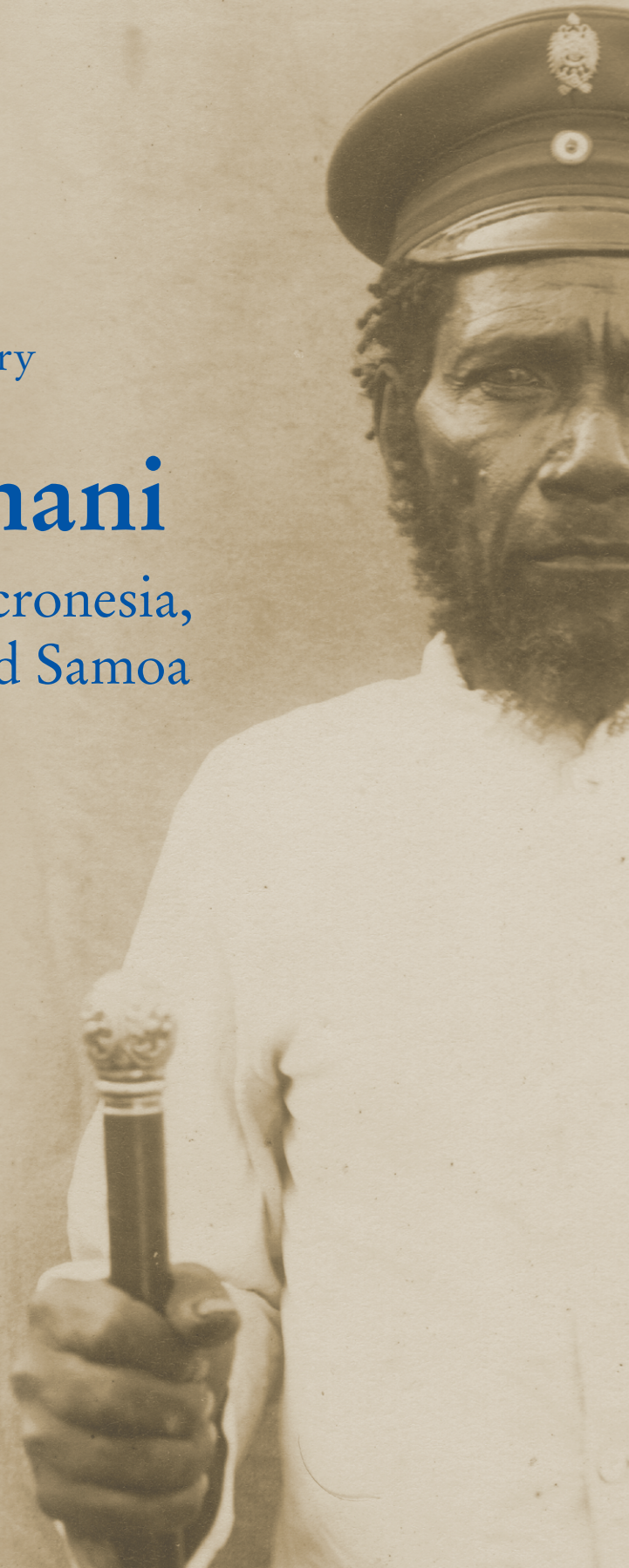


Hermann Joseph Hiery

Fa'a Siamani

Germany in Micronesia,
New Guinea and Samoa
1884–1914

Harrassowitz



THE PACIFIC

HAWAII (US)

Honolulu



1879-09-19
Kingdom of Hawai'i

1899-11-17
Saipan

Saipan

NORTHERN
MARIANAS

MARSHALL ISLANDS

Agana

1885-09-15
Koror

1885-08-25, 1885-09-30, 1899-11-03
Yap

1885-10-13 / 1899
Ponape

1878-11-29
Jaluit

1885-10-15
Jaluit

1885-10-02
Truk

Kolonia

1885-10-18
Kosrae

1888-10-02
Nauru

Tarawa

PALAU

FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

PAPUA

NEW GUINEA

Port Moresby

See detailed map

NAURU

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Honiara

TUVALU

1878-11-12
Tuvalu

Funafuti

Wallis und Futuna

TONGA

1876-11-01
Kingdom of Tonga

COOK ISLANDS

Avarua

FRENCH POLYNESIA



1879-04-20
Kingdom of
Huahine and Maiao

Papeete

1890-03-01
Apia

1878-07-16
Saluafata

1878-07-17
Falealili

1879-01-24
Samoa

SAVAI'I

SAMOA

KIRIBATI

AUSTRALIA

--- modern borders



Treaty of Friendship



Hoisting of flag
with military occupation

SAMOA German colonial territory
31 July 1914



Hoisting of flag



Hoisting of flag
with Treaty of Protection

1000km

Idea and historical data: Hermann Hiery
Design: Robert Schmidtchen

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Fa'a Siamani

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1884–1914

2020

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Cover photo: *Luluai* To Valia from Tavui in his full German colonial regalia as an indigenous judge. Photo by Fr. Josef Oberreiter, MSC. MSC Archives, Vunapope, Papua New Guinea.

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Preface

This book owes its existence to Pacific Islanders' perseverance. Time and time again, Pacific Islanders have asked whether I could present my studies on the German colonial history of the Pacific Islands in English. Numerous visits to the South Pacific demonstrated that public interest in the German colonial period has been ever more increasing – all over Micronesia, in Papua New Guinea, and in Samoa.

Fa'a Siamani – the particular way Germans behaved, shaped and influenced Pacific behaviour, is the focus of this study. It combines earlier research that had been available only in German, like my *Das Deutsche Reich in der Südsee* which has been out of print for many years (as has *Die Deutsche Südsee 1884-1914. Ein Handbuch*, which I edited in 2001; 2nd German edition 2002), and more recent findings. A further book, *Kainkain Piksa*, also to be published by Harrassowitz, will concentrate on the pictorial evidence of the German colonial era in the Pacific.

More than three decades ago, when I started with my research, Germany was still divided. At the time the colonial archives were held in East Germany. To get and work there was an adventure in itself. The original German New Guinea files which were captured by the Australians in 1914, were then accessible at the Australian National Archives. They have since been transferred to the National Archives of Papua New Guinea and can now be consulted in Port Moresby. Apart from a few colleagues who were living in Australia – in particular, Peter Hempenstall, Stewart Firth and Peter Sack – the German colonial past of the Pacific Islands did not seem to arouse much interest. But there were vivid memories, both in the Pacific Islands and in Germany. People who had witnessed German colonialism themselves were only too willing to share their experience. While in Germany these memories vanished with the disappearance of the generation who had lived through the colonial times, stories and memories of the German past lingered for much longer on many Pacific islands. They gave credit to a specific culture of oral history which was still thriving all over the South Pacific until about a decade or so ago.

There were altogether only a few hundred Germans living on islands which had become parts of the German Colonial Empire after 1884. Surprisingly many of them kept private notes, correspondence, diaries, or photo albums of their stay in the Pacific. Already then there existed a wealth of material Germans had written about their colonial Pacific. This included many and detailed observations on indigenous Pacific traditions, laws and behaviour. Of special significance are publications by German academics of the time: ethnologists, geographers, botanists and zoologists, legal experts. A selected few – foremost the writings by Augustin Krämer – were translated into English and are now in use even at courts in a number of Pacific Islands. But

the bulk of these German-Pacific publications remains still unknown outside the German-speaking area in Europe. There also exists a wealth of writings by German missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant. Packed away in now defunct monasteries or dilapidated libraries, they are important sources, largely untapped by academics.

Even more difficult to access are the original German colonial records and files. They are written in the former German script, a form of writing that has been defunct in Germany since 1941. Today it presents difficulties even for German students of history who have to learn it as if it was a foreign alphabet.

This book makes wide use of these otherwise inaccessible or hardly accessible German sources. By opening up this information for a wider Pacific public, I hope to shed more light on a part of Pacific Islanders' history which still remains largely obscure.

I have to thank many people who facilitated my research, supported it, or shared their knowledge with me: Carl Schlettwein (†) and Daniela Schlettwein-Gsell generously granted permission to use the letters of Adolf Schlettwein. In the Marianas I was supported by Joseph F. Ada, Dirk Ballendorf (†), Genevieve S. Cabrera, Pete A. Duenas, Jr., Don Farrell, Edmund J. Kalau (†), Samuel F. McPhetres, Joe Quinata and Scott Russell. Olympia E. Morei, Rita Olsudong, Faustina K. Rehuher-Marugg, Francesca Remengesau, and Thomas W. Schubert assisted me in Palau. In Ponape Johnson Keldridge, Rufino Mauricio, Manuel Rauchholz and Edgar Santos were of great help. I am indebted to Fr. Bart Advent, Susan Alexander, Leo J. Dion, Cathy Emioni, Evelyn Foo, Br. Walter Fuchs, Sandra Geok Mei Lau, Archbishop (ret.) Karl Hesse, Fr. Winfried Holz, Herman Kose, Fr. Matthew Locan, Bernard Lukara, Br. Hermann Ostgathe (†), Archbishop Francesco Panfilo, Nelson Eddie Paulias, Jim Ridges, Fr. Sebastian Vilamur and Meinhard Wittwer, who aided me in Papua New Guinea. In Samoa I could not have done without Fr. Joseph Allais (†), Hans Joachim Keil (†), Va'ai Kolone (†), So'ona'alofa Sina Malietoa, Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa, and Hermann Misa Telefoni Retzlaff. Last but not least special thanks go to John Lambert and William Yangi. My gratitude is with all of them.

Fellow-academics such as James Bade, James Belich, Stewart Firth, Bruce Harding, Peter Hempenstall, Fr. Francis Hezel, Gideon Kakabin (†), Biana Kanasa, Helen Kedgley, August Kituai, Arthur Knoll (†), Hank Nelson (†), Karen Nero, Peter Sack (†), Pamela Swadling, Roger Thompson, and Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi shared my interest for Pacific history. All of them stimulated my work in one way or another even though I sometimes view things differently or come to alternative conclusions.

In chapter two I integrated an article which was originally published by I. B. Tauris. My thanks go to them and also to the German Historical Institute in London. This book would not have been possible without Gabi Krampf who formatted the manuscript and Harrassowitz publishers in Wiesbaden and their CEO Barbara Krauß, who made it see the light of day.

Bayreuth, 24 July 2020

Hermann J. Hiery

The Pacific, the Germans, and the German Reich

What was the German Reich doing in the South Pacific? This is an obvious question, but it is not easy to answer. The first Germans arrived in the area before the middle of the nineteenth century. Commercial interests attracted them to a region so extremely far from their home bases and trading centres. At first, the trade in products derived from whales (especially blubber, which was important in the manufacture of candles and soap) and coconuts (copra, the dried kernel of the coconut, was used in the production of margarine and edible oils) guaranteed considerable profits, despite the distance and the risks it involved.¹ This changed as central Europe became less dependent on the production of candles, and as patterns in the annual migrations of the whales altered. When Wilhelm, King of Prussia and later German Kaiser, rejected a protectorate over Fiji, the German trade in the Pacific, which was carried on mainly by merchants from Hamburg and Bremen, seemed destined to be dominated, politically as well as commercially, by the French and especially the British.² As soon as Fiji became a British Crown Colony, it was apparent that this was also a direct disadvantage for German traders. When the German planters and traders lost their landing rights to the British, the Germans blamed this on the Reich, which they accused of failing to provide adequate assistance, and they claimed compensation at the German supreme court (*Reichsgericht*) in Leipzig.³ This coincided with similar developments in Samoa and New Guinea, where Anglo-Australian interests threatened to displace German claims. Under these circumstances the German Chancellor decided to act. He resolved to pursue a more active colonial policy and, as we know, promised those German commercial interests which had come together to form the Neu-Guinea Compagnie the diplomatic protection of the Reich. Thus Bismarck's change of attitude towards German colonial policy was not only a response to the situation in West Africa, as has so often been claimed.⁴ There was enough in the Pacific to influence Bismarck's attitude towards colonies as expressed in the German supreme court's decision.

Economic Value

It quickly became apparent that the Pacific had little of commercial value to offer. The Neu-Guinea-Compagnie did not flourish and the venture soon faced ruin on several counts, both economic and legal. In the Marshall Islands, the Jaluit-Gesellschaft operated rather more effectively by different principles (maintaining trading

stations instead of large plantations), but it did not make large profits either.⁵ There are, in fact, no commercially valid reasons why the Reich should have decided, in 1899, to pick up the pieces of the Neu-Guinea-Compagnie's disaster and take on an active colonial role itself. Its control over the tropical climate whose heat and humidity were so intolerable to central Europeans was as limited as (initially, at least) over the endemic and often fatal illnesses whose disastrous impact on its profitability the Neu-Guinea-Compagnie had experienced at first hand. Research into the causes of malaria, which was the main reason for the high death rate among Europeans in New Guinea, began only after the Reich had taken over the administration. The results of Koch's expedition of 1900 helped to lower mortality rates considerably thereafter. Nevertheless, 10 to 15 bouts of malaria annually remained "the normal average for all Europeans".⁶ In 1907 life insurance premiums in New Guinea were still 50 per cent higher than those in Germany. Before this date larger companies had sometimes refused to insure the lives of people in New Guinea at all.⁷

The Marshall Islands had had a positive trade balance since 1901, but the products imported and exported were of little importance. When the Reich took over the Jaluit-Gesellschaft's territory in 1905-6, the value of the islands' main export, copra, was pretty much the same as the tax revenue generated by the town of Hildesheim, and their total trade amounted to about the same as the Stettiner Haff's fish catch.⁸

Until the outbreak of war, there was little improvement in Germany's economic basis in the Pacific. It has long been known that its colonies were of small economic value to the German Reich.⁹ From Germany's point of view the South Pacific was on the remotest periphery, and not only in geographical terms. If its colonies accounted for a minimal share of Germany's total trade, the Pacific colonies provided only a marginal share of that. In financial terms, the German Pacific contributed only 10.9 per cent of the total yield of all German colonial imports into the Reich in 1900. By 1913, this figure was just under one fifth, while on occasion, it had fallen to 5.0 per cent. If we look more closely at Germany's total exports to its colonies the minuscule contribution made by Germany's Pacific colonies to the German economy, which is always tacitly assumed, becomes even more obvious. At no time did their share of the total economic yield of Germany's colonies exceed 8.3 per cent. The high point came soon after the turn of the century; thereafter it was constantly under 5 per cent. Their remoteness from Germany and the fact that there were no trade barriers for foreign competitors – the German colonies were outside of the German Customs Union – meant that their Pacific colonies held little interest for German exporters. But these conditions encouraged trade with their neighbours in the Pacific, a point to which we shall return. In any case, Germany's Pacific colonies yielded more or less exactly the same level of imports as New Zealand, which was geographically similarly remote, while German exports to the South Pacific ranked in value with the cotton stockings the Reich exported to Canada in 1913, or the children's toys it exported to Belgium.¹⁰ In 1913 the German Pacific's share of the German Reich's total trade was 0.06 per cent.¹¹

TABLE 1. Total Trade Figures for the German Pacific Colonies with the German Customs Area expressed as a Percentage of all German Colonies

Year	- Imports into the Reich -		- Exports from the Reich -	
		- absolute figures in millions of marks -		- absolute figures in millions of marks -
1900	10.9	0.7	4.5	0.8
1901	8.6	0.5	7.1	1.1
1902	7.2	0.5	7.7	1.1
1903	6.8	0.5	8.3	1.1
1904	8.9	1.0	3.5	0.9
1905	5.1	0.9	3.6	1.3
1906	5.0	1.0	3.5	1.3
1907	5.5	1.2	3.0	1.0
1908	9.3	2.1	4.4	1.4
1909	11.0	3.2	4.8	1.8
1910	16.1	8.0	2.9	1.3
1911	15.9	6.8	4.0	1.9
1912	15.4	8.1	4.5	2.2
1913	19.5	10.3	4.6	2.5

Source: calculated from figures in *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich*, 26 (1905), 163-6, 32 (1911), 272-5, and 36 (1915), 253-4. The figures up to 1 March 1906 relate to the German Customs Area including Luxemburg but excluding the free ports of Hamburg, Cuxhaven, Bremerhaven, Geestemünde, and Helgoland; thereafter they relate to the whole of the German Reich plus Luxemburg (as part of the German customs area), but excluding Helgoland.

Military-Strategic Value

It is obvious to anyone looking at a map of Germany's colonial possessions in the Pacific that they were located in a line running south-east of the naval base Tsingtao, with Samoa lying at the extreme end of this chain. Strategic considerations certainly played a large part in the acquisition of Germany's Pacific colonies. We must remember that long before they became colonies or possessions in the real sense individual islands, such as the Marshalls, for example, were "acquired" as coaling stations for the German navy, while on others Germany had sole use of the best harbour, guaranteed by special treaty, explicitly for military purposes. The contractual right to use these harbours remained even if colonial rule was not or could not be established (Tonga). Soon after the Mariana, Caroline, and Palau Islands were acquired from Spain it became apparent that they were unprofitable, and the deal was publicly justified in terms of their political-strategic significance. Commercial considerations had been put forward as a cover, it was claimed, in order to mislead rivals.¹²

But this, too, was merely a pretext. In a report dated December 1898 the Supreme Command of the German Navy had expressly emphasized that the islands were useless in military terms because they were too remote.¹³ Indeed, it soon emerged that the Pacific had no military and strategic significance for the German Reich at all. It is true that German warships coming from China regularly but infrequently put in at Germany's Pacific possessions. The military value of these visits, apart from the usual need to impress the locals, and the recreation they afforded German naval crews, was doubtful. The contempt in which military and naval circles in Germany held Germany's Pacific possessions is reflected in real terms in the way they were equipped. None of Germany's Pacific colonies ever received subsidies for military developments. None of the few German settlers, planters, or officials had any military training. On the contrary, as military service in the German colonies was inadequately policed in both theory and practice until shortly before 1914, the colonies offered a relatively easy way of avoiding military service for those Germans who could afford the journey. Only New Guinea had a considerable number of native police-soldiers. But they were trained only for the pacification of their own colony, and the thought of using them to defend the colony in case of an attack from outside did not even arise. Modern arms, and efficient defensive weapons in particular, were lacking everywhere. Added to this was the fact that the majority of harbours in the German Pacific were too small for large warships, and no effort had been made to compensate by developing militarily useful port installations. In Samoa, Germany had acquired the two largest islands, Upolu and Savai'i. But the Americans secured the only militarily useful harbour for themselves (Pago Pago) and, logically enough, transformed "their" Samoa, Tutulia, into a military colony. In Micronesia, similarly, the Americans secured the most important port in the region, Agana, together with the island of Guam (administered as a naval base by a military commander) before the Germans could buy the rest from Spain. But German Micronesia was full of

tiny atolls and dangerous reefs which were difficult to land on, as the many wrecked freight and passenger steamers soon testified. Economically more significant islands such as the phosphate islands of Angaur and Nauru had no ports at all and could keep in contact with the outside world only by using small boats. Either the Germans did not realize that the remoteness of the Micronesian islands was an advantage when it came to concealing naval bases, as the Japanese demonstrated after 1914 and the Americans after 1945, or they made no use of this knowledge.

The German Reich had a number of good harbours in its largest possession, New Guinea. The port facilities, however, had all been built by private firms and trading companies, and offered the navy at most a contractual right of use. The best port in the country, Alexishafen, in the north-east of Kaiser-Wilhelmsland, belonged to the Catholic Steyler Mission, which enjoyed exclusive use of it without the navy or the government even claiming a share. It seems they had no interest in using it. The indigenous people were well aware of the German navy's inertia, and of the fact that the large distances between the Reich's Pacific possessions posed a considerable security risk for the German rulers. The German presence was probably strong enough to bring any revolt under control, but not for a confrontation with other European powers in the area. None of Germany's military or other allies was represented in the Pacific. On the contrary, all the other European colonial powers there, with the exception only of the Netherlands, were potentially Germany's enemies. It was thus quite clear that in case of war, Germany would be completely isolated in military terms. This made its lack of military preparation even more surprising. The only explanation is that, encouraged by the outcome of the Berlin Congo Conference, Germany relied on a sort of gentleman's agreement by which the European powers would not militarily contest each other's colonial possessions. This attitude was extremely naive, to say the least. In the Pacific, it produced a situation in which, in military terms, the German islands kept their virginity intact until 1914.

By the same token, the development of communications with Berlin was long delayed. Even top secret political messages could reach Samoa by telegraph only via Fiji, headquarters of the British Western Pacific High Commission, or directly via New Zealand. New Guinea's distance from the German telegraph network was no less dramatic. It was the Morocco Crisis that seemed to prompt a re-thinking. By the time that radio telegraph stations were finally built in Apia and Rabaul in 1914, war was imminent. If it was difficult to defend Germany's colonies in Africa, it proved simply impossible in the Pacific. After the outbreak of war, however, it quickly became clear that strategically and militarily, Germany's Pacific islands were not an advantage, but merely a burden. Given their distance from Germany, and the distances that separated Germany's Pacific possessions from each other, this was something that should have been obvious even to a layman from the start. All the talk of yesterday was thus exposed as idle gossip. At most, it was revealed as propaganda that lacked any basis in reality and which now gave the opponents of war a useful arsenal of arguments.

If Germany did indeed see the military development of its Pacific possessions as a low priority from the start, as we have argued here, then a number of questions remain. Either the German colonists on the spot believed in the strategic significance of the Pacific, and had neglected to turn geographical conditions into a real military advantage, or strategic factors were as much a pretext as the alleged economic reasons for the acquisition of colonies. What, then, were the real motives behind Germany's acquisition of colonies in the Pacific? What were the Germans doing there? If they had over-estimated the economic and strategic advantages, why were they still there? Could it really be that the government of the German Reich spent millions each year on a peripheral colony that was of no use or value to Germany for the sole benefit of a few officials and planters, simply as an end in itself? And that it did not question this practice even when, from year to year, criticism of all colonialism expressed in the Reichstag became increasingly virulent?

The Significance of the South Pacific and Images of its Inhabitants from the Point of View of German Foreign Policy

The economic difficulties it had suffered in Africa and New Guinea might have warned Germany to hold back when it came to the acquisition of Spanish Micronesia in 1899, and Samoa in 1900, chronologically its last "successful" colonial ventures. In fact, the opposite was the case. The Reich government was prepared to part with 17,215,000 marks for the small, economically insignificant coral isles of Micronesia, which were afflicted by typhoons almost every year. This money was raised as a loan and financed by a supplementary budget. In the debates about Samoa, German public opinion from time to time became almost hysterical, the fuss out of all proportion to the negligible economic and strategic value of the islands. A political monopoly here cost the German government its privileged position in neighbouring Tonga, making necessary a complete withdrawal from that part of the southern Solomons which, with British agreement, Germany had claimed since 1885. Britain put forward an alternative suggestion, namely, that in exchange for giving up its claims in Samoa, Germany should expand Togo by taking in previously British territories. But against the advice of experts and the colonial council, who saw this proposal as "much more advantageous ... in material terms", the German government rejected it with reference to German public opinion.¹⁴ In the debates about the economically insignificant islands, whose total economic contribution to the Reich in 1912 was less than the value of pineapple imports from Portugal,¹⁵ Bülow, the German Secretary for Foreign Affairs, claimed, vis-à-vis London, that Samoa had "sentimental value" for the Germans.¹⁶ What sort of sentiments were these that disregarded rational arguments about economic and strategic value, and were prepared to risk a world war which, in the event, was prevented only by a quirk of nature?¹⁷

It has been argued, in my opinion quite correctly, that German colonial policy, at least as far as the Pacific in the period after Bismarck's departure is concerned,

can be explained by the increasing hold which the idea of prestige gained on German politics.¹⁸ In this view the government pursued a colonial policy although it was well aware of the region's lack of economic and strategic value because the simple fact of owning a colony increased the standing of the country which possessed it. If we pursue this line of reasoning, then the Reich had no alternative, after the Neu-Guinea-Compagnie went bankrupt, but to take over the administration of the colony, even if this cost it 4 million marks and meant it had to acknowledge the company's disputed land rights from the start. From this perspective, the dangerous and at first sight economically senseless gamble on the question of Samoa could be regarded as a great international policy success. Even Germany's secret intrigues and negotiations with Spain for its share of Micronesia no longer appear as what, from a rational, economic point of view, they actually were, namely, sinking money into coral reefs or casting it into a typhoon. Instead, they become a successful "effort not to end up empty handed, and miss out on a fair share".¹⁹ Given Germany's late appearance on the stage of world politics, and that by this time most suitable territories had already been taken as colonies, it is not really surprising that the idea of prestige acquired such importance in Germany colonial policy. However dangerous such a policy was (as the July crisis of 1914 was to demonstrate), it did not lack an inner logic despite its emotional basis.

From this perspective the Pacific suddenly seems like an ideal colony, and the economic and strategic disadvantages of being at the periphery are transformed into advantages. Here Germany could put into practice its oft-trumpeted claim that it was superior to the other European powers in scientific and scholarly, technological, and above all cultural terms, without the fear that proximity to Europe or to the possessions of other European colonial powers would attract unwanted observers or competitors onto the scene. To those in distant Europe, the Pacific seemed especially desirable and attractive just because it was so remote. Perhaps we can also feel the influence of a specifically German romanticism here, which saw the strategically lost outposts in the immensity of the Pacific as vulnerable and innocent islands which needed protecting. The Reich could not, indeed must not deny them its help – which is how German colonial activity was widely regarded. Practices such as blood feuding and tribal warfare, which were practically ubiquitous in the Pacific and certainly much more common than in Africa, did not act as a deterrent but actually made the cultural mission more fascinating. Indeed, nowhere did the image of the "noble savage" persist as long and universally as it did in the image, distorted by distance, which Europeans had of South Sea Islanders. Rousseau achieved his longest lasting victory here. As what should not exist cannot be, inhumane practices are either denied or suppressed to the present day, or the most abstruse theories are developed to justify them.²⁰ The official line was that even if Germany did not have the economically or strategically most important territories in the Pacific, it at least "owned" "the best people", for which the other colonial powers "envied" it. At least before 1914, large sections of German public opinion agreed with this view and supported it. In

1902 Governor Bennigsen defended the acquisition of Micronesia in the Reichstag using exactly this argument:

even if the economic advantages which Germany can draw from this island territory are not particularly large, I believe that we can fulfil a very high idealistic purpose there, namely, to preserve the Polynesian. ... The Polynesians are a proud but peace-loving and beautiful people, and Germany should regard it as an honour to maintain them in their condition, and gradually to educate them towards culture. All the more should Germany remember that this is reason enough to keep these islands and to develop their administration. ... In political and economic respects, and especially because their inhabitants are a beautiful race which is worth introducing to culture, the islands are worth keeping for the German Reich and administering as they have to be administered.

The shorthand record of Reichstag proceedings recorded “lively calls of bravo”.²¹ In fact the people under discussion were Micronesians, and the Governor of New Guinea, who was responsible for the Island Territories and had already paid his first visit to the area, was well aware of this. It seems likely that he deliberately spoke of “Polynesians”, who were associated by a broad German public with the romanticism of the South Seas and thus enjoyed a positive image, in order to achieve his aims more easily.

When it came to the specific issue of the Reichstag approving the subsidies for the Pacific colonies, the Governor of Samoa added:

I can assure you that Samoa really is the pearl of the Pacific, and I should be grateful to the House, in my own name and in that of my brown charges, if, gentlemen, you do not economize too much on the gold for the setting of this pearl.

The reaction of the democratic representatives of the German people was unanimous: “amusement and lively applause from all sides of the House.” Minutes later the colonial budget had been passed.²² The view that the Germans had a special cultural mission towards the Pacific Islanders, and the Polynesians and Micronesians in particular, one that the Reich could not reject, was the public justification for the prestige which the Reich had gained in becoming a world power with colonies of its own. Bülow’s demand for Germany to have a “place in the sun”²³ was fulfilled in more than symbolic terms in the Pacific. To live and rule in line with these ideals meant in concrete terms that in cases of doubt, economic motives always had to give way to altruistic ones. The aim was to gain credit and respect, both externally (in the eyes of other “respected” powers), and to a certain extent also internally (in the eyes of the indigenous people). If it was possible to make a profit at the same time, so much the better. Under this colonial policy, Pacific Islanders were almost the perfect substitute subjects for the Germans. On the one hand there were the Polynesians and Micronesians who almost completely satisfied European ideals of beauty. To achieve any “technical” improvements in such perfection was an exacting challenge to which the Germans hoped to rise. On the other, there were the Melanesians who

almost completely fulfilled a different European preconception – that of a people in need of protection. As such, they aroused the sympathy of Europeans. In contrast to Africans, Melanesians had the advantage of coming straight from the Stone Age. Thus Europeans could “shape” or “mould” them from the start. The German conviction that “colonization is missionizing”, as Solf, Governor of Samoa, put it in his famous Reichstag speech,²⁴ was widespread, at least in the Pacific. Translated into practice, however, it generally did not mean harshly forcing the indigenous people to accept German ways of thinking and behaving. Rather, it involved a careful approach to traditional structures, customs, and concepts. The German obsession with being respected, even loved, implied a degree of caution and consideration from the start. There is no doubt that this position was founded upon a feeling of intellectual superiority. None the less, it also contained elements of an inferiority complex produced by the perceived need to justify themselves *vis-à-vis* other Europeans, and a certain embarrassment *vis-à-vis* the local side at having to change what was often seen as an idyllic original state of innocence – a view, incidentally, shared by many other Europeans. This applied particularly to the area of sexuality. The fact that almost all Pacific Islanders, in contrast to Europeans, regarded sexuality as something natural, and displayed an uninhibited enjoyment of sex, produced a reaction less of disgust than of self-reproach, even envy, among those Europeans who did not belong to Christian missions.

Thus German colonial policy in the Pacific typically attempted to lead indigenous cultures towards an acceptance of European-German values and norms on the basis of existing indigenous models. This meant that the German colonial administration preserved, perhaps even stabilized, existing traditions much more, for example, than was the case in neighbouring French colonies in Melanesia and Polynesia. Many German colonial officials in the Pacific were of the enlightened persuasion that disparaged the religious missions, imputing corrupt motives to them but purely ethical ones to those professing the ideal of political-cultural education. The rough limit of tolerance – rationed from the start – for indigenous traditions was defined by what the general European *Zeitgeist* deemed appropriate. The way in which the “others” – the French and especially the British – behaved in their Pacific colonies was the yardstick. Little notice was taken of the Dutch and Portuguese. German Africa by no means served as a model – at most, it was regarded as a deterrent. Colonial officials who had been transferred from Africa to the Pacific were generally criticized. Erich Schultz, Governor of Samoa, was the sharpest critic of their “misconceptions about the indigenous people”, “colourblindness”, and “master arrogance”.²⁵

Of course, there was opposition. It came mostly from those who saw the indigenous people as the main competition in a commercial sense – that is, the few European settlers, planters, and traders who had made the Pacific their second home, and bitterly opposed the German colonial administration on the spot. Much more than in Africa, in the Pacific the local colonial administration was deeply divided from the European settlers in the region. The Governors of both New Guinea and Samoa, who shared a dislike of the European traders, – “They wish to cheat the natives”²⁶ – had

to defend themselves against furious accusations that their colonial policy was too “friendly to the natives”. The fact that the existing policy was in Germany’s interests, as I have tried to show here, and that a long-term attachment of the colonized peoples to a German community of values was intended did not prevent public opinion in Germany and in the German print media from bitterly denouncing “unGerman” colonial administrations in the Pacific. Although the critics of German colonial policy occasionally managed to get the support of the Centre Party and, in individual cases, drove officials to resign,²⁷ a policy requiring colonial administrations to switch course immediately and completely did not have majority support in Germany and would have been unworkable. Governors in the Pacific not only remained in office, they were also given enough time to put their ideas into practice – something which Governors in Africa were not granted. After 1900, Governors in Africa stayed in office for an average of just three and a half years, while in the Pacific the average term of office was seven and a half years. Solf, who was bitterly opposed by the German settlers in Samoa because of his native policy, was relieved of duty, but only to become Secretary in the Reich Colonial Office, in fact Germany’s Colonial Minister. The German colonial administration in the Pacific benefited from the fact that the PanGermans (*Alldeutsche*), who advocated the most radical colonial policy, were really only interested in Africa and took little notice of the Pacific. On the other hand, the Pacific and the policy of setting a German model, had the best possible lobby group that could be imagined in the Kaiserreich, namely, the military. Commanders and officers on naval visits were regularly given such a good time in the Bismarck Archipelago and in Samoa that they reported only the most positive things. In 1910 Rear Admiral Gähler enthused about

*these strong Samoan people, some of whom have an almost classical beauty, with their magnificent light brown skin ... They seem almost Homeric, just as the whole manner and bearing, and the culture of the Samoans is strikingly reminiscent of the Homeric Greeks. If a new Homer were to arise today, he could find no better models for his songs than in Samoa.*²⁸

Gähler’s report brings together the typical pride of the owner, explorer, and teacher. The Samoans had a greater capacity for learning than any other colonial peoples, ran the argument, because they had already reached a stage which, outside Germany and Scandinavia, “and perhaps England”, “puts all other civilized nations into the shade”.²⁹ It is hardly necessary to mention that the Rear Admiral urgently recommended, in high places, that the Governor’s policy should not be changed. After all, as he put it, the Samoans were a “unique master race (*Herrenvolk*)”. Another Prussian naval officer who was filled with enthusiasm for Samoa styled the inhabitants of German Polynesia “Teutons of the South Seas”.³⁰

Although in general Kaiser Wilhelm II tended to be rather impatient and was anxious to see “concrete results” quickly, his reaction to the enthusiastic reports from the German Pacific was anything but disapproving. His pride in possessing the “pearl of the Pacific” meant that he was impervious to any criticism of the policies pursued

there. It simply ran off him like water off a duck's back. He was less patient when it came to New Guinea, which was less "advanced", but even in this case he allowed the Governor to convince him that the existing colonial policy was the best for the German Reich.³¹

Between 1899 and 1914, the German Reich subsidized the Pacific to the tune of 22,147 million marks. On top of this was almost the same amount again, 21,215 million marks, for the administration of New Guinea and Micronesia, giving a total of 43,362 million marks.³² This figure takes no account of the sometimes considerable sums invested by private companies. There was, indeed, little economizing on the gold for the setting of this particular pearl, although the German Reich had little hope of any concrete economic benefits from New Guinea except in the long term, if at all. This metaphor is more appropriate than it may seem at first glance. Polynesia and Micronesia were the pearls in the Reich's prestige crown. They were intended to cast their sheen into the outside world, and the German government was prepared to pay for this deception. In purely materialistic, economic terms, the islands were cheap baubles. The real gold, whose existence, probably in large quantities, in the province of Morobe had long been known, was not exploited. A special mining ordinance was passed to prevent private prospectors or companies from digging on their own account, as had happened in neighbouring Australian Papua.³³ But for the moment the German government did nothing to exploit the mineral itself. It did not improve the infrastructure in remote areas, nor did it make any attempt to introduce specific measures which would have facilitated mining at a later date. Early in 1914, when a mineralogist replaced the Governor who was taking home leave, it seemed that German colonial policy was on the verge of a fundamental change and might take a more economically orientated direction. But the first pronouncement put out by the new acting Governor of German New Guinea in the last German memorandum before the outbreak of war demonstrated that this was not the case:

*The satisfaction of the indigenous people with German rule must be of greater concern to the colonial administration than the profit levels of the leasing companies.*³⁴

It is striking that even when profitable phosphate deposits were mined in Micronesia, the economic benefits to the Reich were minimal. Nor is there any indication that much effort was made to maximize possible profits. On Angaur a German company received exclusive mining rights, and on Nauru, which was bigger and potentially more profitable, they were given to a British company. The duties which these companies had to pay to the state were nominal, and bore no relation to the enormous profits which could be, and indeed were, extracted.³⁵ In other cases too, it was a few trading companies, firms, and individuals who drew concrete economic benefits from the Pacific colonies supported by the German Reich's generous colonial policy. Germany as such did not grow rich from its Pacific possessions; the opposite is more likely. This is more or less in line with Germany's experiences in Africa.³⁶ The few individuals who maximized their profits, however, lived on the spot, protected by

their remoteness from the rest of the world, at the expense of the indigenous population and of the Reich, while Germany's colonial officials gave the pursuit of prestige internally and abroad priority over potential economic profits. Sharp-eyed contemporary observers had already noted this before the outbreak of war.³⁷

Pacific Influences on the Germans

Historians studying culture contact between Europeans and non-Europeans have for some time past taken more notice of the ways in which indigenous cultures could influence this development. Far too long, the indigenous partners in this process of interaction have been put into the passive role of refusing to co-operate, while Europeans alone were presented as the active side, aiming to achieve cultural change. Indigenous people were cast in the role of victims, while the Europeans were seen as the active party. The unanimity and inflexibility with which this view was put forward has long been criticized by indigenous historians of the first generation.³⁸ Historians of the Pacific have tried to free themselves from this old, restrictive view, and they have been highly critical of the "colonial histories" written so far.³⁹ But this issue goes beyond the question of what and how much indigenous societies contributed to cultural change on the spot. We must also ask to what extent indigenous ideas, practices, and patterns of behaviour influenced typically European views, and thus had an elementary impact on the behaviour and essential attributes of Europeans in the Pacific.⁴⁰

Those Germans who went to the Pacific voluntarily, for whatever reason, or were posted there found that their new place of work provided an environment which, in almost all areas, contrasted strongly with their familiar European world. Daily life was dictated by the necessity of adapting to the tropical climate. Europeans had to learn to endure heat, and especially humidity, to such an extent that they could fulfil their duties there. Attempts were certainly made simply to ignore existing conditions and to introduce European standards by force, but they were usually quickly abandoned. A typical example was the introduction of prefabricated European houses, which was soon given up in favour of building with local materials.⁴¹ In general, Europeans tried to adapt to existing conditions as well as they could, but found that it was impossible to put their work ethos into practice without damaging their health.⁴² European traders, merchants, and plantation owners soon came to the unanimous conclusion – and nationality made no difference here – that it was totally impossible for Europeans to do physical labour in the tropics. Their 'work', therefore, was to provide moral 'leadership' for those non-Europeans who could be expected to do physical labour. Germans felt that justice had been done to the demands of their European work ethos if non-European labourers could be persuaded to fulfil them as if they were Germans in Germany. This attitude certainly enhanced already prevailing racial stereotypes.

Officials and administrative personnel were just as affected by the tropical climate as were traders, merchants, and plantation owners. But the perceived impossibility of delegating most of their work to non-Europeans ruled out a similar solution. Added to this was the specific training of these officials which made them see any deviation from the civil servant's work discipline as a personal failure. If German officials in the Pacific did not want to become slaves to their own ideology (which, even if they had wanted to, would have been impossible in the long term), they had to adapt. European food and drink could be imported, but not a European climate (at least not with the technology available at that time). One way in which German officials could come to terms with the tropical climate as well as with their own work ethic was to change their usual rhythm of work. They started work earlier in the day to take advantage of the cool mornings, and had a longer lunch break – a siesta was practically obligatory. The opening hours of post offices – a focus of the administration,

A New Zealand Visitor Finds German Offices in Apia, Samoa,
“Uneuropean”, ca. 1910

What would one think if in New Zealand, they went to the Chief Post Office, in the capital town, and found a notice plastered up, as follows: This office is closed from twelve to two o'clock? And the best of it is, an official sits there and tells you so. This at least is our experience. We nearly took a fit, and as we retired, we looked up to see for sure if it was the Post Office, and not the Lunatic Asylum. And this, ye Gods, is German colonization! With the natives of Samoa, we hope the day will dawn when the White Ensign – as it should have done – flies triumphant over every Island in the Southern Seas.

William David Browne Murray, “A trip to the Friendly and Navigator Islands”, unpublished manuscript, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand, MSX-4210, p. 26. Cf. Knoll/Hiery, 487.

the missions, and trade, and the communication centres of culture contact *per se* – give a good indication of how the usual working day was adapted to tropical conditions. In Rabaul, capital of German New Guinea, the post office opened at 7.30 a.m. and closed at 11 for a two-and-a-half hour lunch break. In the most important town on the mainland, Friedrich-Wilhelmshafen, notoriously humid, the midday break was three hours long. Parts of Micronesia deviated even further from the usual German hours. In Jaluit the sub-post office opened at 7 and closed for four hours at 11. On a number of islands such as Ponape and Palau there were no fixed opening hours at all: the post office opened “as required”. As sub-post offices were usually accommodated in the station leader's office, and he or his deputy acted as the postal official in addition to their other duties, these hours allow us to draw conclusions about the working hours of the administration in general. Strangely enough, a few missionaries were the only Europeans to stick rigidly to the working rhythm of their home countries.⁴³

In Samoa there was not even a standardized central time by which to set one's watch. On Saturdays, when the sun was at its highest, a canon would be fired by the pilot boat at the entrance to Apia harbour to provide a rough guide to local time. Apart from this, people used the sun for orientation and lived *à la Pacifique*: "Minutes don't matter here!"⁴⁴ The American Military Commander on neighbouring Pago Pago suggested that because it was so close to the international date line, German Samoa, like US Samoa, should introduce a regular time system. Solf replied curtly that the canonshot every Saturday was a perfectly adequate time orientation and that he saw no reason to change the existing time system (or rather, non-system) on German Samoa.⁴⁵ At home, Germany had introduced a standard time only in 1893.

There is much to suggest that it was not only European working hours that fell victim to tropical conditions. The rare German visitor complained about attitudes to work, especially in Micronesia, which left much to be desired. The leader of the Hamburg Pacific Expedition, the ethnologist Augustin Krämer, was infuriated by the German officials on the spot who "openly displayed a completely nonPrussian slovenliness and a predilection for beer."⁴⁶ On Yap and Jaluit he took exception to impoliteness and a lack of etiquette which would have been unthinkable in Germany. He confided to his diary: "The government works to no plan; there is a lack of method everywhere."⁴⁷ His companion Hambruch had the same impression. He complained about the sloppiness and unreliability of the German officials: "Everything has to be explained 5 or 6 times, and then done first [sic!] or it is always too late. Officials are rarely to be found in the office building. ... Everything is neglected."⁴⁸

If climatic and environmental conditions forced all Europeans, including officials, to adapt, social life in the Pacific was shaped by a no less fundamental challenge to the usual European world-view. There were very few Germans in the huge area that was officially under their administration, and added to this was the doubt cast constantly, even daily, on Central European values by the practical, living demonstration of completely different values among the numerically far superior indigenous people. All this left at least an impression on those who spent any length of time in the area. In addition, the Germans, unlike all other European colonizers, were unable to find support among their own people relatively close at hand. The Dutch in West New Guinea had the neighbouring Dutch East Indies with Batavia as a quasi-European centre, the British in southern Papua an Anglicized Australia only a few kilometres away, and those in Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa the no less Anglicized New Zealand, while the Americans in the Pacific were in the process of turning it into their own backyard. Hawaii was increasingly Americanized, and the USA's own west coast became a springboard and a life raft for those unlucky enough to be stranded. The French had not too far distant refuges in Indo-China and Canada. If anyone compared with the Germans in their extreme isolation and remoteness from their homes, then it was only the Portuguese. And if there was a German equivalent to Goa and Macao, then it was Tsingtao. But this German base in China, of course, was naval territory, which tended to deter German civilian officials, most of whom

had strong reservations about the military, especially those who had gone to the colonies to escape the army.

The completely alien nature of their environment had two potential consequences for the Germans in the Pacific. Those who were unable or unwilling to come to terms with the new world could find no other permanent refuge. The last resort for them was to return home and thus to admit defeat. Those who wanted to avoid that fate – the great majority – were forced to make the best of their new home. Indeed, it was the aim of many to feel at home in this new environment. The greater the degree of isolation, the less possible did a third alternative become: withdrawal into a European enclave, the construction of a homely “fortress” in the middle of enemy territory which one left to go to work, and returned to after office hours. What in theory seemed possible in the ghettos of European missionaries, and was actually put into practice by the Australian Protestants in neighbouring Papua,⁴⁹ was simply impossible in most parts of New Guinea and Micronesia because there were so few Europeans and no shipping connections. In German New Guinea including Micronesia, the only Europeans who lived in the government stations outside the district offices were, in general, the station leader, a police official, and a doctor or medical assistant. With the exception of Apia, the situation was much the same in Samoa.

While it was impossible to jettison time-honoured ideas from one day to the next, many German colonial officials in the Pacific were receptive to new experiences. One had to have an open mind to survive. This applied even more to traders and planters, who often lived far from the protection of European armed power and from the comfort of the presence of other Europeans, in a potentially dangerous climate and in the midst of an environment that was strange and often hostile. These men had chosen to live in constant contact with people who had not asked them to come. The extent to which Germans were prepared to adapt is astonishing. Almost all station officials had mastered the local language within a relatively short time. For the traders, of course, this goes without saying. Many officials made the study of local languages and customs their personal hobby, which occupied them after their working hours, and thus became experts on local cultures.

In many cases German officials were the first to put down indigenous laws and local traditions in writing, and indigenous people today, increasingly alienated from local oral traditions, regard their books as standard works which they like to consult even on matters of civil law. Without wishing to detract from any others, Georg Fritz's works on Chamorro culture, and Erich Schultz's studies of Samoan legal views and proverbs deserve special mention. Schultz, who was highly critical of Krämer's works, made several applications to extend his contract of employment in Samoa “as I intend, in any case, to bring to a close here the observations which I have had the opportunity to make ... during my many years of work on Samoan land matters and names, and during my official and private contacts with the people of Samoa in general.”⁵⁰

From New Guinea to the Marianas, from Palau to Samoa, women were the most important bearers of culture. Living with indigenous women increased European

men's chances of survival and vastly improved the quality of their lives. It also meant that they were forced to engage much more strongly with indigenous values and lifestyles. There is a large theoretical literature, both contemporary and modern, about highly controversial "mixed marriages" and the problems of mixedrace children,⁵¹ but nothing has been written about how these relationships and marriages worked in practice. The theoretical literature conveys a completely distorted picture of the real lives of Germans (that is, German men) in the Pacific. Co-habitation with indigenous women, whether permitted or not, whether institutionally sanctioned or not, was by no means the exception in large parts of the German Pacific. Given that these were not settler colonies, this is hardly surprising.

According to the official census of 1 January 1913, 76 Europeans in Samoa were married to indigenous women, and 75 were married to European women.⁵² The picture would be clearer still if the lifestyles of the 221 unmarried adult Europeans could be statistically decoded. Most of them lived with Samoan women in *fa'a Samoa*, that is, in relationships which were sanctioned in Samoan, but not official European terms. In Micronesia there were 17 officially sanctioned marriages between a European man and a Micronesian woman on 1 January 1913 – half as many as those in which both European partners were present in the Pacific (34).⁵³ By far the majority of the 280 "single" European men here also lived with indigenous women without being officially married to them.

In New Guinea the situation was rather different because the women did not, in general, correspond to European ideals of femininity. But here, too, the indigenous "laundresses" employed by European traders and planters were in fact more often sexual partners and local advisers than mere employees.⁵⁴ Nor was the converse unknown, namely, white women having relationships with indigenous men.⁵⁵ Even in New Guinea there were five officially recognized cases of marriage between European men and indigenous women.⁵⁶

The children of these relationships were the living proof of a functioning cultural symbiosis. A good six months before the outbreak of the war, 102 mixedrace children lived in the Old Protectorate of New Guinea. In a European population numbering 1,130 at that time, this was a respectable proportion, even for New Guinea.⁵⁷ In Micronesia, 189 people, or more than 40 per cent of the white population, were of mixed race by 1913.⁵⁸ In Samoa at the same time, the mixed race population outnumbered the European population by almost two to one (1025:544).⁵⁹ Samoans of mixed race played an extremely active part in the commercial as well as the social life of the colony. They worked in government service and as planters, but mostly as traders and tradesmen.⁶⁰ Some mixed-race Samoans even had white employees.⁶¹ Samoans of mixed race were fully integrated into the social life of German Samoa; in fact, they formed a kind of elite in Apia. The fact that Europeans in leading positions were married to indigenous women (or lived with them in *fa'a Samoa*) meant that any racist ideas were nipped in the bud.⁶² The Samoan *afakasi* were in an important position mediating between indigenous traditional and European-modern ideas, and they dominated the social life of Samoa. In this, their role resembled that of the *demis* in

neighbouring Papeete.⁶³ In New Guinea the circle around the Samoans Queen Emma and Phoebe Parkinson, together with their mixed-race children, was fully integrated into society. As the president of the European tennis club in the German capital of New Guinea, Queen Emma held the key to acceptance into the colony's establishment in her own hands. Every time a German ship weighed anchor in Rabaul, it was almost *de rigueur* for the officers to call on the Samoan ladies, but this was a social duty to which they "submitted" gladly.⁶⁴

The behaviour of many German officials also contravened the official 'recommendations', which, since Solf's initiatives, had become official policy. These officials did not give a jot for current European ideas about *rassekonformes Verhalten* ("behaviour appropriate to their race"). Instead, they followed their feelings. In Samoa almost all German subaltern and middle-ranking officials had a steady liaison with Samoan women, or were "officially" married to them, like the *Zollaufseher* (customs inspector) Rudolf Berking, the highest-ranking German official permitted to stay in the country after 1914. At the beginning of 1912, eight of the 37 German officials in Samoa were living with Samoan women, including the *Polizeivorsteher* (police inspector), Schaaffhausen.⁶⁵ In Micronesia, the case of the *Stationsleiter* (station leader) in Palau, August Winkler, stands out. He married Ngeribongel, an indigenous woman, in the Catholic church.⁶⁶ In New Guinea the station leader of Kieta was married to a Samoan woman, and the station leader of Morobe, Hans Klink, was traditionally married to the Melanesian woman Ambo. They had five children, and their oldest daughter, Elsa Ambo, was educated at a German grammar school. This relationship did not exist for the German statistics, and it was passed over in silence in other contexts too. In general, it seems that officially, as far as Europe was concerned, people made an effort to keep up appearances, while on the spot, the practice of co-habitation between European men and indigenous women was certainly tolerated. Indeed, any attempt to influence these relationships was rejected, or prevented from arising in the first place. There is no record of disciplinary steps having been taken against any of these officials. If a superior ever attempted to approach one of his subordinates because of his behaviour, to "advise" or to "admonish" him, he was received icily and had to countenance reactions which might go as far as death threats. The planter Kolbe, a former officer, who was married to the half-Samoan "Queen Emma" challenged the *Landeshauptmann* of New Guinea, Schmiele, to a duel, but Schmiele died before it could take place. A Javanese woman was blamed for his death.⁶⁷

It would have been difficult to intervene. Relationships in the Pacific were too 'different' from relationships at home. Too many officials, including high-ranking ones, had 'compromised' themselves, and were thus susceptible to blackmail. In many respects, German officials in the Pacific were a 'community of conspirators' who tried as far as possible to conceal their ties with the local people on the spot from the officials at home. They did not want to break German taboos, but far from home and almost unsupervised, they lived their own lives. In many cases, this quite clearly involved adopting local patterns of behaviour. The fact that this can be demonstrated only with great difficulty today is a result of the 'conspiracy' between Europeans

in the South Pacific. This protected them against possible (and likely) intervention by German theorists of colonialism and against the Eurocentric, if not racist, prejudices of their own relatives at home. Most Germans in Samoa who lived with local women sent their children to New Zealand or the United States to be educated, not only because these countries were closer than Germany, but also “to spare them the insults they would receive in Germany”.⁶⁸ In these mixed-race families, mothers taught their children Samoan, but fathers communicated with their wives in English. Consequently, English became the main European language in Samoa and German was marginalized. This was another stick with which published opinion in Germany could beat the notion of mixed marriages in the Pacific.

Anglicized ‘German’ Apia

Apia, although a German port at the time of our visit, was so anglicized that I did not hear a word of German at any time when I was ashore.

Gilchrist Alexander, *From the Middle Temple to the South Seas*, London 1927, 127.

Cultural exchange between indigenous people and Europeans went in both directions, and the most important mediators, in both cases, were indigenous women. For them and their families, co-habitation with a white man, especially in a marriage that was officially recognized in European legal terms, was prestigious. The prestige gained was noticeable in interaction between extended families, and in their social standing relative to others. It is therefore not surprising that in societies with hierarchical structures, such as Samoa and Micronesia, women from high social classes in particular ‘usurped’ European men for themselves, thus stabilizing the position of their families within hotly contested oligarchic structures. Similarly, it could also be an advantage for a European man to marry a woman from the leading oligarchy. Not only did it increase his prestige, improve his local standing, and secure his financial position, but it also meant that he could acquire land. This was common practice in Hawaii, and in neighbouring Fiji, Wilhelm Hennings, a merchant from Bremen, had set a precedent by marrying a local woman of high status. In Samoa, a Swedish trader, August Nelson, was the most successful in these stakes. He married a Samoan woman from the leading aristocratic family, which had access to the title *Tamasese*. In Micronesia, similar attempts to marry indigenous ‘princesses’ to German officers are known.⁶⁹ Sexual behaviour in many areas of the Pacific facilitated this sort of liaison, because traditionally, women often took the initiative. Solf therefore feared, with good reason, that a ban on mixed marriages might spark off a revolt among the women of Samoa.⁷⁰ On his own admission, his ideas were shaped by the British racist ‘model’ in India, and he did not implement them until he had left Samoa and thus no longer bore direct responsibility. His motto was the English proverb: “Lord made the Whites and Lord made the Blacks but the Devil made the halfcastes!”⁷¹