

UC San Diego

Presentations and Posters

Title

Exploring the (de)Colonial Gaze through Archival Analysis and Teaching

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8tz798pn>

Authors

Garcia-Spitz, Cristela
Emerine Hicks, Rachel

Publication Date

2021-01-20



Patrolling the Past to Explore the (de)Colonial Gaze

Who controls knowledge? How is indigenous knowledge shared, preserved, and maintained? Through an examination of the recently-digitized [Papua New Guinea Patrol Reports](#) in the [Melanesian Archive](#) at the UC San Diego Library, students dive into first-hand accounts from the post-World War II era of Papua New Guinea (PNG). During our journey, we will explore how remote indigenous communities were documented by kiaps or patrol officers, capturing information on village life such as census figures, languages spoken, health, food supply, tribal warfare and other local conditions. What were the key characteristics noted by these “explorers?”

Search ...

CATEGORIES

- Aboutness Statement
- Cultural Context
- Final Analysis
- Personal Biography
- Words and Representations

FREQUENTLY USED TAGS

1930s 1935-1936 1940s 1950s

1960s 1970s Aboutness

Aboutness Statement Agriculture Anthro-

Exploring the (de)Colonial Gaze through Archival Analysis and Teaching

Cristela Garcia-Spitz
Curator of the Tuzin Archive for
Melanesian Anthropology
UC San Diego Library

Rachel Emerine Hicks
Ph.D. Candidate, Anthropology
UC San Diego

HASTAC 2019
Decolonizing Technologies,
Reprogramming Education
Unceded Musqueam (x^wməθk^wəy'əm)
Territory, May 18, 2019



2018 July 16 Cultural Context of the East Sepik District, Yangoru from 1949-53

Cultural Context of the East Sepik District, Yangoru from 1949-53

MARGO TANNEWITZ July 15, 2018

I was very excited to begin my research of my assigned patrol report volume, which is that of the East Sepik District, Yangoru from the years 1949 to 1953. I was intrigued whilst reading the actual patrol reports from the collection, for they are valuable primary sources from eyewitnesses of the actual colonization process. However, when I branched out to research the region more broadly to find specific dates of contact, information on the region, and its historical events, I was met with difficulty locating reliable, or academically-focused works. I anticipated an array of research papers or online library collections of sources similar to that of UCSD, yet it seemed yomube videos, blog posts, and even websites promoting tourism were commonplace over such sources. This lack of quality, educational, and unbiased factual accounts of the region left me disappointed, and led me to conclude that this lack is likely due to the more recent colonization of Papua New Guinea.

Since I do not often conduct research outside of creative or literary criticism, I believe I was slightly less prepared to hunt down incredibly detailed sources, but I did read a summary of the history of the East Sepik, which explained the events that led up to my given time period. The summary stated that before the mid 1940's, the district was actually occupied by Japan for most of World War II, which ceased further development of the region until it ended (Lonely Planet). Pressure and expansion westward by Australia in Papua New Guinea led to the eventual surrender of the Japanese General Adachi during 1945 (Lonely Planet). Though the exact years I am focusing on were not outlined in the source, it did not state that the region has been quite "volatile" from after WWII until present day, most notably for government corruption, attempts at invasion from other countries, and immigration struggles (Lonely Planet).

An article specifically about the Sepik River entitled "Sepik River Facts," was rich in information on the prominent geographical features, which "flows 700 miles through Papua New Guinea and Indonesia, and was untouched by Europeans until 1885 when Germans began to explore its region" (Sepik River Facts). The river is clean and undeveloped due to little industry in the area, and it has a watershed of 30,000 square miles (Sepik Facts). According to the article, "There are no large cities or industry along the Sepik River, which contribute to its pristine state" (Sepik River Facts). However, currently, threats of "proposed mining, invasive species, and industrial logging" are present in the area (Sepik River Facts). The Sepik River includes a variety of different ecosystems, such as mountains, tropical rainforests, and swamps (Sepik River Facts).

As we have mentioned in class, the same article also mentioned that historically indigenous cultures have practiced cannibalism in the region, and though currently Christianity is common amongst villagers, many superstitions and rituals are still maintained (Sepik River Facts).

Though context of this only lightly-developed and until quite recently untouched region is difficult to encounter, I am eager to delve further into the physical patrol reports and Melanesian Archives to increase my breadth of knowledge.

Lastly, here is also a link to a helpful map of the exact region I am researching, it offers a helpful interactive visual of where bodies of water and established provinces are located: <http://www.maplandia.com/papua-new-guinea/east-sepik/>

PNG Patrol Report: East Sepik District, Yangoru, 1949-1953

CATEGORIES

- Aboutness Statement
- Cultural Context
- Final Analysis
- Personal Biography
- Words and Representations

FREQUENTLY USED TAGS

1930s 1940s 1950s

1960s 1970s Aboutness Statement Aboutness Statement Central District Cultural History education Cultural Central culture education East Sepik education final analysis Gulf District history Karema key terms Margo Tannewitz pangia Papua New Guinea personal biography Port Moresby research Scott Curtis Sepik River Southern Highlands Talasea Week 1 Week 2 Week 3 Week 4 Week 5 West New Britain Words and Representations Yangoru

MONTHS

- August 2018
- July 2018

WEBA

- Log in
- Entries RSS
- Comments RSS
- WordPress.org

Printed in Cultural Context
Tagged Margo Tannewitz, Papua New Guinea, Sepik River, Week 2

1 COMMENT

JIA LI 10 months ago # Permalink

I also found it extremely hard to find professional analysis and article about my assigned area at the beginning, but then after hours of struggle, I finally found some digital books about Port Moresby (recommend Jstor.org and Google Books). I really love reading your blog for the cultural context of East Sepik. It seems pretty fascinating as both an academic article and a tourist magazine. By the way, the map link at end has been very helpful for me to know more about East Sepik geographically.

Reply

VIDAL ESPINA 10 months ago # Permalink

I ran into the same thing regarding finding a lot of information that led up to my time period.

Reply

Cristela Garcia-Spitz 10 months ago # Permalink

I was very interested in tourism while studying anthropology as an undergrad. To find the type of information and how a country/people/place is characterized in travel books as interesting and informative.

To find more academic sources, it's good to look at some of the databases listed in the Pacific Studies Libguide or try the library catalog:

<https://proq.oxd.edu/search-59/?searchtype=X&searcharg=yangoru>

Web of Science lists articles from journals like Oceania and Papua New Guinea Medical Journal. Many of the articles are by Dr. Paul Roscoe, who worked in the area.

<https://umaine.edu/anthropology/faculty-staff/jim-roscoe/>

Reply

Rachel Hicks 10 months ago # Permalink

Hi Margo, I am glad that you did not give up in your search, but still found some interesting background to this area of the Sepik. Related to tourism, a cruise ship used to go up part of the Sepik (though I'm not sure which part) and stop at a village for people to experience "indigenous life." I don't know if it still runs. I also believe there have been various forms of mining and some types of fishing in that area. Cristela suggested some good sources if you want to explore things on a more academic level. Also, that's great you found the village on a map!

Reply

Bevan Kuaisombi 3 months ago # Permalink

I was amazed on social mapping based on the Yangoru-Boiken anthropology which clearly defines the cultures. Thus explaining alot on human behaviour and environmental conditioning.

Bevan Honjikieng Kuaisombi
Karapia/Howi Village
East Yangoru
East Sepik Province

Reply

LEAVE A REPLY

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked *

Comment

<http://lib.ucsd.edu/yangoru1949-53>

Reply



Bevan Kuaisombi

3 months ago Permalink

I was amazed on social mapping based on the Yangoru- Boiken anthropology which clearly defines the cultures. Thus explaining alot on human behaviour and environmental conditioning.

Bevan Honjikieng Kuaisombi
Karapia/Howi Village
East Yangoru
East Sepik Province

Reply

Takeaways

- Be flexible & inclusive (student & indigenous voices).
- Leave lots of time for discussion & self reflection.
- Build collaboration and exchange into the course.

Changes to the course? Less emphasis on library science readings more on PNG.

I really liked the spreadsheet organization, I may try to use this for other classes while trying to break down a certain text or lecture.

There is so much work behind the scenes that goes into making history accessible.

Our discussions about information ethics and cognitive justice were very inspiring and will definitely influence my future academic work.

I would recommend this course to students who are willing to experience new forms of learning differentiated from other practicum courses.

Explore More...

<https://knit.ucsd.edu/patrollingthepast/>
<https://lib.ucsd.edu/png-patrol-reports>

Student Portfolio:

<https://knit.ucsd.edu/patrollingthepast/author/v1rojas/>

Class interactions:

- <https://knit.ucsd.edu/patrollingthepast/2018/07/29/rukmini-ravi-words-and-representations/>
- <https://knit.ucsd.edu/patrollingthepast/2018/07/15/cultural-context-of-the-east-sepik-district-yangoru-from-1949-53/>

Student's Analysis on the Digital Collections website:


<https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb5018738r>

LIBRARY DIGITAL COLLECTIONS UC San Diego

Home About Browse By Help Sign In The Library

Search Digital Collections

Patrol Reports. Central District, Port Moresby, 1946-1948



File Size 110 MB
File Format PDF

Download file View file

Collection
• Papua New Guinea Patrol Reports

Creation Date
1946-1948

Cite This Work
Patrol Reports. Central District, Port Moresby, 1946-1948. National Archives of Papua New Guinea, Accession 496.

Description
Approximately 14 patrol reports, with related correspondence. PATROL OFFICERS: Galloway, R. T.; Graham, E. O.; Earle, R. K.; Timperley, A. J.; O'Connor, D. M.; Hayes, B. B.; Wren, E. D.; Mallick, W. S.; Adamson, C. J. AREAS PATROLLED: Koiari, Gale, Maoro, Iolo, Pari, Karuku, Port Moresby.

Geographics
• Central Province (Papua New Guinea)
• Port Moresby (Papua New Guinea)

Topics
• Agriculture
• Buildings—War damage
• Census
• Diseases
• Health
• Hygiene
• Inspection

Note
During July 2018, UC San Diego undergraduate students conducted a preliminary analysis of a few PNG Patrol Report volumes. Students were assigned one volume to analyze at the report level summarizing their findings, identifying key terms, and writing aboutness statements. Visit *Patrolling the Past to Explore the (de)Colonial Gaze*: CAT 124A Summer 2018 South College to learn more about the students work and the course: <https://knit.ucsd.edu/patrollingthepast/>

Patrolling the Past
CAT 124A Summer 2018 Sixth College

<https://knit.ucsd.edu/patrollingthepast/>

ABOUT ▾ CLASS BLOG POSTS ▾

Exploring the (de)Colonial Gaze through Archival Analysis and Teaching

Cristela Garcia-Spitz
Curator of the Tuzin Archive for
Melanesian Anthropology
UC San Diego Library

Rachel Emerine Hicks
Ph.D. Candidate, Anthropology
UC San Diego

HASTAC 2019
Decolonizing Technologies,
Reprogramming Education
Unceded Musqueam (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm)
Territory, May 18, 2019



Patrolling the Past to Explore the (de)Colonial Gaze

Who controls knowledge? How is indigenous knowledge shared, preserved, and maintained? Through an examination of the recently-digitized [Papua New Guinea Patrol Reports](#) in the [Melanesian Archive](#) at the UC San Diego Library, students dive into first-hand accounts from the post-World War II era of Papua New Guinea (PNG). During our journey, we will explore how remote indigenous communities were documented by kiaps or patrol officers, capturing information on village life such as census figures, languages spoken, health, food supply, tribal warfare and other local conditions. What were the key characteristics noted by these “explorers?”

Search ...

CATEGORIES

- Aboutness Statement
- Cultural Context
- Final Analysis
- Personal Biography
- Words and Representations

FREQUENTLY USED TAGS

1930s 1935-1936 1940s 1950s

1960s 1970s Aboutness

[Aboutness Statement](#) [Architecture](#) [Anthro-](#)

1930s 1935-1936 1940s 1950s

1960s 1970s Aboutness

[Aboutness Statement](#) [Architecture](#) [Anthro-](#)

- Who controls knowledge? How is indigenous knowledge shared, preserved, and maintained? These were some of the questions we set out to ponder in a course called Patrolling the Past to Explore the (de)Colonial Gaze.
- Co-taught by Rachel Emerine Hicks, a Ph.D Candidate in Anthropology, and myself, a Librarian and Curator for the Melanesian Archive, this course was somewhat of an experiment.
- Rachel could not be with us today because she is doing her fieldwork in the Solomon Islands right now.
- I appreciate the opportunity to here to learn and connect, and share this project.
- Thanks & Acknowledgements - Musqueam (Mus-kwee-um), UBC & conference organizers, also name Nancy Lutton & Vicky Puipui (PNG National Archives), Tukul Kaiku (UPNG), Kathy Creely (UC San Diego Library), who had the forethought & collaboration to microfilmed the PNG Patrol Reports in the late 80s/early 90s that made all of this work possible. We digitized the reports shortly before Kathy’s retirement, and so I now enjoy the fruits of their labor.
- Through an examination of the recently-digitized [Papua New Guinea Patrol Reports](#), students dove into first-hand accounts from the post-World War II era of Papua New Guinea (PNG) to explore how remote indigenous communities were documented by kiaps or patrol officers, capturing information on village life such as census figures, languages spoken, health & diet, tribal warfare and infrastructure – building roads/politics/economics.
- Most used items in Melanesian Archive by scholars & people of PNG
- There is some irony in the high value placed on these colonial reports in that they are full

with layers of representations and subjectivity. (creation & maintenance and access over the years)

- They are accessible by District/Date/Patrol Officer/Areas Patrolled...however there is no subject access and so it is hard to search the reports by topic. And the OCR or text recognition is poor.
- We set out to develop a practicum that combined anthropology and decolonial research methods with archival theory and practice.
- Descriptions of the course, the final syllabus, and weekly blog posts written by the students were captured and shared on Knit, the UC San Diego Digital Commons open source teaching and community-building tool called [Commons In A Box \(CBOX\)](https://knit.ucsd.edu/patrollingthepast/) at <https://knit.ucsd.edu/patrollingthepast/>.

Course Breakdown

Practicum - Analysis of the PNG Patrol Reports

How were Papua New Guineans represented?

Weekly Blogs

1. Personal Biography
2. Cultural Context
3. Aboutness Statement
4. Words & Representations
5. Final Analysis

Final Project & Presentation

Knowledge organization is a social construct.

Brief Life & Times of Ian Mack

Course Breakdown

- 5-week course CAT practicum (Culture, Art, and Technology) met twice a week and was comprised of lecture and hands-on activities
- Each week students had readings and wrote a blog post and were asked to read and comment on other students' posts.
- Practicum requirement 20 hours of work outside of class each week in which students did the data analysis on the patrol reports.
- Students were paired up by a region and time period, and tasked to carry out subject analysis on a volume of the Patrol Reports (comprised of 10-20 reports). And then QC each others work. They did this in spreadsheets using techniques to write description > construct aboutness statement > derive topics

We looked at the OCR, did a text analysis exercise using Voyant, and did a mapping exercises reading a text and mapping out the life of one particular patrol officer. Rachel also discussed the creation of maps for her research.

Included was a journey to the Library with a class exercise in Special Collections & Archives, and a stop to explore the maps and the GIS Lab; do a demo of the microfilm readers. The PNG patrol reports were digitized from microfilm, so you can see the challenge of using the report, and how the technology and format can change and influence research techniques.

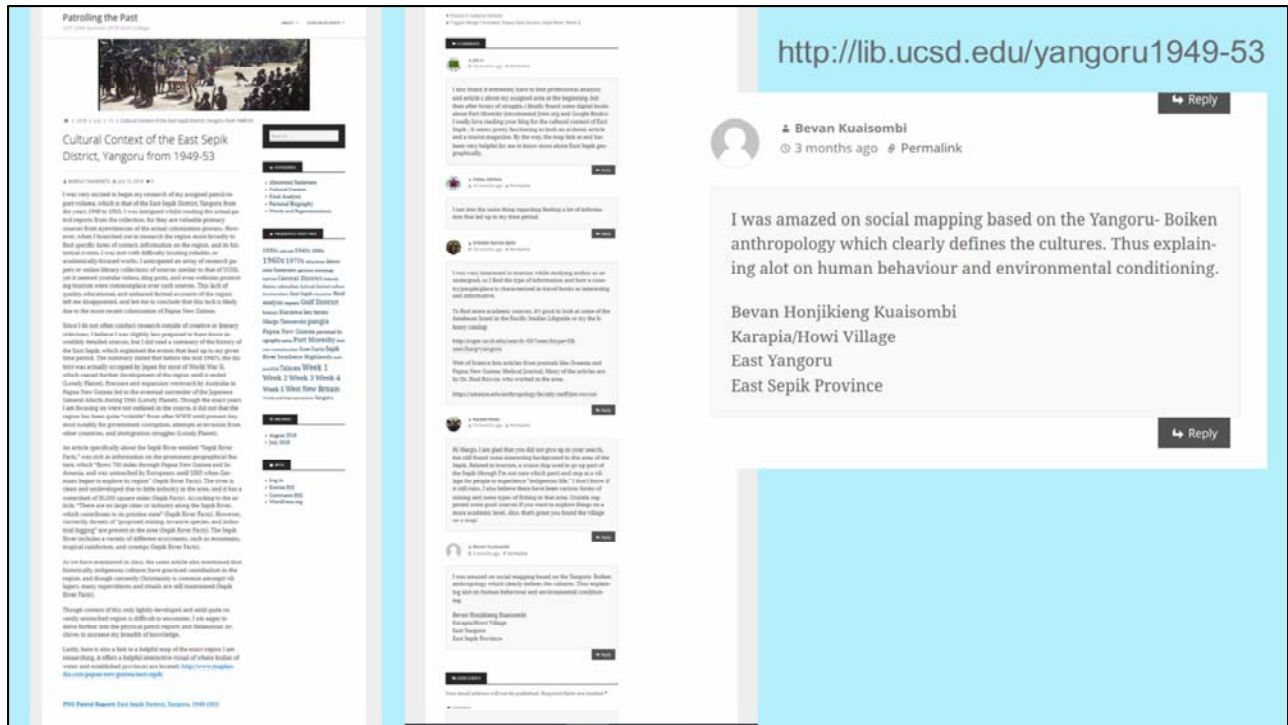
Some students had never seen microfilm reader so it was fun to put them in front of one and to think about the implications of using that technology in research.

It was a small seminar class of 10 upperclassman students coming from multiple disciplines: sciences, arts & humanities, which enriched the discussion.

Class consisted of group discussion or think/pair/share exercises and asked more questions:

- What perspective is represented in the png patrol reports?
- What perspective are you bringing to your analysis?
- What are the implications for us as researchers to represent people well and make knowledge accessible? How can this be done better?
- How could we provide cognitively just subject access to the png patrol reports?
- How does indigenous representation influence decolonialism?
- Can our blog or the patrol reports become a place to contribute toward decolonization?

<http://papuanewguineatravel.com/>



This is an example of the student’s weekly blog post in the blog on KNIT, with comments from other students as well as Rachel and myself. It allows for valuable collaborations between academics (students, librarians, and faculty). Elevate student and treat them as an academic/scholar.

- I was surprised and pleased to find a comment added 3 months ago from someone in Papua New Guinea.
- The online platform allows for collaboration, which when combined with archival analysis opens up the access to knowledge and learning often only available to those within academia.
- By asking students to publicly share their reflections and class assignments via KNIT, students had to consider how they represented themselves and indigenous groups in their writing.
- Using the digital collection and online platforms was an effective way to open up the discussions, but there is much more to be learned and explored with using these tools for teaching; It resonated with me when yesterday’s opening speaker Jennifer Reddy (Simon Fraser U) suggested we slow ourselves down in order to do it well and that working fast can lead to working alone.

Takeaways

- Be flexible & inclusive (student & indigenous voices).
- Leave lots of time for discussion & self reflection.
- Build collaboration and exchange into the course.

Changes to the course? Less emphasis on library science readings more on PNG.

I really liked the spreadsheet organization, I may try to use this for other classes while trying to break down a certain text or lecture.

There is so much work behind the scenes that goes into making history accessible.

Our discussions about information ethics and cognitive justice were very inspiring and will definitely influence my future academic work.

I would recommend this course to students who are willing to experience new forms of learning differentiated from other practicum courses.

We did follow the course with a brief student survey. Student quotes - Most were positive & heart-warming. There was a comment about too much library literature, and comments that there should be more pacific voices/decolonial techniques; points to a gap in some of the literature and a need for more pacific voices and representation.

Lessons Learned:

- Be flexible. We designed much of the course with the students by presenting the idea and collectively deciding whether the Knit blog would go live at the end of the course and the format of the final project (Presentations in the Library, invitation to those outside the class to attend).
- Include indigenous voices. We had readings from Pacific scholars. However, in future renditions of the course, it would be great to have engagement with groups in PNG. Whether through working with a PNG library, university, or with individuals from the villages being discussed, a local voice would enrich the course. The online platform opens the possibility for this collaboration to happen across the globe. This class was developed in just a few months, so there wasn't time to build those connections this time around, but this is something we want to consider in future versions. Also anticipate and hope there will be more work by pacific scholars in the future as it is a budding area for scholarly literature and there are many emerging voices.
- Leave lots of time for discussion. Students needed more time for discussion and self reflection. Hopefully more on decolonizing methods will also be taught in other courses

so not as much time would be needed to explain the concepts and there would be more time to focus on discussion of other topics and the analysis.

- Build in collaboration and exchange. Students enjoyed the chance to not only explore the archives but to work together to check for accuracy in the analysis. This helped them consider other possible interpretations of what they were reading and what they might have missed. It was hard to grade the substance of comments on others blog posts.

Explore More...

<https://knit.ucsd.edu/patrollingthepast/>

<https://lib.ucsd.edu/png-patrol-reports>

Student Portfolio:

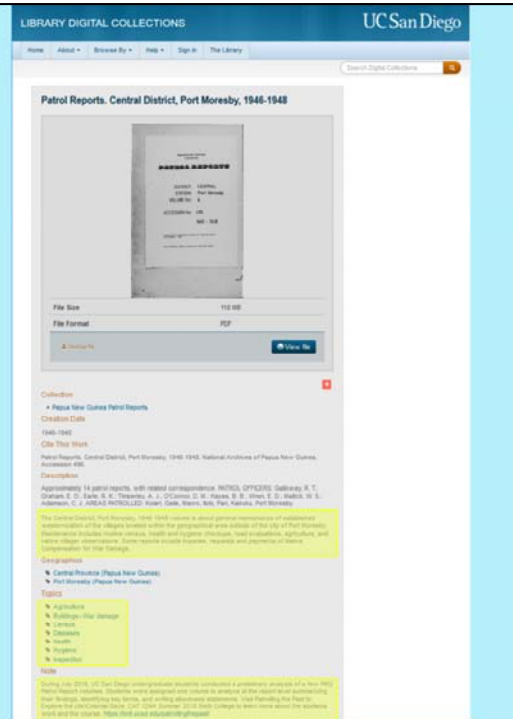
<https://knit.ucsd.edu/patrollingthepast/author/v1rojas/>

Class interactions:

- <https://knit.ucsd.edu/patrollingthepast/2018/07/29/rukmini-ravi-words-and-representations/>
- <https://knit.ucsd.edu/patrollingthepast/2018/07/15/cultural-context-of-the-east-sepik-district-yangoru-from-1949-53/>

Student's Analysis on the Digital Collections website:

<https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb5018738r>



The student's work was then contributed back to our digital collections website. The description of the volume includes the aboutness statement and topics from the student, as well as a note about the course and a link to the class KNIT website. More information on the students' findings & course design is available on KNIT.

This course had a balance of the theoretical and the practical:

- Students can point to their work.
- In turn, this course also allowed me to explore how subject analysis on the patrol reports might be carried out in the future.
- Online platform opens access to the analysis and coursework that typically is only available to academics, contributing in a small way to decolonizing our archives and academia.