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To cite this article: Elena Govor & Chris Ballard (2021): MANUSCRIPT XXXV: Why Miklouho-Maclay Chose New Guinea, The Journal of Pacific History, DOI: [10.1080/00223344.2021.1972799](https://doi.org/10.1080/00223344.2021.1972799)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223344.2021.1972799>



Published online: 25 Oct 2021.



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NARRATIVES AND DOCUMENTS

MANUSCRIPT XXXV: Why Miklouho-Maclay Chose New Guinea

ELENA GOVOR  AND CHRIS BALLARD 

ABSTRACT

Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay (1846–88), the Russian explorer, naturalist and anthropologist, dedicated 12 years of his short life to field research in Oceania, from 1871 to 1883. Here we provide the first translation into English of an important but unfinished essay by Maclay, written early in the course of his travels, between 1871 and 1872, and titled ‘Why I chose the is[land] of New Guinea as the base of my voyage to the is[lands] of the Pacific Ocean?’ Intended as a draft introduction to his major book, the final manuscript of which was later lost, the essay was neither completed nor published during his lifetime. Our introduction sets Maclay’s essay within the contexts of the development of ethnographic method, European knowledge about Papuans and New Guinea, and his own unfolding research programme.

Key words: Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay, New Guinea, ethnology, anthropology

Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay (1846–88),¹ the Russian explorer, naturalist and anthropologist, dedicated 12 years of his short life to field research in Oceania, from 1871 to 1883. When he died, aged just 41, the final manuscript of a major book summarizing his work was lost, but his surviving drafts and other papers were

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Acknowledgements: We wish to thank Raphael Kabo for his translation of the original essay.

Funding: This work was supported by the Australian Research Council under Grant DP110104578.

¹ This spelling, or the abbreviated ‘Maclay’, was the most common form of his name used by Miklouho-Maclay while in English-speaking countries. In citing his own publications, we have retained the original spelling of his name in each instance.

painstakingly assembled in six volumes of his collected works, published in Russian in three editions decades later.² Amongst these papers is an important but unfinished essay by Maclay, written early in the course of his travels, and titled simply ‘Why I chose the is[land] of New Guinea as the base of my voyage to the is[lands] of the Pacific Ocean?’ Intended as a draft introduction to his major book, it was neither completed nor published during his lifetime. Here we offer the first English translation of this essay, based on the Russian text published in the most recent edition of Maclay’s collected works.³

In many respects this essay was a foundational statement for Maclay’s overarching programme in Oceania. His field research has often been characterized as haphazard in its focus, methodologically eclectic, and lacking in any discernible unity of purpose.⁴ But this criticism partly reflects the state of his surviving archive, as well as the limited methodological and theoretical development of the fledgling field of ethnography.⁵ In the rare references to his contribution in disciplinary histories of anthropology, Maclay is characterized rather awkwardly as someone who conducted long-term fieldwork with all of the intent of an anthropologist, but well *avant la lettre* and certainly prior to the academic institutionalization of the discipline.⁶ Whatever his status as an

² N.N. Miklukho-Maklai, *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh*, 5 vols (Moscow and Leningrad: Izd-vo AN SSSR, 1950–54); N.N. Miklukho-Maklai, *Sobranie sochinenii v shesti tomakh*, 6 vols (Moscow: Nauka, 1990–99; 2nd ed., 6 vols (St Petersburg, 2020). Our references in the text are to the edition of 2020, which is now available online at <https://book.mikluho-maclay.ru/>, referred to here as the *Collected Works*.

³ The manuscript is now held in the Archives of the Russian Geographical Society, f. 6, op. 1, no. 17. It has been published, in the original Russian, as N. Miklukho-Maklai, ‘Pochemu ia vybral Novuiu Gvineiu polem moikh issledovaniï’ [Why I chose New Guinea as the field of my studies], in *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 7–11. The text presented here was translated by Raphael Kabo from the Russian of Maclay’s unfinished essay, working from the version published in *Collected Works*. It includes Maclay’s own footnotes but not the more detailed endnotes and commentaries by successive editors of the collected works. Some of the more relevant information from these commentaries is incorporated and discussed here in our introduction.

⁴ For an overview see P.L. Belkov, ‘Proiskhozhdenie N.N. Miklukho-Maklaia kak “cheloveka nauki”’. Zapisnaia kniga “Ethnologia” [The origin of N.N. Miklouho-Maclay as a ‘man of science’. The ‘Ethnologia’ notebook], in *Staroe i novoe v izuchenii etnograficheskogo nasledia N.N. Miklukho-Maklaia. Ocherki po istoriografii i istochnikovedeniiu* [Old and new in the study of the ethnographic heritage of N.N. Miklouho-Maclay. Essays on historiography and source study], ed. P.L. Belkov (SPb: MAE RAN, 2014), 9–17; E.M. Webster, *The Moon Man: A Biography of Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1984).

⁵ G.W. Stocking, ‘Maclay, Kubary, Malinowski: Archetypes from the Dreamtime of Anthropology’, in *Colonial Situations: Essays on the Contextualization of Ethnographic Knowledge*, ed. George W. Stocking, Jr (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 9–74.

⁶ See, for example, Robert Welsch’s claim that, prior to the First World War, Gunnar Landtman, in his 1910–12 fieldwork among Kiwai speakers, was ‘probably the only anthropologist in all of New Guinea who had conducted intensive ethnographic research in a single location’, to which he appends a note acknowledging that Maclay ‘had lived for a total of almost three years on the Rai Coast’ but ‘was not an anthropologist [though] his fieldwork in many ways resembles

anthropologist, proto- or otherwise, his work certainly represents an important bridge between the more casual ethnographic observations in the New Guinea region of travelling zoologists such as Alfred Russel Wallace during the 1850s, and the sustained expeditionary approach exemplified by the Cambridge University Expedition to the Torres Strait Islands of 1898.⁷ However his contribution to anthropological method is assessed, Maclay was ‘in the Torres Strait before Haddon, the Trobriand Islands before Malinowski, and Manus before Mead’.⁸

What the essay published here provides is some indication of the fundamental questions and ideas guiding Maclay’s research from the outset. Our contention is that his subsequent enquiries remained largely true to this preliminary statement, and that his extensive travels need to be understood as a systematic exploration and working out of the propositions first set out systematically in this essay. Maclay’s essay is also of interest for the light it sheds on the state of anthropology as a discipline in 1870, as well as that of anthropological knowledge of the Papuans on the eve of the golden age of naturalist exploration of New Guinea.⁹ It is particularly revealing on issues of the scale and sources of Maclay’s ambition, the clarity and single-mindedness of his extraordinary programme of field research, and his vision of the methods appropriate to that programme.

MACLAY’S CONVERSION TO ANTHROPOLOGY, 1869–70

Raised in a cultured Russian family, Maclay studied medicine and zoology at German universities from 1864 until 1868, specializing in comparative anatomical studies. During a zoological field trip in 1868 with his colleague, Anton Dorn, to Messina in Sicily, Maclay became convinced of the need to observe living organisms in their original surroundings, a goal best implemented, in his

ethnographic fieldwork today’. *An American Anthropologist in Melanesia: A.B. Lewis and the Joseph N. Field South Pacific Expedition, 1909–1913*, ed. and annot. Robert L. Welsch (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, c. 1998), vol. I, 566, 590.

⁷ Alfred Russel Wallace, *The Malay Archipelago: The Land of the Orang-utan and the Bird of Paradise* (London: Macmillan, 1869), 2 vols; Anita Herle and Sandra Rouse, eds, *Cambridge and the Torres Strait: Centenary Essays on the 1899 Anthropological Expedition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁸ Chris Ballard, ‘Marginal History’, *History and Anthropology*, doi:10.1080/02757206.2019.1607733.

⁹ We use ‘Papuan’ here as it is the term most commonly used throughout the 19th century to identify the inhabitants of New Guinea and its surrounding islands – Maclay himself, and most of the authors listed in this paper, referred to these populations almost exclusively as ‘Papuans’; alternatives such as ‘New Guinean’, which appear more frequently from the 1880s, tended to indicate an Australian perspective on British New Guinea (later the Territory of Papua). For an overview of naturalist exploration, see David G. Frodin, ‘The Natural World of New Guinea: Hopes, Realities, and Legacies’, in *Nature in Its Greatest Extent: Western Science in the Pacific*, ed. Roy MacLeod and Philip F. Rehbock (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1988), 89–138.

view, through the establishment of dedicated biological stations – ideas that he later presented at the Second Congress of Russian naturalists in August 1869.¹⁰ By September of 1869, he was declaring that this approach to studying living organisms in their broader natural setting should be the cornerstone of evolutionary theory in biology:

In recent years, as is well known, the work of zoologists has been aimed mainly at studying the lower animals found in the seas, often at great distance. The study itself has moved, little by little, from classrooms, museums, and zoological gardens to the natural habitats of the animals, where they can be observed and studied in all their settings, and in all their varieties of transitional forms, depending on temperature conditions, environmental density, food quality, geographic distribution and other physical influences. Only a study such as this is productive; it alone can explain in a scientific way both the origin and the change and development of the most diverse organisms found on earth.¹¹

It was this zeal for field research that Maclay brought to the emerging field of human evolution. The first suggestion of his switch in focus from zoological to anthropological subjects is a letter to the Russian Geographical Society (RGO) dated October 1869, in which he enquired about the possibility of Society support for a proposed research programme which would encompass:

- (1) the study of the organization of animals, living and in situ;
- (2) the study of the fauna of the predominantly Eastern [Pacific] Ocean, the geography of animals within it and the assembly, where possible, of collections;
- (3) the study, as conditions permit, of ethnographic and anthropological issues.¹²

In this way Maclay began his conversion from a broad-spectrum naturalist into an anthropologist, specializing in the regional field of Oceania. Maclay's transition is marked by a notebook that he kept during 1869–70, on the opening page of which he wrote the title 'Ethnologie'. Here, he entered his thoughts on the literature relating to the racial classification of the populations of Australia and the South Pacific, summarizing the writings of Alfred Russel Wallace, Carl von Baer, Friedrich Müller, James Cowles Prichard and others.¹³ Ethnology, which had been the dominant framework for the study of 'uncivilized peoples' during the middle decades of the 19th

¹⁰ *Trudy vtorogo s'yezda russkikh estestvoispytateley v Moskve, prokhodivshego s 20-go po 30-e avgusta 1869 goda* [Proceedings of the Second Congress of Russian Naturalists in Moscow, held from 20 to 30 August 1869], part 2 (Moscow, 1871), xix–xx.

¹¹ Quoted from 'Chronicles' in the *St Petersburg Herald*, 19 October 1869, 1–2; this text presumably drew on either Maclay's presentation at the Congress or an interview with him.

¹² N.N. Miklukho-Maklai to the Secretary of the Russian Geographical Society, 27 September (9 October) 1869, in *Collected Works*, vol. 5, 47–8.

¹³ N.N. Miklukho-Maklai, 'Ethnologie', notebook, 1869–70, Russian Geographical Society Archives, St Petersburg, f. 6, op. 1, no. 12.

century, was in the process of emerging under the new guise of ‘anthropology’, as the study of the origins of human civilization.¹⁴ Maclay’s own transformation charted this progression towards this new ‘natural history of man’ but, despite a certain looseness of terminology, he tended to refer to his own interests in ethnogenesis, (physical) anthropology and prehistory under the old collective label of ‘ethnology’.

In October 1870, Maclay presented to the Russian Geographical Society a ‘Program of Proposed Studies during the Voyage to the Islands and Coasts of the Pacific Ocean’, compiled on the basis of questionnaires he had sent to selected European scholars and subsequent discussions with them.¹⁵ The list of his correspondents, which is revealing of his expanding range of interests, included the leading German scholars of the day, amongst them ethnologist Adolf Bastian, prehistorian and craniologist Rudolf Virchow, geographer Georg Gerland, and zoologist Ernst Haeckel; he also wrote to Thomas Huxley, then the President of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and a veteran of the voyage of HMS *Rattlesnake* under Owen Stanley to southern New Guinea in 1849.¹⁶

Two critical sources of influence in the narrowing of Maclay’s focus to New Guinea and the Papuans as the testing ground for his new approach were Wallace’s *The Malay Archipelago* (1869), and von Baer’s craniological studies of Papuan skulls (1859).¹⁷ To some extent these two works served as twin poles of inspiration, with Wallace representing the model of field-intensive research, and von Baer the focus on the question of Papuan characteristics. What Maclay sought to achieve was a marriage of these two approaches, addressing the question of the origins and character of the Papuans through both intensive field enquiry at one or more stations, and wider-ranging surveys to establish the boundaries of their distribution. In his presentation to the RGO in October 1870, Maclay for the first time described his theory of the importance of the study of ‘habitus’ or context:

Of course, when examining the whole ‘habitus’ of a man of any race, one should pay due attention to the skull; but an individual traveller who collects skulls is collecting only a small part of the material which might lead over time to broader conclusions. A zoologist, who has the opportunity to observe and study people of various races alive, is responsible for the study of signs [features] that, perhaps, are even less permanent than the skeleton of man; but together they

¹⁴ George W. Stocking, Jr, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 46–77.

¹⁵ N.N. Miklukho-Maklai, ‘Programma predpolagaemykh issledovaniï vo vremia puteshstviia na ostrova i pribrezh’ia Tikhogo okeana’ [Program of Proposed Studies during the Voyage to the Islands and Coasts of the Pacific Ocean], in *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 321–34.

¹⁶ John MacGillivray, *Narrative of the Voyage of HMS Rattlesnake, Commanded by the Late Captain Owen Stanley, R.N., F.R.S. &c. During the Years 1846–1850: Including Discoveries and Surveys in New Guinea, the Louisiade Archipelago, etc.*, 2 vols (London: T. & W. Boone, 1852).

¹⁷ Carl-Ernst von Baer, ‘Über Papuas und Alfüren: ein commentar zu den beiden ersten abschnitten der abhandlung crania selecta ex Thesauris Anthropologicis Academiae Imperialis Petropolitanae’, in *Mémoires présentés à l’Académie Impériale des Sciences de Saint-Petersbourg, Sciences Naturelles*, 6th series, no. 8 (10) (1859): 1[271]–78[346]; Wallace, *The Malay Archipelago*.

provide a more complete and correct [impression of the] character of the race than a single skull, its size, and some notes about the colour of skin and hair.¹⁸

Later, in February 1874, Maclay would declare in a letter to Virchow, that:

It would be unfair to many other authors if I attributed my decision to go to New Guinea solely to the excellent work of C.E. von Baer. I must also admit that it was not purely anthropological questions that prompted me to do this; I was also attracted by the ethnology of these tribes, which are still so poorly understood, and it is precisely this aspect of the study that later gave me great satisfaction in New Guinea.¹⁹

NEW GUINEA AND THE PAPUANS

In 1870, the New Guinea mainland and its surrounding islands, along with their residents, were still largely unknown to Europeans. Two abortive attempts at settlement, by the British at Dorey Bay in 1793 and then by the Dutch at Triton Bay in 1828, had ended fairly swiftly in failure.²⁰ Though a handful of pioneering missionaries had established themselves, more or less successfully, in Geelvink Bay and eastern New Guinea, their observations on New Guinea and the Papuans were not widely available.²¹ The leading ‘authorities’ on Papuan anthropology of the early to mid-19th century, such as John Crawford, George Windsor Earl, and Carl von Baer, had never been to New Guinea and had seen few if any living Papuans.²²

Wallace’s published accounts of his travels between 1854 and 1862 in the Malay Archipelago and on the contrast, as he saw it, between the Malay and Papuan races, marked a watershed in Papuan anthropology, establishing field observation as the basis for authority. Wallace approached humans as a zoologist, to be studied as one class of animals amongst others, and his focus on ‘natural history’,

¹⁸ Miklukho-Maklai, ‘Programma predpolagaemykh issledovaniï’, 328.

¹⁹ N. Miklucho-Maclay, ‘Die Brachycephalie der Papuas in Neu-Guinea’, *Verhandlungen der Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte* 6 (1874): 177–8.

²⁰ Ida Lee, *Commodore Sir John Hayes: His Voyage and Life (1767–1831), with Some Account of Admiral D’Entrecasteaux’s Voyage of 1792–3* (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1912), 83–104; Salomon Müller, *Reizen en onderzoekingen in den Indischen Archipel gedaan op last der Nederlandsche Indische regering, tusschen de jaren 1828 en 1836* (Amsterdam: Frederik Muller, 1857).

²¹ Niel Gunson and Jan Godschalk, ‘Manuscript XXVIII: An Early Ethnography of the Geelvink Bay People, West New Guinea’, *Journal of Pacific History* 49, no. 1 (2014): 95–121; Elisabetta Gnecci-Ruscone, “‘A School of Iron, Vexation and Blood, but a School Nonetheless’”: The Writings of the First Italian Missionaries to Oceania in the 1850s’, *Journal of Pacific History* 47, no. 3 (2012): 389–403.

²² Chris Ballard, “‘Oceanic Negroes’”: Early British Anthropology of Papuans, 1820–1869’, in *Foreign Bodies: Oceania and the Science of Race, 1750–1940*, ed. Bronwen Douglas and Chris Ballard (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2008), 157–201.

with a particular emphasis on the ‘moral character’ of human races as well as their anthropological differences, was very much the model that Maclay sought to emulate. In December 1870, Maclay made the pilgrimage to London, where he met with Wallace, as well as Huxley (for a second time), and attended a meeting of the London Ethnological Society, but had to forgo a planned encounter with Darwin.

Maclay’s innovation would be to stay for longer in New Guinea than the three and a half months spent by Wallace collecting in Dorey Bay, and to take Papuans as his central focus. Maclay’s willingness to challenge several of Wallace’s positions on the anthropology of the Papuans is evident in the essay under discussion here: he is equally sceptical of Wallace’s curious insistence that Polynesians were more closely related to Papuans (as ‘varying forms of one great Oceanic or Polynesian race’)²³ than they were to Malays (‘there remains a significant challenge in connecting the Papuans and the Polynesians’), and of his invocation of the ‘problematic’ sunken continent of Lemuria as a means of accounting for their distribution.²⁴ Finally he turns Wallace’s own valorization of field observation back upon his speculation about the likely evolutionary history of Australians and Polynesians: ‘it is difficult for Wallace to conclusively answer these questions, as he is not familiar with either the Polynesians or the Australians by personal observation’.

GENESIS OF THE ESSAY

In May 1870, Maclay managed to secure assistance for his planned voyage from the Russian Geographical Society, and transport to his New Guinea destination from the Russian Navy.²⁵ During 1871, while aboard the naval vessel *Vitiaz*, Maclay began work on his essay, ‘Why I chose the is[land] of New Guinea as the base of my voyage to the is[lands] of the Pacific Ocean?’ He would continue sporadically to develop the essay during his stay in New Guinea from 1871 to 1872. Even at this early stage in his travels, it appears that Maclay envisaged the essay as a contribution towards his eventual book, and in the plan for the first volume of his major works, he suggested using the essay as a preface.²⁶

²³ A.R. Wallace, ‘On the Varieties of Man in the Malay Archipelago’, *Transactions of the Ethnological Society* (London) 3 (1865): 212.

²⁴ The idea of Lemuria, or of sunken continental shelves, as a means of explaining natural historical distributions, was particularly fashionable by 1870. Formalized in 1864 by zoologist Philip Sclater to account for the anomalous fauna of Madagascar, the convenience of sunken evidence for ancestral forms was taken up by Wallace in 1867. Ballard, “‘Oceanic Negroes’”, 184. Lemuria was then identified in 1870 by Maclay’s former teacher at Jena, Ernst Haeckel, as the ‘primeval home’ of the human races. Sumathi Ramaswamy, ‘Catastrophic Cartographies: Mapping the Lost Continent of Lemuria’, *Representations* 67 (1999): 92–129.

²⁵ D.D. Tumarkin, *Belyi papuas: N. N. Miklukho-Maklai na fone epokhi* [White Papuan: N. N. Miklouho-Maclay and his epoch] (Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura, 2011), 122.

²⁶ B.N. Putilov, ‘Comments on the Publication of Miklukho-Maklai’s Essay “Why I Chose New Guinea as the Field of My Studies”’, in Miklukho-Maklai, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 379–80.

The first part of the essay was written on loose sheets of paper, while the second part was discovered in the notebook, which has been stitched and glued together from sheets of different sizes and colours. The first Russian edition of the essay, published in 1939, was heavily edited. The original text was then restored by Boris Putilov in the edition of *Collected Works* published in 1993 (and reprinted in 2020). This publication also includes a few notes on loose sheets, placed inside the notebook. One of these notes contains a rough plan of numbered topics and what appear to be numbered headings for footnotes for the essay. Putilov has suggested that Maclay drew up this plan just before he embarked on the *Vitiaz*.²⁷

- (1) I choose New Guinea
 - (2) Sources natural history main zoology anthropology
 - (3) If possible thematically describe position of Papuans as race among others using newer [sources]. Scholars examining this question: Baer, Wallace, Jukes etc.
 - (4) I have no preconceived opinions.
 - (5) Questions of anthropology which need answering.
 - (6) The other side of the voyage.
The dangers are known.
How to get there.
 - (7) Military vessel.
 - (8) Ways to reach New Guinea [Followed by 'U. and V.' in Russian, which probably refers to 'South and East']
 - (9) East coast is less well known.
 - (10) Unknown country – hence interest and difficulties of voyage.
-
- (1) Size of New Guinea.
 - (2) Comments on New Guinea by Jukes, Wallace, Finsch.
 - (3) Dates and people who discovered New Guinea.
 - (4) Voyagers who visited New Guinea.
 - (5) Malay and Melanesian archipelagos. Waitz, Wallace and others.
 - (6) Note from Baer about the area of New Guinea.

My goal is to discern the position of the Papuans in relation to other races and then (viewing as my central aim the ethnographic position of the Papuans) to try and determine their distribution through personal observation.

By the end of 1870, following this period of swift transition from zoologist to ethnographer, during which Maclay read, corresponded and travelled widely, he was able to outline with confidence the scope of his new enterprise. In this short essay or prospectus, 'completed' by 1872, he laid out much of his vision for a sustained field study of the Papuans, with an emphasis on 'stationary observation' at

²⁷ Putilov, 'Comments', 380.

the heart of Papuan territory on the mainland of New Guinea, supplemented by a broad-ranging traverse of the boundaries of Papuan distribution in the surrounding archipelagos. Over the next 12 years, Maclay seldom wavered from the goals set out in this brief document, combining several years of intensive enquiry living amongst Papuan communities at several locations around New Guinea with long-distance surveys of island Melanesia in the east (in New Caledonia, the New Hebrides, Solomon Islands and the Bismarck Archipelago), Australia to the south, Micronesia to the north and the Malay Archipelago and Malay Peninsula to the west.

Maclay may have failed to establish himself as an ancestor for the emergent discipline of modern anthropology – his approach was probably too eclectic, he was too enthusiastic about other avenues for enquiry, and his results went largely unpublished – but this should not deter us from understanding his vision for field research as possessing a coherence and an intent that were fundamentally ethnographic.

Why I Chose New Guinea as the Field of My Studies

N.N. MIKLOUHO-MACLAY (Translated by Raphael Kabo)

I think that I should first explain *why* I chose the island of New Guinea as the goal of my expedition and the focus for my research. In reading expedition accounts, I found most of them entirely lacking in description of the natives in their primitive state, i.e. the state in which peoples of the lower races lived and still live before direct contact with whites or races with some degree of civilization (such as Indians, Chinese, Arabs, and so forth). The explorers either spent too little time among these natives to be able to acquaint themselves with their ways of life, customs, the degree of their mental development and so forth; or they spent the majority of their time collecting or on the observation of other animals, and only ever brought their attention to bear on people in the second instance. Such neglect of the study of primitive races seemed to me greatly to be regretted given that these races, as is well known, disappear with each passing year following contact with European civilization.

It seemed to me that time was of the essence, and the goal – *the study of primitive peoples* – appeared sufficiently worthy to dedicate a few years of my life. This was entirely in accord with my desire to see other parts of the globe, and my knowledge was sufficient to the challenge. My studies in human anatomy and medicine would considerably enhance the anthropological work that I was planning to pursue.

But where were these primitive tribes of people to be found, free from the influence of others who had already ascended to a higher degree of civilization?

Among the countless islands of the Pacific Ocean, those of Melanesia are less well-known than the rest, although they hold great scientific interest, and among them, New Guinea is of prime importance as the largestⁱ and the least studied.ⁱⁱ

Although it was discovered more than 300 years ago,ⁱⁱⁱ only a portion of the region's coasts are familiar to Europeans through the visits by voyagers of various nationalities.^{iv}

The interior of the island and its nature remain unstudied.

Although the scientific expedition of Wallace – which clarified for us the distribution of fauna in the Malay Archipelago and allowed for interesting conclusions pertaining to the geological history of our planet – approached New Guinea as its outer limit, it has shed some light on its fauna.

In Wallace's opinion, the fauna of New Guinea belongs to the Australian fauna, but as it is so little known, it is not yet possible to draw a final conclusion.

As it presents an entirely different environment for life [from Australia], and as it is a predominantly mountainous country, forested, with a hotter and wetter climate, New Guinea, despite similarities in its fauna, probably also presents significant differences, leading one to hypothesize that it is the only country in the world where organic forms entirely new to us may still be hidden.

Given its position, New Guinea is the central link in the study of the natural history of Polynesia²⁸ and is able to supplement our information regarding the problematic continent, the so-called Lemurū [Lemuria].

It is not only in a zoological sense that New Guinea presents such a rich field of studies. It is also important both anthropologically and ethnographically, as it is inhabited by the little-studied race of Papuans, whose position among the other [races] has barely been established.^v

More isolated and less subjected to mixing with other tribes, the inhabitants of New Guinea may provide a point of reference for comparison with the scattered dark-skinned inhabitants of the Malay and Melanesian archipelagos. In itself, [the race of Papuans] likely consists of not one, but many different tribes.

These were the considerations which prompted me, while planning the forthcoming expedition to the islands of the Pacific, to choose New Guinea as the base for my expedition. Of the many questions noted above, in terms of ethnology, I set myself two problems which, I think, should be solved before the others, as they are of great general scientific interest, namely: firstly, to clarify the anthropological relation of the Papuans to other races in general, which is still barely established; secondly, so far as possible and through my own observations, to establish the distribution of this race in relation to the other tribes of the Pacific, for I am of the opinion that by doing so, the ethnology of the tribes inhabiting the islands of the Pacific will be greatly clarified, as this is still open to dispute.

As I am not undertaking systematic zoology and have no inclination to assemble collections of interest to the zoologist or geographer, Wallace's goals cannot govern my expedition.

Comparative anatomical studies, on the other hand, allow me a fair degree of latitude in any future change in research location, and thus I have developed my

²⁸ 'Polynesia' was commonly used, in Russia and elsewhere, during much of the 19th century to designate either Oceania generally, or the South Pacific specifically.

expeditionary plan with anthropo-ethnographic goals in view, in the course of which I will always have time for specialist anatomical studies.

Having decided thus, I swiftly identified New Guinea as the first station of my voyage, being the most challenging in every respect and before my strength had been gradually depleted from other exertions.

Now I should report briefly on what is known about New Guinea. However, our knowledge in this regard is very limited, and others have thoroughly collated what meagre information can be found scattered across various travel accounts. Finsch, for instance, has gathered everything related to New Guinea in a single book. I will note, however, for the sake of completeness, that in a zoological sense New Guinea presents peculiarities. In the work of [Carl von] Baer, which I have already quoted a number of times, we find an excellent analysis of the material regarding that segment of the human race which inhabits New Guinea. The material has been critically studied and organized, and a number of questions have been advanced which await answers.

Therefore, almost all the scientific literature about New Guinea has been assembled, and all that remains for me is to venture forth in search of new facts; before this, however, I would like to reveal to my readers why the anthropological position of the race which presents itself to me for study has yet to be determined.

Rather than concentrating on the first reports about the Papuans and the various descriptions of them presented by Baer, I have turned directly to the most recent opinions about them, which continue to appear right up to the present day, and among others I touch on two which address the subject from different angles, namely the zoological and the linguistic.²⁹

Wallace, who spent almost eight years in close contact with the Papuans and the Malays and, as he describes it, in constant observation of them, very energetically argues for the difference between the two tribes, based not only on their physical appearance, but also on their character. Counting the Malays among the peoples of Asia, he assigns the Papuans to the Polynesians, who, along with the inhabitants of Australia, he considers the vestiges of one common Oceanian race, which once inhabited a continent now covered with ocean.

Wallace also talks about the Alfuru, distinguishing them from the Papuans and placing them closer to the Malays, though not counting them among the latter. He considers them, along with the Malays, to be of Asiatic provenance.³⁰

²⁹ Maclay's text addresses only the first of these two recent works on Papuans, which is the zoological work of Wallace; from other references amongst his papers, it seems likely that the second work, on linguistics, was that of the German linguist Hans Conon von der Gabelentz, *Die melanesischen Sprachen nach ihrem grammatischen Bau und ihrer Verwandtschaft unter sich und dem malaisch-polynesischen Sprachen* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1860).

³⁰ The category of Alfuru or Alfuro was a focus for considerable debate throughout the latter half of the 19th century. Likely of Iberian and ultimately Arabic origin – as *al forro* or free person – it was already current in the East Indies by the early 16th century to designate interior communities not under the control of coastal polities or colonial rulers. During the 19th century, the category was racialized, and regarded as either a hybrid race intermediate between Papuan and Malay, or a separate race altogether, indigenous to what is now eastern Indonesia. Maclay regarded the category

If there were proof for any of these theories, the question of the relation of the tribes would be easily resolved. However, there remains a significant challenge in linking the Papuans and the Polynesians, as they are distinct both in language and appearance. The association of the Australians with the Papuans would appear less problematic.

Moreover, it is difficult for Wallace to conclusively answer these questions, as he is not familiar with either the Polynesians or the Australians through personal observation; at least I can find no information in his book on travels in Polynesia or Australia.

As for the great difference which he finds between the Malays and the Papuans: since Blumenbach, almost all classifiers of the tribes of humanity have consistently distinguished the former from the latter.

[Maclay's Footnotes]

- i The size of New Guinea has not yet been accurately determined. There are two camps of opinion: one estimates it to be 10,800 square miles in area, the other proposes 13,000 square miles. [In his notes to the publication in the *Collected Works*, Maclay scholar D.D. Tumarkin suggests that Miklouho-Maclay is referring here to the German geographic mile, equal to 7420 metres.³¹] We can gain a better understanding of its size by comparing it with distances in Europe: the length of New Guinea is approximately equal to the distance from Gibraltar to Amsterdam, and at its widest is wider than the Pyrenean [Iberian] Peninsula from Valencia to Lisbon (or from Paris to Trieste) (see: O. Finsch, *Neu-Guinea und seine Bewohner*. Bremen, 1865, p. 12). In *Petermann's Geographische Mitteilungen* (1869, Plate 20) there is a map of New Guinea and a map of western Europe at the same scale for comparison: according to this, New Guinea is approximately the same size as Austria.
- ii J. B. Jukes (Jukes J.B., *Narrative of the Surveying Voyage of H.M.S. 'Fly'. 1842–1846*. London, 1847, vol. 1, p. 291) writes of New Guinea that he knows of no other part of the world where exploration would so flatter the imagination, and which is probably so rich with interesting results for the naturalist, the ethnologist, the geographer, and all together; the interior of New Guinea will very likely reward the enlightened curiosity of the brave explorer. Further on he exclaims that contemporary reports make the interior of New Guinea seem akin to the magical lands of Arabian tales,

with scepticism and made little use of the term in his own writing. See von Baer, 'Über Papuas und Alfuren'; Wallace, *The Malay Archipelago*, 270; E.T. Hamy, 'Les Alfouros de Gilolo d'après de nouveaux renseignements', *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie* (Paris), 6th series, 13 (1877): 480–91; R. Virchow, 'Alfuren-Schädel von Ceram und anderen Molucken', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 14 (1882): 76–93; Adolf Bernhard Meyer, *Über die namen Papúa, Dajak und Alfuren* (Wien: Carl Gerold's Sohn, 1882).

³¹ D.D. Tumarkin, 'Notes to the Publication of Miklukho-Maklai's Essay "Why I Chose New Guinea as the Field of My Studies"', in Miklukho-Maklai, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 381.

so cloaked is it in darkness and so filled with hidden wonders [here Maclay very closely paraphrases the original passage from Jukes]. A.R. Wallace writes that no other country in the world produces such unique, new and beautiful creations of nature as does New Guinea (Wallace A.R. *Der Malayische Archipel. Deutsche Ausgabe von Meyer*. Braunschweig, 1869. Bd. 2, S. 293), and further on [he refers to] New Guinea [as] the largest *terra incognita* remaining to be explored by naturalists.

- iii New Guinea was probably (the sources are not entirely reliable) discovered by the Portuguese [Jorge] de Menezes between 1526 [crossed out in the manuscript: - 28]. The name 'New Guinea' was given by [Bernardo de la] Torre and [Íñigo] Ortíz de Retes in 1545, during their second voyage, in reference to the 'dark-skinned and curly-haired population', which they found similar to African negroes. Baer (Baer K. von. 'Ueber Papua und Alfuren', *Mémoires de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences de St. Pétersbourg*. Sixième série. Sciences Naturelles. 1859. T. 8. S. 275; also off-print) writes that Menezes was probably on an island west of New Guinea, while the Spanish explorer Álvaro de Saavedra [Cerón] discovered the northern coast of New Guinea and it was he, according to some Spanish sources (Hevera), who named the region New Guinea after the curly hair of the inhabitants.
- iv Finsch, in the first pages of the work mentioned above, provides a list of voyagers and scientists who have visited the shores of New Guinea. Here it will suffice to note that much of the credit for the exploration of the north-eastern, northern, and western shores of New Guinea should be given to Dutch seafarers, while the southern coast has been described by the British. The eastern coast was surveyed by [William] Dampier (who discovered Cape King William) and Dumont d'Urville, who discovered two significant bays – Astrolabe and Humboldt.
- v Waitz Th. *Anthropologie der Naturvölker*. Vol. V. Leipzig, 1865, p. 1.