Protective Colonialism – Challenging Colonialist Preconceptions

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Colonialism is a philosophical concept which never fails to draw debate as to its operation and effects on developing nations. Historians are now challenged to observe and study through the various colonial lenses, while institutions are motivated to practice decolonisation throughout their research and teaching outputs. Colonialism was, and is, an international phenomenon of power and control which continues throughout the world today, which involved the movement of people and establishment of centres of power or control.[ii] It is human nature to try and define and categorise the ways in which the world operates; in the case of power relationships, it is finding a sense of commonality and meaning within the broad diversity of colonial endeavours.[iii] Two predominant, overarching models exist within scholarship, both perfectly validly for the vast majority of colonial entities. However, the case of Papua requires a re-examination of these general approaches to understanding colonisation: they are perfectly adequate in dealing with small elements of the Papuan experience but do not adequately cover the full nature of Australia's first overseas colony. Instead, a new instrument of analysis, hereafter described as Protective Colonialism, more fully reflects the motivations and operations of Papua as a colony. This paper will examine the nature of colonialism as a concept and offer an explanation as to why the Anglo-Australian colony of Papua does not conform to these. It will then propose the concept of 'Protective Colonialism' and illustrate its relevance by discussing the elements of the governorship of Sit Hubert Murray, governor of Papua from 1905 to 1940.

To fully appreciate the necessity of defining a new section of coloniality, it is important to examine the two pre-existing categories that form colonialist scholarship. Broadly speaking, the motivations and policies undertaken by the colonial power have been analysed with either a mercantilist or settler-colonialist view. Mercantilism encompasses a colonial entity designed or developed for the express purpose of trade or the exploitation of a resource.[iv] This would include colonies such as Cape Town, established as a trading post for the Dutch East India Company, and Bermuda, established for growing sugar to feed the British market. These colonies were established with an economic imperative: to make money, and their continued existence depended on this. Settler colonial entities, on the other hand, aimed to establish outposts of the metropole through the movement of people. They aimed to replicate, or improve, the conditions of the metropole into the

periphery of empire, mainly for those whose shared the racial or cultural background of the metropole.[v] This would occur alongside widespread dispossession of land and resources from Indigenous peoples and the imposition of the settler's culture, language and customs on the colonised. Oft-cited examples of this phenomena include Canada and Australia, both transplanted British colonies.[vi] These both will be explored in greater depth later in this research paper.

The challenge which arises is when colonial examples, such as Papua, do not adequately meet the thresholds established under theoretical systems. This area, lying somewhere in the middle of an imagined colonial continuum, is currently not explained, or dealt with in contemporary colonial research as it is currently established. This, therefore, lends itself to the development of a new framework for which to examine the practices of colonial rulers within a colonial sphere. This theory, which I propose, is called Protective Colonialism. Simply put, Protective Colonialism can be defined by what it is not, more than what it actually is. It may have small elements which are like settler colonialism or mercantilist colonialism, but as a philosophy and as a practice, does not conform to these major themes. [vii]

A further, more detailed definition, however, would show that Protective colonialism is:

"The establishment of a colonial entity that is deigned to exist without the deliberate intention of profitability or the duplication of the culture of the colonizing power. The policies of said colonies are implemented to protect the rights and freedoms of the Indigenous culture who is experiencing colonization."

The complexity that stems from establishing such a definition is understanding the system that it is not, namely the mercantilist and settler colonial theoretical frameworks. By understanding said systems, the necessity of Protective colonialism, especially as it existed under the Governorship of Hubert Murray in Papua, becomes apparent.

Mercantilism is a long-established motivation and system of governance in the colonial space. Mercantilism is, according to Adam Smith, is the process of establishing self-sustaining trade networks between the metropole and the hinterland. It dates to our earliest understandings of colonialism as well as the human condition.[viii] Humans have always established these networks of colonies, as can be witnessed by as diverse of societies as the Phoenicians, Greeks, Dutch, and Venetians. Whether it be for exploitation of resources or the establishment of trade routes, colonisation has been a process to develop exploitative relationships with land and resident peoples. The crucial element of this form of colony is the profit motive; while there may be an implicit understanding the profitability may not be immediate, nor directly attributable, the access to raw

materials may be significant enough for the metropole to establish and continue such a colonial entity. In the Pacific, a prime example of this attitude towards colonialism was in the establishment of German New Guinea, across the north-eastern quadrant of the island. The company established their colonial entity, German New Guinea, as an attempt to access the resources not available in Germany. Copra from plantations built across the colony, nitrates and guano from Nauru and copper from Bougainville all fuelled German economic, military, and agricultural expansion in the late nineteenth century. The structure itself was indicative of the purpose of this endeavour. By chartering a corporate entity, the newly-unified German state followed in the mercantilist tradition blazed by the British, French and Dutch East Indian Companies, the Hudson Bay Company in Canada and the French Compagnie des Indes Occidentales in the Caribbean.[ix] There was significant encouragement by the German government to undertake plantation activities in the colony, in order to increase the outputs of agricultural commodities such as copra and jute. From this, the increased need for labour coupled with the pseudoscientific belief that white people were not suited to working in the tropics, meant that there was a largescale policy within the colony of Indigenous labour was necessary to operate. Parallel to this was the need to import labour from other colonial holdings, in this case, Tientsin in China. [x] Again, German New Guinea was not an outlier in this space. The British, for example, exported Indian labour to Singapore, Malaya, Kenya, and Fiji, while the major European colonial powers exported African labour (through slavery mostly) to the Caribbean and both North and South America.

The alternative, more modern theory which explains colonialism is that of settler colonial. This theoretical framework has been championed most recently by historians such as Lorenzo Veracini, Tim Rowse, Patrick Wolfe and Sai Englert. Settler colonialism, at its core, explains the nature of colonialism that exists without a profit or resource motive. It is the process where a colonial entity is established, whose sole intent is to replicate the conditions of the metropole in a new hinterland. This new colony aims not to preserve the indigenous culture and knowledge that was pre-existing, but instead supplant it with their own; the existence of Indigenous people was also negotiable.[xi] Indigenous populations were dispossessed of their land through forced relocations, such as the missions system in Australia and the reservation system in the United States or Canada, or through warfare and massacre along the frontier of settlement. These massacres were generally kept quiet, to avoid any potential consequences by authorities. Once Indigenous peoples had been 'dealt with', new settlement by the colonising power would be allowed to flourish, and a new frontier would develop. [xii] The important consideration of said settler colonies was their eliminationist nature: by eliminating Indigenous people, the necessity to bring in foreign labourers, such as Pacific Islanders (Australia), Chinese (United States), Indians and Africans (United States) increased, as there was no

indigenous labour to participate in the low-skilled section of the economy. [xiii] Ultimately, the philosophy of settler colonialism dictates the destruction of the Indigenous for the inclusion of the settler.

When examining the founding of the colony of Papua, one cannot establish definitive links between the dominant theoretical frameworks as to purpose and management. The colony was financially unsuccessful and struggled economically to develop, even with the ample natural resources available. Similarly, the active discouragement of permanency vis a vis settlers and land tenure, indicate a colony without the intention of supplanting Indigenous Papuans from their lands. Instead, a focus exists on a degree of modernization, though strictly within a minimalist interventionist policy. Thus, with these considerations, Papua does not conform to the settler-colonial ideas of colonialism, not does it exist within the mercantilist-economic framework. This does not mean, however, that Papua existed as some form of colonial utopia; violence and exploitations were features of the Papuan colonial experience, though can be witnessed to be less significant and dominant within the colonial experience, especially when compared to other colonial enterprises of the period. Colonialism implies the strategic intent of British and late Australian incursion into Papua. The establishment of Papua as a formal colony only occurs after to occupation of northern New Guinea by Germany. Initial British engagements in New Guinea occurred in the late 1870's to stop the growth of blackbirding, which was akin to slavery but contravened British bans on enforced servitude. A protectorate was eventually established, and migration policy established to keep out Queensland colonists, prime proponents of the worst excesses of settler colonialism. The colony of Papua was governed by the British as resident governor but financed by the Australian colonies. This is a highly unusual situation, and the only instance in the Imperial systems of the modern times.

To fully appreciate the nature of colonialism in Papua, and to be able to try and apply a label to said colonialism, one must look at the actual administration of the Colony, particularly after the take-over by Australia. The governorship of Hubert Murray, particularly in the period before the Great War, illustrates the establishment of a system which it neither a mercantilist nor a settler colonial arrangement. Instead, the theory of 'Protective Colonialism' is relevant.

Initial attempts at establishing Papua for the British crown were attempted by Queensland in 1883 due to the concern around German involvement in the region. Premier McIlwraith of Queensland saw the need for Queensland. While defence had been an openly stated motivation by Queensland, it was the implicit need for the recruitment of labourers that formed a strong motivation to establish this colony. The involuntary recruitment of these labourers, known as 'blackbirding', was a widely supported practice among the landed elite in Queensland, including future Premier of Queensland, Sir Robert Philp.[xiv] The destruction of the indigenous peoples of the state meant that

there was little access to cheap labour, and thus the annexation of Papua would provide opportunities for economic growth, as well as the possibilities of expropriating land for widespread plantation agriculture. This effort, however, was quashed by Britain, who saw Australia's colonies as too unreliable to participate in direct colonial rule. [xv] Thus, the Queensland motivation for colonialism can be directly attributable to that of a mercantilist colonial state; however, British intercession meant that these plans never truly eventuated. [xvi] Instead, the first elements of protective colonialism were established, primarily as a response to criticisms that had been levelled across the British Empire about how individual colonies had been managed.[xvii] However, there still existed opportunities for retributive raiding and massacres against Indigenous peoples.[xviii]

Hubert Murray arrived in British Papua in 1903 as one of the judicial officers of the colony. The colony in which he arrived had an extremely small population of colonists and governed only the coastal regions and the Port Moresby hinterland.[xix] It had also recently seen an outbreak of violence between colonist and indigene, due to the continual incursion of missionaries, prospectors, and potential plantation owners onto their lands. This culminated in the Goaribari massacre, where missionaries were killed and eaten on Goaribari Island. In responses, then-governor LeHunte led a retributive raid which killed a number of Indigenous men and boys. A subsequent raid led by Christopher Stansfield Robinson led to further deaths when seeking out the perpetrators of the original murders. Murray used his political connections and his judicial power to conduct an enquiry into the conduct of these leaders, resulting in findings that the leadership was reckless and such murders were unwarranted.[xx] As a consequence of these findings, Governor Robinson committed suicide. The death of Robinson led to Murray's elevation to Chief Justice of Papua in 1904, and to Lieutenant Governor in 1908. To understand the radical changes in the governance and structural ideology of Papua, one must first understand the two general approaches that emerged during the first decades.

In the administration of Papua, there were two distinct camps: the 'Australian' and the 'British'. The Australian philosophical tradition was to look at Papua as an extension to Australia and therefore to adopt colonial policies which benefitted Australian interests. This included such ideas as the further development of mining and plantation interests, an encouragement for greater (though not rampant) white settler immigration, and the encouragement of Indigenous people being forced to provide their labour to said economic developments. It was also a perspective which encouraged greater interventions into the social life and structures of the Indigenous people, using missionaries and patrol officers.[xxi] The British philosophical tradition, however, was a fundamental shift from their earlier colonial philosophy. Pioneered by Sir Peter Scratchley, the first British Special Commissioner of Papua (forerunner to the role of Lieutenant Governor), this ideology was to impose minimal outside influence on the Indigenous peoples of Papua. The first Lieutenant Governor of

Papua, Sir William MacGregor, truly pioneered what I am now arguing is 'protective colonialism'. MacGregor's policies were self-described as 'paternalistic humanitarianism'. He empowered villages to remain autonomous by strict regulation of immigration and land ownership. He prevented the ownership of permanent title of land, instead instigating a series of leasehold spaces which operated under the permission of traditional indigenous owners, with some degree of joint ownership.[xxii] He ensured the maintenance of law and order by recruiting Papuans into both the Papuan constabulary, as well as setting up native recruits in each village. Macgregor, however, was not strictly against Western influence in Papua. He explored widely, documenting the cultures that he and his patrol officers encountered and collecting artefacts on these journeys. He also sought to outlaw what were regarded as barbaric practices against civilised society, such as cannibalism, polygamy, and head hunting.[xxiii] These policies formulate a substantial element of understanding protective colonialism – they actively diminish the economic returns of the colony, thus negating any concept that the governance of the colony was profit or trade driven, while also negating any thought that this was a settler colonial space. By implementing policies that were protective of Indigenous Papuans, he changed the trajectory of colonial rule in the Pacific.

The governorships of LeHunte and Robinson, however, conformed much more closely to the Australian vision of colonial administration. While maintaining much of MacGregor's policies, they nonetheless aimed to encourage greater settlement through weakening restrictions on immigration and land ownership. They also signalled a change in relationships with Indigenous people using retributive shows of force, most notably the Goaribari massacres.[xxiv] The death of Robinson, as stated previously, indicated a turning point for the administration of Papua.

When Murray was elevated to the role of Chief Justice, and then Lieutenant-Governor of Papua, he was widely considered as enmeshed in the Australian philosophical tradition. He was, after all, a former New South Wales circuit judge, whose father was one of the original New South Wales parliamentarians and who had strong political friendships with Prime Ministers Edmund Barton and Alfred Deakin.[xxv] Initially, Murray was somewhat supportive to the requests of the Australian settlers. However, the retributive raids of Robinson on Goaribari soon soured his vision of the Papuan colonial experiment. Murray instead undertook a more British approach to governance but was increasingly interventionist. He maintained the policy that made land ownership by settlers impossible, which continuing to manage population growth through financial disincentive. He did, however, develop policies to encourage settlers to enter in order to work in development, such as teachers; in this, he did maintain the White Australian policy, refusing to submit to commercial demands for the import of indentured labourers from China or India.[xxvi] He undertook further exploration and made efforts to hold court sessions in villages, rather than centrally in Port Moresby.[xxvii] These alone meant that a

greater degree of sovereignty was maintained by Indigenous people than colonial authorities. Later efforts by Murray included the establishment of schools in regional areas to develop literacy, and the provision of medical training for indigenous Papuans at University of Sydney.[xxviii] He also empowered patrol officers to undertake anthropological works while patrolling to capture and maintain the unique nature of Papuan traditional cultures and artefacts.[xxix] However, the economic challenges of maintaining these policies is a constant during the Murray administration. Throughout his papers are constant appeals for increased funding from Australia; the replies, however, tend to encourage Murray to make more pro-business reforms to meet the needs of his limited exchequer. [xxx]

Alongside efforts to improve, but not impose, upon Indigenous Papuans were efforts to minimise the coercive impact of settler-colonists. In governance, settlers were politically represented by a three-man Legislative Council, who had provision to represent economic and social interests in the colony but had no direct political power.[xxxi] Papuan colonists also had no provision for political representation in the Federal Parliament, a constitutional decision reinforced by the *Papua Act 1907 (Cwlth)* that created a degree of frustration among the expatriate community. Instead, the colonist interests were represented by the Lieutenant-Governor via representations to the Minister of External Affairs. [xxxii] They were unable to import labour to work the plantations (due to the White Australia policy) and were not able to compel Indigenous labour to work on the plantations due to [xxxiii]government policy, these factors, coupled with a general belief that white labour was unsuited to manual labour in the Tropics, meant that Indigenous lands were protected from speculation and development. In the post-war space of 1919, Murray advocated an expansion of his policies into the newly acquired Australian (Northern) New Guinea, though the military authorities at the time saw it appropriate to continue the pro-Mercantilist policies of the Germans, leading to greater development and exploitation of Indigenous peoples. However, highest praise was made of Murrays policies by Sir William Macgregor who, as Governor of Queensland, argued that Australian rule was acceptable, so long as Murray maintained control.[xxxiv] While some have argued that this period of colonialism could be simply considered 'masterly inactivity', it is simply not accurate. Murray deliberately pursued a policy which aimed to minimise the impact of Western colonists on the Indigenous people of Papua.

Ultimately, the concept of Protective Colonialism is a fundamental shift in how we perceive colonialism. In many ways, it conforms to a nostalgic understanding of the process; something which unfortunately permeates a significant amount of people's understanding of the concept.[xxxv] Unlike people's understanding of colonialism, however, this understanding of colonialism provides a positive protective outcome for the indigenous people under the structure. In the case of Murray as our key example, Papuans were able to access medical assistance and have intra and intra tribal

conflict mediated through the rule of law. The uniqueness of a protective colonial entity is that there remains a high degree of autonomy and preservation for the Indigenous peoples, while also benefitting from the expertise and knowledge of the coloniser. [xxxvi] Unfortunately, the concept of protective colonialism was not a universal undertaking, though it can be argued that there were periods of this which existed throughout colonial history, such as early German influence in Nauru or British influence in Tanzania. [xxxvii]

In closing, the idea of protective colonialism provides an analytical tool to look at the possible benefits and interventions of a colonial power into an indigenous space. It recognises the benefits that could be, and are often attributed to colonialism, while also recognising the importance of cultural, political, and economic preservation by the colonial ruler. The case of Anglo-Australian Papua, as illustrated through this paper, indicates that while some governors conformed to a more settler-colonial or mercantilist dream, most of the time, the governance and policies of the territory reflect this new theoretical framework. The governorships of MacGregor and Murray show a protective benevolence that is more than merely 'masterful activity', but a concerted effort to learn about Indigenous ways while minimising the effects of colonialism on them.

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^{vi} Kennedy, "An Australian empire."
^{vii} As Kendrick LeMar says, "They not like us".
^{viii} van Dommelen, "Colonialism and Migration in the Ancient Mediterranean."
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