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ESSAY 1

Introduction: Revisiting the Dutch and American New Guinea Expedition of 1926

Paul Michael Taylor

Matthew W. Stirling (1896-1975) never published, in anything more than incomplete and ephemeral fashion, the American records of the "Stirling Expedition"—the historic 1926 Dutch and American joint expedition to Netherlands New Guinea. The expedition of over 400 participants was carried out from April to December, 1926, under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution (Washington, D.C., USA) and the Indies Committee for Scientific Research (Batavia, Netherlands East Indies). The expedition was initially under Stirling's leadership though after a series of intrigues, variously described in public accounts of the expedition as a cooperative scientific agreement (or in Stirling's private letters as "blackmail"¹), overall leadership of the expedition was turned over, in June of that year, to the botanist in charge of the Dutch scientific party, Dr. Willem Marius Docters van Leeuwen, director of the Botanical Gardens in Buitenzorg. Americans sources have usually called this expedition the "Stirling Expedition," though Dutch sources sometimes called it the "American-Dutch Expedition" or most commonly the "Dutch-American Expedition"² of 1926. It was a major scientific expedition up the Mamberamo River of western New Guinea (and also the last expedition up its Rouffaer or Taritau tributary), in what was formerly called "Irian Jaya" province, though its name officially changed in 2002 to Papua province (and subsequently, at this writing (2006), is being divided into new provinces³) in eastern Indonesia.

This introductory essay describes this overall publication of the expedition's source materials and its goals, suggests some reasons why the publication of such materials contributes to current issues in history and anthropology (in addition to providing historic data), and outlines potential future valuable directions for this project. For future work, I emphasize especially the importance of studying and including (perhaps independently published but linked in some way) the original Dutch archival sources about the expedition. Also, several other precedents (examined below) suggest the likely value of returning to the regions from which these records, images, and

¹ M.W. Stirling letter from Motor Camp, Middle Rouffaer River, Dutch New Guinea, Aug. 5, 1926, to A. Wetmore, in Wetmore papers, Smithsonian Institution archives: "I volunteered under pressure which amounted to blackmail to give over the leadership to Dr. van Leeuwen [sic] whose position as director of the Botanical Gardens made him a conspicuous figure in Java, and a man who would be more difficult to oppose, besides appeasing the popular clamor in some of the Java papers that the Americans were getting too much "credit" out of the expedition, even though we took the initiative of the expedition, organized and financed it and permitted the Dutch to join us at their own request."

² These expressions literally translate the Dutch terms, e.g. le Roux 1948 (vol. 1) p. 7 "Nederlands-Amerikaanse expeditie"; but "Dutch-American Expedition" was not a name used in contemporary English language accounts, nor does the expression occur in the American expedition diaries. This may be partly for the same reason I translate that term differently, in the title of this publication, as "Dutch and American Expedition": a more common understanding of "Dutch-American Expedition" in American English would be "an expedition carried out by Americans of Dutch descent."

³ See Essay 3. Indonesia's division of western New Guinea (Papua Province) into separate component provinces has been challenged in court cases on constitutional bases and is unresolved at this writing (2006).

collections were obtained, in a way that will enhance our understanding of the significance of these records in our collections, and will also give local people new access to their own historical records, images, and material culture.

The expedition was a massive effort which included over 400 members of the expedition itself.⁴ It cost, according to a brochure accompanying Matthew Stirling's popular lecture tours about the expedition after his return, "about five hundred thousand dollars."⁵ This is one of only two published contemporaneous estimates located so far, estimating the total cost of the expedition. It is in a brochure issued about the expedition, distributed at and used for Stirling's lecture tour, and there is no evidence the statement was corrected by Stirling himself. The only other published estimate so far located is less reliable because it is second-hand. In February 1927, Richard Peck (who had returned to California directly across the Pacific bringing the film for development) was reported in the *Los Angeles Times* to have provided another figure to the anonymous reporter who published it in his article entitled "Kangaroo Stew Fine Dish: Flyer Returns from Dutch New Guinea With Tale of Odd Fare and People Averaging Four Feet High." (*Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 17, 1927, p. A20). This article states "Mr. Peck estimated that the expedition had cost to date about \$700,000."⁶ Possibly both these American participants simply guessed at the dollar equivalent value of the huge Dutch East Indies government contribution; surely this is an area in which publication of the Dutch records could shed considerable light

If we are left, then, with \$500,000 as currently our best estimate of the expedition's overall cost (from all sources), it is difficult to state its equivalent in today's U.S. dollars due to the very different and remote economic context in which the money was being used. But based on the U.S. consumer price index alone (probably the best conversion factor), this would be equivalent to over \$5.5 million in 2005. As a share of America's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at the time, it would be equivalent to over \$64 million in 2005.⁷

Stirling's lecture tour, and the silent film footage from the expedition that played during the lecture, were both entitled with variations of the phrase "By Aeroplane To Pygmy Land,"⁸ though Stirling later seems to have settled on the spelling "Pygmyland"

⁴ There is some variation in counts from different sources, but almost certainly there were between 415 and 450 persons on the expedition. One section of the brochure distributed at Stirling's 1927 Pond lecture tour after the expedition, "The Lure of Pygmy Land," lists the following: "450 People were required to carry out the work. These consisted of 20 White Scientists, 75 Ambonese soldiers, 130 Dyak canoemen and 220 Malay carriers" (though the sum of these figures is 445). Greater variation in counts is found in press reports, which are the least reliable sources; these range from 350 to about 500.

⁵ "The Lure of Pygmy Land." Brochure accompanying Pond Lecture Tour, "By Aeroplane to Pygmy Land," 1927.

⁶ The Associated Press carried the report, and this quote appears the same day in the *Washington Post*, p. 11, under a different title: "Relics of Pygmy Land Due Here Next Week: Aviator-Photographer Lands in Advance of Party to Develop Films: Professor Stirling at Head."

⁷ See discussion of modes of calculating inflation and cost equivalences at: <http://www.measuringworth.com>

⁸ Though original footage from this expedition remain in the Smithsonian's Human Studies Film Archive, no copy of the original self-standing American version of this film survives. The one formerly in the Smithsonian's film archive was lost due to flooding in the building where it was stored. There is however a surviving copy of the Dutch version of the film, with the title "Wonderen Uit Pygmyland" (Marvels [or, Wonders] from Pygmyland" in the Netherlands Film Archive (Amsterdam), and an interpositive copy of that surviving film has also been deposited in the Human Studies Film Archive. The now-lost American

as one word (e.g. in his popular articles in *World's Work* and *Readers Digest* [Stirling 1928a, 1928b]). As the tour traveled around the U.S., various alternative spellings (“Airplane,” “Pigmyland,” etc.) were introduced or reported in press reviews and in advertisements.

Here, I have used that title of Matthew Stirling’s lecture tour as the overall title of the present online publication, within the Smithsonian Libraries’s new “Sources and Critical Interpretations” series of the “Digital Editions” website. My intention is partly to fulfill, eighty years after the expedition itself, Matthew Stirling’s frequently expressed hope that his own records, the photographs, and the American explorers’ results of this journey would be published.⁹ The choice of the online format is particularly appropriate for this material, since the sources themselves are inherently “multi-media,” consisting of over 700 photographs, about two hours of film footage, maps, and sound recording¹⁰; the inter-connectivity allowing a reader to move from one format to the other is an advantage of the web format rather than the usual printed book¹¹. These records give considerable additional information beyond what has been published by the Dutch ethnologist who accompanied this expedition, C.C.F.M. le Roux,¹² the Dutch botanist W.M. Docters van Leeuwen,¹³ and the ethnomusicologist Jaap Kunst (1931), to whom le Roux brought the expedition’s wax cylinder recordings.

silent film itself has often been supposed to have had a title like “By Aeroplane to Pygmy Land” since variations of this title were used for the lecture and thus the film footage shown during Stirling’s lectures. However, all press reports located so far about the self-standing film of this expedition, as opposed to any selected film footage that would have been shown during the lecture, give that lost film’s title as “Adventures in Pygmyland” (or “Pygmy-land” or “Pygmy Land”) which corresponds to the Dutch title. See, for example, the self-standing film advertisements and notices in *The New York Times* for Feb.21, 27, 26, and 28, 1928; and *The Chicago Tribune* for March 6, 1928. The self-standing film would have been “narrated” by intertitles, as is the case with the surviving Dutch version.

⁹ Soon after his return from New Guinea, for example, Stirling detailed his plans, in a popular article in the University of California alumni magazine (Stirling 1927), for a lecture tour, photographic exhibition, and publication of the scientific results.

¹⁰ At present only the recorded voice narrative by Matthew Stirling, as he narrated the silent film footage later (probably in the 1960s), represent “sound recording”; none of the original wax cylinder recordings made by the expedition have been located in American collections so they have not been included here.

¹¹ This publication does include a “print-friendly” version, however, for those who prefer (for example) to read a printed expedition diary from beginning to end.

¹² During the expedition itself, le Roux sent to Batavia for publication three articles presenting findings, with maps and photographs and a schematic architectural drawing of the men’s house at Piesano village (or “Pisano” in updated spelling using le Roux’s transcription; this is the village Stirling calls “Bisano”). The three articles were published together as le Roux (1926): “Expeditie naar het Nassau-gebergte in Centraal Noord Nieuw Guinee” *Tijdschrift voor het Bataviaasch Genootschap voor Kunst en Wetenschappen* 66:447-513. In addition, le Roux later published several recollections or comparative statements that directly discuss events of the 1926 expedition within his *De Bergpapoea’s van Nieuw-Guinea en hun woongebied* (le Roux 1948-50). These include the full citation of long passages of one day’s journal entry (Sept 2, 1926), from le Roux’s own otherwise (still) unpublished archival field journal of the expedition (quoted in le Roux’s vol. 2, pp. 94-95). The “Atlas” (vol. 3) includes photos and illustrations of objects collected on the expedition (among other highland western New Guinea photos and objects); while passages providing other details or recollections about this 1926 expedition are provided as follows in volumes 1 and 2: Vol. 1: pp. xxi-xxii, 7, 43, 61, 85, 173, 195, 201, 256, 303, 326, 332, 407, 409, 425, 458, 477, 481; Vol. 2: pp. 492, 498, 575, 600, 607, 617, 651.

¹³ The botanical publications by Docters van Leeuwen, resulting from this expedition, are summarized within the bibliography of expedition collections, provided on the website of the Nationaal Herbarium

Yet as the subtitle “Revisiting the 1926 Dutch and American Expedition to New Guinea” suggests, “revisiting” with the perspective of 80 years implies bringing a new critical view to the scientific questions addressed at the time, and to the many ways in which the structure and organization of the expedition, and the pre-suppositions and biases of the expedition’s members, reflected the cultures of the scientists and informed the kind of data they gathered. Consequently, this “revisiting” of the 1926 expedition includes a number of interpretive essays, beginning with this introductory essay (Essay 1) outlining the project.

Next, in Essay 2 below, “Assembling, Assessing and Annotating the Source Materials for the Study of the 1926 Expedition,” the steps taken so far in making the expedition’s records available are described. The proper organization and publication of this expedition’s records has a value in its own right; this was an important expedition, whose major ethnographic contributions have gone unrecognized and whose results (being largely unpublished and unavailable until now) have been underappreciated in the ethnography of New Guinea.

This second essay surveys the extant source materials that are presented in this publication, assessing the variations in the kinds of data available (especially extant versions of the two primary field journals – the expedition diaries of Matthew Stirling and of Stanley Hedberg, but also including correspondence, secondary re-writings and summaries, press reports, film and photographic images, ethnographic objects collected, the later published and unpublished recollections by expedition members, and other sources). This essay also describes in detail the editorial methods and conventions used throughout the publication, including the means by which varying diary “drafts” were reduced to a single variorum edition, and the means by which the expedition’s photographs were located, separated from non-expedition photographs that have ended up intermixed within the same set of archival papers, and identified and captioned (or associated with the expedition’s captions). Also explained in this essay is the method by which film clips were selected from the archival silent film footage available, and divided into segments that were properly lined up with the much later sound recording of Matthew Stirling’s taped recollections as he narrated this film footage, probably in the 1960s. These film segments have been linked to the appropriate grouping of expedition journal entries, and expedition photos. This makes it possible to view the film footage from that place as one reads through the journals, and also to examine side-by-side both the expedition journals, as well as surviving expedition photos and film footage, from particular places and times.

Overall, as that second essay makes clear, the goal is to allow the reader either to read an individual account of the expedition from beginning to end, *or* to (at any point) compare differing accounts from the same time or the same place, for example by putting all the information from one village or place “together” (differing field accounts,

Nederland in Leiden: This section of the herbarium’s website is at:

<http://www.nationaalherbarium.nl/FMCCollectors/D/DoctersvanLeeuwenWM.htm>

The bibliography of his botanical publications is given as follows: ‘Schets van de flora en fauna van het van Rees-gebergte rondom Albatros-bivak Nieuw-Guinee’ (Trop. Nat. 15, 1926, p. 177-186, 10 fig.); *cf.* also Ind. Gids 48, 1926, p.745-768, 955-960, 1038-1056, and Tijdschr. K.N.A.G. 43, 1926, p. 271-272, 747-750. See also his biographical entry in the *Flora Malesiana* (Steenis-Kruseman 1950:139-140).

recollections, photo images, and film clips about that place). An editorial selection of photographs (not selected by Stirling himself) has been placed within Matthew Stirling's journal of the expedition. The purpose is to help visually bring this narrative to life and to better inform the reader who chooses to read only this one complete journal from beginning to end.¹⁴ Still, from this (or any other) account of the expedition the same reader can at any point pause to see the photos or film footage from that place or that section of the trek, or can turn for example to read the journal entry of Stanley Hedberg from that same day (if that day is included among the four surviving fragments of the Hedberg expedition journal). Other options are also described there, including search functions, and the option of following the Geographic Navigator (a series of maps) to go directly to journal records, photos, and film footage from any particular location.

The third essay presented here, "Western New Guinea: The Geographic and Ethnographic Context of the 1926 Expedition," provides a general introduction to the geography and ethnography of western New Guinea for readers unfamiliar with the area, with a brief summary of the region's political history up to the present day. Intended to provide a context (and summary bibliography) for the general reader, it does not attempt to synthesize the ethnographic or geographic data found on this 1926 expedition. The essay is included here for two reasons. First, this expedition is expected to be of interest to people from many fields beyond New Guinea studies – including for example those interested in the general history of aviation, film, or colonial encounters. Such readers may benefit from an introduction to the region and the context of this expedition. Secondly, Stirling himself clearly intended for such an essay to precede a future publication of his journal. For that reason I have also included here, as appendices to this essay, an annotated transcription of four documents constituting Matthew Stirling's own unfinished drafts and notes for introductory materials about his journal, or about this expedition. These materials, though they are just in draft form, were intended to serve the same purpose of placing his expedition field journal, and other source materials about the expedition, within a geographical and ethnographic context.

These three essays constitute an initial presentation of the primary extant source materials about this expedition within American collections, and a description of future directions of the project. It is especially hoped that those future directions will include the comparable presentation of the Dutch records of this expedition, the improved documentation and organization of the ethnographic collections, and some provision for a return to the areas of New Guinea from which this material was collected, both to supplement our understanding of the material in our collections and also to provide people of the region with a new resource on their own history. They leave Matthew Stirling himself, in the words of the unfinished documents appended to Essay 3, with the last words interpreting the genesis, the story, and the results his own expedition for his audience.

However, it may be useful to outline or introduce here two additional essays examining these same source materials, currently in preparation and hopefully to be added to this website in the near future. These essays will comprise a fourth and fifth

¹⁴ Readers interested in this era will perhaps recall that many American novels in the 1920s were also re-published with illustrations added by a publisher, each captioned only with a quote from the original novel.

component of the “Interpretive Essays” component of the website, to which other contributions may be added in the future.¹⁵

The fourth in this series of essays (currently in preparation), even prior to considering in detail the scientific basis for the expedition in the search for pygmies in the interior of New Guinea, is an essay which I call “A Village Ecology: The Expedition As a Village.” This title reflects the fact that entire major ethnographies have been written about villages smaller than the size of this expedition; and in fact the genesis and composition of the expedition as a village community did substantially affect the development of the scientific questions eventually addressed, and the investigative methods used, by the expedition. The 1926 expedition was a massive undertaking with many understated political ramifications. It is a supreme example of a transnational collaboration that (at least in principle) transcended mercantile, imperial, or colonial interests though it remained always suffused with them. “The Expedition As a Village” therefore looks at the organization and makeup of the expedition, and at some of its key members: Americans, Dutch, Dayak, Ambonese and other soldiers, and Malay convicts – all transported into the environment of New Guinea natives.

The expedition occurred at an important moment in Indonesia’s colonial and nationalist history, as well as the history of science in the Dutch East Indies. Matthew Stirling’s American “model” of such an expedition had a scientific basis, but took its shape and its ecological basis from other areas of American life – the commercial sponsorships about which we find compelling though somewhat suppressed evidence in the archival record, and the potential financial return from the sale of film footage and from the silent-film lecture tour, for which I present some evidence, for the first time, in this essay. The “Stirling Expedition” was “Fostered by the Smithsonian Institution” as even the lettering on the expedition’s plane trumpeted (Figure 1), though Matthew Stirling was not on the Smithsonian’s staff. Stirling had worked at the Smithsonian Institution from 1921 to 1924, first as a Museum Aide then as an Assistant Curator in the Division of Ethnology. He resigned in 1924 to do archeological excavations in Peru, then to work in the field of real estate in Florida, where he met Stanley Hedberg.¹⁶ Hedberg had formerly served as an Associated Press reporter (a background which would serve him well as the 1926 expedition’s de facto publicist), but was primarily employed in public relations work in the booming field of Florida real estate. He seems to have been well placed to explore potential commercial sponsorships for the proposed expedition to New Guinea.¹⁷

In fact, though the Smithsonian was a great beneficiary of the collections assembled, it was not involved in financing the expedition nor in its business arrangements; nor was there any Smithsonian provision (at that time) for reviewing or approving the press reports issued by the person who acted as the expedition’s publicist,

¹⁵ A synopsis of these additional two essays has been prepared for the symposium inaugurating this online publication, to be held in Leiden, the Netherlands, on November 16, 2006. Other papers in the symposium also address the topics of these essays. In accordance with the procedures of the publisher, it is expected that these essays will be posted here after the peer-review process.

¹⁶ After the expedition, Stirling returned to the Smithsonian Institution in 1928, when he was appointed Chief of the Bureau of American Ethnology, enabling him to continue the archeological work in Central America for which he is widely known. (See Collins 1976 and Coe 1976.)

¹⁷ This economic basis of the expedition, combining an association with scientific research and a commercial sponsorship component, will be explored further in Essay 4 (in preparation).

Stanley Hedberg.¹⁸ This expedition thus in some ways fit a model of self-financed expeditions¹⁹ from which the Smithsonian benefited, and for which the Smithsonian provided letters of introduction, assisted in obtaining required permits, and of course provided the scientific repository for the collections assembled (and thus one justification for the scientific nature of the expedition itself). It differed from other examples of such private collecting efforts in the intensiveness (and success) of its efforts toward attaining publicity.



Figure 1. The "Ern" (the airplane used for the 1926 Expedition), being prepared for the trip at Maywood, Illinois, in 1925. Seen in this photograph are, clockwise from top left: Albert C. Hamer, Hans Hoyte, Stanley Hedberg, and Richard Peck. (National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution)

The Americans arriving in Batavia (to great skepticism in the Dutch East Indies press) also perceived themselves to be unintentionally caught up in an internal Dutch struggle between two models of the expedition – neither corresponding to the American one: a military expedition model (under the ranking military leader, though prior military expeditions had often brought scientists), and a scientific expedition model, under a scientific leader (albeit in this case with a military component).²⁰ The three modes of

¹⁸ On March 23, 1926, the Smithsonian's Assistant Secretary Alexander Wetmore wrote to Stirling in care of the U.S. Consul in Batavia, expressing concern about the expedition's press reports because of "considerable feeling regarding expeditions organized for commercial concerns," and providing advice to Stirling on this matter: "It may be well to make plain in your own case ... that yours is a purely scientific party and that there are no commercial interests concerned. Authorities are often somewhat suspicious in such matters." He notes also that after Stirling's departure the Smithsonian had organized its own Scientific News Service to provide articles to the press. Nevertheless there had been no provision or agreement for Smithsonian oversight of press releases issued independently by the expedition members.

¹⁹ Most of the Smithsonian's ethnographic collections from the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) in fact come from the entirely self-financed expeditions of William Louis Abbott (1860-1936), who traveled extensively from the islands west of Sumatra to western New Guinea (see Taylor 1985, 1993, 2002). Many of W.L. Abbott's collections from Indonesia are included in Taylor and Aragon 1991 (including examples from northern coastal and offshore islands of western New Guinea, p. 257-277).

²⁰ Letter from M.W. Stirling to W. Hough, from "Upper Rouffaer River, New Guinea," Aug 24, 1926, National Anthropological Archives: "The work of the expedition thus far has been most successful and we are "on schedule." There have been many unpleasant features for me personally, concerning political phases of the expedition. The machinations which have gone on would make Clemencian and Lloyd

carrying out the expedition (one American, and two Dutch), grafted onto each other, with added Dayak rowers, Ambonese soldiers, convicts, medical personnel, and others, became merged, as the massive expedition proceeded by stages into the unknown interior of New Guinea.²¹

Yet beyond the historically revealing description of the expedition itself, the publication of this information at this time reflects, in addition, a central thesis that I shall try to convey in this essay and others accompanying the material here – a thesis which, even if not accepted, still leaves the original field journals, film footage, and other records with their value intact. My thesis is that this expedition’s central scientific questions or goals remain unanswered (though admittedly also, less frequently asked or sought after nowadays); and that they are still worthy of study – not least through a re-examination of the records of this expedition itself. The expedition’s two preeminent aims were, first, to try to locate and document whether there were “pygmies” in the interior of New Guinea and if so, to find evidence to explain their presence there. The second was a broader goal of exploratory ethnographic and geographic survey (of a kind still needed, even perhaps within a now seemingly “outmoded” expeditionary framework). This goal was expressed as “filling in a blank” on the map (where the region explored really was blank). In fact, within the scholarly fields of this expedition’s members – botany, ethnology, and topographic studies, this region was unexplored in 1926; but it also (relatively speaking) still is quite under-explored. Nowadays, of course, any such “expedition” addressing such goals would need the active involvement, invitation, cooperation and leadership of the people of the region.

We may speculate, in fact, that at least two modern descendants of this scientific expeditionary tradition survive and prosper in this area – both having the central criterion of the expedition as stated by Baal et al. (1984:44): “Expeditions are journeys by interdisciplinary research teams for purposes of exploration.” First is the on-going “Rapid Assessment Program” procedures used in conservation biology, and spearheaded in western New Guinea by Conservation International, in which multidisciplinary teams travel to a place (often prior to its proposed development or transformation) to assess in a preliminary way the degree of biological diversity that is there, as a strategic way of assessing how to dedicate scarce resources available for conservation goals. An example would be Mack and Alonso’s 2000 report on the Rapid Assessment Program’s biological assessment of the Wapoga River area of northwestern Irian Jaya (western New Guinea). We might consider, as a second and very different contemporary “descendant” of the expeditionary tradition, the multidisciplinary and coordinated or inherently cooperative

George dizzy. It seems there has been an old feud on in Java over the question whether expeditions of exploration should be under military or scientific control. When in Java though I knew of this ... I did not see where it concerned me particularly. [...] After we were under way the political propaganda began to work, I naturally knowing nothing of it. To complicate matters, Dr. Van Leeuwen [sic], director of the botanical gardens at Buitenzorg turned out to be the arch villain of the plot and began a propaganda unknown to the rest of us, army included, to get the control of the expedition or at least the name of it for himself. [...] [N]ot that there have been an[y] quarrels on the expedition, but a lot of little obstacles continually put in our way in a highly politic manner. In any event it will now I am sure, have no bearing on the results of the expedition which is the principal thing.”

²¹ Clearly, relying on available American records allows us with confidence to see how the Americans perceived their situation, but here the incompleteness or one-sidedness of these accounts, in the absence of publication of the Dutch records, is most strongly felt.

study of a region in which many individual researchers are encouraged to take part (though not traveling together as a group) and share or co-publish results. A very productive example would be the multiple perspectives on western New Guinea's Bird's Head (*Kepala Burung*) Peninsula brought together in an edited volume by Miedema and Reesink (2004), based upon coordinated individual studies in the area and with an essay by the editors (pp. 175-188) on findings and perspectives for new interdisciplinary research.

Stirling's own first scientific goal for the 1926 expedition – to reach, document, and find evidence to explain the presence of Pygmies in the central highlands – was a central goal around which Stirling had constructed and outfitted the expedition prior to the involvement of the Dutch. One part of my thesis, that even this scientific question remains unanswered (albeit unpopular) and still worthy of study, will be explored in a fifth essay currently in preparation, "The Lure of Pygmies, Scientific and Otherwise"²², which builds upon Chris Ballard's (2000) insightful essay on the importance of finding pygmies as a goal (or at least an achievement, publicly presented as a goal after the fact) of the earlier British Ornithological Union (BOU) expedition of 1910-1911.²³ Stirling aimed to determine whether there was a group of Pygmies in the central highland region that could efficiently be approached and studied by an easier route to be determined using an airplane, comparable to the population of Pygmies that the BOU expedition (Wollaston 1912) had briefly located after long and extremely difficult trekking through the jungles from the south coast. After Stirling's return, he wrote a 1927 popular article in *California Monthly* reflecting on this question – here using the term "Negrito" which Stirling at this time was using interchangeably with "Pygmy":

The distribution and relationship of Negrito tribes has, for a long time, been a problem of interest to anthropologists. For many years an admixture of negrito blood has been suspected among many of the native Papuan tribes of New Guinea. Fifteen years ago an English anthropological expedition penetrated to the foot of the Nassau Mountains of Dutch New Guinea, and [...] discovered a small group of what were apparently true Negritos. Owing to the many difficulties encountered by the expedition, they did not have the opportunity to study these shy people, and saw nothing of their women and children, or of their home life. Because of this discovery it appeared likely that in the depths of the rugged Nassau Mountains would be found the home and territory of a Negrito race. (Stirling 1927:486)

²² The first part of this essay's title, "The Lure of Pygmies," is taken from the title of one section of the advertising brochure distributed for Matthew Stirling's Pond Corporation Lecture Tour after his return.

²³ In fact, Ballard argues that the discovery of pygmies became of such importance to the British Ornithological Union expedition precisely because this expedition "was a spectacular failure in almost every respect." (2000:137). "There is no indication," he writes, "...that the study of local communities or the collection of artefacts was intended as anything more than an incidental bonus to the main collection of zoological specimens." (ibid.) Yet Ballard shows that the discovery of a community of Pygmies became the preeminent achievement of the expedition, in the eyes of its own members. This presentation of the expedition's results nevertheless strongly influenced Stirling and his party. It seemed to them the successful achievement of a worthwhile scientific goal.

In fact, locating and confirming the presence of other short-statured or “pygmy” populations, and considerable work on anthropometric studies of western New Guinea’s short-statured populations, had already been done by the Dutch anthropologist Hendricus Johannes Tobias Bijlmer, whom Stirling met at Surabaya after the expedition (see Stirling’s journal entry, January 23, 1927). Yet Stirling was apparently unfamiliar with Bijlmer’s 1922 Academic Thesis from the University of Amsterdam or his 1922 summary publication on the topic (Bijlmer 1922; cf. also his later publications, e.g. 1928, 1934, 1939).

In any case, the 1926 expedition aimed, through methods of study available at the time, to study them and bring back information that would help understand the status of this pygmy or Negrito “race” in relation to the other Papuan groups around them and in human racial history, that is, in the history of the evolution and movements (migrations) of human populations. The methods they used, long before the days of mitochondrial DNA analysis (which has still barely begun in the region) or even blood typing, included collecting linguistic and material culture data, and taking anthropomorphic measurements.

Ballard (2000) has discussed the importance of pygmies within the science as well as the popular imagination of the time with reference to Wollaston’s earlier expedition to New Guinea’s central highlands. This argument can be applied and developed with reference to the uses and images of pygmies in American public culture that seem to have inspired Stirling’s interest in the topic and, since the expedition was to some extent dependent upon a commercial return (for example, through the film-lecture tour for which audiences paid), also probably inspired some of this 1926 expedition’s unique character. Since Stirling’s conclusions on the “pygmy question” were never published, though his unfinished ethnographic notes, and the draft of one previously unpublished speech, are included within the appendices to Essay 3, it will be useful also to provide a synopsis of his probable thinking on the question based on later press reports and interviews, as well as his cautious preliminary statements within his short popular writings (e.g. Stirling 1927 cited above, and Stirling 1928a, 1928b). In fact, the central scientific question he was investigating has become subsumed in other questions, up to the present time. It is easy to chortle at some of the early preconceptions and mis-uses of pygmies in the popular imagination – and at the commercialization of this exotic element in Stirling’s lecture tours and in the other lecture-tours that had probably inspired him. Yet despite the past 80 years of shifts in topics of interest to physical anthropology, defining and explaining the distribution of these short-statured populations remains a challenging (though currently rather unpopular) question, a question still worthy of study, and arguably much bigger than just the facetious title of Jared Diamond’s relatively recent paper on the subject (Diamond 1992), “A Question of Size.”

As mentioned above, the second major scientific aim of this expedition (like other New Guinea expeditions of the time) was more broad-ranging and general, namely to help “fill in the blanks” not only literally on the map, but also in our understanding of the ethnography, geography, and natural history of a previously unexplored area. Here I trust that regional specialists will more likely be unanimous in agreeing that the presentation here of a major, previously unpublished photographic and written record – with the potential for additions within this format of other expedition sources and even, in the future, potentially also additions from descendants of the people who are depicted in these sources – constitutes a major contribution. Increasing attention is now being paid to

the publication of older expeditionary and other archival source materials for the scientific value of information they contain.

Stirling's was of course not the only early New Guinea expedition making first contact with indigenous peoples. Anton Ploeg (1995) has provided a valuable survey of such expeditions in the highlands of western New Guinea. J. van Baal *et al.* (1984:44-54), in their *West Irian: A Bibliography*, provide an essay on "Expeditions" with a bibliography of expeditions to western New Guinea from 1858 (see also Schumacher 1954). Gammage 1998; Leahy 1994; and Miklouho-Maclay 1982 [cf. Miklucho-Maklaj 1963] represent examples of New Guinea expeditions whose source materials have been published in varying degrees. Setting the standard as the best and most comprehensive example of such expeditionary source material publication is probably Welsch's (1998) two-volume publication of the records and collections assembled from many different areas of Melanesia by A.B. Lewis, in collecting trips for Chicago's Field Museum from 1909 to 1913, under the auspices of the Joseph N. Field South Pacific Expedition.²⁴ Michael Cookson (2000) has also published a survey of the papers of the Archbold Expeditions to New Guinea at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, and Larry Lake of Messiah College, Pennsylvania is preparing a larger work based on those archival papers. An exceptionally productive project that has published many kinds of source materials about western New Guinea (not just scientific expedition records) is the "Irian Jaya source materials" project which was part of the IRIS ("Upgrading of Irianese scholars in the field of Irian Jaya studies") project, launched jointly in 1991 by three organizations: the Irian Jaya Studies Center (IJSC) in Jayapura, the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) in Jakarta, and the Projects Division of the Department of Languages and Cultures of Southeast Asia and Oceania (DSALCUL), Faculty of Arts, Leiden University (Netherlands). As described by Miedema and Reesink (2004:xi-xii), the project drew on "the wealth of unprocessed Dutch source material present in Dutch and Indonesian archives" (p. xi). The efforts of "papuaweb" (www.papuaweb.org), a joint website coordinated among the Australian National University in Canberra, the State University of Papua (Unipa) in Manokwari, Papua, and Cenderawasih University in Abepura, Papua (western New Guinea) are especially commendable for their goal not only of publishing (within its *Archive/Arsip* section) source materials of this kind, but also translating them into Indonesian and making them available to the present-day descendants of those contacted by these expeditions, and others now living in the region. Another very productive site (in Dutch, English, and Indonesian) is operated in the Netherlands by a foundation formed in 1999, "Stichting Papua Cultureel Erfgoed" or "Papuan cultural heritage Foundation" (also known by its acronym PACE), and is now also actively involved in making available Dutch archival and photographic records from western New Guinea available online at: www.papuaerfgoed.org.

Ballard, Vink, and Ploeg's publication on photography and the exploration of Dutch New Guinea (2001) has provided another inspiring model of how useful it can be not only to organize and document historic expeditionary photographs but also to return to the area with them, enriching our information about these images while returning an

²⁴ Welsch also includes (vol. 2, pp. 19-174) a biographical section entitled "Who Was Who in Melanesia, 1909-1913) with information on individuals mentioned in the A.B. Lewis field diaries, specimen lists, correspondence, photo captions, and other notes.

important part of a people's history to them.²⁵ Chris Ballard's chapter on the Amungme within that publication (p. 43-45) addresses local reactions to the photographs of the Wollaston and Colijn expeditions through Amungme territory (1912 and 1936, respectively); and identifies individuals in the historic photographs from these expeditions through interviews with their descendants, many of whom today, he writes, "are inclined to look back on the early expeditions led by Wollaston and Colijn as the first steps in a tragedy that has engulfed their world." (p. 44). Yet he shows that the local reception of these photographs has been productive for the Amungme as well, and has had positive effects:

Ironically, the photographs taken by the Wollaston and Colijn expeditions will play a crucial role in confirming Amungme rights to their land, placing people and their settlements in time and in space, and proving their unbroken connection to the landscape. Copies of these early images have been eagerly received by communities of the Wa and Tsinga valleys, and Amungme employees of Freeport [a joint U.S.-Indonesian copper and gold mine based at Timika] have produced their own calendars using the photographs as illustrations. Perhaps more significant than the reception of these photographs is the manner in which Amungme are now addressing the broader question of representation through visual media. Using cameras in formal meetings with company and government officials, and digital video cameras to record interviews about human rights abuses, Amungme people are increasingly reasserting some degree of control over the way in which they are visually represented. (C. Ballard, in Ballard, Vink, and Ploeg 2001:45)

The written and photographic records of the 1926 Dutch and American expedition, also, provide us with the best sources of information about the particular "blank" that it tried to fill in within the history of the island's exploration: the ethnography of the highland Dem people, and also the peoples along the expedition's route to reach the Dem – the peoples of the Mamberamo basin and particularly the upper Rouffaer region of that basin. Van Baal et al. (1984), for example, consider that these peoples of the upper Rouffaer form a recognizably distinctive culture area that is still among the least-studied regions of Melanesia. Their bibliographic review of literature on Irian Jaya called this region "ethnographically a terra incognita" (van Baal et al. 1984: 95). Consequently, it is hoped that this annotated and illustrated publication of some of the expedition field journals and records will make available a primary source of information about this region.

As appropriate to an online publication, these essays that accompany the source materials from the expedition may be read in any order, but there is nevertheless an intended order in the presentation here, thus the essays are numbered. Since it is expected that some readers will arrive at them via links from other readings, and browse them at will in other sequences, there is necessarily some repetition of very basic information in

²⁵ The exhibition of photographs which this catalog accompanies was shown in Amsterdam, Jakarta, and Timika (Irian Jaya).

later essays that had already been stated in prior essays, but I have tried to keep that to a minimum.

All these essays reflect the fact that “revisiting” a 1926 expedition 80 years later must also address the relationship between the collectors and the societies they are collecting from, and the ethical and historical questions raised by the mode of collecting and exploration undertaken. Our revisiting, in the mode of important new studies of historic collectors such as those in the edited volumes by O’Hanlon and Welsch (2000) or by Schefold and Vermeulen (2002, including Taylor 2002), can therefore be used to interpret these archival and museum collections (and the methods by which they were obtained) for what they tell us about the cultures of the collectors, as well as what they tell us about the cultures of peoples from whom the collections were being assembled.²⁶ Still, the expedition’s records are preeminently those of people whose descendants today will have a great interest in them; and it is also hoped that this publication will provide the people of western New Guinea (and the Dayaks, Ambonese, as well as Dutch, Americans and others who participated in the expedition) a new form of access to their own interwoven history.

²⁶ I had previously written, citing others who had also done so, about the extent to which museum collections and exhibitions from this region also reflect both the cultures of the collectors and those of the people from whom objects are collected and exhibited; see e.g. Taylor 1994, 1995.

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