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# Ethnographic and Imperial Mapping: Miklouho-Maclay's New Guinea Placenames

ELENA GOVOR 

## ABSTRACT

This paper is a fine-grained study of spatial or personal encounters inspiring a highly localized dimension of Oceanic cartography: Indigenous placenames inscribed in sketch maps of New Guinea's Astrolabe Bay and Kowiai Coast by Russian naturalist-ethnographer Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay, the earliest European to undertake extended anthropological fieldwork in Oceania. Maclay's journals, maps, and manuscripts in Russian and Australian archives enable investigation of his personal engagements with places and communities, sometimes imposing his own toponyms while aspiring to ethical placenaming. During long stays in Astrolabe Bay in the 1870s, he documented many Indigenous toponyms. His briefer visit to the Kowiai Coast in 1874 is a case study of the collection of local placenames in contexts of wider interactions involving Indigenous inhabitants, Seramese traders, and transient Dutch colonial officials. Local toponyms recorded by Maclay are juxtaposed and compared with the metropolitan nomenclatures in Russian, German, Dutch, and English which often overlaid or replaced them.

**Keywords:** Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay, New Guinea, Astrolabe Bay, Maclay Coast, Kowiai Coast, toponyms

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The Russian Empire was the fifth European power to send exploratory expeditions to the expanses of the South Pacific, in the wake of Spanish, British, Dutch, and French expeditions since the early 16th century. Like most European voyagers, Russians combined geographical exploration and naturalist inquiry with placenaming, by both imposing names in newly ‘discovered’ lands and trying to record some local toponyms as tokens of their own empirical credentials. These processes were not simply arbitrary: by and large, they followed mainstream tendencies of Western interaction with Indigenous societies; but in the case addressed in this article, they also registered the idiosyncratic impact of one man’s quest for ethnographic authenticity. Historical Russian toponyms in the South Pacific number at least 129.<sup>1</sup> During the first half of the 19th century, most such names resulted from naval visits to Polynesia and Micronesia; however, after 1870 fifty more toponyms were added to Russian maps of New Guinea, primarily due to the naturalist and anthropological investigations conducted by Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay between 1871 and 1883. The earliest non-missionary European to undertake lengthy ethnographic investigation in Oceania, Maclay’s visits were prolonged and repeated around Astrolabe Bay (Madang Province, Papua New Guinea [PNG]); briefer along the Kowiai Coast (West Papua Province, Indonesia); and fleeting in the Admiralty Islands (Manus Province, PNG). Maclay’s toponymic impact constitutes an alternative history not well-known to Western scholars, coupled with a subaltern history of inventory and preservation of Indigenous toponyms.

From the late 1980s, a burgeoning poststructuralist critique of cartography as a quintessentially imperial science excavated long-suppressed historical linkages between power, geographical knowledge, and mapmaking.<sup>2</sup> In the early 21st

*(Acknowledgements continued)*

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<sup>1</sup> N.N. Miklouho-Maclay and E. Govor, ‘O spiske russkikh geograficheskikh nazvanii v Okeanii’ [On the list of Russian geographical names in Oceania], in *Rossiiskoe tsivilizatsionnoe nasledie: russkie toponimy v iuzhnoi chasti Tikhogo okeana: Kollektivnaia monografiia* [Russian civilizational heritage: Russian toponyms in the South Pacific: Collective monograph], ed. E.M. Astaf’eva and S.E. Pale (Moscow: Institute of Oriental studies of Russian Academy of Sciences, 2021), 203–33. All translations are my own unless otherwise stated. Transliteration is based on the Library of Congress system.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., J.B. Harley, ‘Maps, Knowledge, and Power’, in *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments*, ed. Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 277–312; João Sarmiento, ‘Geography and Empire’, in *Oxford Bibliographies in Geography*, ed. Barney Warf (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), <http://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199874002-0227>

century, cartographic historians increasingly acknowledged Indigenous presence by reconfiguring colonial surveying and mapping as dialogic processes of knowledge co-production by global and local (including colonized) agents.<sup>3</sup> A recent parallel literature has addressed power dimensions in toponymy generally.<sup>4</sup> These historiographies are considered in more detail in the introduction to the special issue of which my article is part. The significance of Indigenous agency in placenaming by European voyagers in Oceania has been investigated by Bronwen Douglas since 2010, including in this special issue.<sup>5</sup> Douglas and I explored early Russian cases in a joint paper.<sup>6</sup> However, as Douglas insists, such contexts ‘are in no sense colonial’, since they occurred during the first phase of fleeting coastal or seaborne encounters between locally entrenched Oceanian people and relatively vulnerable European voyagers.<sup>7</sup> In New Guinea, the initial phase endured to the late 19th century. It can be considered ‘imperial’ only with respect to naval officers’ patriotic, class, and racial attitudes or intentions, rather than Indigenous understandings or non-existent subservience.

In this article, I argue that varied motivations and experience underpinned the broad strategies involved in Russian imposition or recording of toponyms around the littoral of Astrolabe Bay. Against the backdrop of momentary, mostly eponymous political or personal placenaming by highly transient Russian naval personnel, Maclay’s plural toponymy resulted from his ongoing, reflexive engagement with people, places, general principles of ethnographic mapping, and an aspiration to an ethical approach resulting from profound ethnographic immersion. Over the course of two long stays and one brief visit in Astrolabe Bay and a short stay on the Kowiai Coast, these processes were accompanied by his increasing interest in and championing of Indigenous toponyms. The article

<sup>3</sup> E.g., Michael T. Bravo, ‘Ethnographic Navigation and the Geographical Gift’, in *Geography and Enlightenment*, ed. David N. Livingstone and Charles W.J. Withers (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 199–235; D. Graham Burnett, “‘It is Impossible to Make a Step without the Indians’: Nineteenth-Century Geographical Exploration and the Amerindians of British Guiana”, *Ethnohistory* 49, no. 1 (2002): 3–40; Felix Driver and Lowri Jones, *Hidden Histories of Exploration: Researching the RGS-IBG Collections* (London: Royal Holloway, University of London, and RGS-IBG, 2009); Kapil Raj, *Relocating Modern Science: Circulation and the Construction of Knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650–1900* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 60–94, 181–222.

<sup>4</sup> E.g., Lawrence D. Berg and Jani Vuolteenaho, eds, *Critical Toponymies: The Contested Politics of Place Naming* (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2016 [2009]); Frédéric Giraut and Myriam Houssay-Holzschuch, eds., *The Politics of Place Naming: Naming the World* (London and Hoboken, NJ: ISTE Ltd, 2022).

<sup>5</sup> Bronwen Douglas, ‘*Terra Australis* to Oceania: Racial Geography in the “Fifth Part of the World”’, *Journal of Pacific History* (henceforth *JPH*) 45, no. 2 (2010): 179–210; idem, “‘Very Beautiful Land’: Malay Knowledge, Spanish Voyages, and Indigenous Presence in Iberian Mapping of New Guinea”, *JPH*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223344.2024.2411987>

<sup>6</sup> Bronwen Douglas and Elena Govor, ‘Eponymy, Encounters, and Local Knowledge in Russian Place Naming in the Pacific Islands, 1804–1830’, *Historical Journal* 62, no. 3 (2019): 709–40.

<sup>7</sup> Bronwen Douglas, ‘Naming Places: Voyagers, Toponyms, and Local Presence in the Fifth Part of the World, 1500–1700’, *Journal of Historical Geography* 45 (2014): 13–14.

is not a history of Indigenous toponymies per se but seeks primarily to unpick a very early ethnographer's efforts to learn and map the names given locally to places where he lived or visited.

## THE MAKING OF AN ETHNOGRAPHER

In 2014, I went to the location of Maclay's first hut, on a promontory he named Point of Solitude in a bay the Russians called Port Grand Duke Constantine (now Melamu Bay), south of Madang (Madang Province, PNG). While there, I remembered Maclay's drawing of the spot with a stream nearby. The stream was still there. 'Is this Bela stream?' I asked the Gorendu people who brought me there. Yes, it was, and they were amazed to discover that a stranger might share their intimate knowledge of a placename preserved as an oral tradition by a handful of people.

These two opposite processes – imposition of foreign nomenclature and preservation of Indigenous – were inherent to Maclay's involvement with New Guinea. They were deeply intertwined with contemporary conventions and his own personal, moral, and academic position. Born in 1846, Maclay was brought up in St Petersburg in a family with Ukrainian, German, and Polish roots, sharing Russian democratic values. From his youth, he was on the side of the oppressed and unprivileged, be they Poles, women, or later, Indigenous people. Although Maclay did not come to the South Pacific until 1871, more than 40 years after the golden era of Russian geographical expeditions, he grew up on the travel writings of these explorers. After the untimely death of his father Nikolai Il'ich Miklukha, his mother Ekaterina Seme-novna (née Becker) coloured maps for publishers at home to support the family, fascinating young Nikolai and perhaps influencing the style of his own maps.

On finishing his naturalist and medical education in German universities, Maclay conceived a plan to study South Pacific populations. Returning to St Petersburg, he met Friedrich von Lütke and enthusiastically discussed Lütke's ethnographic and geographical studies of the Caroline archipelago, undertaken while circumnavigating the globe in the late 1820s.<sup>8</sup> As a result Lütke, then vice-chairman of the Russian Geographical Society, was instrumental in supporting Maclay's expedition to the South Pacific.<sup>9</sup>

## TOPONYMIC STRATEGIES AT ASTROLABE BAY

In 1870, with the support of the Russian Geographical Society and the Emperor's family, Maclay was taken by the Russian naval vessel *Vitiaz* to New Guinea and landed on the northeast coast at Astrolabe Bay in September 1871. The ship anchored for several days while Maclay's hut was built and the ship's commander,

<sup>8</sup> Douglas and Govor, 'Eponymy', 731–8.

<sup>9</sup> 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), 118–19.

Pavel Nazimov, took the opportunity to engage his officers in a hydrographic survey of the southern section of the uncharted bay. Maclay's journal describes their activity:

Many places were given names. The small bay where the *Vityaz* lay at anchor was named in honour of the Admiral and President of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society, Port [Grand Duke] Constantine. All the headlands were named after the officers making the survey, and the island which could be seen at Cape Duperrey was named Vityaz Island (afterwards I learnt that the native name was Bili Bili).<sup>10</sup>

I have been unable to find the original surveys in a Russian repository. However, a manuscript copy of the *Vitiaz* chart of Astrolabe Bay was recently located in the UK Hydrographic Office (Figure 1).<sup>11</sup> The Russian Naval Ministry eventually published the results of the *Vitiaz* survey, replete with Russian eponyms, in an official naval map of 1885 (Figure 2).<sup>12</sup> Point Observation (Gabina) seems to be the only place named for its function, as it served as the precisely mapped reference point for surveying the rest of the bay. Otherwise, having bestowed the politically judicious eponym Port Grand Duke Constantine on Melamu Bay, Nazimov allowed other geographical features to be named for seven obscure officers.

Maclay's remark about the Indigenous name Bili Bili in one of his initial journal entries is telling. A couple of weeks later, after the ship's departure, Maclay received his first lesson in local geography from his friend Tui (Figure 3), who took Maclay under his protection and became his language teacher:

<sup>10</sup> Mikloucho-Maclay, *New Guinea Diaries, 1871–1883*, tr. C.L. Sentinella (Madang, PNG: Kristen Pres, 1975), 27. Cape Duperré was named for a French admiral by Jules Dumont d'Urville, who called Astrolabe Bay after his own ship. Cape Duperré still appears in an Australian map of 1888 but by the early 20th century has vanished, whereas Astrolabe Bay endures to the post-Independence present. Anon., *New Guinea* (Sydney and Melbourne: The Picturesque Atlas Publishing Company, 1888), National Library of Australia, Canberra (henceforth NLA), MAP RM 5184, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-2865301272>.

<sup>11</sup> Anon., *Severo-vostochnyi bereg ost. Papua ili N. Gvinei: Karta bukhty Astrolabiia i porta Velikii Kniaz' Konstantin ... korveta Vitiaz pod komandoiu kapitana 2-go r. Nazimova ... 1871* [North-east Coast of Is. Papua or N. Guinea: Chart of Astrolabe Bay and Port Grand Duke Constantine ... of the Corvette *Vitiaz*, commanded by Captain Nazimov ... 1871], UK Hydrographic Office, A3331, shelf Lc. I thank Jan Hasselberg for finding and photographing a copy of this map.

<sup>12</sup> P. Trustalevskii, supervised by P. Briantsev, *Plan Zapadnogo berega bukhty Astrolabiia na severnom beregu ostrova Novoi Gvinei: Po opisi ofitserov korveta "Vitiaz" pod komandoiu kap. 2 ranga Nazimova v 1871 g. i ofitserov korveta "Skobelev" pod komandoiu kap. 2 ranga Blagodareva v 1883 g.* [Plan of the western shore of Astrolabe Bay on the northern coast of New Guinea Island: Based on the survey of the officers of the corvette *Vitiaz* commanded by captain 2nd rank Nazimov in 1871 and officers of the corvette *Skobelev* commanded by captain 2nd rank Blagodarev in 1883] (St Petersburg: Hydrographical Department of Naval Ministry, 1885), Russian State Library, Moscow (henceforth RSL), KGR Ko 20/IX-55. This composite map of the *Vitiaz* and *Skobelev* surveys has an inset 'Plan of Port Grand Duke Constantine'.

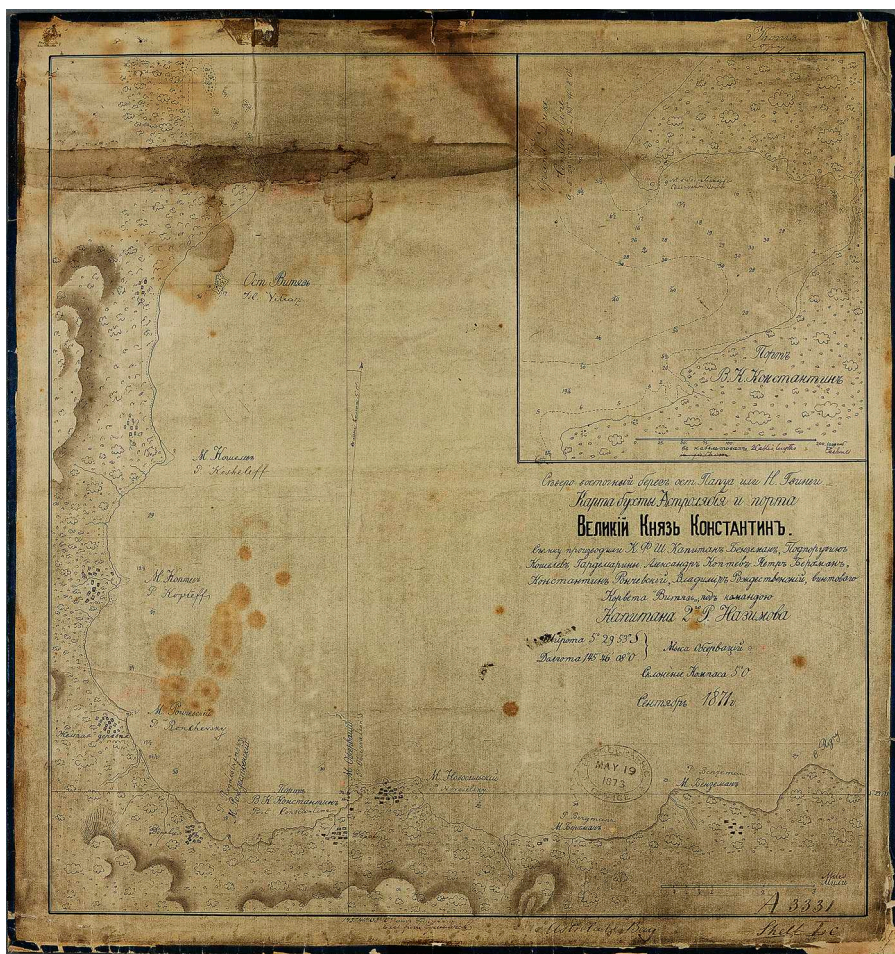


FIGURE 1: Anon., [North-east Coast of Is. Papua or N. Guinea: Chart of Astrolabe Bay and Port Grand Duke Constantine ... from the surveys of ... the Corvette *Vitiaz*] (1871), UK Hydrographic Office, A3331, shelf Lc.

I learnt from Tui today the names of various villages which are visible from my cape. I am surprised at the number of names – each tiny promontory, each rivulet has its particular native name. Thus, for example, the small promontory on which my cabin stands, where no one had ever lived before me is named Garagassi; Cape Observation, opposite, is Gabina, and so on ... To the east of Garagassi is the village ... called Gumbu, then further along is Maragum, and still further Rai.

In this case, when Maclay still did not know the local language and was unable to ask the question ‘What is this?’, the physical go-between, his notebook, was especially important:

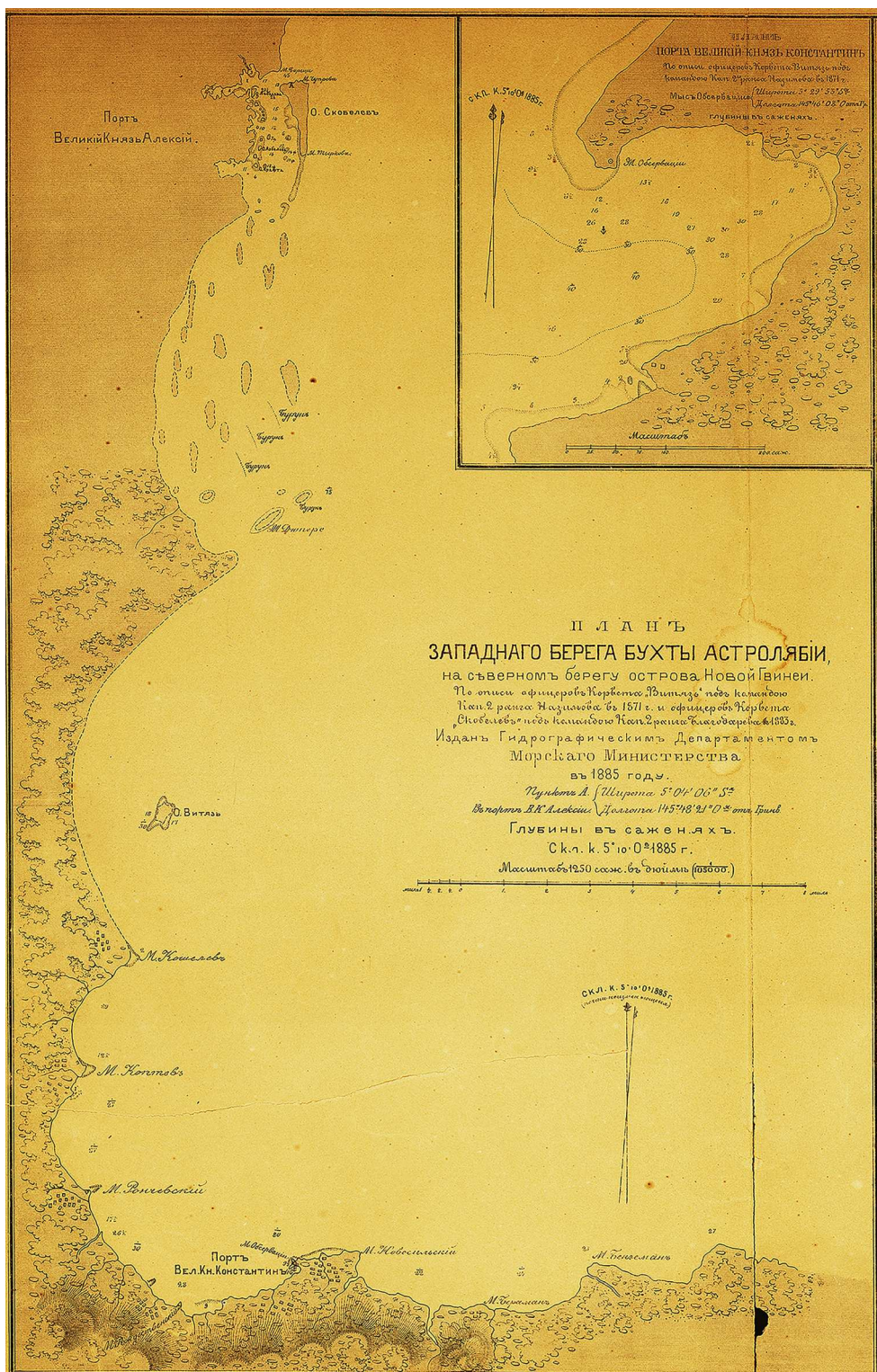


FIGURE 2: P. Trustalevskii, supervised by P. Briantsev, [Plan of the western shore of Astrolabe Bay ... : Based on the survey of ... the corvette *Vitiaz* ... in 1871 and ... the corvette *Skobelev* ... in 1883] (1885), Russian State Library, KGR Ko 20/IX-55.

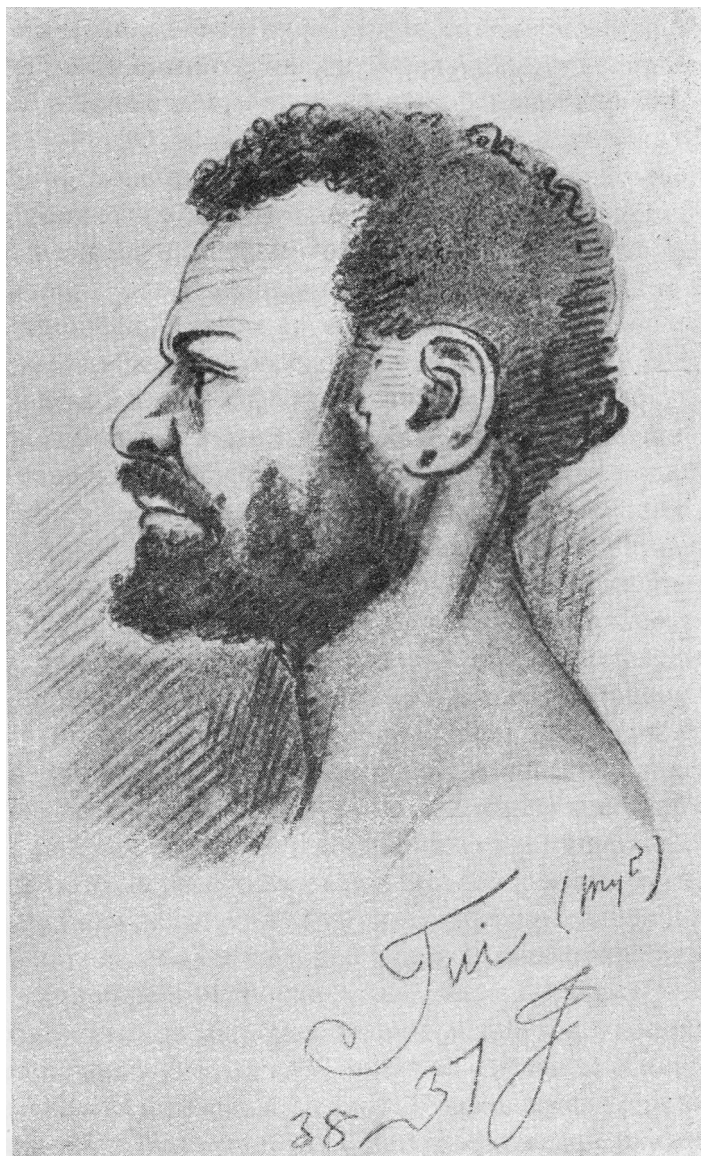


FIGURE 3: N.N. Miklukho-Maklai, 'Tui', in *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh*, vol. 1 (1950), 85.

When I heard the names I wrote them down, of course, and on the same piece of paper did a sketch of the whole bay, making a note of the relative positions of the villages. Tui understood this and I checked the pronunciation of the names several times, reading them over aloud, while Tui corrected not only two of the names but even the sketch of the map itself.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Mikloucho-Maclay, *New Guinea Diaries*, 48.

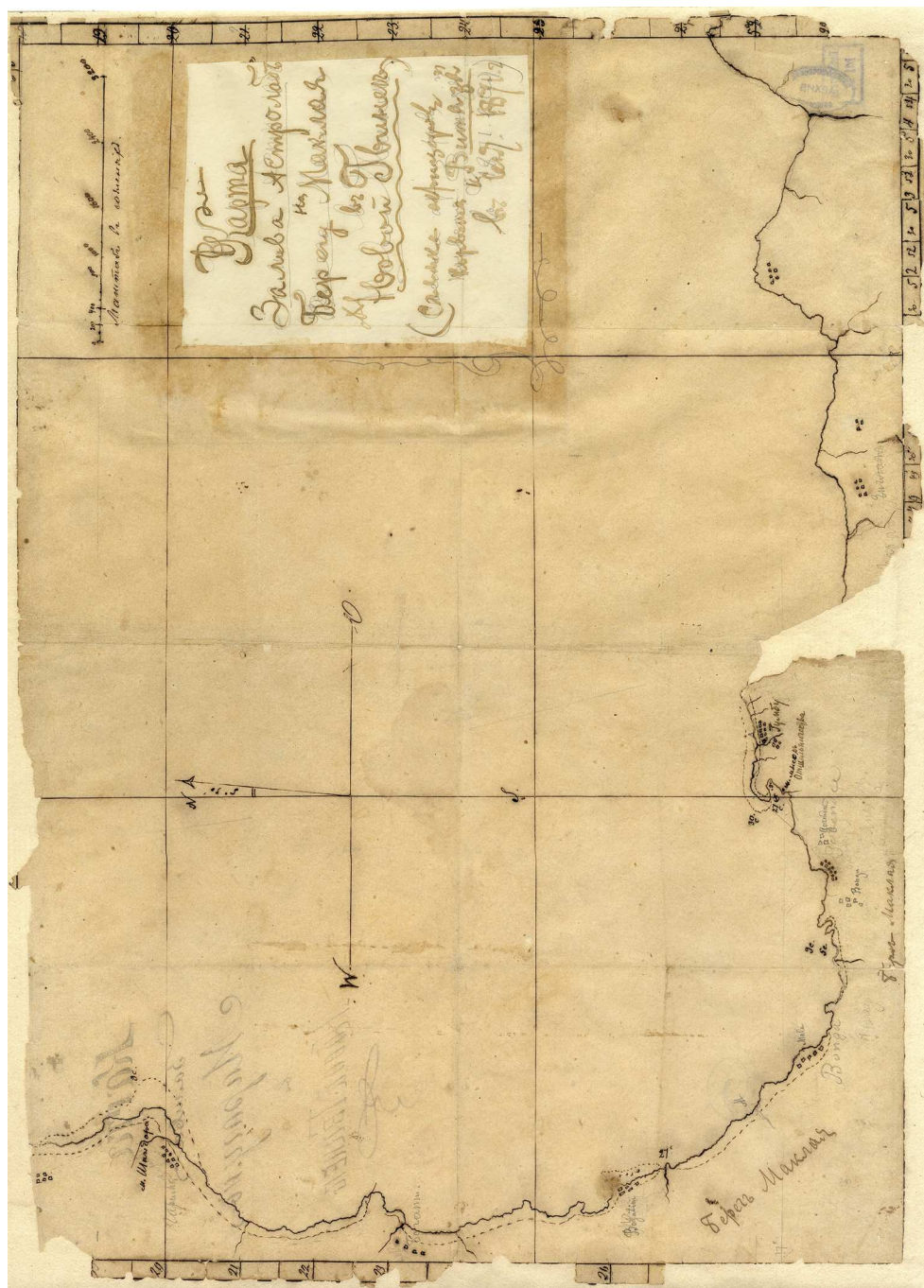


FIGURE 4: N.N. Miklouho-Maclay, [Map of Astrolabe Bay on the Maclay Coast in New Guinea (survey by officers of the corvette *Viliac* in Sept. 1871)] (n.d.), Russian Geographical Society Archive, St Petersburg, f. 6, op. 3, no. 49.

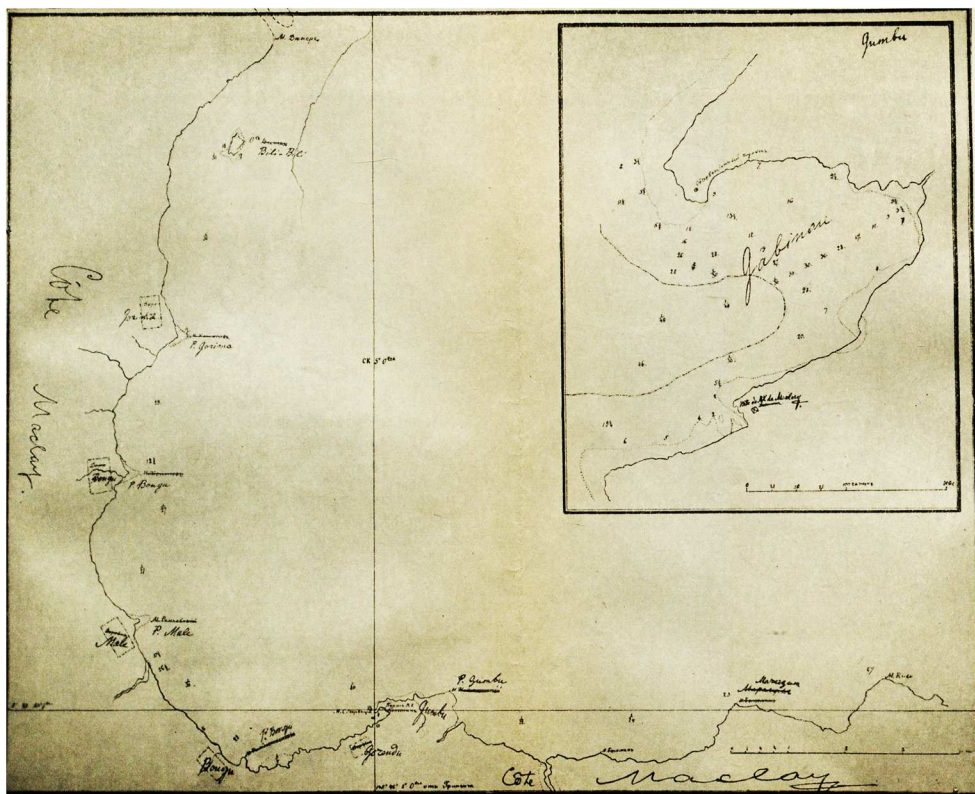


FIGURE 5: N.N. Miklukho-Maklai, 'Côte Maclay' (n.d.), in *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh*, vol. 2 (1950), 336–7.

A very tattered sketch map, recently located in the Russian Geographical Society archives (Figure 4),<sup>14</sup> may well be the one drawn by Maclay under Tui's instruction in the early stages of his visit. Scribbled in pencil on a coastal outline, evidently copied from the *Vitiaz* survey, are most of the placenames mentioned above, while some are written more neatly in pencil or ink, including the site of Maclay's hut on 'Point of Hermitry'. The verso of the map bears the legend 'Karta zaliva Maragum v Novoi Gvinee' (Map of Maragum Bay in New Guinea). The toponym Maragum does not appear on the map but it does clearly mark a settlement where the name Maragum appears on a similar map, its original now lost (Figure 5).<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, Maclay included 'Point

<sup>14</sup> N.N. Miklouho-Maclay, 'Karta zaliva Astrolab na Beregu Maklaia v Novoi Gvinee (S'emka ofitserov korveta "Vitiazia" v sent. 1871 g.)' [Map of Astrolabe Bay on the Maclay Coast in New Guinea (survey by officers of the corvette 'Vitiaz' in Sept. 1871)], Russian Geographical Society Archive, St Petersburg, f. 6, op. 3, no. 49.

<sup>15</sup> N.N. Miklukho-Maklai, 'Côte Maclay', in *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh* [Collected works in five volumes] (Moscow-Leningrad: Izdatelstvo Akademii nauk, 1950–4), vol. 2 (1950), 336–7.

Maragum' in a subsequent list of toponyms.<sup>16</sup> He evidently did not repeat his early extension of this local placename to the entire bay and that usage has not survived.

Maclay's interaction with Tui is not ethnographic mapping in the 19th-century Russian imperial sense of maps intended 'to visualize the geographical territories inhabited by various ethnolinguistic groups';<sup>17</sup> or in the recent technical anthropological sense of systematic spatial comprehension of kinship and other patterns performed by a researcher in the field. Rather, the term here denotes a reciprocal process of mapping places and their names as an essential part of ethnographic encounter and interaction. Indeed, the episode determined Maclay's consequent attitude to local toponyms. From then on, he painstakingly recorded them and his maps feature almost nothing from the Russian officers' placenaming frenzy, which continued during a subsequent naval visit in 1883.<sup>18</sup> In the second of his sketch maps (Figure 5), Maclay methodically deleted most of the Russian eponyms and replaced them with Indigenous toponyms.

At first sight, Russian placenaming in Astrolabe Bay might seem to have involved two opposing strategies: the imperialist as enacted by the naval officers, whereby European names were imposed on an apparently blank cartographic canvas for descriptive purposes, to honour sponsors, or for personal aggrandizement; and the ethnographic, whereby Maclay championed and endeavoured to preserve Indigenous names. But this apparent dichotomy is ambiguous and breaks down in practice, since Maclay also added toponyms of his own devising to the New Guinea map. Almost all the alien placenames have long since disappeared. Most of those bestowed by the Russian surveyors were confined to naval maps with restricted circulation and only briefly impinged on wider cartography, if at all. Most of the relatively few invented by Maclay had little currency beyond his sketches and notes. However, those notebooks, sketchbooks, and journals also record a detailed ethnographic toponymy, distilled from the lived knowledge of places and their names that local people chose to share with him.

## TOPONYMY OF COLONIAL ASPIRATIONS

This picture of placenaming in action gains depth from probing the impetus for Russian toponymic activity in New Guinea in the context of burgeoning competitive

<sup>16</sup> N.N. Miklukho-Maklai, *Sobranie sochinenii v shesti tomakh* [Collected works in six volumes], 2nd edition (St Petersburg: [Miklouho-Maclay Foundation], 2020 [1990–6]), vol. 4, 221, 222, <https://book.mikluho-maclay.ru/>. I prefer to cite this edition because the earlier one of 1950–4 was heavily and inappropriately edited. However, I refer below to the original edition for illustrations not subsequently reproduced.

<sup>17</sup> Catherine Gibson, *Geographies of Nationhood: Cartography, Science, and Society in the Russian Imperial Baltic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 4.

<sup>18</sup> P. Trustalevskii, supervised by P. Briantsev, *Plan Zapadnogo berega bukhty Astrolabiï* (1885); *Plan porta Velikii kniaz' Aleksii, v bukhte Astrolabiï: Po opisi, proizvedennoi ofitserami korveta "Skobelev" v 1883 godu*. [Plan of Port Grand Duke Alexey in Astrolabe Bay: Based on the survey conducted by the officers of the corvette *Skobelev* in 1883] (St Petersburg: Hydrographical Department of Naval Ministry, 1885), RSL, KGR Ko 20/IX-55.



that the proximity of these islands to Australia, which was rapidly developing, would provide them with a 'brilliant future'. 'These are the reasons', he wrote, 'why it would be extremely beneficial for Russia to plant its banner in these remote but rich' islands, especially since these lands, 'luxuriously endowed by nature', allegedly belonged 'to nobody', 'even as a colony'. Kaulbars also proposed that the Russian Naval Ministry, which at that time was preparing the ship *Vitiaz* for departure to the Pacific Ocean, with 'zoologist Miklouho-Maclay on board', could conduct a survey of the islands to determine their suitability as a Russian colony. Fearing that there would be few people willing to move there at first, Kaulbars advised initially sending a thousand people 'sentenced by the court to exile in the settlement', who would do the preliminary work of setting up the colony. He was convinced that exile would be a temporary measure, free settlers would come without delay, and soon the systematic development of the 'New Russia' colony in the South Pacific would begin.<sup>23</sup> The memorandum was soon published in the major newspaper *Saint Petersburg Herald*, while a new version was reprinted under the heading 'On the founding of a Russian colony in Australia' in the *Kronstadt Herald*, an unofficial naval and maritime periodical.<sup>24</sup> Rumours about these plans and Miklouho-Maclay's expedition reached Australia, where newspapers in April 1871 raised the alarm about: 'an indirect method of establishing a footing in that territory preliminary to ultimate annexation to the present vast possessions of the Russian Empire, the contiguity of which to this part of the world is already sufficiently approximate for all peaceful purposes'.<sup>25</sup>

I have found no further official Russian reaction to Kaulbars' proposal. Moreover, Russia, which had sold its overseas territory Alaska to the United States only three years previously, had no plans to acquire territories in South Pacific. Nonetheless, Kaulbars' interest was obviously noted by Captain Nazimov of the *Vitiaz*. He led his ship to the islands recommended in the memorandum and anchored at Port Praslin (Lassim Bay) in New Ireland, named for the French Navy Minister in 1768 by the navigator Louis-Antoine de Bougainville. There, Nazimov prepared a detailed appraisal of the island's potential, drew a map, and 'named the bay of our anchorage Russian Bay'. As the vessel proceeded along New Guinea's northeast coast, Nazimov conferred other political and personal toponyms. He named the strait between Umboi Island and New Guinea after the Russian Emperor Alexander II, thereby effacing its earlier eponym, the English navigator William Dampier who in 1700 was the first European to traverse the

<sup>23</sup> N.V. Kaulbars, [Memorandum], in M.F. Matveeva, 'Dokladnaia zapiska barona N.V. Kaulbarsa o russkoi kolonizatsii na Tikhom okeane, 1870 [Memorandum of Baron N.V. Kaulbars about Russian colonization in the Pacific Ocean, 1870]', in *Sankt-Peterburg – Avstraliia* (St Petersburg: European House, 2014), 166–73.

<sup>24</sup> N.V. Kaulbars, [Memorandum], in *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti* (8 August 1870); idem, 'Ob osnovanii russkoi kolonii v Avstralii [On the founding of the Russian colony in Australia]', *Kroshtadtskii vestnik* (19 August 1870).

<sup>25</sup> 'Ubiquity', 'The Russian Scientific Expedition to New Guinea', *Argus* (15 April 1871): 6.

strait.<sup>26</sup> Nazimov named the channel between Long Island and New Guinea after his own ship *Vitiaz*.<sup>27</sup>

Throughout this passage, Nazimov's officers charted the adjacent coastlines which, he complained, were not 'correctly outlined on the available maps' – such maps certainly included those of New Guinea published in the two editions of Adam Johann von Krusenstern's *Atlas Iuzhnogo moria* (*Atlas of the South Sea*), the first atlas dedicated to the Pacific Ocean. Both versions clearly marked Dampier's Strait and the later one incorporated the results of the coastal survey of northern New Guinea undertaken in 1827 by the French navigator Jules Dumont d'Urville.<sup>28</sup> Arriving at Astrolabe Bay, Nazimov found that it was completely uncharted, as 'Captain Duperrey identified only its entrance capes'.<sup>29</sup> Nazimov reported to the Naval Ministry that, during the ship's stay of seven days, the cadets under the senior navigating officer 'carried out hydrographic work to compile a map of the bay' (see Figure 1), imposing their own names on several points south of Bili Bili Island, itself called Vitiaz Island. Port Grand Duke Constantine, named after the Czar's brother, formed an eponymic pair with Alexander II Strait.

This toponymic activity, especially the name Russian Bay and the imperial eponyms, might be seen as the first step in establishing a Russian footing in the South Pacific by claiming territory for a colony along the lines proposed by Kaulbars, thereby emulating British and French actions in New Zealand, eastern Polynesia, and New Caledonia in the 1840s and 50s. Nazimov, for his part, was clearly using his own initiative in his routes and toponymic work, following the call of his patriotic heart rather than direct government instructions. He admitted while passing New Britain that he had to abandon a closer survey of the shoreline, which had been 'mapped incorrectly', because 'the special purpose of my sailing is not an inventory of the coast', despite its geographical importance.<sup>30</sup>

The second Russian naval visit to New Guinea – in the *Izumrud* to collect Maclay in 1872 – produced only one new toponym. The strait between Karkar Island and the New Guinea mainland is still named Isumrud Strait, but it was Maclay's doing, not that of the ship's commander M.N. Kumani who obviously did not see himself as a 'discoverer'. But the next Russian visit in 1883 – by the

<sup>26</sup> William Dampier, 'A View of the Course of Cap<sup>t</sup>. Wil. Dampiers Voyage from Timor Round Nova Brittannia &c.', in *A Voyage to New-Holland, &c. in the Year 1699* (London: James Knapton, 1703), endpiece.

<sup>27</sup> [P.N.] Nazimov, 'Iz vlechenie iz raporta komandira korveta "Vitiaz"' [Extract from the report of the commander of the *Vitiaz*], *Morskoï sbornik* 119, no. 4 (1872): 7–10.

<sup>28</sup> I.F. Kruzenshtern, 'Karta Novoi Gvinei [Map of New Guinea]', in *Atlas Iuzhnogo moria* (St Petersburg: s.n., 1824), vol. 1, plate 2; idem, 2nd edition (St Petersburg: s.n., 1835), vol. 1, plate 2.

<sup>29</sup> Like Astrolabe Bay itself, its fringing capes Rigny and Duperré were named by Dumont d'Urville (see note 5) and not by his compatriot Louis-Isidore Duperrey, who had traversed this coastline from well west of Astrolabe Bay in 1824. Jules Dumont d'Urville, *Voyage de la corvette l'Astrolabe ... pendant les années 1826–1827–1828–1829 ... Histoire du voyage* (Paris: J. Tastu, 1830–3), vol. 4 (1832), 546; vol. 5 (1833), 600.

<sup>30</sup> Nazimov, 'Iz vlechenie', 9.

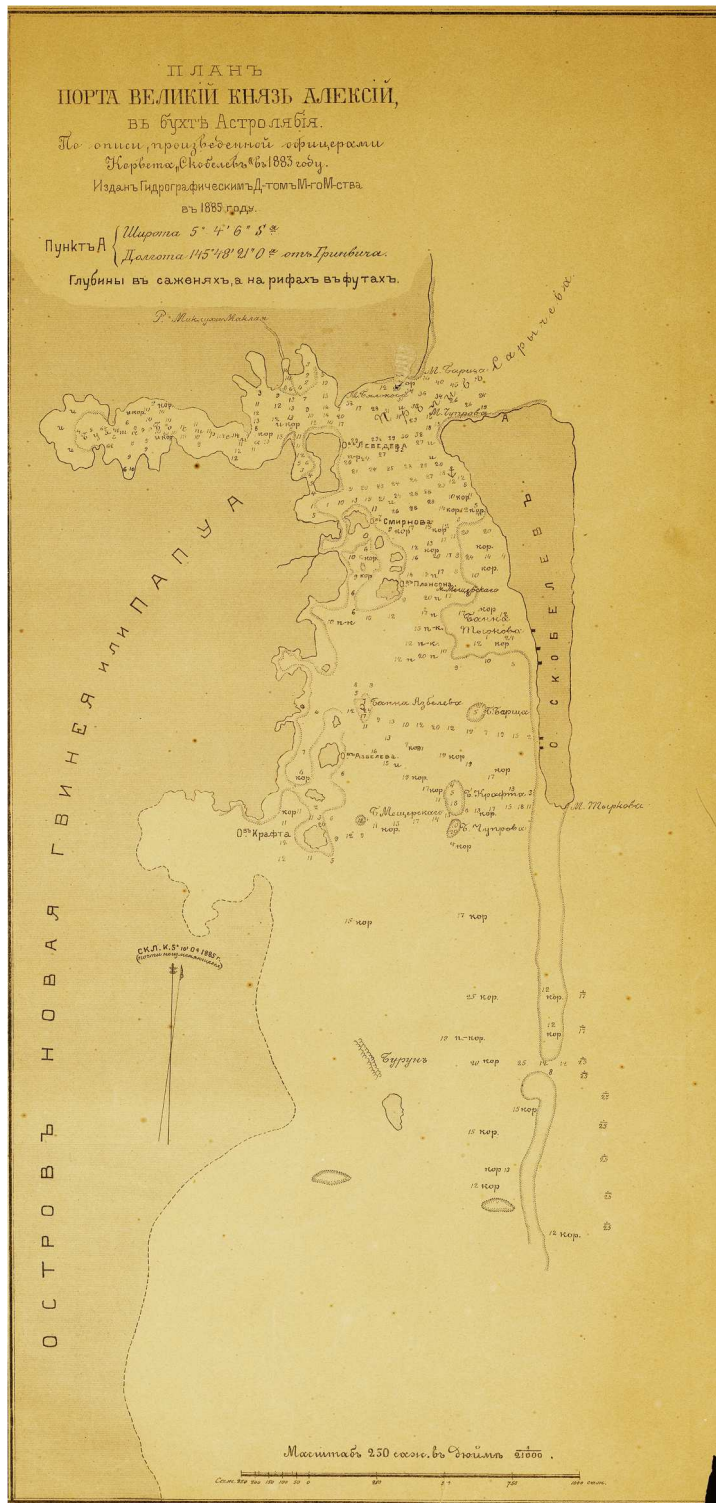


FIGURE 7: P. Trustalevskii, supervised by P. Briantsev, [Plan of Port Grand Duke Alexey in Astrolabe Bay: Based on the survey ... of the corvette *Skobelev* in 1883] (1885), Russian State Library, KGR Ko 20/IX-55.

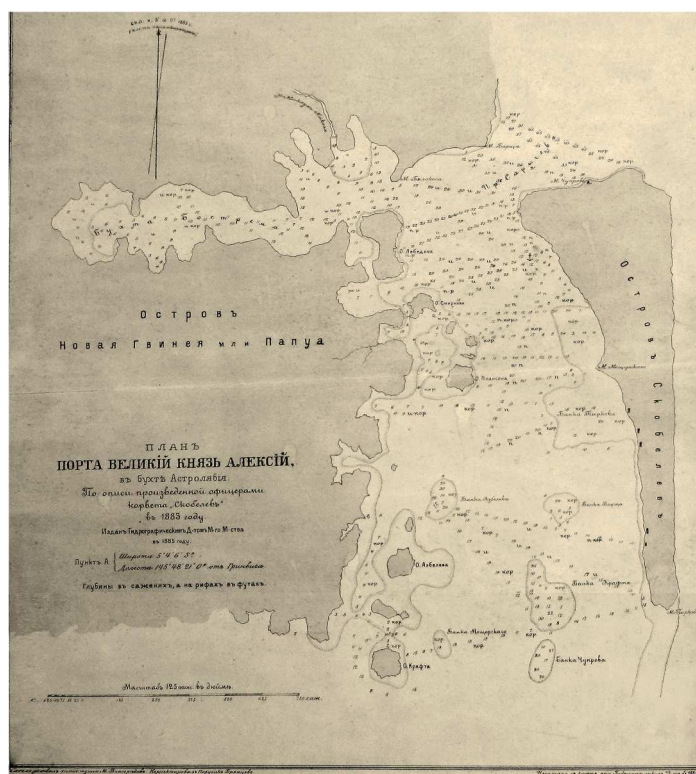


FIGURE 8: M. Vinogradov, supervised by P. Briantsev, [Plan of Port Grand Duke Alexey in Astrolabe Bay: Based on the survey conducted by the officers of the corvette *Skobelev* in 1883] (1885), Russian State Library, KGR Ko 110/IV-4.

naval vessel *Skobelev* – resulted in hydrographic exploration and charting of the northern part of Astrolabe Bay and an unprecedented spate of placenaming. In total, 20 locations named for ship's officers were added to the Russian map (Figure 7).<sup>31</sup> This visit was made after Maclay's trip to St Petersburg in 1882, when he met with the Emperor and Naval Ministry officials to promote his idea of Russia's claiming some territory in the South Pacific in the face of other countries' colonial advances in the area. Maclay secretly planned to establish a proto-Papuan state and a colony based on the democratic principles of likeminded compatriots, disguised at first as a Russian naval or coaling station in the northern basin of Astrolabe Bay.<sup>32</sup>

In 1885 the Naval Ministry published its detailed composite map of Astrolabe Bay with two separate cartouches representing the hydrographical and placenaming activities of *Vitiaz* and *Skobelev* officers in 1871 and 1883

<sup>31</sup> Trustalevskii, *Plan Zapadnogo berega bukhty Astrolabiï* (1885); *Plan porta Velikii kniaz' Aleksii* (1885). In some cases the same name was used twice: Azbelev Island and Azbelev Rock; Barshch Point and Barshch Sandbank.

<sup>32</sup> Tumarkin, *Belyi papuas*, 455–9.

(see Figures 2 and 7).<sup>33</sup> The Ministry also published a larger-scale version of the map of Port Grand Duke Alexis as a separate edition (Figure 8).<sup>34</sup> In 1886, another Russian naval ship, the *Vestnik*, continued charting islands in the western basin, uncompleted by the officers of the *Skobelev*. The *Vestnik*'s visit was brief, its surveys have not been published, and there is no indication that the crew engaged in place-naming, since northeastern New Guinea had already been annexed by Germany in 1884. In late 1886, the Russian government made a final decision against Maclay's plans for a Russian colony in the South Pacific in any form and after his premature death in 1888 the scheme was abandoned and forgotten. As happened several times in Oceania, the geopolitical pragmatism of rival imperial governments trumped the romantic aspirations of citizens on the spot.

## TOPONYMY OF ETHNOGRAPHIC IMMERSION

This episode of Russian toponymic interest in a particular area of New Guinea had another dimension. Beyond naval surveys, Maclay's involvement with the place was in a quite different register, which I refer to broadly as ethnographic mapping. Its essential aspects are local immersion and participant observation.

Maclay's early adherence to democratic humanist values, his education in liberal German universities, and his early anti-racist position resulted in an idea innovative for his time. The English naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace, who met Maclay before his departure for New Guinea, remembered his creed that 'you could really learn nothing about natives unless you lived with them and became almost one of themselves; above all, you must win their confidence, and must therefore begin by trusting them absolutely'.<sup>35</sup> Learning language was the key to such immersion and establishing the names of things and places was logically a crucial element in the process. Indeed, Maclay's first paper written aboard the *Vitia*, which entered the South Pacific from the east and visited Easter Island (Rapa Nui) en route, started with the principle of adherence to Indigenous names:

Rapa Nui Island, or Easter Island, like most islands in the Pacific Ocean, goes by several names. The ancient name of the island, still preserved among the natives, is Matakirangi, but it fell into disuse because the island was known among the inhabitants of other archipelagos only under the name Rapa Nui, which replaced the ancient name.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Trustalevskii, *Plan Zapadnogo berega bukhty Astroliaii* (1885); *Plan porta Velikii kniaz' Aleksii* (1885).

<sup>34</sup> M. Vinogradov, supervised by P. Briantsev, *Plan porta Velikii kniaz' Aleksii, v bukhte Astroliaii: Po opisi proizvedennoi ofitserami korveta "Skobelev" 1883 godu*. [Plan of Port Grand Duke Alexey in Astrolabe Bay: Based on the survey conducted by the officers of the corvette *Skobelev* in 1883] (St Petersburg: Hydrographical Department of Naval Ministry, 1885), RSL, KGR Ko 110/IV-4.

<sup>35</sup> Alfred Russel Wallace, *My Life: A Record of Events and Opinions*, 2 vols (London: Chapman & Hall, 1905), vol. 2, 35.

<sup>36</sup> Miklukho-Maklai, *Sobranie sochinenii* (2020), vol. 1, 59.

The dichotomy between Indigenous names and those imposed by European ‘discoverers’ is longstanding. In the case of early Russian expeditions in the Pacific, Douglas and I traced the close correlation between long stays – which allowed for engagement with Islanders and encouraged some interest in their agency and knowledge – and adherence to the use of Indigenous toponyms.<sup>37</sup> This is especially true for the maps of the voyages of Otto von Kotzebue and Lütke. In contrast, in his groundbreaking *Atlas of the South Sea*, Krusenstern favoured ‘for clarity’ the placenames given by European explorers over Indigenous ones. Anticipating publication of the French version of his *Atlas*, Krusenstern made the explicit point that Russian discoveries were neglected by Western savants and Russian names should be used on maps to promote their recognition.<sup>38</sup> As the first Russian circumnavigator, Krusenstern no doubt had a personal stake in the matter.

Maclay consistently used only Indigenous placenames, when available, and made specific enquiries about them in his travels. Preparing his New Guinea journal for publication, Maclay tended to qualify Indigenous names with European, presumably for clarity: ‘Mana-boro-boro, as the natives call the Finisterre Range’.<sup>39</sup> Illustrating the breadth of Maclay’s impact, the distinction gained some traction in subsequent European mapping of New Guinea: ‘Mana-Boro-Boro or Finisterre Mts’ in an Australian map of 1888; and ‘Finisterre-Geb. [range]’/‘Bura-Mana’ in an influential German atlas published just after the First World War.<sup>40</sup> Hundreds of Maclay’s field sketches are labelled with Indigenous names: for village or locality, person(s) portrayed, and artefacts. For the ethnographer needing to build relationships with local inhabitants, despite limited knowledge of their vernacular and without even a go-between language, the tools of dialogical history were extremely important. A crucial device was drawing.<sup>41</sup> Maclay’s first experience of this type of interaction was in sketching a map and discussing placenames with his friend Tui (see Figure 2). It is notable that later these dialogues became reciprocal – Maclay would show maps to Indigenous people to explain the whereabouts of his own country. In the fifth month of his stay, he recorded that Tui was ‘beginning to get very interested in geography; he repeated after me the names of parts of the world

<sup>37</sup> Douglas and Govor, ‘Eponymy’.

<sup>38</sup> Kruzenshtern, *Atlas Iuzhnogo moria*; Adam Johann von Krusenstern, *Atlas de l’Océan pacifique* (2 vols, St Petersburg: s.n., 1824–7); I.F. Kruzenshtern, *Sobranie sochinenii, sluzhashchikh razborom i iz’iasneniem Atlasa Iuzhnogo moria kapitan-komandorom Kruzenshternom* [A collection of works serving as an analysis and explanation of the Atlas of the South Sea by Captain-Commander Krusenstern] (St Petersburg: s.n., 1827), part 2, II.

<sup>39</sup> Mikloucho-Maclay, *New Guinea diaries*, 141.

<sup>40</sup> Anon., *New Guinea* (1888); Richard Andree, ‘Kaiser-Wilhelmsland und Bismarck-Archipel’, in *Andrees Allgemeiner Handatlas*, ed. Ernst Ambrosius, 7th edition (Bielefeld und Leipzig: Velhagen & Klasing, 1921), plate 223, Internet Archive, [https://archive.org/details/andrees\\_allgemeiner\\_handatlas00biel/page/223/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/andrees_allgemeiner_handatlas00biel/page/223/mode/2up)

<sup>41</sup> Chris Ballard, ‘The Return of the Past: On Drawing and Dialogic History’, *Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 14, no. 2 (2013): 136–48.

and countries which I showed to him on the map. But it is very probable that he considers Russia a little larger than Bongu or Bili Bili'.<sup>42</sup>

Combining a placename with the word *tamo* (man, people) allowed Maclay to identify visitors to his hut and build the first conversations, when he had just started to learn the vernacular language. The simplicity and transparency of this construction was used by his hosts in Gorendu village when he was first invited to attend a feast. Offering food, they called out guests by their personal name and the name of their village, including 'Maclay, *tamo* Russ' (Maclay, the man from Russia).<sup>43</sup> Thus, through a local toponymic model, the villagers localized his hitherto uncertain status in their world.

Attention to Indigenous toponyms had practical value for Maclay's studies, for instance into the history of people's migrations. He recorded the name of a village, Aralu, destroyed by an earthquake and tidal wave along with its people in about 1856; a few surviving people resettled in Gumbu village.<sup>44</sup> Maclay's meticulous notes remain valuable for contemporary research. In my interview with Gumbu people in 2014, they mentioned the destruction of Agalu village which, they believed, occurred between Maclay's first and second visits: that is, between 1871 and 1876.<sup>45</sup> Thus, the toponym associated with the story preserved by Maclay allows a more precise reconstruction of historical events than that offered solely by oral histories. In another case, he recorded data which he could not interpret: some sort of microtoponyms attributed to each part of a village. When Russian anthropologists came to Bongu village a century later with Maclay's notes, they discovered that these terms were names of *vemun* (clans), allowing them to reconstruct genealogies of Bongu village.<sup>46</sup>

Maclay's position with respect to local placenames was multifocal. Along with carefully recording local names, he also named places himself. His stay of nearly three years (1871–2 and 1876–7) in Astrolabe Bay was very demanding, often becoming a task of pure survival, and placenames he chose can serve as markers of his emotional and mental journeying. Before he learnt from Tui that the promontory where his hut was built was called Garagassi, he named it Point of Solitude or Point of Hermitry, because initially he saw himself as a hermit who had left the white man's world for the sake of science. Later, when the hut turned out not to have been built on a deserted crag but at the crossroads of the area's trading and social routes, it became the centre of his interactions with local people. At this point, especially in scholarly publications, he referred to the location as Garagassi, rather than Solitude. Sketching the spot, he manifested his attachment to it by intricately scripting the Indigenous name, as if writing the monogram of his

<sup>42</sup> Mikloucho-Maclay, *New Guinea diaries*, 112.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>44</sup> Miklukho-Maklai, *Sobranie sochinenii* (2020), vol. 4, 225–6.

<sup>45</sup> Galupi Muar and Galom Dagaun, Gumbu people, Gorendu village, Madang Province, PNG. Interview by Elena Govor 9 September 2014. MP3 file 140909\_012, Govor-Ballard personal archives, ANU.

<sup>46</sup> N.A. Butinov, 'Vemun y derevne Bongu [Vemuns in the village Bongu]', in *Na Beregu Maklaia: Etnograficheskie ocherki* [On the Maclay Coast: Ethnographic essays] (Moscow: Nauka, 1975), 166–7.

beloved.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, the name Bugarlom Point near Bongu village, where Maclay stayed in 1876–7, is an important element of his decoration of the cover of the album, along with drawings of local fish.<sup>48</sup>

Traces of Maclay's mental and emotional travel are also evident in his bestowing names on distant mountains, which he did freely as he believed they belonged to no particular group and had no common name. So he called mountains in Mana-Boro-Boro after the German philosophers Kant and Schopenhauer – both names feature in later German and British maps.<sup>49</sup> Maclay's papers frequently quote their philosophical writings on the quintessential mysteries of being, which were probably consolatory to ponder while looking at the distant mountains. There is a reference to such meditations in Maclay's journal of 1883: 'As the sun was going down the view of the high ranges and their peaks, Kant and Schopenhauer, was magnificent'.<sup>50</sup>

The naming of the mountain range directly behind his hut was multidimensional. He called the entire chain after Karl Baer, a Russian Baltic German anatomist whose armchair studies influenced Maclay's choice to work in New Guinea – 'Baer Mts' appears on the Australian map of 1888.<sup>51</sup> And he named particular peaks after people important to him: Mt Meshchersky, after Prince Meshchersky; Mt Elena, after Grand Duchess Elena; and Mt Constantine, after the Grand Duke. Although these choices might seem honorific and political, they were also deeply personal. Alexander Meshchersky was Maclay's closest friend since their years together at university. Grand Duchess Elena, widow of Michael, brother of the Emperors Alexander I and Nicholas I, was a patroness of the arts who took the former rebel student Maclay under her wing. In 1870, she introduced him to her salon where she brought together writers, scholars, liberal public servants, and members of the royal family; many liberal reforms in Russia sprang from this salon. There, Maclay met Grand Duke Constantine, one of the most brilliant and ardent liberals in Russia. As head of the Russian Navy, he facilitated Maclay's voyage on a naval vessel straight to New Guinea. Maclay's patriotism is probably reflected in his naming one mountain after the Russian Emperor Peter the Great and his pragmatism in naming another after Gorchakov, the minister of foreign affairs.<sup>52</sup>

However, it seems that Maclay only memorialized his European attachments and connections in naming natural features that appeared to be nameless or had

<sup>47</sup> Miklukho-Maklai, *Sobranie sochinenii* (2020), vol. 1, 88, 266.

<sup>48</sup> Miklukho-Maklai, *Sobranie sochinenii* (1954), vol. 5, 307.

<sup>49</sup> E.g., Andree, 'Kaiser-Wilhelmsland und Bismarck-Archipel' (1921); Great Britain, War Office, *British & German New Guinea* (London: War Office, 1906), American Geographical Society Library, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, (AGS) 501.4 A-1906, <http://collections.lib.uwm.edu/cdm/ref/collection/agdm/id/1263>; Hermann Haack, 'Neu-Guinea und der Bismarck-Archipel', in *Stielers Hand-Atlas* (Gotha: Justus Perthes, 1907), plate 81, David Map Collection, Stanford Libraries (henceforth DRMC), <https://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/view/search?search=SUBMIT&cat=0&q=0961178>.

<sup>50</sup> Mikloucho-Maclay, *New Guinea diaries*, 318.

<sup>51</sup> Anon., *New Guinea* (1888).

<sup>52</sup> Miklukho-Maklai, *Sobranie sochinenii* (1950), vol. 2, 416–17.

multiple possible local names – mountains, straits, bays, and an archipelago. His interests were shaped by living in extremely close personal contact with Indigenous people and the tapestry of their materiality. His field notebooks, diaries, and drawings preserve over 120 local placenames in the Astrolabe Bay area, painstakingly elicited and recorded.<sup>53</sup> Drawing on such intimate immersion, Maclay invented a meaningful toponym. With regard to the northern part of Astrolabe Bay, he noted: ‘The strait between the mainland of New Guinea and Graged [Island] ... could serve as a good harbour’. He added: ‘I shall have to try to find a name for this bay, since, although each island has its name the bay is simply called the sea by the natives’.<sup>54</sup> Accordingly, he named the harbour after Grand Duke Alexis, son of the Emperor Alexander II, whom he had met in 1870. But he chose a collective name for the entire group of islands on very different grounds, stimulated by Indigenous agency:

The life of these people, their relations with each other, their conduct towards their wives, children and animals made an impression on me that they are quite happy with their fate, themselves, and everything that surrounds them. I have therefore named this group of islands, on which no European apart from me has stepped foot, and which does not appear on any maps, the Archipelago of Contented People – a name which the inhabitants have so far deserved.<sup>55</sup>

As in many other aspects of his life, Maclay’s idealism did not stick. His whimsical toponym was misconstrued or derided by would-be colonizers. The British traveller-colonial administrator Hugh Romilly, who spent ten days around Astrolabe Bay in 1881, disparagingly reworded Maclay’s placename: “‘The Archipelago of useless idle men’ would have been probably nearer the mark’.<sup>56</sup> The German naturalist and colonial agent Otto Finsch endorsed Romilly’s opinion in 1884, noting sardonically that ‘these “contented” people also often seemed quite discontented, and arguments that are resolved with weapons also occur’.<sup>57</sup> Currently, the islands of the Archipelago of Contented People no longer share this or any other common name.

Later, when trying to prevent the European colonial invasion of New Guinea, Maclay used the name in anticolonial arguments. He claimed in public lectures in St Petersburg in 1886 that the invasion of traders ‘would awaken greed in the local inhabitants’ and unleash a spate of kidnapping: ‘One shouldn’t be surprised if, given such circumstances, “the Archipelago of Contented People” will in time become “the Archipelago of Savage People”, or perhaps “the Archipelago of

<sup>53</sup> Counted on ‘Index of geographical names’ in Miklukho-Maklai, *Sobranie sochinenii* (2020), vol. 6, 64–132.

<sup>54</sup> Mikloucho-Maclay, *New Guinea diaries*, 216.

<sup>55</sup> Miklukho-Maklai, *Sobranie sochinenii* (2020), vol. 1, 273.

<sup>56</sup> Hugh Hastings Romilly, *The Western Pacific and New Guinea ...* (London: John Murray, 1886), 126, 220–31.

<sup>57</sup> Otto Finsch, *Samoafahrten: Reisen in Kaiser Wilhelms-Land und Englisch-Neu-Guinea in den Jahren 1884 u. 1885 an Bord des Deutschen Dampfers “Samoa”* (Leipzig: Ferdinand Hirt & Sohn, 1888), 107, 110.

Murderers”’.<sup>58</sup> His paternalistic prediction was arguably validated after the German colonial occupation, when racial tensions erupted in the so-called Madang rebellion of 1904.<sup>59</sup>

Maclay also contrived a more significant, relatively enduring toponym by applying the term Maclay Coast to the wider Astrolabe Bay area, which lacked a regional Indigenous name. He claimed, with some vanity, that he named it ‘by the right of the first European who settled there, explored this shore and gained scientific results’.<sup>60</sup> In 1881 he added a pragmatic reason for the nomenclature:

The name of ‘Maclay Coast’ was used by me, as far back as 1872, for the sake of greater convenience of reference in scientific description, so as not to have to repeat continually the geographical position of the part of the Coast, explored between the Cape Croisilles and Cape King William, a tract of land with a coast line of above 150 miles, extending inland to the highest Ranges, averaging a width of 50–60 miles, and this description has been adopted by the scientific world.<sup>61</sup>

In marked distinction to the commonly held Russian view, some Western scholars have interpreted Maclay’s act of naming a place after himself as an imperial imposition.<sup>62</sup> This reading might appear persuasive, given that Russian naval commanders and Maclay himself inscribed names of members of the Russian royal family on maps of the area. However, it is equally plausible to argue that, beyond practical or imperial considerations, the seemingly egotistic toponym Maclay Coast materialized his feeling of intimate attachment to a particular area. On his numerous maps, Maclay Coast is intermingled with Russian and local toponyms,<sup>63</sup> not perhaps a marker of an imperializing strategy but a material trace, created in discourse with the inhabitants, of a place with which he identified.

Maclay Coast quickly entered anthropological, naturalist, and political discourse during Maclay’s lifetime. In the Anglophone world, John C. Galton in 1874 adopted the term from Maclay’s own usage (*Maclay-Küste*) in a recent scientific account of his ethnographic activities.<sup>64</sup> Galton’s paper was

<sup>58</sup> Miklukho-Maklai, *Sobranie sochinenii* (2020), vol. 3, 366.

<sup>59</sup> John Burton, *The Yaganon People of the Rai Coast: Ethnography and Social Mapping Study*, rev. edition (Thursday Island, QLD: Pacific Social Mapping for Highlands Pacific Limited, 2000 [1999]), 2–3, 21, 59.

<sup>60</sup> Miklukho-Maklai, *Sobranie sochinenii* (2020), vol. 1, 276.

<sup>61</sup> N. Miklouho-Maclay, *Travels to New Guinea: Diaries, Letters, Documents*, ed. D. Tumarkin (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1982), 455–6.

<sup>62</sup> E.g., Bradford T. Stull, *Religious Dialectics of Pain and Imagination* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), 72–5.

<sup>63</sup> Miklukho-Maklai, *Sobranie sochinenii* (1950), vol. 2, 325, 416–17.

<sup>64</sup> N. von Maclay, ‘Anthropologische Bemerkungen über die Papuas der Maclay-Küste in Neu-Guinea’, *Natuurkundig Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indie* 33 (1873): 225–49; John C. Galton, ‘Dr von Miklucho Maclay’s Researches among the Papuans’, *Nature* 9 (1874): 328–30.

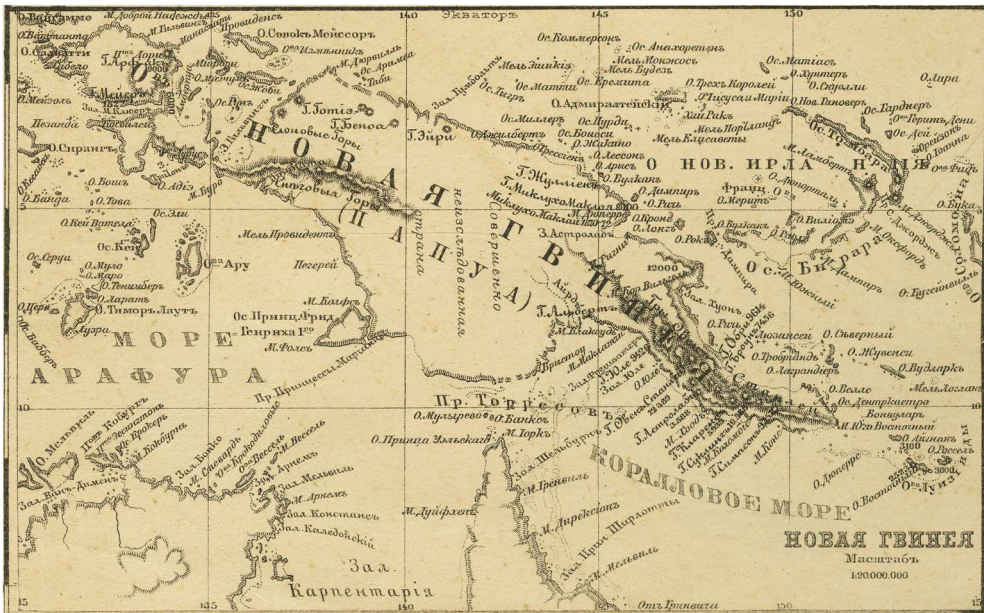


FIGURE 9: N. Kaulbars, 'Novaia Gvineia' (1875), detail, National Library of Russia, St Petersburg, K3-AB/4-4.

immediately publicized in several Australian newspapers, bringing the term 'Maclay Coast' to Australian awareness.<sup>65</sup> It was duly inserted in the colonial map of 1888 and routinely used in British maps.<sup>66</sup> In Russia, Kaulbars published a map of New Guinea indicating the area where Maclay worked and naming a mountain after him (Figure 9).<sup>67</sup> In 1880, a 'Schematic map of the Maclay Coast in New Guinea' based on Maclay's sketches was published by the Russian Geographical Society (Figure 10).<sup>68</sup> Nonetheless, the toponym remained primarily

<sup>65</sup> Anon., 'Dr. von Miklucho Maclay's Researches among the Papuans', *Empire* (8 June 1874): 3; Anon., 'Recent Explorations in New Guinea', *Australian Town and Country Journal* (13 June 1874): 18–19; Anon., 'Researches among the Papuans by Dr. von Miklucho Maclay', *Sydney Morning Herald* (15 June 1874): 3.

<sup>66</sup> Anon., *New Guinea* (1888); Great Britain, War Office, *British & German New Guinea* (1906); Richard Andree, 'New Guinea and the Papuan Archipelago', in *The Times' Atlas*, 2nd edition (London: Office of 'The Times', 1900), plate 128, DRMC, <https://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~253893~5519269>;

<sup>67</sup> N. Kaulbars, 'Novaia Gvineia', inset, in *Karta Avstraliia (Novoi Gollandii) ... po noveishim svedeniiam i puteshestvuiam ...* [Map of Australia (New Holland) ... according to the latest information and travel ...] (St Petersburg: Kartograficheskoe zavedenie A. Il'ina, 1875), National Library of Russia, St Petersburg, K3-AB/4-4.

<sup>68</sup> [Anon. after N.N. Miklukho-Maklai], 'Skhematicheskaia karta Berega Maklaia na Novoi Gvinee [Schematic map of the Maclay Coast in New Guinea]' ([St Petersburg]: Kartograficheskoe zavedenie A. Il'ina, 1880), *Izvestiia Imperatorskogo Russkogo Geograficheskogo obshchestva* 16, no. 2 (1880): attachment.



German military officer who spent the First World War in the general area.<sup>71</sup> The Australian administration after 1918 acknowledged the dual nomenclature ‘Maclay (or Ray) Coast’,<sup>72</sup> but Maclay Coast fades from usage, although it occasionally appears in reports during the Second World War.<sup>73</sup> In Russia, Maclay Coast (or Miklouho-Maclay Coast) remains the only name for this area and its erasure in Western maps is seen as a regrettable loss.<sup>74</sup>

While the name Maclay Coast vanished from Western maps, local people still connect Maclay with several microtoponyms. They remember the exact locations of Maclay’s hut during his first stay at Garagassi and second stay in Bongu. The footpath to these places is still known as *gom Maclay*.<sup>75</sup> Airu cliff on Bili Bili Island, where the inhabitants built Maclay a hut, is associated with him. They told the Australian researcher Mary Mennis in 1977 that he loved to stand there while waiting for a Russian ship.<sup>76</sup> Maclay’s name is also used to commemorate places. In 2014, I noted a primary school building named Maclay School near Garagassi Point. In 2017, during a visit by Nickolay Miklouho-Maclay, a direct descendant of Maclay’s brother, Tui’s great grandson Asel Tui decided to rename his family homestead near Garagassi Point as Maclay village.<sup>77</sup> In 2023, Nickolay reported a brickwork (0.5 m×0.5 m) on the highest point of Bili Bili Island. Although it was possible to distinguish German letters and the date 1910, his guide, Bili Bili elder Samuel Kuiem, and other local people insisted that Maclay himself made the structure. Nickolay documented similar brickwork associated with Maclay on nearby Yabob

<sup>71</sup> Hermann Detzner, ‘Kaiser-Wilhelmsland nach dem Stande der Forschung im Jahre 1919’, *Mitteilungen aus den deutschen Schutzgebieten* 32 (1919): map 1, Basel Mission Archives, Switzerland, BMA KARVAR-31.074, <https://www.bmarchives.org/items/show/100204624>

<sup>72</sup> E.g., Australia, Parliament, ‘Report to the League of Nations on the Administration of the Territory of New Guinea from 1st July, 1921, to 30th June, 1922’, in *Australia. Parliamentary Papers*, 1923 (Second session) ([Melbourne: Government Printer], 1923), Appendix D, 16, NLA, Nq 328.94 AUS, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-2723239517/view?partId=nla.obj-2725935164#page/n296/mode/lup>

<sup>73</sup> Anon., ‘As The Earth Turns: Commentary on World’, *Advocate* (Melbourne), 26 January 1944: 3, refers to the ‘Maklay’ coast.

<sup>74</sup> V.O. Guretsky, ‘Russie geograficheskie nazvaniia v Novoi Gvinee [Russian geographical names in New Guinea]’, *Izvestiia Akademii nauk, Seriya geograficheskaya* 3 (1969): 122–31; Tumarkin, ‘K istorii toponima Bereg Maklaia’.

<sup>75</sup> A.V. Tutorsky, ‘Predaniia o N.N. Miklukho-Maklae v culture zhitelei Berega Maklaia’ [Tales about N.N. Miklouho-Maclay in the culture of Maclay Coast people], 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 ...], ed. P.L. Belkov (St Petersburg, MAE, 2014), 168–9; English version, ‘The Stories about Nicolas Miklouho-Maclay in the Culture of Bongu Village, Madang Province’, [https://www.academia.edu/5869707/The\\_Stories\\_about\\_Nicolas\\_Miklouho\\_Maclay\\_in\\_the\\_Culture\\_of\\_Bongu\\_Village\\_Madang\\_Province](https://www.academia.edu/5869707/The_Stories_about_Nicolas_Miklouho_Maclay_in_the_Culture_of_Bongu_Village_Madang_Province)

<sup>76</sup> Mary Mennis, ‘Na ostrove Bili-Bili (Po sledam Miklukho-Maklaia) [On Bili Bili Island (In Miklouho-Maclay’s footsteps)]’, *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 5 (1989): 117–23.

<sup>77</sup> Miklouho-Maclay and Govor, ‘O spiske russkikh geograficheskikh nazvanii v Okeanii’: 214.

Island.<sup>78</sup> During my 2014 visit, carried out by invitation in strict observation of local protocol, I was taken to a special place of the Ileg people, where ‘Maclay threw a mirror into the sea from the coral cliff’. The story told me by local elders is a creation myth belonging to their people, and the place’s significance is enhanced by tales of Maclay’s activities there.<sup>79</sup> All these echoes, rather than an administratively prescribed placenames, remain the best testimony to Maclay’s ongoing presence in the area.

## RUSSIAN ECHOES IN GLOBAL CARTOGRAPHY

On 19 May 1873, more than a decade before the Russian Naval Ministry published its maps of Astrolabe Bay, the Hydrographic Office of the British Admiralty in London acknowledged receipt of the manuscript copy of the *Vitiaz* officers’ chart (see Figure 1). Russian placenames – mainly officers’ eponyms – are transliterated on the map and the cartouche translated into English on a separate sheet.<sup>80</sup> This map was immediately lithographed verbatim in English translation as Admiralty Chart 1084 (Figure 11).<sup>81</sup>

The Russian manuscript and the new printed chart were despatched to Sydney where John Moresby, who since 1871 had captained HMS *Basilisk* in surveys of northern Australia, Torres Strait, and the western Pacific, was about to return to England via New Guinea’s north coast. He had been asked on behalf of the Russian Geographical Society to investigate rumours that Miklouho-Maclay was ‘missing’ in New Guinea.<sup>82</sup> En route, Moresby did not enter Astrolabe Bay but he met Maclay in June 1874 in hospital in Amboyna (Ambon, Indonesia).<sup>83</sup> Both Moresby and Maclay briefly reported their encounter but neither mentioned their important cartographic exchange. Moresby gave Maclay a copy of his new map of the New Guinea coast, later deposited in the Russian Geographical Society.<sup>84</sup> Moresby also showed Maclay his copy of Admiralty Chart 1084, derived

<sup>78</sup> Nickolay Miklouho-Maclay personal communication, email 29 January 2024.

<sup>79</sup> Manumba Busi and Anang Mull, Ileg people, Bongu village, Madang Province, PNG. Interview by Elena Govor 10 September 2014. MP3 file 140910\_015, 140910\_017, Govor-Ballard personal archives, ANU.

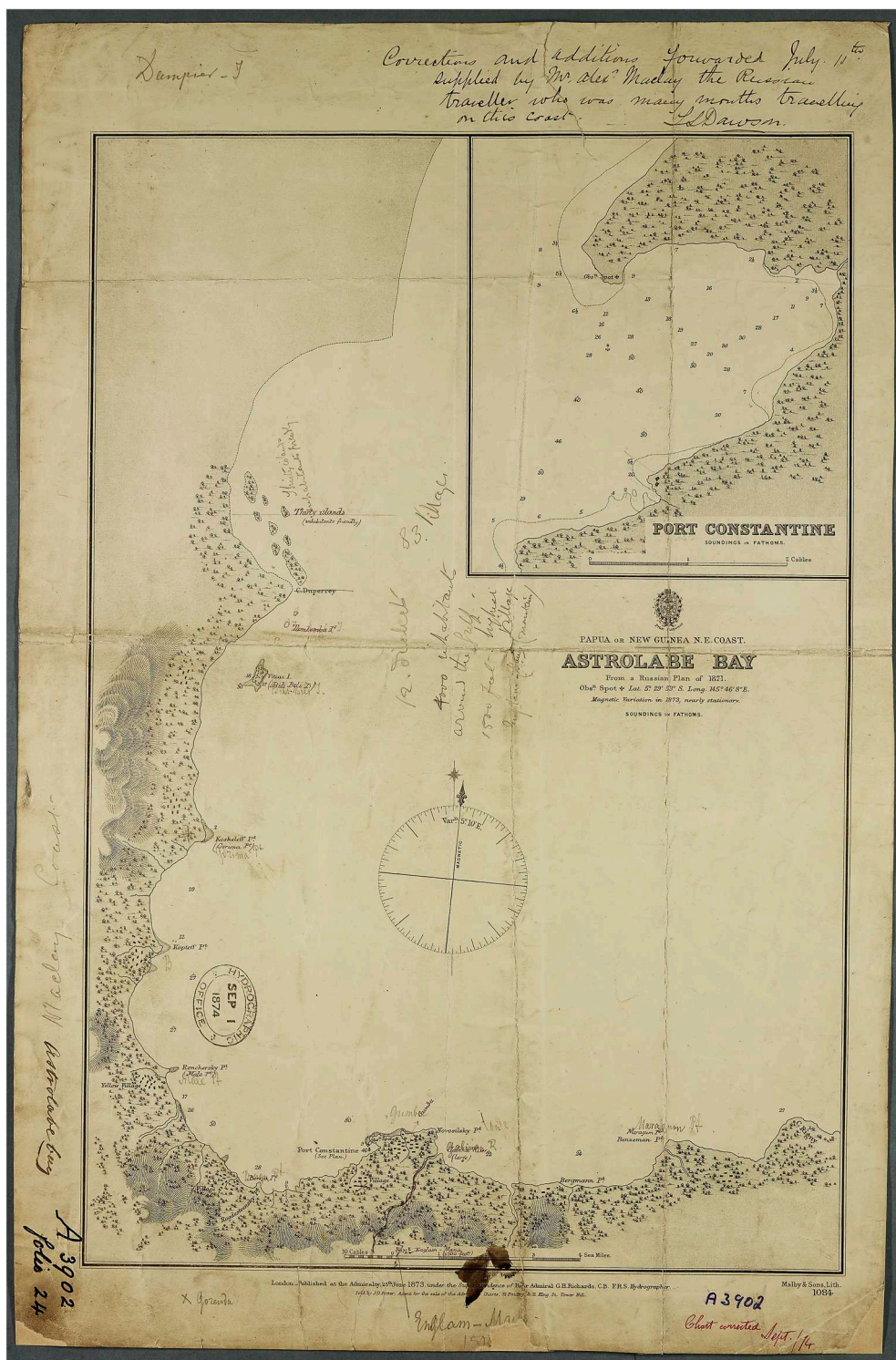
<sup>80</sup> Anon., *Severo-vostochnyi bereg ost. Papua ili N. Gvinei* (1871).

<sup>81</sup> Great Britain, Admiralty, *Papua or New Guinea N.E. Coast: Astrolabe Bay, from a Russian Plan of 1871* (London: Admiralty, June 25, 1873), Chart 1084, UK Hydrographic Office (henceforth UKHO), A3902, folio 24.

<sup>82</sup> John Moresby, ‘Recent Discoveries at the Eastern End of New Guinea’, *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 44 (1874): 14; idem, *New Guinea & Polynesia: Discoveries & Surveys in New Guinea and the d’Entrecasteaux Islands ...* (London: John Murray, 1876), 120, 291.

<sup>83</sup> Miklukho-Maklai, *Sobranie sochinenii* (2020), vol. 1, 298; vol. 2, 7; Moresby, *New Guinea & Polynesia*, 291–3, 326.

<sup>84</sup> E.I. Gleiber in N. Miklukho-Maklai, ‘Dnevnik pervogo putesthestviia na Malakkskom poluos-trove ... [Journal of the first excursion on Malacca Peninsula ...]’, *Izvestiia Gosudarstvennogo geografi-cheskogo obshchestva*, 1–2 (1939): 218, note 2.





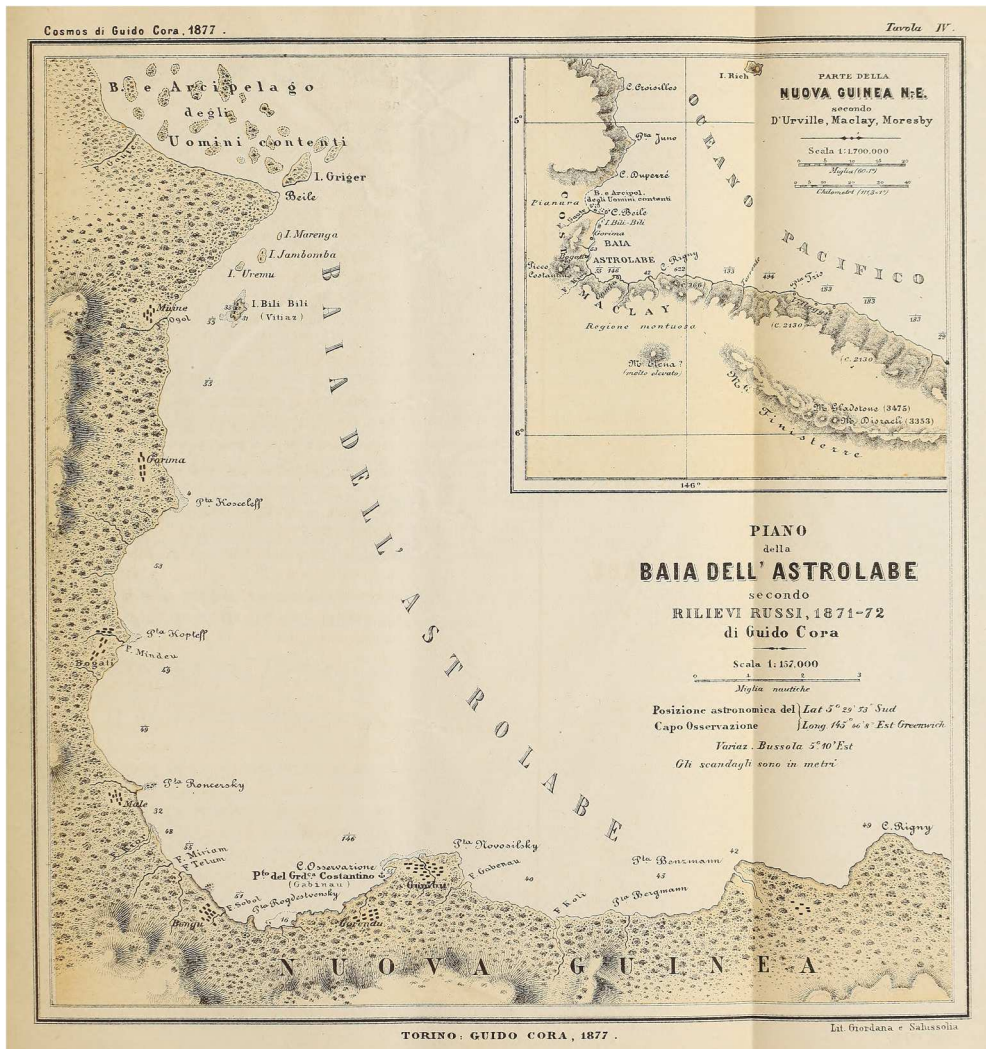


FIGURE 13: Guido Cora, 'Piano della Baia dell' Astrolabe secondo rilievi Russi, 1871–72' (1877), <https://archive.org/details/cosmoscommunicaz4n3cora/page/120/mode/2up>.

Cora's map both replicates the original chart but diverges somewhat from the published Russian version of 1885. The most telling discrepancy relates to the only placename with a hint of spatial engagement invented by the Russians. They made several trips to the large village of Bogadim but, unable to ask for its local name, referred to it as 'Yellow', as it was surrounded by light-yellow bushes of *Coleus*.<sup>88</sup> This term appears on the original Russian chart as *Zheltaia derevnia*, on the Admiralty chart as *Yellow Village*, and on Cora's map as *Villaggio Giallo*, in each case mislocated to the place named Male. It did not qualify for the official Russian naval map of 1885. The

<sup>88</sup> Mikloucho-Macleay, *New Guinea diaries*, 48.

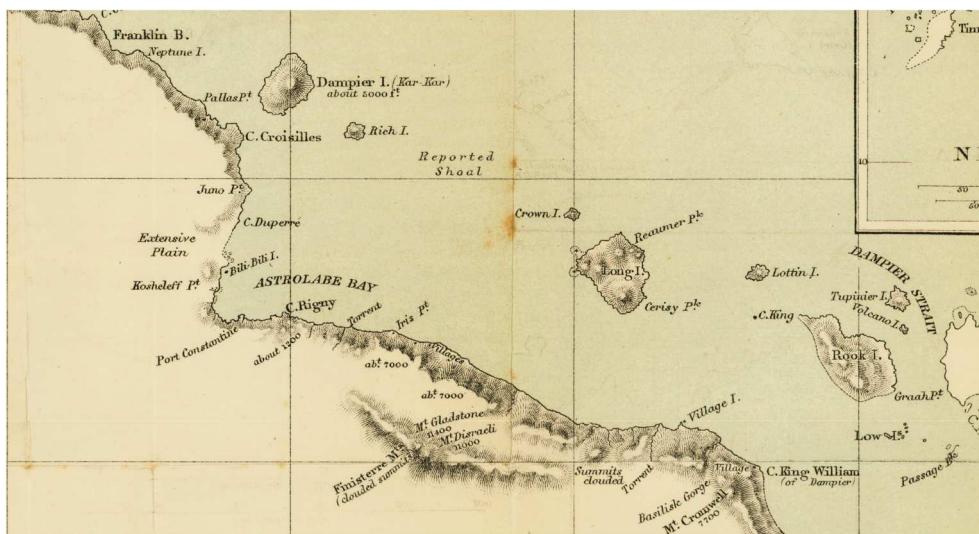


FIGURE 14: Edward Weller, ‘Map of Eastern New Guinea to accompany the Paper by Capt<sup>n</sup>. J. Moresby R.N.’ (1875), detail, Princeton University Library, <https://maps.princeton.edu/catalog/princeton-xw42nb408>.

naturalist Finsch mentioned the “yellow village” Bogadschi (Bogati)’ in his account of his colonizing visit to Astrolabe Bay, while Cora’s map was reproduced, complete with *Villaggio Giallo*, by the Netherlands-based German scholar Arthur Wichmann.<sup>89</sup>

In 1877, Cora published a second edition of his map (Figure 13),<sup>90</sup> based on additional materials received directly from Maclay. This version includes several Indigenous names for villages and streams, as well as B[ay] and Archipelago of the Contented Men and Mts Constantine and Elena. *Villaggio Giallo* has vanished, replaced by Male, while a large village further north, is labelled Bogati. However, the local names mapped comprise only a small proportion of the list of 64 settlements, 24 islands, and nine rivers sent to Cora by Maclay, along with four coastal, island, and mountain profiles that Cora did not publish.<sup>91</sup> In an inset map of the ‘Parte della Nuova Guinea N.-E.’, Cora attempted to reconcile the divergent nomenclatures of Dumont d’Urville, the *Vitiaz* officers, Maclay, and Moresby (Figure 14).<sup>92</sup> Maclay’s 1880 map (see Figure 10) omits the eponyms of *Vitiaz* officers but includes his own six mountain toponyms, including Mts Kant and Schopenhauer. Maclay noted

<sup>89</sup> Finsch, *Samoafahrten*, 70; Arthur Wichmann, *Entdeckungsgeschichte von Neu-Guinea* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1910), vol. 2, part 1, 153, fig. 14.

<sup>90</sup> Guido Cora, ‘Piano della Baia dell’ Astrolabe secondo rilievi Russi, 1871–2’, *Cosmos* 4 (1877), plate 4, following 120, <https://archive.org/details/cosmoscommunicaz4n3cora/page/120/mode/2up>

<sup>91</sup> Guido Cora, ‘Note sulla Tavola IV’, *Cosmos* 4 (1877): 100–2.

<sup>92</sup> Edward Weller, ‘Map of Eastern New Guinea to accompany the Paper by Capt<sup>n</sup>. J. Moresby R.N.’, *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, 45 (1875), following 153, Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ, <https://maps.princeton.edu/catalog/princeton-xw42nb408>

that these names ‘were given by me in 1871, 3 years before Capt. Moresby who in May [18]74 called these highest tops Mont Gladstone and Mnt Disraeli’.<sup>93</sup> Some later maps inscribe both Maclay’s and Moresby’s nomenclatures,<sup>94</sup> whereas Cora included only Moresby’s.

Cora’s inset map of 1877 is evidently the earliest to publish the toponym *Costa Maclay*, though he limited it to Astrolabe Bay, whereas Maclay himself extended it from Cape Croisilles to Cape King William (see Figure 10). Cora’s is the only map in which both sets of Russian placenames – Maclay’s and those of the *Vitiaz* officers – are published together until 1969, when Vladimir Guretsky released his studies of Maclay Coast toponymy, accompanied by a detailed Russian map.<sup>95</sup>

Few of the Russian placenames were long-lived outside Russia. Port Constantine appeared in the Australian press and features in numerous maps at least into the 1930s. After 1885, during the German colonial era, it was Teutonized to Konstantinhafen or Constantinshafen. Similarly, Port Grand Duke Alexis became Alexishafen and is still thus named (Figure 15).<sup>96</sup> The Germans knew of the Russian naval map of 1885 and from 1887 published versions with German orthography (Figure 16).<sup>97</sup> Nonetheless, the Russian toponyms, with the notable exceptions of the two ports and occasional references to the Maclay Coast and the Archipelago of Contented People, were hardly used in German materials. The names Vitiaz Strait and Isumrud Strait have survived to the present but Alexander II Strait has been forgotten in favour of the pre-existing eponym Dampier Passage/Strait.

## PLACENAMING BEYOND THE MACLAY COAST

Leaving the Maclay Coast and travelling in other parts of New Guinea and the South Pacific, Maclay maintained his interest in and respect for Indigenous names but gained an awareness of historical instability or dispute in local placenaming, largely absent

<sup>93</sup> [N. de Miclucho Maclay], ‘New Guinea Place Names’, in ‘Papers Relating to New Guinea, 1885’, Item 1, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, An 28; John Moresby, ‘Discoveries in Eastern New Guinea, by Captain Moresby and the Officers of H.M.S. Basilisk’, *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 45 (1875): 162.

<sup>94</sup> E.g., Andree, ‘Kaiser-Wilhelmsland und Bismarck-Archipel’ (1921); Great Britain, War Office, *British & German New Guinea* (1906); Haack, ‘Neu-Guinea und der Bismarck-Archipel’ (1925).

<sup>95</sup> Guretsky, ‘Russie geographicheskie nazvaniia v Novoi Gvinei’.

<sup>96</sup> Richard Andree, ‘Astrolabe Bai’, inset in ‘Neu-Guinea und Bismarck-Archipel’, in *Andrees Allgemeiner Handatlas*, ed. Albert Scobel, 5th edition (Bielefeld und Leipzig: Velhagen & Klasing, 1906), plate 205, DRMC, <https://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~239468~5511806>; idem, ‘Astrolabe-Bai’, inset in ‘Kaiser-Wilhelmsland und Bismarck-Archipel’ (1921); Anon., *New Guinea* (1888); Bonnesseur, ‘Nouvelle Guinée et Iles Salomon’ (1931); Great Britain, War Office, *British & German New Guinea* (1906).

<sup>97</sup> Anon., *Astrolabe-Bai: Grossfürst-Alexis-Hafen aufgenommen von den Offizieren der Kaiserl. russisch. Korvette “Skobelew”, 1883* (Berlin: Reichs-Marine-Amt., 1908 [1890]), NLA, MAP RM 3894, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-232394711>

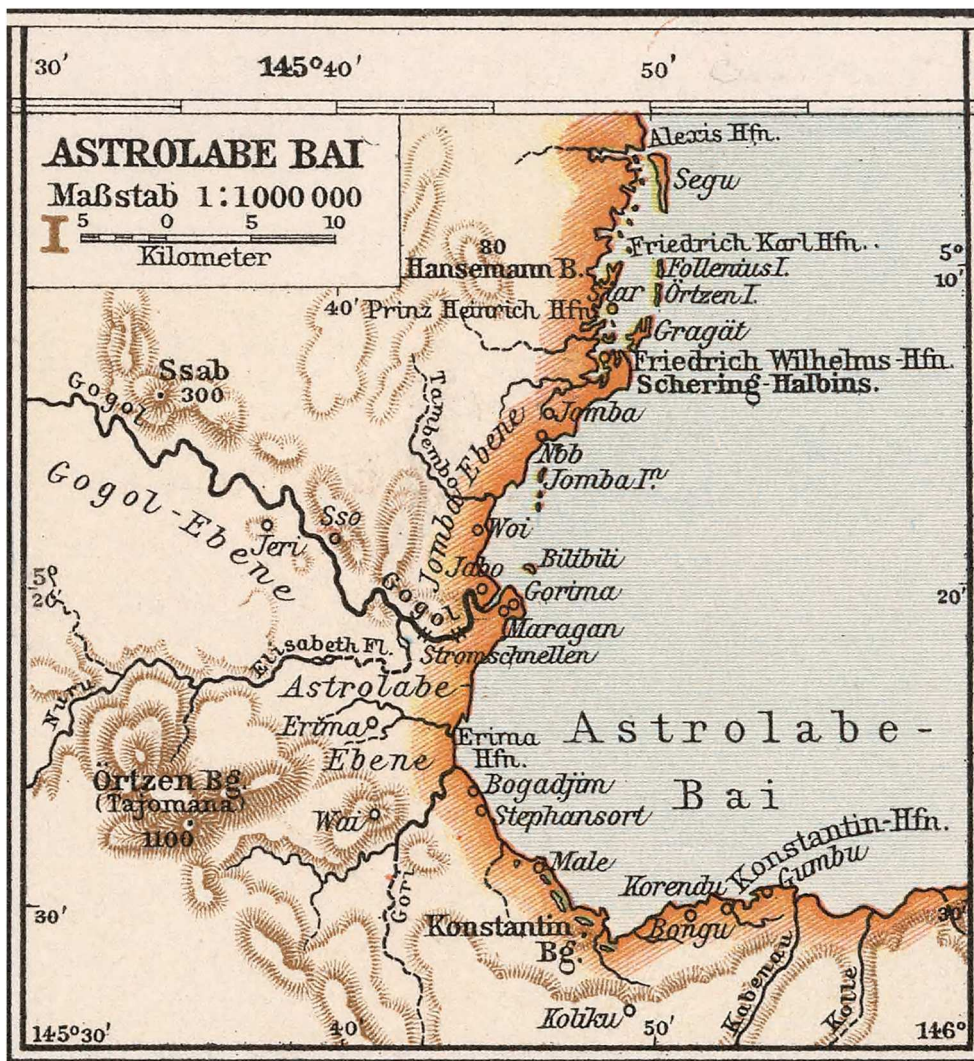


FIGURE 15: Richard Andree, 'Astrolabe Bai', inset in *Andrees Allgemeiner Handatlas* (1906), David Rumsey Map Collection, <https://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~239468~5511806>.

from his more intensive, longer term, but spatially circumscribed work in Astrolabe Bay.<sup>98</sup> In 1873, while exploring the Kowiai Coast in southwest Netherlands New Guinea (West Papua Province, Indonesia), Maclay found a new strait and noted:

<sup>98</sup> For a relevant modern ethnographic case study on the significance of landscapes in selective remembrance and forgetting of the past in PNG, see Simon Harrison, 'Forgetful and Memorious Landscapes', *Social Anthropology* 12, no. 2 (2004): 135–51.

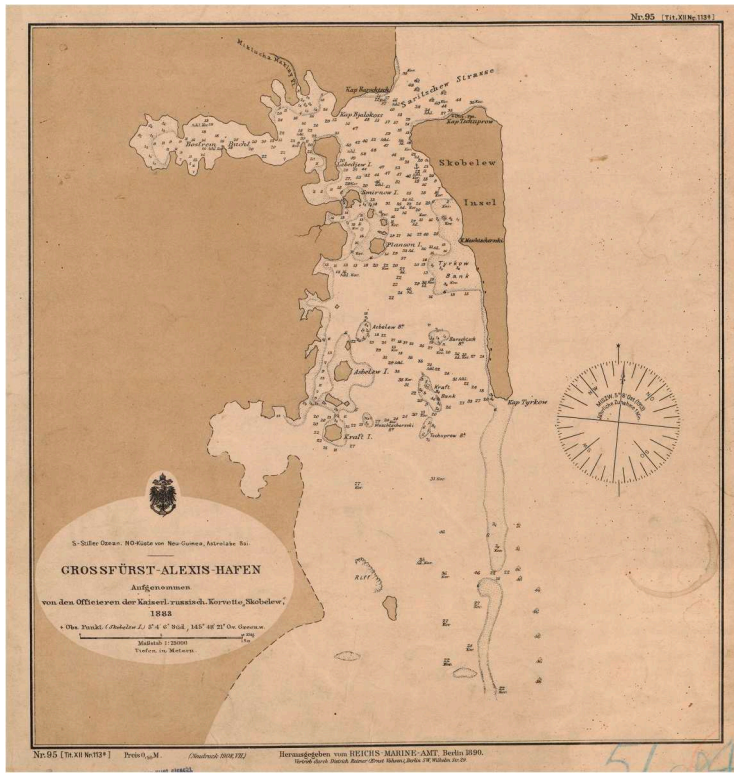


FIGURE 16: Anon., *Astrolabe-Bai: Grossfürst-Alexis-Hafen aufgenommen von den Officieren der Kaiserl. russisch. Korvette “Skobelew”, 1883* (1908 [1890]), National Library of Australia, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-232394711>.

As this passage between the Archipelago of Mawara and the mainland of New Guinea had not yet been designated on the maps I called it the Straits of Grand Duchess Elena in memory of her courteous hospitality and the few pleasant weeks I spent at her palace in Oranienbaum in the autumn of 1870.<sup>99</sup>

The picturesque strait Maclay named for his patroness is labelled *Durchfahrt d Grossfürstin Helene* in his sketch map in German of the ‘Küste [Coast] Papua-Kowiay in Neu-Guinea’ (Figure 17).<sup>100</sup> His choice of nomenclature was obviously determined by past personal associations. So too was the toponym *Cap Loudon*, after James Loudon, the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies, whose hospitality he had recently enjoyed in Buitenzorg (Bogor, West Java Province). However, commenting

<sup>99</sup> Miklouho-Maclay, *Travels to New Guinea*, 290.

<sup>100</sup> [Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay with J.A. Waldeck], ‘Kartenskizze der Küste Papua-Kowiay in Neu-Guinea nach Holländischen Karten und nach eigenen Notizen zusammengestellt ...’, in ‘Meine zweite Excursion nach Neu-Guinea, (1874)’, *Natuurkundig tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indië* 36 (1876): facing 210, Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/natuurkundigtijd36koni/page/n237/mode/2up>.

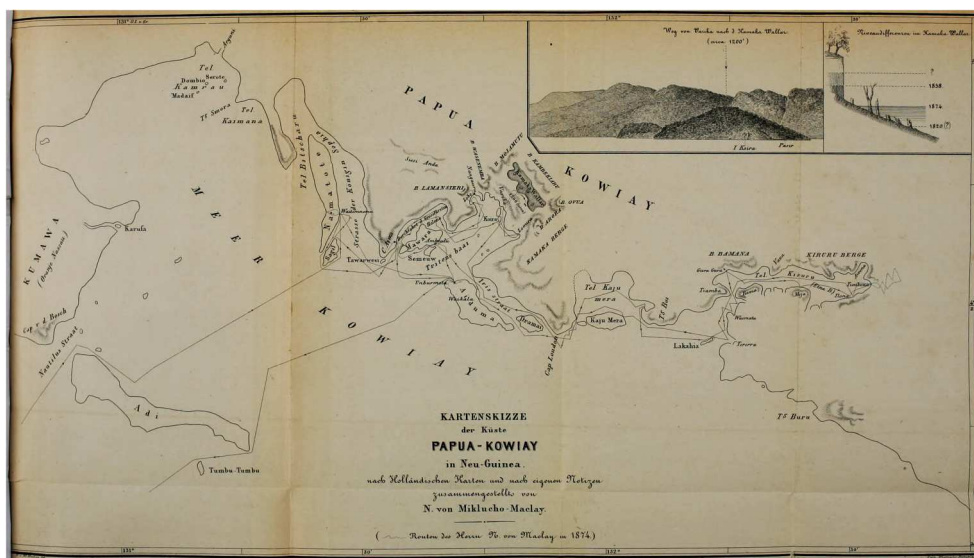


FIGURE 17: [Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay with J.A. Waldeck], ‘Kartenskizze der Küste Papua-Kowaiy in Neu-Guinea...’, (1876), Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/natuurkundigtijd36koni/page/n237/mode/2up>.

on his map of the Kowiai Coast, Maclay clearly expressed his consistent position with respect to local placenames:

I allowed myself to introduce these names, as – despite their geographical importance – these places do not have any sort of native name. The other names on the map sketch are, for the most part, of half-Papuan – half-Seram origin, as the Seram people have for centuries traded on these shores and have names for almost every locality – whether adopted from the Papuans or given by themselves. But at the same time as almost every *pasir* (sandy beach), cliff or stream has its own name, large parts of the sea and the coasts lack any kind of identification.<sup>101</sup>

Regarded as authoritative by the Dutch colonial administration, Maclay’s map of the Kowiai Coast is reproduced in an official history of ‘travels’ in Netherlands New Guinea which describes his exploits in the area (Figure 18).<sup>102</sup>

While travelling along the Kowiai Coast, Maclay discovered the difficulty of maintaining local placenames in an area notable for the fluidity of its population, where a history of endemic raiding meant that entire communities had been

<sup>101</sup> Miklukho-Maklai, *Sobranie sochinenii* (2020), vol. 3, 173. The eastern edge of Seram, in Indonesia’s Maluku Province, is around 200 km west of West Papua Province.

<sup>102</sup> J.A. Waldeck, ‘Schetskaart van Papoea-Kowiai naar de ontdekkingen van N. von Miklucho Maklay’, in P.J.B.C. Robidé van der Aa, *Reizen naar Nederlandsch Nieuw-Guinea ondernomen op last der Regeering van Nederlandsch-Indie ...* (’s Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1879), frontispiece, 326–7, Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, NL-HaNA\_4.VELH\_250, [https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/en/research/archive/4.VELH/invnr/250/file/NL-HaNA\\_4.VELH\\_250](https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/en/research/archive/4.VELH/invnr/250/file/NL-HaNA_4.VELH_250)

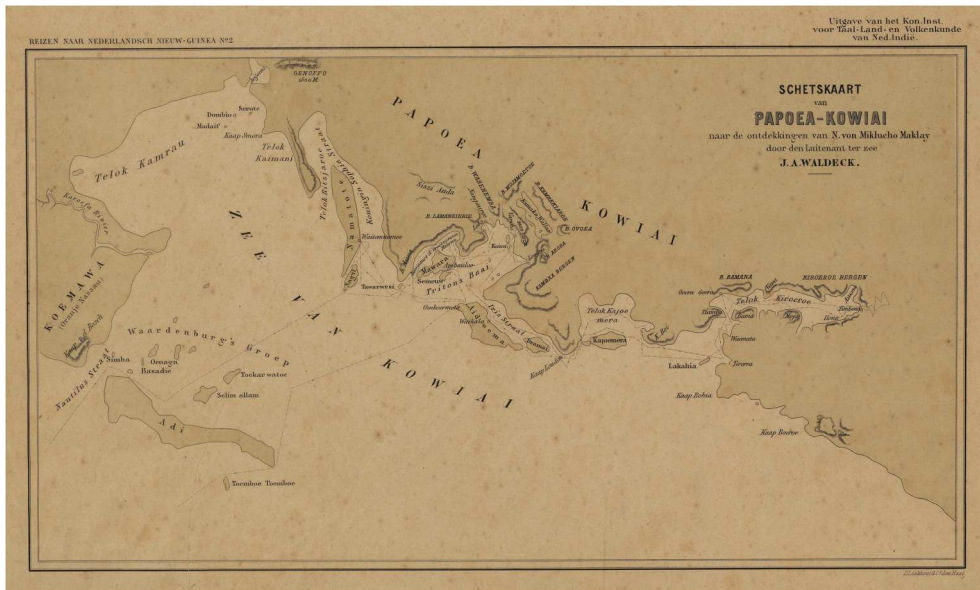


FIGURE 18: J.A. Waldeck, ‘Schetskaart van Papoea-Kowiai naar de ontdekkingen van N. von Miklucho Maklay’ (1879), Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, NL-HaNA\_4.VELH\_250, [https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/en/research/archive/4.VELH/invnr/250/file/NL-HaNA\\_4.VELH\\_250](https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/en/research/archive/4.VELH/invnr/250/file/NL-HaNA_4.VELH_250).

extinguished, enslaved, or displaced. ‘Many times’, he wrote, ‘when I wanted to find out the native name of a place, the Papuans I asked gave me a number of names and argued amongst themselves, and each insisted that he knew the right name. The nomadic way of life here makes the conservation of tradition very difficult’. Moreover, while checking local names recorded by the earlier explorers in the area, he discovered that some were unknown to the local people. ‘It is very likely’, he concluded, ‘that place names often become lost and new ones arise in their place, with which a similar process can again occur’.<sup>103</sup> Nevertheless, he did his best to record all available Indigenous toponyms in the locality. Maclay’s copy of the official Dutch *Atlas van Kaarten over Nieuw Guinea*, held in the Library of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstskammer) in St Petersburg, has numerous pencilled inscriptions in his hand of local placenames on the Kowiai Coast (Figure 19).<sup>104</sup>

Maclay gradually developed his own skills in working with Indigenous toponyms. One was accurate phonetic recording. In the Palau Islands, which he visited in 1876, he amended his maps, noting: ‘I write all native names and names of objects as close as possible to the native pronunciation’.<sup>105</sup> After visiting Hanuabada, in southern

<sup>103</sup> Miklukho-Maklai, *Sobranie sochinenii* (2020), vol. 3, 172–4.

<sup>104</sup> Anon., ‘Schets der Binnenbaai in de bogt [bight] van Lakahia: Z.M. Stoomschip Etna, 1858’, in Nederlands, Commissie voor Nieuw Guinea, *Atlas van Kaarten over Nieuw Guinea* (Amsterdam: Frederik Muller, 1862), plate R, annotated Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay, Kunstskammer, St Petersburg, P-917.

<sup>105</sup> Miklukho-Maklai, *Sobranie sochinenii* (2020), vol. 3, 245.

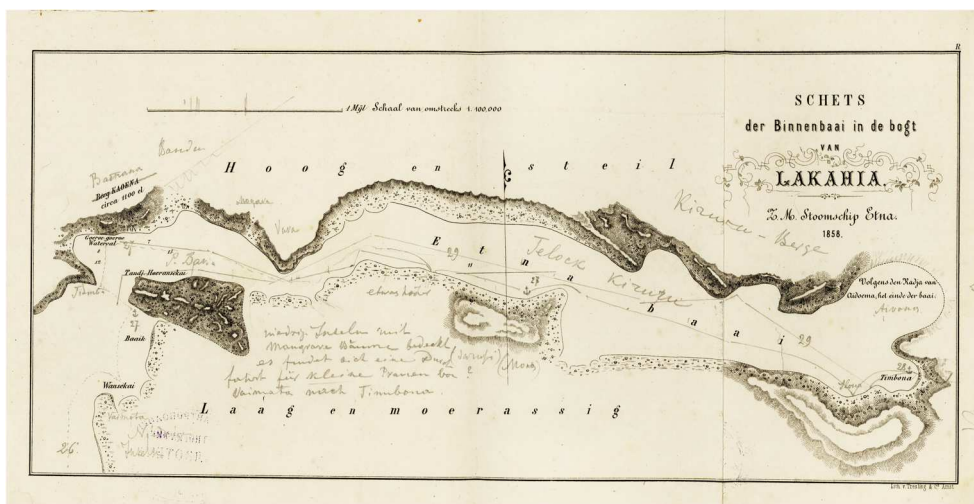


FIGURE 19: Anon., ‘Schets der Binnenbaai in de bogt van Lakahia: Z.M. Stoomschip Etna, 1858’ (1862), annotated Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay, *Kunstkammer*, St Petersburg, P-917.

New Guinea, he sought out the missionary William George Lawes in Sydney in order to find out the correct Indigenous pronunciation and spelling of the settlement’s name:

Although some natives call the place ‘Anuapada,’ others again ‘Anua-bata,’ the greater number however, pronounce this name in such a way that the Missionaries of the London Mission Society, have agreed to spell it as ‘Hanuabada.’ In the dialect [language] of the Motu tribe, ‘Hanua’ means ‘big’ or ‘large,’ ‘Bada’ ‘inhabited land’ or ‘village’.<sup>106</sup>

When travelling in the Malay Peninsula (Malaysia), Maclay discovered that local toponyms had not only temporal, but even spatial fluidity. He remarked of a river that ‘at almost every confluence of some other river, at every widening, at every turn, it had a different name’.<sup>107</sup>

The Admiralty Islands, north of Astrolabe Bay, visited by Maclay in 1876, posed a new methodological challenge for his study of local toponyms – multiple names reported by different Indigenous groups. In the small Hermit, l’Echiquier, and Anachoret groups (Western Islands), he heard from local people what he believed were the original placenames – Agomes, Ninigo, and Kanies – and corrected his maps accordingly. However, when continuing his toponymic quest in the islands in 1879, he discovered that Agomes, which he had taken for Hermit Island’s local name, was in fact the Islanders’ corrupted pronunciation of ‘Hermit’, the name spoken by visiting European skippers. The Indigenous name for the island turned

<sup>106</sup> N. Miklouho-Maclay, ‘On two new species of *Dorcopsis* from the South Coast of New Guinea’, *Proceedings of the Linnean Society of New South Wales* 10 (1885): 145, note 1. Unfortunately, Maclay inverted the meanings of the words *hanua* (village) and *bada* (big).

<sup>107</sup> Miklukho-Maklai, *Sobranie sochinenii* (2020), vol. 2, 41, 43–4.

out to be Lub.<sup>108</sup> The situation with respect to Manus, largest of the Admiralty Islands, was less straightforward. At first Maclay suspected that Manus, lacking a common name, was ‘divided between a large number of separate and warring tribes’. Later he learned the name Tauï from a group of people whose ancestors had migrated from Manus to Lub. Although suspecting that Tauï labelled only part of the large island, he argued: ‘in any case, the name Tauï has just as much right to exist and be used as the name Admiralty Island, if one does not accept the right of naming to be exclusively a prerogative of the white race’.<sup>109</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This article has juxtaposed two distinct but partly cross-cutting toponymic strategies, each shaped by particular location in time, space, and circumstance. Naval officers, beholden to superiors or sponsors and confined to brief sojourns in exotic, linguistically diverse places, conventionally took strategic refuge in eponymy. So too, initially, did Maclay the pioneer ethnographer. But, driven to learn local placenames to facilitate communication with his Indigenous hosts, he gradually evolved an innovative dialogic system, at once egalitarian to friends, respectful to interlocutors, and gratifying testament to his own growing ethnographic expertise and credentials.

Maclay’s deep personal involvement in constituting much of the Russian toponymic heritage in New Guinea makes some of it a living local phenomenon in Astrolabe Bay and along the former Maclay Coast, rather than a forgotten page of imperial imposition in the South Pacific. Conditioned by ethnographic immersion, his preferred placenaming strategy ultimately championed Indigenous toponyms. Adapting the same approach during shorter visits to other localities, such as the Kowiai Coast and the Admiralty Islands, he continued his program of ethical ethnographic mapping developed on the Maclay Coast. It meant that inventing a name, such as Archipelago of the Contented People, or attempting to recover and retain an Indigenous name, such as Lub Island, were different manifestations of dialogical processes. They resulted from Maclay’s interactions or conversations with Indigenous people whose agency or interests are materialized in his toponymy.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, 103–4, 354; vol. 5, 197.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, 103–4; vol. 3, 216, 297–8.