prevailing discourse that held indentured women to be "promiscuous" "prostitutes," it was easy enough for the judges to overlook

⁸³ Tapilai and Bago's statements, and Grundler's note, Rabaul, 27 November 1911, NAA: G255, 325.

⁸⁴ On the imperial emphasis on notions of respectability and sexual propriety, see Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*.

Laimasung's claim that the beatings had taken place because "the master was cross" that Tapilai "wouldn't allow him to do as he pleased with her."⁸⁵

Conclusion

This chapter has examined three colonial sites in which sexual contact between white Europeans and New Guineans was policed and permitted. In analyzing the establishment of a sanctioned (but still contested) colonial sex industry employing Japanese women, debates about interracial marriage, and colonial courts as key sites in which indentured New Guinean women contested white, European men's claims to their laboring bodies, the boundaries between policing and permitting are revealed as highly permeable. Efforts to limit sexual contact between colonists and New Guinean women were pursued, most notably by Hahl in his attempts to divert men's sexual attentions away from "native" women through the establishment of brothels and the exploitation of Asian women's sexual labors. However, white, European men took for granted that interracial sexual contact would occur in the colony, and everyday practices in the colony reinforced their assumed right to sexually access New Guinean women.

Colonial courts were a crucial site in which sexual access of the most violent kinds was permitted, rather than prevented. Courts reiterated characterization of indentured women as "willing" participants in the violence that male colonists perpetrated against them. Attentiveness to indentured New Guinean women and men's testimonies of sexual violence

⁸⁵ Laimasung's statement, Rabaul, 19 February 1912, NAA: G255, 325.

prompts a reconsideration of the categories of voluntarism and violence that have dominated debates on the Pacific labor trade. Appearing before German colonial courts, women and men contested the terms of their indentures and, as this chapter has argued, European men's assumptions that understood the indenture to grant them access to women's productive, domestic, and sexual labors. In their accounts of struggle and resistance, their denial of accusations of prostitution and refutation of the assumption that remuneration precluded the possibility of rape, their stories contrast starkly with those that colonists told the courts, and that the courts told themselves.

Colonial courts were thus crucial in transforming colonial male fantasies of indentured New Guinean women's "promiscuity" and sexual availability into legal presumptions constitutive of the colonial rule of law. In perpetuating these tropes, German colonial courts worked to efface the complex position of women in the indenture, and the multiple labors they were expected to perform. As gestured to above, colonists' assumptions about indentured women worked not only to obscure their multiple roles as laborers, but also as wives, partners, mothers, and sisters. In depicting indentured women as prostitutes, German colonial officials rendered them knowable at the same time as they allowed themselves to feign ignorance of the violence that the German colonial indenture inflicted upon New Guinean women, families, and societies. When, in the final years of German rule in New Guinea, colonial officials focused their attention on the perceived decline in the colony's local populations, the explanatory trope of the indentured woman as the non-procreative "prostitute" was always close at hand. As we will see in the next chapter, in the hands of colonial administrators and medical and ethnographic "experts" the same gendered

and racialized tropes that worked to exculpate individual male colonists in German New Guinea's courts were mobilized to exculpate the German colonial indenture itself.

CHAPTER 6

Colonial Catastrophe: New Guinean Women's Labors and Colonial Logics of Depopulation

Is the population actually declining?

According to all previous research, there can unfortunately no longer be any doubt that an increase in the population is not taking place, and that in many areas an eerily rapid decline is occurring.¹

What for me make him picanninis for white man[?]

—he no more can live all same father belong him.²

These two quotations, recorded a decade apart from each other, speak to a colonial catastrophe born of depopulation. Europeans had observed and debated “population collapse” in the Pacific since at least the seventeenth century.³ Theories of “doomed” and

¹ Willy Wick, “Die gesundheitlichen Verhältnisse im mittleren Neumecklenburg,” *Amtsblatt für das Schutzgebiet Deutsch-Neuguinea* 3, no. 22 (15 November 1911): 240.

² “Why should I have children for the white man? They can no longer live as their father did.” J. J. Cummins, an Australian military officer in New Guinea, attributed this comment to New Guineans in general. J. J. Cummins, Brisbane, to the Prime Minister, 24 November 1921, National Archives of Australia, Canberra (hereafter: NAA): Territories Branch, Prime Minister’s Department; A518, Correspondence files; F840/1/3, Part 1: New Guinea. Annual Return of Police Court Proceedings for Offences against Natives, 1919-1923.

³ Donald Denoon, “Pacific Island Depopulation: Natural or Un-natural History?” in *New Countries and Old Medicine: Proceedings of an International Conference on the History of Medicine and Health, Auckland, New*

“dying races” emerged, heralding the notion that “primitive,” “savage,” and “Stone Age” peoples were becoming extinct, their “savage customs” of warfare, cannibalism, infanticide, and superstition culminating in “racial suicide.” The notion that “primitive” peoples were inevitably (if unfortunately) unable to keep pace with the advance of European “civilization” accompanied European incursion into non-European worlds. These extinction discourses reached a “crescendo” in European thinking during the nineteenth century and years prior to World War I.⁴ They bolstered white Europeans’ claims to global supremacy and brushed aside questions of violence, conquest, and land alienation that brought disease, death, and disruption to Pacific peoples.⁵

The prominent British anthropologist, neurologist, and psychiatrist W. H. R. Rivers rejected notions that “savage customs” were contributing to demographic decline in the Western Pacific prior to European invasion and colonization.⁶ He had made several trips to the region in the prewar years, before returning to Britain where he assumed a leading role in developing treatments for shell shock. Rivers saw analogies between the psychological effects of trench warfare and European colonization, which produced a “loss of interest in

Zealand, 1994, eds. Linda Bryder and Derek A. Dow (Auckland: Pyramid Press, 1995), 324; Victoria Lukere, “Mothers of the Taukei: Fijian Women and ‘the Decrease of the Race,’” Ph.D. thesis, Australian National University, 1997, 1.

⁴ Patrick Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races, 1800-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 5. Also see Russell McGregor, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory, 1880-1939* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1997); Philippa Levine, “Anthropology, Colonialism, and Eugenics,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*, eds. Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 43-61.

⁵ Scholars have attempted to quantify depopulation in the Pacific and have noted the difficulties of doing so. See, for example, Denoon, “Pacific Island Depopulation, 324-339; Patrick V. Kirch and Jean-Louis Rallu, “Long-Term Demographic Evolution in the Pacific Islands,” in *The Growth and Collapse of Pacific Island Societies: Archaeological and Demographic Perspectives*, eds. Patrick V. Kirch and Jean-Louis Rallu (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2007), 1-14. Shifting the focus away from questions of demographic data, Nicholas Thomas has usefully emphasized that Europeans’ arrival in the Pacific brought new and enduring *disruptions* that affected all Islanders, see Nicholas Thomas, *Islanders: The Pacific in the Age of Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 23.

⁶ W. H. R. Rivers, “The Psychological Factor,” in *Essays on the Depopulation of Melanesia*, ed. W. H. R. Rivers, with a Preface by Sir Everard im Thurn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 87.

life [...] so potent in enhancing mortality.”⁷ Imperial interference with “native customs” caused demoralization.⁸ He thought employment on colonial plantations was insufficient to restore Melanesians’ interest in life and recognized its role in spreading disease and interrupting marriage and childbearing.⁹ Low birthrates ensued, as colonial subjects asked: “Why should we bring children into the world only to work for the white man?”¹⁰ Melanesian practices of restricting births through contraception and abortion, once limited, had now “become the instrument of racial suicide,” he believed.¹¹

In the years prior to World War I, German commentators also grappled with themes of depopulation and reproductive disruption. In German New Guinea, mounting colonial concerns about labors of sexual, productive, and reproductive kinds propelled New Guinean women’s bodies and labors into the center of extensive, heated debates about the nature and future of German colonial governance. Beginning around 1906, New Guinean women assumed novel and unprecedented importance as objects of German colonial labor policy and medical and ethnographic inquiry, as non-reproductive sexual economies and “barrenness” provoked anxieties among many colonialists. Colonial administrators, anthropologists, and physicians sought to establish demographic facts, to diagnose the causes of depopulation, and to prescribe solutions to combat it. Solutions in the forms of labor policy and colonial medicine were proposed in tandem. This chapter begins by

⁷ Ibid., 104. Also see Margaret Jolly, “Other Mothers: Maternal “Insouciance” and the Depopulation Debate in Fiji and Vanuatu, 1890-1930,” in *Maternities and Modernities: Colonial and Postcolonial Experiences in Asia and the Pacific*, eds. Kalpana Ram and Margaret Jolly, 183 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Nancy Rose Hunt, *A Nervous State: Violence, Remedies, and Reverie in Colonial Congo* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 13.

⁸ Rivers, “The Psychological Factor,” 92.

⁹ Ibid., 106.

¹⁰ Ibid., 104.

¹¹ Ibid.

exploring the politics of women's labors in this colonial situation, revealing the competing claims that various colonial actors made to women's laboring bodies. Their claims at once exposed and obscured the violences that the colonial indenture exercised against New Guinean women and their communities more broadly and suggest the emergence of new gendered spatial frameworks regulating labor, sexuality, race, and reproduction. This chapter then turns to the gendered "catastrophe logics" of reproductive disruption produced in contemporary medical-ethnographic studies that aimed to bolster labor reforms in the colony.¹² During this period, colonial administrators radically revalued New Guinean women's bodies and labors, increasingly emphasizing their value in the biological reproduction and economic subsidization of the labor force.

German colonial concerns about depopulation reflected new emphases among European colonial powers on "preserving" colonial subjects, who increasingly figured as wards of a paternalistic colonial state ostensibly in need of its protection and gifts of "development." In the German empire, this approach to colonialism was championed by the newly appointed director of the Imperial Colonial Office, the left-liberal economist Bernhard Dernburg, who declared in 1907: "While one used to colonize through destruction, one can now colonize through preservation." With his program of "scientific colonization," he promoted colonial reforms based on medical and technological interventions alongside missionization.¹³ As Pascal Grosse has demonstrated, this approach to colonialism signaled a shift from an "unreflective use of human resources" to new considerations prioritizing "the

¹² Nancy Rose Hunt, *A Nervous State: Violence, Remedies, and Reverie in Colonial Congo* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 13.

¹³ Bernhard Dernburg, *Zielpunkte des deutschen Kolonialwesens: Zwei Vorträge* (Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn, 1907), 9. On Dernburg's reforms, see Woodruff D. Smith, *The German Colonial Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 183-209.

biological reproduction of colonial subjects” whose labors would ensure Europe’s imperial future.¹⁴ In turning their attention to the New Guinean women, German experts were in broad agreement with those of other imperial powers in the Pacific and further afield in seeing women as “natural ‘targets’ of government concern and intervention.”¹⁵ German efforts to halt, and ideally reverse, the devastating population decline they believed to be taking place in New Guinea was part of broader a European imperial project of intervening in colonial subjects’ reproductive lives.¹⁶

Colonial Politics of Women’s Labors

The extent to which depopulation occurred in the colonial Western Pacific remains a topic of scholarly conjecture.¹⁷ In German New Guinea, there is evidence that introduced diseases, colonial systems of labor migration, and violence were taking their toll—at least in some parts—by the early twentieth century. On some small atolls where depopulation

¹⁴ Pascal Grosse, *Kolonialismus, Eugenik und bürgerliche Gesellschaft in Deutschland, 1850-1918* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2000), 143.

¹⁵ Margaret Jolly, “Infertile States: Person and Collectivity, Region and Nation in the Rhetoric of Pacific Population,” in *Borders of Being: Citizenship, Fertility, and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, eds. Margaret Jolly and Kalpana Ram (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001), 264.

¹⁶ See Lenore Manderson, “Shaping Reproduction: Maternity in early twentieth-century Malaya,” in *Maternities and Modernities: Colonial and Postcolonial Experiences in Asia and the Pacific*, eds. Kalpana Ram and Margaret Jolly, 26-49 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Nancy Rose Hunt, “‘Le Bebe en Brousse’: European Women, African Birth Spacing and Colonial Intervention in Breast Feeding in the Belgian Congo,” in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, eds. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 287-321; Nancy Rose Hunt, *A Colonial Lexicon of Birth Ritual, Medicalization, and Mobility in the Congo* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); Victoria Lukere, “Mothers of the Taukei: Fijian Women and ‘the Decrease of the Race,’” Ph.D. thesis, Australian National University, 1997; Luker, “A Tale of Two Mothers: Colonial Constructions of Indian and Fijian Maternity,” *Fijian Studies: A Journal of Contemporary Fiji*, special issue 3, no. 2 (2005): 357-374.

¹⁷ Denoon, “Pacific Island Depopulation: Natural or Un-natural History?” 324-339.

indisputably occurred, Europeans were quick to profit from it, transforming island homes into commercial copra plantations.¹⁸ But in the years before World War I, with the expansion of foreign-owned plantations and ever-increasing demands on the part of white colonists for indentured New Guinean laborers, depopulation threatened to undo Germany's colonial project in the Western Pacific. As Governor Hahl saw the situation in 1909, population decline put the "political and industrial future" of German New Guinea in peril.¹⁹

By 1906, governor Albert Hahl already thought there existed a connection between the recruitment of New Guinean women in the German colonial indenture and low birth rates in the colony.²⁰ From that time onward, he endeavored to place restrictions on the recruitment of women into the indentured labor force.²¹ Women's absence from villages during prime reproductive years, the circulation of venereal disease from plantations to villages, and the non-return of time-expired laborers were said to be factors contributing to low birth rates in the German colony.²² Besides, many argued, New Guinean societies were already marked by a troubling "lack of women"—perhaps a symptom of the "dying lifeblood"

¹⁸ Stewart Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1983), 112-135, especially, 115.

¹⁹ Albert Hahl, Herbertshöhe, to Benjamin Danks, 28 July 1909, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales (hereafter: ML); Methodist Overseas Mission Records (hereafter: MOM); 111.

²⁰ This section is indebted to, and enters into a dialog with, Stewart Firth's work on "the politics of colonial policy." See Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans*, 118-135. While Firth's analysis emphasizes the economic and political considerations of these labor debates I discuss here, my own purpose here is to revisit colonial debates about women's indentured labor in light of what the preceding chapters have revealed about New Guinean women's labors and experiences, and the gendered and sexual terrains produced by German colonialism in New Guinea.

²¹ Minutes of the Government Council meeting, 2 November 1906, NAA: Imperial Government of German New Guinea; G255, Correspondence files; 136: Kaiserliches Bezirksgericht zu Herbertshöhe. Akten betreffend Gouvernementsratssitzungen.

²² See, for example, Dr. Born, "Die Gesundheitsverhältnisse der Eingeborenen im mittleren Neu-Mecklenburg. Mit 39 Photographien," 29 July 1908, BArch: R 1001/2311, 70; Wilhelm Adelman, "Bevölkerungsrückgang in Neu-Mecklenburg," Namatanai, 20 January 1909, "Betrifft: Bevölkerungsrückgang in Neu-Mecklenburg," Namatanai, 20 January 1909, BArch R 1001/2311, 134.

of Oceanian peoples. The “annual abduction” of women into the colonial labor force dangerously exacerbated this already troubling situation.²³

Neu Mecklenburg appeared to concerned parties to be the part of the colony most vulnerable to demographic collapse. In 1906, the administration identified northern and central Neu Mecklenburg as areas in which the recruitment of women should be temporarily halted, signaling worry about depopulation linked to recruiting excesses.²⁴ Not only had Neu Mecklenburg served for decades as a particularly profitable ground for labor recruiters, it was also, many claimed, the only island in the colony from which women were recruited into the indenture in significant numbers.²⁵ In northern Neu Mecklenburg, Käwieng station chief Franz Boluminski had informed the governor in 1905 about demographic disparities in the region. There were too few young women for the adult male population, he reported. According to his count, there were approximately 3,000 unmarried young men in the region in 1903, but only around 400 unmarried women.²⁶ Yet recruiters kept coming. Officials estimated with alarm that anywhere between 625 and 1,000 women were recruited from the district between 1905 and 1907, sent to labor in other parts of German New Guinea and in German Samoa.²⁷ Boluminski urged the governor to disallow any already-indentured women from signing new labor contracts once their current ones expired, necessitating their return home, and to prohibit any new recruitment of women for a period of ten years. Limits

²³ Wick, “Die gesundheitlichen Verhältnisse im mittleren Neumecklenburg,” 240-241.

²⁴ Minutes of the Government Council meeting, 2 November 1906, NAA: G255, 136.

²⁵ Hahl, “Betrifft: Bevölkerungsrückgang in Neu-Mecklenburg,” Herbertshöhe, to the State Secretary of the Imperial Colonial Office, Berlin, 25 October 1908, Bundesarchiv Berlin (hereafter: BArch): Reichskolonialamt; R 1001/2311, 52; Richard Thurnwald, “Die eingeborenen Arbeitskräfte im Südseeschutzgebiet,” *Koloniale Rundschau* (1910): 619.

²⁶ Boluminski, Käwieng, to Hahl, Herbertshöhe, 19 October 1907, BArch: R 1001/2310, 88.

²⁷ Ibid.; Hahl, “Betrifft: Bevölkerungsrückgang in Neu-Mecklenburg,” Herbertshöhe, to the State Secretary of the Imperial Colonial Office, Berlin, 25 October 1908, BArch: R 1001/2311, 52.

must also be placed on the number of men allowed to recruit, he wrote, suggesting that no more than 500 be recruited from northern Neu Mecklenburg.²⁸

The idea of closing northern and central Neu Mecklenburg to the recruitment of women was put before the Government Council in late 1906. Opposition to Hahl's proposal came from several quarters: from the colony's commercial interests and also from within the colonial administration. Further enquiries into the question of women's recruitment were needed before action should be taken, the Council concluded.²⁹ Although missionaries and some administrators favored prohibiting women's recruitment, most of the colony's powerful commercial enterprises consistently opposed Hahl's attempts to introduce reforms that limited their ability to exploit New Guinean labor. Having formed a Bismarck Archipelago branch of the nationalist German Colonial Society in 1903, and a Planters' Association the following year, the companies and planters were a political force in the colony and metropole that Hahl could not readily ignore.³⁰ Pressures also came from the Imperial Colonial Office in Berlin, intent on scaling back colonial spending in the wake of colonial scandals elsewhere in the German Empire, most recently and perhaps most spectacularly in the form of Germans' genocidal war against the Herero and Nama in South West Africa and brutal suppression of the Maji Maji Uprising in East Africa.³¹ These factors stalled and limited administrative attempts to restrict the recruitment of women into the indenture as well as to implement labor reforms that would see improved working

²⁸ Boluminski, Kāwieng, to Hahl, Herbertshöhe, 19 October 1907, BArch: R 1001/2310, 89.

²⁹ Minutes of the Government Council meeting, 2 November 1906, NAA: G255, 136.

³⁰ Peter J. Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders under German Rule: A Study in the Meaning of Colonial Resistance*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1978), 161.

³¹ Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans*, 121. On German colonial scandals, see Woodruff D. Smith, *The German Colonial Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 154-159. For an overview of German colonial violence in Southwest Africa and East Africa, see Sebastian Conrad, *German Colonialism: A Short History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 79-87.

conditions and provisions, including rations for laborers whose malnourished states rendered them vulnerable to dysentery and pneumonia.³²

While the companies' resented any administrative efforts that would restrict their immediate ability to profit from New Guinean labor, Hahl's economic vision for the colony was marked by a different temporality. For him, immediate measures to "preserve" declining New Guinean populations would ensure a colonial future for Germany. Fierce antagonisms over the "labor question" masked a belief shared by colonists that New Guineans' labors should further European interests in the Western Pacific.³³ Hahl's aim was not to restrict labor recruitment, he assured the Government Council in 1909, but to "assist" it by ensuring that there would continue to be sufficient numbers of New Guineans to serve as laborers.³⁴ He was not merely appeasing hostile parties within the Council, for in the same year, writing to a Wesleyan missionary on the matter of medical missionaries, he similarly stated that the "political and industrial future" of this plantation colony depended on halting the "dwindling of the population."³⁵

In April 1909, Hahl sent a circular to the colony's government stations, missions, and firms soliciting their opinions on his new proposal for colony-wide restrictions on the recruitment of women.³⁶ This proposal, which Hahl intended would come into effect at the beginning of 1910, would forbid any recruitment of unmarried women into the colonial labor force. Allowances would be made for the recruitment of married women only on the

³² On the proposed colonial labor reforms more generally, see Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans*, 118-135.

³³ Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans*, 134; Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders under German Rule*, 161-62.

³⁴ "Protokoll zur 3. Gouvernementsratssitzung der IV. Sitzungsperiode," Herbertshöhe, 27 December 1909, *Amtsblatt für das Schutzgebiet Deutsch-Neuguinea* 2, no. 2 (15 January 1910): 15.

³⁵ Hahl, Herbertshöhe, to Benjamin Danks, 28 July 1909, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales (hereafter: ML); Methodist Overseas Mission Records (hereafter: MOM); 111.

³⁶ Hahl, Herbertshöhe, 30 April 1909, BArch: R 1001/2311, 165a.

condition that they were recruited together with their husbands and that employers did not separate them by sending them to different labor sites during the period of their indenture contracts. Only the administrative authorities at the place of employment would be able to approve such separations. Marriage certificates from the administrative authorities at recruitment sites would have to be produced as evidence that a woman was married and was recruited with her husband.³⁷ While many administrators protested that the production and verification of marriage certificates would prove burdensome for the administration and “very costly” for labor recruiters, Hahl assured the Imperial Colonial Office that such measures would be essential to hindering depopulation.³⁸ These proposals represented Hahl’s desire to extend administrative control over New Guineans’ marriages, fostering heteronormative, reproductive family units.

Like his superior, Boluminski, the assistant station chief at Käwieng, Georg Zwanzger, stressed the urgency of taking action to restrict the recruitment of women in order to stall depopulation. His recent counts in the district’s coastal villages of Bagail, Lauan, Fissoa, and Lamussong had yielded “quite distressing results”: women were few and children even fewer.³⁹ Zwanzger did not identify venereal infections as a factor contributing to low birth rates in northern Neu Mecklenburg, though, as we will see, many others did. Instead, he hinted at women’s sexual debasement resulting from indenture. Experience had taught him, Zwanzger informed the governor, that single women who were recruited into the indenture

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Rodatz, Eitapé, to the Imperial Government, Herbertshöhe, 15 May 1909, BArch: R 1001/2311, 174; Klug, Rabaul, to the Imperial Government, Herbertshöhe, 16 May 1909, BArch: R 1001/2311, 176; Hahl, “Betrifft: Anwerbung von Frauen,” Herbertshöhe, to the State Secretary of the Imperial Colonial Office, Berlin, 30 April 1909, BArch: R 1001/2311, 165.

³⁹ Georg Zwanzger, Käwieng, to Hahl, 16 June 1909, BArch: R 1001/2311, 178-79. Zwanzger was acting station chief at this time while Boluminski was on home leave.

and spent many years away from home were no longer considered “complete” by the men of their home village once they returned. The men rarely considered them marriageable, he wrote.

Other administrators were more explicit than Zwanzger about the sexual economies that marked the German colonial indenture. They spoke openly about the sexual labors of indentured New Guinean women, considering those labors to be fundamental and essential features of the system and warning the governor that a general prohibition on the recruitment of single women would be deleterious for the plantation economy. On the Gazelle Peninsula, the station chief at Rabaul, Joseph Klug, argued that in addition to women providing cheaper labor than men and being “especially suited to particular forms of labor,” marriages that formed between indentured laborers lent stability to the labor force. This brought with it the benefit of motivating experienced laborers to sign new labor contracts once their original ones had expired, presumably because these marriages would not be sanctioned by the laborers’ home societies.⁴⁰ The station chief at Simpsonhafen, on Kaiser Wilhelmsland, expressed some support for Hahl’s proposal, since “it is a commonly known fact that the population in the protectorate is slowly declining.” Nevertheless, he warned that the entire labor recruitment enterprise would be “greatly hindered” should male recruits “know that there are no unmarried women at the places for which they are recruited.”⁴¹ Friedrich Wilhelmshafen station chief, Benno Scholz, was of a similar mind. He reminded Hahl of the problems already plaguing the administration’s ability to recruit male laborers, and soldiers in particular, for Kaiser Wilhelmsland, where mortality rates among indentured

⁴⁰ Joseph Klug, Rabaul, to Hahl, 16 May 1909, BArch: R 1001/2311, 175-176.

⁴¹ Schober, Simpsonhafen, 25 May 1909, BArch: R 1001/2311, 176.

laborers from the Bismarck Archipelago had been notoriously high in the past. Given that there was currently a lack of indentured women—unmarried and married—laboring in the district, Scholz reported that potential male recruits were already averse to entering contracts knowing that there were “no opportunities to marry” in this part of the colony. The proposed measure to restrict the recruitment of New Guinean women into the colonial labor force would exacerbate this situation, he warned.⁴² As it was, the Simpsonhafen station was already sending consignments of unmarried women to satisfy police soldiers at the government stations of Kieta on Bougainville and Eitapé on Kaiser Wilhelmsland.⁴³

“Marriage” here, as we have seen elsewhere, likely signified a wide range of relationships and sexual encounters, many of which would have been exploitative, fleeting, and some violent. Given that New Guinean women only ever constituted between 5 and 10 percent of the indentured labor force in German New Guinea, the types of longer-term unions that Klug imagined as stabilizing the labor force would have been illusory for the majority laboring men and women. While marriages did form between indentured laborers, they also dissolved, and where marriage did exist, it did not protect indentured women from sexual exploitation and violence, as Chapter 5 has demonstrated.⁴⁴

“Prostitution” was another term that the administrators used to describe the sexual labors of New Guinean women within the indenture system. As we have seen, “prostitution” was a term that colonial administrators and others used to veil violence and accuse

⁴² Benno Scholz, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, 1 June 1909, BArch: R 1001/2311, 177.

⁴³ Schober, Simpsonhafen, 25 May 1909, BArch: R 1001/2311, 176.

⁴⁴ On marriages formed between indentured laborers, see, for example, Fritz Rose, Finschhafen, to Bismarck, 13 February 1890, BArch: R 1001/2960, 66, 82. On the breakdown of marriages, see, for example, the letter (translated into German) from Mocjuc, an attendant at the hospital in Herbertshöhe, 1914, Neuendettelsauer Mission Archive, Mission EineWelt, Landeskirchliches Archiv der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche in Bayern, Nuremberg (hereafter: NM): 5.140; Christian Keysser, “Die Seele der Papua-Christen,” vol. 4.

indentured women, holding them to be complicit in sexual violence perpetrated against them. This does not preclude the possibility that some indentured women may have exchanged sex for money, goods, or privileges on European-owned plantations and in male-dominated colonial centers—the evidence is, however, lacking.⁴⁵ It bears reiterating that the term and concept of prostitution in this colonial situation denoted highly asymmetrical relations of power between women and men, as well as between New Guineans and Europeans. Within this context, white, European men readily applied the term in an attempt to camouflage rape. “Prostitution” was “the lesser evil,” according to the station chief at Rabaul, when one considered the alternative: homosexual acts between male laborers, which were already a known feature of plantation life. For “natural reasons,” he stressed, it would surely be necessary to ensure the “presence of a certain number of women on the plantations.”⁴⁶ In Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, station chief Scholz thought so too. He cautioned Hahl against taking measures that might lead to “failings of an unmentionable kind,” producing “completely untenable moral conditions” among male recruits.⁴⁷ With these arguments, German colonial administrators both depicted indentured women as central to

⁴⁵ Hermann Hiery cites as evidence for prostitution on German New Guinea’s plantations letters describing the situation in Rabaul, written by male pupils of the Neuendettelsauer Mission and sent to the mission’s head, Christian Keysser. The letters evince the Lutheran converts’ horror at what they perceive to be sexual license, and female sexual aggression in particular. However, the letter writers neither identified this sexual license as “prostitution” nor indicated that women (sexually aggressive or otherwise) were transacting in sex. This evidence is intriguing and would offer a fertile source base from which to consider gender and sexuality in contexts of Christian evangelization and conversion, but, on the question of prostitution, it is ambiguous, at best. See Hermann Joseph Hiery, *Das deutsche Reich in der Südsee (1900-1921): Eine Annäherung an die Erfahrungen verschiedener Kulturen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 174-175, and here, fn 4. For the letters, translated into German by Keysser, see: Letters 13 and 20: Tilijuc, Rabaul, 1910 and 1911; Letters 17 and 19: Lokicne, Rabaul, 1910 and 1913; Letter 28: Kulia, Rabaul, 1912; and Letter 37: Mocjuc, Herbertshöhe, 1914, NM: 5.140, vol. 4.

⁴⁶ Klug, Rabaul, to Hahl, 16 May 1909, BArch: R 1001/2311, 175. Colonists advanced the same basic arguments in the Dutch East Indies. See, Ann Laura Stoler, *Capitalism and Confrontation in Sumatra’s Plantation Belt, 1870-1979* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1985), 32.

⁴⁷ Scholz, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, 1 June 1909, BArch: R 1001/2311, 177.

producing and preserving familial and (hetero)sexual orders on the plantations *and* disregarded the demographic and economic features of plantation life that rendered indentured women particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and violence.

Representatives of the colony's commercial interests similarly emphasized the integral roles that indentured women's sexual labors played in the colonial labor system, echoing administrators concerns as debates about restricting women's recruitment continued to play out.⁴⁸ Like the administrators discussed above, the men of German New Guinea's firms argued that female laborers served a crucial role in drawing the majority-male labor force into the indenture and onto the plantations.⁴⁹ Thus, when Hahl proposed in December 1909 prohibiting the recruitment of women from Neu Mecklenburg, Neu Hannover, and the outlying islands (with exceptions for married women who recruited with their husbands for the same employer), company employees again voiced their opposition. Insisting—erroneously—that Neu Mecklenburg was the only part of the colony from which women were able to be recruited, Maximilian Thiel of Hertsheim & Co. argued that closing off the island to their recruitment would leave the “thousands of male laborers” on colonial plantations without access to women.⁵⁰ The Government Council agreed to close only northern Neu Mecklenburg and the islands of Nusa channel to the recruitment of single women, leaving unmarried and married women in central and southern Neu Mecklenburg,

⁴⁸ See “Protokoll zur Gouvernementsratssitzung der IV. Sitzungsperiode, Herbertshöhe, den 27. Dezember 1909,” *Amtsblatt für das Schutzgebiet Deutsch-Neuguinea* 2, no. 2 (15 January 1910): 14; “Sitzungsbericht zur 10. Gouvernementsratssitzung der IV. Sitzungsperiode am 10. November 1911 im Gouvernementsgebäude zu Rabaul,” *Amtsblatt* 3, no. 23 (1 December 1911): 258.

⁴⁹ For a comparative case in the neighboring colony of the Dutch East Indies, see Ann Laura Stoler, *Capitalism and Confrontation in Sumatra's Plantation Belt, 1870-1979* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1985), 32.

⁵⁰ “Protokoll zur Gouvernementsratssitzung der IV. Sitzungsperiode, Herbertshöhe, den 27. Dezember 1909,” *Amtsblatt* 2, no. 2 (15 January 1910): 14.

as well as Neu Hannover, available for the indenture.⁵¹ Believing that localized restrictions would simply drive recruiters to other parts of the colony in pursuit of female laborers, Hahl again proposed a colony-wide ban on the recruitment of single women in 1911.⁵² Wilhelm Mirow of Forsayth & Co. reasoned that since most New Guinean men enlisted in the indenture “in order to get a woman from [their] employer” any restriction of women entering the indenture would result in fewer men signing on as plantation laborers.⁵³ These claims speak to a common understanding among colonists about the necessity of maintaining a minority of indentured women, whom company men and administrators understood as an enticement for men to recruit, but also to a common knowledge that white employers in German New Guinea made these women sexually available to indentured men.⁵⁴

A decline in New Guinean recruits, Hahl believed, could be compensated for in the short-term through the importation of Chinese and Malay “coolie” laborers.⁵⁵ The New Guinea Company had already pursued these avenues during its period of rule, and Hahl’s immediate predecessor as governor, Rudolf von Bennigsen, also believed in 1899 that Malay laborers imported from the Dutch East Indies would be essential to the colony’s economic development, since “there can be no longer be any doubt that a large part of South Sea

⁵¹ Ibid., 15.

⁵² “Sitzungsbericht zur 10. Gouvernementsratssitzung der IV. Sitzungsperiode am 10. November 1911 im Gouvernementsgebäude zu Rabaul,” *Amtsblatt* 3, no. 23 (1 December 1911): 258.

⁵³ Ibid., 258.

⁵⁴ Similar scenarios played out in the Dutch East Indies and French New Caledonia. See Ann Laura Stoler, *Capitalism and Confrontation in Sumatra’s Plantation Belt, 1870-1979* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1985), 32; Dorothy Shineberg, *The People Trade: Pacific Island Laborers and New Caledonia, 1865-1930* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1999), 107.

⁵⁵ Hahl, Herbertshöhe, to the State Secretary of Imperial Colonial Office, Berlin, 5 July 1909, BArch: R 1001/2311 169-70. For further details on Hahl’s “Asian solution,” see Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans*, 112-113, 116-118.

Islander tribes is going extinct.”⁵⁶ Hahl was inspired by the British example in Fiji, where, during the late-nineteenth century, colonial officials had observed and investigated depopulation, and where the plantation economy relied on imported Indian laborers who were, in Hahl’s assessment, “also carefully colonized.”⁵⁷ A similar influx of foreign labor power was essential to German New Guinea’s development, he informed the Imperial Colonial Office in 1911, since the “indigenous native” population was small and, as “children of the Stone Age” succumbed easily to the “influences of European culture.” Evoking tropes of a dying race, Hahl nevertheless simultaneously insisted that New Guinea must be further “opened up” for labor recruiting. But even this, he believed, would not be enough to keep pace with expanding European holdings and their increasing demands for labor.⁵⁸ Moreover, the demand for indentured New Guinean women would be lessened by an influx of Asian women who, at least in the case of Malays, in Hahl’s experience, followed their menfolk into the colony in “hordes.” With Malay women available to labor for Europeans, New Guinean women could tend to the business of bearing children.⁵⁹

For planters, Asian labor presented an upset to economic and racial colonial orders. Importing laborers was more expensive than compelling New Guineans to work, they complained.⁶⁰ Competition from Chinese traders also threatened European commercial

⁵⁶ Peter Biskup, “Foreign Coloured Labour in German New Guinea: A Study in Economic Development,” *The Journal of Pacific History* 5 (1970): 85-107; Rudolf von Bennigsen, Herbertshöhe, to the Foreign Office, Colonial Department, Berlin, 23 September 1899, BArch: R 1001/2306, 63.

⁵⁷ Hahl, Rabaul, to the State Secretary of the Imperial Colonial Office, Berlin, 17 September 1911, BArch: R 1001/2264, 81. On depopulation in Fiji see especially *The Colony of Fiji, Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Decrease of the Native Population* (Suva: Government Printer, 1896); Victoria Lukere, “Mothers of the Taukei: Fijian Women and ‘the Decrease of the Race,’” Ph.D. thesis, Australian National University, 1997.

⁵⁸ Hahl, Rabaul, to the State Secretary of the Imperial Colonial Office, Berlin, 17 September 1911, BArch: R 1001/2264, 80-81.

⁵⁹ Hahl, Herbertshöhe, to the State Secretary of Imperial Colonial Office, Berlin, 5 July 1909, BArch: R 1001/2311, 170.

⁶⁰ Forsayth Gesellschaft, Hamburg, to the State Secretary of the Imperial Colonial Office, Berlin, 21 November 1912, BArch: R 1001/2313, 23-24.

interests.⁶¹ Under Mirow's directorship, the Planters' Association warned of the colony becoming "flooded by the Mongolian element."⁶² The "yellow race" was already spreading "in a frightening way," the Association told the administration in 1911. Rabaul's Chinatown was already home to unemployed idlers, thieves, and loiterers. Chinese gambling dens and, as everyone knew, a Chinese brothel, operated openly.⁶³ Opium was a problem too, although the colonial administration itself was responsible for granting the Chinese merchant and long-time resident of German New Guinea, Ah Tam, a monopoly on its importation.⁶⁴ The planters' complaints were also of a sexual nature: Chinese residents unsettled colonial racial hierarchies by establishing "friendly and familial" relations with New Guineans the likes of which, they said, were off limits to the white man for reasons of "race."⁶⁵ As "independent entrepreneurs" and members of the "white race," they demanded that Hahl reconsider his plans to bring in more Chinese laborers and "to take appropriate measures to protect the colony against the invasion of the yellow race."⁶⁶ The planters' menacing visions of Chinese invasion and miscegenation were deemed misguided by another interlocutor concerned with the "labor question," as we will see later. Yet both Hahl's optimism about an influx of Asian laborers and the planters' racist diatribes about Chinese "invasion" were misplaced.

⁶¹ Biskup, "Foreign Coloured Labour in German New Guinea," 99.

⁶² Planters' Association of German New Guinea, *Amtsblatt* 3, no. 12 (15 June 1911): 136.

⁶³ Planters' Association in the Bismarck Archipelago, Herbertshöhe, to the Imperial Government, Rabaul, 25 February 1911, BArch: R 1001/2264, 129-130.

⁶⁴ Klug, Rabaul, to Hahl, 13 March 1911, BArch: R 1001/2264, 123; Hahl, Rabaul, to the State Secretary of the Imperial Colonial Office, Berlin, 17 September 1911, BArch: R 1001/2264, 79. On Ah Tam, David Y. H. Wu, *The Chinese in Papua New Guinea, 1880-1980* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1982), 21.

⁶⁵ Planters' Association in the Bismarck Archipelago, Herbertshöhe, to the Imperial Government, Rabaul, 25 February 1911, BArch: R 1001/2264, 129-130.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

The numbers of Chinese laborers who came to German New Guinea were never sufficient to satisfy either vision.⁶⁷

Race, Gender, and Colonial Space

As debates about labor mobility, contestations over the recruitment of New Guineans signaled new ideas about colonial space in the German colony. Colonial spatial frameworks gestured to gendered divisions of labor, paid and unpaid, as Anne Dickson-Waiko has argued for neighboring British New Guinea/Papua.⁶⁸ While British and Australian labor policies in that colony barred New Guinean women from the indenture to a much greater extent than the Germans would ever achieve, Dickson-Waiko's analysis of British "protectionism" as productive of gendered spatial frameworks is helpful here. Outmigration of indentured men and restrictions on the movements of colonized women, she argues, produced the feminization of the village or "domestic space," whose counterpart was the "colonial enclave" of white, predominantly male settlement and a mobile, transitory, New Guinean male labor force. Since, in German New Guinea, this strictly gendered division of colonial labor would never reflect the reality of the colonial situation, these gendered spaces are best understood as colonial spatial *imaginaries* underpinning administrative efforts to prohibit the

⁶⁷ Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans*, 117-18. More generally, see Biskup, "Foreign Coloured Labour in German New Guinea," 85-107; Wu, *The Chinese in Papua New Guinea*, 17-28; Hank Nelson, "Chinese in Papua New Guinea," in *China in Oceania: Reshaping the Pacific?* eds., Terence Wesley-Smith and Edgar A. Porter (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 104-105.

⁶⁸ Anne Dickson-Waiko, "Colonial Enclaves and Domestic Spaces in British New Guinea," in *Britishness Abroad*, eds. Kate Darian-Smith, Patricia Grimshaw, and Stuart Macintyre (Carlton: Melbourne University Publishing, 2007), 205-230.

recruitment of New Guinean women into the colonial labor force. Excluded from colonial enclaves and confined to domestic spaces, New Guinean women in the German colony would be shielded “against the ill effects of land alienation and [indentured] labour” like their counterparts in Papua, but also from the non-reproductive sexual economies that characterized indenture.⁶⁹

The station chief at Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, Scholz, signaled these spatial configurations of gender, labor, and sexuality when he cautioned Hahl about the potential dangers of removing New Guinean women from the indentured labor force. Scholz wrote of the need to maintain female contract laborers to attract male recruits and ward off homosexuality among laboring New Guinean men, and also to provide white men with ready access to New Guinean women. He reminded Hahl that “at the moment, relationships between whites and indigenous colored women do not exist” and warned that “The good rapport thereby created could easily be altered by the present proposal, the dangers of which are obvious.”⁷⁰ By making female laborers from distant locales sexually available to white men in the colonial enclaves, Scholz suggested, more hazardous unions between whites and local (“indigenous”) women that breached the colony’s domestic spaces and enraged local men could be avoided. Others made similar claims with reference to male laborers. Without sexual access to indentured women, Mirow said in 1912, indentured men would “attack” “local native women.”⁷¹ Both men represented such incursions into domestic spaces as perilous to colonial security. The administrator Klug, earlier dubious of plans to prohibit

⁶⁹ Ibid.,” 214. Governor Hubert Murray, as Dickson-Waiko writes, was “adamant that the indenture of women would turn them into prostitutes, thereby unnecessarily sexualizing the indenture system.” Ibid., 216.

⁷⁰ Scholz, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, 1 June 1909, BArch: R 1001/2311, 177.

⁷¹ “Bericht über die 4. Gouvernementsratssitzung der V. Sitzungsperiode am 18. Oktober 1912 im Gouvernementsgebäude in Rabaul,” *Amtsblatt* 4, no. 21 (1 November 1912): 232-233.

women's indenture, now confidently rebutted Mirow, claiming that "the authorities would know how to protect [local village] women" against assaults from male laborers.⁷² As for the white men, Hahl again looked to Asia for an answer to this sexual "labor question." The "disadvantages" to "the young, unmarried, European population" of barring New Guinean women from the labor force, he informed the Imperial Colonial Office, "can easily be eliminated by recruiting Javanese and Japanese women." Hahl was of the opinion that upon returning home after a period of "concubinage with a European" and a small fortune to show for it, these "girls" were "usually sought-after wives" in their homelands. He was not concerned about "prostitution among the Europeans," believing it to be preferential to "the prevailing custom of cohabitation with women of indigenous tribes."⁷³ As we have seen, Hahl had been putting these ideas into practice on the Gazelle Peninsula since 1904 by sanctioning importation of Japanese women to work Ah Tam's brothel in the colonial enclaves of Matupit and, later, Rabaul.⁷⁴

As a racialized and gendered "artefact of colonial subjugation," Dickson-Waiko has argued that the construction of domestic space imposed "a new layer of patriarchy" upon New Guinean societies, institutionalizing existing sexual asymmetries and rendering them more systematic and hierarchical.⁷⁵ Paternalistic labor policies advocating for women's confinement to village spaces worked to restrict female mobility that, as we have seen, threatened dangerous sexuality and reproductive disruptions. The German colonial administration's decision to limit female recruits to married women who signed on with

⁷² *Ibid.*, 233.

⁷³ Hahl, Herbertshöhe, to the State Secretary of Imperial Colonial Office, Berlin, 5 July 1909, BArch: R 1001/2311, 170.

⁷⁴ Hahl, Herbertshöhe, to the Foreign Office, Colonial Department, Berlin, 23 November 1904, BArch: R 1001/2991, 74-76.

⁷⁵ Dickson-Waiko, "Colonial Enclaves and Domestic Spaces," 206, 208.

their husbands followed this logics, emphasizing heteronormative, racialized, reproductive family units. The spatial divisions that the German colonial administration attempted to cultivate through recruitment policies were therefore demarcations of labor, gender, and sexuality, as well as race and reproduction.

Hahl imposed more direct forms of patriarchal authority through his labor policies, too, pronouncing in 1909 that any recruitment contracts willingly entered into by married women were henceforth illegal if the woman's husband had not provided his consent. He suggested that such incidents were on the rise.⁷⁶ This pronouncement had roots in a 1906 proposal of the Government Council to make impermissible the recruitment of women against the "ascertained will" of their "ruler" [*Gewalthaber*].⁷⁷ Hahl considered his decree to be in keeping with the "principle" that women required their husbands' permission to recruit and declared that any recruiters found to have violated this "principle" would have to return female recruits to their husbands. The woman's family would have to return any payments they may have received for her recruitment, but her husband would be under no obligation to compensate any other expenses incurred by the recruiter. Hahl did not make explicit whether he believed the "principle" that men had authority over their wives' mobility to be one customary in New Guinean societies. Historian Peter Sack has pointed out that although Hahl probably did believe this to be the case, his pronouncement made no concessions for alternative vernacular understandings of gender relations and women's autonomy.⁷⁸ Rather, this patriarchal "principle" designed to bring women's mobility under male control was one

⁷⁶ Hahl, "Betrifft: Anwerbung verheirateter Frauen," Herbertshöhe, 25 June 1909, *Amtsblatt* 1, no. 13 (15 July 1909): 98.

⁷⁷ Minutes of the Government Council meeting, 2 November 1906, NAA: G255, 136.

⁷⁸ Peter Sack, Peter Sack, *Phantom History, The Rule of Law and the Colonial State: The Case of German New Guinea* (Canberra: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, ANU, 2001), 361-362.

imposed by the colonial state and upheld by colonial courts. In one case from 1911, for example, the station court in Rabaul sided with a man from Tanga, an island off the coast of Neu Mecklenburg, who demanded the return of his wife, Mante, despite the fact that Mante said her husband physically abused her.⁷⁹ Hahl's labor regulation, as Sack has argued, was intended to "signal to recruiters and employers that the recruitment and employment of married women was politically unwanted because it was in the public interest that they bore children and looked after their families at home." At the same time, it warned married women and their relatives that they would have to return recruitment money if the woman's husband had not consented to her recruitment.⁸⁰

The colonial construction of domestic space worked to extend male authority—European and New Guinean—over women's movements and labors. These spatial demarcations were, however, imperfectly realized in German New Guinea. New Guinean women continued to circulate within male-dominated colonial enclaves; it remained legal to recruit married into the indentured labor force with their husbands, and provisions allowed for the recruitment of single women to labor for "white families," which falsely implied that the presence of white women would shield indentured women from male vice. The war intervened before a drafted labor ordinance that would prohibit the recruitment of all single women into the labor force went into effect.⁸¹ However, as we will see in the following

⁷⁹ Kuangkake's statement, Rabaul, 29 June 1911, and Georg Stuebel's ruling, 21 July 1911, NAA: G255, 572: Stationsgericht zu [Rabaul]. Akten gegen Tom Miller in Makurapan wegen Zuwiderhandlung gegen die Arbeiterverordnung (1911). The court's ruling was made in spite (or perhaps because) of the fact that in his pronouncement of 25 June 1909, Hahl made an exception which would allow the recruitment of married women in cases where it could be proven that the woman was justified in discontinuing her marriage—it was up to the colonial authorities to determine whether this was the case. See Hahl, "Betrifft: Anwerbung verheirateter Frauen," Herbertshöhe, *Amtsblatt* 1, no. 13 (15 July 1909): 98.

⁸⁰ Sack, *Phantom History*, 362.

⁸¹ "Verordnung des Gouverneurs von Deutsch-Neuguinea, betreffend die Auswanderung und Ausführung von Eingeborenen, die Anwerbung und Beschäftigung von Eingeborenen als Arbeiter, sowie die Erhaltung der

section, in the years of fertility scares prior to the outbreak of war, German medical doctors also ventured into the colony's domestic spaces, making their own recommendations for extensions of colonial control over New Guinean women's bodies and labors. Their recommendations, like administrative attempts at labor reform, made New Guinean women central objects of medical-ethnographic knowledge intended to secure Germany's colonial future in New Guinea.

Medical Doctors and Domestic Spaces

As administrators and planters in the German colony debated measures to combat depopulation through labor reforms which would confine New Guinean women to the domestic space of the village, medical doctors ventured into these spaces, seeking to establish scientific evidence that would lend urgency and legitimacy to Hahl's embattled policy initiatives. While the absence of women from their villages—especially from Neu Mecklenburg—during their peak childbearing years was concerning to some doctors, many were reluctant to draw too close a connection between reproductive disruption and the labor system upon which German colonial rule depended. Instead, they focused their attentions overwhelmingly on New Guinean women themselves, identifying female promiscuity, which they held responsible for the spread of venereal disease, and women's general disregard for maternity as primary factors explaining low birth rates. These

Disciplin unter den eingeborenen Arbeitern (Arbeiter-Verordnung), Rabaul, 1914, National Library of Australia (hereafter: NLA); Papers relating to German New Guinea, MS 69, 12, § 33.

gendered logics of colonial catastrophe oscillated between the biopolitical and what Nancy Rose Hunt has recently called the “nervous” guises of the colonial state.⁸² The first linked women’s indenture with infertility, highlighting the venereal and championing medicalization. The second turned to the vernacular, identifying New Guinean women’s everyday practices of controlling fertility and restricting family sizes as gendered forms of racial pathology.

Many medical doctors who carried out research into depopulation in Neu Mecklenburg agreed that venereal disease was affecting birthrates, producing sterility and childless marriages. Almost all agreed that gonorrhoea was widespread, though they debated the prevalence of syphilis among New Guinean communities.⁸³ The government physician Dr. Walter Born identified gonorrhoea as “the commonest cause of sterility” among both men and women in Neu Mecklenburg.⁸⁴ He had traveled to the government station at Namatanai in February 1908 to investigate the “health conditions of the natives of central Neu Mecklenburg.” Born considered the station, established in 1904, to be “very well located from a tropical hygiene point of view.” Roomy and airy houses for colonial administrators were perched on a hill overlooking Nabuto Bay. Even at elevation, however, malaria was a problem. It plagued the villagers living around the station, and children whose enlarged spleens indicated the disease were often seen.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, the resident Europeans, as well as the New Guineans employed at the station, were in good health, he wrote.

⁸² Hunt, *A Nervous State*.

⁸³ Doctors often mistook yaws, which is endemic in New Guinea, for syphilis. See Daniel Walther, *Sex and Control: Venereal Disease, Colonial Physicians, and Indigenous Agency in German Colonialism, 1884-1914* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 105.

⁸⁴ Dr. Ludwig Born, “Die Gesundheitsverhältnisse der Eingeborenen im mittleren Neu-Mecklenburg,” BArch: R 1001/2311, 70.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 56.

Examinations of the latter had revealed only a few cases of venereal disease, and these were old infections that Born treated immediately.⁸⁶

Over a period of eleven weeks, Born toured the area near Namatanai, visiting plantations and villages on Neu Mecklenburg's north coast, from Namerodu (Namarodu) on Nabuto Bay and northwest to Belik. He noted differences between the peoples living around Nabuto Bay and those in the villages to the north. Around the Bay, from Namerodu (Namarodu) to Bopire—where an outbreak of dysentery coincided with Born's visit to the plantation—people lived in scattered huts situated in dense bush. He thought them to be “sullen” and unaccommodating. To the north, as far as Belik, he saw “rather coherent villages in which a much freer, more lively tone prevails.” Even here, though, he noted an absence of a kind of “zest for life” and a cheerlessness even among the young. “Rarely does one hear the laughter, games, and dances of children and young people,” he wrote⁸⁷ This was not “loss of interest in life” that Rivers believed resulted from colonization. Born speculated instead that the “dull pressure that seems to burden the entire people” originated from former times, a period prior to “pacification” marked by a constant fear of attack from neighboring villagers and the “cannibalistic orgies” that followed.⁸⁸ Yet, he was attentive to changes that colonialism had brought to this region. He noted that there was not a single village in central Neu Mecklenburg from which men and women had not been recruited to labor on European-owned plantations in other parts of the colony.⁸⁹ He observed that decades of haphazard and

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* Also see 69.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 64. It should be noted that Born's point here was that central Neu Mecklenburg's intensive contact with foreign influences made its peoples problematic subjects for the ethnographer intent on uncovering their “native customs.” He found those who had worked as indentured laborers or sailors to be “impudent.” They wanted payment for everything and feigned offense at refusals to buy their surplus taros and yams, he wrote.

violent recruiting practices had generated a new and different fear—one of recruitment ships. In particular, he reported, people feared “their women” being recruited.⁹⁰

Born noted that in many of central Neu Mecklenburg’s villages, the numbers of children were barely half that of the adult population. He asked the women he met how many times they had given birth and recorded the highest number to be four.⁹¹ Born saw a direct connection between venereal disease in women and their recruitment into the labor indenture. He reported that, in his opinion, “very few of all the women and girls recruited escape a venereal infection during the course of their [labor] contracts.” In the government hospitals where laborers were treated, all of the women who presented with severe venereal disease were from Neu Mecklenburg, he wrote. “The young women of Neu Mecklenburg leave their homes healthy and blooming; infirm and sick they often return to the same place.” Since “even the layman” knew that “the clap (*der Tripper*)” produced sterility, this must, he thought, be the reason “for the barrenness of so many marriages in Neu Mecklenburg.”⁹² Returning home venereally infected, Born contended, female former laborers spread sterility-causing disease in their villages.⁹³ He advocated prohibiting the recruitment of women from central Neu Mecklenburg into the colonial labor force for the next few years, until healthy conditions could be achieved.⁹⁴

Born was confident that a decidedly biopolitical German rule could remedy the problem of depopulation among its colonial subjects. In addition to restricting the recruitment of women into the indenture, he advocated far-reaching medicalization through

⁹⁰ Ibid., 69-70.

⁹¹ Ibid., 69.

⁹² Ibid., 70.

⁹³ Ibid., 70.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 70-71.

extended administrative controls. For the region of Namatanai, Born called for the construction of both a “large native hospital” and a labor recruitment office.⁹⁵ The recruitment office would allow the administration to exercise greater control over the numbers of people—presumably exclusively men—recruited from central Neu Mecklenburg. It would further allow a physician to subject these recruits to medical examinations before they were transported to other parts of the colony. As the situation stood in 1908, laborers only received medical examinations once they had reached the colony’s labor depots in Herbertshöhe and Friedrich Wilhelmshafen. Having previously worked as a physician in Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, Born was aware of the limitations of this situation, which allowed those he deemed barely fit to be recruited to enter into the indenture. He reported that having examined many recruits in Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, who had been transported there from various parts of the colony, admitting that among them “were a number that I only allowed to pass through because they were already far from home.”⁹⁶ The hospital would, Born believed, serve as “a kind of gathering point for the sick, where surgical patients and those with venereal disease would find treatment.”⁹⁷

Extending the administration’s control over New Guinean bodies at a colonial station was one thing. Born knew that measures also needed to be taken to combat depopulation in the colony’s domestic spaces. He proposed training “intelligent, young people” from all of Neu Mecklenburg’s larger locales with basic medical knowledge. Together with a European physician based at Namatanai, these medical middlemen (who would later become known as *Heiltultuls*, or medical *tultuls*) would “from time to time” conduct medical examinations in

⁹⁵ Ibid., 71-72.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 71.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 71.

the surrounding villages, thereby extending medical “control over the entire region.”⁹⁸ Born was optimistic about this approach. He had already successfully carried out “a proper medical examination” of all the villagers at Belik, within fourteen days of being there. “Women and children,” he reported, “even young girls, who are always the shyest, trustingly came for treatment.”⁹⁹ Yet, the cases of venereal disease he observed led Born to conclude that it was much more widespread than previously thought. He described a young woman whose age he estimated to be about fifteen, but who looked closer to forty “because of her festering ulcers.” He learned some villages were “widely known among the natives for their many venereally infected women.” While at Belik, he encountered four young women—the youngest a child—who came from a nearby village to see him, seeking treatment because their genitals had been “eaten by ulcers.”¹⁰⁰ But he also noted that those suffering from venereal disease as a rule did not seek out medical assistance of their own accord, since “Former laborers know very well that in the government hospitals compulsory treatment exists for these patients, and they would believe that they would be similarly forced here.”¹⁰¹ Born therefore conceded that “Particularly strong coercion” might be required to treat those with venereal disease.¹⁰² A colleague of Born’s agreed, stating that, in his experience, those in Neu Mecklenburg’s “more isolated villages” declared themselves “too ashamed” to undergo physical examinations, but he also thought medical middlemen could boost people’s confidence in German medicine.¹⁰³ As far as Born was concerned, “The villages must be

⁹⁸ Ibid., 71-72.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 65.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 68.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 68.

¹⁰² Ibid., 68, 71-72.

¹⁰³ Karl Kopp, “Ärztliche Bericht über die Zeit vom 1. Januar 1911 bis 31. März 1911, Käwieng, 7 April 1911, BArch: R 1001/5772, 75.

systematically examined for venereal disease and all sick people must undergo treatment.”¹⁰⁴ The colonial administration’s biopolitical presence in and control over Neu Mecklenburg’s domestic spaces was urgent, Born believed, if the colony’s “current population calamity” were to be remedied.¹⁰⁵

Like administrators and planters, who spoke with varying degrees of explicitness about the sexual economies that marked the German colonial indenture and plantation labor, medical doctors also gestured obliquely to systemic sexual exploitation and violence faced by indentured New Guinean women in the colony. Born’s thinking about venereal contagion, for instance, remained obscure in his report. Although he identified a definite connection between women’s indenture and venereal disease, he was silent on why that might be the case. Others were more explicit. Born’s colleague, the government physician Wilhelm Wick, shared Born’s sentiment that women’s indenture led to venereal disease. In 1914, as gonorrhea was performing a “victory march” in the German colony, Wick wrote that “almost all of these women become venereally infected during their contract period,” before promptly asserting that “they are actually nothing other than prostitutes.”¹⁰⁶ This reductive rendering of indentured New Guinean women had traction among German colonial medical experts. In a lengthy report published in Germany’s leading academic journal for tropical medicine, for example, the government physician Ludwig Külz, maintained that the dynamics of New Guinean women’s wage labor and sexual waywardness were quite simple: New Guinean women maintained the sexual “looseness” they acquired during their time as

¹⁰⁴ Born, “Die Gesundheitsverhältnisse der Eingeborenen im mittleren Neu-Mecklenburg,” BArch: R 1001/2311, 68.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 72.

¹⁰⁶ Wick, “Arbeiterfürsorge in Deutsch-Neuguinea,” 1914, BArch: R 1001/5773, 38.

laborers even after their contracts had ended. They merely exchanged their role as “plantation prostitute” for that of the “village whore.” Unmarried and often also married women necessarily became “venereally diseased whores” once recruited.¹⁰⁷ One physician suggested that the blame might not solely lie with indentured women, stating that “unscrupulous whites with chronic gonorrhoea and healed syphilis” were often responsible for infecting them. Still, this doctor charged women with spreading venereal infection to New Guinean men once back in their villages.¹⁰⁸ This “vicious circle” of venereal contagion from plantation to village could only be broken by restricting women’s participation in the indentured labor force and confining them instead to the colony’s domestic spaces, this doctor agreed.¹⁰⁹

In reports like these, detailing venereal disease and depopulation, medical doctors, along with other commentators, recast the sexual economies and exploitations of the indenture as medical and ethnographic facts about female laborers’ supposedly unrestrained, unproductive sexuality. Scholars have noted the fervor with which German colonial physicians blamed colonial subjects for the spread of venereal disease. Racialized ideas about local “superstition,” “ignorance,” and “loose morals” informed much of the medical knowledge they produced.¹¹⁰ In German New Guinea, these ideas were also sharply gendered. Notions that there were too few women in villages—due to recruitment but also because the more general “lack of women” was said to characterize New Guinean societies—fueled fears of polyandry and signaled novel and troubling sexual cultures, resulting in

¹⁰⁷ Ludwig Külz, “Zur Biologie und Pathologie des Nachwuchses bei den Naturvölkern der Deutschen Schutzgebiete,” *Archiv für Schiffs- und Tropen-Hygiene* 23 (1919): 59-60.

¹⁰⁸ Hermann Runge, “Bericht des Regierungsarztes Dr. Runge über die Sterblichkeit in Nord-Neu-Mecklenburg, sowie Vorschläge zu ihrer Bekämpfung,” *Käwieng*, 26 June 1908, BArch: R 1001/2311, 76.

¹⁰⁹ Runge, “Bericht des Regierungsarztes Dr. Runge,” BArch: R 1001/2311, 76.

¹¹⁰ Walther, *Sex and Control*, 81-83.

venereal contagion and childlessness. The station chief at Käwieng believed skewed gender ratios in northern Neu Mecklenburg to be inciting polyandry practices and barrenness there.¹¹¹ The ethnographer, Richard Thurnwald, also believed polyandry to be reigning in German New Guinea.¹¹² In an article published in the *Koloniale Rundschau* (*Colonial Review*), he accused New Guinean women who had worked for Europeans as indentured laborers of considering themselves too “cultivated” to become mothers and suggested that indentured women’s engagement in prostitution might diminish their “taste for childbearing.”¹¹³ With such assertions, European doctors, administrators, and ethnographers not only rallied colonial tropes of licentious and promiscuous subaltern women. They also highlighted very concrete realities of the indenture system in which New Guinean women labored and which colonists widely assumed made women’s bodies available to male laborers and white colonists. Venereal disease and sexual license in women allowed white, European men to articulate a connection between indenture and infertility while simultaneously diverting criticism away from the colonial labor system and onto New Guinean women.

Medical doctors also made other criticisms of New Guinean women as they ventured into domestic spaces and attempted to diagnose and treat the causes of depopulation. Like many others, the government physician Dr. Hermann Runge thought venereal disease was contributing to depopulation in Neu Mecklenburg, but he downplayed its importance.¹¹⁴ Serving as government physician at Käwieng in northern Neu Mecklenburg, Runge traveled

¹¹¹ Zwanzger, Käwieng, to Hahl, 16 June 1909, BArch: R 1001/2311, 179.

¹¹² Thurnwald, “Die eingeborenen Arbeitskräfte im Südseeschutzgebiet,” 622. On Thurnwald, see Marion Melk-Koch, *Auf der Suche nach der menschlichen Gesellschaft: Richard Thurnwald* (Berlin: Museum für Völkerkunde Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, 1989); George Steinmetz, “Scientific Autonomy and Empire, 1880-1945,” in *German Colonialism in a Global Age*, eds. Bradley Naranch and Geoff Eley (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 46-73.

¹¹³ Thurnwald, “Die eingeborenen Arbeitskräfte im Südseeschutzgebiet,” 621-622.

¹¹⁴ Runge, “Bericht des Regierungsarztes Dr. Runge,” BArch: R 1001/2311, 75-78.

to nearby villages between late March and early June 1908 to investigate “mortality among the natives” and report back to Hahl. During this time, he acquired knowledge through what he claimed to be “close communication” with local people.¹¹⁵ The conclusions he reached were bleak. One village, “that a few years ago was a flourishing place” was now home to “relatively few inhabitants.” Another village was “likewise greatly decimated.” “Usually one sees only one child per family,” he lamented, “but very often not any.”¹¹⁶

For Runge and many of his colleagues, a host of “native customs and practices” dominated knowledge of demographic decline.¹¹⁷ This was a colonial logic of a “nervous” kind, betraying a colonial state “energized by dread” that promoted securitization and penalization rather than health and vitality.¹¹⁸ Their diagnoses were gendered. Many of those musing on low birthrates blamed vernacular labor regimes, which they believed burdened women’s bodies, rendering them gaunt, prematurely aged, and, as one doctor wrote, “naturally not much good for the business of bearing children.”¹¹⁹ The trope of New Guinean women as “beasts of burden” reemerged as medical knowledge that asserted that “contrary to the norm, not the man but rather the woman bears the bulk of life’s burden.” These burdens rendered women “shriveled and haggard” and led to earlier deaths, another doctor wrote, noting that pregnant women and nursing and mothers were “not absolved

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 75.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 76.

¹¹⁷ See, for example, Wilhelm Adelman, “Bevölkerungsrückgang in Neu-Mecklenburg,” *Namatanai*, 20 January 1909, BArch: R 1001/2311, 134; Karl Kopp, “Zur Frage des Bevölkerungsrückganges in Neupommern,” *Archiv für Schiffs- und Tropen-Hygiene* 17, no. 21 (1913): 729-750. An abridged version of this report was reprinted by the Australian Military Administration in the *Government Gazette: British Administration of German New Guinea* 1, no. 5 (15 December 1914): 8-12.

¹¹⁸ Hunt, *A Nervous State*, 8.

¹¹⁹ Born, “Die Gesundheitsverhältnisse der Eingeborenen im mittleren Neu-Mecklenburg,” BArch: R 1001/2311, 63.

these grueling labors.”¹²⁰ Still others blamed prolonged breastfeeding of infants, accompanied by prohibitions against sexual intercourse, even while a few acknowledged that such practices were grounded in New Guinean conceptions of vitality.¹²¹ Some considered a decline in polygamous marriages, itself attributed to New Guinea’s “lack of women,” to be exacerbating the problems already caused by cultural prohibitions against postpartum sex. For in earlier times, as one colonial administrator wrote, when men had “two or even more wives, [...] when it was forbidden for him to have sex with one, he could turn to another. Today, it is seldom the case that a man has two or more wives.”¹²² To an even greater extent than diagnoses of depopulation grounded in venereal disease, these explanations resisted an interpretation of reproductive disruption as a product of the German colonial situation. As with biopolitical knowledge produced about venereal disease, however, New Guinean women—with their barren bodies and wrongheaded approaches to mothering—assumed central importance in ethnographic knowledge of a nervous kind.¹²³

“Abortion and infant mortality” were, to Runge’s knowledge, the principal causes of depopulation, but his report focused on pregnancy avoidance too.¹²⁴ European colonists had long been aware that New Guinean women knew how to prevent and terminate pregnancies.

¹²⁰ Karl Kopp, “Zur Frage des Bevölkerungsrückganges in Neupommern,” *Archiv für Schiffs- und Tropen-Hygiene* 17, no. 21 (1913): 730-733.

¹²¹ Runge, “Bericht des Regierungsarztes Dr. Runge,” BArch: R 1001/2311, 76; Wilhelm Adelman, “Bevölkerungsrückgang in Neu-Mecklenburg,” Namatanai, 20 January 1909, BArch: R 1001/2311, 134.

¹²² Adelman, “Bevölkerungsrückgang in Neu-Mecklenburg,” Namatanai, 20 January 1909, BArch R 1001/2311, 134.

¹²³ Similar logics were at play elsewhere in the Pacific. See Margaret Jolly, “Other Mothers: Maternal “Insouciance” and the Depopulation Debate in Fiji and Vanuatu, 1890-1930,” in *Maternities and Modernities: Colonial and Postcolonial Experiences in Asia and the Pacific*, eds. Kalpana Ram and Margaret Jolly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 177-212; Vicki Lukere, “A Tale of Two Mothers: Colonial Constructions of Indian and Fijian Maternity,” *Fijian Studies: A Journal of Contemporary Fiji*, special issue 3, no. 2 (2005): 357-374. And for a brief but important assessment of this logics in German New Guinea, Rainer F. Buschmann, *Anthropology’s Global Histories: The Ethnographic Frontier in German New Guinea, 1870-1935* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2009), 107-08.

¹²⁴ Runge, “Bericht des Regierungsarztes Dr. Runge,” BArch: R 1001/2311, 75-78.

They wrote about older women who massaged bellies and applied pressure with vines and sticks to induce abortions, and who knew which botanicals would prevent conceptions and induce abortions. According to Runge, as soon as girls in Neu Mecklenburg reached puberty, “the old women take them into the bush and give them the sap of a tree to drink, whereupon they are incorporated into the women’s house.” This sap functioned as a contraceptive, which Runge believed allowed young women to “serve as prostitutes [...] for whomever wants to have them.” Should a woman become pregnant—either as “prostitute or wife,” Runge reported, she would consume the sap of another plant to induce abortion.¹²⁵ While Runge echoed accusations of licentiousness and non-reproductive sexuality that so many of his colleagues directed toward indentured women, he also gestured to the nervous colonial suspicion that female subjects were willfully refusing to produce the children upon whom the futures of European empires rested.¹²⁶

As a solution to depopulation, Runge prescribed increased administrative control in the form of policing and penalizing. “The remedy against attempts to abort and so on,” he informed Hahl, “must be a severe punishment of all cases in which it can be demonstrated that such means and manipulations have been attempted.”¹²⁷ Runge was not alone in making such a suggestion. The Eitapé station chief, Hans Rodatz, also advised that the administration take “significantly intensified” measures against women with regards to abortion.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Ibid., 76.

¹²⁶ On the suspicion that women were refusing to bear children, see Heinrich Fellmann to Benjamin Danks, Raluana, 16 November 1909, ML: Heinrich Fellmann, letter book, CY 4756 (microfilm); Augustin Krämer, “Das Aussterben der Naturvölker und Mittel zur Abhilfe,” *Die Woche* 12, no. 37 (1910): 1546; J. Lyng, “German New Guinea: Area and Population,” *Rabaul Record* (1 May 1916), 6. See also Felix Speiser, “Decadence and Preservation in the New Hebrides,” and W. H. R. Rivers, “The Psychological Factor,” both in *Essays on the Depopulation of Melanesia*, 40, 104.

¹²⁷ Runge, “Bericht des Regierungsarztes Dr. Runge,” BArch: R 1001/2311, 76.

¹²⁸ Hans Rodatz, Eitapé, to Hahl, Herbertshöhe, 15 May 1909, BArch: R 1001/2311, 175.

Believing that a local informant would soon provide him with samples of the vegetation that Neu Mecklenburg women used to produce abortifacients, Runge further suggested that the administration use this knowledge to “diligently fell such trees.”¹²⁹ Runge, like Born, thus also advocated for administrative incursions into New Guinea’s domestic spaces, but for him it was not women’s venereally infected bodies, but rather their reproductively pathological practices that needed to be contained. Whether Runge ever did receive the botanical knowledge needed for the administration to carry out such plans is doubtful: when, in 1911, another physician attempted to discover the substances women used as contraceptives and abortifacients on Manam Island, off the coast of Kaiser Wilhelmsland, “people simply smiled but did not answer.”¹³⁰ As was the case in other parts of the German colonial empire, in New Guinean women did not readily give up this intimate vernacular knowledge to those whose business it was not and who might use it against them.¹³¹

Colonial attempts to suppress vernacular practices of birth control and infanticide were fraught. Missionaries in German New Guinea had long been attempting to stamp out abortion and infanticide, which they associated with “fornication” (*Hurerei*) and sexual immorality.¹³² One Rhenish missionary referred to abortion as New Guinea’s “national sin.”¹³³ He considered it more important for female European missionaries to dissuade New

¹²⁹ Runge, “Bericht des Regierungsarztes Dr. Runge,” BArch: R 1001/2311, 76.

¹³⁰ Fritz Leisegang, “Ärztlicher Vierteljahrsbericht. 1. Oktober bis 31. Dezember 1911, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, 5 February 1912, BArch: R 1001/5772, 114.

¹³¹ For a parallel case from German East Africa, see Daniel Bendix, “Impossible to Get to Know These Secret Means”—Colonial Anxiety and the Quest for Controlling Reproduction in ‘German East Africa,’” in *Transcending Borders: Abortion in the Past and Present*, eds. Shannon Stettner, et al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 53-67.

¹³² Helmich, Siar, to the Deputation, 27 July 1899, Vereinte Evangelische Mission, Bestand Rheinische Mission (hereafter: RMG): Heinrich Helmich papers; 2.148, vol. 1.

¹³³ Wilhelm Blum, “Bericht über das erste Halbjahr 1917,” Ragetta, July 1917, RMG: Ragetta; 3.003, 53.

Guinean women from committing this sin than to have obstetrics training.¹³⁴ With a lack of medical knowledge, however, missionaries were prone to mistaking any neonatal and postnatal death for maternal malfeasance.¹³⁵ In one case from 1901, Catholic Father Eberhard Limbrock of the Divine Word Mission at Tumleo asked the administration to make an example of a woman whose newborn had died and whom the missionaries believed to have committed infanticide, probably because the sisters mistook an indentation in the newborn's skull as evidence of injury.¹³⁶ They took the clay smeared on the infant's body as part of the Tumleos' death ritual as further evidence of wrongdoing and washed it off amidst the mother's protests.¹³⁷ The Catholic Father urged the authorities to sentence the woman to six months forced labor with monthly floggings to help to deter women from committing similar crimes in the future.¹³⁸ Although the colonial court found insufficient evidence to convict the woman of any wrongdoing, the judge, Stuckhardt, deemed her pretrial detention of almost five months in Friedrich Wilhelmshafen adequate to warn her against committing "new offenses."¹³⁹ Almost a decade later, members of the same mission society demanded that the administration punish four women suspected of infanticide. The administration responded by arresting the women and burning the houses of those thought to be their

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Dr. Hintze, who examined the baby's body, believed the Catholic sisters probably mistook the unfused sutures of the baby's skull for a sign of injury because few of them were familiar with the anatomy of a newborn. Hintze, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, to the Imperial District Office, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, 20 September 1901, NAA: G255, 966: Bezirksgericht Friedrich Wilhelmshafen. Strafsache wider die Eingeborene Tamentjeo aus Sapi bei Tumleo wegen Kindesmords (1901-1902).

¹³⁷ Eberhard Limbrock, Tumleo, 28 August 1901, NAA: G255, 966: Bezirksgericht Friedrich Wilhelmshafen. Strafsache wider die Eingeborene Tamentjeo aus Sapi bei Tumleo wegen Kindesmords (1901-1902). Limbrock's ethnographically engaged colleague, Father Erdweg, detailed the Tumleo practice of smearing clay on the bodies of the deceased. Mathias Josef Erdweg, "Die Bewohner der Insel Tumleo, Berlinhafen, Deutsch-Neu-Guinea," *Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien* 32 (1902): 289.

¹³⁸ Eberhard Limbrock, Tumleo, 28 August 1901, NAA: G255, 966: Bezirksgericht Friedrich Wilhelmshafen. Strafsache wider die Eingeborene Tamentjeo aus Sapi bei Tumleo wegen Kindesmords (1901-1902).

¹³⁹ Stuckhardt, 4 March 1902, NAA: G255, 966.

accomplices. Even members of the administration were forced to concede that these heavy-handed attempts to control New Guinean women's reproductive lives were likely what provoked a failed plot by the peoples of the Potsdamhafen area to murder the district officer as well as the local Catholics and other Europeans in 1910.¹⁴⁰

Blaming New Guinean women for the colony's apparent population problem may have been easy for medical doctors, administrators, and missionaries alike. But white, European men's attempts to intervene in the New Guinean women's intimate lives and into matters of family and reproduction, more broadly, could prove dangerous, even fatal, as we seen in previous chapters. As the following section demonstrates, rather than stage direct attacks on New Guinean women's practices of preventing pregnancy and restricting births, some colonial interlocutors turned to eugenics to solve the depopulation problem they believed to plaguing German New Guinea. Rather than simply blame the women of the colony, and Neu Mecklenburg in particular, for low birthrates on the island, some eugenic thinkers advocated replacing them instead.

Eugenic Fantasies

Among some observers, the peril of depopulation fostered eugenic fantasies, which blamed New Guineans' infertility on centuries-old practices of "inbreeding," attributed to "the tribes'

¹⁴⁰ Scholz, Friedrich Wilhelmshafen, to Hahl, 30 March 1910 (copy), Noser Library, Divine Word University, Madang (hereafter: NL); 47192: Documents concerned with events in colonial German New Guinea.

insularity.”¹⁴¹ Such fantasies inspired the naval physician, Emil Stephan, to propose the “experiment” of transplanting women into the “exhausted” villages of southern Neu Mecklenburg who would “freshen the blood” of these dying populations whose inbreeding manifested in a worrisome lack of women. The most obvious solution, Stephan thought, would be to relocate “women from such Melanesian tribes that still have a surplus of women—if they can actually be found—into regions with a lack of women.” Transplanting “child-rich families” into “foreign tribes” was another option, which would at least serve to provide “fresh blood” for the next generation. New Guinea’s great diversities in “language, custom, and habit, and the prejudices arising from them” would prove challenging to overcome, Stephan conceded. The cost of relocating populations was another issue. Yet with the “future of the colony” at stake, these challenges should not be insurmountable. The troubling question remained as to whether any other peoples of the Bismarck Archipelago had the vitality needed to regenerate Neu Mecklenburg. Stephan had his doubts.¹⁴²

Fantasies about New Guineans’ “inbreeding” enabled German colonists to craft an image of a people on the verge of dying out as a result of their own ignorance about matters of science. The myth of inbreeding permitted an understanding that if German colonialism might have had any impact on demographics in the Western Pacific, it was that it had arrived just in time to intervene in this otherwise fatal practice. Many interlocutors engaged in degrees of this self-congratulatory logics, asserting that German colonialism had already begun to corrode the fierce tribalism that produced insularity of this kind through what they

¹⁴¹ Emil Stephan, “Gutachten des Marinestabsarztes Dr. Stephan über den Volksrückgang in Süd-Neumecklenburg und Vorschläge zur Besserung,” Muliama, 11 February 1908, BArch: R 1001/2311, 138-140.

¹⁴² Stephan, “Gutachten des Marinestabsarztes Dr. Stephan,” BArch: R 1001/2311, 138-140. Also see Andrew Zimmerman, “Selin, Pore, and Emil Stephan in the Bismarck Archipelago: A ‘Fresh and Joyful Tale’ of the Origin of Fieldwork,” *Pacific Arts* 21/22 (2000): 79; Andrew Zimmerman, “Primitive Art, Primitive Accumulation, and the Origin of the Work of Art in German New Guinea,” *History of the Present* 1, no. 1 (2011): 20.

euphemistically termed “pacification.”¹⁴³ Some lauded the colony’s system of migratory labor for bringing otherwise isolated populations into contact with one another. The station chief in Eitapé, for instance, suggested in 1909 that female laborers who returned to their homes bearing children conceived on distant plantations served to “refresh the blood” of their communities.¹⁴⁴ Stephan also advocated the “large-scale experiment” of encouraging marriages between indentured laborers “from different tribes.” It was his belief that only through performing this “experiment” would the question of whether such unions were “usually barren” finally be resolved.¹⁴⁵

The ethnographer Richard Thurnwald researched New Guinean peoples during these fraught years of population anxieties. He rejected the notion that the cause of depopulation was to be found in “inbreeding,” but also harbored eugenic fantasies about the German colony’s ability to produce racial “admixtures.”¹⁴⁶ Like Hahl, who championed Thurnwald’s research, this ethnographer looked to Asia, believing that “mixing” Chinese and New Guineans yielded an “improvement in the native race.” Careful to maintain racial hierarchies and separations, he noted that the same could not be said of the progeny of whites and New Guineans since the races were “too distant from one another.” Thurnwald’s visions were of a crudely economic nature. He believed that by establishing the conditions under which

¹⁴³ Born, “Die Gesundheitsverhältnisse der Eingeborenen im mittleren Neu-Mecklenburg,” BArch: R 1001/2311, 69. Wick also thought pacification had reduced tribal feuding and cannibalism that he believed had had a negative impact on the population numbers in earlier times. See Wick, “Die gesundheitlichen Verhältnisse im mittleren Neumecklenburg,” *Amtsblatt für das Schutzgebiet Deutsch-Neuguinea* 3, no. 22 (November 15, 1911): 241.

¹⁴⁴ Rodatz, Eitapé, to the Imperial Government, Herbertshöhe, 15 May 1909, BArch: R 1001/2311, 174-175.

¹⁴⁵ Stephan, “Gutachten des Marinestabsarztes Dr. Stephan,” BArch: R 1001/2311, 140.

¹⁴⁶ Thurnwald, “Die eingeborenen Arbeitskräfte im Südseeschutzgebiet,” 622, 631. On Hahl’s facilitation and approval of Thurnwald’s work in German New Guinea, see Rainer Buschmann, *Anthropology’s Global Histories: The Ethnographic Frontier in German New Guinea, 1870-1935* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2009), 108.

Chinese and New Guineans would produce children in the colony, the plantation economy would have at its disposal a “tougher, smarter, and cheaper labor force,” which, already adapted to the tropics, would be able to cultivate crops which required greater care than the simple coconut. Given this bold vision for peopling the plantation colony with an improved source of labor, there could be no fear of the “yellow peril” in German New Guinea, he insisted.¹⁴⁷

Stephan looked even farther afield for a solution to Neu Mecklenburg’s purported infertility and fatal lack of women. Suspecting his findings for the Muliamia region would be reproduced by research across the colony and believing China and the Malay Archipelago to be beyond the reach of the German colonial administration “for political reasons,” he turned his sights to Africa and proposed importing “Negresses” [*Negerweiber*] from Germany’s colonies there. This naval physician assumed—though he did not have the relevant information on hand—that Germany’s African colonies were home to an “abundance of women” who might “freshen the blood” of Neu Mecklenburg’s villagers with their apparently superior reproductive capacities.¹⁴⁸ Stephan believed that such an “experiment” in what he termed “crossbreeding” [*Rassenkreuzung*] would in all likelihood yield fertile results, “at least on the woman’s side.”¹⁴⁹ He resisted attributing depopulation in the southern regions of the island to venereal disease, abortion, and colonial labor regimes. “The whole business,” he wrote, “is a question of breeding, and must be treated as such without prejudice.”¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Thurnwald, “Die eingeborenen Arbeitskräfte im Südseeschutzgebiet,” 631.

¹⁴⁸ Stephan was perhaps unaware that German doctors were also anxiously discussing depopulation in Germany’s African colonies. See Külz, “Die seuchenhaften Krankheiten des Kindesalters der Eingeborenen und ihre Bedeutung für die koloniale Bevölkerungsfrage, *Koloniale Rundschau* 6 (1913): 322-323; Bendix, “Impossible to Get to Know These Secret Means, 53-67.

¹⁴⁹ Stephan, “Gutachten des Marinestabsarztes Dr. Stephan,” BArch: R 1001/2311, 140.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 139.

Not everyone supported Stephan's proposed "experiments." Hahl informed the Imperial Colonial Office in Berlin that it would be impossible to relocate women from elsewhere in German New Guinea to Neu Mecklenburg, since no part of the colony appeared to be blessed with a "surplus of women." He had less patience for Stephan's proposal to transport women from Germany's African colonies to its Western Pacific one. A crossed-out sentence declaring: "The suggestion to bring in Negresses [*Negerinnen*] from Africa evades any serious discussion" was replaced with a handwritten edit that phrased his opinion more gently: "The suggestion to bring in Negresses from Africa may be considered even less practically feasible."¹⁵¹ That champion of medicalization, Dr. Ludwig Born, also did "not think much" of Stephan's plan to alleviate Neu Mecklenburg's fertility woes through the introduction of African women. The realization of such a proposal, he warned, carried the serious risk of simultaneously introducing "African epidemics" like sleeping sickness, adding them to the "bouquet" of ailments already afflicting the people of Neu Mecklenburg.¹⁵² For his part, Stephan was largely dismissive of "medical and sanitary [*gesundheitspolizeiliche*] measures like those Born proposed. Such measures might, at best, "somewhat minimize moribundity" by increasing average life expectancy, but they would have no effect at all in addressing the true cause of depopulation.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Hahl, Herbertshöhe, to the State Secretary of the Imperial Colonial Office, Berlin 25 October 1909, BArch: R 1001/2311, 51.

¹⁵² Born, "Die Gesundheitsverhältnisse der Eingeborenen im mittleren Neu-Mecklenburg," BArch: R 1001/2311, 69-70.

¹⁵³ Stephan, "Gutachten des Marinestabsarztes Dr. Stephan," BArch: R 1001/2311, 139.

Conclusion: Capitalist Logics and Population

Low birth rates in German New Guinea not only troubled German colonists concerned with depopulation, but also revealed and disrupted European notions of the tropics as places of boundless fertility and run counter to a capitalist logics that privileged growth. As Governor Hahl wrote in 1909, German New Guinea's "political and industrial future" depended not merely on halting "the dwindling of the population." It also depended on bringing about "a healthiness and a *substantial increase* in the numbers of the people."¹⁵⁴ To German interlocutors who held four to five children per New Guinean family to be a "moderate" number, and seven to indicate a "strong" family, families with only one child suggested local peoples' deficiencies against the capitalist imperatives broadly shared by white, Europeans colonists.¹⁵⁵

Colonial commentators who supported Hahl's attempts at labor reform also assessed New Guineans in economic terms. Government physicians believed that "the natives are the alpha and omega of our colonial politics; above all, they must be kept healthy so that we have good and strong laborers."¹⁵⁶ Thurnwald published his study detailing New Guinea's problems under the title "The Native Labor Force in the South Sea Protectorate."¹⁵⁷ Thurnwald explained to the readers of the *Koloniale Rundschau* that a "white man without natives" in these tropical climes, was like "a head without a hand." Measures to protect "the

¹⁵⁴ Hahl, Herbertshöhe, to Benjamin Danks, 28 July 1909, MOM: 111. My emphasis.

¹⁵⁵ Stephan, "Gutachten des Marinestabsarzt Dr. Stephan," BArch R 1001/2311, 138-140. On Stephan, also see Andrew Zimmerman, "Primitive Art, Primitive Accumulation, and the Origin of the Work of Art in German New Guinea," *History of the Present* 1, no. 1 (2011): 5-30.

¹⁵⁶ Born, Herbertshöhe, and Wick, Rabaul, "Aufruf zur Mitarbeit an der Gesunderhaltung unserer farbigen Arbeiter," *Amtsblatt* 1, no. 19 (15 October 1909): 150.

¹⁵⁷ Thurnwald, "Die eingeborenen Arbeitskräfte im Südseeschutzgebiet," 608-632.

native laborer” were akin to “an investment of capital,” necessary to secure the long-term “economic viability” of the colony’s plantations. “The native laborer” was, after all, “most valuable asset in the tropical economy.”¹⁵⁸ Hahl assisted Thurnwald’s efforts and excitedly endorsed his findings.¹⁵⁹ The German ethnographer Augustin Krämer reflected on the “dying out of natural peoples” in similar terms. He noted that “Since tropical agriculture, the be-all and end-all of our colonies, is crushed by competition on the world market without cheap and abundant laborers, our first effort must be to increase the quantity and quality of our wards as much as possible, certainly to protect them from decline.”¹⁶⁰ In short, Hahl was far from alone in considering the problem of depopulation to be “the most important economic problem” facing the plantation colony.¹⁶¹

Fierce antagonisms over the “labor question” masked a common belief that New Guineans’ labors should further European interests in the Western Pacific.¹⁶² Hahl’s aim was not to restrict labor recruitment, he assured the Government Council in 1909, but to “assist” it by ensuring that there would continue to be sufficient numbers of New Guineans to serve as laborers.¹⁶³ For Hahl, taking administrative measures to keep New Guinean women out of the colonial enclaves of white settlement was a necessary safeguard for what he called the German colony’s “human material” (*Menschenmaterial*).¹⁶⁴ His proposals to combat

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 608, 627-628.

¹⁵⁹ Buschmann, *Anthropology’s Global Histories*, 108.

¹⁶⁰ Augustin Krämer, “Das Aussterben der Naturvölker und Mittel zur Abhilfe,” *Die Woche: Moderne Illustrierte Zeitschrift* 12, no. 37 (1910): 1545. A copy of this article can be found at BArch: R 1001/2313, 72-74.

¹⁶¹ Hahl, quoted in Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans*, 133.

¹⁶² Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans*, 134; Peter Hemenstall, *Pacific Islanders under German Rule: A Study in the Meaning of Colonial Resistance* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1978), 161-162.

¹⁶³ “Protokoll zur 3. Gouvernementsratssitzung der IV. Sitzungsperiode,” Herbertshöhe, 27 December 1909, *Amtsblatt für das Schutzgebiet Deutsch-Neuguinea* 2, no. 2 (15 January 1910): 15.

¹⁶⁴ Hahl, Herbertshöhe, to the State Secretary of Imperial Colonial Office, Berlin, 5 July 1909, BArch: R 1001/2311 169-70. Other colonists, including medical doctors, described New Guineans as “human material.” See, for example, Runge, “Vierteljahresbericht für die Zeit vom 1. Januar bis 31. März 1912,” Herbertshöhe, BArch: R 1001/5772, 160.

depopulation by restricting the recruitment of women into the colonial labor indenture reflected a colonial belief that New Guinean women, confined to the domestic spaces of the village, would bring about the much-needed population increase by redirecting their labors toward the biological reproduction of the race, and with it, the colonial labor force.

If medical and ethnographic knowledge of a biopolitical kind expressed confidence in German colonialism's ability to govern successfully by promoting "healthiness" and population "increase," ethnographic knowledge of a nervous kind perhaps expressed lurking doubt. Nervous knowledge about New Guinean matters of fertility and family suggested vernacular logics anathema to Germany's colonial project. In pointing to vernacular practices that appeared deliberately to restrict births and limit family sizes, it provided glimpses into New Guinean understandings of vitality that troubled the capitalist logics of increase upon which Germany's colonial future depended. This knowledge also revealed empire's shifting investments in intersecting modes of production and reproduction within a colonial situation, and the gendered and racialized methods by which empire laid claim to the bodies and labors of colonial subjects. We need to treat with caution colonial knowledge that *produced* catastrophe logics, while being mindful of the fact that imperial discourses about depopulation in the colonies have their modern-day counterparts in discourses about *overpopulation* in the Global South. Historicizing the relationships between these discourses is important. But the efficacy of colonial policies aimed at population increase should not be taken as a given. We need also to be attentive to what medical-ethnographic knowledge reveals (if reluctantly) about vernacular modes of being that undermined and evaded colonial capitalism's claims to people's bodies and their labors.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

This dissertation began with a question: since Guinean women and their labors were such fiercely contested topics during the final years of German rule—one that animated a host of colonial interlocutors, inspired the production of multiple field reports, and dominated administrative meeting and correspondences right up until the outbreak of war—why do we know so little about these women? Out of this emerges a further set of questions: who were the women who ultimately became targets of concerted colonial attempts at intervention; what were their experiences of German colonial rule; and what was the nature of their participation within a German colonial labor regime? In seeking out the answers to these questions, this project has encountered archival silences and screams. New Guinean women were never the principal concern of European colonists in German New Guinea, whose labor forces depended principally on the recruitment of New Guinean men into the indenture. They mattered even less to politicians in imperial Europe’s capitals. When New Guinean women appeared in reports, memoirs, and studies penned by white, European men, they appeared as *en masse* as “females” (*Weiber*), who were said to behave in a particular way, appear a certain way, knowable from a distance and through generalization. They were

degraded by New Guinean men, who “bought” and “sold” them like “commodities”; they were “prostitutes” whose indenture rendered them sexually available to white, European men; they were barren and childless, signaling a gendered modality of “racial suicide.” They were not the big men of New Guinea whom it was prudent for European colonists to know. Those men had the names To Kilang, To Bobo, To Ruruk, To Vagira, and Talili—names worthy of mention in the accounts produced by white men, who also detailed their power, their wars, their hopes, their allegiances, their lives and deaths.

This dissertation is about the New Guinean women who were also part of the history of German colonialism. Their names—some of which were Saghan, Mainum, Geldu, Didui, Karielin, Minni, and Tapilai—as well as their words and their experiences under German rule are part of the colonial archive, too. In seeking out their stories, this dissertation has traced a different edge of the German colonial labor force—one that defies conventional narratives. It challenges predominant scholarly understandings of the colonial labor indenture as a masculine domain by shedding light on the lives of a significant yet largely overlooked segment of that labor force. In doing so, this study calls into question established paradigms of consent and coercion that have informed so much scholarship on the Pacific labor trade and the colonial Pacific more generally. Consent and coercion emerge as highly gendered terms in colonial texts and contexts, just as the violence that attended the colonial indenture was also starkly gendered. In order to fully grasp these gendered dimensions of colonial labor and its attendant violences, as this dissertation has demonstrated, it is imperative also to look beyond the moment of recruitment in order to examine the lives and experiences of laboring women and men on plantations, mission stations, trade outposts, and in the homes of white colonists.

Focusing on New Guinean women also reveals dimensions of German colonial rule that remain obscured in analyses of a narrowly defined male, plantation labor force, throwing into relief the intersecting but unstable categories of race, gender, sexuality, and labor. This dissertation therefore pushes beyond the formal parameters of indentured labor, urging attentiveness also to a range of informal, semi-formal, and unpaid labors that constituted German colonialism in practice and that were deeply gendered as well as racialized. It has spurred investigations of marriage practices and gendered divisions of labor in New Guinean societies, prompting examinations of the ways in which European understandings of vernacular systems of marriage and labor informed colonial practice in quotidian, concrete sites of interaction. Stories of women abducted by traders to perform domestic and sexual labors on remote stations as well as in colonial centers brush against white, European men's narratives of "marriage" and "cohabitation." Contestations between missionaries and administrators about the recruitment and transportation of women under the missions' so-called "educational contracts" reveal the liminal spaces New Guinean women could and did occupy under German colonial labor law. White, European men's violent sexual exploitation and assault of indentured women—masked as prostitution in colonial discourse—suggests a colonial crisis born of rape, violence, and disruption that was never limited to the reproductive.

The shifting terrains in which colonial categories of women's labor operated reveal imperial priorities in flux, from mobilizing New Guineans—many women among them—to labor in colonial enclaves, to restricting women's mobility in the belief that, confined to New Guinea's domestic spaces, women would assume the reproductive labors necessary for Germany's ongoing exploitations of New Guinean lands and labors. Reproductive crisis and

colonial anxieties about Pacific depopulation are important categories in understanding an early twentieth-century mode of colonial governance, but they are inadequate to sustain the weight and ferocity of colonial contestations about female indentured laborers that characterized that period. Scratching the surface of colonial discourses yields insights into gendered histories of colonial violence and rupture camouflaged as “racial suicide.”

One of the arguments advanced by this dissertation is that, in order to better understand German histories of colonialism, we need to move beyond the discursive registers of colonial knowledge production to understand the quotidian practices of German colonialism, its material effects, and embodied experiences. The project therefore traces the architectures of a complex colonial archive. Court records produced in, and about, key sites of colonial encounter in German New Guinea have proven crucial to foregrounding the experiences and narratives of nonliterate, marginalized historical actors, such as indentured New Guinean women (Figure 7.1).

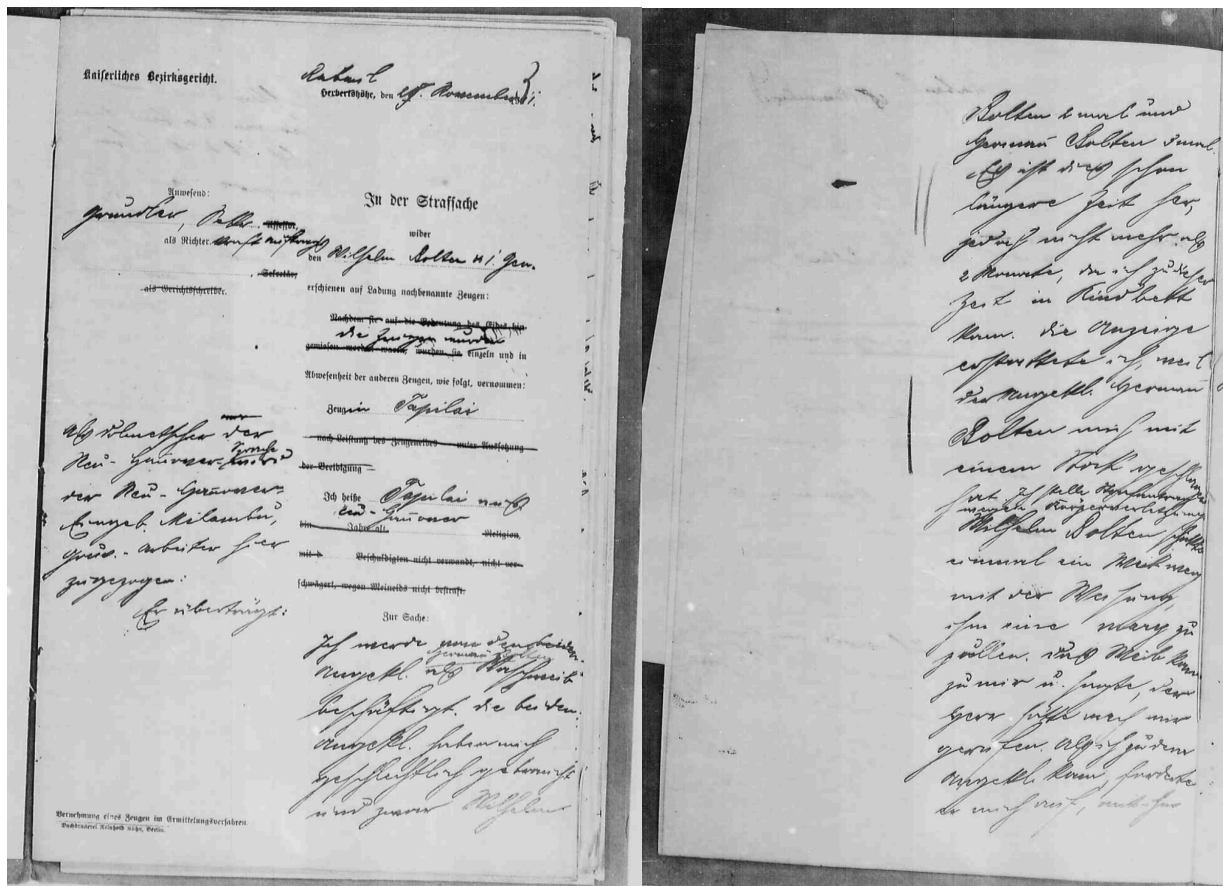


Figure 7.1. Excerpt from Tapilai's testimony against Wilhelm and Hermann Bolten. National Archives of Australia, Canberra.

That such records seldom made their way into the archives of the German imperial capital is an indication of Germany's imperial priorities, but not of the realities of its colonial rule. The testimonies contained with them provide important insights into the lives of indentured New Guinean women and men, as well as the practices and ideologies of colonies. Such testimony contains laborers' accounts of abduction, physical and sexual violence on plantations and in the homes of white colonists, of the forced removal of laborers' children to mission stations. It is an archive in which the words, gestures, and experiences of individual women and men at times burst forth, challenging and at times decimating

narratives of empire inherited from metropolitan archives. If we are truly to bring metropole and colony together in a “single analytical frame,” as Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler have urged, it is no longer sufficient to focus on the multiple ways in which the colonial presence was felt in metropolitan society.¹ We need also to venture beyond metropolitan societies and archives, to the societies and archives produced on the ground.

¹ Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 15.

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