RESEARCHERS, PERMITS AND ARCHIVAL SOURCES IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

by NANCY LUTTON

PAPUA New Guinea seems to have had a fascination for people looking for the unusual experience, ever since it began to appear on the maps of early explorers from the 16th century. Perhaps the reason for this was, as Gavin Souter says, that it was the 'last unknown'.[1] After the 1870s, when the country was gradually explored by outsiders—missionaries, government officers, scientists, gold prospectors and others—and it became obvious how diverse the cultures were within a comparatively small region, research interest has become intense. There are something like 700 distinct languages, which correspond to a similar number of cultural groups, all of which consider themselves exclusive. Thus in addition to the attractions for the adventurous—the lure of rugged mountain ranges, swift flowing, wide and deep rivers, some capable of navigation for several hundred miles inland, the hazards of swamps and possibly hostile inhabitants—there were also attractions for the researcher, more particularly in the early years, the anthropologist and the linguist. These researchers may be distinguished from scientific explorers, because they tended to settle in one place for several months and thus intruded upon the lives of the people in a more permanent fashion than the scientists whose main function was to collect specimens and take them away for analysis. Since the War, the numbers of researchers have increased, particularly in the social sciences, economics, politics and history with all the variations of enquiry concerning law, land, government, and every aspect of living.

Any academic, archivist or librarian knows very well that all this research only scratches the surface of what is waiting to be done, but when a country has just emerged from its colonial past and is seeking to be recognised as a truly independent nation, its inhabitants are liable to be over-sensitive to any activities that seem to suggest they are different, or odd, and therefore should be the subject of research. Apart from the psychological aspect, a few researchers have not played the game with strict fairness in the past, and naturally enough it is the sins of this minority which are generalised into the reasons why researchers should not be allowed into the country. According to Kundapen Talyaga, villagers say they do not like researchers because they do not like being used as informants. It is a waste of time. They give labour but there is no return in the form of information. They cannot see that the researcher has contributed to economic or social welfare. It is usually the 'kiap' (the government officer) from whom the researcher gets permission, and villagers are insulted over this—it is not the kiap who is giving the information. Lastly there is the objection that artifacts are taken away after a low price has been paid and sold overseas for inflated prices.[2]

Kundapen Talyaga goes on to give the students' point-of-view too: there will be nothing left for them to study; facts are distorted; and

ignorant people are exploited. He suggests that researchers should get the permission of the people to study them. If there are any complaints of behaviour, they should leave. Artifacts should be inspected before allowing any sale, and the researchers should deposit copies of tapes, papers and theses in the district concerned. Above all, they must treat the people as human beings, and he ends with an Enga expression which means 'Just because one kaukau [sweet potato] stinks, we throw away the whole lot'.[3]

University students also complain from a slightly different angle. Since they are themselves the most articulate section of the indigenous people and are gathered together at the foremost institute of learning together with academics who are researching while teaching, they become the targets for constant questions by seekers of information.

> A person is sometimes frustrated when he/she is dogged and eventually cornered by a researcher, fired and digged at with a barage (sic) of cross examinations to extract every piece of information that could be obtained. It is academic ignorance, gross insensitivity and intellectual exploitation. Every occasion social or whatever becomes an opportunity for their insidious inquisition.[4]

Now, while this student may be somewhat overstating the case, one only has to look at the considerable number of research papers and articles published by academic staff using the results of questionnaires gathered from students on all storts of matters from cultural background to educational opportunities, to see how they have been affected by the rapid social change during their lifetime, to understand how they must get sick of it all. It is usually the same few who get cornered socially because they are the most sociable. Others may get over exposed because they are the only students from particular areas. When all is said and done, as the same student says, 'Isn't the last laugh usually with the villager for does the researcher really get the truth . . .?'[5]

Researchers of course have not been slow in giving their side of the case. They do have to pay for work done, there are laws about minimum wages. It is courteous to call on the kiap, besides he can help with overall information on policies and events. Information is not only for the researchers' use, all knowledge is of benefit to mankind, but it needs to be analysed by trained minds. When papers *are* sent back to the district, the people still do not see them because someone souvenirs them, besides few villagers would know how to use them. This applies to pure rather than applied research, but there is no reason why a researcher should not be required to look at application alongside his research. As for there being nothing left to research—what 'pitiful ignorance of both the nature of research and the richness and diversity of the cultures of Papua New Guinea'.[6]

Whether or not insiders can look at their own cultures better than outsiders is also a matter for argument. A researcher could be tied too emotionally to his own culture to see it objectively.[7] Nevertheless a Tongan anthropologist urges the training of more Pacific Islanders because outsiders often have written only the seamier side of what they see.

> . . . in Melanesia we have come up only with pictures of people who fight, compete, trade, pay bride-prices, engage in rituals, invent cargo cults, copulate and sorcerise each other. There is hardly anything in our literature

to indicate whether these people have any such sentiments as love, kindness, consideration, altruism and so on.[8]

Another anthropologist adds that no matter what the colour of the researcher, people will never see themselves as anthropologists do, which also applies to middle-class Americans being studied by American sociologists. As for training Pacific Island anthropologists, he says that in a developing country the elite are more attracted to jobs that lead to top management and prestige.[9] This is the same difficulty we have in attracting recruits to librarianship or archives.

New Rules for Researchers

There is enough truth in the complaints for a tightening up of the control of entry for foreigners coming to Papua New Guinea for research. This applies particularly to where they may go and to the depositing of their papers. It has been possible in the past for ten researchers to study the same area and not leave a single paper behind them.[10] Even those who have published their results seem to be congregated in a few areas, as a glance at the 'Intensive ethnographic studies' section in *An Atlas of Papua New Guinea* will show.[11] As one charged with collecting everything written in or about Papua New Guinea, I could not agree more with the control over papers. Another point is that researchers are not always *bona fide* scholars, and the Director of the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies has commented on the number of applications which have been withdrawn when further information was requested.[12]

The Minister for Foreign Relations and Trade, Sir Maori Kiki, has outlined the conditions under which a researcher may be granted a permit to enter Papua New Guinea.[13]

(a) The researcher must be affiliated with some national institution, a university, museum, or even a government department. This is to ensure that work is not duplicated, that it fits into the total scheme of research, and that the researcher is a *bona fide* scholar.

(b) The researcher has to be acceptable to the local community concerned. While he may not be able to arrange this before entering the country, it is up to him to explain the purpose of his work to the local authorities and the people. Should complaints be received, the Migration Act allows for cancellation of his permit.

(c) Copies of books, papers, theses, tapes, photographs and films must be deposited at the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, and a declaration must be signed to this effect.

(d) Research proposals should be submitted to the nearest P.N.G. or Australian post overseas. The proposal will be sent to the Migration Office in Port Moresby, and in turn sent to the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, who will arrange liaison with a suitable institute if necessary. If nobody will take him on, the permit will be refused.

(e) The proposal must include the *curriculum vitae* of the applicant as well as the proposal in full, together with a letter from supervisor if the researcher is a Ph.D. student.

(f) To pay for the expenses incurred by the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies for processing, a fee of $100.00 is charged.

In addition, normal migration procedures such as medical examinations will be required.

Predictably, some researchers have complained that of course Papua New Guinea is like any other newly independent country, it is throwing out researchers because no practical use can be seen. This is because the picture presented by the researcher is in his own language and villagers do not understand, or because the former white administration has not acted on it.[14] However, this view is not shared by all. Strathern asks at what level the returns are expected. At the national level, it means the deposits of papers, etc., and this can be organised. Practical use of course does not mean the research will 'directly help people to mend their cars',[15] but research showing people's ideas is of value to everyone. At the local level, linguists and anthropologists could easily write some reports for their people in their local tongues. Going back to the practical he makes the point that people in the field often *do* mend cars, as well as handing out medicine and other things. The villagers gain a lot in personal relations.

In general, while continuing to assert that research is of value, especially to a developing country, *bona fide* researchers have fully supported the justice and necessity for the new regulations.[16]

The Institutions and their Purposes

(a) *University of Papua New Guinea*

U.P.N.G. has Faculties in Arts, Law, Science, Education, Agriculture and Medicine. The main campus is at Waigani, Port Moresby, and the Medical Faculty is at Boroko. The former Secondary Teachers' College at Goroka has also now been incorporated into the University. This institution is obviously the main target for affiliation and procedures for such have been outlined by the Research Committee.

The researcher should write to the relevant department, which if it agrees, will inform the migration authorities. This intimates academic support in that the researcher is then recognised as *bona fide*, he may be allowed to use archival sources, and the academic staff will assist where possible. It will not however mean the university has any liability for the researcher, nor guarantee his entry permit. In return the researcher would be expected to give seminars or lectures to interested university staff, and also assist in training Papua New Guinea researchers in the field.[17]

Presumably, all other institutions have drawn up similar guidelines, though they may vary a little according to the nature of the institution.

(b) *Papua New Guinea University of Technology (UNITECH)*

Here there are five faculties—Architecture and Building, Business Administration, Engineering, Natural Resources and General Studies. Part of U.P.N.G.'s Agriculture course is done at UNITECH. The two Universities complement each other. UNITECH is situated at Lae.

(c) *Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research*

This is the former New Guinea Research Unit (and still better known by that name). The Australian National University handed over its assets to the Papua New Guinea Government in August 1975 when the House of Assembly passed an Act to establish the institute.[18]

It is not a teaching institution, but functions to promote research into economic, social and political problems in order to find practical solutions. It does aim to train Papua New Guineans as research workers, and it makes its findings known through publications of series such as the *I.A.S.E.R. Discussion Papers*. It it situated at Waigani, adjacent to the University of Papua New Guinea, and has a good library.

(d) *Institute of Medical Research*

This was formerly known as the Institute of Human Biology, and is at Goroka. This institute co-ordinates research into diseases peculiar to Papua New Guinea, including any aspect of medicine or biology, anthropological or sociological aspects of health, and anything to do with public health generally.[19] Naturally there is close liaison with both the Public Health Department and U.P.N.G. Medical Faculty. The latter seems to cater for its library needs.

(e) *Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies*

In spite of the numerous references to this institute above in relation to the regulations for entry, that role is merely a side line to its main functions. Because P.N.G. has undergone such rapid social change, there is a fear that much of its culture is irretrievably lost. In other parts of the Third World, the urge to re-establish the country's unique identity has been expressed in such terms as 'Negritude' and here it is called 'The Melanesian Way'. While it is recognised that culture cannot be preserved in a fossilised state, knowledge of the culture brings an understanding and appreciation which will in turn foster a national identity. The aim then is to collect cultural archives, and there is already since the act was passed in 1974[20] a music archive and a folk-lore archive. Grants are made to Papua New Guineans for research into various aspects of culture, dance, poetry, and drama. There are also plans for film making, and for starting a photo archive, and there is research into art and architecture. The results are published in several journals, and numerous monographs and discussion papers, all most attractively produced by the institute itself.[21] The institute is in Boroko, Port Moresby.

(f) *The Papua New Guinea Museum*

This is directed by the same National Cultural Council as the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies. A new building is in process of erection at Waigani, Port Moresby and it is apparent that it will be quite an eye catcher when it is complete. The new building will enable an expansion of exhibits and activities.

(g) *The Summer Institute of Linguistics*

The Institute is not a government institution but perhaps ought to have a mention. It is a religious organisation which aims to reduce as many vernacular languages as possible to writing, and judging by their numerous publications, they are succeeding very well.

Where are the Archival Sources?

(a) *Papua New Guinea National Archives*

This is a well established institution with a sound basis of archival practice, modelled in general on the Australian Archives. Indeed

many of the records have their counterpart in Australian departmental files—from which, it has been advocated, records which were destroyed during the war could be reconstituted.[22] These gaps constitute one of the difficulties faced by the National Archives. The others are the re-organisation of the public service which has recently pushed the Archives from the Department of the Interior to the Education Department, and the low priority given to its needs. The latter means lack of funds for adequate salaries and equipment and more particularly for the further training of archives staff. The Chief Archivist, Moeka Helai, was seconded to act as head of a government department for two years and has only recently returned.

These difficulties have an indirect effect on the reference capabilities of the archives staff. Besides that, use of the archives is tightly controlled and unprepared researchers may find their time has run out before permission has been obtained. It is necessary to fill in an application form directed to the Secretary of the Education Department. Information required is the name of the institution of research and the supervisor. Scope and purpose of research must be stated and an indication of which files the researcher wishes to see. Then the researcher has to sign an undertaking not to publish, give seminars, or present theses without clearance of the material from the archives The processing of these applications is likely to take three weeks, and has been known to take six months.

Readers of *Archives and Manuscripts* will have seen a number of articles concerning the National Archives in previous years, so a further description is not necessary here.[23] The staff consists of the Chief Archivist, two Archives Officers and eight Clerks.

(b) *The New Guinea Collection, University of Papua New Guinea Library*

This Collection has also been described in some detail only two years ago.[24] It is the next largest collection of archives and is greatly dominated by mission records. This is because it has been designated as the repository for the archives of two major churches, the Anglican and the United. Large consignments are still arriving from time to time as they are discovered, usually rotting away, in some isolated outpost mission. There are also numerous private manuscripts and growing collections of pictures and tapes.

Use of the Collection is still reasonably informal though there are indications that some tightening up is needed. Almost anyone who can give a good reason, can enrol on the spot by simply filling in a form to be approved by the New Guinea Collection Librarian or her deputy. Undergraduate students of U.P.N.G. have to obtain permission from the Reader Services Librarian, as often the material they want is available in the main library anyway. It is necessary to insist on this in order to prevent wear and tear on the collection and to leave the New Guinea Collection staff time to attend to *bona fide* research workers. The present staff consists of the Librarian, who is also archivist, an assistant librarian, two library officers and two library assistants. One of the library officers assists full time with the archives, and all are capable of handling most reference enquiries.

(c) *Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies*

The Archive collections at the Institute are not archives in the same sense as used in the above institutions. They are collections of taped music, handwritten folklore and other papers connected with the Institute's own research. It has not endeavoured to collect historical manuscripts. Its library, if a few hundred books and articles can be called that, consists mainly of what comes to the Institute in exchange for its publications, and much of that is quite irrelevant to its work and is promptly passed on to U.P.N.G. library, from where it is re-distributed.

There are some theses, research papers and similar material, deposited, as required, by researchers who have been and gone and are carrying out their obligations, but the system has only been in operation for three years and it takes longer than that to write most theses. The deposit of this type of material can be expected to increase from now on, and the Director is keen to appoint a library officer to take charge of the library soon.[25] The Director also agrees that theses not directly relevant to the work of the Institute would be better housed in the New Guinea Collection, but so far no final decision has been made.

Although the Institute is strongly oriented towards encouraging national participation in research, overseas researchers in that field are welcome to visit and use the archive collections. However, apart from processing the application forms for entry permits, the Institute has no need to see researchers in other fields and there is no obligation to visit, though some do. Whether or not it is your field of research, a visit is in fact worth while as culture can be enjoyed by all. There are frequent exhibitions held of the various arts.

Rationalisation of Archival Sources and Depositing of Research Papers

In the New Guinea Collection we have a constant stream of overseas visitors, whom we are very glad to see and very happy to help. It is my discussions with them about their frustrations in finding materials that has prompted me to write this article. The greatest of these is the length of time taken to process applications to use the National Archives. As this is beyond our control, or even the Archivist's control, there is little we can do except warn people to plan well in advance. If they have not, it is too late when they get here unless they are here for an extended stay.

Another frustration is the frequent request for theses which, the enquirer has been told by the author of the thesis, was here. Few theses come to us direct from the author, and we usually have to go to some trouble to find out all its correct bibliographic details and then order a microfilm or photocopy. In the meantime the big question is where to advise the enquirer that the copy may be found. It could be at the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, the National Archives, or in the department that helped the author most and to which he felt most obliged. It could mean he sent it to a friend expecting it to be given to the library, but the friend has souvenired it or not finished reading it, or has just plain forgotten.

Certainly the researcher has signed an agreement to deposit copies of his work with the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, but it is a little difficult to see how this is to be enforced if the researcher never intends to return and several years have passed before it is written up anyhow. The National Archives also periodically sends out reminders to people who have used them to send their published works to them. I have had people come to me saying, 'what is the use of sending papers there, they have no library, I would rather give them to you'. In other words, researchers themselves often decide where they wish to deposit papers, they do so, and feel their obligations have been met—which in a sense they have. There is after all a limit to the number of papers or theses which the researcher is able to distribute free of charge.

Obviously some rationalisation about the depositing of research papers and theses is needed, but this is a library rather than an archive function. The National Library Service is still not off the ground though the recommendations were accepted by Cabinet more than two years ago.[26] The National Library building donated by Australia as an Independence gift, is as far as a hole in the ground, but there have been no staff appointments. Bills for legal deposit and copyright have still not come before the National Parliament, there are too many other priorities. The National Archives will become part of the National Library Service. Those archivists who might deplore such a move should remember there are only two archivists in the country. One is a librarian and the other hopes to extend his qualifications by becoming one. Although the National Library Service itself will be part of the Education department, the archives should benefit from close association with an organisation with many mutual interests. It is hoped that when the National Library Service gets under way, the problems of what is where will be looked into and rationalised. Another necessary service is a national register of the archival sources on Papua New Guinea as suggested by former Archivist Kevin Green.[27] Again, staff and time are the ingredients needed.

Papua New Guinea is not an easy country in which to travel around. Even in Port Moresby public transport is appalling, and unless he has his own car a researcher with limited time cannot be blamed if he feels frustrated being sent from the University to the Archives, to the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies and possibly other places, to be told to fill in a form and come back. I find I am constantly apologising for this seeming discourtesy. I do hope this account of the whys and wherefores will explain the situation and that it may help some researchers to plan their time here ahead, and avoid the pitfalls which are exacerbated because of the developing state of the country.

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3. *Ibid.*
4. 'Academic Exploitation: a contagious disease' (Editorial), Economics Students Association of the University of Papua New Guinea (Newsletter), May 1973.

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9. Ron Crocombe, 'Anthropology, anthropologists, and Pacific Islanders', *Oceania* Vol. XLVII No. 1 (September 1976), pp.66-73.
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12. Beier.
13. A. M. Kiki, 'Guide to Foreign Research Workers seeking research permits to P.N.G.', *Man in New Guinea,* Vol.6 No. 4 (December 1974) pp.3-4.
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16. T. Schwartz, 'A reply to Ulli Beier', *Research in Melanesia,* Vol. 1 No. 2 (July 1975), pp.18-21.
17. U.P.N.G., 'Procedures for the affiliation of Foreign Research Workers in Papua New Guinea', *Research in Melanesia* Vol. 1 Nos. 2-3 (September 1975), pp. 16-17.
18. Papua New Guinea: *Act* No. 80 of 1975 (Institute of Applied Social and Economic Research Act 1975).
19. P.N.G. Ordinance No. 1 of 1968 (Institute of Human Biology) and P.N.G. Ordinance No. 37 of 1973 (Institute of Medical Research).
20. P.N.G.: *Act* No. 76 of 1974 (Cultural Development Act).
21. Institute of P.N.G. Studies, *Annual Report* 1975-76.
22. Kevin Green, 'National and Local Collection of Pacific Manuscripts', *Source Materials related to research in the Pacific Area.* (Australian Unesco Seminar, National Library of Australia), September 1971, pp.33-40.
23. Besides *Archives and Manuscripts* articles there is a good account in *Journal of Pacific History* Vol. 6 (1971), pp. 164-169. There is also a *Handbook* of the P.N.G. National Archives 1974, which is due to be updated.
24. Nancy Lutton, 'The New Guinea Collection: University of Papua New Guinea Library' *Archives and Manuscripts* Vol. 6 No. 4 (August 1975), pp.113-119.
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