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COMPANIONS



The Routledge Companion to Indigenous Repatriation

Return, Reconcile, Renew

Edited by Cressida Fforde, C. Timothy McKeown
and Honor Keeler

THE ROUTLEDGE COMPANION TO INDIGENOUS REPATRIATION

This volume brings together Indigenous and non-Indigenous repatriation practitioners and researchers to provide the reader with an international overview of the removal and return of Ancestral Remains.

The Ancestral Remains of Indigenous peoples are today housed in museums and other collecting institutions globally. They were taken from anywhere the deceased can be found, and their removal occurred within a context of deep power imbalance within a colonial project that had a lasting effect on Indigenous peoples worldwide. Through the efforts of First Nations campaigners, many have returned home. However, a large number are still retained. In many countries, the repatriation issue has driven a profound change in the relationship between Indigenous peoples and collecting institutions. It has enabled significant steps towards resetting this relationship from one constrained by colonisation to one that seeks a more just, dignified and truthful basis for interaction. The history of repatriation is one of Indigenous perseverance and success. The authors of this book contribute major new work and explore new facets of this global movement. They reflect on nearly 40 years of repatriation, its meaning and value, impact and effect.

This book is an invaluable contribution to repatriation practice and research, providing a wealth of new knowledge to readers with interests in Indigenous histories, self-determination and the relationship between collecting institutions and Indigenous peoples.

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PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN THE FIELD

Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay

Elena Govor and Hilary Howes

Introduction

The case of Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay (1846–1888),¹ a Russian naturalist and anthropologist, offers valuable insights into attitudes towards physical anthropology in the Pacific in the late nineteenth century. He stayed in the area for a total of fourteen years – an unprecedented duration of fieldwork in an era dominated by seaborne ethnography, which involved European visitors making brief stops at multiple locations.² As a result of his extended visit, Maclay's attitudes were shaped not only by his communications with European armchair savants but also by his extended encounters with Indigenous people in the field. In this chapter, we discuss these encounters, together with the anthropological and moral questions posed by Maclay's collection of mortal remains during his South Pacific travels. As a case study of Russian attitudes towards physical anthropology in the late nineteenth century, we examine Maclay's research interests and his methods of collecting in various regions of the South Pacific and Australia. We also provide an overview of subsequent inventories and studies of Ancestral Remains collected by Maclay.

Expelled from the University of St Petersburg in 1864 on account of his participation in revolutionary-democratic student protests, Maclay moved to Germany to complete his studies. From Heidelberg, he progressed to Leipzig, then Jena, where he became assistant to the zoologist Ernst Haeckel (1834–1919), the chief German populariser of Charles Darwin's works. In 1866–1867, he accompanied Haeckel to the Canary Islands, his first major overseas voyage. Subsequent travels took him to Morocco, the Red Sea and the Volga, then to New Guinea, stopping en route in South America, Tahiti, and Samoa.

Arriving in New Guinea aboard the Russian ship *Vitiaz* in 1871, Maclay settled on the north-east coast of the island (Astrolabe Bay, Madang Province), remaining there for a total of two-and-a-half years.³ He interspersed his field studies there with visits to various parts of the Asia-Pacific region including Indonesia, the Philippines, the Malay Peninsula, Micronesia, and south-west New Guinea. Between 1878 and 1886, he was based largely in Australia. During this time, he visited the Torres Strait, far north Queensland, and Brisbane and the surroundings, as well as island Melanesia and the south-east coast of New Guinea. He also established a marine laboratory in Sydney, the first in the Southern Hemisphere; contributed numerous papers to the Linnaean Society of New South Wales; and was instrumental in establishing the Australasian

Biological Association (Govor and Manickam 2014; Maclay 1974; Richards 2008: 176–179, 195–211; Shnukal 1998: 35–36; Webster 1984).

At least ninety-three skulls and other human remains collected by Maclay during his South Pacific travels survive in museum collections in Russia and Australia. However, Maclay never saw himself as primarily a collector, so the story of his collecting activities poses a number of interesting anthropological and moral questions, which we will explore in some detail.

‘Why I chose New Guinea’: motivation and preparations

Physical anthropology was the cornerstone of Maclay’s research proposal when he conceived his expedition to New Guinea in 1870. His choice of destination was influenced partly by reading *Über Papuas und Alfuren* (On Papuans and Alfuros), an essay published in 1859 by the Baltic German anatomist and embryologist Karl Ernst von Baer (1792–1876). Based on an examination of three ‘skulls of Papuans’ and six ‘skulls of Alfuros of New Guinea’ from a collection assembled in Batavia by the German medical officer Georg Joseph Peitsch,⁴ Baer argued that New Guinea was inhabited by two distinct anthropological types: Papuans, occupying mostly the western parts of New Guinea, and Alfuros, inhabiting its inner regions (Baer 1859a: 246, 250; compare Howes 2013: 122–127). He suggested that Alfuros had resulted from an admixture of Australian and Papuan types, but he stressed that this hypothesis required further study, including a special expedition to the area. It is not surprising, then, that New Guinea struck Maclay as an ideal place to explore ethnogenetic processes in Oceania. His intention was to examine relationships between Papuans and other races, and to chart in the field the boundaries of the Papuan race beyond New Guinea itself. First, while he still had the means and energy to do so, he wanted to study New Guinea’s Indigenous inhabitants in the field. Later, he planned to expand his field studies with visits to Southeast Asia and other Melanesian islands (Miklukho-Maklai 1993d: 8).

In 1870, while preparing for his New Guinea expedition, Maclay sent questionnaires to leading scholars in various fields. As a result of his communications and discussions with such authorities as Thomas Henry Huxley (1825–1895) in London, Karl Gegenbaur (1826–1903) and Haeckel in Jena, and Robert Hartmann (1831–1893) and Rudolf Virchow (1821–1902) in Berlin, he came to the conclusion ‘that one should not attribute such significance to the skull and its shape as it had previously enjoyed’. At this time, Maclay also formulated the importance of the general ‘habitus’ in anthropological studies, where the skull was seen as only one element of study, along with more innovative techniques such as microscopic studies of hair and skin, and comparative studies of the shape and size of various body parts (Miklukho-Maklai 1993e: 302).⁵ As a result of his initial indifference towards the skull per se, he did not even bother to take a craniometer with him.

The face of Janus: humanist beliefs and human remains

To the extent that Maclay is remembered today, it is often for his humanist beliefs (see, for example, Shnukal 1998: 35–36 and Walton 2014). These beliefs were well known during his lifetime and in some cases had far-reaching consequences. Together with London Missionary Society (LMS) missionary James Chalmers, he ‘help[ed] prevent a British reprisal massacre . . . on the southeast coast of New Guinea’ (Shnukal 1998: 36). He was also instrumental in frustrating Queensland’s attempt to annex New Guinea in 1883, forwarding documentary evidence of the brutal treatment of Aboriginal people in that state to Sir Arthur Gordon, governor of New Zealand and former high commissioner for the Western Pacific, who in turn vehemently and successfully urged British Prime Minister W.E. Gladstone to quash the attempted annexation

(Reynolds 1998: 128–132). Despite his best endeavours, he was less successful in thwarting the German annexation of north-east New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago. In October 1884, responding to a newspaper report that German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck had ‘arranged a league with other European Powers to protect the unoccupied territory of the world from English aggression’ (‘Prince Bismarck and England’ 1884, quoted in Miklouho Maklay 1884), he wrote to Bismarck directly, urging him:

in the name of justice and humanity, to induce the Great Powers, not only to protect the land against the attacks of the English, but to take under their protection the rights of the dark natives on the islands of the Pacific . . . against the shameless injustices and cruel exploitation (abduction, slavery and similar), not only of the English, but of the whites in general! [Maclay’s emphasis]

(Miklouho Maklay 1884)

‘An international covenant *to respect the human rights of the South Sea Islanders*’, Maclay concluded, ‘would perhaps be the right thing’. In January 1885, dismayed by rumours of a German annexation, he telegraphed Bismarck a single pointed sentence: ‘Maclay coast natives reject [G]erman annexation’ (Miklouho Maklay 1885b). Subsequent newspaper articles in Russian and English, in which Maclay expressed strong doubts as to the legality of Germany’s claim, generated a flurry of repudiative paperwork within the Imperial Colonial Office but failed to alter the situation on the ground (Miklouho–Maclay 1885a; compare Germer 1961; Howes 2013: 281–283; Webster 1984: 302–309).

However, Maclay’s desire to win respect for the human rights of ‘the dark natives . . . of the Pacific’ was matched by his desire to obtain their mortal remains for scientific study. The study of human remains was a cornerstone of European positivist knowledge about the human body and its varieties, and Maclay was part of this growing trend. Work in anatomical theatres and hospitals during his medical studies in Jena made him immune to the prevailing sensitivity at the time towards mortal remains. For twenty years, he carried with him all over the world a lamp made of a skull with a green lampshade, resting on crossed arm bones. The skull and bones belonged to a girl with whom he had fallen in love while treating her in the hospital in Jena. Dying, she asked Maclay to keep her skull as a memento, which he did (Tumarkin 2011: 62–64). At one stage, Maclay intended to donate his own brain to Virchow, a prominent and influential cell pathologist, left-liberal politician, and public health reformer in Berlin. ‘Would you be so good as to order one of your students to dissect and sketch [my brain] (I will attach to this letter my exact wishes, which must be taken into consideration)’, he wrote on the eve of his departure for Melanesia in 1879 (Miklucho–Maclay 1879: 86–87). In another letter to Virchow, he casually enquired, ‘One question! Has the brain of Mr K.E. von Baer been preserved? Or, at least, [has it been] thoroughly inspected, photographed, [and] weighed?’ (Miklukho–Maklai 1996: 214). Later, he bequeathed his body to the Russian Academy of Sciences.⁶ However, this request was not observed by his Australian wife, who insisted that he receive a Christian burial in Volkov Cemetery. Only in atheist Soviet times, during the cemetery’s reconstruction, was his skull exhumed, ending up in the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (MAE) in St Petersburg.⁷

Maclay’s letters to fellow anatomists were not without a certain amount of gallows humour. He wrote to Virchow at the beginning of his Melanesian voyage of 1879:

Hoping to obtain, in Noumea or . . . another place visited during the voyage, the corpse of a Melanesian, I ordered in Sydney a coffin-like box (for 2 corpses), which could be filled with spirits, and took it with me. Up to the present, however, it is still

empty! How often an anthropologist has to envy a zoologist, who can kill or order to have killed material for his studies! [Maclay's emphasis]

(Miklukho-Maklai 1996: 233)

At the same time, his letters to Arthur Gordon, Otto von Bismarck, and the Russian Geographical Society are full of passionate appeals against the extermination of Indigenous peoples in Australia and Oceania. Colonists of northern Australia, he wrote with indignation, 'killed as many blacks as they could manage' as punishment for a stolen horse. In spite of his popularity in Australia at the time, he realised that his exhortations to spare Australian Aborigines 'for the sake of justice and philanthropy' resembled 'an appeal to sharks not to be so voracious!' (Miklukho-Maklai 1996: 222–223). This seemingly paradoxical combination of attitudes can also be observed in his older compatriot Baer, whose pivotal involvement in the professionalisation of craniology and the expansion of the Anatomical Museum at the Academy of Sciences in St Petersburg is discussed in [Chapter 15](#), this volume.

Physical anthropology on the Maclay Coast, 1871–1872

Maclay's long-term residence among the Indigenous people of the Maclay Coast played an important role in his conversion into a campaigner for human rights. It also affected his approach to the field of physical anthropology, although his initial encounter with local people was not without difficulties. Arriving on the *Vitiaz* in Melamu Harbour, Astrolabe Bay, in September 1871, Maclay was initially occupied in supervising the construction of his hut by the ship's crew. In the meantime, he wrote, '[t]he officers of the corvette were occupied with surveying the bay and, in doing so, visited five or six coastal villages, where, in exchange for various trifles (beads, buttons, nails, empty bottles, etc.), they picked up many different weapons and utensils – and also acquired by barter . . . about a dozen skulls' (Mikloucho-Maclay 1975: 27; Ronchevsky 1874: 679, 684–685). Later on, when Maclay himself enquired for skulls while visiting different villages, he often heard that 'there were no more skulls, that the Russians had collected them all' (Mikloucho-Maclay 1975: 107, 113). The officers, ruining Maclay's hopes for pure scientific contact with an unspoiled traditional society, evidently sported the skulls as curios. This is interesting, as Papuan skulls, unlike the highly ornamented Nuku Hivan ones collected with enthusiasm by members of the first Russian round-the-world expedition of 1804–1806 (see Govor and Howes, [Chapter 15](#), this volume), were considered quite unsightly by European standards. The relatives of the deceased usually preserved the lower jaw as a memento, discarding the rest of the skull in the nearby scrub, where it rapidly deteriorated under the influence of the elements (Miklucho-Maclay 1873a: 238–239).

Two of the skulls obtained by *Vitiaz* officers eventually found their way into German hands. Returning from Astrolabe Bay in late 1871, the *Vitiaz* stopped at Manila where its officers encountered Adolf Bernhard Meyer (1840–1911), a German traveller-naturalist who had been exploring Celebes since September 1870.⁸ The *Vitiaz* officers supplied him with two skulls from Astrolabe Bay, which he forwarded to the Berlin Society for Anthropology, Ethnology and Prehistory (BSAEP), supplementing them at a later stage with thirty-five skulls and eleven skeletons from Celebes and the Philippines (Meyer 1873b: 91n3; Virchow 1872). In March 1873, Virchow announced to the BSAEP's monthly gathering the acquisition of 'two splendid skulls from Astrolabe Bay'; Meyer had 'received [them] in Manila, from the Russian officers who had put Mr Miclosich [*sic*] Maclay ashore, and was so kind as to send them to us'. It is likely that these two skulls were subsequently incorporated into the BSAEP's Anthropological Rudolf Virchow Collection (Virchow 1873: 67).⁹

In the meantime, Maclay was testing his armchair plans in the field. While establishing long-lasting relationships based on trust and respect with the Maclay Coast people, he realised that it

would be inappropriate to conduct any physical studies of their bodies, including skull measurements. The only 'collecting' he could venture in this respect was to barter strands of his own hair in exchange for theirs. These hair studies allowed him to refute influential contemporaries' speculations that Papuan hair grew in tufts, differentiating them from other races (for example Earl 1853: 1–3; Finsch 1865: 35–36; Wallace 1869: 445–446). This respectful 'hands-off' approach contrasts sharply with Maclay's notorious dissection of the larynx of his Polynesian servant named 'Boy', who died soon after they settled on the Maclay Coast. Prior to Maclay's departure for New Guinea, his teacher Gegenbaur had encouraged him to obtain 'the larynx of a dark-skinned man' during his travels. While Boy lay dying in his arms, Maclay was very emotional; however, as soon as Boy's earthly life ended, Maclay's scientific urges prevailed and he performed the dissection (Mikloucho-Maclay 1975: 84).¹⁰

Although he refrained from physical examination of the Maclay Coast people, Maclay was eager to collect skulls, explaining that he was prompted to begin by the small number of genuine Papuan skulls held at that time in European museums. His collecting activities made good progress: he noted in his journal that local people were happy to barter skulls for nails, red cloth, and other useful items (Mikloucho-Maclay 1975: 107, 113, 121, 162, 218, 227). He later explained that his success in obtaining skulls on the Maclay Coast was due to local mortuary rituals:

After about a year has passed, the corpse, or at least the head, is exhumed by the nearest relatives . . . the skull . . . is thrown into the bushes in some corner of the village. Only the lower jaw is carefully retained, and even significant gifts are seldom able to persuade the relatives to surrender this memento of the deceased. In contrast, the skulls are gladly exchanged for empty bottles, calico, or similar . . . During my fifteen months' stay, I obtained only a dozen skulls and only two with lower jaws; the latter were brought to me secretly (so as not to expose [the bearer] to the reproaches of the other relatives) after a great deal of coaxing and repeated gifts, with the request not to show the lower jaw to the other Papuans.

(Mikloucho-Maclay 1873b: 188–189)

These mortuary rituals also meant that the skulls' provenance could be perfectly documented, since they belonged to recently deceased villagers, whose names Maclay was often able to record. Reliable provenance was of paramount importance for his studies of human remains. While visiting the Kowiai Coast in 1874, he discussed local customs as potentially leading to confusion for the collector, as in those parts the skulls offered for barter were often those of visitors from Malay-inhabited islands. He also expressed caution about the authenticity of Meyer's large collection of skulls (Miklukho-Maklai 1993a: 266).¹¹

Head measurements and habitus in the Philippines, 1872

In December 1872, Maclay departed the Maclay Coast aboard the Russian ship *Izumrud* with around thirteen skulls. Fortunately for him, the ship visited Luzon Island, which fitted well with the request he had received from Baer before his departure:

I would advise you to visit the Philippine Islands and to find there the remnants of the Indigenous population, to study them thoroughly and to do your best to obtain a few skulls. I think it is very important to solve the question: are the Negritos of the Philippine Islands brachycephalic?

(Miklukho-Maklai 1993b: 430–431).

The concept of the cephalic index, the ratio of the breadth of the skull to its length, was widely adopted by physical anthropologists in the nineteenth century, who used it to categorise human populations as either dolichocephalic (long-headed) or brachycephalic (short-headed). It is not surprising, then, that Baer would encourage Maclay to test this concept in the field. During his excursion to the Limai mountain tribes on Luzon, Maclay was able to obtain only one skull. To compensate, he used a makeshift craniometer to measure the heads of a score of villagers in order to establish the cephalic index. His findings were unambiguous: the Negritos of the Philippines were brachycephalic. This field experience allowed Maclay to reach two important conclusions. First, writing to Baer, he argued that despite the fact that Negritos were brachycephalic and Papuans mostly dolichocephalic, 'their common habitus unambiguously testifies to the similarity of these tribes' (Miklucho-Maclay 1874: 23). Maclay's belief that the habitus – his personal impressions of external appearance, as well as manners and customs – was of paramount importance underlay his many subsequent visits to parts of Southeast Asia, Micronesia, and Melanesia. To reconcile his impressions of habitus with head measurements, he argued that New Guinea and Melanesia might be inhabited by 'more brachycephalic' groups, demonstrating this with reference to his New Guinea and Melanesian field materials (Miklucho-Maclay 1874: 22–23; compare Miklukho-Maklai 1994: 6–7).

Another 'discovery' that stemmed from Maclay's Luzon experience was his growing conviction of the acceptability and even preferability of head measuring, as opposed to skull collecting. He worked out the adjustments to the index width and later used head measurements widely in his work, 'being completely convinced of their validity' (Miklucho-Maclay 1878: 99–100). During his second stay on the Maclay Coast, local people allowed him in some cases to measure their heads. Nevertheless, he continued to collect skulls whenever the opportunity arose. While residing amongst 'his' Papuans, he scrupulously observed local protocols, taking only what he was allowed to have:

I also enlarged my collection with a dozen skulls which the relatives of the dead *wished* to let me have. But, not wishing to abuse the confidence of the natives, I felt compelled to leave untouched (in other words I did not steal) some probably complete skeletons, although I knew where they were; the natives did not even want to understand my extremely broad hints that I wanted to have some skeletons. [Maclay's emphasis]

(Miklukho-Maklai 1993f: 201)

In contrast, when travelling in other areas, he did occasionally steal skulls. This happened, for instance, when he was visiting an abandoned settlement and cemetery on Tamoia Plantation in New Caledonia (Miklukho-Maklai 1993c: 238–240).¹² Similarly, he secretly removed a skull from a burial site on New Guinea's Kowiai coast (Miklouho-Maclay 1982: 327–328). Despite his genuine sympathy and respect for living Indigenous peoples, it seems that Maclay, like many of his scientific contemporaries, did not always extend this respect to their mortal remains.

Maclay's visit to Torres Strait, 1880

Maclay's visit to Torres Strait in 1880 allowed him to continue his studies and to expand his collection of skeletal remains. One of the issues that interested him was manual cranial deformation of new-born children. This custom, described by the Scottish naturalist John MacGillivray in 1852, had been questioned by Baer, who did not believe that 'a temporary pressure of this kind' could have any effect, 'for the head does not consist of clay' (MacGillivray 1852: vol. 1, 189, vol. 2, 12; Baer 1859b: 63). Now Maclay, visiting Mabuyag (Jervis Island), could study the practice

in the field, documenting it in a number of (mostly unpublished) drawings (Miklukho-Maklai [1880a]: 229–231; Miklouho-Maclay 1881a). In addition, he recorded of his visit to a pearl-ling station on Mabuyag that one of the station's employees, a ni-Vanuatu man from Eromanga 'named Neva[,] sold me the skulls of his two wives: Kadubu and Kavangoi' (Maclay, quoted in Shnukal 1998: 42, 46, 48n19).¹³

But his total haul was larger than this. The Macleay Museum in Sydney holds a number of skeletal remains collected by Maclay in Torres Strait: three skulls from Erub (Darnley Island) and three from Mabuyag, as well as pelvic bones (Stenburi and Kennedi 1974: 238). The Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (MAE) in St Petersburg holds a further skull from Mabuyag; according to a study by Valery Alekseev, it is male (Alekseev 1974: 190). Maclay also made a drawing of a skull from Mabuyag (Miklukho-Maklai [1880a]: 232) and recorded measurements of a skull from Erub (Miklukho-Maklai [1880b]: folio 13 v.). While Maclay certainly acquired some of these skulls during his own visit to Torres Strait, it is likely that he had asked his contacts there to supply him with further skulls while he continued his travels in Australia. The English floral artist Marianne North recorded a brief meeting with Maclay on her arrival in Brisbane in 1880:

That strange mortal, Baron M. (a Russian), came on board in search of some promised skulls which had not arrived, and though said to be a woman-hater, he did me the honour of carrying my bag. He had the reputation of being a real cannibal and enjoying a human feast

(North 2011: 108).

Maclay was also interested in skull deformation experienced by women in New Guinea as a result of carrying heavily loaded bags, the handle of which exerted pressure on the frontal bones of the skull. He collected one skull exhibiting such deformation on the south-east coast of New Guinea; it is now held in the Macleay Museum (Miklouho-Maclay 1881a; Stenburi and Kennedi 1974: 238).

Maclay's anatomical studies of Australian Aborigines

Maclay was profoundly interested in anatomical studies of Australian Aborigines throughout his stay in Australia. He published several papers on Australian Aboriginal skulls, which he studied in the collections of the Australian Museum in Sydney. His studies extended well beyond simply measuring these skulls. For instance, he interviewed a 'phrenologist Hume',¹⁴ the collector of one of the skulls, about the circumstances of its acquisition (Miklouho-Maclay 1883a, 1883b). In an 1884 letter to the Russian Geographical Society, he wrote that his immediate plans included 'working on his craniological collection and adding, to the description of his collection of Australian skulls, detailed notes about some outstanding skulls in the Australian Museum collection' (Miklukho-Maklai 1996: 376). This suggests that he had amassed quite a substantial personal collection, although, at present, only four Aboriginal skulls held in the Macleay Museum can be connected with certainty to Maclay's collections.¹⁵

One of these is a skull from Cape York, accompanied by the Russian label 'Kokeruga. C. York'. Maclay's field notebook, held by the Russian Geographical Society, indicates that he conducted some research in connection with this skull while travelling along the Australian coast from Thursday Island to Brisbane in the steamer *Corea* in May 1880. He made a drawing of a section of this skull, including measurements and an inscription in Russian: 'Skull. Churaga Kokeroga'. He also sketched a detailed map of the northernmost tip of Cape York showing the

location of seven local Aboriginal tribes, marking the territory of the 'Cockyrugga' tribe in red. During his travels, he received information about the numbers of 'surviving' Aborigines in each tribe from Francis Lascelles (Frank) Jardine, a cattle grazier and former police magistrate ('Jardine, Frank Lascelles' 1919; Lack 1972). According to Jardine, in April 1880, the 'Cockyrugga' had numbered only five men and seven women (Miklukho-Maklai [1880b]: folio 26–26 v.).

Maclay acquired two further skulls from the Balonne River during a trip to the interior of Queensland to study a hairless 'tribe' rumoured to live at Gulnarber Station near St George (Miklucho-Maclay 1881b; see also Higham Hill 1880). This expedition again confronted Maclay with ethical issues connected with his aspirations to obtain 'specimens' for his studies. He wanted to remove a small sample of skin for microscopic examination from Aidanill, a 'hairless Australian' Aboriginal man, but Aidanill 'protested so emphatically . . . and became so apprehensive' that Maclay promised him 'not to undertake any operation of this kind'. Later the same afternoon, having 'rewarded [Aidanill's] patience in allowing himself to be observed, measured, and sketched with a couple of shillings', Maclay 'found him very drunk and could easily have carried out the operation', but refrained from doing so, regretting that his earlier promise 'now prevented [him] from obtaining an interesting anatomical specimen'. On leaving Gulnarber Station, however, Maclay asked both the local doctor, Ernest Frederick Seidel, and the station owner, George Marshall Kirk, to retain a skin sample for him from Aidanill or his sister Déwan if the opportunity were to arise through their injury or death (Miklucho-Maclay 1881b: 146 n. 2).

Though Maclay's interests in physical anthropology were wide-ranging, he was particularly interested in the comparative anatomy of the brain, as is evident from a letter written to the secretary of the Russian Geographical Society shortly after his arrival in Sydney in 1878:

As there are still large gaps in research relating to the comparative anatomy of the brains of human races, any material whatsoever is valuable . . . I did not miss the chance to preserve for research the brains of two natives of the South Sea Islands who had died in the Municipal Hospital. As Australian natives are very seldom admitted to municipal hospitals, I have tried by official means, through the Colonial Secretary and the Chief Superintendent of Prisons, to obtain permission to remove and examine the brain for scientific purposes in the event of a native dying in prison

(Miklukho-Maklai 1996: 202).

As well as the 'examination and precise illustration (with the help of photographs) of the brains of natives from Polynesia, Australia, [and] Melanesia', Maclay planned to devote himself to examining the brains of unusual exemplars of Australian fauna, including platypus, echidna, dugong, and Australian lungfish. He estimated that he would need to spend around six weeks in Queensland in order to obtain specimens of the dugong and lungfish, adding: 'I have heard that the chance of obtaining the brain of an Australian native [there] is better than in Sydney' (Miklukho-Maklai 1996: 204; see also Scheps 1988).

Johnny Campbell, the 'Aboriginal Ned Kelly'

This advice proved accurate. In March 1880, Johnny Campbell/Kagariu, a Gubbi Gubbi/Kabi Kabi man known as the 'Aboriginal Ned Kelly', was captured on the banks of the Noosa River in south-east Queensland. A feared and successful bushranger, he was convicted of rape and hanged at Brisbane Gaol on 16 August 1880. The date of his execution had been brought forward at Maclay's request. Maclay photographed and dissected Campbell's body; after removing various internal organs, including the brain, he preserved the remainder in fluid and sent

it to Virchow, at that time President of the BSAEP, who confirmed receipt on 19 March 1881 (McNiven and Russell 2005: 202; Miklucho-Maclay 1881c; Miklouho-Maclay 1882b; Prentis 1991; Virchow 1881a: 397, 1881b).

Campbell had been the subject of intense media interest over the course of his career. Queensland's newspapers breathlessly reported the details of his capture, trial, and execution. Several managed to obtain information on the fate of his corpse:

BARON MACLAY has had the use of the room in the old Museum formerly used by the analytical chemist. Johnny Campbell, who, since his untimely decease, has been the Baron's close companion, is, we believe, going in a cask to a scientific man in Germany.

(‘Current news’ 1880: 421)

This story, with embellishments, circulated throughout Queensland's settler community over subsequent years. In 1892 *The Brisbane Courier* printed the following account by a Mr A. Meston:¹⁶

In recent years the blackfellow, ‘Johnny Campbell,’ was the worst aboriginal criminal. His body was sent to Russia by Baron Miklouho Maclay in a hogshead of rum, injudiciously labelled ‘dugong oil,’ and the Russian sailors drank the contents on the journey up the Volga, and declared dugong oil to be the champion beverage of the age. The odour from the cask when it arrived in St. Petersburg diffused itself over half the Russian empire, and created a belief that a Chinese invading army had started on the warpath, and was already within 1000 miles of the Russian capital.

(Meston 1892f)¹⁷

This sensational description was reprinted in several other newspapers (Meston 1892a, 1892b, 1892c, 1892d, 1892e). Twenty-five years later, another correspondent, Laurence S. Smith, recounted a somewhat less graphic version for the benefit of readers of the *Maryborough Chronicle, Wide Bay and Burnett Advertiser*. He had ‘heard it asserted’, he recalled,

that a German scientist had secured [Campbell's] body, and that it was shipped to Germany in a cask of rum, and on the voyage the sailors broached the cask and drank the rum. I cannot vouch for the latter statement, but many old Noosa residents could bear me out in the former.

(Smith 1917)

An article by ‘Coyyan’ (Michael O’Leary, a long-term resident of north Queensland) later the same year included a further variation on this theme, suggesting that Campbell’s ‘skull . . . was sent to the London Museum’ after he had ‘paid the penalty in the Brisbane gaol’ (Coyyan 1917; Borland 1940).

In contrast to these divergent speculations, Virchow’s article (1881b) clearly confirms that Campbell’s body reached Berlin in 1881. What happened to his body after that point is as yet unknown. Virchow’s personal collection of ‘skulls of human races’, minus losses incurred during World War II, is now held as the ‘anthropological Rudolf Virchow Collection’ by the BSAEP, but Nils Seethaler’s recently-published list of Ancestral Remains of Australian origin in this collection does not include any likely to have been Campbell’s (Kunst and Creutz 2013; Seethaler 2014).

Sydney and St Petersburg: the collections and their destinies

Maclay obtained various other mortal remains during his travels. In a letter to Virchow announcing the shipping of Campbell's preserved body, he mentioned that he had also acquired the heads and brains of 'a Chinese from Canton' and 'a Tagal from Manila' during his stay in Brisbane (Miklucho-Maclay 1881c: 32). Chris Dawson (2012) has identified these two individuals as Jimmy Ah Sue and Maximus Gomez respectively (see also 'Specialities' 1880; Stenburi and Kennedy 1974: 241; Waterson and Haggerty 2014: 39). In 1889, their preserved heads were donated to the Macleay Museum at the University of Sydney by Maclay's widow, Lady Margaret Maclay, together with forty-eight further skulls from locations including Australia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea (north-east coast, Admiralty and Ninigo Islands), the Philippines, Timor, and Torres Strait (Macintosh 1949; Miklouho-Maclay 1882a: 171). A few skulls from Maclay's collection were described in 1897 by the German anatomist Wilhelm Krause (1897: 508), but the craniological collection was then forgotten for many years. When anthropologist N.W.G. Macintosh was invited to make its inventory in 1948, he discovered the following situation:

The skulls were found scattered in different parts of the Museum, some wrapped in brown paper, some in canvas bags, some lying loose among a variety of other specimens (shells, grass skirts, etc.). The majority of the mandibles were found piled here and there in loose heaps. No catalogue could be found. A heavy coating of dust and other accumulations concealed any identification such as labels or markings on the skulls themselves. Some paper labels which had originally been attached to the skulls were lying on the floor of one cabinet.

(Macintosh 1949: 161)

Macintosh painstakingly reunited the skulls with their mandibles and labels, struggling to read Maclay's inscriptions in Russian, and trying to clarify their origin using available publications by Maclay. Of fifty skulls donated by Lady Maclay, he wrote, only forty could 'be conclusively identified as Maclay's and linked with his published observations' (Macintosh 1949: 173–174). In 1974, further information on this collection was published in Russian by Peter Stanbury and L. Kennedy (Stenburi and Kennedy 1974). Besides the aforementioned Torres Strait and Australian skulls, the collection includes four skulls from the Admiralty Islands, collected by Maclay during his visit in 1879, and sixteen from the Maclay Coast, obtained from coastal and mountain villages during his second stay in 1876–1877. Characteristically, skulls of people from Bongu and Gorendu, whom Maclay knew well, bear the names of the deceased, written in Russian script. The collection also includes two skulls from Luzon Island, which Maclay visited in 1873.

The second part of Maclay's craniological collection is located in the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (MAE) in St Petersburg. The first catalogue of the MAE's craniological collection, published by Jules Ludewig in 1904, listed fifty-two items collected by Maclay (Ludewig 1904: 32–33), but in the later research of Russian anthropologists P. F. Taratorkina (1949: 390) and V.P. Alekseev (1974: 189, 190) only thirty-three skulls are listed. Maclay brought these skulls, together with artefacts, to Russia in 1886; some of them were sent directly from Australia, but others were from his earlier collections left behind in Batavia, which he retrieved on the way to Russia. Upon arrival in October 1886, he organised an exhibition of his ethnographic collections in the conference hall of the St Petersburg Academy of Sciences. According to newspaper reports, most of his craniological and osteological collections remained packed in crates during the exhibition, but a few items were displayed. The newspapers also commented on crates 'with collections of brains [preserved] in spirit: Malays, Polynesians, Australians, and

Papuans'. Another newspaper remarked that many visitors were disappointed that 'the huge collection of skulls and brains, which N.N. Miklukho-Maklai had told scholars so much about, and which many medics had come to see', was not displayed. In response to their interest, Maclay promised to organise a special anthropological exhibition, but this plan most likely did not proceed (Putilov 1997: 21, 23). All of the anthropological and ethnographic materials brought by Maclay to Russia were eventually transferred to the MAE.

Inventories and studies of Maclay's collections

Interest in Maclay's craniological collections was already evident during his lifetime. Joseph Deniker (1852–1918), a Russian–French anthropologist, produced the first comparative study of data derived from cranial and head measurements carried out by Maclay and other naturalists, including A.B. Meyer and Paolo Mantegazza. From his personal communication with Maclay, Deniker learnt that Maclay had craniometrical data of thirty-five skulls and heads from the Maclay Coast (Deniker 1883: 11). In 1900, Julius Fridolin, a German-speaking craniologist based in St Petersburg, studied skulls from the 'South Seas' in the MAE collection and published photographs of five skulls collected by Maclay (Fridolin 1900). Later, skulls in Maclay's collection were studied and described by Taratorkina (1949) and Alekseev (1974, 1984).

On the basis of these inventories and studies, we can outline the following composition of the collection. The most numerous are osteological materials from New Guinea (thirty-six skulls and one skeleton). It should be noted that in Ludewig's catalogue, sixteen of them are attributed the unidentifiable provenance 'Iovaimoche Snow. New Guinen [*sic*]' (1904: 32–33). Only one of these skulls has been used in later publications on the collection (Alekseev 1974; Taratorkina 1949). The only one used by Alekseev from this series was identified by him as Papuan. We may cautiously suggest that these skulls might have been from the Papua-Kowiai Coast in south-east New Guinea, where Maclay collected skulls in 1873–1874; skulls from this area have not been identified to date in his other anthropological collections. Among other skulls in the New Guinea group, only a few have a more detailed provenance attribution: one is from Aiduma Island off the Papua-Kowiai Coast, three are from the Maclay Coast, one is from Dore, and one skull and associated skeleton are from Hanuabada (Port Moresby). All the rest are listed simply as being from New Guinea and most likely are from the Maclay Coast. It is possible that an examination of the skulls themselves might reveal additional information in the form of labels or inscriptions. Besides this, Maclay's collection in the MAE includes one skull from the Admiralty Islands, two skulls from Lydia (Nuakata) Island in the Louisiade Archipelago, two skulls from Simbo Island in the Solomons, one Māori skull from New Zealand and one Moriori skull from Chatham Island. It also contains three skulls from Ceram and one from Halmahera in Maluku, as well as one from Luzon in the Philippines.

The Australian component is not numerous. It includes one male skull from Mabuyag and a plaster cast with the inscription 'Cape York' (this could be a cast of the 'Churaga Kokeroga' skull from the Macleay Museum in Sydney). The collection also includes a skull from 'Goats Island', which was listed in Ludewig's catalogue without further provenance, while in Alekseev's study it was listed as '[Aboriginal] Australian, south territory' (Alekseev 1984: 28), but this attribution seems doubtful. There is a tiny Goat Island off the South Australian coast, but we could not find any evidence that it was used for Aboriginal burials, and it seems unlikely that Maclay could have obtained a skull from the Goat Island located in Sydney Harbour. Yet another Goat (Dyaul) Island can be found near the coast of New Ireland. Unfortunately, Maclay's published journals and materials make no reference to any of these islands.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the Pacific fieldwork of Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay as a case study of Russian attitudes towards physical anthropology in the late nineteenth century. As a result of his extended stay in the Pacific region, Maclay's attitudes were shaped not only by his communications with European armchair savants but also by his extended encounters with Indigenous peoples in the field. His beliefs and practices seem paradoxical in many respects. He campaigned actively for the human rights of 'the dark natives . . . of the Pacific' and was outspoken in his criticism of their mistreatment at the hands of European settlers, but he was eager to obtain the mortal remains of these same 'dark natives' for scientific study. He was scrupulous in his interactions with the people of New Guinea's Maclay Coast, taking only those remains 'which the relatives of the dead *wished* to let me have', but stole skulls from burial sites in other areas. He emphasised the importance of the general 'habitus' in anthropological studies, and considered skull measurements so unimportant that he did not even bother to take a craniometer with him on his travels, but nevertheless accumulated at least ninety-three skulls during his South Pacific travels. Although some aspects of Maclay's case are unique, the fundamental cause of these paradoxes, namely the tension between his genuine respect for Indigenous peoples and his fervent enthusiasm for the advancement of the physical sciences, was experienced by many collectors of mortal remains during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Note

In citing Miklouho-Maclay's publications in the References, we have retained the original spelling of his name in each instance. However, his publications are listed chronologically, not alphabetically by the various versions of his name; likewise for Baer C.E. and Baer K.E., and Blumenbach J.F. and Blumenbachii I.F.

Notes

- 1 This spelling, or just 'Maclay', was the most common spelling used by Miklouho-Maclay while in English-speaking countries. In citing his publications, we have retained the original spelling of his name in each instance.
- 2 Although Bronwen Douglas uses the term 'seaborne ethnography' to refer to early voyages to the Pacific (specifically, 'accounts by British and French voyagers of visits to New Holland and Van Diemen's Land between 1770 and 1802'), the practice can also be observed in much later scientific expeditions, notably the voyage of HMS *Challenger* from 1872–1876 (Corfield 2004; Douglas 2003: 4).
- 3 We use Maclay's toponym 'Maclay Coast', still used in Russia, for this area (currently it is known as the Rai Coast).
- 4 See our chapter 'Russia and the Pacific: Expeditions, Networks, and the Acquisition of Human Remains', Chapter 15 in this volume.
- 5 Maclay's emphasis on the general 'habitus' is reminiscent of the 'natural system' of classification outlined in Blumenbach's *Handbuch der Naturgeschichte* (1779: 10–14, 56–57), which classified organisms according to their *Totalhabitus*, the totality of 'all [their] external characteristics', rather than by looking at 'individual abstracted characteristics' only. Paradoxically, however, Blumenbach also privileged the comparison of cranial forms in the study of human difference, claiming that 'no part of the human body' appeared 'more suitable for the purpose of distinguishing and defining national varieties' than the skull. See Blumenbachii 1820 [1790]: 5; Howes 2013: 39–41.
- 6 Maclay's eagerness to donate his own body to science contrasts markedly with the attitudes of many of his contemporaries, such as the British medical men discussed by Helen MacDonald (2010: 218), most of whom 'took care in making funeral arrangements for their own remains and for those of people they loved'.

- 7 Incidentally, Russian medics using modern techniques to examine Maclay's skull were able to establish metastatic cancer of the jaw as the cause of his long suffering and premature death (Miklukho-Maklai 1996: 777 (notes); Tumarkin 2011: 541–542).
- 8 Skull collecting was among Meyer's top priorities: he had already obtained at least six skulls in Celebes before arriving in Manila, and would acquire further skulls and skeletons in the Philippines and New Guinea (Howes 2013: 74n28, 82–83, 173–174; Meyer 1872a, 1872b, 1873b, 1875).
- 9 A further nine skulls collected by the *Vitiaz* officers, including eight from the Maclay Coast, were deposited in 1874–1875 in the Imperial Medical and Surgical Academy (now S.M. Kirov Military Medical Academy) in St Petersburg, and were described by the Russian anthropologist Valery P. Alekseev (1929–1991) in 1974 (Alekseev 1974: 189, 197).
- 10 All of Maclay's writings in English translation based on the heavily-edited Soviet edition of Maclay's Collected Works (Miklukho-Maklai 1950–1954) have been checked against his original unamended texts in the new Collected Works (Miklukho-Maklai 1990–1999) and amended where necessary.
- 11 Interestingly, Meyer had warned Virchow the previous year not to 'give credit implicitly' to Miklouho-Maclay's claim that the two skulls from Astrolabe Bay 'originated from the "Maclay Coast"', noting that the officers of the *Vitiaz* had landed at sites that Miklouho-Maclay had 'never reached', and offering to request further information on the skulls' provenance from the ship's commandant, with whom he claimed to be 'in correspondence'. Seen in parallel, these incidents hint at the competitive nature of collecting during this period, and the strategies employed by collectors to position themselves as authoritative sources of information. See Meyer 1873a; Howes 2013: 185–186.
- 12 Most of the collections assembled by Maclay during his Melanesian voyage of 1879 were apparently lost at sea. When he departed the ship in January 1880 in the Louisiade Archipelago, Maclay entrusted his collections to the skipper, Mr Webber, who agreed to deliver them to Sydney. However, Webber died soon afterwards, and the crew were caught in a storm while returning to America and disposed of most of the cargo in order to save the ship. See Tumarkin 2011: 390–391.
- 13 The correct archival folio number is 15 (Miklukho-Maklai [1880b]: 15), not 14 as given by Shnukal.
- 14 Presumably James Hill Hume, a professional phrenologist and mesmerist from Scotland (Snooks 1983).
- 15 Some of Maclay's collections, possibly including human remains, were destroyed by a fire that swept through the Sydney International Exhibition in September 1882 (Tumarkin 2011: 490–491).
- 16 Almost certainly the journalist, civil servant and explorer Archibald Meston, Protector of Aborigines for southern Queensland from 1898 to 1903 (Stephens 1974).
- 17 Such rumours had a long history. Both Luyendijk–Elshout (1970: 126) and Mirilas et al. (2006: 605) mention the canard, popularised in 1889 and apparently still published on occasion, that sailors transporting an extensive collection of anatomical and embryological specimens assembled by the Dutch botanist and anatomist Frederik Ruysch (1638–1731) from Amsterdam to St Petersburg in 1718 drank the alcoholic fluid in which the specimens were preserved. In fact the collection arrived in St Petersburg intact and as catalogued.

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