

Early German-language Analyses of Potsherds from New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago

Hilary Howes*

ABSTRACT

In December 1905, the Austrian anthropologist and medical practitioner Rudolf Pöch unearthed a number of potsherds from a refuse heap in Wanigela, south-eastern New Guinea. Four years later, Otto Meyer, a German Catholic missionary, discovered decorated pottery fragments on Watom Island in the Bismarck Archipelago. His illustrated accounts of these fragments are now recognised as the earliest descriptions of Lapita pottery. Although Meyer and Pöch shared a common language and examined similar materials from neighbouring parts of the Pacific at much the same time, their interpretations of these materials differed significantly. By comparing and contrasting their analyses of prehistoric pottery and speculations about its origins, I hope to help contextualise early archaeological work in the Pacific and shed new light on the development of ideas about the settlement of the region.

Keywords: Otto Meyer, Rudolf Pöch, Lapita, Wanigela, Watom

INTRODUCTION¹

In December 1905, the Austrian anthropologist and medical practitioner Rudolf Pöch (1870–1921) unearthed a number of ‘sherds and handles of pots’ from a refuse heap near the Wanigela Anglican Mission in Collingwood Bay, south-eastern New Guinea (Figure 1), now part of Oro Province (Pöch 1907b: 68). He argued that these objects could legitimately be described as ‘prehistoric’ since no tradition about them exists, tradition being the sole unwritten history of New Guinea’ (Pöch 1907a: 137). Four years later, the German-language journal *Anthropos* published excerpts from letters by Otto Meyer (1877–1937), a German-born Sacred Heart Missionary, describing ‘fragments of vessels’ exposed on Watom Island in the Bismarck Archipelago (Figure 1) by unusually severe weather (Meyer 1909a: 251). Several decades later, his illustrated accounts of these fragments and others uncovered during pioneering excavations of the area were acknowledged as the earliest descriptions of what is now known as Lapita-style decorated pottery (Green & Anson 2000).

These two men shared a common language and examined similar materials from neighbouring parts of the Pacific at much the same time. A closer investigation of their interpretations of these materials nevertheless reveals important differences. I compare and contrast their analyses of prehistoric pottery and speculations about its origins, paying particular attention to their educational and exper-

iential backgrounds, interactions with local people, and discussions with international networks of friends and colleagues who shared their interests. This comparative approach will help contextualise early archaeological work in the Pacific and shed new light on the development of ideas about the settlement of the region, some elements of which remain influential in archaeological thought today.

THE MEDICAL MAN AND THE MISSIONARY

Rudolf Pöch (Figure 2) was born in 1870 in Tarnopol, now located in western Ukraine, then part of Habsburg Galicia, the Austro-Hungarian Empire’s northernmost province. He commenced studies in law and philosophy at the University of Vienna in 1888, but transferred the following year to medicine, completing his medical degree in 1895. In 1897 he visited Bombay as a member of the Austrian Plague Commission, a scientific expedition organised by the Imperial Academy of Sciences (hereafter IAS) in Vienna. The expedition’s purpose, as its name suggests, was to study the raging epidemic of bubonic plague. After two years working in municipal hospitals in Vienna, he relocated to Berlin to study anthropology and ethnology under Felix von Luschan. Freshly appointed to the position of Extraordinary Professor of Anthropology at the University of Berlin, Luschan was also a Directorial Assistant of fifteen years’ standing at Berlin’s Ethnological Museum. Here, under his guidance, Pöch completed an internship in addition to his studies (Regal & Nanut 2010; Weninger 1980).

Pöch’s overseas travels resumed in 1902 with a malaria study trip to West Africa, funded by the Hamburg Institute

* CBAP, Sir Roland Wilson Building #120, The Australian National University, Acton, ACT 2601, Australia
Corresponding author: hilary.howes@anu.edu.au

for Tropical Diseases. The IAS subsequently supported two major anthropological expeditions: first to New Guinea, the Bismarck Archipelago and Australia (1904–06), then

to South Africa (1907–09). During these expeditions, Pöch pioneered the use of film and phonographic recordings of local languages, songs and ceremonies, and amassed extensive and diverse collections of zoological, botanical and geological specimens, items of material culture, and human skeletal remains (Legassick & Rassool 2000: 9–29; Teschler-Nicola 2009: 67–73, 2013; Weiss-Krejci 2013). The year after his return from South Africa, Pöch was appointed Adjunct Professor of Anthropology and Ethnology at the University of Vienna; by 1919 he had risen to the rank of Full Professor, but his early death in 1921 prevented him from fully analysing material collected during his travels. From 1915 to 1918, again with financial support from the IAS, he also conducted detailed physical anthropological studies of prisoners of war interned in Austro-Hungarian and German camps (Berner 2010; Evans 2010: 131–87; Lange 2010).

Otto Meyer (Figure 3) was born in 1877 in the German city of Oldenburg in Lower Saxony; however, he spent much of his childhood in Kleve, close to the German-Dutch border. In 1890 he was confirmed into the Catholic faith in Antwerp by Monsignor Louis Couppé, vicar apostolic of New Pomerania (now New Britain) and a Missionary of the Sacred Heart (Laracy 1981). He commenced his novitiate in Salzburg, where he also took his first vows. In 1902 he made his final profession at the Sacred

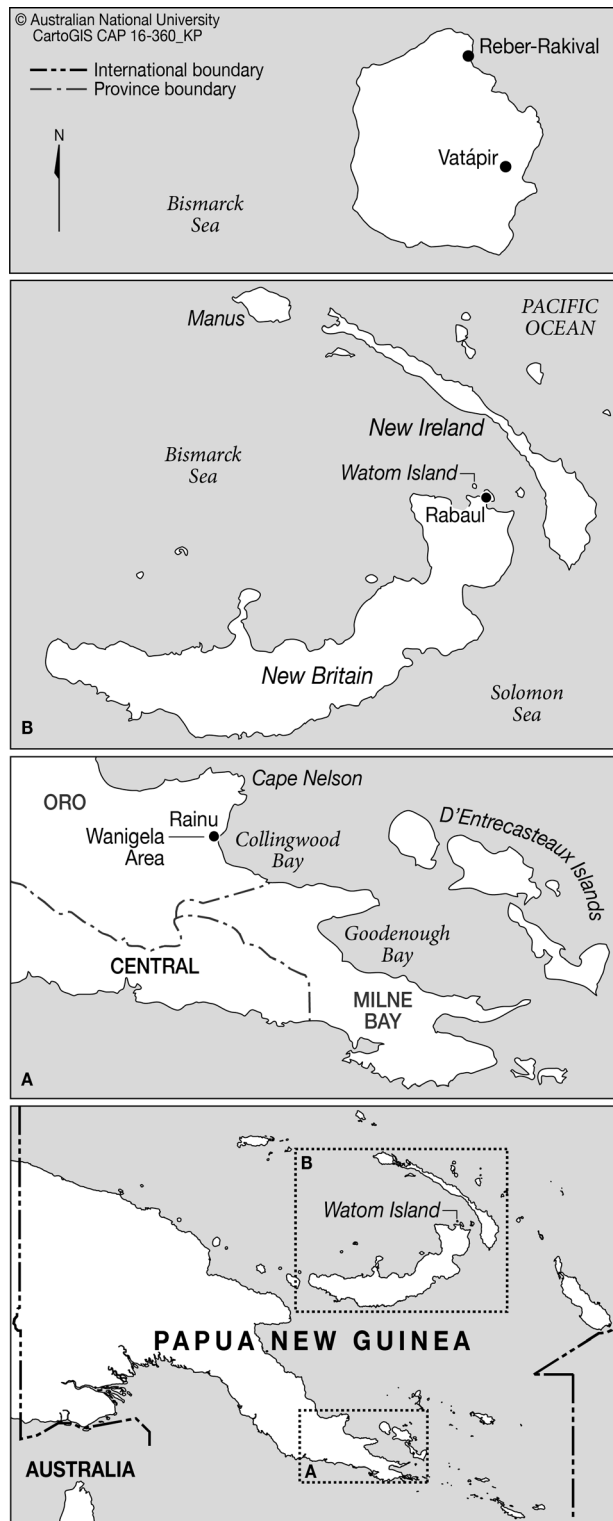


Figure 1. Location map. Courtesy Kay Dancey, CartoGIS, College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University.



Figure 2. Rudolf Pöch (1870–1921). Reproduction courtesy Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz.



Figure 3: Otto Meyer M.S.C. (1877–1937) (Meyer 1932:185).
Reproduction courtesy National Library of Australia.

Heart Mission House in Hilstrup, now a suburb of Münster. In the same year he was sent as a missionary to the vicariate of Rabaul and took up residence at Reber Mission Station on Watom Island.² Here he remained for the best part of 36 years. In 1937, returning from two months' leave in Sydney, he died in his cabin on board the liner *Nellore*, berthed at the New Farm wharf in Brisbane, and was buried in Brisbane's Nudgee Cemetery (Anon 1937; Smith 1937).

Lukewarm reports of Meyer's progress as a priest-in-training in Hilstrup contrast with his evident dedication to scientific research. In a letter dated February 1902, he first sought his superiors' 'consent to enter into mission' in the Bismarck Archipelago, describing it as his 'dearest wish to work towards the salvation of souls ... and to engage in science', then immediately qualified this request by asking to study in Germany 'for a few more years', 'in order to be able to accomplish more in the field of natural science'. Should his superiors prefer him to depart for New Britain immediately, 'I would do so willingly, provided I can be certain of [having access to] scientific equipment'. The chilly response to this request – 'It must be made clear to Father Meyer that ... he does not have the right to demand to [be allowed to] spend his time merely on scientific matters' – does not seem to have dampened his enthusiasm (Meyer n.d.a.). Between 1905 and 1930, in addition to a number of unpublished manuscripts, he produced some thirty publications on topics ranging from archaeology, ethnobotany and zoology to descriptions of local beliefs,

customs and languages (Hüskes 1932:212). Meyer was also a valued collector of specimens for the American Museum of Natural History in New York and the Zoological Museum in Berlin; the potsherds he excavated found their way to museums in Basel, Berlin, Cologne, Melbourne, Paris, and (for a time at least) Rome (Specht 2003:125–26; Meyer n.d.e.).³

'PREHISTORIC EXCAVATIONS': INITIAL DISCOVERIES

Pöch's earliest published description of his excavations appeared in 1906, in the third of four progress reports to the IAS. By this stage he had already covered a considerable amount of ground. He commenced his expedition in German New Guinea, landing at Friedrich-Wilhelmshafen (now Madang) in July 1904, and spent several months in each of Potsdamhafen (now Awaro in Madang Province), Herbertshöhe (now Kokopo, East New Britain), and Namatanai (in New Ireland). In July 1905 he relocated to Australia for a month and a half, then headed to British New Guinea via the Solomon Islands. From October 1905 to January 1906 he was based in Cape Nelson, where G.O. Manning, the Resident Magistrate of the district, 'hospitably accommodated [me] and supported ... my work in every way' (Pöch 1906:601). His excavations in Wanigela were carried out during this period:

On 13 December I commenced prehistoric excavations in ... Collingwood Bay, in large mounds of refuse that had been discovered several years ago, but had not previously been viewed or systematically examined by an expert. The yield included pottery sherds displaying a far more advanced ceramic technique than [that found] anywhere in the region today, and a decorated shell ... in addition, I exhumed four more or less complete skeletons (Pöch 1906:602).

Later in his report, Pöch offered a more detailed description of his findings:

In the village of Wanigéla are three long earthen mounds, around 1 ½ to 2 m high and each originally 100 m to 200 m long. Two of these mounds were dug away when a mission station was being laid out, and were discovered to be full of potsherds ... I began to cut through the third, previously undisturbed mound transversely and came across four skeletons some 1 m below the surface, which, judging by their position and completeness, had been buried there ... In addition, I discovered in the mound pigs' bones, sherds and handles of pots, and shells ... Everything found to a depth of 1 m was kept separately from items excavated to a depth of 2 m (Pöch 1906:606).

Importantly, Pöch had envisaged the possibility of

finding ‘traces of a Palaeolithic era in New Guinea’ even before departing Vienna. His first report to the IAS summarised his progress on the various research questions listed in his pre-departure travel and work plan. In addition to seeking ‘traces of a Palaeolithic era’, these included clarifying ‘the position of the Papuans [in relation] to the other black races’ and identifying ‘differences between the Papuan and Melanesian [races]’, as well as investigating language diversity, diet, sensory physiology, and the possible existence of ‘dwarf population[s]’ (Pöch 1905: 437–43).

Possibly the general impetus to search for ‘traces of a palaeolithic era in New Guinea’ came from Luschan, a polymath with considerable experience in archaeological excavations in Asia Minor and numerous publications in archaeology and Classical studies (Bleibtreu 2009; Rugendorfer & Sükar-Kogler 2009; Wartke 2009). However, Pöch’s decision to target Wanigela specifically was influenced by a description of potsherds from the same area by C.A.W. Monckton, then Resident Magistrate of the North-Eastern Division:

In some excavations carried out by the mission and natives at Rainu, in Collingwood Bay, an interesting discovery was made of an old village site of a forgotten people, and a quantity of broken and ancient pottery found of curious and unique design and shapes. The pottery was much superior to any now made or in use, and there is no tradition or record of the people by whom it was made. Among human remains, at a depth of 4 feet, two fragments of carved shell were found ... The art of carving on hard shells is not now practised (Monckton 1905: 33).

Monckton’s description does not suggest that he personally took part in these excavations. Pöch, however, stated in ‘Prehistoric discoveries in New Guinea’ (1907) that ‘[t]he first publication on these discoveries stems from C.A.W. Monckton ... it is based on excavations that he and Missionary Money conducted in Collingwood Bay’ (Pöch 1907c). Possibly this was simply a misunderstanding, but I suspect it also indicates a certain mindset towards the value of European expertise as opposed to local knowledge. Similarly, Pöch made no reference to the participation of local ‘natives’ in the excavations, despite Monckton’s explicit acknowledgement of it, and was equally evasive about the involvement of local people in his own digs. His earliest published account, quoted above, depicted a lone explorer: ‘I commenced’, ‘I exhumed’, ‘I began’, ‘I discovered’. In ‘Prehistoric discoveries in New Guinea’ he declared: ‘In 1905 I myself dug through a previously untouched hill’ (Pöch 1907c). However, another 1907 article described the situation rather differently:

I was delighted ... when the present Resident Magistrate, G.O. Manning, offered me the opportunity ... to travel with him in his whaleboat to Collingwood Bay.

Police officers were taken to supervise the work, as well as spades and mattocks ... I selected for my excavations a mound at the edge of the village situated north of the mission, which until then had remained completely untouched ... I had it cut through transversely; the material excavated was packed in layers into sacks ... While I arranged for the mound at this spot to be dug through systematically, the natives began to dig in other places on their own initiative, including at a more distant mound, a good distance inland, which I was not able to see (Pöch 1907b: 68–9).

Far from the ‘lone explorer’ narrative, this account suggests that Pöch benefited from substantial assistance in his excavations; indeed, it is possible that he never touched a spade, preferring instead to direct the efforts of his assistants. Presumably all or most of these were local people; however, with the exception of Manning, their identity remains unclear.

While Pöch’s excavations were planned well in advance, Meyer stumbled upon his first pottery fragments quite by chance:

At the beginning of the year terrible north-westerly weather prevailed here, such as has not been seen for decades ... the current flows past around five minutes away from my station and forms a small counter-current in the quiet bay of Reber. Thanks to this counter-current, and to the rain, I discovered two fragments of vessels similar to pots or pitchers. Both pieces were found in the same place, the first at the beginning, the second at the end of January (Meyer 1909a: 251).

Later the same year, Meyer reported that the north-westerly wind had ‘[brought] to light’ further ‘fragments of prehistoric pottery vessels’ (Meyer 1909b: 1093). He added that he believed he had ‘found the site whence they all originate’:

Some years ago I had a pit some 2 m deep dug beside my house. The pieces (without markings) lie in the earth most recently cast up, those with markings somewhat further [away] and were probably washed by the rain as far as the coast ... In addition to many smooth and several engraved sherds, the most recent excavations also turned up snail shells and coconut shells (Meyer 1909b: 1093–94).

Evidently Meyer then became sufficiently interested in these chance finds to undertake a more systematic search of the pit site. His next report detailed ‘the results of the most recent excavations I arranged’. These included ‘more pieces of smooth pottery vessels’, amongst them ‘several with large figures superimposed or glued on, such as I had not found previously’, as well as human, bird and fish bones, ‘[p]igs’ teeth, tusks and molars’, and various ‘[s]nail

shells and seashells, the most common being 'large Trochus, with the lower parts already partially polished for arm rings'. He also described 'complete Trochus arm rings', 'a fish hook made of Trochus', and several stone items: a 'particularly large number of small, still sharp pieces of obsidian', a 'small stone axe', a 'sharpened greenstone, a second, larger one which served as a whetstone', and 'semicircular sharp stones, which probably served as knives to cut through lianas' (Meyer 1910a: 1160–61).⁴

LOST IN TRANSLATION: LANGUAGE AND SILENCE

Meyer proposed possible uses for some of the objects unearthed. He did not specify how he reached these conclusions, but probably drew on his own observations of local craft practices and tool use, as well as his discussions with local people. Other remarks point to both methods as sources of information. For example, he noted that the fish jaws excavated were those of 'species which today are caught with a large reef fish basket', and that *Terebra* shells 'are not eaten nowadays', while snails of the genus *Potamites* 'are purchased by the natives of Nakanai, the creatures live only in mangrove lowlands'.⁵ The 'front side of the [human] incisors' found 'was gleaming brown'; he speculated that they had 'perhaps [been] previously blackened, as the people still do' (Meyer 1910a: 1160–61). Regarding a separate item, 'a mortar-like stone' brought to him by a local person, he noted:

Some of the old ones say that it is a hand-held club, with which the enemy was slyly stunned by blows to the temples and breast. Others say that it served to close the bamboo cane in which the remains of a person doomed to die were ensorcelled. Others again are of the opinion that it could also have served to pound the nuts (*Carinarium* [sic] *indicum*) used when making cakes of this sort (Meyer 1910a: 1161).

Meyer also sought local views on the first two potsherds. 'The natives to whom I showed the "stones" could only respond to my questions by saying that the markings on them were probably made by *Pir*, the legendary person of their tales', he recalled (Meyer 1909a: 251). Ten of these tales appeared in print the following year, in two local dialects of the Tuna language (Tolai language, *a tinata tuna*) with parallel translations into German, under the title 'Myths and Stories from the Island of Vuatom'. One story specifically mentioned a sacred stone, *a vatápir*, which Meyer translated as 'the Stone of Legend or the Stone of Pir, a legendary person' (Figure 4). He described it as 'a basalt block a metre high with a vertical front face, on which the pattern [depicted] opposite ... appears to have been carved', adding that the same pattern 'frequently recurs in the paintings of the natives' (Meyer 1910b: 723 n. 4). Meyer was also able to elicit local names for some of the ornamental patterns (Figure 5) on the potsherds, noting that

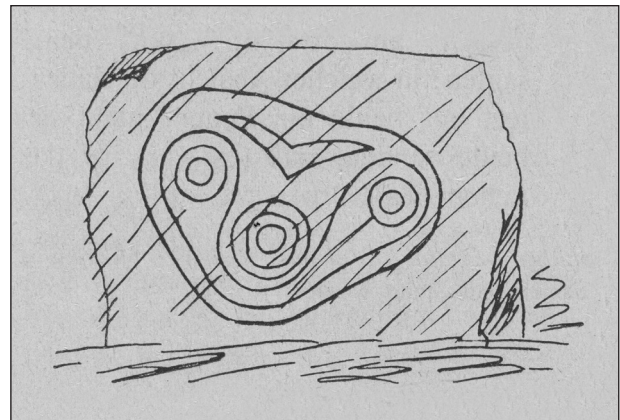


Figure 4. *a vatápir*, the Stone of Legend or the Stone of Pir, a legendary person (Meyer 1910b: 723). Reproduction courtesy National Library of Australia.

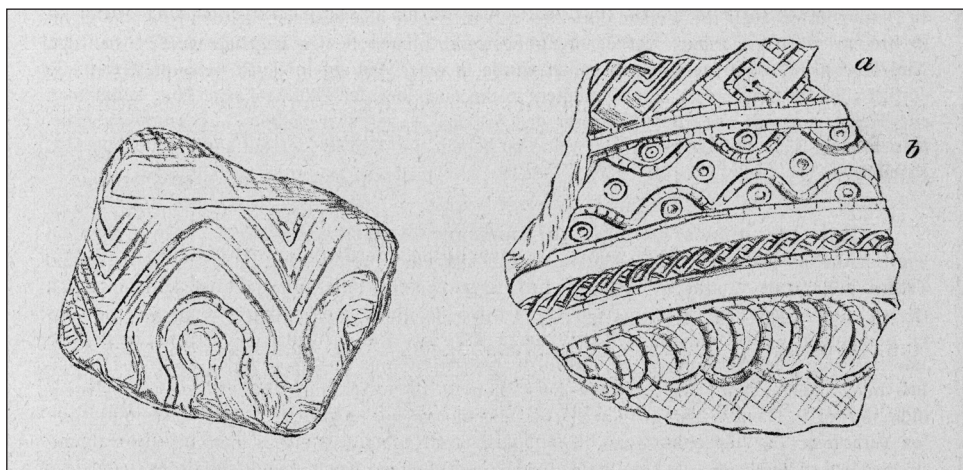


Figure 5. Two fragments of vessels similar to pots or pitchers (Meyer 1909a: 251). Reproduction courtesy National Library of Australia.

‘[t]he natives recognise markings *a* and *b* as *daudaul* and *tutumuna bint*’ (Meyer 1909a: 252). His 1921 dictionary of the Tuna language does not list *bint*, but gives *tutumuna* as ‘to write, written text, writing implement’; *daudaula* or *daudaula* is translated as both ‘a zigzag pattern’ and the name of a plant species (*Sida rhombifolia*), while the related word *daula* is given as meaning either ‘frigatebird’ or ‘zigzag line’ (Meyer n.d.d.: 59, 279, 410).

While these observations offer tantalising glimpses of the rich world of narrative and belief infusing the daily lives of Watom Island’s early twentieth-century inhabitants, they also emphasise the more obvious point that Meyer could not have accessed any of this information without a working knowledge of the local language. In this respect Pöch was undoubtedly at a disadvantage. His reports do not explicitly address the question of language barriers, but even if Manning or others were in a position to offer assistance, the potential for details or nuances of meaning to be lost in translation must have been ever-present.

A further point, equally obvious but no less necessary, is the considerable difference between the kinds of conversations possible with one’s neighbour of seven years and those one might be willing to engage in with a short-term visitor, especially if that visitor arrived in the company of a senior government official and police officers. Although little has been written about Manning’s tenure as Resident Magistrate, his predecessor Monckton had a decidedly unpleasant reputation: ‘some contemporaries admired him as a “fearless ... fighting man”, others deplored his readiness with a gun, his callous punishments and his sexual exploitation of local women’ (Lutton 1986). Nor should the influence of the police be underestimated: oral evidence collected by John Waiko suggests that ‘in the early period of contact it was often the police who determined whether relations between groups were to be hostile or peaceful’ (Waiko, quoted in Lutton 1978: 65).

In addition, Pöch’s arrival in Collingwood Bay on 13 December 1905 to ‘commence prehistoric excavations’ was not his first appearance in the area. He had spent the period between 17 November and 5 December ‘visit[ing] Collingwood and Goodenough Bays in the government cutter ... with many opportunities for comparative ethnological and anthropological observations’ (Pöch 1906: 1–2). Pöch’s 1906 report does not specify the nature of these observations, but if they followed the general approach outlined in his first report, they were undoubtedly both lengthy and intrusive:

Skull and body measurements of some 150 natives have been undertaken to date. In most cases I devoted 1–2 hours to the investigation of a single individual, in order to capture as many features as possible suited to a characterisation of the race. The external appearance was also accurately described, [and] the state of health was examined with particular attention to hereditary and specifically tropical diseases. Type photographs

were taken of most people, [showing their] full face, profile, and full figure. Prints of hands and feet were also collected, as were hair samples (Pöch 1905: 438).

In declaring that ‘the present-day populace [of Collingwood Bay] ... has no connection to these remnants of earlier pottery, nor ... any tradition relating to their creators’, Pöch seemingly did not take into account any of the abovementioned factors (Pöch 1906: 6). Apparently it did not occur to him that the company in which he travelled, his inability to speak the local language, or the activities he had undertaken on his previous visit to the area might have shaped local people’s responses to his queries about the Wanigela discoveries. It did not strike him as unlikely that if, as he later claimed, ‘the Wanigela people are constantly finding the old potsherds’, and if they ‘kept in their houses as rarities’ ‘fine pieces ... they had found on earlier occasions’, they would nevertheless have no views whatsoever on their origins, no explanation of their cultural significance, no way of incorporating them into their social world (Pöch 1907b: 69). Nor did he consider that knowledge about the potsherds’ meaning might have been restricted to a smaller subset of the local population, despite having described a situation of precisely this kind in an earlier report on styles of ornamentation used by Monumbo wood-carvers around Potsdamhafen:

The meaning of the ornamentation is completely unknown to the great majority of the population, only a few influential old men are able to interpret it, those in whom the traditions of the people live on, who know the sagas, songs and ceremonies of their people; even the man who carves the decorations according to the pattern provided or from memory is completely in the dark as to their meaning (Pöch 1905: 444).

Possibly Pöch simply accepted Monckton’s statement that ‘there is no tradition or record of the people by whom [the pottery] was made’ (Monckton 1905: 33). Although his analyses are substantially more detailed, he certainly concurred in general with Monckton’s evaluation of the appearance and nature of the potsherds. Where Monckton described ‘curious and unique design and shapes’, Pöch declared that the ornaments on the excavated sherds were ‘entirely different to those commonly used nowadays’, and ‘do not fit into any of the stylistic variants of New Guinea existing today’ (Monckton 1905: 33; Pöch 1906: 6, 1907c). ‘The beautiful ornaments’, he concluded, ‘are foreign’ (Pöch 1907d: 612).

THE SEARCH FOR ORIGINS

Like Monckton, Pöch considered the pottery found at Wanigela ‘much superior to any now made or in use’ (Monckton 1905: 33). ‘These old pieces’, he declared, ‘are far superior to the current pottery in strength, size and fine

workmanship' (Pöch 1906:6). Some potsherds were 'indicative of particularly large and strikingly circular vessels, 'often very thick-walled and mostly very beautifully and evenly fired' (Pöch 1907c, 1907a:139). Some displayed 'a lustre and an external smoothing that cannot be a subsequent patina, but was evidently applied to the clay prior to firing'; others had been 'very beautifully fired from strikingly good, brick-red earth' (Pöch 1907c, 1907a:139). The various handles found, 'very diverse in their design', were 'particularly remarkable in view of the fact that the present-day Wanigéla people do not know how to make any handles on their pots' (Pöch 1906:6).

Pöch acknowledged that some of the potsherds in his collection had been uncovered by 'natives ... dig[ging] in other places on their own initiative', while others had been brought to him to sell by people who had 'found [them] on earlier occasions and ... kept [them] in their houses as rarities' (Pöch 1907b:69). 'Naturally', he recalled, 'since all discoveries were rewarded, attempts were also made from time to time to offer me thoroughly modern potsherds, but added smugly that 'the intended deception could not succeed, for the differences between old and new pottery are too striking. The modern pots are much weaker, [and] the modern pottery lacks most of the forms displayed by the old ware' (Pöch 1907b:69). He emphasised this point with a visual comparison (Figure 6):

[The object marked] A ... is a piece of a broken new pot of the Wanigéla people. It is still blackened by soot. In addition, its walls are much thinner. Moreover, the ornamentation is stuck on as a series of small mouldings, something that is never found in old potsherds. Even in cases where the decorations on new pots are engraved, they are roughly done in comparison to the old potsherds (Pöch 1907b:70).

These statements indicate Pöch's determination to establish that the potsherds uncovered at Wanigéla did not just differ from pots produced by the area's current inhabitants, but were superior to them in every conceivable way. He did not consider that features of the modern pots he dismissed as 'inferior' might actually have been advantageous for local use. The 'strength' of the 'very thick-walled' prehistoric pots, presented by Pöch as an advantageous contrast to the 'much weaker', thinner-walled new pots, is an obvious example. Brian J. Egloff's 1973 paper on 'Contemporary Wanigéla Pottery' suggests the exact opposite, namely that thinner-walled pots were preferable to thicker-walled ones:

Wanigéla vessels are in demand because of their thin walls which permit the rapid cooking of food, while using a minimum of firewood ... In the villages at the

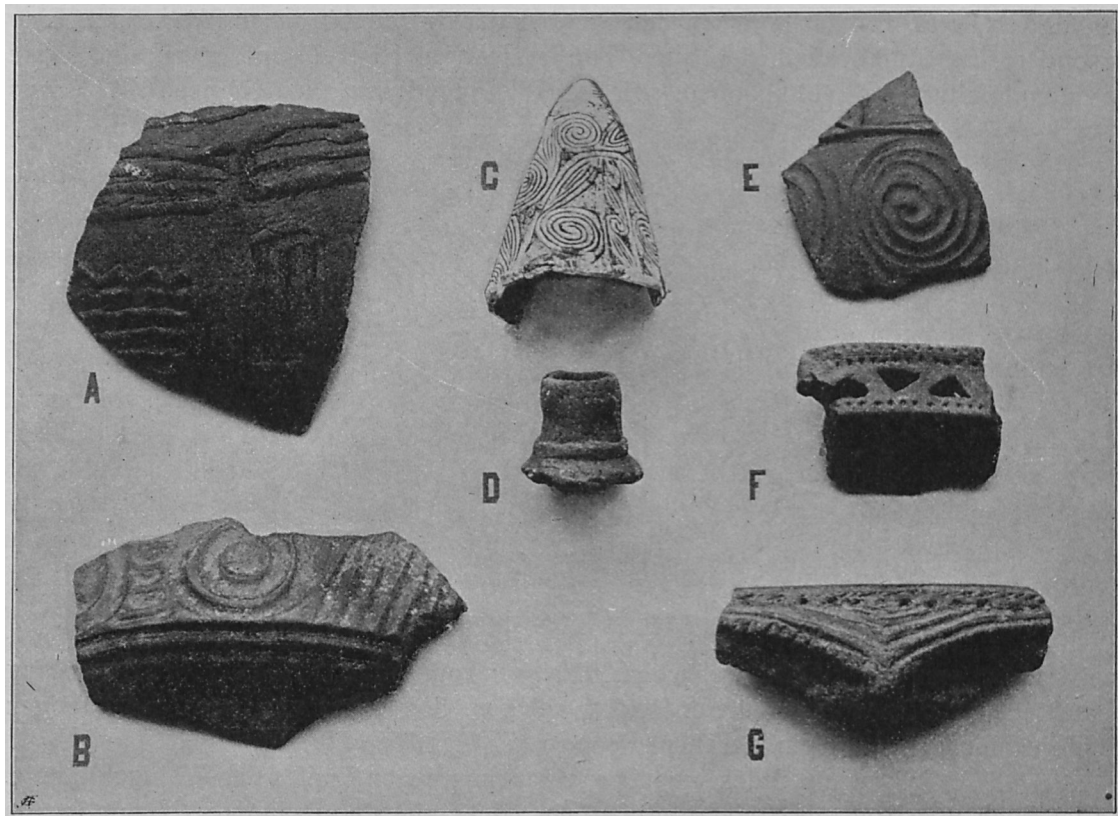


Figure 6. Old potsherds and a carved shell, excavated in Wanigéla (Pöch 1907b:69). Reproduction courtesy Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz.

tip of Cape Vogel ... a ware is produced which is quite similar in style to that made in Wanigela. However, the vessel walls are thicker and the local potters admit that their product is inferior to that of Wanigela. Technical excellence of the vessel wall is one of the hallmarks of Wanigela pottery (Egloff 1973: 77–8).

Unlike Monckton, Pöch took the extra step of suggesting a possible origin for the sherds, extrapolating on his views regarding the superiority of ancient pottery to reach the conclusion that its makers must likewise have been superior. ‘The discovery of traces of a population whose culture was doubtless a higher one’, he asserted, ‘is very surprising in New Guinea and was not to be expected ... I am inclined to assume that it is a matter of immigration by a more cultivated people from the island groups further to the south-east in the Pacific Ocean’ (Pöch 1906: 6). He expanded on this theory in subsequent publications, proposing a connection to ‘the Amphlett Group (south of the Trobriand Islands), known today for the largest and most beautiful pots’ (Pöch 1907c). Perhaps, he mused, ‘one could interpret these vanished potters’ settlements as a colony of tribes from the Massim district’ (Pöch 1907b: 71). Pöch was uncertain on this point: he acknowledged that the pattern carved on the *Conus* shell fragment found amongst the sherds – ‘spirals that turn back on themselves, with elliptical centrepieces inserted between them’ – might suggest ‘connections’ to this cultural area, but argued that the spiral pattern was nevertheless ‘distinct from those characteristic of the Trobriand Islands (A. Haddon’s “Massim District”)’ (Pöch 1907b: 71, 1907c). He was more confident in dismissing the alternative theory ‘that these people, as the original inhabitants of New Guinea, were a powerful inland tribe, culturally far advanced’:

The supposition that an isolated centre of a higher culture had developed here in the interior ... seems very adventurous, since it contradicts all general experiences and since a similarly highly-developed culture has been found nowhere else in the interior of New Guinea. There remains the possibility of supposing the obvious, that these peoples who possessed the higher culture had penetrated from the coast into the interior ... this supposition is strengthened when we observe the higher culture still existing today in the Trobriand Islands and the pottery in the Amphlett Group (Pöch 1907a: 139).

Although Pöch remained vague about the precise features he believed distinguished a ‘higher culture’ from a lower one, they clearly extended beyond the ability to make aesthetically pleasing pottery. ‘Polynesian influence’, he asserted, ‘must arguably be assumed with regard to the higher culture of the Trobriand Islands themselves, the well-developed chiefly rank etc., so that these discoveries, brought into connection with the Trobriands ... suggest an influence from the sea’ (Pöch 1907b: 71). Clearly, for

Pöch, as for many of his contemporaries, cultures classified as ‘Polynesian’ were assumed to be generally superior to those identified as ‘Melanesian’. He also appears to have subscribed to a stadial model of socio-cultural development, believing, in E.B. Tylor’s (1869: 11) formulation, that ‘human culture does progress consistently: and evidence as to the condition of any one of its departments really does authorise ... an opinion as to its condition as a whole’. According to this model, features considered ‘higher’ or ‘more advanced’ by European standards – for instance, the existence of ‘chiefly rank’ within a particular society – could be expected to correlate with other features similarly considered ‘more advanced’, such as ‘large and handsome’ pots (Pöch 1907a: 138).

This ‘prehistoric culture, now vanished’, Pöch insisted, had ‘no connection’ to ‘the present-day populace’ (Pöch 1907c, 1906: 6). He conjured up a violent scenario to explain its disappearance:

The account that most readily suggests itself would be to assume that a tribe migrated hither from the sea, and that this people were either driven back over [the] sea or annihilated by the mountain tribes (Pöch 1907d: 612).

Pöch did not actually accuse Wanigela’s current population of having exterminated a more cultured tribe. Rather, he suggested, ‘the mountain peoples’, having ‘attacked, annihilated or driven away the earlier inhabitants ... then returned [to the mountains] again. The Wanigela people later migrated into the empty region’ (Pöch 1907b: 71). Despite proposing that an undefined ‘Polynesian influence’ had contributed to the development of ‘a population whose culture was doubtless a higher one’, he did not suggest that this population was racially Polynesian and therefore physically distinct; in fact, his examination of the human remains found with the potsherds had convinced him that ‘the people in question appear not to have been substantially different from the present-day inhabitants’ (Pöch 1907c). Nevertheless, there are clear parallels between Pöch’s speculative history and the ‘deep-seated colonialist and negative representational tropes of Indigenous peoples’ identified by McNiven and Russell (2005: 2) as foundational to ‘the discipline of “prehistoric” archaeology, as practiced upon Indigenous cultures’. Migrationism, ‘a discourse that emerges from an ideological desire to view contemporary ... Aboriginal peoples not as “original inhabitants” but rather as relatively recent interlopers who had dispossessed earlier populations’, is relevant here, as is diffusionism, a discourse ‘predicated on the assumption that Indigenous cultures prior to European contact were uninventive and static’, so that elements in these cultures considered ‘advanced’ were automatically assumed to be ‘anomalous and exotic in origin’ (McNiven & Russell 2005: 8). Seen in this context, Pöch’s enthusiastic approval of the social changes implemented by British colonial authorities in New Guinea is no coincidence:

In celebration of the king's birthday, the resident magistrate, G.O. Manning, invited the natives of the North-Eastern Division to dances at the government station in Cape Nelson. Some 700 men came ... I admired the great influence which the government there, in scarce five years, had acquired over a territory as large as my native land of Lower Austria, and inhabited by Papuans who, from immemorial time, had lived in tribal fights and man-hunting (Pöch 1907d: 614).

By contrast, Meyer's three publications on ancient pottery recorded local informants' suggestions regarding its possible origins, but offered no speculations of his own. Nor did he publish again on the topic, though he conducted further excavations in 1922 and 1924 (Anson 2000a: 20). In an unpublished manuscript on 'The Animal World of the Qunantuna of New Britain' (1917), he described 'pigs, dogs and chickens' as 'ancient cultural heritage', adding:

My excavations show that inhabitants of Vuatom [sic] Island were familiar with pigs centuries ago, if not longer. After removing ½ m of alluvial soil, I found sherds of plates and pitchers with a sophisticated ceramic [technique] ... pigs' bones and jaw fragments lay alongside these prehistoric potsherds (Meyer n.d.c.: 2).

Although Meyer does not say so explicitly, his phrasing here – his reference to 'inhabitants' rather than 'the inhabitants', his use of 'were familiar ... centuries ago' rather than 'have been familiar ... for centuries' – suggests that he did not believe the present inhabitants of Watom Island were necessarily connected to the makers of prehistoric potsherds. I hope that further clues to his views on this question may emerge as I continue to trawl through archival material held in the Sacred Heart Mission in Münster-Hiltrup. Pending such discoveries, I note the importance of an unpublished manuscript of ca. 1934, held in the files of the Department of Oceanic Prehistory, Musée de l'Homme, Paris (now in the Musée du Quai Branly), and published in English translation by Dimitri Anson (2000a: 20–3). In this manuscript, Meyer recalled meeting 'the Government geologist (of Papua), Mr Evan R. Stanley', in 1922. Stanley believed the potsherds to be 'of Peruvian origin', and initially thought it 'not impossible that some ships of the first explorers brought them', but Meyer was able to convince him otherwise: 'after having seen the specimens and heard my own opinion he believes that they are of older origin' (Meyer, trans. Anson 2000a: 23). Meyer added that he had shown Stanley 'certain figures which resemble the motifs of pottery pieces from here' in Georg Buschan's *Illustrierte Völkerkunde* ('Illustrated Ethnology') and Moritz Hoernes' *Urgeschichte der Menschheit* ('Prehistory of Humankind'),⁶ and continued:

I believe that if the motifs mainly resemble those of South America, for example Peru, more than others,

there could have been contacts between this local ancient culture and those of South America (Meyer, trans. Anson 2000a: 23).

CONCLUSION

Green and Anson (2000:185) state that 'most [archaeologists today] would feel [Meyer] went badly astray' in considering 'an origin in South America ... for the "non-Melanesian" dentate-stamped pottery now called Lapita'. Although they mitigate the severity of this remark by recording their 'utmost respect for what he did accomplish', it ought also to be pointed out that Meyer was working without the benefit of any comparable archaeological material; indeed, it was not until 1948 that similar potsherds were described from New Caledonia (Specht 1968:117). In any case, the correctness or incorrectness of Meyer's speculations by today's standards is less important for the purposes of this paper than the process by which he arrived at them. The same applies to Pöch, whose suggestion of 'connections' between Wanigela and the islands of the Massim District has been upheld by recent analyses (Ambrose *et al.* 2012; Spriggs 2013). Both men drew on similarities in decorative style to propose connections between the artefacts of the areas they excavated and those of other regions. However, Pöch's image of a 'higher culture' displaying 'Polynesian influence', violently displaced and entirely unconnected with Wanigela's 'present-day populace', is vastly different from the open-ended 'contacts' between 'ancient culture[s]' suggested by Meyer. The roots of this difference, I believe, can be traced partly to differences in these two men's education and training, partly to the divergent nature of their interactions with local people, and partly, perhaps, to a fundamental difference in their own self-perception. Where Pöch introduced his excavations by describing 'large mounds of refuse that ... had not previously been viewed or systematically examined by an expert', with the clear implication that he himself was that long-awaited expert, Meyer concluded his manuscript of ca. 1934 with a humble disclaimer:

But I, poor hermit, what do I know of these scientific questions which are still so perplexing, even for you, the scientists, by the Grace of God (Meyer, trans. Anson 2000a: 23).

Acknowledgements

Research for this article was funded by the ARC Laureate Fellowship Project on 'The Collective Biography of Archaeology in the Pacific: A Hidden History', based at the Australian National University under the direction of Professor Matthew Spriggs. I am grateful to Sabine Heise, Father Martin Kleer M.S.C., and the staff and residents of the Sacred Heart Mission House in Münster-Hiltrup for their generous support and assistance during my visit. I also

thank Jim Specht for kindly making available to me his collection of unpublished documents relating to Meyer's excavations on Watom Island, and for suggesting various clarifications and improvements to my text, together with a second reviewer who has chosen to remain anonymous.

Endnotes

1. Unless otherwise specified, all translations are my own, including those from Meyer 1909a, 1909b, and 1910a. I note, however, that Anson (2000a) has separately published translations of these three works.
2. Recent publications on the archaeology of Watom Island refer to excavations at the 'Reber-Rakival site', stating that Reber was the mission station and Rakival the neighbouring village (Green 2000:6; Petchey *et al.* 2016:12). However, although Meyer referred to 'my station Reber', he also listed 'Reber' as the name of a bay, 'Réber' as the name of a tribe and a dialect, and 'Rakiváli' as the name of a district (Meyer 1909a: 251, 1910b: 713, 1913: 94, 1929: 22, 1930: 23).
3. Meyer's first deposition of potsherds was to the Hilstrup Mission Museum in 1910; these were bought by the Museum für Völkerkunde (now the Museum der Kulturen) in Basel in 1976 (Meyer 1910a:1161; Schultze-Westrum n.d.). Depositions of potsherds to the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum in Cologne and the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde (now the Ethnologisches Museum) in Berlin followed in 1912 and 1913 respectively; Meyer stated that 'specimens' had also been sent to 'the Vatican Museum, Rome' (Meyer n.d.b., n.d.e.; Specht 2003:126). Specht (1968:127) and Anson (2000b:128) mention further collections in the National Museum of Victoria (now Melbourne Museum) in Melbourne and the Musée de l'Homme in Paris; Anson also refers to a collection in the Musée des Arts Africains et Océaniens in Paris. In contrast, the Collingwood Bay finds are less widely distributed: Pöch's 'entire [ethnological] collection ... entered the possession of the Ethnographic Division of the Royal and Imperial Museum of Natural History in Vienna' (now the Weltmuseum), while Monckton and Money donated materials to the British Museum in London and the Australian Museum in Sydney respectively (Pöch 1907b: 57 n. 1; Spriggs 2013: 8–9).
4. Green & Anson (2000:185) acknowledge Meyer's 'early contribution to defining what is today known as the Lapita cultural complex, i.e., the extension of Lapita to the non-ceramic items associated with the dentate-stamped pottery'.
5. Detailed observations on local fishing practices can be found in Meyer 1913.
6. Possibly Meyer was referring, *inter alia*, to figures in Buschan (1910: Tafel VI, VII, 117) depicting items decorated with meander (Greek key) patterns, including a painted ceramic water jug used by 'Arawak tribes on the Içana', a woman's apron adorned with glass beads from 'Makushi (British Guyana)', and a wooden dance club attributed to 'Kobéua (Uaupés)'. Meander patterns occur on many of the potsherds Meyer collected, including the larger of the two fragments depicted in Figure 5.

References

a. Archival Sources

- Meyer, O. n.d.a. Correspondence to Unknown, 16/02/1902. Sig. 565b, Archiv der norddeutschen Provinz der Herz Jesu Missionare Münster-Hiltrup, Germany.
- Meyer, O. n.d.b. Correspondence to Royal Ethnological Museum Berlin, undated [1913]. E No. 20/13, Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Acta betreffend die Erwerbung ethnologischer Gegenstände aus Australien, Vol. 24: Vom 1. Oktober 1911 bis Ende 1914, Pars I B, Ethnologisches Museum (Archiv), Berlin, Germany.
- Meyer, O. n.d.c. Die Tierwelt der Qunantuna Neubritanniens, Reber, 1917. Bestand norddeutscher Provinz, Archiv der norddeutschen Provinz der Herz Jesu Missionare Münster-Hiltrup, Germany.
- Meyer, O. n.d.d. Woerterbuch der Tuna-Sprache, zusammengestellt von P. Otto Meyer, M.S.C., 1921, Reber-Vuatam. Abgeschrieben v. P.F. Gründl, M.S.C., Vunapope, 23. Jan. 1944. Bestand Bibliotheksgut, Archiv der norddeutschen Provinz der Herz Jesu Missionare Münster-Hiltrup, Germany.
- Meyer, O. n.d.e. Correspondence to Dermot A. Casey, 18/10/1932. MS 1326, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), Canberra, Australia.
- Schultze-Westrum, T. n.d. Correspondence to Jim Specht, 23/03/1976. Akten zu Einkauf V_0459: Sammlung Missionare HJ Oeventrup, Teil VII, Museum der Kulturen (Dokumentenarchiv), Basel, Switzerland.

b. Published Sources

- Ambrose, W., Petchey, F., Swadling, P., Beran, H., Bonshek, E., Szabo, K., Bickler, S. & Summerhayes, G. 2012. Engraved prehistoric *Conus* shell valuables from southeastern Papua New Guinea: their antiquity, motifs and distribution. *Archaeology in Oceania*, 47:113–132.
- Anon. 1937. Priest dies on ship in Brisbane. *The Telegraph* [Brisbane], 14 December 1937, p.1.
- Anson, D. 2000a. Appendix 1. The archaeological excavations of Father Otto Meyer on Watom Island, In: R.C. Green, An introduction to investigations on Watom Island, Papua New Guinea. *New Zealand Journal of Archaeology*, 20:12–27.
- Anson, D. 2000b. Reber-Rakival dentate-stamped motifs: Documentation and comparative implications. *New Zealand Journal of Archaeology*, 20:119–35.
- Berner, M. 2010. Large-scale anthropological surveys in Austria-Hungary, 1871–1918, In: R. Johler, C. Marchetti & M. Scheer (eds) *Doing Anthropology in Wartime and War Zones: World War I and the Cultural Sciences in Europe*. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, pp.233–53.
- Bleibtreu, E. 2009. Felix von Luschan und die Stele Asarhaddons, In: P. Ruggendorfer & H.D. Szemethy (eds) *Felix von Lu-*

- schan (1854–1924): *Leben und Wirken eines Universalgelehrten*. Wien, Köln, Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, pp.295–306.
- Buschan, G. (ed.) 1910. *Illustrierte Völkerkunde*. Stuttgart: Strecker & Schröder.
- Egloff, B.J. 1973. Contemporary Wanigela pottery, In: P.K. Lauer (ed.) *Occasional Papers No. 1*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland, Anthropology Museum, pp.61–79.
- Evans, A.D. 2010. *Anthropology at War: World War I and the Science of Race in Germany*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.
- Green, R.C. 2000. An introduction to investigations on Watom Island, Papua New Guinea. *New Zealand Journal of Archaeology*, 20: 5–27.
- Green, R.C. & Anson, D. 2000. Archaeological investigations on Watom Island: Early work, outcomes of recent investigations and future prospects. *New Zealand Journal of Archaeology*, 20: 183–97.
- Hüskes, J. (ed.) 1932. *Pioniere der Südsee. Werden und Wachsen der Herz-Jesu-Mission von Rabaul zum goldenen Jubiläum 1882–1932*. Hilstrup: Missionare vom Hl. Herzen Jesu.
- Lange, B. 2010. AfterMath: Anthropological data from prisoner-of-war camps, In: R. Johler, C. Marchetti & M. Scheer (eds) *Doing Anthropology in Wartime and War Zones: World War I and the Cultural Sciences in Europe*. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, pp.311–35.
- Laracy, H. 1981. Couppé, Louis (1850–1926), In: *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 8. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press. <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/coupe-louis-5790/text9821> [accessed 25 June 2016]
- Legassick, M. & Rassool, C. 2000. *Skeletons in the Cupboard: South African Museums and the Trade in Human Remains, 1907–1917*. Cape Town: South African Museum.
- Lutton, N. 1978. C.A.W. Monckton: Reprobate magistrate, In: J. Griffin (ed.) *Papua New Guinea Portraits: The Expatriate Experience*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, pp.48–74.
- Lutton, N. 1986. Monckton, Charles Arthur Whitmore (1873–1936), In: *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 10. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press. <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/monckton-charles-arthur-whitmore-7619/text13315> [accessed 28 June 2016]
- McNiven, I J. & Russell, L. 2005. *Appropriated Pasts: Indigenous Peoples and the Colonial Culture of Archaeology*. Lanham, New York, Toronto, Oxford: AltaMira Press.
- Meyer, O. 1909a. Funde prähistorischer Töpferei und Steinmesser auf Vuatom, Bismarck-Archipel. *Anthropos*, 4 (1): 251–52.
- Meyer, O. 1909b. Nachtrag. *Anthropos*, 4 (4): 1093–95.
- Meyer, O. 1910a. Funde von Menschen- und Tierknochen, von prähistorischer Töpferei und Steinwerkzeugen auf Vatom, Bismarck-Archipel. *Anthropos*, 5 (4): 1160–61.
- Meyer, O. 1910b. Mythen und Erzählungen von der Insel Vuatom (Bismarck-Archipel, Südsee). *Anthropos*, 5 (3): 711–33.
- Meyer, O. 1913. Fischerei bei den Uferleuten des nördlichen Teiles der Gazellehalbinsel und speziell auf der Insel Vuatam, Neu-Pommern, Südsee. *Anthropos*, 8 (1): 82–109, 8 (2/3): 325–341, 8 (6): 1069–1103.
- Meyer, O. 1929. Zur Brutbiologie einiger Vögel des Bismarckarchipels. *Journal für Ornithologie*, 77 (1): 21–35.
- Meyer, O. 1930. Uebersicht über die Brutzeiten der Vögel auf der Insel Vuatom (New Britain). *Journal für Ornithologie*, 78 (1): 19–38.
- Meyer, O. 1932. Missionar und Wissenschaft, In: J. Hüskes (ed.) *Pioniere der Südsee. Werden und Wachsen der Herz-Jesu-Mission von Rabaul zum goldenen Jubiläum 1882–1932*. Hilstrup: Missionare vom Hl. Herzen Jesu, pp.185–96.
- Monckton, C.A.W. 1905. Appendix D: North-Eastern Division, In: Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, British New Guinea. Annual Report for the year ending 30th June, 1904. Melbourne: Government Printer, pp.31–4.
- Petchey, P., Buckley, H., Walter, R., Anson, D. & Kinaston, R. 2016. The 2008–2009 excavations at the SAC locality, Reber-Rakival Lapita site, Watom Island, Papua New Guinea. *Journal of Indo-Pacific Archaeology*, 40: 12–31.
- Pöch, R. 1905. Erster Bericht von meiner Reise nach Neu-Guinea über die Zeit vom 6. Juni 1904 bis zum 25. März 1905. *Sitzungsberichte der kaiserl. Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, mathem.-naturw. Klasse*, 114: 437–53.
- Pöch, R. 1906. Dritter Bericht über meine Reise nach Neu-Guinea (Neu-Süd-Wales, vom 21. Juni bis 6. September 1905, Britisch-Salomonsinseln und Britisch-Neu-Guinea bis zum 31. Jänner 1906) (vorgelegt in der Sitzung am 5. April 1906). *Sitzungsberichten der kaiserl. Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, mathem.-naturw. Klasse*, 115: 601–15.
- Pöch, R. 1907a. Ausgrabungen alter Topfscherben in Wanigela (Collingwood Bay). *Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien*, 37: 137–39.
- Pöch, R. 1907b. Einige bemerkenswerte Ethnologika aus Neu-Guinea. *Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien*, 37: 57–71.
- Pöch, R. 1907c. Prähistorisches aus Neuguinea. *Globus*, 92 (19): 301.
- Pöch, R. 1907d. Travels in German, British, and Dutch New Guinea. *The Geographical Journal*, 30 (6): 609–16.
- Regal, W. & Nanut, M. 2010. Arzt, Anthropologe und „Meister des Lichtbildes“. *Ärzte Woche*, 1/2010. www.springermedizin.at/artikel/14781-arzt-anthropologe-und-meister-des-lichtbildes [accessed 24 June 2016]
- Ruggendorfer, P. & Sükar-Kogler, L. 2009. Die Dokumentation lykischer Felsgräber durch Felix von Luschan als Grundlage aktueller interdisziplinärer Forschung, In: P. Ruggendorfer & H.D. Szemethy (eds) *Felix von Luschan (1854–1924): Leben und Wirken eines Universalgelehrten*. Wien, Köln, Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, pp.267–94.
- Smith, K.M. 1937. Funeral notices. *The Telegraph* [Brisbane], 14 December 1937, p.16.
- Specht, J. 1968. Preliminary report of excavations on Watom Island. *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 77 (2): 117–34.
- Specht, J. 2003. Watom Island and Lapita: Observations on the Reber-Rakival localities, In: C. Sand (ed.) *Pacific Archaeology: Assessments and Prospects. Proceedings of the International Conference for the 50th anniversary of the first Lapita excavation. Koné-Nouméa 2002*. Nouméa: Service des Musées et du Patrimoine, pp.121–34.

- Spriggs, M. 2013. Three carved cone shells from Collingwood Bay, In: L. Bolton, N. Thomas, E. Bonshek, J. Adams & B. Burt (eds) *Melanesia: Art and Encounter*. London: The British Museum Press, pp.7–10.
- Stresemann, E. 1938. Otto Meyer †. *Journal für Ornithologie*, 86 (1):166–69.
- Teschler-Nicola, M. 2009. Felix von Luschan und die Wiener Anthropologische Gesellschaft, In: P. Ruggendorfer & H.D. Szemethy (eds) *Felix von Luschan (1854–1924): Leben und Wirken eines Universalgelehrten*. Wien, Köln, Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, pp.55–79.
- Teschler-Nicola, M. 2013. Das forMuse-Projekt und die Beforschung und Restitution überseeischer menschlicher Skelettreste in Wiener Sammlungen, In: H. Stoecker, T. Schnalke & A. Winkelmann (eds) *Sammeln, Erforschen, Zurückgeben? Menschliche Gebeine aus der Kolonialzeit in akademischen und musealen Sammlungen*. Berlin: Christoph Links Verlag, pp.259–78.
- Tylor, E.B. 1869. The condition of prehistoric races, as inferred from observation of modern tribes, In: *International Congress of Prehistoric Archaeology: Transactions of the Third Session, which opened at Norwich on the 20th August and closed in London on the 28th August 1868*. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., pp.11–26.
- Weiss-Krejci, E. 2013. Abschied aus dem Knochenkabinett – Repatriierung als Instrument kultureller und nationaler Identitätspolitik am Beispiel österreichischer Restitutionsen, In: H. Stoecker, T. Schnalke & A. Winkelmann (eds) *Sammeln, Erforschen, Zurückgeben? Menschliche Gebeine aus der Kolonialzeit in akademischen und musealen Sammlungen*. Berlin: Christoph Links Verlag, pp.447–76.
- Wartke, R.B. 2009. Felix von Luschan und die Ausgrabungen in Sendschirli, In: P. Ruggendorfer & H.D. Szemethy (eds) *Felix von Luschan (1854–1924): Leben und Wirken eines Universalgelehrten*. Wien, Köln, Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, pp.307–22.
- Weninger, M. 1980. Pöch, Rudolf (1870–1921), Anthropologe und Mediziner, In: *Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon (ÖBL) 1815–1950, Vol. 8*. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, pp.138–39. www.biographien.ac.at/oebl/oebl_P/Poech_Rudolf_1870_1921.xml [accessed 15 May 2015]

Les premières analyses germanophones de tessons de poteries en Papouasie Nouvelle-Guinée et dans l'archipel Bismarck.

RÉSUMÉ :

En décembre 1905, l'anthropologue et médecin autrichien Rudolf Pöch déterra plusieurs tessons de céramique dans un tas de déchets à Wanigela, au sud-est de la Nouvelle-Guinée. Quatre ans plus tard, Otto Meyer, missionnaire catholique allemand, découvrit des fragments de poterie décorés sur l'île de Watom, dans l'archipel Bismarck. Ses exposés illustrés de ces fragments sont maintenant reconnus comme les premières descriptions de poterie lapita. Bien que Meyer et Pöch aient partagé le même langage et examiné des matériaux similaires provenant de zones voisines du Pacifique à peu près au même moment, leurs interprétations de ces matériaux différaient de manière significative. En comparant et en contrastant leurs analyses de la poterie préhistorique et leurs spéculations sur ses origines, j'espère contribuer à contextualiser les premiers travaux archéologiques dans le Pacifique et à jeter un nouvel éclairage sur le développement des idées concernant le peuplement de la région.