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The power of pictures; learning-by-looking at Papua in illustrated newspapers and magazines

ABSTRACT

Illustrated newspapers and magazines at the end of the 19th and early in the 20th century promoted economic opportunities in gold mining, planting, tourism and trading in the Australian Territory of Papua and visually suggested it was a potentially prosperous tropical frontier of costumed dancers, ex-cannibals, mission converts and eager labourers. The widespread dissemination of pictorial material in this era allowed Australians to be relatively well informed about Papua and learning-by-looking at daily, weekly and monthly publications liberally illustrated with photographs meant existing colonial, racist and hegemonic attitudes were reinforced and new interest generated in Australia's sub-regional empire in the islands..

Two new forms of media – the camera in the hands of colonial officials, scientists, missionaries and travellers; and photographically illustrated magazines, newspapers, postcards and serial encyclopaedia - merged in the first three decades of the 20th century and shaped public opinion in Australia on the fate of “natives” in the southwest Pacific, appropriate policies for colonial administrations confronted with indigenous subjects and the potential for Australian sub-imperialism in the wider Pacific region. When WE Geil visited missions in the Pacific in 1905 as part of a world tour an Australian journalist reported the “brilliant American evangelist, author ... travelled with the latest up-to-date equipment of camera, typewriter and fowling pieces”¹ and when Miss Philippa Bridges travelled from Adelaide to Port Moresby in 1923 she reported to the South Australian branch of the Royal Geographical Society there was “a population of 2000 white people in Papua of whom 1782 write articles about anthropology for the *Sydney Bulletin* ”.² The camera and the boom in heavily illustrated publications, starting in the mid-1890s, offered readers intimate depictions of life in Papua and other colonies in the southwest Pacific and provided a new level of public access to information. Public understanding of empire grew accordingly as self-education on the newly federated nation, sub-empire and economic opportunity in the region were promoted visually. It was a second-hand, mediated knowledge but nonetheless significant in attitude formation. In the first study of tourism in Melanesia, Ngairie Douglas claimed material sent to editors from professional photographers and keen amateurs helped “form public opinion and knowledge of this part of the Pacific”.³ This can be measured through statistical analysis of dissemination in the public domain but connection between the subject matter of a photograph and an opinion expressed later on the topic remains speculative.

The message in photographs of Papua, a colony transferred from British to Australian control in 1902-1906, was explicit in three overlapping self-education dimensions – Papua was a frontier of amazing cultures and “natives” (a lesson in anthropology); Australian was representing western civilization by governing Papua (a lesson in nationalism and membership of the British Empire) and Papua offered opportunities for Australians in administration, missions, plantations and mining (a lesson in economics).

Despite the inconclusive evidence linking photographs to particular expressions of public opinion or government policy on Papua, photographic material was so widespread and recognizable that Australian readers had at least a rudimentary grasp of the colonial situation in their newly acquired colony. As Graeme Davison on Australia, John Mackenzie on Britain and Anne Maxwell on international exhibitions have noted, imperial propaganda and the popularity of international and inter-colonial exhibitions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were characterised by a widespread enthusiasm for *observing* or learning-by-looking.⁴ In England, of the ten and half million people who visited the Franco-British Exhibition from May to September 1908, it was claimed 25000 people visited the combined missionary display each day.⁵ In the Australian colonies, 1.1, 1.3 and two million people respectively attended the Sydney 1880, Melbourne 1880 and Melbourne 1888 exhibitions.⁶ Once the technique of reproducing photographs on newsprint was mastered in the mid-1890s, using the half-tone process, learning-by-looking at photographs in illustrated magazines and weekend newspapers became an equally modern and popular pastime. Sales of illustrated magazines and newspapers boomed because they were illustrated. By their public accessibility and a format offering several pages of images, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century illustrated magazines and weekend newspapers offered visual short cuts to knowledge of other worlds and the experience of being there with the photographer, traveller, missionary or patrol officer. They provided evidence to support long-held or newly adopted, opinions, beliefs and attitudes. Photographs were a new media and assumed to be from real life and to offer a level of truth superior to literary and artistic representation and the annotation “taken by the author” carried authenticity and accuracy. Photographs from Papua were therefore either comfortably accepted by readers in support of long-held attitudes, or absorbed as evidence to be cited when expressing new views and opinions about Papua and Australian sub-empire in the Pacific. If there was an uncertainty about the subject matter of a particular photograph, the captions and bold headings made recognition easier for the reader. However, transcription or absorbing an impression from a photograph has an element of discrepancy and historians today acknowledge that readers, for example in the 1920s and 1930s, could arrive at varying interpretations of the same photograph.⁷

It is possible to count the photographs of Papua that appeared in illustrated newspapers and magazines and to list the frequency of particular images such as plantations, wharves, mission schools and coastal villages, but a statistically verifiable gallery of published images does not necessarily allow claims the Australian reading public were any better informed, or even informed at all about Papuans, the administration, resources, terrain or infrastructure. There is a quantitative element in claims of attitude formation but “circulation alone is a poor measure of influence”.⁸ A reader’s response to a photograph, for example, of the wharf at Samarai cannot easily be tracked to a subsequent voting choice, support for a specific government policy, a donation to a Mission fund or a decision to try their luck as a planter in the tropics. It is not possible to identify a “single privileged message” which a reader might draw “in univocal fashion” from an image.⁹ As each photograph had many potential literal and implied meanings, and as many different responses and relayed expressions of opinion as there were different readers, uncertainty in interpretation existed despite captions and associated text which otherwise denoted and connoted specific messages and meanings.¹⁰ So while able to count the photographs of Papua in the public domain, the different locations where a photograph was reproduced and make a reasonable estimate of readership, there is less certainty about the educative process by which images of

Papua were interpreted, absorbed and then recycled by readers as attitudes and opinions in sub-empire, mission, gender, social or scientific discourses of the day. The most amenable claim is that Australian newspaper and magazine readers could not avoid seeing images of Papua. There was a consistent policy by editors to publish photographs from Papua between 1895 and 1930 and Australian readers were confronted each week or month with substantial plantations, steamers lying off-shore loading copra, wharves, police patrols, lines of labour, *lakatoi*, tree houses, clay pots, costumed dancers, bamboo aqueducts, swinging vine bridges and Hanuabada village (not by name, but as a generic Papuan village.) Public understanding of colonial life, economic potential and the cultures of Papuan peoples was derived from, or confirmed by, the repeated presentation of this subject matter in illustrated magazines and weekend newspapers such as *The Queenslander*, *Sydney Mail*, *Lone Hand*, *Wide World Magazine* and *Australasian*.

“... 1782 write about anthropology for the Sydney *Bulletin* ”

Scientific and popular interest in other cultures, later formalised as Anthropology, was an expression of modernity and a matter of public debate among Europeans serving in colonial possessions in Africa, Asia and the Pacific.¹¹ Although several officials in Papua had aspirations of being noted for their scientific contributions most saw their published, illustrated articles as either a hobby with a small financial reward or the practical off-shoot of their colonial role, prompted by location and the lack of other western amenities and pursuits. For some, presumably the target of Philippa Bridge’s sarcasm, it was a dilettante preoccupation. Her parody of ambitious writers in Papua was based on reasonable evidence and although the *Bulletin* did not stand out for its Papuan coverage, other illustrated newspapers and magazines were receptive to articles sent from Papua or delivered by hand while “down south” on leave.¹² Editors accepted unsolicited illustrated articles and in some cases commissioned traveller/author/photographers to visit the Pacific and weekly and monthly news magazines in Australia had a long record of publishing illustrations on Papua. Specialist journals such as the *Australian Museum Magazine*, *Australian Traveller*, *Industrial Australian and Mining Standard*, *Importers and Exporters Journal of Australasia*, *Pastoralist’s Review* and *Scientific Australian* also published illustrated articles and occasionally single photographs on Papua as fillers and the major city daily newspapers also published an illustrated weekly summary, initially designed for sale in rural areas, which attracted large sales in urban areas. The pairing of print-only daily newspapers with a heavily illustrated weekend magazine style edition began in the 1860s and survived until the early 1930s when the number of published images fell away and many illustrated magazines and newspapers ceased publication.¹³

Serious and skim readers would have easily recognised a Papuan hairstyle, *lakatoi*, aqueduct, belle, dandy and Koiari tree house. For example, Miles Staniforth Smith’s three part series in the *Review of Reviews* in 1905 included thirty-three photographs of Papua. Journalist Thomas J McMahon’s six articles on Papua in the *Australasian* in 1916-17 included thirty-seven photographs and his nine articles in *Wide World Magazine* in 1917-23 included 102 photographs. Anthropologist EWP Chinnery’s seven-part series in *Wide World Magazine* in 1919-20 included forty-four photographs. The Australian edition of the *Illustrated London News* published eighty-four photographs of Papua between 1919 and 1924 by TJ McMahon, WN Beaver, Rosita Forbes, Lilian Overell, Frank Hurley and AY Gowan.¹⁴ EC Harris and Beatrice

Grimshaw published two and three-part articles in *Life* (with twenty-nine photographs), and Jack McLaren published a twenty-five part serial “On the fringe of the law” in the *Sydney Mail* in 1920-21 (with 32 photographs).¹⁵ The most prolific author was Thomas McMahon with his photographs also appearing in the *Cairns Post and Northern Herald* (102 photographs), *The Queenslander* (47 photographs), *Daily Telegraph* (12 photographs), *Sydney Mail* (73 photographs) and the *Australasian* (36 photographs). In 1911, the new monthly magazine *Lone Hand* was typically including forty photographs and forty etchings or drawings each issue, *Life* magazine thirty-six photographs, twelve drawings, nine cartoons and three maps each issue and even the smaller and cost-conscious Mission publications, an average of one photograph on every second page.¹⁶ The sheer quantity of this photographic imaging in one-off articles, serials and full-page pictorial features, is quite remarkable, with 763 separate published images of Papua alone in just the small sample listed above. If a conservative figure is accepted of 10,000 to 20,000 sales for each of the eleven eastern Australian capital city illustrated weekly editions (after allowing for 30,000 sales in Sydney and Melbourne and smaller sales in Brisbane, Hobart and Adelaide) the total weekly sales outside the war years were between 110,000 and 220,000 copies. In 1920, if monthly and quarterly magazines and the twenty-six daily capital city newspapers were included, even allowing for their lower rate of illustration, the number of photographs published each week was huge. In the 1921 census the literacy rate for Australians was between 82% and 86%, a potential reading public of just over three million readers aged fifteen to seventy years. If all the published magazine and newspaper photographs of Papua in this period were counted, allowing for some repetition, the sum of published photographs in illustrated magazines and newspapers would be measured in thousands. When illustrated material in postcards, commercial album booklets, stamps, lanternslides, illustrated lectures, prints, book illustrations and serialised encyclopaedia, it amounts to a photographic imaging of Papua in the public domain that was widespread and constant.

Editors advertised for photographs to meet this huge demand. *Sea Land Air*, which began in Sydney in 1919, invited “clear photographs on subjects dealing with aviation, wireless, the navy and mercantile marine”¹⁷ and *The Australian Magazine* told readers it would “be glad to receive prints of unique photographs”, with a short description attached.¹⁸ In order to attract photographs the *Queenslander*, *Australasian*, *Sun* (Sydney), *Town and Country Journal*, and *BP Magazine* ran photography competitions with prizes of up to a thousand pounds and in one instance a trip to Papua, and the *Papuan Courier* reminded local readers the Kodak company in Australia was running competitions for “the happiest moment of 1913” and in 1919 for the best photograph of the Australia-United Kingdom air race.¹⁹ As there was little duplication among published Papuan photographs, the supply line of photographs on the southbound Cairns-Cooktown steamer must have been constant. In editor’s offices and the albums of ex-New Guinea hands “down south” the stockpile must also have been expansive and of publishable quality.

The traveller/photographer; a bombardment of clicking cameras

The extent of photography in Pacific colonies is demonstrated by the photographic output of a traveller, author and visitor to Papua, Eric Pockley, a Port Moresby resident and author, Beatrice Grimshaw and a resident and anthropologist, EWP Chinnery. They were also photographers. When Pockley arrived to Papua in 1922, he noted with

an element of satire that he had a “Miners’ Right, shooting licences, permits for obtaining birds of paradise for museum purposes, guns and rifles, picks and shovels, prospecting dishes, charcoal boxes for obtaining specimens of sugarcane, wet and dry-bulb thermometers, aneroid, compasses, field glasses, etc”. In a series of six illustrated articles in the *Sydney Mail* in 1922, under the banner “A tramp across New Guinea”, he made fun of the colonial European’s obsession with excessive measurement, collection, analysis and recording of facts especially in the zoo which social and physical scientists, anthropologists and commercial collectors had created in Papua. Critically reflecting on his own behaviour, he added his party was armed with cinema and still cameras and on arrival in a village, Papuans were “exposed to a bombardment of clicking cameras”.²⁰

Beatrice Grimshaw, author, Port Moresby resident and friend of the Governor, Hubert Murray, published illustrated articles in *Asia, Australia Today, Life, Metropolitan Magazine, National Geographic, Pall Mall Magazine, United Empire, Wide World Magazine, Windsor Magazine, Woman at Home* and *World’s Work*.²¹ Two of her non-fiction books on Papua, *The new New Guinea* and *Isles of adventure* were liberally illustrated with forty-nine and thirty photographs respectively.²² She published “Guinea gold” a twelve part series in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1911 with 79 photographs, “Among the pygmies of Papua” a nine part series in 1912-1913 with 50 photographs, “Homes in New Guinea” a five-part series in 1916 and seven illustrated articles in *Wide World Magazine* between 1923 and 1925.²³ A three-part series in *Life* in 1909 with 17 photographs described the problems facing settlers, the lifestyle for Europeans, praised the economic potential and spoke enthusiastically the scenic beauty of Papua.²⁴ The majority of Grimshaw’s published photographs were ethnographic depictions of sago making, villages, house construction and side, front profile and group portraits of “types” following the conventional format and ethnographic imperative already influencing visual material on Papua. Her photographs confirmed some reader’s expectations about savages, cannibals, mountain villages and exotic rituals, but surprisingly there were few photographs of economic activity or infrastructure development. The accompanying text was a straightforward message of economic potential and opportunity. In this thinly disguised promotion of European-led investment in the colony a dramatic gallery of ethnographic images overwhelmed the economic propaganda of the text.

The *Wide World Magazine* articles by EWP Chinnery demonstrate the editorial appeal of the illustrated pictorial genre. Chinnery, an administration official and later government anthropologist who also published in *Man, Royal Anthropological Society Proceedings, Geographical Journal, Journal of the Royal Geographical Society* and *United Empire*, enlisted in the Great War of 1914-19 and after returning became government anthropologist for the Mandated Territory, later serving as Australian Commonwealth Adviser on Native Affairs and ending his career in Darwin as Director of Native Affairs in the Northern Territory from 1939-46. He was an administration official, explorer and anthropologist but also an archetypal photographer/author of illustrated articles.²⁵ Notwithstanding his scholarly publishing record, he was certainly more well known after publishing two serial stories in *Wide World Magazine*; “In quest of cannibals; exploration and adventure in unknown New Guinea” in 1919 with 29 photographs, and “Into the Unknown; chasing outlaws in New Guinea” in 1920 with 22 photographs and drawings.²⁶

Knowing Papua through the photographs in Chinnery, Grimshaw and Pockley's illustrated articles demanded acknowledgement by readers of three spatial constructions – anthropologically (“natives” in a primitive state); economically (companies, traders and planters making a good life in the tropics); and administratively (Australians serving in colonial and official positions). The three formed an overlapping triptych or photographic mosaic of colonialism. By 1930, when public knowledge of Papua mixed 19th century literary and artistic depictions with early 20th century photo-journalism and visual anthropology, Papuan photographs were immediately familiar to the Australian reading public.

The Sydney Mail

The *Sydney Mail* began in 1860 as a weekly news summary, taken from its parent newspaper *The Sydney Morning Herald*, for distribution to rural districts. Early editions featured items as diverse as the Maori land wars in New Zealand and the Garibaldi campaign in Italy. In four years its circulation expanded from 1000 to 11500 copies. In 1870, it was challenged by the new *Town and Country Journal* which quickly dominated sales of weekend illustrated newspapers.²⁷ The *Sydney Mail* responded by changing format and price and increasing the number of pages from sixteen to thirty-two. In 1871, it began using woodcut illustrations. In 1876, a special pictorial section was created and by 1880 current news summaries were reduced and illustrated features, essays and stories gave it the look less of a newspaper and more of a magazine. In 1888, it used the new half tone reproduction process for the first time to publish a photograph of a fire in Broken Hill and by the mid-1890s had become a “pictorial as much as a reading journal ... extensively provided with photographs on a diverse range of topics from Australasia and the wider world”.²⁸ In 1912, it adopted a colour cover, expanded to fifty pages printed on quality art paper and claimed that its sphere of information had been “widened until it now covers the federal arena and is not silent on affairs of the wider world particularly their bearing on Australian policy and development”.²⁹ During 1914-18, it converted wholly to a pictorial magazine to cover the war and was selling a remarkable 120000 copies weekly. In the 1920s it maintained weekly sales of 30000 copies. Fairfax and Sons declared, quite reasonably in 1924, “much of this success is due to the pictorial presentation of news. Its illustrations are the leading feature and not equalled by an other publication in Australia”.³⁰ Three years later, Fairfax and Sons noted the “pictorial presentation of news commands a wider popularity than any other method”.³¹ The Great Depression and a major strike caused the closure of the *Sydney Mail* in 1938. Changing habits and a wave of popularity for radio, cinema newsreels and specifically targeted, human interest pictorial magazines like *Pix*, *Man* and *Womens Weekly* meant that the broad appeal, illustrated weekend editions of the daily newspapers had served out their usefulness. Those not already closed did so before the end of the 1930s.

In what ways did the *Sydney Mail's* long-running coverage of belles, dandies, tree houses, *lakatoi*, but equally significant, sisal hemp plantations, lines of robust labourers and panoramas of substantial wharves and towns affect public perceptions of Australia's new possessions - Papua, Nauru, a jointly administered League of Nations mandate with New Zealand and Britain and the former German New Guinea, by military occupation in 1914 and a mandate after 1921? Papua was presented visually as a wonderland with landscape, topography and geology different to that of the Australian colonies. Papua was a frontier, geographically and culturally distant from ‘Marvellous

Melbourne' and eastern seaboard cities, factories, office jobs and wheat and sheep farming; Papua was constructed as jungle villages, plantations, intrepid expeditions, gold rushes and BP's steamers; Papua was a colony and Australia an emerging nation. The sense of difference was important. Photography created and sustained these differences. Responding to their readers interests, and capitalising on a steady stream of photographs sent down from Papua on the steamer, the *Sydney Mail* published illustrated articles and single photographs of Papua in a special pictorial segments. Fiction serials with supporting photographs were a popular feature and included adventure tales by Jack McLaren, JS Hoskins and "Wanda Lust". Reports of expeditions, the development versus native interest debate and travelogue articles by the well known artist Ellis Silas in 1922 and a Mrs E Sandery's adventures in the Gulf and Fly River districts in 1926 were featured.³² As well as amateur and professional photographers, two London photography companies, "PICA" and the "Alfieri Picture Service" supplied photographs of Papua for the *Sydney Mail* in this period.³³ Anonymous contributors provided the *Sydney Mail* with full-page features on *lakatoi* racing in Port Moresby in 1921 and 1931³⁴ and Captain GH Pitt-Rivers, passing through Sydney after leaving Papua, provided four photographs for a full-page feature titled 'Papua; land of mystery, strange native scenes'.³⁵ Along with pottery making and tattooing this article included a photograph of eight Papuan men casually standing on a mud-bank discussing a recently speared crocodile that lay at the water's edge. This was an unusual composition because the men were not looking at the camera. The informality of posture and concentration on the crocodile rather than the camera lens contrasted sharply with the rigidly posed and line-up group portraits common in this period and suggested a *la flaneur* approach by the photographer that was unusual but becoming increasingly evident by the 1920s. His final photograph was another unusual composition in the pictorialist tradition with a Papuan male to the right sitting on a rock looking down over a cloud filled valley. Was the Papuan's village obscured in the clouds or was he contemplating the spatial significance of this transitory presence of strangers and photographers?³⁶

The most published photographer in the *Sydney Mail* in this period was Archie Gibson. He ran a Port Moresby photography business with his daughter and his photographs, often un-attributed, appeared in postcards, stamps, books, magazines, reports and company brochures. His *Sydney Mail* photographs appeared singly or in full-page presentations including a 1920 feature "Pacific Islanders; pictures from Papua" with six portraits of dancers, widows, mothers and children, as illustrations for Jack McLaren's serial 'On the fringe of the law' and four photographs attributed to a Mr Baynes were also panorama and wide-angle photographs by Gibson that Baynes had purchased or borrowed in Port Moresby.³⁷ An artistic composition by Gibson of two small children posing cutely in a studio setting and captioned "Papuan smiles" appeared in a regular *Sydney Mail* column called "Photo Study" and thirteen years later re-appeared in the special "Camera Study" column of the newly launched *BP Magazine*, an indication of the longevity and multiple uses made of popular images from Papua.³⁸

The enthusiasm of the *Sydney Mail* for publishing material on Papua and New Guinea was evident in the selection process for the illustrated "Annual" edition each October. Photographs of Papua in the "Annual" from 1931 to 1936 included Jean Beegling's image of a canoe visiting a tourist ship, three highland photographs by MJ Leahy and anonymous contributions including a *lakatoi*, a view of Samarai and one captioned "Papuan in a flower garden".³⁹ That images of Papua were selected in competition with

Australian material indicates the topicality and iconographic imperative of otherness, public interest in Australia's new colonial responsibilities and a continuing reader interest in adventures on the frontier. The transfer from British to Australian control of Papua in 1902-6 also briefly raised Papua's profile. The *Sydney Mail's* illustrated articles, pictorial features, Christmas special and "Annual" responded to market directions and trends and editors relied on ethnographic material, which still carried strong reader interest, but after 1900, were also receiving unsolicited photography promoting the idea of Australian-led economic opportunities. With a dwindling supply of alleged discoveries, adventures, near escapes and wondrous landscapes, they were also under pressure to cater for new art forms particularly from advocates of the pictorialist school of photography searching for new ways to represent the mysteries of Papua. A further consideration was the reporting of major events in Papua and later the Mandated Territory of New Guinea, and emerging in the 1930s, reader interest in illustrated articles on tours and voyages, mostly thinly disguised advertisements for Burns Philp and other steamer companies.

The preoccupation with imaging Papua and the relative lack of interest in the north-eastern half of New Guinea, arose from Port Moresby's proximity on postal and supply routes to Australian ports and the number of Australian personnel involved in administration, planting, trading and mission roles. Although Papua dominated the *Sydney Mail* pictorial sections it also ran a seven-part series on the Solomon Islands in August to October 1910 with forty-nine photographs, a three-part series on the Cook Islands in March and May 1913 with eight photographs, a three part series on German Samoa in September 1914 with nine photographs and from December 1921 to February 1922, four full-page features on the Solomon Islands using the photographs of visiting American photographer Merl La Voy.⁴⁰ Between 1910 and 1914 it also ran illustrated stories on the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu), Easter Island, Fiji, Honolulu and Tonga. The photographic content of the *Sydney Mail* and other illustrated magazines and newspapers, suggests calls made in the national interest for an expanded Australian southwest Pacific sub-empire at the close of the Great War invigorated editorial interest in Papua as a story worth publishing. The neighbouring German New Guinea was ignored until the military occupation in 1914 and its subsequent transfer to Australia as a mandate. The Mandated Territory briefly assumed prominence during the military occupation and later during the mainland gold boom and pioneering expeditions into the highlands, but it missed the surge of English language, photographically illustrated books, magazines and newspapers that fed on and in turn created an imperative to image Papua.

The full-page pictorial and illustrated serial format

The full-page pictorial feature was the preferred format for photographs and was used for local agricultural shows, visits to towns and factories, sporting events and military displays. The full-page "pictorial" allowed locals to see their town, friends and local events along with scenes of newly opened agricultural tracts and technological advances. It was used as early as 1896 to promote tourism, when Burns Philp supplied the *Sydney Mail* with eight photographs including a view of Port Moresby, a spire house at Kerepuna, a fleet of canoes beached at Kwato Mission and prospectors panning a shallow river bed.⁴¹ The impression was of tranquillity, order and hospitality towards travellers and investors and that travel and human and capital investment, important to Burns Philp's profits, were welcome in the islands region. From 1914 to

1918, the pictorial press was dominated by portraits of armed forces personnel, recruits, the injured, captured howitzers, crashed zeppelins or rustic, carefully posed tableaux of boiling the billy in a bombed cathedral. In the post-war period the progress of soldier settlement areas was reported in full-page pictorial features. Full-page formats were retained into the 1930s with *The Queenslander* offering features on the copra industry, newly discovered Papuan tribes and the views to be obtained by tourists cruising the Papuan coast.⁴² Full-page illustrated stories were also used occasionally to report on topical events such as the visit of a Royal Commission to Papua in 1906 or Staniforth Smith's expedition when it was lost in the interior in 1911.

Photography in the 1895-1930 period falls into two distinct but contiguous phases. An emphasis on ethnography in the early period led to publication of full-page photograph features such as "New Guinea pictures", "Views in New Guinea" and "Picturesque Papua; Australia's fertile possession" appearing respectively in the *Australasian*, *Leader* and *Sydney Mail* in 1903, 1907 and 1910 and offering thirty-three photographs, two-thirds captioned "types" and portraying Papuans chewing betel, posing with weapons and canoes, crossing steams or decorated for dancing.⁴³ Captions such as "type" and "a typical native" had become standard appellations by 1910. There was little visual evidence to suggest European presence apart from an occasional sisal hemp plantation, plant nursery, and police patrol, game of cricket or a caption that informed readers a group of young women were "school girls". As government patrols, scientific expeditions, missions and prospectors armed with cameras pushed further into the interior, full-page features were dominated by Papuan material culture, types and strange customs. These features carried a simple message; Papuans and New Guineans were part of the "Great Chain of Being" that ranked all the world's people from superior down to uncivilised status. Papuans, typically described as ex-cannibals, ex-savages and natives were at the bottom of a hierarchy that placed metropolitan, English civilization at the apex. This hierarchy was confirmed in reader's minds by visual evidence of partly clothed men and women, warriors carrying spears, mourning widows and off-shore elevated pile villages or tree houses.⁴⁴ In the second phase, after the Australian takeover of the former British New Guinea in 1902-1906 and the post-war acquisition of the Mandated Territory of New Guinea, full-page features promoted the potential for European settlement, investment, trade, shipping and tourism as well as the introduction of appropriate "Native Policy". In the second phase, both ethnographic and economic propaganda photography supported fiction and non-fiction serials that ran for several weeks or months in illustrated magazines and newspapers.⁴⁵

Strictly true in every detail

The emphasis on pictorial material in the *Sydney Mail* was matched by *Wide World Magazine*, a popular English "illustrated monthly of true narratives; adventure, travel, customs and sport" with a wide distribution in Australia and an extraordinary record of publishing material on the two eastern New Guinea territories and the Pacific generally. From 1901 to 1928, there were fifty illustrated articles on Papua in *Wide World Magazine*, more than any other single colony or territory worldwide and more than all other Pacific Islands combined. In the editor's invitation for manuscripts, potential authors writing about their own experiences or who reported on the adventures of others were warned in capital letters that articles must be 'STRICTLY TRUE IN EVERY DETAIL.' The "curious or remarkable photographs" they were invited to submit did not attract such a warning. The photograph was assumed to be a truthful record from

real life. *Wide World Magazine* also used drawings produced by its Cliché Department. There was no suggestion that a photograph was a cliché. We do not know how readers reacted to photographs in illustrated publications but we can assume from the editorial directions to contributors that readers probably thought photographs were curious, remarkable and truthful re-presentations of distant people, places and events. In *Wide World Magazine* the regular offering was an adventure, a good yarn and photographs of the exotic. Contributors after studying earlier issues shaped their manuscripts and selected photographs accordingly. The text relied heavily on long-standing literary depiction of savages, cannibals, headhunters and dark, unknown interiors. A photograph of the mission, gold mine or expedition for which the author was touted in by-lines, was usually overwhelmed by depictions of savagery, exotic customs, material culture and dark skinned bodies.⁴⁶

As these photographs spread across the public domain, readers faced uncertainty about the Great War and post-war world realignments, but it was antithetically an era of unmitigated boosting of exploitation and profit making in the ex-German colonial possessions in the Pacific. In 1914, Japan had immediately taken over Germany's former colonies in the north Pacific, as requested by the Allied Command, and by 1922, was well advanced towards a policy of *Nanyo* or southern expansion. There were Australians, for example, who thought the Marshall Islands should become an Australian territory rather than pass to Japan.⁴⁷ In this ferment of opportunity and uncertain directions, photographs of labourers tapping rubber, picking cotton, planting rice, husking coconuts, being paid-off or posing in massed lines, muscular, available and obedient suggested a labour reserve of experienced, easily trained natives would eagerly sign-on. But Governor Hubert Murray's policies were an impediment to the expansion of a settler-dominated plantation economy and in Clive Moore's opinion Papuans were also unwilling to enlist as labourers.⁴⁸ However, readers in the 1920s had before them what seemed to be incontestable photographic evidence from real life of a huge, skilled labour force, busy ports, banks, stores, police patrolling and flourishing plantations.

The iconographic imperative creating a set of generic Papuan images generated ideal convergences, suggesting an idea of Papua based on documentary-style photographic evidence, and alternatively a representational 'ideal' Papua based on long-standing literary and artistic stereotypes, myths and imaginary tropical frontiers. Papuans were imaged in ways that affirmed readers existing beliefs about native peoples,⁴⁹ and as it was widely accepted that truth and integrity were embedded in photography it is unlikely that images were questioned and doubts raised about photography's trend towards propaganda and agendas of deliberate persuasion. As Caroline Brothers notes in relation to war photography⁵⁰, photographs offer historians insights into the consumption and transmission of meaning - what Australians were learning about Papua - and suggest the prevalence of a collective imagination and forum in which Australians gave expression to this knowledge. The existence of satire in captions and occasionally in composition invites the conclusion that for some readers there was awareness that Papua was being mis-represented. Knowing about Papua was also confused by the practice in illustrated magazine and newspapers of running parallel representations - one textual, one visual - often at odds in the representations they disseminated. Beatrice Grimshaw's photographs noted earlier, for example, offered an overwhelmingly ethnographic gallery of Papua culture but her text was polemical, explicit propaganda to boost the policies of the administration and attract suitable

European-led economic development. Photographs of Papua did carry messages intended by the photographer at the moment of closing the shutter, but once published they were open to diverse, contradictory and manipulative interpretations. What the learner-by-looking was learning about Papua was further influenced by editorial practice, page layout and printing technique. Knowing about Port Moresby, Samarai or the prospects for sisal and rubber was the realm of editors and sub-editors, as much as the photographer's carefully composed images. Whether the multiple ideas and meanings embedded in photographs altered, reversed or shaped voting patterns, Cabinet policy, the level of mission donations or decisions to emigrate to the tropics is famously unmeasurable. But the sheer volume of photographic material on just this one neighbouring colonial possession demands acknowledgement of photography's potential impact on the Australian reading public.

The *Sydney Mail*, *The Queenslander*, *Wide World Magazine* and *Walkabout* after it started in 1934, and other illustrated publications were for Australian readers a personal album of a trip to Papua. Intimate, picturesque, amazing and propaganda images soon become familiar but readers also brought ideas fermented in a continental settler society characterised by political and moral debates over the fate of indigenous peoples, western imperialism and untrammelled free enterprise and capitalist endeavour. These attitudes were predicated by the reader's historical and recent experiences. Any new knowledge acquired was contextualised by what they already knew and as noted by Caroline Brothers, while photographs shape and subvert opinion they in turn are circumscribed by the popular unconscious, the collective imagination and ideas already existing.⁵¹ Glancing at photographs in illustrated magazines and newspapers was a collective act of learning-by-looking in the public domain and increasingly at an easily identifiable world. There were many readers in the 1900-1930 period able to identify canoes, houses, villages, hairstyles, harbours and head-dresses from Papua and to assess the visual evidence against Australian policy and economic opportunity and this familiarity came from the profusion of Papuan photographs in illustrated newspapers and magazines.

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1 (anon.), "Interview with WE Geil", *Review of Reviews (For Australia)*, 20 August 1905, 147; WE Geil, *Ocean and Isle*, (Melbourne, Pater and Co) 1902, 1. Geil included twenty of his own photographs of Papua and five by an un-attributed photographer.

2 Philippa Bridges, "Afoot in Papua 1923", *Royal Geographical Society (South Australia) Proceedings*, 25 (1923): 40

3 Ngaire Douglas, *They came for savages, 100 years of tourism in Melanesia*, (Lismore, Southern Cross University Press, 1996): 45.

4 Graeme Davison, "Festivals of nationhood; the international exhibitions", in SL Goldberg and FB Smith, eds., *Australian cultural history*, (Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1988), Graeme Davison, *The use and abuse of Australian History* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 2000); John Mackenzie, *Propaganda and empire; the manipulation of British public opinion 1880-1960*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985); Anne Maxwell, *Colonial photography and exhibitions; representations of the Native and the making of European identities*, (London: Leicester University Press, 1999).

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- 5 *United Methodist Magazine*, Aug 1908; 366; Paul Greenhalgh, "Art, politics and society at the Franco-British exhibition of 1908", *Art History*, 8, no 4 (1985) 434.
- 6 Davison, *Festivals of nationhood*, 170.
- 7 Mary Price, *The photograph; a strange and confined space*, (Stanford; Stanford University Press 1994): 7; Graham Clarke, *The photograph*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press 1997): 27-39; John Tagg, *The burden of representation; essays on photographs and histories*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press 1995).
- 8 Caroline Brothers, *War and photography; a cultural history*, (London, Routledge 1997): 4.
- 9 Brothers 27-29, for a discussion on fluidity of interpretation and quantification.
- 10 This dichotomy was noted by Barthes and followed by most subsequent researchers on the meaning, reading and dissemination of photography, see; Roland Barthes, "Myth today" in his *Mythologies*, (London: Grafton, 1973); *Image, Music, Text*, (Glasgow: Fontana, 1977); and *Camera Lucida; reflections on photography*, (London: Fontana, 1984)
- 11 For official attitudes in Africa towards "practical" anthropology see, Henrika Kuklick, *The savage within; The social history of British anthropology 1885-1945*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), 194-209; for Papua and New Guinea see, Ian Campbell, "Anthropology and the professionalism of colonial administration in Papua and New Guinea", *Journal of Pacific History*, 33, no 1, 1998, 69-90.
- 12 The major illustrated magazines in Melbourne were the *Australasian* (with the *Argus*), *Sketcher*, *Leader* and *Illustrated Australian News* (with *The Age*); in Sydney the *Sydney Mail* (with the *Sydney Morning Herald*), *Town and Country Journal* (with the *Evening News*) and *Weekly Times* (with the *Daily Telegraph* and later *Herald*); in Adelaide the *Chronicle* (with the *Adelaide Register*); in Brisbane *The Queenslander* (with the *Courier-Mail*); in Townsville the *North Queensland Register* (with the *Townsville Daily Bulletin*) and in Tasmania the *Tasmanian Mail* (with the *Hobart Mercury*). Other illustrated magazines included *BP Magazine*, *Bulletin*, *Illustrated London News* (Australian edition), *Wide World Magazine*, *Life*, *Lone Hand*, *New Nation Magazine*, *Pacific Islands Monthly* and *Review of Reviews*, (which later became *Stead's Review*). In the United States of America trade and travel magazines such as *Dun's Review*, *Mid-Pacific*, *Overland Monthly*, *Pacific Ports*, *Sunset*, *Travel*, *Trans-Pacific*, *World's Markets* and *World's Work* were popular destinations for a short manuscript and a bundle of photographs mailed from Papua.
- 13 The following illustrated magazines closed down in this period; *Australasian* (1864-1910), *Town and Country Journal* (1870-1919), *Trans-Pacific* (1919-1922), *Overland Monthly* (1883-1923), *Munsey's Magazine* (1889-1929), *Sphere* (1900-1930), *Dun's International Review* (1903-1931), *Travel* (1901-1931), *World's Work* (1900-1932), *Graphic* (1869-1932), *Dun's Review* (1841-1933), *Penny Pictorial* (1899-1935), *Mid-Pacific* (1911-1936), *Sydney Mail* (1860-1938) and *The Queenslander* (1866-1939). Many smaller illustrated magazines closed or were absorbed, re-opened and then closed again in the 1930s.
- 14 For examples from the *Illustrated London News*, see, WN Beaver, "Unexplored New Guinea", 1919, 725; Thomas McMahon (on Papua), 1919, 776-80 and (on the New Hebrides), 1921, 444; Rosita Forbes, "Curious Christmases", 1921, 898;

Frank Hurley, (on his book and film *Pearls and savages*) 1923, 332-3 and 1924, 662-66; Lillian Overell, "A woman's impression of German New Guinea" 1923, 1113 and 1924, 585; AY Gowan, (on the cruise of the *Speejacks*), 1924, 651-2.

15 "On the fringe of the law" ran from October 1920 to March 1921 with a full-page format and one or two photographs and additional text to the rear of each edition. The photographs by Archie Gibson, Thomas McMahon and others included belles, the Armed Native Constabulary, Rouna waterfall, villages, coconut plantations, views and for the December edition a message made up by ten Papuan infants each holding one of the letters for "A Merry Xmas"; *Sydney Mail*, 15 December 1920, 28..

McLaren also published "Utingu; the coconut plantation at Cape York", *Lone Hand*, 1 October 1917, with 4 photographs and a book, *My Odyssey*, (London, Jonathon Cape, 1923) with 16 photographs. For McMahon's imaging of Papua and German New Guinea see, Max Quanchi, "Thomas McMahon; photography as propaganda in the Pacific Islands" *History of Photography* 21, 1 (1997): 42-53. From 1916 to 1923, McMahon published forty-nine articles and 204 photographs on the former German New Guinea. There is a huge library of German language books and articles on the German colony and New Guinea generally.

16 Based on the June 1911 editions of *Lone Hand*, *Life* and *United Methodist Magazine*.

17 *Sea Land Air*, 1 February 1921, 697.

18 *The Australian Magazine*, 1 July 1908, 447.

19 *The Queenslander*, 11 April 1896; *Papuan Courier*, 10 March 1913 and 25 July 1919; *The Graphic* (London), 10 April 1920; Alan Davies and Peter Stanbury, *The mechanical eye in Australian photography 1841-1900*, (Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1985), 92 and 98.

20 Eric Pockley, "A tramp across New Guinea", *Sydney Mail*, 2 August 1922, 14. The series of six articles under this title ran from July-August 1922.

21 For Grimshaw's writing see, Eugene Laracy and Hugh Laracy, "Beatrice Grimshaw; pride and prejudice in Papua", *Journal of Pacific History* 21, (1977): 154-75; Susan Gardner, "For love or money; early writings of Beatrice Grimshaw, colonial Papua's woman of letters", *New Literature Review* (1977): 10-36; Jan Roberts, *Voices from a lost world; Australian women and children in Papua New Guinea before the Japanese invasion*, (Sydney, Millennium, 1996). Laracy, Garner and Roberts ignore Grimshaw's photography and considerable published visual output. Her illustrated articles appeared in numerous illustrated newspapers and magazines between 1909 and 1934; for example, Beatrice Grimshaw, "Australia's Island asset", *Life* April 1909, 357-62; May 1909, 483-88; and June 1909, 602-606; "The progress of Papua", *Australia Today* (1911): 141-5; "The world's worst cannibal island", *Asia* (1934) 34: 348-51.

22 Grimshaw B, *The new New Guinea*, (London, Hutchison, 1911); and *Isles of adventure*, (London, Jenkins, 1930). Grimshaw published several fiction works with a Papuan setting such as *Guinea gold* in 1912 (also published in twelve parts in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1911); *The Paradise poachers* in 1928 and *My lady Far-away* in 1929.

23 Beatrice Grimshaw, "East beyond the East", *Ibid.*, (1923): 25-32; "Sorcery and spiritualism in Papua", *Ibid.*, (1923): 208-15; "Headhunters of the Sepik", (in four parts), *Ibid.*, (1923): 240-6, 283-88, 381-7 and 501-4; "Sea villagers of Humboldt Bay", *Ibid.*, (1925): 325-31;

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- 24 Beatrice Grimshaw, "Australia's Island asset"
- 25 George Stocking, "Gatekeeper to the field; EWP Chinnery and the ethnography of the New Guinea Mandate", *History of Anthropology Newsletter* 9, no 2 (1982): 3-12; EWP Chinnery, "An anthropologist in New Guinea", *Sydney Mail*, 19 February 1930. For examples of Chinnery's photography see, "Lantern slides", Box 445 and "Print Collection", PR055854-63 and PR055986-6043, Royal Geographical Society, London and a photograph, "A chief in full dress", used as a frontispiece in, C Cameron, *Two years in Southern Seas*, (London, Fisher and Unwin, 1923) Chinnery's three Anthropological Reports (Numbers 1-3) were profusely illustrated with 196 photographs. He was awarded the Cuthbert Peck Award by the Royal Geographical Society in 1920.. His wife was also a photographer but it is not possible in the diaries and papers in the Australian National Library to determine who took individual photographs among the thousands in the Chinnery collection. I thank Kate Fortune for pointing out Mrs Chinnery's role as a photographer. The huge Chinnery photograph collection is held by the Museum of Victoria, Melbourne.
- 26 EWP Chinnery, "In quest of cannibals; exploration and adventure in unknown New Guinea" (in 3 parts), *Wide World Magazine*, Oct 1918-Jan 1919; and "Into the Unknown; chasing outlaws in New Guinea" (in four parts), *Ibid.*, Oct-Dec 1920.
- 27 Frank Greenop, *History of magazine publishing in Australia*, (Sydney, Murray, 1947): 118.
- 28 Anon., *A century of journalism; the Sydney Morning Herald and its record of Australian life 1831-1931*, (Sydney, John Fairfax and Sons 1931): 678-9; Greenop, 117-195; Gavin Souter, *A company of heralds*, (Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1981): 112-14.
- 29 *Sydney Mail*, 3 April 1912.
- 30 Anon., *Sydney Morning Herald and Sydney Mail*, (Sydney, Fairfax and Sons, 1924); 19. (Mss held in Mitchell Library, Sydney.)
- 31 Anon., *Sydney Morning Herald and Sydney Mail*, (Sydney, Fairfax and Sons, 1927). (Mss held in Mitchell Library, Sydney.)
- 32 JS Hoskins, "A Papuan snake story", *Sydney Mail*, 7 January 1920; "Wanda Lust", (psued.), "An island tour in a copra catcher", *Ibid.*, 9 December 1931, 52-55; A Darby, "The development of Papua; native land and white settlement", *Ibid.*, 5 August 1908, 348-9; (Darby included four photographs from the official presentation albums of the 1884 Proclamation expedition.) E Silas, "An artist in Papua", *Ibid.*, 27 December 1922, 10-11; E Sandery, "Primitive Papua; with the Governor to Baramura", *Ibid.*, 17 March 1926, 8-9; E Sandery, "Primitive Papua; with the Governor to Kairuku", *Ibid.*, 24 March 1926, 18-19. (accompanied by eleven of her own photographs). In an anonymous article by "MMcL", "A visit to Papua" (*Ibid.*, 28/12/1910. p.37) the photographs included "Youthful belles", a Hanuabada village scene, "types" (a group portrait of women and children) and the classic Motu water carrier composition traceable back to Johannes Lindt's *Picturesque New Guinea* published in 1887.

33 Between 1916 and 1922, photographers identified in the *Sydney Mail* included Jean Beegling, Harry Downing, AE Dywer, Roscoe Earle, EWP Chinnery, Archie Gibson, Thomas J McMahon, Michael J Leahy, GH Pitt-Rivers, E Pockley, Mrs E Sandery and a Mr Baynes.

34 *Sydney Mail*, 14 December 1921, 21; and 26 September 1931, 40.

35 *Ibid.*, 29 March 1922, 18.

36 This composition would have been familiar to readers as people sitting on rocks overlooking cloud filled valleys (at Katoomba and elsewhere in the Blue Mountains) was a popular “shot” for amateur and professional photographers. It still features in travel magazines and the private albums of tourists.

37 *Sydney Mail*, 20 October 1920

38 *Sydney Mail*, 20 October 1920, .8; 27 October 1920, 14; 24 November 1920, 22; 15; 29 December 1920, 13 (An early uses of the phrase “Pacific Islanders” occurred in December 1920, page 28). Papuan, New Guinean, cannibal, native or type were the standard appellations .

39 For photography sections in the “Annual” edition see, *Sydney Mail*, 26 September 1931, 40; 8 October 1932, 65; 7 October 1933, 49, 5 October 1935, 36 and 3 October 1936, 36.

40 Merl La Voy, “With a camera in the Solomon Islands”, *Sydney Mail*, 7 December 1921, 18-19; 28 December 1921, 4 January 1922 and 1 February 1922; Merl La Voy, “In the Solomons”, *BP Magazine*, Jun 1929, 25. La Voy was an American visiting the Solomon Islands collecting material for a movie film.

41 The remaining photographs were a view of Ba, Fiji, Marau in the Solomon Islands and a group portrait of New Hebrideans; *Sydney Mail*, 24 October 1896, 867.

42 *The Queenslander*, 19 December 1929, 1 October 1931, 25 January 1934 and 20 September 1934.

43 *The Australasian*, 27 June 1903, 1428; *Leader*, 30 November 1907, 27; *Sydney Mail*, 30 November 1910, 27-28. The *Australasian* acknowledged Senator Miles Staniforth Smith had provided photographs for the 1903 feature page. Other evidence indicates many were taken by an administration officer, FR Barton and the missionary HM Dauncey.

44 For tree house iconography see; Max Quanchi, “Tree houses, representation and photography on the Papuan coast, 1880 to 1930” in Barry Craig, Bernie Kernot and Christopher Anderson, eds, *Art and performance in Oceania*, (Bathurst, Crawford House 1999): 218-30.

45 There had been some earlier serials such as C Ross-Johnston’s two-part story in 1898, “Three men in New Guinea waters”, *Town and Country Journal*, 22 January 1898 and 29 January 1898. This included seven photographs. Ross-Johnston also published “Camp life in New Guinea”, *Sydney Mail*, 11 June 1898; “The track to the New Guinea gold fields”, *Town and Country Journal*, 18 February 1899; “On the war path in Papua”, *Wide World Magazine*, March 1910, 543-8; and a book *The trader; a venture in New Guinea*, 1909.

46 For examples of publishing ethnographic photographs of village scenes and “types” despite the theme of the text, see; Frances Bayard, “Savages at play”, *Wide World Magazine*, July 1898, 339-346 and August 1899, 512-24; Basil Thompson, “Curiosities of the South Seas”, *Ibid.*, September 1899, 376-83 and October 1899, 509-16.

47 Mark Peattie, *Nan'yo; the rise and fall of the Japanese in Micronesia, 1885-1945*, (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1988); Thomas McMahon, “The Marshall Islands; wonderful work by Japan”, *Sydney Mail*, (1 January 1919):8-9 and 32; Thomas McMahon, “How Japan is winning the trade of the Islands”, *Ibid.*, (12 March 1919): 8 and 26; Thomas McMahon, “The Japanese occupation of the Marshall Islands”, *Steads Review* 51, (1919): 157-60; Thomas McMahon, “Japan and the Marshall Islands”, *Empire Review*, (Jun 1919): 167-72; Thomas McMahon, “Japanning the Marshall Islands”, *Sunset; the Pacific Monthly*, (Jul 1919): 31-3; Thomas McMahon, “Land of the model husband”, *Travel*, (Nov 1919): 5-9; Thomas McMahon, “Trading in the Marshall Islands”, *Pacific Ports*, (Jul 1920): 71-2, 132 and 134; Thomas McMahon, “Marshall Islands; an account of the progress made since the Japanese took control of the islands in 1914”, *Dun's International Review*, (1922): 51-2.

48 Clive Moore, “Workers in colonial Papua New Guinea; 1884-1975”, in Clive Moore, Jacqui Leckie and Doug Munro, eds., *Labour in the South Pacific*, (Townsville, James Cook University of North Queensland, 1992): 34; Francis West, *Hubert Murray; the Australian Pro-Consul*, (Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1968): 122-74.

49 The impact of working with Indigenous Australians prior to serving in Papua, and of Papuan experiences conditioning attitudes and behaviour towards Indigenous Australians after “going south” is an area of Australia’s colonial experience yet to be examined. For example, Chinnery’s work in Papua, New Guinea and later the Northern Territory is only one of many possible life histories that might offer insight on private and official relations with indigenous peoples..

50 Brothers, 12 and 16.

51 *Ibid.*, 26-27 and Chp 1, “Photography, theory and history”.