

Stanner's War

*W.E.H. Stanner, the Pacific War, and its Aftermath**

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THE PACIFIC WAR CREATED AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE IN POST-WAR AUSTRALIAN colonial policy in the South West Pacific and particularly the territories of Papua and New Guinea. It brought to the fore a generation of men and women who saw the war as a chance to introduce change into Australian political life and thinking, and a more independent role for Australia in international affairs. In the Department of External Affairs and various other government departments, in war-born organisations such the Australian army's education unit and Directorate of Research and Civil Affairs (DORCA), in mission bodies and as individuals, this generation found itself able to participate in the development and formulation of new policies. The men and women who made up DORCA were at the forefront of these efforts and attempted to bring about a new deal for a post-war Papua New Guinea.¹ In fact, their ambitions were greater than this: they envisaged an Australia responsible for the old British territories, stretching from Borneo to the British Solomon Islands Protectorate.²

Papua New Guinea was under Australian rule and what happened in Australia had an impact on immediate post-war development. The contest for dominance over policy in Papua New Guinea was fought out in offices in Melbourne and Canberra by the old guard who wanted the status quo, by progressive pre-war officials and by the younger generation who sometimes formed alliances of sorts with the progressive pre-war officials.³ In this paper, I focus on the role of William Edward Hanley Stanner (1905–81), a man with some experience in the British Colonial Office and in East Africa, who found himself part of DORCA but not part of the progressive ideas for change that were being discussed and formulated in DORCA at the time. Stanner had no direct experience of Papua New Guinea but was confident that his experience in

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¹ The term 'Papua New Guinea' is used here for convenience. During World War II the territories of Papua and New Guinea were combined and known as 'New Guinea', from 1945 to 1949 they became 'Papua-New Guinea', from 1949 to 1971 'Papua and New Guinea' and, thereafter, 'Papua New Guinea'.

² It is an area that roughly coincided with the wartime South West Pacific command.

³ See Geoffrey Gray, "'The next focus of power to fall under the spell of this little gang": anthropology and Australia's post-war policy in Papua New Guinea', *War & Society*, 14:2 (1996), 101–17.

colonial Africa would hold him in good stead. By concentrating on Stanner and his difficult personal relations as well as his intellectual and political differences with the men and women in DORCA, I examine the various strands of thought about Papua New Guinea developed in DORCA and the battle waged by DORCA and, after 1946, its successor the Australian School of Pacific Administration (ASOPA) with the civil bureaucracy, especially External Territories. I also underline the argument that political support is critical in obtaining change.

The period under discussion, 1942–49, was a short moment in Australian colonial history, but full of hope and idealism for a new deal for the people of Papua New Guinea, partly prompted by a sense of obligation for their participation in the war against Japan.⁴ These hopes were largely unfulfilled owing to a change of government and ineptitude on the part of some of the DORCA leaders, particularly Alfred A. Conlon and John Kerr. For the others most associated with DORCA — Herbert Ian Hogbin, Camilla Wedgwood, Kerr, Conlon and Stanner — it was also an episode in their lives when they had an opportunity to influence, in a political way, colonial policy.

Stanner favoured a colonial policy based on various British models, especially those of settler colonies in East Africa, which he proposed for Papua New Guinea. He envisaged indigenous peoples able to participate in economic development but did not conceive of a time when Papuans and New Guineans would be self-governing. This was partly due to what might be seen as a pragmatic view of their state of development. ‘Natives’, he wrote,

by and large, are poor, superstitious, all too often undernourished, and... their health is bad... Their mental horizon is narrow;... their values are different [from ours]... They have less knowledge... They are inexperienced in large scale economic undertakings.⁵

His colleagues, by contrast, felt Australian rule should shift from benign paternalism, which in their view largely characterised pre-war policy, to one that would facilitate the process of self-government and, possibly in time, independence.⁶ Clearly Stanner’s position was in stark opposition to the prevailing mood in DORCA. This paper, then, traces the nature of the conflict, the way it was played out and the outcome, which favoured, in the end, neither Stanner nor DORCA.

Stanner hurried home to Australia soon after war was declared in Europe; he was 34 years of age, had recently completed his PhD at the London School of Economics (LSE), and was eager to find a place for himself in Australia.⁷ He had been destined, until then, for work with the British academy and the British colonial service. There were no positions for anthropologists in Australian

⁴ See Gray, ‘The army requires anthropologists: Australian anthropologists at war, 1939–1946’, *Australian Historical Studies*, no. 127 (2006), 156–80.

⁵ Stanner, ‘New Guinea under war conditions’, *International Affairs*, 20:4 (1944), 492–3.

⁶ Cf., Susan Woodburn, ‘Post-war development proposals for the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony’, in Brij V. Lal (ed.), *The Defining Years: Pacific Islands, 1945–65* (Canberra 2005), 113–16.

⁷ His (unpublished) thesis was entitled, ‘Economic Changes in North Australian Tribes’ (1938).

universities, nor was there a demand for anthropological researchers in Australia or its colonies. Both Papua and New Guinea already had government anthropologists. On his return in October 1939, Stanner spent the first few months writing up his African research, undertook lecture tours for the University of Sydney Extension Board and prepared broadcasts on 'political and military matters' for the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC),⁸ which in turn led to his employment with the Department of Information preparing propaganda scripts for the ABC.

His work for the ABC caught the attention of the security service, where his manner was described as 'cultured and restrained' and his point of view 'never startling rather non-committal if anything'.⁹ The security service was also aware that Stanner had political ambitions: but for 'lack of finance', he would have contested the federal seat of Martin as a United Australia Party candidate against the sitting member M.V. McCall.¹⁰ Stanner had worked for several prominent conservative politicians, including Bertram Stevens, Premier of New South Wales, preparing data and ideas on economic and social matters; in London, he had been attached to the staffs of Richard Casey and Prime Minister Joe Lyons; in 1941 he was adviser to Percy Spender, Minister for the Army in the third Menzies Ministry, and continued in that position after a change of government in October 1941. He most likely stayed as an adviser to the incoming Minister for the Army, Frank Forde, in part because Spender remained in the War Cabinet until February 1944.¹¹

At the end of June 1942, he was appointed to the Prime Minister's National Morale Committee, chaired by Alf Conlon.¹² The Committee was probably Conlon's introduction to Stanner. In the various descriptions of Conlon, who preferred to influence events from behind the scenes, there is no middle ground.¹³ He is variously described as a 'charismatic charlatan',¹⁴ largely unimportant or a visionary.¹⁵ John Kerr, who had been recruited by Conlon and became his

⁸ Diane E Barwick, Jeremy Beckett and Marie Reay, 'W.E.H. Stanner: an Australian anthropologist', in Diane E. Barwick, Jeremy Beckett and Marie Reay (eds), *Metaphors of Interpretation: essays in honour of W.E.H. Stanner* (Canberra 1985), 13.

⁹ A member of the North Australia Observer Unit, which Stanner commanded during the war, recalled that Stanner was 'very bookish. He had a very English accent; spoke meticulously; and dressed carefully. I remember sharing a cabin with Stanner... on the train from Melbourne to Sydney. I was struck by the opulence and magnificence of his tailored wardrobe... His uniform was immaculate and he always wore yellow socks'. Cited in Richard Walker and Helen Walker, *Curtin's Cowboys: Australia's secret bush commandos* (Sydney 1986), 16.

¹⁰ Report, 8 Apr. 1942, C123, item 12630, National Archives of Australia, Canberra (hereinafter NAA). McCall, a Sydney wool and skin merchant, held the seat of Martin from 1934 until his defeat in 1943.

¹¹ David Horner, *Inside the War Cabinet: directing Australia's war effort, 1939-1945* (Sydney 1996), 18, 209-13.

¹² John Pomeroy, 'Morale on the homefront in Australia during the Second World War', PhD thesis, University of Sydney (Sydney 1995), 156-232.

¹³ See however John Thomson (ed.), *Five to Remember* (Sydney 1964), 91-164.

¹⁴ Robert Manne (review of Cassandra Pybus, *The Devil and James McAuley*, Brisbane 1999), *Australian Book Review*, Aug. 1999, 21.

¹⁵ Peter Ryan, *Brief Lives* (Melbourne 2004), 28-61.

right-hand man in the Australian army's Directorate of Research but later fell out with him, described him in the following way:

Conlon's motivation was complex. He loved the power that came from being able to induce people, especially those who had power in their own right, to carry out his suggestions... He had a minor kind of Leonardo complex: he believed he knew and understood a wide range of intellectual matters; he had an uncanny capacity for discussing what might be called the methodological and philosophical fringe of many subjects. He was a master of this and did it with wit, and some distinguished men came under his influence.¹⁶

The historian Peter McPhee captures the essence of Conlon as a 'young man with a brilliant mind and an extraordinary talent for making contacts,... who surrounded himself with other men who shared his energy and penchant for red wine and long nights'.¹⁷ Conlon is remembered by others who worked with him as a 'beer and pipe man'.¹⁸ At the beginning of the war, Conlon, a mature-age medical student and the first student representative member of the University Senate, was heading the University's manpower section.

When Conlon proposed the establishment of a Prime Minister's National Morale Committee in February 1942, it was a time of conscription, social disruption and rationing, so morale was an increasingly important issue. At the end of 1941, Australia faced the prospect of invasion; early in 1942, the Japanese bombed Rabaul, Lae, Port Moresby, Darwin and Broome. Singapore had fallen, Australia's Eighth Army Division had been destroyed and 22,000 Australian troops had been taken prisoner. The country was in a state of alarm verging on panic. The Japanese were expected to invade at any moment.¹⁹ Stanner, writing scripts for radio, encouraged Australians to recognise the heroic men and women who settled the country as models for the coming days of war against Japan.²⁰

¹⁶ John Kerr, *Matters for Judgment: an autobiography* (Melbourne 1978), 100–1.

¹⁷ Peter McPhee, *'Pansy': a life of Roy Douglas Wright* (Melbourne 1999), 59. See also Stephen Foster and Margaret M. Varghese, *The Making of the Australian National University, 1946–1996* (Sydney 1996), 3; Tim Rowse, *Nugget Coombs: a reforming life* (Melbourne 2005), 154.

¹⁸ Pers. comm. Hank Nelson; see also Brian Jinks, 'Alfred Conlon, the Directorate of Research and New Guinea', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 12 (1983), 21–33; Gray, 'Managing the Impact of War: Australian anthropology, WWII and the Southwest Pacific', in Roy M. MacLeod (ed.), *Science and the Pacific War: science and survival in the Pacific, 1939–1945* (London 2000), 187–210.

¹⁹ There is no evidence that an invasion was ever planned by the Japanese. See for example Henry Frei, *Japan's Southward Advance and Australia: from the sixteenth century to World War II* (Melbourne 1991), especially 160–74; Peter Stanley, "'They're (not) coming south": the invasion that wasn't', paper delivered at the 'Remembering 1942' conference held at the Australian War Memorial, 1 Jun. 2002; Steve Bullard, 'Australian Accounts of the Japanese at War in Papua, 1942–1943: reflections on military history and nationalism', presented to seminar, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University (ANU), 14 Sept. 2004.

²⁰ See for example, 'War Morale: a challenge to Australian youth', ABC Broadcast, 1942, MS 3572, item 69, Stanner Papers, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands Studies, Canberra, (hereinafter SP). See also SP 109/3, 318/48, NAA for Stanner's broadcast scripts. He commented in a letter to Ian Clunies Ross that, 'Menzies once said after hearing me speak that I ought to have given Percy Spender's speeches for him instead of simply writing them'. Stanner to Ian Clunies Ross, 30 Sept. 1948, A10651, ICR 23/28, NAA. See also Gray, 'Australian Anthropologists in WW II', *Anthropology Today*, 21:3 (2005), 18–21; and Tigger Wise, *The Self-Made Anthropologist: a life of A.P. Elkin* (Sydney 1985), 146–54.

The National Morale Committee was Conlon's introduction to political power on a national level, and demonstrated his ability to recruit individuals of influence and intellect. The Committee consisted of Julius Stone, Professor of International Law at the University of Sydney, as Vice-chairman; Stanner; R.M. Crawford, Professor of History at Melbourne University; Justice E.D. Roper of the NSW Supreme Court; Sid Deamer, a journalist with the ABC Weekly; Dr Keith Barry, Federal Programme Controller at the ABC; Roy (Pansy) Wright, Professor of Physiology in the University of Melbourne; and the Sydney anthropologist Ian Hogbin.²¹ In December 1942, the committee co-opted several more of Conlon's allies, H.C. Coombs, John Kerr and Brian Fitzpatrick.²² In anyone's assessment this was an exceptional group.

Yet Coombs could not 'recall that its deliberations did much to raise the national spirit'.²³ After Stanner wrote his criticism of the draft report on the National Morale Committee, sometime in July 1942, he appears to have taken no further part in the Committee, although many of his broadcasts continued to address the broad issue of civilian morale. It is unlikely that the committee was abolished until the end of the war; Paul Hasluck described it as a 'curiously composed body' and noted that 'it is difficult to determine what standing it had'.²⁴ Perhaps we can be confident that it served to link senior government, military officials and the Prime Minister, which could only promote the interests of Conlon.

In May 1942, Stanner was appointed commanding officer of the North Australia Observer Unit (NAOU), which patrolled an area that spanned almost the whole of northern Australia.²⁵ Once the threat of invasion had receded, the NAOU was abandoned and Stanner was transferred, in October 1943, to DORCA, located at Land Headquarters, Victoria Barracks, Melbourne. He was promoted to Lt-Colonel and made Assistant Director (Territories Administration), an unsought appointment. Who was responsible for suggesting Stanner is unknown, although Conlon was the most likely.

At the time of Stanner's transfer, there was increasing discussion at a senior government and military level on Australia's role and responsibilities in a post-war South West Pacific, especially Papua and New Guinea. DORCA had proposed to Thomas Blamey, Commander-in-Chief of the Australian army, that DORCA should become the policy arm of the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit (ANGAU), now that the Japanese had been pushed back, so that by the time a civilian administration took over, these territories

²¹ See Keith Barry, in John Thomson (ed.), *Five to Remember* (Melbourne 1964), 96–7; Sid Deamer, *ibid.*, 100–1; Rowse, *Nugget Coombs*, 96, 100.

²² See H.C. Coombs, in Thomson, *Five to Remember*, 127; also 'Criticism by Major W.E. Stanner of the draft Interim Report of National Morale Committee to the Prime Minister', [n.d., probably Jul. 1942], MS 3752, item 68, SP.

²³ Coombs, *Trial Balance: issues of my working life* (Melbourne 1983), 197.

²⁴ Cited in Richard Hall, *The Real John Kerr: his brilliant career* (Sydney 1978), 40–1.

²⁵ Report: joint Services and US Army meeting on the organization of observer and intelligence services, North Australia. 7 Mar. 1942, MP 729/6, 29/401/618, NAA; also Richard Walker and Helen Walker, *Curtin's Cowboys*.

would be 'in a state of development far ahead of any that had been contemplated previously'.²⁶ Stanner was a useful addition to the anthropologists Hogbin and Wedgwood, who had been appointed to DORCA to assist in the development of these plans and conduct pertinent research.

The war may not have been the instrument of change, but it provided the opportunity for these ideas to be aired and debated in a changed environment. The journalist and historian Richard Hall wrote that the war

provided the opportunity for intellectual talent to play a role in running the country. The growth of services, the necessary expansion of government, and the advent of a Labor Cabinet gave the younger generation chances which it would never have had in the stagnant society between the wars. The Army Education Service, headquartered in Melbourne, was one haven for intellectuals. *Salt*, the Army newspaper, which came under the Education Service, provided an outlet for non-conformist journalists... In the Public Service, the Department of External Affairs was picking up bright young men... It was good to be alive in Melbourne. The various groups overlapped at parties and in pubs, and there was a spirit of optimism about Australia's future. The new generation was confident that past mistakes would be avoided... The Melbourne world of conversations and discussions was remote, not just physically from the frontline. The bright young men were nationalists, but not patriots in the sense that senior army officers were. Australian resistance to sending another contingent to fight in Europe highlighted and underlined 'a vigorous nationalism [which] flourished among senior officers of the Australian Infantry Forces, fed not by political leanings but their experience in the Middle East where they found themselves treated as colonials by their English counterparts'.²⁷

It was this intellectual and social milieu that members of the Directorate both entered and influenced. But Stanner, it seems, was drawn elsewhere both intellectually and politically. One could say that Stanner was an outsider, partly because of his style, his conservative political views and what was perceived by many in DORCA to be a predisposition to the British position in international and colonial affairs.

On the surface, there was much to commend Stanner to Conlon: he had worked for the British Colonial Office and had considerable experience and knowledge of British colonial policy,²⁸ something other members of DORCA lacked. Yet one can detect Stanner's antipathy toward the Directorate's senior members. He confided to Ian Clunies Ross, some years after the end of the war, that there was 'nothing in Canberra so long as [H.E.] Evatt [Minister for External Affairs] and [Eddie] Ward [Minister for External Territories] are there. I found my disagreements with them insuperable, and their entourages don't like the cut of my jib. Or my threat of competition'.²⁹

J.K. Murray, the ex-Principal of the School of Civil Affairs and Administrator of Papua and New Guinea (1946–52), recalled that 'a good deal of discussion and forming of attitudes was done in Melbourne homes in the evenings to early

²⁶ MP 742, 284/57, NAA. See also Gray, 'Managing the Impact', 187–210; Pybus, *The Devil and James McAuley* (Brisbane 1999), 38–9, 45.

²⁷ Hall, *The Real John Kerr*, 43–5, 53.

²⁸ See Stanner, 'On the Next Phase of British Colonial Policy', *Australian Outlook*, 6:2 (1952), 90–104.

²⁹ Stanner to Clunies Ross, 30 Sept. 1948, A10651, ICR 23/28, NAA.

mornings . . . “brains trust” thrashing out of situations as they arose or looked like surfacing: dialogue style’.³⁰ Those who favoured a more formal approach were exasperated, most notably Stanner. Jinks concludes that Conlon ‘made his most favourable impact on those who were least involved in solving immediate, practical problems’, which was not Stanner’s style.³¹ Raymond Firth, Stanner’s PhD supervisor, described Stanner as possessing a negative approach.³² According to J.A. Barnes, professor of Anthropology at the University of Sydney, 1956–58, Stanner’s nickname at Sydney was, ‘spanner in the works’.³³ He was very good at summarising reports and presenting the information in a balanced, non-committal way, but it was difficult to grasp Stanner’s position, and this irritated his colleagues in the Directorate.

There was no love lost between Conlon and his ‘acerbic assistant’.³⁴ Once Stanner was demobbed, he never let an opportunity go without criticising the actions of ‘the boys’, as they called themselves. It was mutual dislike and distrust. John Kerr, the other assistant director of DORCA, described Stanner as having ‘an ego of terrific size which gets mixed up with the objective problem’.³⁵ Though it is difficult to unravel the purely personal from the political, the latter strongly informed Stanner’s views about Conlon, Kerr and Hogbin, as well as Evatt and Ward. Hence, Stanner’s appointment can be seen as a strategy to delimit possible criticism of DORCA’s plans for post-war Papua New Guinea and the various British colonies in the South West Pacific.

DORCA, which was the main vehicle for influencing change in colonial policy, had a difficult birth. While still chairman of the National Morale Committee, Conlon had discussed with Major-General Victor P.H. Stanke, Adjutant General of Land Headquarters, the possibility of creating a research section which would assist in planning for the possible invasion and occupation of Australia by the Japanese. By April 1942, Stanke had commissioned Conlon to form such a section. The lawyers John Kerr and John Ryan were asked to report on alternative forms of military government for North Queensland in the event of invasion and the withdrawal of troops south of Brisbane, and the geographer John Andrews provided maps.

Conlon, despite the support of Stanke, had to fight tenaciously to gain a foothold for a research section in the army. In early January 1943, Stanke was replaced as Adjutant-General by Major-General C.M. Lloyd who threatened to close the section. Conlon managed to have it transferred, in February, to the Directorate of Military Intelligence, and in October convinced Blamey to bring the research section under his command. There it became the Directorate of

³⁰ J.K. Murray, quoted in Jinks, ‘Policy, Planning and Administration in Papua New Guinea 1942–52, with special reference to the role of Colonel J.K. Murray’, PhD thesis, University of Sydney (Sydney 1976), 129.

³¹ Jinks, ‘Policy, Planning and Administration in Papua New Guinea 1942–52’, 129.

³² Melinda Hinkson, ‘Stanner and Makerere: on the insuperable challenges of practical anthropology in post-war East Africa’, paper presented at ‘W.E.H. Stanner, Anthropologist and Public Intellectual: a symposium’, ANU, 25 Nov. 2005.

³³ Pers. comm., J.A. Barnes, Jan. 2006.

³⁴ Pybus, *The Devil*, 49.

³⁵ Kerr to Conlon, 19 Jun. 1945, Keith Isles Papers, University of Tasmania Archives, Hobart.

Research *and* Civil Affairs. It now assumed an advisory role on the takeover of civil from military government and, once hostilities ceased, its responsibilities broadened and additional officers were recruited. Conlon also convinced Blamey that a unit was needed to help Blamey in his dealings with the Australian government and ANGAU. Conlon pointed out to Blamey, for example, that when the army in New Guinea finally pushed out the Japanese, there was a danger that it would leave behind a discontented and troublesome indigenous population. Blamey needed advice at a higher level than ANGAU was equipped to provide 'for the formulation of larger policy, and to ensure that army civil affairs remained at least broadly in conformity with Australia's national policies'.³⁶ DORCA could do this.³⁷

Bypassing the University of Sydney's Department of Anthropology, DORCA directly recruited anthropologists to study the effects of the war on indigenous peoples in New Guinea. Hogbin, Wedgwood, Kenneth E. (Mick) Read, Ralph Piddington and Stanner were involved in the Directorate's activities.³⁸ Both Hogbin and Wedgwood had undertaken research in Papua and New Guinea during the 1930s. Hogbin, rather grandly, described himself as 'official adviser on native affairs to the High Command of the South Western Pacific'.³⁹ Wedgwood had lectured at the University of Sydney with A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, done field research on Manam Island, reviewed Australian policy and administration on Nauru in 1936, and was Principal of Women's College when appointed to DORCA. The young anthropologist Mick Read was chosen by Hogbin to assist him and also undertook independent research in the Markham Valley and later in the Eastern Highlands of New Guinea, resulting in the classic ethnography *The High Valley* (1966). Lucy Mair, the British anthropologist and expert on colonial administration, joined in January 1944. She and Stanner had clashed when he was a student at the LSE. Mair was influential in assisting DORCA formulate a colonial policy for Papua and New Guinea after the war (although Hogbin wrote the speech for the Minister, Eddie Ward, when he proclaimed a 'new deal' for Papua and New Guinea in 1946).

The Directorate launched enquiries into post-war issues, including 'a study of the labour situation and its effect on village life [Hogbin], a study of native education [Wedgwood],⁴⁰ which paid special attention to the problems created by the war but was not confined to them, a survey of agricultural potentialities of

³⁶ Ryan, *Brief Lives*, 36–7.

³⁷ MP 742, 284/57, NAA; also Kerr, *Matters for Judgment*, 101–5; R.W. Reece, 'Alf Conlon, the Fall of Singapore and British Borneo', unpublished, [n.d., c.1993], (copy in possession of author). Cf. Stanner, 'New Guinea under war conditions', *International Affairs*, 20:4 (1944), 481–94.

³⁸ With the exception of Wedgwood, all were graduates of the University of Sydney's anthropology department.

³⁹ Hogbin to Wedgwood, 20 Apr. 1944, MS 483, Box 1, Camilla H. Wedgwood Papers, 1928–1954, Australian National Library, Canberra (hereinafter ANL). Hogbin Field notes, Hogbin Papers, University of Sydney Archives (hereinafter HP).

⁴⁰ See MP742/1, WOB 274/1/247, NAA for Wedgwood's reports. Also David Wetherell and Charlotte Carr-Gregg, *Camilla: C.H. Wedgwood, 1901–1955 — a life* (Sydney 1990); Alan Powell, *The Third Force: ANGAU's New Guinea war, 1942–46* (Melbourne 2003).

the Territories [J.K. Murray], and two anthropological studies of native communities with special emphasis on the effect upon them of the war [Read and Hogbin].⁴¹ Conlon envisaged that Stanner, for example, would overview colonial issues involving the US and Britain in terms of 'obligations and commitments, economic capacity, manpower requirements, and policy imperatives',⁴² and his initial work for DORCA was to write a report on ANGAU and colonial policy.

Many of the ideas and sentiments of DORCA can be found in the pamphlet, *Development and Welfare in the Western Pacific* (1943), by Hogbin and Wedgwood and in a paper, 'Relief and Rehabilitation in Australia's Territories in New Guinea', presented by T.P. Fry to the Institute of Pacific Relations in January 1945. Mair used 'the African material as illustrative of what might happen after the war', and lectured on colonial administration at the Australian army's School of Civil Affairs, Duntroon.⁴³ At war's end she wrote *Australia in New Guinea* (1948), an examination of pre-war Australian rule in Papua and New Guinea and lauded the role of the Directorate.

DORCA's plans also represented a challenge to the anthropology department at the University of Sydney. One of its graduates, Ralph Piddington, spent the early years of the war in the British Army as a psychologist and, in July 1944, joined the Australian army as Deputy Chief Instructor of the army's School of Civil Affairs under J.K. Murray.⁴⁴ The School was part of a larger plan to control both the training of colonial officials and research in the South West Pacific. Mair explained the object of the courses at the School 'was to show that the problems of New Guinea are those which every colonial administration has to face, and to indicate that experience elsewhere could contribute to their solution'.⁴⁵ Stanner — critical of many of DORCA's plans, not just for a post-war Papua New Guinea, but for Dutch New Guinea, the British colonies in the South West Pacific and the training of colonial officials in a specialist school, the School of Civil Affairs — warned Elkin in September 1944:

You see the position that is shaping, it will be an extraordinary array of personalities with their mingled gifts and weaknesses. If Conlon can mould them into an effective team, they may do good work, but the more I ponder on the long term position of your department, the more I wonder at the final outcome.⁴⁶

Kerr and Stanner attended the Field Officers' Conference held at Port Moresby in February 1944. This was ANGAU's one brief foray into native policy. Stanner observed that ANGAU's 'long term policy was weak and undeveloped [which] was very clearly shown in the conflict of opinion as to objectives and methods shown among officers... and in the noteworthy absence

⁴¹ Lucy Mair, *Australia in New Guinea* (London 1948), 18.

⁴² Pybus, *The Devil*, 45.

⁴³ Jeremy Beckett, *Conversations with Ian Hogbin* (Sydney 1989), 27.

⁴⁴ Mair, *Australia in New Guinea*, v.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Stanner to Elkin, 22 Sept. 1944, 197/4/2/573, Elkin Papers, University of Sydney (hereinafter EP).

at that conference of any clear statements of general [Native] policy'.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, he declared that service, mostly as labourers and carriers (stretcher-bearers), with ANGAU has

definitely improved the native. His control has been firm, but just; his physique has improved from the excellent housing and rations he receives; he has learnt the value of discipline and his added responsibilities; he has a far more extensive appreciation of health and hygiene matters; he has been taught how to produce more and better food within his own village. Thus when the European returns, or decides to settle in New Guinea he should be well-served with efficient and contented labour, and if such proves the case, most of the credit should go to the personnel of ANGAU because of his efforts on behalf of the native during the war period.⁴⁸

This repeats the pre-war colonial tropes that discipline on the part of the white overseer was the most effective way of maintaining an orderly native labour force, and that the 'native' should remain subordinate.⁴⁹ He noted that 'working under indenture was agreeable to the natives and had become of some positive social and economic importance to them. An increasing volume of labour offered itself without direct compulsion'.⁵⁰ Rowley, however, disputed this view: he showed that statistical and other data 'drives home the point of [the] unpopularity of working for the Europeans'.⁵¹ In *South Seas in Transition*, written after the war, Stanner further betrayed a lack of knowledge about the labour laws in pre-war New Guinea when he inferred that these laws were of benefit to the native.⁵² During the inter-war period, the League of Nations Mandates Commission, headed by Lord Hailey, consistently criticised these very labour laws. Stanner's statements were not based on hard, anthropological evidence.

⁴⁷ Stanner, 'Appreciation of Current Situation and Problems of ANGAU', 1944, 54, 80/6/17, Australian War Memorial, Canberra (hereinafter AWM); see also D.M. Cleland, 'Memo to all District Officers and District Staffs', 22 Dec., 1943, 54, 80/2/13, AWM. General Basil Morris stated that although ANGAU was unable to commit any future civil administration, he hoped that 'we can, and will, build up such an organisation for the benefit of the natives in particular and the Territories in general, that when the time comes to hand over to our successors we can say, "This is a going concern".' B.M. Morris, 'Address to Conference', Feb. 1944, MP742/1, 65/1/1435, vol. 1, NAA.

⁴⁸ Stanner, 'A.N.G.A.U.', Nov. 1944, 54, 80/2/1, AWM. It resonates with Stanner's assessment of Aboriginal labour in army employ in the Northern Territory. See various in F1, 42/435, NAA. Cf. Stanner, 'The South Seas Commission', MS 3752, item 83, SP.

⁴⁹ Gray, 'The Coming of the War to the Territories: forced labour and broken promises', Paper presented to 'Remembering the War in New Guinea', Australian War Memorial, Oct. 2000.

⁵⁰ Stanner, *The South Seas in Transition: a study of post-war rehabilitation and reconstruction in the Pacific territories* (Sydney 1953), 81. This is an important text in the formulation and discussion of policy in the South Pacific, including Papua New Guinea, but is not the only one. A wider discussion of its significance would also consider such works as Mair, *Australia in New Guinea* and Hogbin *Transformation Scene* (London 1951). In addition, other publications addressed a new order for the Pacific, or examined the pre-war policies to argue for change; these included Elkin, *Wanted — A Charter for the Native Peoples of the South West Pacific* (Sydney 1943); J.W. Burton, *The Atlantic Charter and the Pacific Races* (Sydney 1943); Julius Stone, *Colonial Trusteeship in Transition* (Sydney 1944); George Cranswick and I.W. Shevill, *A New Deal for Papua* (Melbourne 1949); and the American anthropologist Stephen Reed published *The Making of Modern New Guinea with special reference to Culture Contact in the Mandated Territory* (Philadelphia 1943), the result of his pre-war research. An assessment of these publications and their influence on post-war PNG and the South Pacific is a forthcoming paper.

⁵¹ C.D. Rowley, review of *The South Seas in Transition*, *Australian Quarterly*, 26:1 (1954), 106. For further discussion see Jinks, 'Policy, Planning and Administration', 86–114.

⁵² Stanner, *South Seas*, 45–56.

In fact, he had done no field research on the conditions of New Guinean labour during the war, and his views were not supported by Hogbin, who had undertaken research and was critical of practices he saw as endemic, particularly the systematic brutality of ANGAU overseers.⁵³ Hogbin went so far as to suggest that the Administration was 'losing standing in the people's eyes by itself engaging in any form of recruiting'.⁵⁴ James McAuley, lecturer in colonial administration in the School of Civil Affairs and the ASOPA, observed that the 'longer the smell of Angau clings to the P[atrol] O[fficer]s, the less use they will be in their proper administrative functions'.⁵⁵ At the Native Labour Conference held in Sydney on 1 and 2 December 1944, which examined ways of changing the various laws governing indenture, Hogbin represented DORCA. Missions and government were represented and the chairman was A.P. Elkin. Stanner was not invited, nor was he consulted.⁵⁶

Soon after the Field Officers' conference in Port Moresby, Stanner and Kerr left to advise Blamey and the Australian Prime Minister at the Imperial Prime Ministers' conference in London. Kerr was sent to keep an eye on Stanner; Conlon, Kerr and Hogbin did not trust Stanner to represent their views fairly or to promote Australian interests as they understood them. Stanner and Kerr also attended a meeting on Borneo and Hong Kong, which formed the basis of planning for the installation of military, and eventually civilian, government in those locations.⁵⁷ Stanner prepared numerous papers on British colonial policy and its application to Australian territories, including his 1944 report on 'Post Hostilities Planning', which contained an interview with Lord Hailey about changes in policy in Africa and its application to Papua New Guinea.⁵⁸ Broadly speaking, he explained, they were compromises between 'competitive influences of much the same kind and weight as those with which the Australian Government will itself have to deal'. Stanner wished there was some 'way of bridging the gap between the highly developed experience of the African administrations and what we are attempting in the Pacific'. The Directorate, in Stanner's opinion, was failing: while 'the network of power the "boys" . . . have built up is so strong', their 'theory is showy but confused . . . using phrases which have long since been shown in Africa, their homeland, to have lost meaning'.⁵⁹

⁵³ Hogbin, 'Report of an Investigation of Native Labour in New Guinea' (copy in possession of author).

⁵⁴ J.K. Murray to Cleland (ANGAU), 16 Oct. 1944; 'The Natives of the Salamaua Coast', A preliminary report by Lieutenant-Colonel Ian Hogbin forwarded to Brigadier Cleland, ANGAU HQ, for perusal and despatch to the Director of Research, LHQ, 7 Oct. 1944, HP; also Geoffrey M. White and Lamont Lindstrom (eds), *The Pacific Theatre: island representations of World War II* (Honolulu 1989), passim.

⁵⁵ McAuley to Wedgwood, 10 Sept. 1946, MS 483, Box 1, ANL.

⁵⁶ Native Labour Conference, 1 and 2 December 1944, Sydney. MP 742/1, 274/1/246, NAA.

⁵⁷ Kerr, *Matters for Judgment*, 101–2; R.W. Reece, n.d. (c.1993), 'Alf Conlon, the Fall of Singapore and British Borneo', unpublished ms. (copy in possession of author); Powell, *War By Stealth: Australians and the Allied Intelligence Bureau 1942–1945* (Melbourne 1996), 266–314.

⁵⁸ Stanner's reports are in MP729/8, 49/431/73, NAA. See particularly, British Planning in the Pacific, Section I, pp. 3–4; Colonial Policy, Section III; Memo, Pacific Territories Research Council, 6 Jul., 1945, A 518, R 815/1/1, NAA.

⁵⁹ Stanner to Elkin, 25 Oct., 1948, 197/4/2/573, EP.

Stanner also reported on the high-powered Social Sciences Committee in the British Colonial Office. It was of particular interest to Conlon. By September 1944, Conlon had secured the agreement of the War Cabinet to establish an External Territories Research Council (Australian Pacific Territories Research Council), which would mastermind progressive policy in Papua New Guinea after the war.⁶⁰ 'Put briefly, the plan was to establish an Australian equivalent to the British colonial development and welfare fund set up by an act of the British parliament in 1940 (sums of £100 million were mentioned) to be administered according to trusteeship principles embodied in an act of parliament. . . . [W]hether or not it was realistic to expect the money would be provided is not at issue: the point is that most of the Directorate's plans assumed that they would be.' The plans were based in many cases on field research of a kind not previously attempted in Papua New Guinea.⁶¹

Stanner was vigorously opposed to the establishment of the Australian Pacific Territories Research Council, particularly the threat, he perceived, to the viability of the Department of External Territories and its control of policy formation for post-war Papua New Guinea. He warned that the Department would become a cypher for both the Research Council and the School for Civil Affairs, later the ASOPA. The previous year he had written a report, perhaps at the behest of the Secretary of the Department of External Territories, although it was possibly unsolicited, on how the department might 'recover its influence on policy and development, and its control over research and planning'.⁶²

He was out of step with the 'triumvirate', as he called them, of Conlon, Kerr and Hogbin. It was over what was perceived as his pro-British stance and an attachment to the status quo that made many in the Directorate suspicious of him. This is seen also in the views of Paul Hasluck, a senior officer in the Department of External Affairs during the war, who described the British attitude as seeking to return to the past; unlike other colonial nations such as the Netherlands, an example Hasluck provides, it had no wish to change its pre-war policies and practices.⁶³ This placed Hasluck, one of Evatt's advisers, on the side of the Directorate in their wish to modernise Australian colonial practice and pursue a foreign policy which placed Australian interests at the centre. Hasluck conceded that the post-war policy influenced by DORCA identified Australian

⁶⁰ 9 Jun. 1945, A518, R815/1/1, NAA. The proposal was originally made to the Cabinet sub-committee on 15 Sept. 1944 and referred to the interdepartmental committee for consideration. Cabinet Agendum, No. 104 of 15 Sept. 1944.

⁶¹ Wetherell and Carr-Gregg, *Camilla*, 148.

⁶² Administration and Policy External Territories, Report for the Department of External Territories, c.May–Oct. 1946, MS 3752, item 84, SP. The status of this report is undetermined. I have not been able to find a copy in the NAA files, but might be looking in the wrong places. There is no evidence that Stanner wrote this for the Department of External Territories as there is no covering letter, attachment or other indication that it was sent. In the same period, c.May 1946, Stanner wrote a report, 'Considerations Affecting Research in the South Pacific Region', but again, its status is indeterminate. It follows on from an earlier 'report', item 84, MS 3752, item 86, SP. For another view of J.R. Halligan, and an examination of some of the issues addressed only marginally in this paper, see I.C. Campbell, 'The ASOPA Controversy: a pivot of Australian policy for Papua New Guinea, 1945–49', *Journal of Pacific History*, 35 (2000), 83–99.

⁶³ Hasluck, *Diplomatic Witness*, 66–124.

interests with 'native interests' and placed the latter ahead of European private enterprise, which had received priority in the pre-war era.⁶⁴ Hasluck was seen by Stanner, at the time, as part of Evatt's entourage.

Stanner dismissed the Directorate's plans as illustrating 'the increasing erectility of the Directorate's libido...likely to afford equal assistance to the bounding megalomaniacs or melancholias between which we now alternate'.⁶⁵ Commenting on Lucy Mair and her appointment to DORCA, Stanner noted that she was part of a small, self-interested coterie: 'the amount of outright nepotism, and the extra-ordinary coincidence that each burst of what purports to be zeal for liberalism and native rights always ends up the same way — higher salaries, expense accounts, positions of power, wider influence for one or other [of the group] — all these [things] sickened me.'⁶⁶

Stanner's views on colonial policy were further developed in work requested by the American Institute of Pacific Relations. In mid-1946, he was asked to 'undertake a survey of post-war rehabilitation and reconstruction in the south-west Pacific', which eventually resulted in *The South Seas in Transition*.⁶⁷ This was a further opportunity to distance himself from DORCA and to point out its shortcomings. In a presentation to Chatham House in mid November 1947, Stanner explained his criticism of post-war policy in Papua New Guinea:

If the New Guinea scene is looked at closely it is difficult to resist the impression that what may well have begun as genuine idealism has now begun to degenerate into futile, piecemeal welfarism which is paying little regard to the limitations of the primitive culture of the natives on the one hand, and on the other of the controlling factors of Australian politics and economics. I do not think the local administration is to be held altogether responsible. A number of factors have made their contribution. The military authorities withdrew before the civil authorities were ready. The devastation and social disturbance... were of great magnitude. A large proportion of the trained staffs were lost in the war... The planning situation was badly mishandled. Evidently the Minister was given and acted upon some very bad advice. A number of administrative blunders were made. A large proportion of officials have been out of sympathy with the new policy. The present administration is deeply divided. Shortages of staff and material have been a heavy handicap. The natives have been unhelpful and restive. But the underlying mentality of the planners has been, or seems to have been if we judge by the outcome, at fault.⁶⁸

To Stanner, there was no doubt who was to blame for the predicament: the DORCA triumvirate. But what was the predicament? Stanner, unfortunately, deals in generalities rather than specifics. He may not have wished to align himself with the *Pacific Islands Monthly*, in its rabid anti-socialist, anti-Labor,

⁶⁴ Idem, *A Time for Building*, 15.

⁶⁵ Quoted in Pybus, *The Devil*, 45.

⁶⁶ Stanner to Elkin, 25 Oct. 1948, 197/4/2/573, EP. Elkin wrote to Camilla Wedgwood that he was 'sorry that Dr Mair felt unable to call on me during her long visit to Australia until the day before she left, and only after my writing her a letter'. Elkin to Wedgwood, 25 Sept. 1947, 160/4/1/74, EP.

⁶⁷ Stanner to Elkin, 25 October 1948, 197/4/2/573, EP.

⁶⁸ Idem, 'The post-war situation in the south-west Pacific', address given at Chatham House. London, 12 Nov. 1947, MS 3572, item 91, EP. Stanner had been given 'every facility for movement, research and study of documents in the Australian territories' by Ward and Halligan; idem, *South Seas*, viii.

anti-do-gooder's stance, yet his critique of the reform and change under way did precisely this. Did he dismiss Hogbin's labour survey and his position on the inquiry into war damage and the subsequent compensation to villagers as welfarism?⁶⁹ Was he motivated by ill-grace and personal ill-will rather than careful consideration of the situation?

Stanner's concern over the future of research in the South Pacific included future research by the Sydney anthropology department. He told Elkin, who like Stanner strongly disliked Hogbin, Conlon and Kerr, that he was concerned that 'all research into anthropology, sociology and colonial administration in the S[outh].W[est].P[acific] will be in the same hands — cocksure, ambitious, politically minded and quite unscrupulous'.⁷⁰ And he blamed Hogbin most of all, whom he saw as undermining the integrity of anthropology, especially at Sydney:

What I object to strongly is the indirect effect of ambitious, untrained outsiders being allowed to build up vast showy research projects which will ultimately weaken the University departments, merely to please transient political interests. This is one of the things I find hardest to forgive Hogbin for: pursuing consciously a policy which he knew could only weaken the Sydney department, which has a long and honourable tradition. And to please whom? A group of power-hungry thrusters on the one hand, and a political party on the other. This is bad stuff, Elkin. Short-sighted, unscholarly, and in my opinion politically venal.⁷¹

Stanner was wrong in his prognostication that the triumvirate's actions would weaken the Sydney department. Although the cessation of training colonial officials removed a key pre-war component of the department, it did not affect funding from the Commonwealth. Yet there was more than a perception that the ASOPA was in opposition to the Sydney University Department of Anthropology. In May 1949, Elkin wrote to Raymond Firth, Professor of Anthropology at the LSE and Acting Director of the Research School of Pacific Studies (RSPaS) at the recently established Australian National University (ANU), that the young anthropologist Mick Read 'announced that by joining the School [of Pacific Administration], he had joined an opposition show'.⁷² Earlier Elkin had written to W.C. Groves, Director of Education in Papua New Guinea and, during the war, director of the Army Education Service, that the 'School of Pacific Administration will have nothing to do with either [the linguist Arthur] Capell or myself'.⁷³ Elkin, not surprisingly, felt a 'deep bitterness towards all members of the ASOPA'.⁷⁴ Groves too was suspicious of 'that Army Research gang, including one Kerr of ASOPA' and believed, like Stanner, in the

⁶⁹ Stanner appeared critical of aspects of the inquiry and makes a scathing reference to Busama, a village which Hogbin investigated soon after the Japanese were removed; see *ibid.*, 118–20.

⁷⁰ Stanner to Elkin, 25 Oct., 1948, 197/4/2/573, EP.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* Stanner had a sympathetic reader in Elkin. There was a deep animosity between Elkin and Hogbin. Elkin refused to grant permission for Hogbin to lecture at the ASOPA, telling the Registrar that Hogbin should attend fully to his duties in the department.

⁷² Elkin to Firth, 27 May, 1949, 174/4/2/178, EP.

⁷³ *Idem* to Groves, 24 Jan., 1949 176/4/2/208, EP.

⁷⁴ Wise, *The Self-Made Anthropologist*, 161.

continuing dark influence of Conlon and the others.⁷⁵ The challenge to the Sydney department however came not only from the ASOPA, but also from the establishment of the ANU's Research School of Pacific Studies, which garnered, in the 1950s, much of the funding for anthropological research.⁷⁶ But importantly, Elkin had been assured by Firth that the Research School was not concerned with Australian Aborigines. There was 'a working agreement' to leave the Aborigines to the University of Sydney.⁷⁷

Stanner completed *The South Seas in Transition* in 1947, revising it slightly in 1950, although it was not published until 1953. The delay he blamed on the 'triumvirate'. In fact, he blamed them for stalling his career in Australia. He had always 'planned to make his run a bit later than most, but the war and other things made it later than even I wanted to be', he told Elkin.⁷⁸ Two other books were published before *South Seas*: Mair's *Australia in New Guinea* (1948) and Hogbin's *Transformation Scene* (1951), which Stanner saw as further evidence of the opposition to him by Conlon, Kerr and Hogbin. In fact, the publications by Mair and Hogbin necessitated a 'radical factual overhaul' of *South Seas* and a further 'six months in the Pacific'.⁷⁹ Stanner, aware of the limitations of *South Seas*, explained in the introduction that he was unable to use the printing delays 'for general revision' although 'the text was...expanded here and there to include some events of importance up to 1950'.⁸⁰ Charles Rowley, then Principal of the ASOPA, reviewing *South Seas* for *The Australian Quarterly*, was critical of the research, the lack of material post 1947 and many of the conclusions. Rowley commented that

obviously a first draft was completed about the end of 1947, and references to the state of affairs at that time which have not been revised out have often no more than accidental justification. Failure to bring the work consistently up to date for publication often frustrates the reader's effort to get views and events into focus. A second obstacle demanding at times a genuine persistence is a predilection to use jargon which, when associated with facility for metaphorical expression, approaches incomprehensibility.⁸¹

It was not a flattering review. Nor was one by J.W. Davidson, the newly appointed professor of Pacific History at the ANU.⁸²

At the end of 1946 Stanner returned to London, where he worked for the Colonial Office and the Colonial Social Science Research Council. He was

⁷⁵ Groves to Elkin, 22 Jul., 1948, 176/4/2/208, EP.

⁷⁶ See Gray, "'I was not consulted": A.P. Elkin, Papua New Guinea and the politics of anthropology, 1942 to 1950', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 40:2 (1994), 195–213; 'The Politics of Anthropology: Post-war Australian anthropology, 1945–1960', in Gray (ed.), *Before It's Too Late: anthropological reflections, 1950–1970* (Sydney 2001), 1–29.

⁷⁷ Elkin to Hercus, 1 Feb., 1950, 156/4/1/14, EP; Raymond Firth, interview with Margaret Murphy, ORAL TRC 283 (1974) transcript, 16, ANL.

⁷⁸ Stanner to Elkin, 25 Oct. 1948, 197/4/2/573, EP.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Idem, *South Seas*, v.

⁸¹ Rowley, review of *The South Seas in Transition*, 104–11.

⁸² J.W. Davidson, review of *The South Seas in Transition*, *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand*, 6:22 (1954), 223–4.

appointed foundation director of the East African Institute of Social and Economic Research, Makerere College, Uganda, but left due to general impatience on his part and after he ran foul of the colonial administrations in East Africa and the principal of Makerere College on whose grounds the Institute was located. He told Elkin that 'the plan for the Institute is not a good one... I am having some little conflict with a few people in London about it, although I gather most of the Colonial Office is on my side'. He was confident that opposition came from Audrey Richards, Lucy Mair, and 'one or two others with whose views I have disagreed', such as Max Gluckman who was also critical of Stanner's proposals.⁸³ There is a hint of other potential problems: he was undertaking a special study of the East Africa development programme for the Colonial Office but it could all come asunder, 'about £50 million down the sink if we aren't careful', he told Clunies Ross.⁸⁴

He was certainly keen to leave Makerere. He applied for a readership in Colonial Administration at Oxford University and for a position in the International Wool Secretariat (based in London) as Australian representative, explaining his application to the latter as 'a chance to be of some use to my country'.⁸⁵ He was unsuccessful in both. He was told that he missed the readership by one vote. The job went to a 'brilliant young undersecretary seconded from the Colonial Office'.⁸⁶ He was leaving Makerere for London, temporarily, but still held hope that his plans would be accepted, even to the point of suggesting that Elkin spend some six months at Makerere in 1949 or 1950. In the end, problems became too difficult, and he resigned in early 1949.

As long as there was a Labor government and 'the boys' still held influence, he felt he could not return to Australia. He told Clunies Ross and Elkin that he was keen to work back in Australia, 'where my roots and home and heart are. But to do what? Every avenue seems closed for reasons which you know as well as I', and to Elkin he confided, 'It seems a time when I need friends in Australia'.⁸⁷ There is a sense of quiet desperation in his correspondence. He did, however, hope that he would assume Elkin's chair, once Elkin retired. He had declared an interest in 1944, and Elkin had not dissuaded him, telling him to 'keep an eye on the chair'.⁸⁸ He reminded Elkin at the end of 1948. Nonetheless, in the circumstances it was an arrogant claim, which Stanner tacitly acknowledged. He recognised that his scholarly record was weak and told Elkin that several books were near completion: 'I hope my Pacific book will be out before long. I will make a supreme effort in 1949 to publish my study of aboriginal economics (now ten years old but fairly good), and to bring my Kamba study of government, economics, law and tribal history (a new kind of approach, I think, which both

⁸³ Stanner to Elkin, 25 Oct., 1948, 197/4/2/573, EP.

⁸⁴ Stanner to Clunies Ross, 30 Sept. 1948, A10651, ICR 23/28, NAA.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Stanner to Elkin, 25 Oct., 1948, 197/4/2/573, EP.

⁸⁷ Stanner to Clunies Ross, 30 Sept. 1948, A10651, ICR 23/28, NAA; Stanner to Elkin, 25 Oct. 1948, 197/4/2/573, EP.

⁸⁸ Elkin to Stanner, 8 Dec. 1944, 197/4/2/573, EP.

Lord Hailey and Sir Reginald Coupland liked) up to date... [W]ith luck, I might have three books out or on the press by the end of next year'.⁸⁹ With the exception of *The South Seas in Transition*, which was largely completed by 1947, none of the books were completed.

Meanwhile the Directorate, especially through the work of Wedgwood and Hogbin, developed a proposal for a South Seas Commission but it was Kerr who had most to do with its establishment. Stanner was supportive of such regional commissions, which he anticipated would bode well for the future of colonial rule. He made comparison with the Caribbean Regional Commission, set up during the war. In an ABC radio broadcast, Stanner pointed out that 'the Commission should bring the machinery of administration to the Pacific right up into the vanguard of progressive colonial policy'.⁹⁰ The South Pacific Commission (SPC) was established on 6 February 1947 under the Canberra Agreement, signed by Australia, France, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the US, as a way of promoting economic and social development in the Pacific Island territories under their administration.⁹¹

John Kerr was the organising secretary of the first South Seas Conference for which staff from ASOPA (many of them formerly of the School for Civil Affairs and DORCA) wrote background papers. Stanner was opposed to Kerr having any significant role, not that Stanner could do anything to influence the decision of the Australian government or the SPC.⁹² His fears about the influence of 'the boys' might have been realised had Kerr accepted the position of Secretary-General, offered to him on a permanent basis at the first formal meeting of the Commission at the ASOPA in May 1948.⁹³

There was certainly concern, among others opposed to Conlon and Kerr, that one of them would capture this key position. W.C. Groves, a long-time opponent, asked Elkin what his reaction was to the idea that Conlon was under consideration as Secretary-General of the SPC; he had information that 'Evatt is not objecting, though I think Halligan is violently against it'.⁹⁴ Conlon had requested Eddie Ward to nominate him for the position as it would, Kerr wrote, 'open the way for him to do the sort of things he had done in the war time years'.⁹⁵ With reservations both Kerr and Evatt supported Conlon's nomination. The British delegation had not forgotten Conlon's territorial ambitions over Borneo during the war, and what they considered his personal unscrupulousness, and objected. Not until the next meeting, in Suva, was W.D. Forsyth, a career diplomat from External Affairs, appointed Secretary-General.⁹⁶ This was the end

⁸⁹ Stanner to Elkin, 25 Oct. 1948, 197/4/2/573, EP.

⁹⁰ The South Seas Commission, ABC broadcast, 8 May 1946, MS 3752, item, 83, SP.

⁹¹ It became the South Pacific Forum in 1972.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Kerr, *Matters for Judgment*, 108–9.

⁹⁴ Groves to Elkin, 22 Jul., 1948, 176/4/2/208, EP.

⁹⁵ Kerr, *Matters for Judgment*, 108–9.

⁹⁶ Woodburn, *Where Our Hearts Still Lie: a life of Harry and Honor Maude in the Pacific Islands* (Adelaide 2003),

for Kerr, who returned to the bar. Conlon, after a brief and disastrous principalship of the ASOPA, also ceased to exercise any influence.⁹⁷

Stanner was wrong about being unable to return to Australia. Raymond Firth, who had taken over Malinowski's chair at the London School of Economics and inherited his mantle of 'kingmaker', first offered Stanner the position of foundation Professor of Anthropology at the Auckland University College and offered the position of reader at the ANU to Hogbin, who had written a paper for Firth on research possibilities in Melanesia (including Papua and New Guinea, British Solomon Islands Protectorate, New Caledonia and the New Hebrides) when Firth was acting director of RSPacS.⁹⁸ But, largely for personal reasons, Hogbin decided to stay at Sydney. Firth then arranged for Stanner's appointment, in 1949, as Reader in Comparative Institutions in the RSPacS, ANU. Almost from the moment he arrived in Canberra, Stanner began fieldwork at Port Keats. It is ironic that at the time of his appointment, when he would have had institutional support, he abandoned his interest in Papua New Guinea and the Pacific in general.⁹⁹ He arrived in early 1950, and Ralph Piddington, Stanner's former colleague at DORCA, accepted the Auckland chair.

By the time Stanner returned to Australia in 1950, he should have realised, too, that his concerns about Conlon, Kerr and Hogbin had little substance. Conlon and Kerr had moved on and, although Kerr retained an interest in the SPC, he had no formal role in it. Hogbin remained in Sydney, ceased fieldwork in 1949, and seemingly took little further interest in Papua New Guinea apart from continuing to write up his fieldwork results.¹⁰⁰

It was time of great passions, bold ideas, idealism, treachery and ambition. Stanner was up to the task, as were the others. In the end, the battle petered out. *South Seas* had no major impact on policy, nor did Mair's *Australia in New Guinea*. The idealism and hopes of the Directorate were not realised. The Department of External Territories regained control of policy and limited research to the immediate needs of the bureaucracy. Papua New Guinea had to wait for another 'new deal'. By this time, the early 1960s, only John Kerr played a part. Stanner was immersed in Australia. Hogbin was a reader in the Sydney department. Conlon was dead.

⁹⁷ Pybus, *The Devil*, 88–90.

⁹⁸ Firth to ANU Vice-Chancellor, 6 Jul. 1949, 4/38, Firth Papers, London School of Economics Archives.

⁹⁹ ANU was asked by the Department of External Territories to provide a report on the social political and economic situation in Papua New Guinea in 1951, and again in 1953 to report on economic development in Papua New Guinea. See O.H.K. Spate, J.W. Davidson and Raymond Firth, 'Notes on New Guinea, Oct-Nov 1951', Series M336/1, item 2, NAA; Spate, C.S. Belshaw and T.W. Swan, 'Some Problems of Development in New Guinea: report of a working committee of the Australian National University', Series M1775/1, item 6, NAA. Stanner was not part of either contingent and, as far as I can determine, was not consulted.

¹⁰⁰ He did visit the University of Papua New Guinea in the late 1960s, acted as an external examiner for the Anthropology Department, and engaged in a correspondence with some of the children of his earlier informants.

ABSTRACT

The Pacific War and its aftermath were a turning point in William Edward Hanley Stanner's career. Until then, he had struggled to establish himself as a scholar and seemed destined to stay, like many other Australian scholars, within the orbit of British academia and its colonial empire. Almost immediately after war had been declared, Stanner returned to Australia, working in various capacities and, in May 1942, commanding the North Australia Observer Unit. In October 1943, he was transferred to the Australian Army's Directorate of Research and Civil Affairs (DORCA). Members of the Directorate saw themselves at the forefront of progressive reform in Australian colonial policy. Stanner opposed what he considered the grandiose plans for a post-war Papua New Guinea that were hatched by the DORCA 'boys', as they called themselves. By the end of the 1940s, however, control over policy was firmly in the hands of the civil bureaucracy and the new Minister for Territories, Paul Hasluck. Any influence that may have accrued to either Stanner or to the idealism of the 'boys' in the Directorate was lost.