European knowledge of Ponape dates back to the sixteenth century. It has been suggested that the first contact was as early as 1526, when Loaisa y de Saavedra voyaged through the area, but no report of this exists. The earliest documented sighting was by Ferdinand de Quiros in 1595. Irregular contacts were made by Spanish galleons and American whalers during the next three hundred years. By the year 1850, contacts had multiplied so quickly that an average of twenty-nine ships were putting in at Ponape annually, most of them whalers from the northern Pacific, seeking fresh provisions and recreation.

When the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (or Boston Missionary Society) founded its first station on the island, in the district of Kiti, in 1852, the Ponapeans were already well accustomed to Europeans and the trappings of their civilisation. Luxury goods had replaced iron as the most sought-after item of trade, and a fair-sized community of beach residents existed, consisting of ships' deserters, mutineers and escaped convicts. Andrew Cheyne mentions a white population of sixty in this 'rogues' paradise' when he arrived as a trader in 1842, and they combined to frustrate his attempts to found a trading empire on Ponape based on tortoise-shell, *bèche de mer* and various tropical plants. While the beachcombing community formed a considerable acculturative influence on the Islanders, it never possessed the productivity or the power to challenge successfully the domination by the district chiefs. Commerce on the island generally remained in chiefly hands, and Europeans were required to function as trading agents or resident artisans and perhaps buy protection with a proportion of their earnings. It was probably from this situation that the Ponapeans acquired an early reputation for stubborn independence mixed with ferocity and duplicity. Ponape was never the home of the legendary happy savage who peoples the tales of early European travellers in the Pacific.

Initially, the Islanders were cordial to the Boston Mission, and the mission settlement was welcomed, despite the protests of the beach community, because the chiefs saw in it prospects of more frequent
Pacific Islanders under German Rule

trade with European ships. But relations deteriorated quickly when the missionaries began evangelising. The Boston Mission had behind it thirty years of evangelical experience in Polynesia, and, with their strict Puritan traditions, its members viewed the indigenous cosmology and cults as diametrically opposed to Christianity, a system of evil which had to be met head on and eliminated. Sakau drinking, polygyny, and the absolute nature of chiefly authority were subjected to virulent attack, with the result that the mission encountered stubborn resistance in Kiti and in Sokehs.

The mission persisted, however, despite blockades and the burning of the Kiti station in 1865. During a smallpox epidemic in 1854, which carried off three-fifths of the population, the mission’s inoculations and nursing work won it many apparent supporters, and its unrelenting campaign against the High Chiefs’ powers gradually persuaded several powerful district chiefs to throw in their lot. By the 1880s, the Boston Mission was well entrenched in Madolenihmw and Kiti, ruling its adherents as a theocracy, controlling its own law enforcement agency, operating a kind of legislature and promoting private ownership of homesteads.

By the 1880s also there was already a considerable German presence in the Carolines. In 1866 Alfred Tetens established an agency for Godeffroys in Yap, in the western Carolines, and this was followed by stations on Kusaie and on Ponape. By 1885 eighty per cent of the Carolines’ trade, and indeed most of the commerce of the entire island sphere north of New Guinea, was in German hands.

It was natural, then, that this area should be a target for annexation when Bismarck’s new pro-colonial policy began to operate after 1884. The flag was indeed raised throughout Micronesia, but Spain suddenly mounted vigorous protests, claiming that the Caroline and Mariana groups, though no official regime was installed there, had been part of the Spanish Pacific empire for centuries. Bismarck was at the time wrestling with the problem of his Kulturkampf against Catholicism and how to resolve it. The Micronesian issue offered him the perfect means by which he might make his peace with the Vatican. The dispute was therefore referred to Pope Leo XIII for his arbitration. In October 1885 the Pope decided in favour of Spain. It was not until eighteen months later, in March 1887, that a Governor of the eastern Carolines, Captain Posadillo, arrived in Ponape with fifty soldiers, twenty-five convicts and five Capuchin monks, to actualise the imperial presence.

The Spanish were blissfully ignorant of their Pacific ‘empire’, and of
the nature of the people with whom they were dealing. They came into immediate conflict with the Boston Mission over the site of their colony (Mesenieng), which the missionary Edward T. Doane claimed by right of prior sale. But the chiefs involved, Lepen Net and Souwenim Metipw, denied the sale, and Doane was sent to Manila under arrest for allegedly inciting the Islanders against Spanish rule.\(^5\) The truth is difficult to isolate in this incident, but Doane's personal animosity to the Spaniards is well authenticated. To a missionary fired with ideals of the American Republic, Spain's Catholic State apparatus seemed the epitome of feudal decadence. Under such a regime the mission had a great deal to lose.

Meanwhile the Spanish were enjoying a short honeymoon with the Ponapeans, whom they called upon to provide working parties to assist in the construction of the colony. At first the Islanders complied willingly, but as time went on and they were repeatedly embezzled out of their wages by three unscrupulous European interpreters, resentment against the regime grew. Then, in July 1887, the Wasai Sokehs (High Chief of Sokehs) refused point blank to send any more working parties to the colony. The incident that occurred next is surrounded by conflicting evidence, but when the Governor sent a military detachment to the island it appears that the Wasai and his deputies refused to leave their assembly house. The Spaniards then fired into the air in an effort to persuade them otherwise. This was the signal for general consternation. Sokehs warriors grabbed the Spaniards' firearms and shot them down. Excited to fever pitch, the warriors followed up with a concerted attack on the new colony in which Governor Posadillo and a further eighty soldiers were killed.\(^6\)

A new Governor, Don Luis Cardaso, arrived at the end of October with three cruisers and 700 soldiers, but the only action he took was to dispatch three of the suspected killers to Manila for trial. To the rest of the Sokehs people the Governor offered an amnesty, and by the beginning of 1888 relations were on an even keel once more, at least on the surface.

Comparative peace reigned until 1890. The Nahnmwarki of Kiti had already shown himself willing to accept a Catholic missionary in the district, probably to offset the growing influence of one of his chiefs, Henry Nanpei, who was the district's leading businessman and had become principal benefactor of the Protestant Mission. The first Catholic station was founded at Aleniang in June 1889. There was, however, a great deal of general coolness when Don Luis announced
a plan to lay roads to the Catholic mission centres and establish military outposts in close proximity to them, so as to extend gradually an integrated network of Spanish control over the districts. The Capuchin Fathers were understandably alarmed at the likelihood of their work being identified with military rule and, when a road was cut from Aleniang into the stronghold of Protestantism at Oa in Madolenihmw in May 1890, they warned the Governor that the people would not stand for this two-fold infringement of their independence and their religious affiliation. On 25 June, as a party of forty soldiers arrived to occupy the site for the garrison, they were attacked by the Madolenihmw people and cut down to a man. A further forty sent the same day met the same fate. In the following months the rebellion grew, and the Spanish mounted a series of punitive expeditions involving several gunboats and hundreds of soldiers imported from the Philippines. These, however, only led to more serious reverses and heavy loss of Spanish life before Oa was taken and the rebellion broken.

The people of the northern districts of Net and Sokehs had had much more contact with the Spanish regime than the people of the south, to whom they were traditionally hostile. Since 1887 the Catholic Mission had been able to make several converts in Net and Sokehs. The revolt in Madolenihmw, and the barely-disguised distaste of Kiti and the other southern districts for the Spanish, caused anxiety among the northern people and forced them to consider an alliance of convenience with the administration and the mission. In consequence, indigenous feuds more and more took on the outward appearance of a confessional war between the Catholic north and the Protestant south. This occurred despite the deterioration of the Boston Mission's position after the 1887 trouble and its final expulsion by Cardaso in 1890.

Throughout the next decade the Islanders continued to defy the Spanish, especially in the south. Intermittent skirmishes and assassinations took place as successive Spanish governors tried in vain to reassert the imperial presence by road-building projects or schemes to disarm the population. On occasions the regime did gain the upper hand in military engagements, only to lose it immediately by a policy of appeasement, which was invariably interpreted as weakness. Reports from German naval vessels visiting the island in these years indicate that the colony lived in a state of constant siege. A buttressed wall with artillery emplacements encircled the entire European settlement at Mesenieng, while the land beyond was cleared to a depth of 500 metres so as to provide a clear line of fire. None of the 300-strong garrison
dared to venture outside this fortress for fear of being shot down, and the soldiers spent most of their time drinking in the taverns. The administration also paid a salary or 'tribute' of about 100 marks a month to the various High Chiefs, to keep the peace; the leader of the Protestant faction in the south, Henry Nanpei, reportedly received 3000 marks a year.\(^8\)

None of these measures altered things in favour of the Spanish. The Ponapeans maintained their military weight and effectiveness by means of the arms continually smuggled into the island by American whalers. Indeed, so low had the Spanish authorities sunk in the Islanders' estimation that this trade was carried on under the very nose of Spanish gunboats, which were under strict instructions to avoid provoking Americans because of the international differences between the two countries.

The Spanish-American war of 1898-99 in fact proved to be the nadir of Spain's abortive regime in the Carolines. A dispute between the Catholic sub-district of Awak in the north and the Protestant districts exploded into a general Protestant uprising in 1898, after the Spanish courts acquitted an Awak chief charged with murdering a Protestant. Politics and religion were inextricably linked in the affair. The Protestants in the south were determined to vanquish the northern districts and thrust the Spaniards from the island as a prelude to American occupation; the northern chiefs bore a particular antipathy towards the leader of the Protestants, Henry Nanpei, whom they suspected of ambitions to make himself the first 'King of Ponape'.

Nanpei was the most exceptional Ponapean of his generation. He had acquired the largest landed fortune on the island through an inheritance which was contrary to the Ponapean tradition of matrilineal succession. The inheritance was from his father, Nahnku, the former Nahnken of Kiti district. Nahnku had established a reputation for hospitality and assistance to visiting Europeans, and, in return, the father of Nahnku's wife, an Englishman by the name of James Headley, in 1863 left a testament ceding the full rights over a large area of land in Kiti, including several offshore atolls, to the Nahnken and his direct heirs. This document to private landed title, unconventional though it was, had been honoured by the Spanish regime, and was to be again by the Germans. Henry Nanpei continued his father's tradition of generous disbursement, and developed his estates considerably through trading and planting. He founded the first Ponapean-owned store, purchased more land, and planted it with coconuts and ivory nuts. In the late
1890s an Englishman visiting Kiti remarked with surprise on the substantial wharf, boathouse and storing facilities which Nanpei had built at the mouth of the Ronkiti River, and he described 'countless' planted coconuts flourishing in the river valley. By the turn of the century Nanpei laid claim to 300 hectares in Kiti and to the Ant Islands offshore.

Nanpei had received an education from the Boston missionaries. Under their auspices, he had travelled to Hawaii and California, returning to Ponape with a rough collection of Republican ideas and quite Westernised personal habits. Nanpei was nothing if not adaptable. When the Spanish arrived he was not unfriendly at first, helping to mediate peace between the parties in the early conflicts, and even rescuing the Capuchin monks from attack during the 1890 war. For his services he was twice decorated with imperial insignia and he received a substantial stipend from the regime, reputedly the largest stipend paid to any of the island chiefs.

But Henry Nanpei was not prepared to commit himself unconditionally to the demands of his new masters. Always he was looking to the maximum political advantage, mindful of the uncertain basis of his estates in Kiti. He had made enemies among the Ponapeans because of his unconventional initiatives and his non-conformity to the rules of inheritance, and the struggle which absorbed him most was political, not religious. Nanpei recognised that the Spanish government was a poor guarantee of his position in Kiti, and of his growing power. In the end his sympathy with the United States made him an enemy of Spain. Exploiting his position as protector of the Protestant faction after the mission left in 1890, Nanpei used the mission schools to preach the virtues of American rule. He imported arms and ammunition into Kiti from Japanese trading schooners and allegedly used them as payment for the labourers on his land. In 1898 Nanpei was the inspiration of the Protestant revolt, though typically he remained carefully in the background, in case the Spanish proved victorious.

In fact the Spanish forces, with the aid of Sokehs and Net, did manage to beat back the first attack on Awak by southern warriors in March 1898, but fighting broke out again a month later. Nanpei was arrested as the instigator of the disturbances, but the process against him faltered in the confusion surrounding the progress of the war between Spain and America. It was a time of uncertainty for the administration, which was besieged on all sides and expecting every day the arrival of an American naval force. The conflict with the Islanders dragged on into 1899, while
Spanish rule became ever more discredited. At last, in September 1899, a warship arrived with the news that Ponape (in fact the entire Caroline and Mariana groups) were to be sold to Germany.

Germany had never relinquished her interest in the Carolines. Bismarck’s unsuccessful annexation bid had not impeded the activities of German traders in Micronesia during the Spanish period. Indeed, the agreement signed with the Spanish government in 1885 had specifically guaranteed freedom of trade and equality for German merchants in the area. Since German companies, the most prominent among them being the Jaluit Gesellschaft, had already built up extensive trading links by this date, it meant in effect that the status quo was shifted in their favour. The single Spanish firm, Factoría Española, did not develop to any extent during Spanish rule, and though there were other small traders on Ponape, and larger American and Japanese concerns in the western Carolines, they had not undermined German dominance of the markets. In 1899 the Jaluit Gesellschaft was exporting three-quarters of the 1500 tonnes of copra produced in the Carolines and it was urging the Foreign Office to acquire the group as a going concern before the Americans could do so.11 In a fit of exhaustion, with the Pacific empire breaking down around it, the Spanish home government was yet determined to deny its island chains to the triumphant Americans. The equivalent of five million marks had been spent trying to subdue the Carolinians. To recoup that, the Carolines and Marianas were sold to Germany in June 1899 for a grand total of 17,250,000 marks. On 2 October a German expedition from New Guinea took formal possession of the Caroline Islands and brought the period of Spanish rule to an end.

The new German administration was forced to take up where its predecessors left off. The Spanish retreat left the Germans facing a thousand practised warriors in the five districts, and the problem of coping with large caches of modern arms and ammunition. It was a crude frontier predicament, which had prevailed without interruption for nearly two decades.

Official policy towards Ponape in the next seven years was influenced decisively by Berlin’s consciousness of the island’s past. With the Spaniards’ experience in mind, officials of the Colonial Department were concerned lest any false moves or indiscreet demands by the local regime should lead to a general rebellion which only a full-scale land and sea operation could hope to suppress.
Of equal import were the economic considerations. Ponape was just not worth many risks. It was an insignificant, undeveloped corner of the colonial empire, with very modest potential as an economic or strategic asset. Though by far the largest island of the Carolines, it contained only eight per cent of the total population of the group (40,000), while the European population never rose above fifty during the German period. Ponape's high volcanic nature diminished its plantation potential, for there was only a narrow belt of level land between the mangrove-fringed reefs and the mountains, with a thin layer of topsoil lacking a coral base. This retarded the rapid growth of coconuts in particular. The constant, heavy rainfall hampered copra production, and the mountainous terrain of the interior made clearing and planting arduous and expensive. In addition, markets were a long way off and freights costly, and there was the ubiquitous problem of labour: because of the demands of yam cultivation associated with the competition for prestige in Ponapean society, the Islanders had little inclination to work for Europeans as wage labourers.

There were no large plantations on Ponape when the Germans arrived. Henry Nanpei, and a Portuguese settler by the name of Dominic Etscheit, owned patches of irregularly-planted coconuts, but they were not geared to intensive production for export. A few new plantations were established by Europeans in subsequent years, but their rate of development was slow; by 1904, six European plantations in the eastern Carolines employed only seventy-eight labourers. The entire Carolines group in fact exported much less copra than did the neighbouring group of atolls in the east, the Marshalls. The Jaluit Gesellschaft had begun its trading in the Marshalls and had built up quite a sophisticated industry there. With German rule established in the west of Micronesia, the Jaluit Gesellschaft was given a concession in 1901 to develop the coral atolls of the eastern Carolines and the high islands of Truk. But Ponape was excluded from the agreement in recognition of its limited prospects and its fragile security.

With such a questionable asset, and for the sake of inter-communal peace, Berlin was at pains to avoid any policy which might cause unrest or provoke a hostile response from the Ponapeans, even to the point of sacrificing close administrative control and the economic mobilisation of the Islanders. The man whom they chose to lead the administration in the Carolines did not stray from this conception. He was Albert Hahl, Imperial Judge in the protectorate of New Guinea since 1896, and appointed Deputy Governor of the island sphere in July
Plate VI  Above right: The Mountain of Sokehs. The murder of Boeder took place to the left of the mission buildings (from Spiegel von Peckelsheim, *Kriegsbilder aus Ponape*).


Plate VIII  Below right: Melanesian police and German marines marching to war, Ponape, 1910 (from Spiegel von Peckelsheim, *Kriegsbilder aus Ponape*).
Plate IX  Left: The ringleaders of the Sokehs revolt: Lepen Ririn and Soumadau (from Spiegel von Peckelsheim, Kriegsbilder aus Ponape)

Plate X  Below left: Albert Hahl
(by permission of the Hahl family)

Plate XI  Below right: A Tolai of the early days, wearing shell-money necklace (from A. B. Meyer and R. Parkinson, Album von Papua-Typen, Stengel and Marken, Dresden, 1894)
1899. Hahl was well aware of the difficulties facing him on arrival in Ponape: ‘We arrive in the protectorate with naked cheeks’ he wrote to a colleague in 1899,

and are supposed immediately to build houses [and] drill people whom we don’t understand and who don’t understand us. . . . From the Spanish we’ll learn nothing and will have nothing to take over; the ground is indeed chosen, but not sowed; at best with blood.14

In the light of Berlin’s apprehensions, Hahl’s strategy was to let the ground lie fallow awhile. From the start, his administration adopted a relaxed posture. Hahl arrived in Ponape with what the departing Spaniards considered a skeleton staff—a doctor, a harbour master, a police official and a mixed force of forty-six Melanesians and Malays—which prompted the Spanish Governor to urge Hahl to leave with him immediately, lest his puny group be massacred within a week.15 Though the Ponapeans treated his small band of ‘niggers’ with open derision, Hahl was unconcerned, for he reasoned that any larger military display would only be cause for provocation. The Deputy Governor also took walking tours around the districts, deliberately without any military escort, in order to convey his peaceful intentions; and he announced that there would be no prosecution of any offences committed during the Spanish period, backing up his promise by negotiating a fragile peace between Awak and the warring Protestant faction.

Hahl’s low-key approach succeeded in gaining a respite from conflicts for the first five years of German rule. It would be unfair to suggest that no substantial administrative priorities existed during this time. Hahl had drawn up a list of objectives, centring on the curtailment of the powers of the High Chiefs, on balancing the interests of clans and on completely restructuring indigenous land rights. According to Hahl’s interpretation, the root of most social conflict in Ponape was the land tenure system, with its emphasis on matrilineal succession and the theoretical right of the High Chief to dispose of all land in his district. Gradual changes to land tenure concepts were taking place on Ponape, hastened by contact with the outside world, and Hahl recognised this development. He envisaged that in four or five years, when rumours of war had subsided and the Islanders were disarmed, Germany might lend her weight to the process and break the bonds of the feudal system. But the Deputy Governor was not sanguine about early changes. The Ponapeans he regarded in 1900 as ‘distrustful, treacherous and
Pacific Islanders under German Rule

apathetic', and the political situation as too delicate for ideas of economic and social reform.16

Where he was able to, without stirring passions, Hahl did sow seeds for the future. In continual discussions with the High Chiefs, which initially took place under armed guard because of their mutual suspicions, Hahl elicited a tenuous acceptance of a few vague principles of administration, like freedom of religious practice, preservation of the Ponapean 'constitution', and protection of individuals' property.17 Significantly, the first signature sought by the Germans for the accompanying protocol was that of Henry Nanpei, not that of the High Chiefs. The High Chiefs were delegated local judicial powers in minor civil and criminal matters, while important cases affecting the districts were left to the Deputy Governor in concert with the chiefs. From the outside the 'package' seems a crude form of indirect German rule; in reality it had more to do with the policy of treading softly in uncertain places, and it left many disputes which otherwise would have reached German courts to be dealt with according to traditional sanctions and patterns of authority. Policing such an agreement was obviously out of the question.

Albert Hahl left Ponape at the end of 1901 to resume duty in New Guinea, this time as Governor—a post he retained until 1914. Although this gave him a continuing relationship with the island sphere (as its chief executive), his energies were concentrated almost entirely, and naturally, on New Guinea itself. His two-year acquaintance with Ponape must be seen therefore as a mere interlude in a long New Guinea administration. That does not diminish the value of his observations on Ponape, nor his conception of its problems, for Hahl was a man of astute perception and practical vision. But it did mean that Hahl was later to make decisions about Ponape based on a rather short, and difficult, tour of duty. His opinion of the people was no more flattering to them at the end of his stay than at the beginning. He left Ponape a disappointed man, after doing all in his power to win their trust and make them loyal subjects, without apparent success.18

His successor was Victor Berg, a forty-year-old colonial civil servant with some experience of German East Africa. Initially he shared Hahl's distaste for the Ponapeans, characterising them on one occasion as 'incorrigible layabouts and ill-civilised Yankee apes'.19 Berg arrived with definite preconceptions about the job, and he earned a severe censure from the Colonial Department within his first two months, after a rashly-worded dispatch announcing his determination to assert
Ponape: The Pattern of Spanish and German Rule

imperial authority 'forcefully' and to meet local resistance with 'relentless' reprisals. He learned his lesson very quickly, however, after his superiors warned that any unrest during his appointment would lead to an immediate recall. His administration thereafter was marked by a singular restraint and sobriety, and in both report and action he remained faithful to the official conception of his duties—to follow the lines of policy laid down by Hahl.

Only three events stand out in Berg's five-year tenure of office: a partially successful disarmament of the Carolinians, the beginnings of a long and wearisome dispute with the Catholic mission, and the manner of his death.

Despite Hahl's surveillance of whaling ships in 1900-01, an illegal whaler trade in consumer goods and arms did continue in Ponapean harbours into 1902 and 1903. After the farcical attempts by the Spanish to stop the arms trade, American whalers had acquired a nimbus of superiority over warships. Not even Hahl's threats of prison for those found trafficking with the whalers were sufficient to deter the Islanders. Lacking manpower and restricted by poor communications (it took six to eight hours for a report to reach the colony by boat from the southern harbours), the administration could rely only on occasional patrols by visiting naval vessels.

Therefore, the long-projected operation to remove as many of the Carolinians' firearms as possible was begun, not in Ponape, but in Truk, where the density of population was much higher (12,000 inhabitants occupied an area one-third the size of Ponape). Using the Samoan precedent of financial compensation, in late 1904 Berg, supported by the presence of SMS Condor, collected over 400 guns and a large amount of ammunition in less than three months.

Berg's idea was to use the Truk disarmament in turn as a precedent for a similar campaign in Ponape, not immediately, but in a few years when the Ponapeans were ready to trust the Germans. But Berg was presented with his opportunity after a very few months. On Maundy Thursday, April 1905, a typhoon broke over Ponape and left a trail of destruction in its wake: forty-six Islanders were killed in the eastern Carolines, over 300 were injured, and damage amounting to four million marks was inflicted on property and crops. On Ponape itself, all the breadfruit and bananas, and three-quarters of all coconut palms were destroyed; the administration's two-day-old motor schooner was thrown onto the reef and buildings suffered damage worth 150,000 marks; while the mission societies fared even worse. At one stroke the
economic potential of the area was set back years, and, although the ensuing threat of famine was averted, there was for a time an alarming scarcity of all but basic foodstuffs.

Berg decided to combine the task of reconstruction with a calculated offensive against the armament problem. His most powerful potential opponent, Henry Nanpei, was conveniently out of the way on a trip to Germany, and this increased Berg's leverage over the community. This time Berg offered thirty-five marks per weapon, ten marks more than in Truk, or rice and tinned meat at even higher values. Hand-in-hand with the arms purchase went the distribution of free coconut seeds and a campaign of planting and house reconstruction.

The results genuinely surprised the Germans. From May 1905 to May 1906, some 545 guns and thousands of rounds of ammunition were handed in, most for cash rather than goods. Ponape was revealed to be quite an armed camp, for the proportion of one gun to fewer than six Ponapeans was by far the highest in the Carolines and exceeded even that in Samoa. Only one incident soured the operation, and that was the unscheduled arrival of a German warship, which led to rumours in the more suspicious areas, Sokehs in particular, that the Germans were planning to fall upon the now-defenceless districts. The surrender of arms dropped dramatically from that time, leaving a substantial number in the hands of Sokehs warriors, though several years were to elapse before the Germans discovered the fact.

Berg, however, considered the disarmament a success, and he was never to know otherwise, for on 30 April 1907, still in office, he died. Officially he died of sunstroke while out surveying—an unusual death for a man who had spent some nine years in the tropics. The Ponapeans themselves believe differently. Their oral traditions tell of Berg's digging in the ruins of Nan Madol and disturbing the tombs of the ancestral kings. He died a few days later, without any prior signs of illness, pursued to the end by the sound of ghostly shell trumpets echoing through the mountains. It is a tale of retribution entirely in keeping with the brooding atmosphere of Ponape and its people.

The final years of Berg's administration had not been free of all recrimination. For the first time since the Boston Mission had left the island in 1890, the government in 1905 encountered a challenge from missionary zeal. A measure of confessional balance had been regained in 1899 when the Boston Mission returned to Ponape, but the centres of its operations now remained in Kusaie and Truk and only one or two missionaries were stationed in Ponape. In 1907 its work in the Carolines
was taken over by the Liebenzeller Mission, an arm of the German evangelical *Jugendbund für entscheidendes Christentum*. In like manner, the mandate of the Spanish Capuchins was transferred to the Rhein-Westfalen Province of the Capuchin Order, and after 1903 German monks gradually replaced the Spanish.

Relations between the Catholic Mission and the administration were at their most cordial while the Spanish Capuchins were still on the island. Both Hahl and Berg were on very friendly terms with the Fathers, and their friendship was reciprocated; Hahl in particular was regarded by the Spanish Fathers as 'a sensitive and noble man'.\(^{24}\) Ironically, with the arrival of the German Capuchins a less fraternal atmosphere prevailed, over an issue which had been evaded hitherto: the question of competitive proselytism.

The first collision occurred early in 1905, when the Capuchins sought approval to expand into Takaiu, an island section in the lagoon of Uh, where the mostly pagan and Protestant inhabitants had declared themselves ready to accept a Catholic station. Predictably, the evangelical missionary, Mr Gray, protested that Takaiu had always been a traditional Protestant preserve.

The dispute which Berg was now forced to adjudicate had ramifications beyond mere sectarian jealousy. Though it claimed over 1000 adherents, evangelical Protestantism in Ponape in the early 1900s was a hollow institution; even the Boston Mission on its return in 1899 acknowledged that the spiritual life of the people was 'all but zero'.\(^ {25}\) But religion had become over the years a powerful reinforcement of the political divisions of the districts. The complexion of one's faith was now a badge of political allegiance: the Catholic north against the Protestant south. To disturb that by insisting on the principle of religious freedom would create dangerous tensions in Ponape. It was a problem that Hahl never had to face even though he had succeeded in gaining the High Chiefs' assent to the principle in 1900. It was left to Berg, and he was only too aware of the Colonial Department's anxiety to maintain the *status quo*. He also recognised in Henry Nanpei a man who was the Church in Kiti, to whom the power was more important than the calling. Nanpei's support was vital to the administration. Under the circumstances, Berg would not sanction the Catholic Mission's plan without Protestant approval.

A confrontation with the mission was inevitable, especially after the Deputy Superior retorted that war was immaterial to the mission where converts were to be made. When Berg went on in 1906 to accept the
action of the High Chiefs of Kiti and Madolenihmw, who stripped two of their chiefs of land and titles for favouring the Catholic Mission, the Capuchins were thoroughly outraged. Relations thereafter were steadily more strained.

The missionaries' stand is an important part of the Ponape story, for they were the real representatives of European rule at district and section level until 1907. The administration gained some knowledge of district relations through its consultations with important chiefs, but by and large until 1907 Hahl and Berg had been confined to rather negative policies: trying to reduce sources of inter-communal conflict, curbing gun-running operations and partially disarming the Islanders. Berg's death marked the end of this phase, for it coincided with the creation of the Colonial Office as a separate ministry, and with the new priorities of Secretary Dernburg: colonial self-sufficiency and co-ordinated economic and social development. After 1907 these pressures made themselves felt on Albert Hahl as chief executive of the island sphere, with portentous results for Ponape.
This text is taken from Pacific Islanders Under German Rule: A Study in the Meaning of Colonial Resistance, by Peter J. Hempenstall, published 2016 by ANU eView, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.