
EDITOR'S FORUM

HUBERT MURRAY AND THE HISTORIANS

Roger C. Thompson
University of New South Wales

In the past thirty years Pacific islands historiography has undergone great change. Especially influential was the establishment by Professor Jim Davidson at the Australian National University of a new school of interpretation of Pacific history from the viewpoint of the islanders rather than their colonial overlords.¹ This new emphasis on Pacific islanders was enhanced in the 1960s by increased respect for indigenous cultures in the wider world. In the following decade the emergence of dependency theories of underdevelopment, followed by Marxist reinterpretations, reinforced negative views of colonial empires. And more recently Pacific islanders themselves have started to write about their own history.

One way of assessing these historiographical developments is to examine their influence on the reputation of a colonial overlord in the Pacific who in his own time was regarded as a model of enlightened rule over his island subjects. This article surveys the historiographical career of Hubert Murray, governor for thirty-two years of the Australian colony of Papua, who ended his long regime in 1940 widely acclaimed as one of the world's great colonial governors. Indeed, this reputation was to survive with remarkable resilience during the next three decades.

An eminent Australian jurist, H. G. Nicholas, set the initial historical interpretative scene when after Murray's death he wrote: "Murray

made Papua a shining example of the British doctrine of trusteeship and set a standard in the treatment of native races that has been acknowledged to be the highest throughout the British Colonial Service and by the Commissions of the League of Nations."² This high estimate was reinforced in 1943 by Murray's most eulogistic supporter, Lewis Lett, a former official in Murray's administration. In his book, *The Papuan Achievement* (reprinted twice in the next two years by its publisher, the Melbourne University Press), Lett claimed that Murray's Papua was a model for the whole colonial world. Moreover, while noted anthropologist Ian Hogbin criticized Lett's lack of any comparative colonial analysis, he agreed that Murray was "a man of genius," who despite very limited financial resources did a marvelous job pacifying the colony and providing services, albeit rudimentary, for its native inhabitants.³

Lett continued his purple prose about Murray in a 1949 biography.⁴ A critic, J. T. Bensted, former director of public works in Papua, disputed Lett's claim that Murray's policies were unique and consistent. Nevertheless, Bensted praised Murray's administration for its "long-range plan of indirect rule applied with common sense," which by steering "a middle course" between exploitation and isolation of Papuans proved the means of their ultimate salvation in the face of European intrusion.⁵

Only one major discordant note was struck in this early litany of praise for Murray: the publication in 1948 of Lucy Mair's *Australia in New Guinea*. In the book's introduction Lord Hailey, a former member of the League of Nations Mandates Commission, described Murray's governance as amounting "to no more than a well-regulated and benevolent type of police rule," though he admitted that Australian government miserliness in funding Papua perhaps made little else possible.⁶ And Mair, a British expert on colonial affairs who was then teaching Australian cadets destined for service in Papua New Guinea, foreshadowed stronger criticisms. She acknowledged Murray's devotion to Papuans, marked by his willingness to go anywhere to meet with them. And she commended his removal of violence from pacification. But she also emphasized his paternalistic conviction that Papuans should be coerced into following his policies for their own good and his satisfaction that Papua had nothing to learn from the outside colonial world. So, while "Papua was in many ways an example of enlightened rule" until World War I, subsequent advances in colonial policies in other regions left Murray's colony behind.⁷

An Australian historian, John Legge, also brought Lett's high-flying image of Murray closer to earth in a 1956 study, *Australian Colonial Policy*. Relying mainly on printed sources he demonstrated that Lett

was wrong about the uniqueness of Murray's policies, pointing out how his predecessor, Sir William MacGregor, had established their essential features. Murray, he claimed, was a "benevolent autocrat." However, he acknowledged that Murray had placed great emphasis on protecting the native population, and that he had justly earned the high reputation gained during his lifetime. The manifest shortcomings of his administration's provision of education, health, and other services for Papuans lay outside his control because of lack of finances.⁸

Thus by the end of the 1950s, though the most exaggerated features of Murray's reputation had suffered destructive blows, much of it remained intact with academic blessing. But in the next decade a new generation of scholars, uninfluenced by association with the great man and more willing to see Papuan history from an indigenous viewpoint, was emerging to place Murray in a different perspective. Significantly, this new research began at the Australian National University, where Jim Davidson, appointed in 1950 as the first Professor of Pacific History, was establishing his new school.

Allan Healy, a Ph.D. scholar in Davidson's department, broke the first significant new ground in Murray historiography in his 1962 thesis on native administration and local government in Papua. In this work and in subsequent articles, Healy, while acknowledging that Murray was a humane man who abhorred violence, accused him of abandoning MacGregor's attempts to set up genuine indirect rule on a consultative basis. Murray had done this by ignoring customary law, by opposing the establishment of native courts, and by imposing on Papuans a coercive police system.⁹ Consequently, and without realizing it, Murray "placed Papuan administration in a strait-jacket, because he was totally dedicated to European attitudes and values, and he was determined that Papuans would exercise no authority until they 'advanced' according to European notions. This meant that Papuans did virtually nothing for themselves; [and] towards the end of his life Murray seemed to doubt that they ever would." Murray's conviction that Papua was unique meant that he learned nothing from contemporary British colonial administrations. In fact, before Murray commenced his rule, colonial authorities in India and Africa were consulting with local people and providing higher education for some of their leaders. Consequently, Papuans were ill-prepared for the system of local native government that the Australian government was belatedly attempting to introduce when Healy visited Papua New Guinea in 1960. Therefore, said Healy, Murray "hardly deserves his acclamation as a great pro-consul: it is hard to point to any significant administrative innovation for which he

was responsible. He carried on and extended methods that were already anachronistic."¹⁰

Murray, however, already had a new champion ready to parry the sharp blows that Mair, Legge, and Healy had aimed at his reputation. Francis West, English medievalist turned Pacific historian, was laboring at the Australian National University (although not one of Davidson's disciples) at what he hoped would be the definitive biography of Murray. He had outlined his defense in 1962 in an Oxford University Press "Great Australians" booklet, proclaiming that Murray ranked "with the ablest British colonial governors, like Sir Arthur Gordon or Lord Lugard." And he dismissed Mair's and Legge's criticisms of Murray's ignorance of advances in colonial policies elsewhere and his autocratic rule, labeling them "hindsight." West argued that the inevitability of independence and indigenous economic development only became urgent after World War II and was not "part of the atmosphere in which Murray lived and worked." Given the immense task involved in merely pacifying the colony's largely mountainous and impenetrable terrain and his slender financial resources, Murray was right in considering that his main task was the initial colonial one of establishing law, order, and equality of justice.¹¹

West put the full weight of his scholarship, which included an analysis of previously unconsulted Murray family letters and Australian archival records, into his biography, which was finally published in 1968. While revealing some warts on the great man, such as his capricious emphasis on courage and endurance in his choice of subordinates, he dismissed Healy's condemnation as unhistorical because, like the Whig interpreters of British constitutional history, he had compared the past with the present. Nor, West insisted, should Murray be blamed for his successors' failures to implement needed reforms. By a detailed comparison with Gordon of Fiji, Lugard of Nigeria, and Donald Cameron of Tanganyika, West reconstructed Murray's pedestal nearly as high as the one his deathbed eulogists had erected.¹²

But West had built on the shifting sands of historical interpretation. Within a year of completing his imposing Murray edifice, the first cracks began to appear. Though the book received many favorable reviews, Healy rejected West's defense that Murray should be judged only by the standards of his time. Healy pointed out that West had failed to see how in the 1920s and 1930s Murray's failure to develop "a more advanced system of native administration" compared very unfavorably with British African colonies such as the Gold Coast.¹³ West's biography was also savagely attacked in the review columns of the

newly constructed flagship of the Davidson school, the *Journal of Pacific History*. Murray Groves, son of one of Hubert Murray's more enlightened New Guinea contemporaries, not only suggested unkindly that Lett had written a much more lively portrait of Murray, but also condemned the book as revealing little that was new. Moreover, Groves agreed with Healy that West had ignored the fact that the essentials of Murray's native policies had been established by MacGregor and that they "lagged badly behind the more advanced British administrations of Africa and Asia." Therefore, "his regime was not notably enlightened or progressive in its own time."¹⁴

In the same year the image of one of the great governors with whom West had compared Murray was savagely destroyed. I. F. Nicolson's penetrating book, *The Administration of Nigeria*, revealed Lord Lugard as having masterfully concealed feet of dirty clay. Lugard's greatest success, wrote Nicolson, was "a propaganda campaign directed to the creation and manipulation of his own fame as an administrator, and of the myth of the superiority of his territory, and his methods over all others." In reality he was a militaristic autocrat who paid little attention to economic development or social welfare in northern Nigeria.¹⁵

Lugard's dethronement raised the question whether Murray had also inflated his reputation by the clever propaganda of his numerous publications. Allan Healy gleefully said "yes" when he turned the tables on West by comparing Murray with Lugard in this capacity in a general article in *Meanjin*, which was a refiring of his earlier broadsides against Papua's governor.¹⁶

Papua New Guinea's most productive historian, Hank Nelson, also raised the question of the gaps between Murray's professed policies and their application. In a review article on West's 1970 publication of some of Murray's letters, Nelson showed, for example, how Murray's advocacy in 1921 of Papuan representation on the all-white Legislative Council was not acted upon for the next nineteen years. He suggested, without spelling out details, that there were similar gaps in "Murray's education policy, the application of western law to Papua, the indentured labour system, the Native Regulations, [and] the encouragement of economic development of Papuans," though he acknowledged that under Murray's administration "few Papuans were shot in punitive raids or were whipped by labour supervisors or lost their lands."¹⁷

Murray was also coming under fire from historians researching specific aspects of his policies at the University of Papua New Guinea, which had been established in 1968 and where new attempts to look at Papuan history from the viewpoint of indigenous people were being

made. Donald J. Dickson concluded from his examination of government, missions, and education that Murray's view of the educational advancement of Papuans

was circumscribed . . . by a belief in the limits to the innate intellectual capacity of Papuans; by the relegation of a thorough intellectual education to third place behind agricultural and technical education; and by an overall deadening paternalism. He was willing to depend upon a cash-impooverished people to finance his whole native administration. He allowed an excessive encroachment of benefits—worthy though most of them were—into a system of expenditure designed primarily to serve education. He tolerated a demonstrably poor system of per capita grants in full knowledge of a better one. Above all other weaknesses, Murray failed to realise that his educational system was creating social change, and . . . had itself to develop, both to accommodate and to further this social change.¹⁸

However, Dickson blamed as well the Australian government, the missions, and the white community for limiting Papuan educational opportunities.¹⁹ Another article by Hank Nelson provided an example of educational restrictions imposed by the white community, which numerically equaled only 0.5 percent of the estimated 275,000 Papuans in 1935. He showed how expatriate prejudice contributed to the cessation of an enlightened program in the 1930s for educating Papuan medical assistants in Sydney. Murray did nothing to stop the program from foundering.²⁰

Murray's willingness to bow to white community pressure was revealed most dramatically in Amirah Inglis's *Not a White Woman Safe*, which exposed a dark aspect of Murray's regime ignored by West. Initially in 1925 Murray resisted the hysterical demand of the approximately four hundred-strong European community in Port Moresby for the death penalty for attempted rape of any white woman because the danger of attack did not seem very great. However, he soon succumbed to the pressure and imposed on Papua a sexual-attack ordinance that was harsher than anything in the British empire and that only protected white, not Papuan, women. Furthermore, Inglis placed this ordinance in the wider context of discrimination against Papuans in Port Moresby before and after the White Women's Protection Ordinance. The whole range of increasingly discriminatory legislation highlighted Murray's belief in Papuan inferiority and white supremacy. His growing sympathy for European residents was revealed by additional barriers erected

in the 1930s against Papuan freedom in Port Moresby, such as the right of police to search Papuan homes without a warrant. Inglis concluded that Murray's readiness to discriminate against urban Papuans arose not only from white community pressure but also from assumptions he shared with white residents about "black sexuality and inferiority and about the importance of white prestige in a colonial situation." Consequently, "he added to the burden of inferiority which the colonial administration had placed on Papuans."²¹

Caroline Ralston, a Pacific historian, considered *Not a White Woman Safe* a death-dealing blow to Murray's sagging reputation.²² But was she right?

A subsequent well-researched thesis, which compared Australian rule in Papua and the Territory of New Guinea in the 1930s, provided an ambivalent answer. Writing from a point of view empathetic to Papua New Guineans, Mary Togolo, Australian-born wife of a Bougainvillian public servant, concluded that compared with the New Guinea territory Murray controlled "a generally humane administration. It really protected 'native' land rights and made sure that there were plenty of opportunities for them to develop their own resources."²³ Most of the restrictions imposed on their freedom were intended to protect Papuans from the effects of the white man's presence in their country. However, she added, Murray's policies such as the White Women's Protection Ordinance were also intended to teach Papuans that they could not expect to behave like white men. Here protection was imposed at the expense of Papuans' dignity and self-respect. For example, Murray's restriction of advanced educational opportunities to training in technical skills allowed them to become good mechanics and carpenters but not to challenge Europeans in other fields. Thus Papuans were ill-prepared to look after their own future, a situation demonstrated, Togolo believed, by their greater dependence on modern-day government institutions than their New Guinea compatriots.²⁴ So Murray's administration both protected natives from harmful European influences and prevented them from achieving an ability to protect themselves.

Another balanced view of Murray's rule was presented in Anthony Power's thesis on economic development in New Guinea. He emphasized the early Australian drive to make Papua an economically productive colony in which Papuans were to play a subservient role. But while Murray initially supported this policy, by the 1920s he was a greater promoter of Papuan development, encouraging local production and the use of Papuan tax money for education. This approach represented a greater use of revenue for indigenous development than ever before.

And “for many years more money was spent on promotion of native agriculture” than on fostering European plantations. On the other hand, Power stressed that Murray’s efforts to compel indigenous production resulted in little more economic benefit for Papuans than a means of paying their taxes. And transfer of technological knowledge to them, especially in the copra industry, was very low. Indeed, negative reactions to Murray’s coercion hindered post-World War II attempts to promote cash cropping in Papua.²⁵

Power’s criticisms, however, were only partially supported by Michelle Stephen in her thesis on the Mekeo region. There people had to be forced to grow copra and rice, and while they did not rebel against the policy, and in fact recognized the government’s right to compel them to raise cash crops to pay taxes, they resented the failure of Murray’s administration to do much for them in return. Nevertheless, the post-war failure of the Mekeo rice scheme was not a by-product of Murray’s coercion. It was the result of the postwar administration’s failure to provide necessary transport and marketing facilities. Moreover, the collapse of the rice scheme did not hinder Mekeo people “from experimenting with cash cropping and business ventures on their own.”²⁶

A handful of books on aspects of Papua New Guinea history published in the mid-1970s tended to support the emerging view of Murray as a racist, paternalistic authoritarian who nevertheless tried to protect Papuans and promote their welfare. In his survey of the history of race relations Edward Wolfers echoed the complaints about Murray’s excessive paternalism that deprived Papuans of training in Western-style institutions, cataloging a long list of petty regulations restricting their freedom. But Wolfers also noted:

several of the least attractive items in his administrative record were enacted during his periodic absences from Papua, while the Australian government, some of his subordinate officers, and the territory’s expatriate population managed to block—politically, administratively, and/or economically—some of his most forward-looking proposals, for example, that Papuans be seated in the Legislative Council.²⁷

Nigel Oram, in his history of Port Moresby, made an important comparative point about the harmful effects of Murray’s segregationist policies. He wrote: “Papuans were treated as inferior to whites in many and often humiliating ways. Unlike people such as the Ganda of Uganda or the Hausa-Fulani of Northern Nigeria, they did not possess a proud, ancient cultural heritage which would support their dignity in the face

of Europeans.”²⁸ Oram also criticized West for defending Murray’s failure to establish genuine indirect rule on the grounds that there were no tribal chiefs in traditional Papuan society. Murray, wrote Oram, “overlooked an important aspect of British policy: the setting up in stateless societies of such institutions as indigenous executive officers, councils with specific responsibilities, native courts and native treasuries.” Nevertheless, Murray’s highly paternalistic direct rule “was also benign. Many of the resident magistrates were able and had a good understanding of Papuan society. And any Papuan could bring his complaints and problems to Murray personally.”²⁹

The two faces of Murray’s paternalism were shown from another perspective in David Wetherell’s history of the Anglican Church in Papua New Guinea. He noted how missionaries became Murray’s strong supporters, rejoicing in the way he protected Papuans from the evils of white society. But Wetherell also described how “during the time that a legend of a beloved governor was developing in Papua, another more critical theme was brooding in private missionary writings and conversations.” This, he explained, was disquiet at a number of court cases in which it was believed there had been miscarriages of justice or unduly severe sentences imposed on Papuans. And one missionary, Robert Jones, privately recorded in 1941 that though Murray’s government had many good points, it had been unprogressive and shortsighted.³⁰

Tony Austin, however, in his study of technical education in Papua, said that Murray should not be placed completely in an unprogressive straitjacket. While agreeing with many of Donald Dickson’s criticisms, Austin concluded that Murray was not as rigid as Dickson had suggested about technical training: “The closest education system—geographically—was that in Australia. Murray’s emphasis on expensive practical training did not reflect the academic system of schooling there. To that extent he was somewhat independent in his thinking. Indeed, the development of education in Papua during Murray’s administration was less akin to the Australian systems than it was after the war.” He added that in this respect Papua was also in advance of the Territory of New Guinea. And, delivering a blow at the critics who had accused Murray of ignoring colonial experience elsewhere, Austin pointed out that Murray did take note of education in colonies in Asia and Africa “where the tendency was to move away from the academic to the practical.” Austin also claimed that Murray was influenced by F. E. Williams, the government anthropologist who served Murray for the last twenty years of his administration.³¹

But a thesis written at the same time as Austin’s study denied that

Williams had any significant influence on Murray's educational or other policies. In her extensively researched analysis of Williams's career, Diedre Griffiths demonstrated that Murray often "cited Williams's authority when it suited his publicity requirements, but only in support of views he already held." Indeed, Griffiths' thesis strongly supports Healy's contention that Murray was engaged in a Lugard-style propaganda exercise, though she gave as a major reason his constant fear that the Australian government would dismiss or retire him. The most important reason for his appointment of a government anthropologist was to demonstrate his enlightened colonial policy, promoting in the process the fiction that he was the first colonial governor to do so. And though Murray claimed that he sought anthropological guidance for his native policies, Williams found that the constant stream of advice he sent Murray was generally unwelcome. "Sometimes, however, almost as though Murray had rediscovered a discarded toy, . . . [he] would devise a 'problem' for Williams to solve or a task to perform. Having done so, Murray usually gave great publicity to the result and particularly to the part he played in procuring it." Yet these were usually purely academic projects not expected to influence administration. In fact, Griffiths argued that Williams's lack of influence on Murray contradicted West's claim that Murray had the capacity to receive new ideas and assess them. The one benefit Murray provided Williams that was denied his anthropologist colleague Ernest Chinnery in the New Guinea territory was uncensored permission to publish what Williams wanted as long as it was prefaced with a rider that his views were not necessarily those of the Papuan government. But Griffiths suggested that Williams would have gladly traded this freedom for Chinnery's greater influence on the New Guinea administration.³²

This is one of the rare cases where comparison with the New Guinea mandate discredits Murray. More common are findings such as Hank Nelson's, in one of his many Papua New Guinea articles, showing that when it came to capital punishment of natives the mandate used it far more often than Murray's Papua—a fact reflecting the more violent treatment of indigenous people in that territory. And Nelson also pointed out that Murray "was pressed to take harsher measures than he otherwise would have supported to prevent the white community from taking even more savage reprisals."³³ In another article on Papuans and New Guineans as laborers, Nelson made the comparative point that Papuans received higher wages, worked fewer hours, and were treated less brutally.³⁴

There was, however, a limit to Murray's labor-protection policies. In

a recent article anthropologist Michael Young revealed that Murray's administration failed to respond in 1911-1912 to a Methodist mission call for a ten-year ban on recruiting in the D'Entrecasteaux island group because of a serious decline in the population there. Young concluded:

Clearly, notwithstanding its impressive native labour legislation, the Administration had no considered policy on the matter, and there was probably no period at which government officers could easily countenance demands to close recruiting in this area—even for a single year let alone the 10 years the mission wanted. If there is any truth in the estimate that the D'Entrecasteaux supplied about a quarter of the Territory's total labour needs at this time, then it would have been death to the commercial interests of many traders and political suicide for Governor Murray himself, who was already under attack for his over-protective policies.³⁵

Indeed, a recent band of authors have claimed that all Murray's policies were at base economically motivated. Dependency theorists, who established a new orthodoxy within the University of Papua New Guinea in the 1970s, needed to tackle Murray head-on in order to demonstrate the contribution of colonial capitalism to Papua New Guinea's underdevelopment. This new attack was launched in 1979 by Azeem Amarshi, lecturer in economics, and Rex Mortimer, former politics professor at that university. In *Development and Dependency*, coauthored with Kenneth Good, they pointed out that Murray started his Papua career as a strong supporter of European enterprise. However, because of the weakness of Australian capitalism and consequent lack of investment in the colony, Murray turned in the 1920s to promoting Papuan cash cropping in order to create, in Mortimer's view, "some kind of peasant development" as the best form of economic exploitation. Labor protection policies were initially to preserve labor for European plantations and then to protect Papuan production, Poor provision of education and other resources helped keep Papuans in their subservient place.³⁶

Development and Dependency included much generalization from few sources and some inconsistency. A more detailed and sophisticated presentation of the economic exploitation case was Peter Fitzpatrick's 1980 Marxist analysis, *Law and State in Papua New Guinea*. The author, a former lecturer in law at the University of Papua New Guinea, did not see the operation of capitalism in Papua New Guinea as an overpowering force. As in other colonies where it was not strong

enough to transform traditional social forms, the capitalist state sought an accommodation with the preexisting mode of production. This can be seen in Murray's promotion of Papuan agriculture. He preserved the traditional mode by protectionist land laws and rigorous enforcement of repatriation of laborers. But greater enforcement of breaches of labor laws by Papuans than by whites indicated the continued use of the traditional mode to support European development. Moreover, encouragement of cash cropping was limited to little more than provision of revenue for the state so as not to disrupt traditional society. And a whole battery of petty apartheid laws were enacted to keep Papuans in subservient roles and prevent them from taking action outside the traditional production mode, thus forestalling any organized Papuan challenge to the colonial state. Hence the emphasis on restricting urban Papuans as exemplified by the White Women's Protection Ordinance, which Fitzpatrick described as "an appropriate affirmation of continuing colonial domination."³⁷

The economic exploitation interpretation of Murray's policies is not easy to refute. Like clever politicians, Marxists and dependency theorists have ready answers for counterarguments. Thus in a recent article Michael Hess of the University of New South Wales dismissed the evidence that Murray aroused strong opposition to his pro-native policies from local planters, miners, and traders by contending that he set long-term goals to gradually develop the usefulness of Papuan labor, which naturally provoked conflict with expatriates in search of quick profits. Hess pointed to the policy of withholding a part of an indentured laborer's wages—an arrangement that cut across the planters' wish to profit from trading with their workers—so that laborers would return to their villages with trade goods that would encourage others to enter the indentured workforce.³⁸ There is also a reply to comparative arguments about differences in native policies. For example, Judith Bennett revealed Resident Commissioner C. M. Woodford in the neighboring Solomon Islands to be turning a much blinder eye than Murray to brutal treatment of labor in the cause of speedy economic development.³⁹ Economic theorists respond that Murray had a more perceptive long-term view of the need to conserve labor for the future, a reason he specifically used in justifying his labor-protection policies. Murray's strong dislike of large capitalist trading companies in his colony, especially Burns Philp, can also be explained. Ken Buckley and Kris Klugman, in the second volume of their history of Burns Philp, have shown Murray's hostility extending in 1933 as far as recommending the consignment of government cargo to the rival German Norddeutscher shipping line.⁴⁰

But Amarshi pointed out that there was a natural conflict of economic interests between the development of Papua and Burns Philp profits and that Australia's own neocolonial economy generated trade protectionist policies that limited the capitalistic development of Papua.⁴¹

In one sense the economic argument depends on a belief in economic exploitation as a concomitant of colonial rule. However, Fitzpatrick, not wanting his readers to consider his case as mere ideological assertion, claimed that it rested on empirical observation. Here he does have a problem because the bulk of his own primary evidence comes from the New Guinea territory and the postwar period rather than from Murray's Papua, and from selective quoting of Murray's own words. In the latter context Fitzpatrick and other supporters of the economic interpretation have conveniently ignored Murray's frequently, if privately, expressed anticapitalist opinions. For example, in 1923 in a letter to his brother, Gilbert, he condemned the very policy that Fitzpatrick accused him of pursuing. Murray wrote that "the great danger" faced by the natives of Papua and New Guinea was "a benevolent capitalism . . . which comes disguised as the friend of the natives—that insists upon their proper treatment and may even pay good wages—but nevertheless uses them only as tools to make money with, and never contemplates their ever rising to anything beyond the servant of the white man."⁴² The economic hypothesis may be hard to refute, but it is yet to be adequately demonstrated. Indeed, another Marxist historian has recently conceded that the experience of pre-World War II Papua "can be summed up as colonialism without capital."⁴³

However, there is a new potential line of criticism of Murray's administration. No historian mentioned thus far is an indigenous Papua New Guinean. Local people are now writing their own history, and a recent thesis indicates a new approach. John Waiko's history of his own Binandere people used oral traditions and his own cultural insights to illuminate their story. He pointed out that the Murray administration's pressure on the Binandere people to plant coconuts and pay taxes robbed them of time to carry out traditional ceremonies, especially mourning rituals for the dead, whose numbers had increased with the violence and disease inflicted by contact with Europeans. This deprivation placed much stress on the people because of their belief that mourning rituals were essential for the success of subsistence agriculture. A result was the kind of reaction that Murray's officials called hysteria and emotional mass movements, signs of which appeared as early as 1909.⁴⁴ Waiko did not place such cultural insensitivity into a comprehensive analysis of the impact of Murray's regime on the Binandere—that was

not the intention of his thesis. But he did point to a potential new area for historical investigation.

The way that research since the publication of West's biography has changed Murray's status can be seen in a comparison of two general histories in which Hank Nelson participated. In the short history that he wrote with Peter Biskup and Brian Jinks in 1968, Murray was presented as a humane governor who tried to protect Papuan lands and many Papuan customs. Because of financial poverty, he only partly deserved the criticism that he was too conservative and did little to develop the colony or educate its indigenous inhabitants. The authors cited as the fairest judgment Mair's 1948 assessment of an enlightened rule that later fell behind colonial progress elsewhere.⁴⁵ In the 1979 political history written by Hank Nelson, Jim Griffin, and Stewart Firth, Murray was still portrayed as a protector of Papuans who were better treated than their New Guinea colleagues. But we now read that "to his discredit he administered and extended a long list of discriminatory legislation." And "because he wrote so frequently and persuasively about his government" we have to look behind the image he created to find the greater responsibility of his officials for policies such as the training of medical assistants. Murray was still defended against the charges that he forced Papuans to accept Australian legal and political systems and did not prepare them for independence on the grounds that he believed Papua would eventually become another Australian state. However, the authors pointed out that he and his Australian superiors "can be criticised for not extending to Papuans some of the benefits enjoyed by citizens of the states."⁴⁶

This changed view of Murray reflects especially the research of Hank Nelson himself and Amirah Inglis into specific applications of Papuan administration policies that West ignored. The other major new evidence is Diedre Griffiths' revelation about Murray's treatment of F. E. Williams, which supports Healy's Lugard-style publicity-seeking criticism and helps confirm the contention that, at least from 1922 onward, Murray was set in his views. West's defense, that Murray should only be judged in terms of the standards of his day, does not apply to this new information, which definitely places Murray in a more unfavorable light than West portrayed in terms of contemporary colonial practices and viewpoints. Such information helps strengthen the case that Mair and Healy had already made about Murray's unwillingness to learn from others.

Nevertheless, more work is needed on Murray's relations with the white community in Papua and with the commonwealth government in

Australia to better estimate how far these bodies shackled progressive policies. There is also a need for more research on the gap between professed policies and actual practices. Michael Young's article provides an example of such research based on Methodist mission records and patrol reports, and these are the kinds of records that can be further explored. Another desirable area for future research is detailed comparison of practices in Papua with the way policies were carried out in other colonies; historians to date have made little more than general statements on that subject. And there is potential for more revelations of indigenous reactions to Murray's administration emerging from the kind of research into oral traditions pioneered by John Waiko.

For what we do know about Murray's Papua we owe the greatest debt to the University of Papua New Guinea. Most of the authors cited started their Papua research careers there or were stimulated by working there. The Australian National University's Department of Pacific and Southeast Asian History has been less influential, except for the widespread influence of its first professor, Jim Davidson, on the emergence of islander-oriented Pacific history. That department's Pacific islands interests have been centered more on other Pacific island groups than on Papua New Guinea. And budget cuts and the paucity of Pacific history teaching positions in the wider university community have more recently reduced the number of research scholars in this discipline.

Research into the history of Papua also reflects the changing nature of Pacific historiography. Interpretations of Murray have been clearly affected by the emergence of the Jim Davidson school, by the new emphasis on indigenous culture in the 1960s, and then by the rise in the 1970s of dependency theory through its practitioners at the University of Papua New Guinea. A Marxist response to and reinterpretation of dependency theory is the most recent substantial challenge to previous lines of interpretation. And the emergence of indigenous Papua New Guinea historians might also contribute to a stormy future for Murray's reputation.

NOTES

1. See J. W. Davidson, "Problems of Pacific History," *Journal of Pacific History* 1 (1966), 5-21; and David Routledge, "Pacific History as Seen from the Pacific Islands," *Pacific Studies* 8, no. 2 (1985), 81-99.
2. H. G. Nicholas, "Sir Hubert Murray, KCMG," *Australian Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (1940), 5.

3. H. Ian Hogbin, review of *The Papuan Achievement*, by Lewis Lett, in *Australian Quarterly* 15, no. 2 (1943), 105-106.
4. Lewis Lett, *Sir Hubert Murray of Papua* (Sydney, 1949).
5. J. T. Bensted, "Sir Hubert Murray of Papua," *South Pacific* 7 (1953), 675-682, 701-709.
6. L. P. Mair, *Australia in New Guinea* (London, 1948), xvi.
7. *Ibid.*, 12 (quotation), 11-13.
8. J. D. Legge, *Australian Colonial Policy* (Sydney, 1956), 131 (quotation), chap. 9.
9. Allan M. Healy, "Native Administration and Local Government in Papua, 1880-1960" (Ph.D. thesis, Australian National University [ANU], 1962); *idem*, "Paternalism and Consultation in Papua, 1880-1960," *Australian National University Historical Journal*, no. 4 (1967), 19-28; *idem*, "Ethics of Colonialism: Wanted—Tact and Maturity," *New Guinea* 1, no. 2 (1967), 59-65.
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