Chapter 1
Papua: the ‘unknown’

Although the title of his landmark study was *The Kiwai Papuans of British New Guinea* (Landtman 1927), the southeastern part of the island of New Guinea officially became Papua in 1906 when administrative responsibility for the colony passed from the Colonial Office in London to the Commonwealth Government of the newly federated Australia. The Western Division of Papua where Landtman undertook his research between 1910 and 1912 was administrated from a small colonial outpost on the offshore island of Daru. Although the region is now the Western Province of Papua New Guinea, Daru remains the administrative centre for the vast, largely undeveloped tracts of savannah lowlands, riverine plains and mountains between the Torres Strait, in the south, to the Star Mountains at the western end of the New Guinea Highlands, in the north.

A geographical perspective

Geographically, the Torres Strait and Fly estuary region where Landtman chose to work is extremely varied. Papua New Guinea’s longest river, the Fly River, and the largest lake, Lake Murray, are both in this province and the Fly River effectively divides the region in two. South of the Fly is the Oriomo Plateau, a generally featureless undulating ridge bordered in the north by the middle Fly and in the south by a narrow coastal plain. Soils on the coastal plain are poor, mostly clay, and easily become water-logged. This narrow coastal plain is often only three kilometers wide and three metres above mean sea level. The coast is fringed by mangroves and littoral woodlands but along the Oriomo ridge and inland away from the coastal swamps and rivers are some areas of good gardening land. To the local people this inland coastal plain and savannah country was known as Daudai.

In the Torres Strait there are more than 100 islands, islets, coral cays and reefs lying between 9°20’ and 10°45’S latitude and 141°15’ and 144°20’E longitude. However, only 16 are presently inhabited although use of the uninhabited islands, either permanently or temporarily, has occurred during recent times. The high, granitic islands in the west are an extension of the Cape York – Oriomo Ridge but the central islands are mostly low, sandy, coral cays. The eastern islands are fertile, basaltic islands of recent volcanic origin with patches of good vegetation. In the north, along the southwest coast of Papua are Saibai and Boigu Islands composed of low mangrove mud and peats overlying coralline platforms. Close to the western end of Saibai is another small granitic island, Dauan.
The only hill on the southwest coast of Papua, at Mabudawan (59 metres), is the highest point on the long exposed coast. For this reason, Mabudawan remains an important cultural site for coastal people of the region. This southwest, or Daru, coast extends from Parama Island in the east to the entrance of the Mai Kussa inlet, opposite Boigu Island. The wide triangular Fly estuary extends from Parama in the south to Dibiri Island in the northeast and to Sumogi Island at the entrance to the Fly River itself. In this swampy, very muddy and hot estuary there are about 40 islands and a number of tidal islets. The Fly estuary covers a vast area of 7100 square kilometres between 8° and 8°15’S latitude and between 143° and 143°45’E longitude. The entrance from Parama to Dibiri is 80 kilometres wide. The largest island in the estuary, Kiwai Island [Iasa Ura], is 60 kilometres in length and varies between five and 10 kilometres in width. However, the average water depth in the narrow channels of the estuary is only about eight metres and passages between islands are usually long and shallow with rapidly changing sandbanks. They can be very dangerous for at times of full moon a tidal bore can swamp small boats and inundate coastal villages.
The People

Kiwai Island is the original home of the Kiwai-speaking people, some of whom have moved to live along the northern (Manowetti) bank and also on the western (Dudi) bank of the Fly estuary. The Kiwai who live along the southwest coast build their homes in a line along the narrow sandy foreshore between the sea and the coastal swamps and grasslands. From this coast they have unlimited access to the waters of the Torres Strait. In nearly all Kiwai communities the principal diet is fish, sago, bananas and some vegetables grown on the coastal strand. The coastal Kiwai are a sea people whose ‘lands’ are the offshore reefs and sand cays of the northern Torres Strait. They are the descendants of the island Kiwai who long ago moved out from their homelands on Kiwai Island.
Other inland people live along the narrow muddy rivers and creeks that intersect the coast and access to these widely spaced communities can only be affected by walking or by small canoe. The Gidra people, who speak Wipi language, live predominantly along the Oriomo River opposite Daru Island, west of Parama Island and behind the Kiwai communities of Katatai and Kadawa. Gidra is a Bine term for bush people. The Bine inhabit the coastal swamp and savannah country along the reaches of the Binaturi River and behind the Kiwai villages of Mawatta and Turituri. Further west the Gizra live along the Pahoturi River behind the Kiwai village of Mabudawan and west of the Pahotrui River are the lands of the Agob people. These inland people are primarily subsistence horticulturalists. Trade between coastal and inland villages continues to be important for access to resources, food and the maintenance of good relationships between small isolated communities. The Kiwai are marine hunters and their place, wedged between the sea and the coastal brackish swamps, is a tenuous one. Villages are largely self-sufficient for the Western Province remains one of the most underdeveloped regions of Papua New Guinea, itself a country struggling even now with social, economic and cultural problems in a politically turbulent part of the world.

The Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits 1898

In 1910, when Landtman went to study the social and cultural life of the Kiwai, the area was largely unknown to outsiders apart from a few missionaries who were mostly Samoan pastors, a few traders and labour recruiters, some plantation owners and the government officials stationed at Daru. At that time the social and cultural life of the Torres Strait Islanders was being compiled by Haddon and his associates, William H. R. Rivers, Charles Myers, Charles Seligman [originally Seligmann], Sidney Ray, Anthony Wilkin and William McDougall, who had comprised the members of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits in 1898 (Herle and Rouse 1998). Myers and McDougall were students of Rivers and Seligman was a colleague of Myers. This multi-disciplinary expedition has been considered a ‘watershed’ in British anthropology (Urry 1984: 98). During the Torres Strait expedition, Rivers formulated the principles behind the ‘genealogical method’ of cultural research. Rivers and the team found that in psychological tests the Torres Strait Islanders were equal to Cambridge undergraduates and in eyesight testing, they surpassed the students. Results which went against perceived wisdom of the time. In the Torres Strait, Rivers made an ‘unprecedented scientific achievement: the creation of a psychological laboratory in the field’ (Kuklick 1996: 620).
Even so, the team of Cambridge researchers only spent one year in Torres Strait, Papua and Borneo. In fact some members of the party only spent five weeks on the western islands of Mabuiag and Saibai and about four to five months on the eastern island of Mer. While the reports of the expedition remain a seminal work in Torres Strait studies, Haddon and his team did not make the break from the evolutionary methodology that dominated anthropology at that time (Mullins 1996: 349–50). Although the works are largely empirical the Cambridge Expedition is credited with establishing some of the philosophical bases for the ethnographic method (Herle and Rouse 1998). For Haddon, whose research background was in zoology, scientific analysis required direct observation. However, long-term fieldwork in a study area would be perfected by others, among them Gunnar Landtman.

The six volumes of the Reports of the Cambridge Expedition to Torres Strait were to be published over 35 years (Haddon 1901/03–1935). By 1910 four volumes, Volume II on physiology and psychology (1901–03), Volume V on the sociology, magic and religion of the Western Islanders (1904), Volume III by Sidney Ray on language (1907), and Volume VI on the sociology, magic and religion of the Eastern Islanders (1908) had been published. Landtman would have had access to these important sources before he sailed to Papua. His discussions with Haddon in Cambridge would certainly have given him a strong grounding in the social, cultural and religious aspects of Torres Strait Islander life. Volume IV on arts and crafts (1912) and the summary Volume I on general ethnography (1935) were yet to be published as Haddon was continually adding material to his original sources from correspondence that he maintained with many people resident in the region. Haddon had strong personal reasons for sending Landtman to Papua: he wanted more information on the cultures of the people of the northern coast of the Torres Strait, areas that he had only briefly visited. Haddon needed more information on his significant discovery that small isolated communities did not contain an undifferentiated mass of unthinking conservatives but that society was highly complex, people differed widely from each other in character and temperament and exhibited considerable differences of opinion (Kuklick 1996: 620).

Haddon's unpublished journals of his two trips to Torres Strait, the first in 1888 and the second with the Cambridge Expedition (Haddon 1888 and 1898) record his growing interest in Melanesia and his disappointment that the affinities of cultures across the Torres Strait remained largely unknown despite European contact. Haddon, like his contemporaries, was drawn to ethnology by a belief that cultures had to be studied and documented before 'all traces of their primitive ways of life were lost' (Quiggin and Fegan 1940: 98). The Cambridge expedition was planned along the lines of earlier natural history expedition although Haddon, Seligman and Rivers brought a new sense of importance to
the collection of data and an emphasis on methodology and research (Urry 1972: 50). It also became apparent that traditional societies defied analysis by large survey teams. It was Rivers who later developed the methodology that a lone, generalist ethnologist should live for a year or more among a community of perhaps 400–500 people marked off from surrounding peoples. This ethnologist should ideally learn the vernacular language and develop close relationships with the community in order to gain access to every feature of social and cultural life (Kuklick 1996: 623). However the communities and cultures of the Torres Strait and south Fly region did not live in isolation from each other. Here the local people were the inheritors and elaborators of a similar Melanesian maritime culture that included clan and totemic allegiance, long-distance trading, warfare and marriage alliances, a common technology, a complex web of magic and stories with adapted social and cultural solutions to the problems of a comparatively resource-poor terrestrial environment and a resource-rich marine one (Shnukal 2004: 327).

In addition to the reports of the expedition of 1898, Haddon had written papers on the ethnography of the Western Torres Strait Islanders (Haddon 1890a), legends of the Torres Strait Islanders (1890b and c), the decorative art of the Papuans (Haddon 1894), the classification of stone clubs (Haddon 1900a) and a study in the anthropogeography of British New Guinea (Haddon 1900b and c). Haddon’s expedition to the Torres Strait marked a break between the amateur and the antiquarian interests in exotic cultures and the development of professional anthropology. But Haddon also stressed the importance of museums, arranged on scientific lines, to illustrate and supplement anthropological teaching, and he acted as Deputy Curator of the Cambridge Museum many times and later donated over 10,000 photographs and his personal papers to the collection. Haddon was concerned with the lack of interest in the ethnology of the Torres Strait Islanders at a time when communicable diseases like influenza and the measles were having a devastating impact on small communities in the region (Haddon 1890a). He wrote a more popular account of the expedition to the Torres Strait, Papua and Borneo and titled it: *Headhunters: black, white and brown* (Haddon 1901).

Haddon was making his life’s work the study of Melanesian anthropology. He was well aware that his observations in the Torres Strait had been made 30 to 40 years after major demographic and social impacts had taken place (Barham, Rowland and Hitchcock 2004: 3) and was keen that the Kiwai coast should be comprehensively surveyed for he wrote: ‘when we turn to the western division of British New Guinea we find quite a different state of affairs [from understanding cultures and customs of the peoples]: nothing, however, is known of the greater part of the district’ (Haddon 1900b: 269). For Landtman, Haddon was an important professional contact and mentor. Haddon no doubt saw in Landtman
a keen, able and enthusiastic candidate for testing newly developed theories on
the nature of cultural contact and social change along the Daru coast. However,
Haddon's scientific studies of art, artefacts and cultures remained grounded in
his intellectual models of comparison based on natural science. Local meanings
and ethnographic context were of little value to him (Busse 2005: 447). While
Landtman's ethnography may seem old-fashioned today, his grounding was in
a different intellectual tradition: the folkloric, linguistic and ethnic heritage of
the pre-Christian Swedish and Finno–Ugric (Uralic) peoples of the Scandinavian
and Nordic countries. Still, it is little wonder that someone as open and eager as
Landtman should soon find himself on a boat to Papua for, as he wrote: 'My field
of research linked up with that of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to
Torres Straits of 1898, as it was Dr A. C. Haddon who suggested it [studying the
Kiwai] to me' (Landtman 1927: v).

Edvard Westermarck and ethnological
traditions in Finland

Landtman was introduced to Haddon through a mutual association with the
sociologist Edvard Westermarck who made several study tours to Morocco
from 1897 and spent two years there from 1900 to 1902. Long term fieldwork
was already part of intellectual tradition in Finland. Westermarck had been
appointed to the chair of Professor of Practical Philosophy at the University
of Helsinki in 1906 [then still officially known as the Imperial Aleksander
University] and was also Professor of Sociology at the University of London
from 1907. Unlike many of his fellow academicians who studied in Germany,
Westermarck studied in England and was attracted by the empiricism of the
British sociologists as opposed to the idealism of the German Rationalists
(Vuorela 1977: 60). His methodological basis for research focused on experience
and the comparative approach in which social phenomena were examined from
many elements collected from primary research among 'primitive' peoples.

Westermarck was essentially an evolutionist and his philosophy following on
from the theories of Herbert Spencer that dealt with the evolution of language,
literature, science, art and forms of government. Spencer had an assistant
search travel literature of the period for evidence of the customs of primitive,
uncivilised peoples that he tabulated in a series of volumes called Descriptive
Sociology (Spencer 1873–81) to provide him with data to support the theory that
all human history was a history of social progress. This Victorian idea of the
unilinear progress of human kind meant also that British empiricism was not
far removed from positivism that said that all proper knowledge was derived
from and supported by the scientific method: ideas that were germinated in the
natural sciences. It was this empiricism that attracted Haddon and he continued
to use data supplied by correspondents in the compilation of the Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits (Haddon 1901–35). However, Westermarck found that data collected by amateur travelers, colonial officials and missionaries were unsatisfactory and so his long career in Morocco was spent personally studying the religious and moral concepts of the local Arab and Berber peoples.

Westermarck actively promoted this model of long term fieldwork in small communities to his students. He also introduced British evolutionary anthropology and sociology into Finnish academic circles and sponsored the study of non-European cultures to his students like Landtman. Westermarck, and his students like Karsten and Landtman, were from a core group of Swedish-speaking liberal academics in Finland active at a time when a national revival era was encouraging the collection and study of oral traditions. The absorption of Finland into the Russian empire following the Napoleonic Wars stimulated the development of a strong nationalist identity grounded in the Finnish language. Folklore was to be the basis of this national patriotism and the native language the ‘only true organ of expression of the national culture’ (Vuorela 1977: 16). Centuries of Swedish rule had also influenced Finnish identity. At the beginning of the 20th Century, about 12 per cent of the population of Finland spoke Swedish as their mother tongue and even under Russian rule this minority continued to hold important political and economic roles. Swedish was the language used by the government, most civil servants and the clergy. Finnish-speaking country folk often had no surname but were given one, in Swedish, when they were sent to school or joined the army. The Swedish-speaking minority varied from being coastal fishers to factory owners, from civil servants to high ranked nobility and since the early 1880s had their own political party, the Svenska folkpartiet i Finland (The Swedish People’s Party). Their driving force in society later guaranteed them linguistic rights after Finland was declared a bilingual state in 1919.

The national epic, the Kalevala, had been first published by the physician Elias Lönnrot in 1835 who had undertaken extensive fieldwork in Karelia collecting folk poetry and songs. Lönnrot later became professor of Finnish language at the University of Helsinki (Salminen and Landtman 1930: 359). The publication of the epic poems stimulated great interest in establishing the cultural origins of the Finnish people and their own cultural traditions. The origin of the Kalevala poems became the subject of much intellectual research and discussion especially following the work of the scholars Julius Krohn and his son Kaarle Krohn (Wilson 1976: 241–49). The Kalevala became a sacred symbol and a strong nationalist icon that set Finno–Ugric peoples apart from their Swedish and Russian neighbours. Linguistics, ethnology, history and comparative religions became distinctive academic fields within both the Swedish-speaking minority and the Finnish-speaking majority. There are still separate Swedish-speaking,
Professorial Chairs at the University of Helsinki, notably in history, law and medicine. Separate Finnish and Swedish language and literature societies were established that sponsored and funded research into the ethnology of the minority and majority cultures. The most important societies continue to operate in Finland today. By 1906 Finland had established a central museum in Helsinki to bring together the disparate collections of ethnology scattered around the city and university. Sensitivity to Russian rule meant that the State Museum of History and Ethnology could not be renamed the National Museum of Finland until after Independence. The establishment of the museum further encouraged researchers and Westermarck, Landtman and his colleague Karsten made substantial collections of material culture now housed in Helsinki.

In its older Finnish usage, ethnography meant the study of the material culture of a people and ethnology was understood to be the branch of learning dealing with a traditional culture, more specifically the material, economic and social aspects of a people. Thus the concept of ethnology covered the study of non-European societies, ancient civilisations and, within modern European societies, the traditional elements of rural and peasant culture that remained juxtaposed against an urban, industrialised society. There were solid grounds for the establishment of this branch of learning. The study of comparative religion had been introduced into Finnish academic circles in the late 19th Century as an ethnological and folkloristic field of study. However it was not concerned with studies of the major world religions but with the evolution of beliefs and practices among the Finno–Ugric peoples, and this later spread to studies among various cultural groups in North Africa (Edvard Westermarck), Papua (Gunnar Landtman), South America (Rafael Karsten) and Palestine (Hilma Granqvist) (see Isotalo 1995 and Suolinna 2000). Westermarck broadened anthropological research in Finland and although he remained interested in comparative religion he extended this to the evolutionary study of the fundamental social institutions of marriage and moral ideas.

From 1918 Westermarck served as Professor of Philosophy and Rector of the Swedish-speaking, Åbo Academi in Turku. The mood of academic inquiry in early 20th Century Finland was liberal, dynamic and open to new philosophical ideas (Attonen 2007). Finnish academic circles were strongly influenced by the German Enlightenment and Landtman had also studied for a time in Germany. However, Finnish scholars, like Landtman, also benefited from the impetus of research on religious traditions of the indigenous Finnish people for these pioneers were ‘doing excellent fieldwork at the time when the first functionalists of the French and English schools were still in their cradles. First-hand observation and the mass of notes and texts provided by them constituted the basis of scholarly work for many generations to come’ (Honko quoted in Anttonen 2007). Certainly Landtman’s research in Papua was based
on the universalist, Människan som kulturvarelse (man as a cultural being) type of research favoured in Finland at that time. So, with a solid grounding in sociology, oral history and ethnology Landtman was an ideal candidate for research into the culture and history of the Kiwai.

### Landtman’s contacts in England and Papua: entry into the Haddon network

As soon as the travel plans were made, Landtman sought to purchase the necessary equipment for his long stay. He later wrote: ‘Mr C.G. Wheeler [from the London School of Economics] was of great help when choosing all kinds of necessities. He had recently returned home from an expedition to the Solomon Islands and helped me with good advice. Together we bought my equipment in the Army and Navy Stores in London. I was excited with the various objects, as they were particularly nice and practical.’ (Landtman 1913b: 3). Indeed, Gerald Wheeler would have been a reliable source of information. On the Percy Sladen Trust Expedition to Melanesia in 1908, accompanied by W. H. R. Rivers and A. M. Hocart, he travelled to the Solomon Islands and undertook research on the folklore of the Mono-Alu people of the Shortland Islands off the southern coast of Bougainville in what was formerly German New Guinea (Wheeler 1926). The Shortland Islands are now part of the Solomon Islands. No doubt Wheeler would have been another of Haddon’s colleagues whose network of associates was wide. Haddon had fortunately also established a good personal relationship with the Lieutenant-Governor and Chief Judicial Officer of Papua, Judge (later Sir) J. P. Hubert Murray, a formidable figure in the history of colonial administration in Papua.

Murray took an active interest in ethnology and encouraged his patrol officers to report on social and cultural practices of the Papuan people. These reports and maps were regularly published in the annual reports of the colonial administration (Annual Reports on British New Guinea 1886/87–1905/06 and Annual Reports on Papua 1906/07–1919/20). Artefacts obtained from patrol visits and confiscated during police intervention, especially during tribal fights, were incorporated into a museum in Port Moresby. Some of this material later found its way into major state collections in Australia. Murray also assisted in the collection of artefacts for Haddon especially when Haddon and Hornell began writing the monumental book on the canoes of Oceania (Haddon and Hornell 1936–38). In return for Haddon’s encouragement and assistance, Landtman was to present the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology with a duplicate collection of artefacts (CUMAE E1912.79) from the Western Division (Landtman 1927: ix). In return Landtman was to win high praise from Haddon who later wrote: ‘The book [The Kiwai Papuans of British
New Guinea] is so packed with interesting information that it will always form an indispensable handbook for ethnologists’ (Landtman 1927: xvii). Indeed, Landtman’s work continues to be a primary source of information on the coastal Kiwai of Papua New Guinea.

Landtman was again fortunate in that he arrived in Papua before Murray had chosen an official Government Anthropologist and before Murray’s opinions of anthropology had changed. Murray became annoyed by Bronislaw Malinowski when he worked in the Trobriand Islands from 1915 to 1918 (Malinowski 1935 and 1953 [c. 1922]) and although he was keen to appoint a Government Anthropologist it was not until 1921 that he was able to appoint W. E. Armstrong, one of Haddon’s former students, as assistant Government Anthropologist in Papua. Armstrong worked only briefly in the Southeast Division and then returned to Cambridge after a year. The Chief Medical Officer, W. Mersh Strong, was then appointed to the post and while Strong wrote on medical conditions for native labourers and on the Roro and Mekeo languages it was not until 1922 that F. E. Williams was employed, first as assistant Government Anthropologist, but then promoted to Government Anthropologist in 1928. Over the next 20 years Williams was to produce some of the finest writing on Papuan ethnology available to us today (Williams see especially 1928, 1930, 1936, 1976). However, Murray and Williams effectively isolated Papua from outside anthropological activity following this appointment. Under Williams, Papua virtually became a closed field of research that he alone surveyed.

Landtman’s personality and his productivity established his good reputation in the eyes of Murray for later the Papuan administration even contributed financially to the publication of the English language volume on the Kiwai (Landtman 1927). Murray held little respect for any anthropologist who attempted to advise him on ‘native’ administration. Lewis Lett (1944: 108) in a largely hagiographic tribute to Murray’s rule was direct and scathing in his opinion of anthropology and anthropologists when he wrote that ‘anthropologists [were] those strangely unscientific scientists’ whose practice of ‘Anthropology varies in its aims and in its principles according to the predilections of its innumerable prophets, and differs so widely that it is impossible to class them together as representing definitely established theories or opinions’. While these opinions were largely directed at Malinowski and the theory of functionalism developed in a later period, the underlying tension between the Papuan model of colonial administration and criticism of it in operation were fermenting slowly. Landtman wisely refrained from expressing any public opinions. He also refrained from open criticism of the Christian missions and their work in Papua.
Landtman’s contacts with the local missions: again the Haddon connection

With a formal letter of introduction signed in London by the Rev. Wardlaw Thompson, the Foreign Secretary of the London Missionary Society (LMS), and addressed to the Rev. Ben Butcher and the Rev. Edward Baxter-Riley, Landtman sailed to Papua (Landtman 1910–21: Thompson 9 February 1910). Again, Landtman was fortunate with his contacts. The LMS, a Congregationalist Protestant mission society, had commenced pastoral work in the Western Division in 1872 when the Rev. Samuel MacFarlane and the Rev. A. W. Murray landed at Mawatta, a Kiwai village located at the mouth of the Binaturi River, with a small group of Loyalty Islander [Lifu Islanders] and Rarotongan [Cook Islander] pastors and built a mission there. Later a trading station was established nearby. Association with the LMS was more than just coincidence for Haddon regularly gave lectures to the students of the LMS in London and to intending missionaries studying at Cambridge.

The presence of Papua and its seemingly unknown peoples and potentialities, so close to the open frontier of north Australia, stimulated tentative exploration of the Fly River before effective government control of the vast region (MacFarlane and Rawlinson 1875–76, D’Albertis 1881, Everill 1885–86, Stone 1880, Strachan 1888, Macgregor 1888–89). In 1890, the Administrator of British New Guinea, Sir William Macgregor, had given the LMS a vast sphere of influence from Milne Bay to the Torres Strait. The only exception was at Yule Island north of Port Moresby where the Congregation of the Sacred Heart established a Catholic mission in 1885. The LMS maintained a presence in the Torres Strait until its churches were handed to the Anglicans in 1914 but in the Western Division of Papua the LMS remained active until the 1930s.

The first government outpost was established near Mabudawan at the mouth of the Pahoturi River in 1891, largely to pacify the internecine fighting along the coast. Despite the belief that the area was the best and healthiest location along the coast for a government station, the site was poorly chosen. Daru with its ridge of volcanic soil, its safer harbour and its more fertile gardening land was the home to a few local families, some of whom were descendants of original inhabitants previously driven off by the Kiwai. Cedar cutters and the crews of pearling and bêche-de-mer boats also used the island as anchorage and as a place to cut firewood and buy food (Annual Report on British New Guinea 1889–90: 66). By 1895, Daru became the principal government station, a water and fuel depot and the base for missionaries, traders and the exploration of the Fly River region. Later the traditional inhabitants of Daru gave up rights of occupation to the colonial government (Beaver 1920: 49).
Despite the ambitions of MacFarlane and Murray, the missions on the Daru coast did not prosper until the Rev. James Chalmers assumed responsibility for the LMS in the Western Division after the retirement of Samuel MacFarlane in 1886 (Chalmers 1887, Wetherell 1993). Chalmers established a base at Saguane on Kiwai Island but, after the death of his wife there, he relocated the mission to Daru in 1900. James Chalmers published useful material on the Kiwai (Chalmers 1903) and he was the first missionary to make contact with the Gogodala, north of the Fly River, in 1898. The vast network of channels and rivers along the coast of Papua stimulated interest in exploration and even in 1892 J. P. Thomson was writing that detailed anthropological investigations into the cultures of the peoples of the Fly River were needed by the colonial administration (Thomson 1892: 118). However, after Chalmers and his assistant Tomkins, together with a party of local missionaries, were killed at Dopima village on Goaribari Island near the Omati River in 1901, Edward Baxter-Riley had to completely re-establish the Fly River Mission (Annual Report on British New Guinea 1900/01 Appendix D and E: 25–37). In retaliation, all the men’s houses in Dopima and nearby villages were burnt by the colonial police in an action that further alienated both the administration and the mission. Samoan pastors (Faifeau Samoa) formed much of the second generation of missionaries and these Pacific Islander pastors in both the Torres Strait and on the Papuan mainland influenced social life in the small communities: much of the pre-contact ritual life was forbidden, music styles were changed with the introduction of Samoan polyphony and new dances like the Samoan sitting down dances and Rotuman ‘Taibobo’, a formation dance, were introduced (Neuenfeldt and Costigan 2004: 116).

Missionary activity, although highly significant, was not the primary catalyst for social change among the coastal Kiwai and the inland tribes of the Daru coast. The main impact came from wage labour on the fishing and pearling boats in the Torres Strait that commenced as early as the late 1860s when floating stations and permanent shore stations were established by entrepreneurs eager to access the pearl shell and marine produce of the Torres Strait. Recruiting also served to partly pacify tribal fighting along the coast. Conditions on the boats were hard with men, usually the young men from the communities, working for long hours and for many months at sea before being paid off in Daru. The time at sea became a new initiation period with its seclusion from women, a struggle for status and a return, laden with goods, being substituted for the traditional rites of passage (Beaver 1920: 295 and Lawrence 1991: 375). Papuan labour was so valuable that even the Australian Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, the so-called White Australia policy, introduced after Federation in 1901 that precluded the importation of Pacific and Asian labour, was structured to allow for contracted labour from Papua to work in Torres Strait (Schug 1995: 157–58).
The economic and political situation in the Torres Strait

The economy of the Torres Strait was based on bêche-de-mer fishing and pearling, volatile industries subject to periods of boom and bust. Maritime exploitation had commenced in the Torres Strait as early as 1869 when a bêche-de-mer and then a pearl shelling station was built on Tudu Island near the Warrior Reefs by Captain William Banner (Chester 1870) who employed 70 South Sea Islanders [mostly Polynesians] and some of the remaining Tudu Islander families. By 1872, over 500 Pacific Islander labourers had been brought in to work the permanent and floating pearling and bêche-de-mer stations (Mullins 1997). Pearl shelling activities expanded rapidly but the growth of lawlessness in the region prompted the establishment of Thursday Island in 1877, the main town on the Queensland side of the border. By 1883 over 200 boats employing 1500 men harvested the pearling fields of the Torres Strait with Thursday Island the only real port of any importance in the region. At the turn of the 20th Century, the Torres Strait and the pearling field off Broome in Western Australia accounted for over half the world’s mother-of-pearl shell (Pinctada maxima) supplied to the button and ornament markets of Europe and America. Secondary marine produce came from trochus and bêche-de-mer, items that could also be collected by surface divers operating on a variety of small and large vessels such as brigs, barques and schooners (Schug 1995: 46 and McPhee 2004).

Only later did the common form of pearling lugger become introduced into the Torres Strait. This vessel was a standardised clinker-built, double-ended vessel with two masts each supported by a dipping lug rig, hence the term lugger. They were generally 5-8 tons measurement rigged for three sails and partly decked over. They only contained a small cabin aft with a bunk and lockers for the crew of up to 10 men. Conditions were not comfortable and Landtman and the local missionaries found these work boats unpleasant means of transport for long trips across the often rough waters of the Torres Strait. Thursday Island became a major shipbuilding and trading centre but the small island close to the tip of Cape York was inhabited by a mixture of whites, Polynesian labourers, Japanese pearlers and shipwrights, indigenous Torres Strait Islanders, Papuans and Malay marine workers. Thursday Island was the commercial heart of a rich marine resource region. It was Landtman’s first port of entry. It was a typical north Australian town: hot and dusty, built of timber and iron, with little architectural appeal.
Landtman described his first impressions of the wood and iron buildings, the palm trees, the dusty streets and the salty sea air:

We arrived at Thursday Island in the middle of the night but could not go ashore as it was dark. At six [in the morning] we landed. It was April 12 when I ended my trip on the steam boat. From then on I had to get along as well as the circumstances granted. I walked up and down the deck impatiently not knowing how things would develop. I knew, nevertheless, that the first few hours after coming ashore would clarify the situation in many respects. I looked at the area with the greatest curiosity and tried to figure out the islands with the high dry hills wooded with bushy forest, with strips of beach here and there, and the open sea glittering in the Sound, on the whole a right idyllic landscape.

Finally we pulled up at the long pier and I went ashore leaving my belongings onboard for the time being. Thursday Island looked almost like a small town with two long streets running parallel to the shallow beach — but there was little else. However the beach was magnificent with its fine sand. Most of the small buildings had both walls and roof of corrugated iron and on the garden side there were whole lines of closed
cisterns [galvanised iron water tanks] for collecting rainwater. The town had a hotel, shops and a couple of bank offices. The population seemed to be the most variegated set I had ever seen, a product of almost all of the most eastern and oceanic peoples with the whites forming the smallest group. The more or less mixed Papuans, the Chinese and the Japanese were the largest groups.

Almost immediately, I had the good luck to meet the person whom I had been advised to turn to: Mr. Walker, the director of a combined business and mission company called The Papuan Industries. With religious management, the company tries to bring productive activity among the Papuans and develop the natural resources of these regions. This meeting was the first of the favorable circumstances at my arrival. It was most important time to begin for the dry season had just arrived and I would have time until December when the rainy season would start.

My money arrangements were in good order at the bank but the post let me down even though I should have been prepared. I had been cut off from all information from home and I was thirsty to know what had happened there but the mail had not arrived as quickly as I had so I only received a few newspapers and a couple of letters. They had been sent about the same time I left home and contained no news.

During my stay at Thursday Island I visited the sympathetic Mr. [Hugh] Milman, the Resident Magistrate to whom I had a letter of introduction. He died later. He was very friendly and hospitable and I decided never to neglect visiting him when I came to Thursday Island.

Our hotel [The Federal Hotel] lay right on the beach and we could hear the waves breaking in all night. I listened to the rattle of the crowns of the palm trees during the quiet hours, and it was pacifying like a mild rain.

Often during the next two years would I remembered with pleasure my stay in this peaceful town, free from household troubles, with a verandah containing easy chairs inviting one to study the fresh newspapers, and also, where one could walk back and forth on the wide solid surface of the floor instead of along the springy pliant bark planks with holes ready to trap your foot — as in Papuan huts (Landtman 1913b: 25 to 28. Translated from the Swedish by Pirjo Varjola).

Landtman’s stay on Thursday Island would be short for Walker was keen to return to his mission on Badu Island. The combination of missionisation, commercial activity and government control gradually stopped the lawlessness and raiding conducted by the men based in the pearl shelling stations of
Torres Strait and assisted in suppressing inter-tribal warfare between coastal village groups as well. When Landtman arrived the Papuan coast was relatively peaceful although sporadic tribal fighting continued especially near the former Dutch New Guinea [now West Papua] border and along the middle Fly. Letters of introduction facilitated Landtman’s work. Baxter-Riley on Daru and Butcher at Aird Hills in the Gulf District to the north were both men of substance who would not only work for many years in the region but would become to be known as authorities on the language, social and cultural life of the peoples they converted to Christianity (Baxter-Riley 1925, Butcher 1963). Their local assistants, the Samoan pastors, were figures of power and authority in their small communities and being the only representatives of the LMS, demanded obedience and respect (Wetherell 1996: 79).

Using his letter of introduction from Thompson, Landtman was able to base himself in mission and trading outposts along the coast and into the Fly estuary and so avoid, unnecessarily, the small European enclave in Daru. Daru was still accessible from the coastal communities where Landtman worked and by 1910 the government offices had records of nearly 15 years of contact with local people. Many of the Resident Magistrates were men of wide experience in Papua and well educated. They too would be useful points of reference for Landtman’s work (see Jiear 1904–05; Beaver 1920; Annual Reports on British New Guinea 1886/87–1905/06 and Annual Reports on Papua 1906/07–1919/20; Austin 1925). In all, apart from the climate, Landtman had an ideal study area for his research.