THE STUDY OF HISTORY IN PAPUA AND NEW GUINEA

INAUGURAL LECTURE

by

K. S. INGLIS

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THE STUDY OF HISTORY IN PAPUA AND NEW GUINEA

What is the use of studying the past? There can be quite practical uses. If you can discover from documentary evidence where a ship loaded with treasure sank in the seventeenth century, you may be able to find the ship and become rich on the treasure. I know of a mining company which engaged a historian to discover why certain mine shafts had been abandoned several decades earlier. Was it that none of the metals the miners had been looking for were found in these diggings? In that case it would be no use opening up the old shafts. Or was it that metals were found, but in quantities not large enough to be profitable at the market prices current at that time? If that were so, then it might be worth opening them up if the metals in question now fetched higher prices. This historian was able to provide the company with information worth money.

In this country the skills of a historian might have a somewhat similar value in disputes over land ownership. To this day, I understand, there is argument about whether Motu people are entitled by history to certain lands near Port Moresby. Last year in Rabaul a man wrote to the *Pacific Islands Monthly*: "Some of the Tolai people of this area, who are always dredging around in the history of land titles, are inclined to claim that they are the real owners of the land at Kokopo on which the famous Vunapope Mission now stands. It is understood they have approached the mission about it. No one seems to know what they are basing their claim on, but they are arguing that they never were paid for the land and never surrendered title to it."[1] In the next issue of the *Pacific Islands Monthly* a correspondent wrote derisively of what he called "the claim game." He said: "the bosomy blonde gold diggers at Sydney's Kings Cross have nothing on some of the Papuan and New Guinean people who have, or pretend to have, the idea that land sold in the Long Before Days has never been paid for in accordance with the people's current idea of inflationary prices in the Islands. These claims have become so persistent, so widespread, that one cannot but wonder who controls the master mind behind the scheme? Who is Big Brother?" "The claim game", this writer went on, "started with private properties; lately it has shifted to both Methodist and Catholic mission lands; and now, according to the latest Press reports, claims have been lodged against the Administration for

1. *Pacific Islands Monthly*, January 1966, p.10.

land in Port Moresby and Lae. There must be a weak link along the chain of justice somewhere, which has been discovered by some super-eager legal eagle (probably an expatriate) and is being worked flat out. And what are the Land Board Inquiry Commissioners to do, poor things? What with all the yapping pack of anti-colonialist Asians and Africans in the United Nations, what *can* they do? Would it be too much to suggest the appointment of a Research Council to unearth old-time documents connected with New Guinea land transactions? It would be far more profitable than putting a couple of sputniks, satellites or whatever they are into space . . ."

The writer is suggesting that someone with a talent for legal history, probably some mischievous white man, is exercising his skill on behalf of natives who are greedy for any land they can lay their hands on. He wants the Administration to appoint a historical committee to dig out documents which would settle the matter. He is sure in advance what these documents would prove: that the Europeans were thoroughly justified in having the land. He gives a high place indeed to this historical enquiry, placing it above the conquest of space. And incidentally, he goes on to make up a piece of pre-European history of New Guinea to support his own view of the situation. "I often wonder . . .", he reflects, "if Land Commissioners and people of that ilk realise that land disputes, and claims for fishing and hunting rights are a dominating part in the very life of a New Guinean, and have been since long, long ago. When life became monotonous and uninteresting: the tuna were not biting, the gardens were planted, all leaky canoes had been mended and most wives were pregnant, then an enterprising villager would start the claim game. Next thing you knew it was a case of spears and stone clubs and the party was on . . . Then came captives, tortures, feasts . . ."[2] This little exercise in imagination could be used as evidence for the strongest of all arguments for studying history: that where proper history is not written, the vacuum is filled by fantasy. Every one of us carries around general and particular conceptions of what has happened in the past, and one reason for studying history is to find out which of our conceptions can be justified by evidence and which cannot. But for the moment my reason for quoting this passage is to point to one *practical* use for historians in this country. If there is a dispute about the validity of a transaction by which land passed from indigenous people to the

2. *Pacific Islands Monthly*, February 1966, pp. 53-4.

German or Australian Administration or to a mission, then any party to the dispute will find it useful to know where to look for evidence about what really happened.

Such a use for history is severely limited and perhaps not inspiring. If the case I have outlined were the *only* case for studying history, then our courses for students should be designed on very different lines from any at present offered. We should teach them about the routes taken by ships carrying treasure, the metallurgy and economics of mining, the history of land alienation, and whatever else seemed at a given moment likely to have practical relevance.

Of course I think that the study of history has other uses. But even a study so narrowly limited as the examples I have given can lead the enquirer to be interested in much larger matters than the history of a particular slice of land. That correspondent in the *Pacific Islands Monthly* began by discussing, or ridiculing, Tolai claims to certain land. Within a few sentences he was engaged in historical speculation: who was behind all this agitation? And before long he was offering an account, or a fantasy, of what people thought and did in the days before the Europeans reached New Guinea. Let me give another example, relating to the recent dispute in Bougainville over the use of certain land for mining. The member for Bougainville in the House of Assembly wanted to know not merely the rights and wrongs and alternative possibilities in this particular case: on behalf of his electors he expressed curiosity about the place of land in early stages of human history when incoming people wanted territory held by people already living on it. "Is it a fact", he asked in the House, "that, at the beginning of civilization in Europe or America and Australia, those who did not want to sell their land to the Government for the common good of the country were bombed or killed or imprisoned or sent to another place as slaves?"[3] The official member to whom this large question was put gave a simple answer. He said: "No." The answer was proper, if not illuminating. It is the job of an official member to explain and defend the policy of his government, not to give elementary lectures in world history. But the curiosity expressed in that question is a legitimate one, which *somebody* ought to satisfy. In what circumstances did land change hands in the centuries between the fall of the Roman Empire and the forming of the nations of modern Europe? What were the transactions

3. *South Pacific Post*, 13 March 1967.

by which land in North America and Australia passed from the control of the aboriginal inhabitants to the control of Europeans? These are important questions, to which answers should be given in any rational programme of education for a country such as Papua and New Guinea.

The mind of the member for Bougainville moved to other historical questions. He asked the same official member: "As Bougainville is one of the British Solomon Islands, can he explain how Bougainville became part of the mandated Territory of New Guinea and should the Bougainville people decide to join the British Solomon Islands, what would be their obligations to the Australian Government?" Here too, the historical question had a clear practical relevance. The official member's reply was patient, and except in one detail it was entirely accurate. "It is true", he said, "that Bougainville is one of the groups of islands known as Solomon Islands. It has never been a part of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate, and has never had political ties with British Solomon Islands Protectorate. The south-east islands of the Solomons group have always been under British control." "Always", the member said. The islands in question have been a British protectorate since 1893. The member was offering a casual and presumably unconscious expression of the view that the history of the Pacific began when European control began. I want to discuss that view later. For the moment let me summarize this example. Certain people are disputing about the use of land on Bougainville. One aspect of this dispute is historical. It leads a representative of Bougainville in the House of Assembly to ask large historical questions. He wants to know what possibly relevant precedents for the present situation history may supply; he wants to know how it was that part of the chain of islands known as the Solomons came to belong to one group of European-administered territories and how the rest of the chain came to belong to another group. His questions lead from the land at Bougainville in 1967 to a series of questions about history.

The case for studying history does not rest merely on its direct revelance to immediate problems. I want to indicate other uses of history not by describing them abstractly but by telling you about the courses in history we offer and hope to offer at this university, and by saying something about why we offer them.

The first history courses in Australian universities were designed by professors who came out from Britain; and history syllabuses in Australia are still recovering from their colonial origins. In many respects it made sense in the nineteenth century for students in the Australian colonies to study history almost exactly as they would have studied it in England, though even at that stage influences from elsewhere, and especially from the United States of America, would have been valuable. As the twentieth century has gone on, history courses made in England have been less and less appropriate for Australia. Teachers of history in the Australian universities have responded with varying amounts of energy and imagination to the need for fresh syllabuses.

Just as the first teachers of history in Australia, coming from Britain, carried out with them British notions of what history was and should be, it is inevitable that teachers of history in the University of Papua and New Guinea, coming as nearly all of us do from Australia, should carry with us ideas we learned in Australia about the contents and methods of historical study. But we, coming to Port Moresby, have two things to deter us from transplanting our Australian arrangements intact. First, there is more uncertainty and diversity of judgment among teachers of history everywhere now than there was in, say, 1900, about what ought to go into history books and history courses. Secondly, the British university teacher who went out to Australia knew that whatever differences he might find in Melbourne or Sydney, his students were the children and grandchildren of migrants from Britain; they were members of the British Empire, and as far as anyone could see they would remain so forever; they were products of the civilization of western Europe. England was their motherland; they grew up from infancy speaking English, and living in an urban industrial society. They might differ slightly from their parents or grandparents in accent and outlook, but the professor from Britain could safely assume that his Australian students were fairly much like students at home in their cultural equipment and their educational needs.

The university teacher who comes from Australia to Papua and New Guinea meets students most of whose parents or grandparents lived in primitive villages, students who began to learn English only when they went to school, and as their second or third language. These students may think a number of different things about the British Empire or Commonwealth but they cannot sensibly feel that they are its sons and daughters. Can the

incoming university teacher safely assume any similarities between the students he has known in Australia and the students he is to teach here? At first, he can assume nothing except that the situation is a challenge.

There have been four new universities founded in Australia since 1960, and in each of them efforts have been made to devise new ways of teaching. As everybody says, it is quite a challenge. I remember the professor of history in one of these new universities saying that he had heard the word "challenge" so often since he took up the job that he thought he could never bear to use it again. That challenge was a mild one: some school leavers were diverted from an old stone university near the centre of the city to a new brick one out in the suburbs. The challenge was to think up new ways of teaching students in a society which had had university education for a century. Our challenge here is twofold: we have to found a new institution; and we have to teach students about whom we know in advance very little, students about whose capacities and needs as students *nobody* knows enough, because they are the first generation of university students in the history of their country. Thinking of ourselves as founders of an institution, we may compare ourselves with teachers at Monash or Flinders or Macquarie, or Sussex in Britain or York in Canada. Thinking of ourselves as teachers, we may compare ourselves with those scholars in medieval Europe who were offering university education in a society whose members had never had it before. The words "challenge" and "New Guinea" seem to attract each other. It is appropriate, I think, that the most complacent book about this country, by the conservative Sir Grenfell Price, and the most dissatisfied, by the communist Jim Cooper, have exactly the same title: *The Challenge of New Guinea*. And that is the last time I shall use the word "challenge", for this evening at least.

What have we decided to teach in history courses here? Professor Drover described in his inaugural lecture the subject in our preliminary year that we call History of Science and Technology. This is a general history of civilization from its beginnings, with emphasis on man's increasing control of his environment. The designer and principal lecturer in the course is a historian, whose temperament and training make him more interested in the ordinary members of a community than in its chiefs. Some of the lectures are taken by scientists. Of the three tutors, two have training principally in science and one in history. It is a course intended to introduce students historically to the

purposes and methods of scientific investigation; and it is compulsory for all students in the preliminary year, whether they intend to go on to Arts or Science or Law. Of the optional courses in the preliminary year, one is called History and another has some history in it. This latter course is called Social Studies, and might more accurately be called Pacific Studies. It is an approach to the study of the peoples of the Pacific, especially the people of this country, and an introduction to some of the academic disciplines known as social sciences. Of the people teaching this course, one is an archaeologist, one is a social anthropologist, one is a historian who has specialised in the Pacific region, and one has qualifications in both anthropology and geography. It has a component of pre-history, or pre-European history, and another part in which students look at colonial encounters. The subject called History is described as World History since 1500. A similar course was compulsory in last year's preliminary year, when there were no options. This year's course is basically a repetition of that one, with some differences. Certain themes which were found unrewarding last year have been omitted or reduced, and others which seem especially relevant to students here have been given more attention, notably the expansion of Europe and the confrontation between European and other civilizations.

In the preliminary year each course runs for the whole academic year. In our degree courses, each unit is one semester, or half the year, long, and the first units have just been completed and examined. In History, our first semester course was on Europe and South East Asia since 1800. We looked at China, Japan, Indonesia and Malaya, and more briefly the Philippines, as cases of encounters between European and Asian peoples. Next semester we are offering a course on the history of New Guinea. For second year students next year we hope to offer in the first semester a course on Christianity since the Reformation, and in the second semester a course on Pacific history in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

What we shall offer as new courses in 1969, and whether we shall repeat or modify or abandon each of the courses we have set up so far, we do not know. Happily, we do not have to decide that until about this time next year. Our problem is not to think up additional courses but to decide which of them *not* to put on. It depends partly on what our neighbours in other disciplines want to do. It depends also on how we judge our priorities, and that in turn depends on where our present courses appear to succed or fail.

What should the study of history at the university offer? It should help students to interpret their present situation by seeing how it arose; it should encourage in them an awareness of the varieties of human experience by introducing them to societies remote in time and different in character from their own; it should include a study of societies which resemble their own, from which they may be able to learn things relevant for their own lives. It should help them learn to judge between conflicting interpretations of the same set of events, to decide whether two writers differ because they are looking at different pieces of evidence or because they are bringing different visions to bear on the same evidence, or for some other reason. It should encourage a few of them to want to go on to graduate work and become university teachers and writers of history. It should help to equip many of them to be good teachers of history and related subjects in schools. It should leave all students wanting to read more history and able to interpret the world as they experience it for the rest of their lives in the light of what they have learned about the history of their own and other peoples.

I could go on adding to what the study of history ought to offer, but already I have too much. A matriculated student has at most four years of undergraduate study, and he has other subjects beside history to take. He may take a unit of history each semester throughout his course, or he may take only one or two units of history and then concentrate on other disciplines. How do we decide which of the desirable things are possible in the time we actually have?

Insofar as we want our students to learn to interpret their present situation by seeing how it arose, I suppose we should be offering them courses in New Guinea history since European penetration began, and in the pre-European history of New Guinea, and in the history of the Europe from which the white men came. For the same purpose we should introduce them to the history of the ideologies which educated Papuans and New Guineans may want to choose between, by offering, say, a comparative study of revolutions in twentieth century China and Russia, nineteenth century Europe, eighteenth century France and North America, and seventeenth century England. Insofar as we want to make them aware of the diversity and depth in time of man's historical experience, we might have students learn about medieval Europe or Aztec Mexico or ancient Egypt. Insofar as we want them to ponder on situations in some ways similar to their own we might offer courses on—what? Other peoples who

have been governed by aliens and then gained independence, such as the West Indies and parts of Africa? Other pre-industrial societies wanting to achieve rapid economic development, such as nineteenth century Japan? Other multi-lingual societies aspiring to national unity, such as Nigeria or Yugoslavia? Other islands close to a more advanced metropolitan neighbour, such as Anglo-Saxon England? The list could go on and on. To encourage a student to read with discrimination, to have him understand the techniques of historical scholarship, to help him judge for himself when an interpretation rests on adequate evidence and when it does not, we would want him to explore *source materials* varied in character: not just the so-called text-books, with their cosy simplicities, but books and articles in which historians dispute with each other, and collections of documents from which a student can construct his own interpretation, or at any rate do-it-yourself document kits which can give him the feeling of what it is like to be a historian. And we would want him to learn how to use a microfilm reader and a tape recorder.

As I said, the problem is how to decide which of all these things *not* to do. I have described briefly the courses we are putting on at the moment, and you can infer from that something about our decisions so far. In the preliminary year course in History we hope to help students become familiar with the broad outlines of history in the last few centuries; we hope besides that they will begin to distinguish between historical evidence and the interpretation of evidence. The two first-year courses are intended to make the student more familiar with the place of his own society in history. In our proposed second-year courses, one, on Christianity since the Reformation, takes the student back through one great theme of European history, and the other takes him out into the Pacific. In each of these second-year courses we want the student to have, as it were, one foot in his immediate environment and one foot outside it. In the case of Pacific history we want to look east and north of New Guinea to see what happened when other Europeans met other peoples. In the case of Christianity since the Reformation we mean to examine a movement which has profoundly affected Papua and New Guinea in the past century, but we want to study it earlier and in its European context. We shall be studying other aspects of European Christianity than its missions to non-European peoples.

If history is taught without regard to the present situation of its students it is likely to be boring or pointless; but if history is related entirely to the present situation of its students it is

likely to be shallow or misleading. It is obvious that in this country we should not put on courses designed for students in Europe or America or Australia; but there is a danger that if we go too far in the other direction we may leave students with misconceptions about the rest of the world. If we teach only those aspects of European history that relate directly to the history of colonization, the student may graduate thinking of Europe as a place populated entirely by missionaries, traders, builders of empire, and manufacturers of industrial goods for export. He may have little or no sense of the internal diversity of European society, or of the complexities within any one country of Europe. He may be unaware how little the world overseas affected the imagination or interests of most Europeans. He may underrate or even not know abut such things as the religious conflicts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the contest between liberty and authority in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the growing power of the voices that spoke on behalf of the poor in some European countries during the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

If he is now attending a Territory High Schol, the student who comes to the university in a year or two will come knowing very little indeed about the domestic history of Europe. Until recently, Territory High Schools followed the New South Wales syllabus of modern world history since 1789. That has now been replaced by a syllabus designed for the Territory, in which much less time is devoted to Europe. The central concerns of the new syllabus are New Guinea, the Pacific and Asia. It has been designed with skill and imagination, though materials are so far lacking to teach it. But it may be that students who have worked through it and come into our preliminary year should have a course with Europe at its centre before they go any further. The relation between the school syllabus and the university courses, and the problem of geeting adequate materials to teach the school syllabus, are among things that will be discussed at a seminar next month at Goroka between teachers of history from the university and from high schools.

Our present thinking about history in the preliminary year is that there may be other good reasons for making its scope narrower both geographically and chronologically than it is this year. *World history* is an admirable notion morally and ideologically; but it has disadvantages from the point of view of teaching. World history has become a popular approach as a result of two historical phenomena: the two great wars of our century, and

the decline of European influence over the rest of the world. To lovers of peace, it has seemed that contempt or indifference towards other nations and peoples helped to bring on the wars of 1914-18 and 1939-45; and teachers and writers of nationalistic or culture-bound history have been blamed for contributing to international misunderstanding and ill-will. There have been a number of attempts since 1945 to write history that will be based in no one nation or civilization but will speak to and for mankind at large. The most ambitious such project is a multi-volume *History of Mankind* sponsored by UNESCO. The decline of European empires has led many writers and readers to see how arrogant and self-centred was much of the history written in the great days of imperialism. A respectable British historian could publish in 1926 a book called *The Expansion of Europe the Culmination of Modern History*. A respectable American historian could publish even more recently a book whose title implied that humanity and European civilization were much the same thing: *The Rise of the West. A History of the Human Community*. It is a sign of the times that this book has now been superseded by another, written by the same author: this one is called *A World History*.

We have been using a book of similar scope in the preliminary year. Its publisher says: "The approach of this book is to analyze, from a consistent and genuine global viewpoint, the development of the world since 1500." One might interrupt the publisher with a question. As this globe has been a pretty divided place ever since 1500, how could there be a consistent global viewpoint, unless it were the viewpoint of a god? Here is the publisher's reply: "The angle of vision throughout is that of an observer perched on the moon and viewing global developments as a whole, rather than that of an observer of either the East or the West." Now the only observers who will be perched on the moon in the foreseeable future are Americans or Russians; and patriotic astronauts and cosmonauts are not the likeliest of men to take a detached global view of history. But it is not of course an actual space pilot whose angle of vision we are invited to share: it is an imaginary observer, perhaps a creature from somewhere else in the universe. Certainly *he* would not be prejudiced for or against any nation or civilization or ideology down here, and that would give him an inhuman objectivity. He would see impartially. But what would he see? A globe a quarter of a million miles away. A sphere of water divided here and there by masses of land. Would he even notice the inhabitants of the earth, let alone understand anything about their ways of life,

their achievements and their failures, their ventures in co-operation and conflict? What would the Reformation of the sixteenth century look like from the moon? In the book I am discussing, the Reformation has less than one paragraph devoted to it. The book has uses, in particular as a reminder that at any one time a number of different movements are under way around the world; but it and books like it have the disadvantage that the reader can hardly ever see a movement or an event close enough and for long enough to get to know it thoroughly. There may be better ways than an approach through world history to avoid a narrowly partisan outlook.

We are having similar thoughts about a course of general history which covers a long period of time. If we isolate one strand or theme of history, such as technological advance, then a strong case can be made out for tracing that strand through many centuries, especially if for long periods changes are slow. The case is different when we are studying a number of aspects of a society's history at once, especially through a period of complex change. Tracing the history of Europe from 1500 to the present in one course is among other things a large exercise in vocabulary. There must be some limit to the number of new words a student can assimilate in a course; and in a survey of four centuries there are a great many words new to most students. There are the abstractions, sometimes invented by contemporaries and sometimes invented later by historians, but in either case impossible to avoid: Renaissance, Reformation, Absolutism, Mercantilism, Enlightenment, Despotism, Evangelicalism, Liberalism, Communism, Imperialism . . . There are the names for groups of people: Huguenot, Puritan, Recusant, Cavalier, Round Head, Whig and Tory, Jansenist, Physiocrat, Jacobin . . . The list of names of historically important individuals can become dauntingly long. A colleague elsewhere once said to me that he would be satisfied if students came out of his first-year history course really understanding what the word "constitution" meant. It may be that in the preliminary year course our students will gain a deeper understanding if we introduce them to fewer concepts.

I speak tentatively about our ideas for revising the course, and our attitude to other courses too is tentative for two reasons. First, our experience at the moment is only a few months long. Secondly, we have been unable so far to get students to read nearly as much as we had hoped, because library space which our Librarian and his staff had hoped to move into several months

ago is still not available. Some of our present dissatisfactions may diminish when we can get students to read what we want them to read.

We may still have difficulties of access to books during the coming semester. Our course on Christianity since the Reformation, at the beginning of next year, may be the first new course to start under fairly satisfactory conditions. I have said a little about this course already, and I want to say one word more. A course with such a title held in a Lutheran seminary would, I imagine, be taught on the assumption that Luther was the wisest of the Protestants and that Pope Leo XIII was wrong in thinking that Luther would go to Hell. The course taught in a Catholic seminary would presumably embody correspondingly different assumptions. The course as taught in Moscow State University, if they have such courses there, would undoubtedly be taught on the assumption that all the beliefs expressed by the people under study were false. Our course will not be intended either to reinforce or to undermine the faith of Catholics or Lutherans or atheists. May I quote here a recent reply by the Rev. Dr. Leslie Rumble, M.S.C., to a troubled questioner who wanted to know why historians would not describe the resurrection of Christ as an historical act. "The historian", said Dr. Rumble, "deals only with observable events naturally verifiable by the average man not possessing special and supernatural means of knowledge. . . . The historian who is personally a Christian and who believes in the actual resurrection of Christ has a key which enables him to bridge the apparent gap in history between the death of Christ and the proclamation of the resurrection-gospel by the apostles on the first Pentecost Sunday of the Christian era. But the historian who lacks that faith has to resign himself to not being able to bridge that gap, saying that he does not know what happened as an alternative to the account given by the apostles themselves. Remember that not all who heard the apostles believed them. Some did. Some did not. If a representative group of our present-day historians could have been present, the result could well have been the same. Some would believe. Others would not. The study of history . . . can make good historians; it cannot create faith and make Christians".[4] Nor, I would add, can the study of history make atheists. I dwell on this point because there is sometimes a feeling in universities that higher education should lead students to abandon belief in the supernatural, and because I detect in this community a feeling that

4. *Catholic Weekly*, Sydney, 18 August and 25 August, 1966.

teaching in the University of Papua and New Guinea should protect and reinforce the faith of those students who enter the university with religious allegiance. Neither of these attitudes, it seems to me, can be properly applied to the teaching of history at a university.

Our first-year students are about to begin a course in the history of New Guinea. A critic of our arrangements might argue that this is far too early in the course. For one thing, he could say, there are not enough good books available for students as inexperienced as those in a first-year class must be. Moreover, New Guinea is the one subject on which plenty of raw material can be found here: annual reports, archival material and more informal sources, of a kind suitable for advanced students who are ready to learn not just how to absorb history but how to write it. I agree that books suitable for first-year students of New Guinea history are hard to find. Most of the works we would like to prescribe are out of print; and there are only two general works available, Gavin Souter, *New Guinea: the Last Unknown,* and C. D. Rowley, *The New Guinea Villager,* which we can happily set. We do not yet have for New Guinea edited collections of documents produced for students such as we have in plenty for European, Australian, and above all American history. We shall have to produce and reproduce our own documentary materials as we go. I agree, also, that New Guinea history lends itself better than any other subject we can study here to exercises in do-it-yourself history; and there may well be a case for an advanced documentary course in particular aspects of the country's history as well as our introductory course. Such a course could be recommended or required in the case of a student who plans to go on to do graduate work in history.

But in the meantime, I think there is a case for a first-year unit in the history of New Guinea, to enable students to learn about and reflect on their own society at the same time as they are learning about so much else. It was made clear to me when I talked with preliminary year students last year that the history of New Guinea was what they wanted most to study. When I asked students what they would like to study in history one said: "Would you ask students *in Australia* what they want to study?" It was a fair question; it expressed a suspicion that was fairly widespread among the preliminary students at that time, that they were likely to be given an education inferior to that of Australian students. As far as I can tell this suspicion has now disappeared among the students. Several things have encouraged

it to disappear: the high failure rate at the end of the preliminary year; the large enrolment of expatriate students taking part-time courses; and the vast improvement in accommodation, food and general facilities since the days of the showground. (As a historian I am happy to see that the old days in the showground and the artisans' huts have become days of legend already, as the old men who survived 1966 tell the young fellows in this year's preliminary year that they do not know how lucky they are.)

The answer to the suspicious student is: Yes, I had on occasions asked students in Australia what they would like to study in history if they had the choice. Not that I or anyone else would design a syllabus according to whatever a majority of its potential consumers happened to vote for. But it impressed me that so many of the students said that they wanted to study the history of Papua and New Guinea; their saying so strengthened my own conviction that although there were difficulties in the way of doing so, we should offer such a course in our first year.

I am not sure how close the course will come to what those students wanted. When I told one scholar who has written well about this country that I was planning this course, he said: "They'll think it's a course about *us,* not about *them.*" What he meant was that when pre-literate societies like those of Papua and New Guinea are colonized, it is only the intruders who leave records: the written sources describe the encounter of European and indigenous people from the vantage point of the European. When we study the presence of Europeans in China and Japan and Indonesia and Malaya, we have documents in translation which tell us, often vividly, what the encounter was like from the Asian end. How much can we know about the indigenous side of the encounter in this country?

We can hope to know more about it than appears in the books so far. In the Highlands, men are still alive and talkative who tried to fight off the first Europeans who walked across their land. According to the press, Mr. J. K. McCarthy has just been renewing his acquaintance with some Kukukukus who hit him with arrows in 1933. The recollections of some such men can surely be recorded. Some anthropologists have recorded testimonies about the first contacts with Europeans. At the University of Papua and New Guinea it is our good fortune to have visiting us Professor R. F. Salisbury, who has made what is, as far as I know, a quite unique study of the experience of one small group of people in New Britain over their eighty years or so of

contact with Europeans. He is finishing a book on this region over the period of German and Australian administration written from two kinds of sources: the documents deposited by Europeans, and the recollections of the Vunamami people themselves. Professor Salisbury is going to draw on his research in a series of lectures which will show as under a microscope both sides of the encounter between European and Tolai people. Year by year I think we shall be able to put a little more in our teaching about what the other side of the encounter was like.

When I told one student early this year of this course in the history of New Guinea, he said he wondered how we could make it last five months. This sort of view used sometimes to be taken of Australian history by Australians who were doubtful about whether their country, by the standards of proper countries like England, really had a history at all. They were often encouraged by Englishmen to think that it had not. In each case this attitude expresses what has been called in Australia the colonial cringe, a provincial lack of confidence in oneself and one's compatriots when one makes comparisons with a respected and perhaps intimidating metropolitan society. The plight of the unconfident Papuan or New Guinean is worse than that of the Australian victim of the colonial cringe; for the Australian, as I mentioned when I began to talk about our courses, could always borrow glory from the motherland: he was, after all, a son of Britain, a member of the mighty British Empire. The blood of Francis Drake and Lord Nelson and Captain Cook and all those other inspired heroes ran in his veins, unless he was one of those Australians whose family came from Ireland; and if he was of Irish stock he was unlikely to be a victim of the colonial cringe anyway. The Papuan or New Guinean can see himself as a beneficiary of Britain and Australia, or a victim, or a client, according to his sentiment; but he cannot really think of himself as a full member of the British Commonwealth, with a proprietary right to feel proud of the deeds celebrated in British and Australian history.

If the Papuan or New Guinean student reads the history of his country written so far, he will find pretty much, as James Baldwin has said of the American negro, that he is not in the books. The view has been held serenely and sincerely by Europeans, and communicated by them to native people, that the history of this country began when Europeans arrived and consists of what they did. This was, I think, the attitude of the official

member who said that the southern Solomons have always been British. Sir Hubert Murray put it clearly in 1923: "History in Papua is barely a generation old, and a generation is but a short time to study the effects of European settlement on a primitive population."

The view that nothing happened in primitive societies before Europeans came is one of the myths that Europeans have introduced into primitive societies. There is a segment of European history between the fall of the Roman Empire and the appearance of feudal societies which used to be called the Dark Ages. A wise English historian has said that dark ages are ages of which the historian's knowledge happens to be dark. (Similarly a historian is sometimes tempted to describe a man about whom he can find little information as "a shadowy figure"). If we cannot find out anything about the history of a pre-literate society, then we can say nothing about it: we cannot say either that changes occurred in it or that changes did not occur in it. As it happens, we can find out a good deal about the pre-European history of this country, though the work involved in doing it has hardly begun. About the very distant past, archaeologists have found out a great deal in the last few years, principally from several excavations in the Highlands. The evidence discovered in these digs is not only filling in the pre-historic past of this country: it is re-writing the early history of mankind in general. The more recent pre-European past is within reach of the methods of oral history; and if the claims of some scholars stand up to criticism, the backward reach of oral history is much farther than we might think. As a serious form of scholarship the oral history of primitive societies is a fairly new activity, and a perilous one. What tests does the historian use to judge at what point his informant is giving him actual genealogies and at what point he is recounting myths? I have no experience of this work myself; but let me report without comment an estimate by Mr. Douglas Newton, Curator of the Museum of Primitive Art in New York, that certain events which informants in the Sepik described to him may have happened about 1775. While I was preparing this lecture I had a message from someone whom I hope to meet soon, saying that he had information suggesting that a certain event richly described in Motu tradition, the destruction of Taurama village, may have happened 250 years ago. Whether or not such estimates can be verified, the evidence is accumulating to show considerable and even drastic changes in New Guinea, both on the eve of European contact and during the thousands of years which are the province of archaeologists.

The archaeologist who has contributed to our preliminary year course in Social Studies, Mr. Jack Golson, gave a talk to the Papua and New Guinea Society a year ago in which he reported some of the results of recent work under the arresting title: *Fifty thousand years of New Guinea history*. He expressed there a theme which, elaborated in this year's classes, has aroused much enthusiasm in our students. "The region of the earth now known as South East Asia, Indonesia and Oceania," he said, "is the least known of the world's major culture areas and one of the most exciting. But for the people of New Guinea it is not only exciting, it is extremely important. The history of this area provides a unifying principle of great significance for a series of communities who are now developing towards nationhood. The concept of New Guinea thus emerges, not as a product of European politics over the last hundred years, but as the culmination of cultural developments shared by the people of the area over the last fifty thousand years".

As for the history of New Guinea since the coming of the Europeans, in one sense it is certainly shallow: nowhere is there as much as a century of continuous European settlement. It is a short period compared even with the history of Australia, less than one-fifth of the period of European settlement in America, and an insignificant time compared with the documented history of Europe itself. But if New Guinea lacks a long period of recorded history, it has something else, which offers a quite different appeal to the historian: so many stages of human experience, so many varieties of culture, co-exist within a single century, even within a single lifetime. Professor Salisbury was able to observe fourteen years ago in the eastern Highlands exactly what effects the coming of steel implements had on a stone age economy.[5] A man from the Australian Broadcasting Commission has just interviewed at length Mr. Jim Taylor and Mr. Mick Leahy about their feats of exploration in the Highlands in the 1930s. On his way back to Sydney he said: "It's like being able to talk to Hume and Hovell." Another of the Leahy brothers was a guest last month at the opening of the Goroka Teachers' College. He looked around him at the black and white guests and observed wryly that it was hardly any time since we were trying to kill each other. Even in the Central District, there are memories that can go back almost to the beginning of European settlement. A few of us had the pleasure recently of hearing the reminiscences of a Mekeo who was born seventy-one years ago last week, a man with a great gift for anecdote and a remarkably vivid memory whose recollections amount virtually to a history of modern Papua.

5. R. F. Salisbury, *From Stone to Steel: Economic Consequences of a Technological Change in New Guinea*, Melbourne 1962.

Talking about our course in New Guinea history, I have not been able to stop myself mentioning research projects. Teaching and research in any subject can enrich each other. In New Guinea history the two activities are unusually close, for anybody engaged in teaching it is waiting impatiently for jobs of research to be done so that he can draw on them for lectures and tutorials. There is no book covering the economic history of the country and no thorough study of the history of missions, to mention only two of the matters on which, so far, anybody who prepares a set of lectures has to do some research of his own.

We have begun a series of research seminars in New Guinea history, and it may give a quick indication of the range of projects under way if I mention some of the contributions to these seminars. Professor Salisbury has given a paper on the subject I described, his bifocal study of Vunamami. The next paper will be on the response of people in south-eastern Papua to the European presence. The one after that will be on the effect of European occupation on the Mekeo and Roro peoples. Next will be a paper on the life and work of J. K. Murray. Later in the year we hope to have papers on the use of oral tradition for art history, on the history of the protectorate in Papua, and on the history of the Anglican mission in Papua.

There are unusual opportunities in historical research here as well as unusual needs. So much oral evidence on matters not in the books is within reach that undergraduates can be encouraged to be local historians of their own communities. Getting oral evidence is not an easy task: but I think that some of our present students may make useful contributions to the writing of their country's history by getting down the recollections of older people. On some matters, the relatively inexperienced native interviewer may be better than the exprienced expatriate scholar at unlocking the memory of his subjects. I think for example of a great theme which is waiting to be explored: the experience of the peoples of Papua and New Guinea in the second world war. It is recent enough to be alive in tens of thousands of memories; but a man who is asked to testify about such matters as the policy of ANGAU, or attitudes to the Japanese while they were

temporarily the conquerors, may censor heavily what he tells an Australian or American interviewer. One student now in his first year has said to me that he hopes to collect evidence and write about the wartime experience of the Motu people. I hope he does, and I hope other students will undertake similar projects.

It is not the main job of a history department in any university to produce professional historians. Our graduates will be school teachers, public servants, perhaps diplomats and politicians. Their country will need many of them as its leaders. But I hope that some of them will write history. There are plenty of precedents for the man of action being also a historian either of his own times or of times more distant. Sir Winston Churchill wrote history. So did John F. Kennedy. K. M. Panikkar, whose book *Asia and Western Dominance* we have been using in our course on Europe and South East Asia, was a senior diplomat of the Republic of India as well as a pioneer of Asian historical writing. In this country, some Australian officials have set the precedent. The history of Papua as it has been written so far derives very largely from what Sir Hubert Murray wrote about it while he was administering the colony. Mr. J. W. McCarthy has contributed to the recent and remote history of the country. I am thinking of his book *Patrol into Yesterday* and the article in which he records, among other things, what must have been the first Christian ceremony and the first gunshots in the history of the country, in August 1606.[6] It is said that Sir Donald Cleland means to write history in his retirement, and we can hope that other men with long experience in the administration will do the same. And I hope that some of the students who are now at this university will one day write history which we can draw on for the instruction of later students.

The Papuan or New Guinean historian is bound to be affected by a current reaction against what is commonly called colonial history. To indicate the approach which this term describes, I quote from a book called *The Colonial Empires*, published last year: "To impose some coherence on two and a half centuries of world-wide empires I have concentrated on three questions of universal relevance. How and why were colonies acquired? How were they governed? What advantages did they

6. J. K. McCarthy, "The Land of Magna Margarita", *Journal of the Papua and New Guinea Society*, vol. 1 no. 1, Summer 1966-7, pp. 33-6.

provide for their masters?"[7] These are good scholarly questions, as applicable to this country as to any other object of European colonization. But the list of questions leaves out one which might also be thought to have universal relevance: "What did the colonial empires do for their subjects?"

The kind of history written without such a question in mind has provoked severe and even violent reactions. Panikkar's book *Asia and Western Dominance* is a good example. Here is a work by an Indian historian, written a few years after India and Pakistan ceased being colonies and became independent nation states. It contains much anger directed at Europeans for their behaviour in Asia, and some anger directed at European historians for alleged insensitivity or indifference to the Asian side of the encounter. His anger leads Panikkar not to avoid the prejudices of European observers but to reverse them. In Panikkar's book it is only European behaviour which is described as barbaric; Asian responses to European intrusion are described as natural and rational. Historians in other ex-colonies are likewise reacting against the old Europe-centred sort of history. Some of them have broken so far away as to alarm their European colleagues. In the *Times Literary Supplement* a while ago, the reviewer of a new book on African history said that the author of one chapter had let himself "be carried away by political and other prejudices to an extent which almost totally nullifies his contribution." The next sentence in this review is startling: "The peace of the world may depend on how the history of the colonial contacts between the races is taught."[8] What did the reviewer mean? He meant that people in formerly colonial territories might be provoked into warlike violence if they were inflamed by anti-European histories of the colonial period. I think this may be unduly flattering to the members of my trade, for I doubt whether a mere historian could move people to violence, or to anything, unless they were disposed to indulge in it already. Perhaps the reviewer was exaggerating deliberately. It is too early to make any sensible prediction about the kind of history which is likely to be written by citizens of an independent Papua and New Guinea. That depends partly on events which have not yet happened. We can be sure that this history will depend more than history written so far on unconventional sources. In the West Indies, a Caribbean

7. D. K. Fieldhouse, *The Colonial Empires* (London 1966), pp. xiv.

8. Quoted in Elsa V. Goveia and F. R. Augier, "Colonialism From Within", *Times Literary Supplement*, 28 July, 1966, p. 675.

Archives Conference has urged governments and institutions like the University of the West Indies to assemble and collect oral accounts, recordings, films, folk objects, and traditional material illustrating the lives of people who do not, as a rule, leave written records. There is bound to be an increasing demand for such materials by historians of this country, and I hope that the university, the missions, the administration and other parties can co-operate in doing as much of this sort of assembling and collecting as can be done before it is too late.

We need to work fast and carefully, too, if we are to preserve the more conventional records for the historian of the future. There is probably no place in the world where nature is more hostile to written records; and accidents, neglect and ignorant destruction are no less common here than elsewhere. The University Librarian is keen to acquire historical materials, and he is prepared to respect the wishes of any donor who may wish to place restrictions on their use. Official records must remain, of course, the property of the administration. The official archives of the Territory are in need of more space and more resources: to permit a more active policy of collection, especially from outstations, and to enable the microfilming of materials which are too bulky to store, and of documents on which the ink is fading.

One other public institution is making a significant contribution to the preservation and display of the country's history, and could make a much larger contribution if it were permitted to. I refer to the Public Museum and Art Gallery of Papua and New Guinea, which shares with the Archives low-cost housing beneath the House of Assembly. It is a heroic feat on the part of Sir Alan Mann and his trustees, and of Mr. Roy Mackay and his staff, to make their resources go as far as they do and to remain cheerful under the conditions imposed on them. There is a beautiful book largely devoted to the artefacts of this country by Jean Guiart, *The Arts of the South Pacific*. It has many illustrations of objects from the Territory, and mentions the present location of each: statuettes from Astrolabe Bay, in Budapest; an intricately patterned plaque from the Middle Sepik, in the Museum of Primitive Art, New York; a decorated wooden club from Massim, in Leningrad; an elegant stone pestle from Papua, in the British Museum; an enormous ceremonial head dress from New Britain, in Basle. Not one of the items is located in the Territory or in Australia, and this is not merely because the book was produced in Europe. "By now", as M. Guiart writes in his introduction, "the finest specimens of Oceanian art have found their way into

private collections or the museums of Europe and America." The best collection of the material culture of Papua and New Guinea, so I am told, is in Switzerland. In Port Moresby, under the very feet of the legislators who are talking about the country's future, lies dismal evidence of how little regard people with access to public money have had for the country's past. The current Annual Report shows that the Museum is an increasingly popular institution: 8,000 people visited it in 1965, 11,000 in 1966. The report shows too that it is not only under-staffed, inadequately housed and ill-equipped, but that even its present holdings are in danger of disappearing. "Only two rooms of the Museum are air-conditioned so that the bulk of the collections are exposed to the destructive atmospheric conditions of the tropics."

A museum created with energy and sensitivity and money can do things which a library of books cannot do for popular entertainment and education. In a country so diverse as this one, an important task for a museum is to display the varieties of taste and ingenuity so that people from one region can learn about peoples from other regions. In a country where literacy is far from universal, a museum can work by direct oral and visual impresson to reach an audience otherwise cut off from much knowledge of its own past and of other people's present ways of life. In a country where education is detaching people from their traditions, a museum can help to preserve an understanding of the life of the village. "It is surprising", Mr. Mackay says in the Annual Report, "how many indigenous children are completely ignorant of the utensils, weapons, clothing and village life of their forebears." The Museum does what it can to reduce this ignorance, by admitting parties of school children and showing them around. What is done modestly and under difficulties now could be done far more effectively.

Moreover, a museum could attempt certain things not yet attempted in this one. It could have imaginative displays, films, recordings of talk and music. It could put the Europeans as well as the native peoples into it; and to do that would be entertaining, educational, and serve a useful civic purpose. The J. K. McCarthy branch museum in Goroka has started well, I think, in having a scope wide enough to include relics from Highland societies 5,000 years ago, and examples of combat aircraft during the second world war. The management committee of the museum says: "Whilst these are not regarded as regular types of museum displays, it is felt that the story of Papua and New Guinea cannot disregard the influences of the war in relation to its history."

That is well said, though perhaps too deferential to the old-fashioned idea of the museum. A museum which tried to collect samples from the experiences of all the peoples who have lived here, not only all the way from the Sepik to Bougainville, but also all the way from Hanuabada to Konedobu, would be a bold affirmative gesture towards the future of the country as well as a monument to its past.

Let me return to the university and its students. I asked earlier what the incoming university teacher could assume about the similarity between students here and students he has been used to teaching elsewhere. He is sometimes warned to expect problems peculiar to the Territory, or at any rate problems which do not arise in an urban industrial society. It has been said in particular that students here have special difficulty in comprehending historical time. They come from societies without the idea of a calendar, where time is conceived not as linear and progressive but as cyclic: the sun goes round each day, the moon waxes and wanes, the monsoon and the trade winds come and go, and all this happens again and again forever. Historical memory in Melanesian societies, it is said, goes back only two or three generations, and then fades into mythology. Concepts such as ten days, five months, three years, a decade, a century: these, it is said, do not exist in Melanesian societies; and students who come out of these societies have a hard struggle to comprehend the chronological system on which much of their higher education depends and which is utterly crucial in the study of history.

My colleagues who taught history in the preliminary year last year were inclined at first to think that this might be so. By the end of the year they were convinced that it was not. Looking back on the year, they thought that some students had begun fairly ignorant, and that most had been seriously deficient in competence with the English language; but as they got to know things, and as their fluency in English improved, there did not appear to be any special problem about the sense of time.

It does seem to me that when some people talk about allegedly peculiar problems faced by students here, they are inclined to assume that what is true of the man who lives in the primitive village must be true also of his son and even his grandson at the university. Thus the nature of indigenous languages and indigenous mythologies is invoked as evidence that university students here will have difficulty in understanding historical time. One might almost as well say that because the rustic labourer in an English village is vague about the distance from Stratford-

on-Avon to Oxford, the English undergraduate will have special problems with geography. Moreover, some expatriate educators in this country compare the actual situation here with a dreamy version of the situation in Australia or elsewhere. At the end of 1965 I was invited to look at some School Certificate papers in History and Geography written by candidates in Territory High Schools. The examiner said as he handed them to me that I was in for a shock. Some of them were certainly ignorant and badly expressed and confused. But I had just been reading in Canberra some papers written by candidates for a public service examination roughly equivalent to Leaving; and I felt no great bump as I travelled from the one set of papers to the other. The only difference I could notice was that whereas most of the public service papers seemed to be written by people whose native language was English, most of the Territory papers clearly were not. I think the examiner had forgotten what examination papers elsewhere were really like. "These students seem to think that Adolf Hitler and Julius Caesar were somehow contemporaries, living together in a timeless abstraction called the past." That was said to me not of students at the University of Papua and New Guinea but by a lecturer in history at the University of Adelaide. Even in the United States teachers of history strike the problem. I say "even" the United States because there is a nation obsessed with history, paying homage to historical documents and dates — the Declaration of Independence, the Fourth of July 1776; the Constitution, 1787 — a nation more conscious of time than any other in the history of the world. It was one of the makers of the American revolution, Benjamin Franklin, who advised young men that time is money, and observed that time is the stuff life is made of. Even in that country, I have known a student of history in a good university compare two English philosophers, John Locke, who lived in the seventeenth century, and John Stuart Mill, who lived in the nineteenth century, and then ask which man lived first. An American professor of history who visited us here last month told us that teachers of history in her country are troubled about how to teach a sense of time to their students. The incoming teacher to any new environment is bound to make mistakes. My present feeling is that he will make fewer mistakes here if he assumes that the students are like students elsewhere than if he assumes that they are not.

There is a particular problem of chronology in this country, but it is a writer's problem and a teacher's problem before it is a student's problem. Historians have imposed on Papua and New

Guinea a chronological framework, a series of dates slicing the past into periods, which look reasonable and indeed natural from the point of view of Europeans. But the historian may have distorted what really happened; from the point of view of participants in the indigenous society his dates may not mark the most significant movement or events. I cannot illustrate this problem easily, because we have not yet much solid work done on history from the indigenous sources. When Professor Salisbury's study of Vunamami appears, this is one of the things it will show.

Professor Salisbury's presence here represents two kinds of co-operation, between institutions and between disciplines. He is on leave from a university in Canada, and he is an anthropologist working in history. We need much help from other institutions if we are to a be good university, and we are getting it. Mr. Golson, the archaeologist who started off our preliminary year course in Social Studies, is employed by the Australian National University. We are likely to have a professor from another Australian university taking part of our course in the History of Science and Technology. Most of the lectures in our course on Europe and South East Asia have been given by a man employed in the Administrative College. Such arrangements both strengthen our teaching and provide encouraging symbols of support. Co-operation between disciplines I have illustrated already in talking about some of our courses. Before very long there are likely to be courses in pre-historic archaeology which can be taken by students concentrating on either History or Anthropology. I give these examples not because there is more co-operation between history and related subjects than elsewhere, but simply because I know more about it. Others can speak more knowledgeably about the prospects for collaborative enterprise here between physics and biology for example, and between mathematics and linguistics.

The map of learning and the map of New Guinea both have been divided too deeply by history. I say "*too* deeply" because it is a bad thing if a man cannot communicate effectively with a man in the next department or the next valley. Schools and roads, members of the House of Assembly say to the administration: give us schools and roads. These are, indeed, the two great agents of commerce and nationality in this country, the two liberators from the physical and mental seclusion of the village. This University will do one important thing that a university in any developing country can do: help to provide the professional

skills necessary for running a complex society. It has another function in a society as divided as this one: to help its graduates feel a sense of community with each other that is unknown in their parents. I hope that the study of history can help to encourage the sense of national community and at the same time help to preserve the sense of continuity between past and present. And I hope that roads can be laid down and kept open between history and other subjects. Then our graduates will be able to talk and work fruitfully both with people from other parts of their country and with people who have travelled through different regions on the map of learning.