It was not until the 1870s that European traders began to exploit on a large scale the rich coconut groves and the concentrated coastal populations of the Bismarck Archipelago for the copra trade, or the abundant marine products such as *bèche de mer* and pearl-shell. German traders were among the first. When Eduard Hernsheim, a Hamburger attempting to set up his own trading empire in the south-west Pacific, anchored in Port Hunter, Duke of York group, in October 1875 to establish an agency, he found that the native inhabitants were well accustomed to the visits of white traders and could understand pidgin English. He also found that Port Hunter had been chosen already as the logical site for a first settlement by the Reverend George Brown, who had arrived in August to begin work for the Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society.

European penetration of the islands of New Guinea developed from these foundations. The coasts of the Gazelle Peninsula and New Ireland were the earliest choice of whites seeking profits. New Ireland is a long, and, at points, extremely narrow island to the north-east of New Britain, overlapping the eastern extremes of the Gazelle Peninsula and stretching away to the north-west. The south, with its straight coasts, reefs and poor anchorages did not attract much interest, except for the labour trade, but in the north there were areas of flat or gently undulating land and dense populations where a resident trader could make a living.

The Gazelle Peninsula is a distinct structural land unit at the northern end of New Britain, separated from the rest of the island by a major fault line. There, in an area of 777 square kilometres live the Tolai people, estimated in German times to number some 40,000, effectively isolated from other New Britain groups except for the Baining and Taulil people in the mountains to the west. On the east coast of the Gazelle Peninsula lies Blanche Bay, formed from a giant exploded crater. Around the shoreline of the old crater, hills rise steeply, some as high as 610 metres, except in the north of the innermost bay, Simpson Harbour, where the coastal flat is wider. Here, later, arose the town of Rabaul. Three
dormant volcanic cones lie on the outer fringe of Blanche Bay, to the north and east. On the inner rim are three active volcanoes, Rabalankaia north of Simpson Harbour, Matupit on the south-eastern arm of Blanche Bay and Vulcan across the bay in the west, this last emerging from the waters in the 1870s and erupting again with devastating effect in 1937. The setting and atmosphere of Blanche Bay is one of tropical grandeur, a composition of towering heights and vivid colouring, from the deep blue of the fine harbours, through the varied greens of the forests to the sandy browns of the mountainsides.

On the steep coasts of this great volcanic lake Europeans tried to gain an early foothold. Barely two years after his arrival, George Brown had established seven mission stations on the Duke of Yorks, eleven on New Britain and five in New Ireland, though most were precarious holds and none was situated away from the coast. In this earliest phase of permanent settlement, the New Guineans dictated the pattern of the relations and the rate of development. Local groups on the coast were particularly jealous of their traditional economic ties with inland tribes. Some coastal ‘big men’ were able to reinforce their own power within their residential groups and subject inland neighbours through their monopoly over European goods and the introduction of firearms which, as in Samoa, became an integral feature of the early copra trade. European traders were restricted to the lowest type of barter commerce in order to acquire copra. Large quantities were impossible to buy in any one place since the New Guineans generally refused to prepare it themselves, and it was left to the individual agent not only to collect the coconuts but to cut and dry them as well.

In the event of a collision with villagers, there was little redress for the isolated trader. Each came as an individual, with his own economic status and goals, and each was forced to live on local terms, making adjustments for the specific area and circumstances in order to ensure his safety and a livelihood. To live on tribal territory and succeed in collecting plenty of coconuts, these men were dependent on local goodwill and co-operation. Most took New Guinean wives, perhaps several wives, who then worked at drying copra. Traders’ resources were few, and the majority were agents for larger firms which provided house, boat, implements and the necessary provisions on credit. In return, the agent collected his coconuts or pearl-shell quota to pay off his usually high debts, hoping to make enough profit to sustain a tolerable existence a little longer.

Such men often were outcasts from their own society, men of
uncommon energy and indiscipline. Confrontations with New Guineans occurred frequently. Some were the result of mutual misunderstanding, for language was a problem in those early days. Many resulted from a trader’s drunkenness and his disregard of local custom. Traders invariably carried firearms themselves, and they made it clear that they expected trouble from the New Guineans. In a tense situation, therefore, violence was almost a self-fulfilling expectation, both sides resorting to arms at the slightest notice. Ten of the twelve agents in New Guinea employed by the Godeffroy’s firm came to a violent end during those earliest years of the late 1870s. In terms of security it was every man for himself, with only the dictates of his own conscience and the instructions of his firm to guide him.

The most violent clashes occurred when the newcomers, be they traders or missionaries, tried to move inland. In April 1878, four Fijian teachers of Brown’s mission, recently installed inland from Ratavul in Blanche Bay, were murdered and eaten, because the local ‘big man’, Talili, feared that he would lose his monopoly over the supply of European trade goods to the interior. For the six to seven whites, including George Brown, scattered along the eastern coast of the Gazelle Peninsula and the Duke of York Islands, the event had much wider implications. Talili wielded a great deal of influence in the north-western corner of Blanche Bay, and enjoyed a reputation as a ruthless despot. The Europeans were convinced that his move against the missionaries heralded a general assault against all Europeans. In fear at their isolation they organised an expedition with George Brown as leader, to demonstrate to the Tolai that Europeans were strong and intended to stay. Brown was able to secure the support of those coastal Tolai at Nodup, Matupit, Malagunan and Kabakada who were already, to some extent, bound to the European presence by the ties of the exchange trade, or who were traditional enemies of Talili. They attacked Talili’s area, burnt down his hamlets, pillaged his stores and killed nearly a dozen of his followers.

This reprisal, and the formal peace which subsequently Brown was able to conclude, broke Talili’s hold over the interior north-west of Blanche Bay and heralded a new phase of expansion and European influence, both by Brown’s missionaries and by European entrepreneurs. By 1880 the first two mainland converts had been baptised at Vunamami, or Kinigunan, a district to the south-east of Blanche Bay, and the first Tolai preacher was appointed. In 1881 there were forty praying sites, fifty-five converts and 514 school pupils. By 1886 the
number of converts to Methodism in the Gazelle Peninsula and the south of New Ireland had risen to 4000. The local mission was by then divided into three circuits, each supervised by a white missionary and operating a school for prospective New Guinean teachers. Brown, who had borne the burden of expansion, left in 1881. He had done little himself to set up schools for New Guineans, preferring to plant Methodism widely by travelling and stationing preachers, but he had helped to overcome the particularism of Tolai village centres nonetheless. By the time he departed, the traditional hostilities of many contiguous coastal districts around Blanche Bay were broken and people were mixing freely, at least while under the shadow of the mission’s presence.

By 1880 commercial competition had accelerated to the extent that there were now five firms active in the area. The two main trading companies, Hernsheim and the DHPG, successor to Godeffroys, set up a network of agencies along the coast of the Gazelle, from Vlavolo on the north coast, to Vunamami in the south-east. Hernsheim alone set up thirteen between the years 1877 and 1883, as well as nine on New Ireland and several on smaller island groups to the north and east. By 1884 these two firms were reportedly exporting between 1350 and 2000 tonnes of copra from the Archipelago.

They did not have business with the New Guineans all their own way. The rates of exchange for tropical produce rose sharply in these years: where, in 1875, a length of tobacco would secure twenty-five to forty coconuts, by 1880 it was only fifteen, and knives, axes and firearms had replaced red cloth, glass pearls and empty bottles as the most sought after items of trade. Firearms particularly were coveted by ambitious ‘big men’; there were said to be 700 in Tolai hands by 1887. New Guineans also demanded amounts of native money (tambu) in exchange for their produce, and Europeans were forced more frequently to finance trips to Nakanai on the north coast of New Britain to buy the raw material from which it was made.

The most important economic and social development of this stage of relations between Europeans and New Guineans was the opening up of the Kokopo coast from Cape Raluana to Cape Gazelle, south of Blanche Bay, and the establishment of the first plantation at Ralum by Emma Forsayth and her business partner, Thomas Farrell. The alienation of large amounts of land became a new and ever more crucial point of contention in the eastern Gazelle Peninsula. Land within the boundaries of the local residential group (a series of hamlets called a
gunan or pakanagunan was controlled by the Senior (alualua) of the matrilineage (vunatarai) on which residence was based, and any individual member of the descent group had a claim to land not in use. The alualua was not only genealogically senior within the group, but was also a man of enterprise and leadership who combined in himself authority over all aspects of indigenous life, with the exception of the principal cults. He could, for instance, delegate the use of uncultivated land belonging to the vunatarai. During the 1870s and 1880s, particularly strong alualua, who were also ‘big men’ through their entrepreneurship and warrior skills, ‘sold’ land in this way to Europeans, in order to acquire firearms for campaigns against other hamlets, or goods to be distributed for the purpose of building up support for their position of influence. The prevailing uncertainty about a ‘big man’s’ power increased the opportunities which a shrewd New Guinean possessed of carrying off such a transaction over the heads of his fellows. It only became clear later that group rights might have been infringed on a large scale.

It is important to distinguish between purchasing the right to use vunatarai land and actually owning it. The conception of possession extended only to land that was utilised immediately, and the rights reverted to the descent group once the land went fallow. Nor did the transfer of land to an outsider necessarily remove the original owners’ rights to use fruits and trees planted there, or include sections with particular cultic importance to the group. The Tolai were reasonably aware of what they were doing in selling small blocks of land for the immediate use of a mission or trading station, though they may not have understood what a ‘sale of land’ meant in terms of European law. Their understanding definitely stopped short in the case of enormous areas which were not taken into use for several years. And when European purchasers deliberately obscured the meaning of such contracts, as was the tendency in the early 1880s, then they could expect only great bitterness and determined resistance after the land was finally cleared for plantations and the villagers expected to move.

There is an interesting description of the typical land purchase procedure in Eduard Hernsheim’s Memoirs. He claims that it was simply a matter of signifying to the nearest native group the land desired and walking around it to gain a rough measure. Then after ‘the natives’ had marked a European contract paper, suitable trade goods were distributed. Hernsheim concludes with the pointed observation:
That the natives signing the paper were the actual owners of the land or understood the contents of the contract was naturally impossible to prove, and only actual occupation could guarantee possession.9

Such a process obviously begged numerous questions about the true ownership of the land and the right of the vendors to sell, but most of the early land acquisitions in the Gazelle seem to have been made in this way. Thomas Farrell claimed to have ‘bought’ 2050 hectares of land extending along the coast and inland from Cape Gazelle to Ralum Point for £50 in trade goods, as well as other areas on the north coast and inland from Port Weber; Richard Parkinson, the German-English planter and ethnographer who moved to the Archipelago from Samoa in the early 1880s after marrying Emma’s sister, is supposed to have purchased the entire districts of Kalili and Vairiki for just £10 in trade.10 Farrell and Emma were careful to draw up written agreements and have them endorsed by the New Guineans; some of their purchases at least were concluded on board British warships with the captain as witness.

Ralum’s trading competitors were not outdone in the rush for land which occurred between 1882 and 1885. Eduard Hernsheim purchased 1640 hectares in New Britain and the Duke of York Islands, plus a further 3280 hectares in the north of New Ireland and 780 hectares in the Hermit group. The DHPG laid claim to nearly 820 hectares in the Duke of Yorks. One of Farrell’s own traders, Octave Mouton, a survivor of the Marquis de Reys expedition, had purchased 2050 hectares of his own around Vunamami by 1888.11

But it was Ralum which led the way in developing commercial plantations on a large scale. By 1886 Ralum already had 180 hectares under cotton, coconuts and various experimental plants, with a work force of hundreds. In the next few years the plantation was to expand dramatically, gradually taking over land on which no occupational claim had been made at the time of purchase. That it could do so without resistance, at least until 1890, was largely the influence of Emma. As the owner of Ralum, she acted out the local expectations of a ‘big man’, giving occasional feasts and dances and providing trade goods for coconuts, so that a mutually profitable market system developed.

In November 1884, a German warship, SMS Elizabeth, sailed into Blanche Bay to hoist the imperial flag over New Britain. The process was repeated on New Ireland, in the Admiralty, Hermit and Anchorite groups, and at three places on the north-eastern coast of mainland New
Guinea. The area was now under the formal protection of the Reich. The administration and development of the new protectorate was left to the New Guinea Company, a chartered firm under the hand of the powerful Berlin financier Adolf von Hansemann, whose immediate interest lay only in the mainland, or Kaiser Wilhelmsland as it now became. Hansemann and his Board had plotted a golden and profitable future for their tropical foster-child, in which the Company was to act as land broker and adviser to thousands of imaginary German settlers who were expected to flock to New Guinea from the homeland and the Australian colonies.

The Archipelago was expected to play second fiddle while this dream was materialising and for the first few years the only signs of Company activity in the islands were a magistrate who resided first on Matupit, then in Kerawara, then at Kokopo, and a bewildering array of laws to govern every facet of 'civilised' life in the tropics. No attempt was made to impose effective control through an administrative staff, a police force or a communications network; and to all intents and purposes the administration of the Bismarck Archipelago existed in name only well into the 1890s.

There had been a certain measure of informal and arbitrary control at the centre of permanent white settlement around Blanche Bay, where European settlers had been able to take matters into their own hands, at least prior to 1884. Richard Parkinson had mediated in disputes between groups of coastal Tolai and, in some cases, had dictated peace with the aid of his own police force—150 Buka men drawn from Ralum plantation. When New Guineans had attacked a European in the area, punitive expeditions had been mounted swiftly and carried out with severity.

This changed with annexation, as relations between the coastal Tolai and the European planting community entered a phase of mutual accommodation and economic advantage. The Tolai were quick to recognise the need of the plantations for large quantities of native foodstuffs to feed their labour lines. As a result, they began to expand their gardens and produce a surplus to sell to the plantations. There are several striking descriptions of the markets which were held every third day at Ralum, with perhaps 200 women gathering from as far away as twenty kilometres to sell yams, taro and bananas under the watchful eye of their armed menfolk. In 1886 Ralum was supplied in this way with 159 tonnes of taro and yams, and local gardens were being extended regularly as the labour force increased. Even this was insuffi-
The New Guinea Islands
cient to meet the needs of the plantation, and Emma was forced to send 
boats along the coast to buy more and more produce. The copra trade 
was also proving a source of ample profit to the New Guineans, and 
native copra production rose from zero in 1870 to 1371 tonnes in 
1884.13 By and large this 'production' meant simply collecting the 
available surplus of coconuts to sell, for since market gardening and 
coconut collection already provided them with a new and constantly 
rising standard of living, the Tolai were not interested in increasing the 
planting of coconuts. They were also unwilling to offer themselves for 
wage labour on the plantations. In 1890, when 1044 recruits were 
obtained from New Ireland, only 130 could be enticed from the whole 
of New Britain.14

The same year saw the first major encounter between the coastal 
Tolai and the plantation owners over land on the Kokopo coast. Ralum 
now was occupying systematically its land holdings to the west and east, 
and linking them by roads. But in doing so, it began to encroach 
seriously on the goodwill Emma had built up among the Tolai. One of 
the roads from an outstation to Kokopo, the site of the New Guinea 
Company's holdings, was being built along the foreshore, cutting 
through local fishing grounds and a men's tubuan cult place. The Tolai 
had given clear warning that they resented this two-fold infringement: 
trade goods distributed for the purchase of some houses lying on the 
route had been returned, and the number of women visiting Ralum 
market from the affected districts had dwindled considerably over a 
period of weeks.15

But the road building went on, under the supervision of John Moses, 
a Filipino overseer who was arrogant and unpopular with the local 
people. In March 1890, when the road reached the houses to be 
demolished, a group of Tolai attacked Moses and clubbed him to death. 
It was only the beginning. Four major districts along the coast and in 
the hinterland—Vunamami, Keravi, Bitarebarebe and Tingenav-
udu—formed a coalition in late March and attacked Ralum. They were 
only narrowly beaten off. The Europeans, under Richard Parkinson, 
replied with two large reprisals, in which five whites and over eighty 
foreign labourers took part, and they succeeded in driving the Tolai 
forces into the interior, destroying some sixty hamlets and killing eight 
warriors.16 Peace was finally negotiated in April with the exchange of 
pigs and shell money, but the ringleader, the 'big man', To Ruruk, was 
not captured and executed until a year later.

Although district fishing rights were safeguarded and various local
complaints were corrected in the negotiated agreement of April, 1890 marked the beginning rather than the end of confrontations between the Tolai and the Gazelle Europeans over land. The Tolai were prepared to make peace in 1890 after compensation had been offered, and because they recognised the growth of the New Guinea Company plantation at Kokopo, now called Herbertshöhe, as a new opportunity for marketing produce and copra. However, as a result of the 1890 clash, the Tolai were forced to vacate immediately, in favour of Ralum plantation, all the coastal land between Malapau (a western outstation) and Ralum that already had been set aside in pre-annexation contracts of sale but not yet occupied. By the middle of 1893 Emma had increased her cultivated area to 240 hectares of cotton and 350 hectares of coconuts. The New Guinea Company possessed about 165 hectares of cotton and coconuts east of Ralum and was now occupying land in the districts of Malagunan and Tingenavudu. Octave Mouton had also begun planting on his estate in Vunamami district.

The Tolai were further alienated by the behaviour of imported labourers who harassed local women and stole market produce, and there was general resentment of the German station manager at Herbertshöhe after he closed down for a time the native market at Kokopo plantation, depriving neighbouring Tolai of their regular trading incomes.

In early July 1893 tension reached a new peak, and the first reports of clashes between villages and Company police began to come in. It was at this moment that an enterprising young sorcerer further inland, Tavalai of Ulagunan, claimed to have discovered an ointment which could repel bullets and actually turn them against the person shooting. ‘Big men’ from the affected areas hastened to Ulagunan to pay the 1000 fathoms of shell money which Tavalai demanded for his ointment, and by mid-July a conspiracy to attack Herbertshöhe and subjugate the whites had been fashioned. There were several reasons why inter-district co-operation should succeed at this point. Firstly, Tolai settlements were already susceptible to occasional alliances through inter-marriage, trading arrangements, and ritual links in the tubuan and ingiet cults. Secondly, in 1893 there were also widespread feelings of uncertainty as European plantations took over land which they claimed to have purchased years before. Finally, the attack on Ralum in 1890 had shown the Tolai that resistance was feasible only when they possessed something to fuse the different groups together: in this case the ointment proved to be a perfect integrating mechanism.
Plate XVI  Right: A Pominis of Papitalai (from Hiltruper Monatshefte, 1933)

Plate XVII  Below: Men from Pak Island, Admiralties Group (from H. Nevermann, Admiralitäts Inseln, 1934)
Plate XVIII  *Left:* A Wampar man during German times (from R. Neuhass, *Deutsch Neu Guinea*, 1911)

In September 1893 some 300 warriors from the districts of Malagunan, Tingenavudu, Ulagunan, Bitarebarebe, Biretava and Vairiki attacked Herbertshohe. The Germans barely managed to repel them. Punitive raids were repeatedly mounted on the districts, and inflicted heavy casualties (over forty Tolai were killed), but the warriors refused to be subdued. Smearing with the magic ointment and singing a ritual chant, they flung themselves at the plantation, rooting out cotton bushes as they went and offering fierce resistance to the troop columns of New Irelanders under European control.

In October the New Guinea Company’s Governor, Georg Schmiele, arrived from Kaiser Wilhelmsland to try to negotiate a settlement with the Tolai, since the disruption of the native food markets was having serious consequences on the Company’s labour force at Herbertshohe. Meetings were arranged with the ‘big men’ of the leading districts, and Schmiele demanded nominal amounts of *tambu* as a traditional surety, but at the last moment the Tolai feared betrayal and the negotiations broke down. Skirmishes continued on into November amid rumours that the entire coastal area south of Blanche Bay was awaiting the final defeat of the white men. The hitherto peaceful villagers between Herbertshohe and Ralum began to stir, and the Europeans’ last line of defence, the imported labourers on the plantations, were more and more disconcerted at the fanaticism of the enemy.

On 29 November the small German cruiser, SMS *Sperber*, arrived off Herbertshohe, and Schmiele made a last attempt to bring about a negotiated settlement. It failed: only Bitarebarebe district, well inland from Herbertshohe and comparatively unaffected by European expansion in 1893, was willing to consider peace. The other districts kept up their resistance into mid-December, when a combined expedition of German marines, European settlers and New Ireland labourers was launched on them. Only then, after the Europeans and their allies had penetrated beyond known settlements, shooting and burning as they went, did the Tolai cease hostilities and declare their submission.

Naturally enough, the New Guinea Company and most of the settlers attributed the ending of the war to the *Sperber* expedition and to the bombardment of coastal villages which the ship had carried out at the same time as the land attack. From the Tolai standpoint, European pressure was less decisive. Sources close to the Tolai suggest that they, and not the Europeans, decided that it was no longer practical to continue the uprising. In his memoirs Octave Mouton describes the final, combined expedition in some detail, and in quaint but telling
prose recounts a decisive moment in the hunt for the massed Tolai forces.

Later we arrived at a village on a hill there the natives came from all directions uphill to attack us with the exception of one side which showed level ground the rest could not be approached by climbing to reach us, the native police were uncontrollable and I and the officer and the other whites told them not to use our ammunition wastefully, the natives came from all directions, at last through the level side we saw a fellow painted red and white and carrying no arms all he had in each hand a bunch of croton like a bunch of flowers, he did not last long as soon seen he was shot, from that moment we could have heard a pin drop after a while, no sooner the wizard dropped all we could hear was the rush of natives through the bush, I cut off one of his ears to show the natives of Kinigunan, so that the fact that they really believed the wizard and evidently he believed it himself because he was unarmed and like a priest leading his followers . . .

Tavalai had become a victim of his own delusions.

The Tolai themselves report an additional reason for their change of heart: an alualua called To Bobo, from Vunabalbal, managed to obtain some magic ointment and took it to the Germans who smeared their forces with it before going into battle. Not only did it strengthen the resolve of the Melanesian troops, but in the eyes of the enemy it also made them invulnerable; thus the Tolai sued for peace.

Without doubt, Tavalai's death and the use of his ointment against them were greater shocks to the Tolai than the whistle of a few artillery shells. In the calmer light that prevailed after the war there were Germans who saw this. The Sperber expedition quickly became notorious as an example of how not to hunt New Guineans. From the beginning it was a fiasco: the New Guinea Company manager, Paul Kolbe, led a party which got lost in the bush on the way in, then proceeded to fire on a detachment from the Sperber on the way out; while the Tolai managed to evade a decisive battle altogether. In addition to all this, the captain of the Sperber was openly cynical about the success of his bombardment since all the target villages were behind a hill; the only casualty seems to have been a man who dislocated his neck in shock at the whistling shells! If Europeans had any dominating effect on the ending of the 1893 war it was because, as Schmiele recognised, the Tolai were becoming economically dependent on the whites and this was a powerful motive for them to accept peace rather than total victory.
The war of the bullet-proof ointment was an important departure in the history of the Gazelle Peninsula. For the Germans it inaugurated a new phase of expansion in the European economy. By 1897 European plantations in the eastern Gazelle had grown to 1295 hectares of planted land, and the Big Three companies were exporting 2325 tonnes of copra. Ralum alone was said to 'own' almost the entire districts of Kabaga, Ravalien, Ulagunan, Tinganavu, Bitarebarebe, Malagunan and parts of Kabakaul and Vunamami.\(^2\)

As for the Tolai, they had shown themselves a force to be reckoned with. They had not won the war, but neither had they been defeated totally. With the bullet-proof ointment, a feature similar to the Maji Maji of East Africa a decade later, the Tolai had for a time successfully opposed European self-confidence and superior technology with an unconquerable morale.

In addition, the co-operation which the districts had achieved in war did not disintegrate entirely with peace. Because of the gradual economic and political consolidation imposed on the Gazelle through missionary activity, and through the spread of trading and planting, the confederation of districts behind Herbertshöhe tended to survive under strong leadership. Some Tolai already had accepted that the whites could not be driven out, and that they must find some compromise solution to the problem of coexistence. One of these was To Bobo, the *alualua* who had helped to bring the war to an end by procuring ointment for the Germans. In 1894 he became head of the Vunabalbal clan after the death of his elder brother, who had unified the area against Herbertshöhe. As a Methodist preacher and 'big man' in his own right, To Bobo came more and more into prominence as virtual leader of the old confederacy based on his district Vunamami. He was a man who recognised the need for peaceful adjustment to the expanding European economy.\(^2\)

Few Europeans showed much understanding of the problems which faced leaders like To Bobo, or of the resentment which the Tolai harboured against the growth of European settlement. In the aftermath of the war, even the normally responsive Emma of Ralum declared that the only way to guarantee peace in the Gazelle was to give the Tolai 'a sound thrashing and drive them away from our lands'. Georg Schmiele, the Company Governor, was one of the few who tried to understand. A man who alienated almost every white settler in New Guinea by his stiff and priggish manners, Schmiele nonetheless was peculiarly sensitive to the changes being forced upon the Tolai by the pressure of white
development. As early as 1891 he had recommended that several 'trusted agents' be appointed to act as intermediaries between the racial communities. No action was taken. Now he recommended them again, and foreshadowed the establishment of reserves to protect the Tolai from the complete loss of their land. This time the Company accepted his ideas, but too late to enable Schmiele to implement them himself: on his way back to Germany in 1895, Schmiele died of fever in the East Indies. His ideas remained shelved until the arrival in January 1896 of Imperial Judge, Albert Hahl.

Hahl was a man of mixed qualities. He possessed a humane spirit, with a genuine interest in the varied cultures of Germany's Pacific empire, and his open, at times egalitarian personality marked him off from his Prussian compatriots. But he combined these qualities with a detached, even a callous sense of the brutalities of colonisation, which allowed him to regard conquest as a legitimate instrument of civilisation.

When Hahl arrived in New Guinea, there existed to all intents and purposes no systematic administration, for the New Guinea Company was engaged in negotiations to transfer permanent political control of the colony to the Reich and considered itself obliged only to a holding operation in New Guinea. Hahl, in whose hands the 'administration' now lay, immediately began moving among the Tolai in an effort to understand their language and customs, and to win them for the ideal of German colonialism. He had already set about defining the goals of the regime. The protectorate's future lay in its contribution to the economy and prestige of the Reich. In Hahl's vision, economic development depended, first, on strengthening the purchasing power of New Guineans in an ordered administration, and, in the long term, on educating them in the service of European capital. These were predictably eurocentric objectives, though they were balanced by a wish to protect New Guineans in the process, a wish which increasingly conflicted with the aims of trading and planting firms in New Guinea.

Albert Hahl early established a tradition of direct, personal and dynamic administration by constant travelling, by initiating contacts with outlying communities, by leading expeditions and police tours and by helping to resolve parochial disputes. Within three months of his arrival, Hahl could converse with the Tolai on the Gazelle Peninsula, and this stood him in good stead, for he was quickly besieged by Tolai leaders anxious to arrest the further encroachment of plantations on village land.
Hahl was aware that many indigenous groups had not grasped the implications of land purchase contracts and that certainly they had not anticipated European settlement and plantation agriculture on the scale it had reached. To Bobo, in particular, was able to persuade Hahl that Vunamami hamlets should be allowed to hold on to their extensive coconut stands as well as subsistence land. The Governor then agreed to negotiate with the owners of Ralum for the establishment of a reserve for Vunamami villagers who were currently occupying Ralum ground, despite the plantation's legal claim to the area. Hahl also set out to dissuade Emma from carrying out a plan to resettle the inhabitants of nine further hamlets on non-Ralum land in the interior in order to take up already-purchased land for new plantings. Such a move would disrupt the traditional basis of the local economy and remove a vital source of food supplies for the plantations. An even more immediate danger, which Hahl recognised, was the likelihood of a new wave of resistance in the area south of Blanche Bay as the populations of the interior came under unwarranted pressure from bitterly anti-white refugees migrating inland from the coast.25

This danger did not disappear until well into the 1900s but, as a result of Hahl's early efforts, which were successful though not without struggle, some reserves were excised from land already purchased by Europeans. Vunamami, for instance, was left with 147 hectares out of its original territory of 287 hectares, an area not inequitable in terms of 1896 land use.26 The reserves were not gained without conditions: Hahl decreed that they should revert to their European ‘owners’ after fifty years if the New Guineans had not planted coconuts or populated the area more densely in that time. To Bobo’s method of meeting these conditions was to lower bride prices by fiat in order to encourage marriage and increase the population, thus reinforcing Vunamami claims to the land; he also led the way in planting coconuts regularly and processing them into copra.

To Bobo prospered under the eye of his new patron, the Government. And among his own people he continued to grow in stature, for his innovations convinced his followers that he was acting for the common welfare, not just his own ambition. Through his leadership he helped the Vunamami confederacy come to terms with the growing colonial apparatus, and ensured that it could contribute to the shaping of its future.

But Vunamami was far from the only beneficiary. The Tolai of the eastern Gazelle prospered as a people for the rest of the German period.
Up to and beyond 1914 they enjoyed a steadily rising per capita income. They supplied eighty per cent of all native-produced copra in the Bismarck Archipelago, and about fifteen per cent of New Guinea's total copra exports. At the same time they strove to remain as independent of the European wage economy as possible, refusing to enlist for wage labour on plantations where, in most cases, they were regarded merely as chattels and not as voluntary employees. A few did enter service for the government or the police force, for here, under Hahl at least, the relationship was more reciprocal and they could retain a sense of economic and social partnership.

Land problems around Blanche Bay and on the north coast of the Gazelle were only one facet of Hahl's concern to provide the security necessary for trade and plantation agriculture to flourish. A second requirement was control of existing native trade routes from the interior, and the construction of new roads at strategic points. The Tolai possessed a very extensive system of markets running inland from Blanche Bay, but the mutual suspicions and hostilities of local settlements made the system vulnerable to sudden disruption. Capitalising on the Tolai's attraction to better market access and economic gain, and with the aid of shell money, iron and Methodist Mission influence, Hahl induced local villagers in 1896 to build a road from Herbertshöhe to Raluana. This road enabled him to secure the trading links which ran from the hinterland to the Kokopo coast. A network of roads was also the first stage in any future taxation project.

By the end of Company rule in 1899, additional roads or riding paths had been constructed around the rim of Blanche Bay to Simpsonhafen (the later site of Rabaul), from Simpsonhafen to Nodup on the north-east coast, and from Herbertshöhe south-west to Vunakokor, sixteen kilometres from the sea in the Varzin mountains. Hahl did not find the same ease in getting the Tolai to maintain the roads: that required constant supervision; and by 1898-99 he was using New Guinean prisoners to complete much of the work.

The final element in Hahl's security program was the appointment of Schmiele's 'trusted agents'. Control by reprisal had always been an inadequate policy, even if at times it was the only way for the meagre government apparatus to exercise its authority. In August 1896, in areas of the Gazelle Peninsula and the Duke of York Islands where the Methodist Mission in particular wielded a decisive influence for peace, Hahl nominated the first individual New Guineans to convey his wishes to groups of hamlets; among them was To Bobo. The new officials,
whom the Germans called originally *lualuas* but later *luluais* after the Tolai name for a district war leader, were given limited administrative and police powers to supervise road construction in their localities and to adjudicate small, local disputes. Fines of up to twenty-five marks or ten fathoms of *tambu* could be imposed, but villagers had the right to appeal against decisions to the Imperial Judge at Herbertshöhe.

The system of *luluais* was designed basically to encourage the peaceful solution of difficulties, and to act as a lever through which the government could ‘draw’ New Guineans to work within the colonial economy as road builders, plantation labourers and, later, taxpayers. To delegate a more autonomous ‘chieflty’ power to these agents was impossible, for the social and political authority of the traditional *alualua*, on which the appointments were based, was generally well circumscribed, and the Germans soon found themselves dealing with numerous complaints against *luluais* for exceeding their authority. Moreover, as the system expanded and single villages were given government *luluais*, the new appointees were not always the natural clan elders or ‘big men’ of their districts, so that some experienced difficulty in exerting their newly-ascribed authority. By 1900 Hahl had appointed forty-four of the new officials in the Gazelle and twenty-three on the Duke of York Islands, the only areas which his administration could reach effectively.29

But if racial relations in the Gazelle Peninsula were improving in the years after 1893, it was not simply the work of the German government. Missionaries had been spreading the Good News during the 1880s and 1890s, and they share credit, at least indirectly, for an increase in stability.

When the war of the bullet-proof ointment began, the Methodists were permanently entrenched throughout the northern Gazelle, in the Duke of York Islands and on southern New Ireland. Three white missionaries and forty-odd Pacific Island assistants, including the first New Guineans, were ministering to over 5000 followers. By 1899 and the end of Company rule, the number of New Guineans regarded as being supporters of the Methodist Mission had risen to 10 419. The mission occupied ninety-five outstations (over fifty in the Gazelle Peninsula), run by twenty-nine Polynesian and sixty-six New Guinean assistants. In addition there existed a major seminary for the training of local teachers on Ulu Island in the Duke of York group, which was giving an elementary education and promoting economic and political co-operation among the Tolai village groups.30 At the level of the
Pacific Islanders under German Rule

hamlet, the Methodist Mission probably exercised greater influence in the 1880s than did the other mission society, the Herz Jesu Mission (Mission of the Sacred Heart or MSC).

The first Sacred Heart priests arrived in Matupit in September 1882 to re-establish the Vicariate of Melanesia, which had been virtually abandoned since 1855. Three priests and two brothers made up the original party, and they settled first in Nodup, on the north-east coast. Within a few years, the headquarters of the mission was transferred to an area of land east of Herbertshöhe on the Kokopo coast, to which the name Vunapope ('seat of the Popies') was given. By 1891 the Mission of the Sacred Heart had its own Bishop of New Britain, Ludwig Couppé, a Frenchman of indomitable spirit and tireless energy, plus a complement of five priests, six lay brothers and five nuns. The same year, the Colonial Department, under pressure from the Imperial Commissioner residing in Kaiser Wilhelmsland, Fritz Rose, officially separated the areas in which the two missions could evangelise: the Methodists were allocated the area to the north and west of Raluna point, the MSC the area to the east and south. Within a very few years both parties, as well as the Berlin authorities, acknowledged that the demarcation was an absurdity. In its sector, the Sacred Heart Mission found only a small and scattered population, so continued to operate in areas destined for the Wesleyans; by 1897 Couppé claimed 3700 baptised adherents in the Methodist districts of Malagunan and Vlavolo alone. At Vlavolo rival churches stood only 400 metres apart, and the Catholics freely admitted they had at least thirteen churches in Methodist areas. The official division into spheres of influence was finally removed in April 1899.

The Catholic Mission was not free in the early days from clashes with the Tolai over land, especially on the north coast at Vunakamkabi near Vlavolo. Nevertheless, Catholic missionaries, like the Methodists before them, soon gained acceptance as men set apart from those seeking cash profits in New Guinea. Because of its efforts to mitigate the effects of the 1893 war on villagers behind Herbertshöhe, the Sacred Heart Mission was soon allowed by the Tolai to expand inland from Vunapope, and the first inland station was set up at Takabur in the district of Tingenavudu. Similar intervention on the north coast, where the mission obtained a pardon from death for the 'big man' organising resistance against them, paved the way for the conversion of the entire district; Couppé also was not far behind Schmiele in actively campaigning to reserve land for the Tolai in areas they had already sold.
In taking upon itself the functions of protector and advocate, the Catholic Mission won the trust of many Tolai. At the end of 1897 it could point to eight stations on the north and east coasts and hinterlands of the Gazelle Peninsula. With a staff now of forty Europeans, over 4000 baptised New Guineans, and two trained catechists, the Catholic Church in German New Guinea was becoming a formidable power.\(^33\)

Because of its resources and strongly centralised character, the Catholic Mission was able to exert as much, if not more physical control in its areas of influence than the German administration during the 1890s. The first road on the Gazelle Peninsula was actually built by Couppe, from Vunapope to Takabur in 1896, while the following year the mission armed its own labourers with private firearms to defend the Vunakamkabi plantation. Couppe was also the spirit behind Hahl's raids in the late 1890s on the north coast settlements of Massawa, Massikonapuka and Ramandu. These raids were designed to break the indigenous slave trade which centred on the technologically backward and largely defenceless Baining people. Many of the freed victims were delivered to the Catholic Mission for rehabilitation, while land was confiscated from the slave traders and they were driven out of the region. Couppe's plan of conversion was to collect these former slaves, as well as orphans and the illegitimate offspring of white settlers, feed and clothe them, and then educate them in Catholic orphanages. Later they would be settled in self-supporting peasant communities in the interior, and through inter-marriage and instruction, provide the core of a new Christian people in New Guinea.

That the mission, rather than the administration, could take the initiative in developing relations with New Guineans was in large part due to the impotence of officials like Hahl. Throughout the 1890s, the New Guinea Company refused to accept full responsibility for the internal security of the New Guinea protectorate, arguing that it was the job of the Reich to protect settlers from New Guineans and the navy to carry out police actions and impose European control when and where the Company desired. In the Bismarck Archipelago the Company did provide a police force of thirty-six Solomon Islanders, but, equipped with antiquated Mauser rifles and forced to work most of their days in the Company plantation, the Company police force was no more than an empty gesture towards the problem of security. The gesture was even emptier when the Company refused to supply its own administrators,
or those of the Reich, with a boat large and fast enough to transport the police quickly to areas of unrest.  

Europeans rash enough to live away from the centre of white settlement in the eastern Gazelle had to fend for themselves. At the fringes of contact beyond the Kokopo coast, the New Guineans remained totally in control until the end of the century. Despite his road into the Varzin Mountains, Hahl could not entrench German influence there because of the power and hostility of the 'big man', To Vagira, who was in the habit of spearing anyone found trying to acquire European goods. On the north coast, the Kabaira people resisted successfully all attempts to punish them for attacks on whites, even a major naval expedition as early as 1886. In fact this incident was a good example of the limitations of naval intervention in German New Guinea. Five hundred men were landed from three warships in June 1886 in order to capture hostages in retaliation for repeated acts against Europeans. Over several days they searched the district back and forth, only once contacting the inhabitants at close quarters and failing to capture anyone. In the following years fourteen Europeans were killed in Kabaira, and as late as 1899 the people were still resisting European encroachments on their land. The slave traders of the north also continued their predatory raids on the Baining people despite Hahl's efforts, and unrest continued there into the early years of the new century.  

Nowhere were the limitations of the government more clearly visible than in New Ireland before 1900. Hostility between coastal groups and Europeans had existed since the early 1880s over the labour trade. Besides forcible removals, occasional shootings and the indifference of some recruiters about returning ex-labourers to their proper destinations, trade was carried on in arms and ammunition. This only aggravated the conflicts.  

The New Irelanders took their revenge by attacking resident traders. Three Europeans were killed in various parts of the island in the last three months of 1885, another two were driven from their trading posts, while all of Farrell's stations on the north coast were plundered and burned. In September 1886 Hernsheim's agent, Hermann, was murdered by the Kapsu people because his predecessor had burned their huts in a drunken rage; Hermann's successor, Hoppe, shared the same fate in December 1888. In the area around Tubtub, another three traders had been dispatched by March 1890. Part of the trouble was the non-return of labour recruits, who had either died on the planta-
tions of Samoa or extended their contracts; partly it was the desire of New Irelanders for firearms and ammunition with which to vanquish traditional tribal enemies; while several incidents can be traced directly to excesses and acts of violence by traders.

During the 1890s the deteriorating state of relations drove many traders out of New Ireland. By the end of 1891 only four were left on the north coast. With the New Guinea Company abdicating its responsibility for their security, these men were forced to rely on the infrequent visits of German warships or take the law into their own hands. When they did organise their own expeditions, the New Guinea Company promptly fined them for unauthorised use of force; if they waited on the navy, it invariably proved to be as inadequate a deterrent to New Irelanders as it had been to the Tolai. Before Hahl’s arrival, only one naval reprisal was in any way effective. In other reprisals, either detachments became lost, or never managed to find the right village, or the villagers fled into mangrove swamps where the sailors could not follow them.

Despite the continual pressure of the New Ireland traders for a hardline attitude, and the arguments of imperial officers for a small police force to be stationed permanently in the north, nothing was done in these directions by the Company or the Reich. Hahl’s arrival hardly helped either, in spite of his energy and good will. Without finance, sufficient personnel, or a proper police corps, Hahl could carry law and order only as far as his whale boat would take him. In 1899 the situation away from the east coast of the Gazelle Peninsula was the same as it had been two decades before: it fell to individuals to ensure their own safety, a task which many undertook with more belligerence than diplomacy.
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.