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Buschmann/Anthropology's Global Histories

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INTRODUCTION

Toward a Global History of Anthropology

The last decades of the twentieth century saw an increasing reconciliation between the disciplines of anthropology and history. Moving beyond the synchronic method of participant observation, anthropologists began to infuse a temporal dimension into the societies they studied. Conversely, historians realized that the temporal divide separating them from their sources was similar to the cultural division separating anthropologists from their subjects of study.[1] But even as historians and anthropologists reached across this methodological divide, they realized that certain types of studies could not be bridged. The interplay between anthropology and history bore fruits in the local understanding of a particular society's historical development. When this historical approach was placed within a global context, however, anthropologists balked at the resulting loss of methodological applicability.

Despite these conflicts, world historians have embraced anthropology with open arms, as Jerry Bentley suggests: "Anthropological and ethnohistorical inspiration has been most important for scholars examining the results of encounters between peoples of different civilizations or cultural regions. . . . Even when anthropologists and ethnohistorians have not specifically intended their works as contributions to world history, they have often thrown useful light on the dynamics of cross-cultural encounters."[2] Bentley's caution that anthropologists may not have intended their work to service world historians is an understatement. Anthropologists are, on the whole, less than enthusiastic about global approaches. Generally specializing in a single society, anthropologists fear the work of world historians may eclipse the significance of their localized studies. Practitioners argue instead that global events (such as imperialism) have and continue to experience local negotiations. Such negotiations may lessen or augment the impact of global occurrences. While expressing concern that global historical approaches may obscure local agency, anthropologists also argue that one should understand history not "in abstract, but in terms of moments of cultural entanglement [involving different social players]."[3] This approach favors a "particulariz-

ing anthropology," which understands historical events locally rather than globally.[4]

Anthropology's shift from globalism to localism has been gradual. Eric Wolf, a noted anthropologist critical of his own discipline, commented on its origins: "Anthropology, ambitiously entitled The Science of Man, did lay special claim to the study of non-Western and 'primitive' peoples. Indeed, cultural anthropology began as world anthropology."[5] In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for example, anthropologists traced the psychological underpinnings of humans or mapped shifting cultural areas in their comparative studies. Shortly before the Great War, however, anthropology's global consciousness dissipated. Practitioners became dissatisfied with the grand narratives of their predecessors and preferred small inquiries within clearly delineated areas. These anthropologists limited their studies to a single non-Western society, and comparative studies generally materialized as a consequence of theoretical comparison. The chief advantage of this method was the establishment of anthropology as a university discipline. When funding agencies eventually shifted their emphasis to local inquiries, subsequent generations of anthropologists conformed accordingly.[6] Generally, anthropology's resort to localism and its neglect of global contexts fell victim to what some have labeled a collective "disciplinary amnesia."[7]

In recent years historians of anthropology have returned some of the global flavor to the discipline. Up until a few decades ago such approaches were plagued by celebratory accounts extolling theoretical directions at the expense of alternative approaches.[8] Over the last three decades, however, historians of anthropology led by George Stocking have developed a distinctive subfield of anthropological inquiry.[9] A cornerstone of this inquiry lies in Stocking's notion of "multiple contextualization," an approach that locates a particular national tradition's development in numerous social and cultural contexts affecting anthropology.[10] Laudably, such contexts include extra-European arenas, in particular the all-encompassing Euro-American imperial reach.[11] Even so, historians following Stocking's lead frequently adhere to a particular "national" anthropology, be it British or American, or, more recently, French and German. Such histories are at odds with world history's agenda, which seeks to transcend the nation state so as to delve into global accounts.

Delineating Anthropology's Global Histories

World historians propose to transcend national boundaries for a more global historical analysis. Within this system, two approaches are worthy of note. The first is an inversion of analytical categories. Proponents of this approach

have traditionally been world historians whose work centers on comparisons between Europe and East Asia. England, for instance, set the norm for industrialization, prompting researchers to ask why similar events were rare outside of the European continent. Questioning China's inability to emulate England led historians to speculate on cultural, demographic, and even racial impediments. However, once historians reversed the question and asked why England was not like China, they revealed few inherent European advantages. Thus, world historians now regard Western superiority as a brief event in world historical chronologies and propose alternative conceptualizations to analyze the course of human history.[12]

The inversion of categories also benefits the history of anthropology, which owes its existence to the dynamic interplay between metropole and periphery. The metropole provides much of the theoretical framework for the early development of anthropology, while the colonial periphery supplies vital data for the study of "non-Western" societies. Steering clear of their seemingly "natural" point of departure, historians of anthropology now scrutinize new subjects of analysis previously considered outside of the discipline's boundaries. In this view, merchants, colonial officials, and even indigenous peoples become collectors of anthropological information. Their agendas take into account boundless "colonial projects" that may or may not agree with metropolitan concerns in anthropology.[13] The accentuation of the peripheral regions also provides vital points for comparative analyses of existing national traditions. Such comparative analyses not only constitute the world historian's playground, they also further our understanding of anthropology's global histories.

Another notable contribution of world history is the identification of novel units of analysis. Eager to transcend the nation state, world historians have, for instance, emphasized the importance of ocean and sea basins in their studies. While such bodies of water cover more than 70 percent of the earth's surface, scholars have traditionally favored firm continents rather than liquid surfaces. In tandem with geographers, world historians are currently rethinking some of the geographical configurations of global space, converting oceans into valid units of analysis. Partially inspired by the pioneering work of maritime historians, world historians understand oceans less as obstacles and more as engaging avenues for cultural and economic exchange.[14]

Significantly, the Pacific Ocean covers 30 percent of the earth's surface and thus figures as an important "peripheral" region for the development of anthropology as an academic discipline. Milestones of that development include Bronislaw Malinowski's sanctioning and refinement of participant observation (better known as fieldwork) among the Trobriand Islanders. Similarly, Margaret Mead's extensive study among young women in Samoa

yielded enough information to fuel the nature-nurture debate for years to come.[15] In addition, the value of the cultural area generally designated as Melanesia for the study of anthropology is well documented. The area harbors more than a quarter of the world's languages (1,450 out of approximately 4,000). Its diversity has always preoccupied anthropologists. For example, according to Bruce M. Knauff, the area "was at the cutting edge of most of the principal theories of society and culture developed in anthropology over the twentieth century."[16]

Historians of the Pacific have long realized that early anthropological attention to this location derived from a misconstruction of the cultures residing in the region. Western observers maintained that the vast distances between islands located in the Pacific Ocean had prevented the same cultural diffusion presumed in the Atlantic and Indian counterparts.[17] From the earliest occupation this has not been the case. By the first millennium CE, Austronesian settlers originating from Asia explored the liquid spaces of the Pacific Ocean and occupied the most distant corners of Hawai'i, New Zealand, and Easter Island. Oceanic mariners, with little interference from either the American or Asian continents, developed prominent regional exchange systems. Cemented by marriage alliances and ongoing material and symbolic exchanges, Pacific societies displayed a high degree of fluidity that could not easily be mapped against nascent European concepts of race.[18] The arrival of Europeans incorporated static classifications of physical and cultural boundaries. Unwilling to acknowledge indigenous maritime abilities, Dutch, English, French, and Spanish observers theorized Pacific waters as barriers preserving Oceanic cultural and racial unity. In short, the Pacific Ocean presented static timeless societies, antithetical to the hybridity of polities in the Atlantic and Indian oceans.

Global Anthropology in the Pacific: From Ethnic Boundaries to Ethnographic Frontiers

The Pacific Ocean was an important field for European explorers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Despite its popularity, its vastness frustrated any thorough charting. Not until the second half of the eighteenth century did important intellectual and technological changes occur in European exploration. The introduction of reliable maritime chronometers, for example, enabled accurate determination of longitude and greatly facilitated the mapping of the Pacific Ocean. Ships and crews transformed not only into floating laboratories, but also into vital instruments for detailed charting tasks.[19] Furthering geographical knowledge was but one aim of the enlightened naturalists traveling on these vessels. Under the rubric of "natural his-

tory," learned individuals devoted themselves to botany, zoology, and, most important, ethnography. The official literature resulting from these voyages gave birth to a public increasingly fascinated by the indigenous inhabitants of Oceania. Their interest had a tremendous impact on the history of anthropology.[20]

During the last decades of the eighteenth and the early decades of the nineteenth centuries, such inquiries crystallized into two leading concerns: ethnic boundaries and ethnographic frontiers. Their origin stemmed from the assumption that Pacific waters separated rather than unified Oceanic polities. From the 1800s forward, learned individuals looked to the Pacific Ocean for answers to cultural and racial puzzles.[21] The delineation of ethnic boundaries became a primary concern in the local delineation of Oceania's vast liquid spaces. For the remainder of the nineteenth century, budding anthropologists attempted to locate physical evidence for the problematic categories of Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia.[22] Dumont d'Urville, who led several expeditions to the Pacific Ocean between 1826 and 1840, is the alleged author of this tripartite division. Recent studies, however, suggest that such divisions were already present and d'Urville simply borrowed from already existing descriptions to supplement his own insights.[23]

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the attempt to identify local ethnic boundaries gave way to a different concern. The watery divide of the Pacific Ocean provided opportunities to study pristine cultures seemingly unmolested by the increasing Euro-American presence in the region. With the diluting contacts of the Atlantic and Indian Ocean worlds absent in the Pacific Ocean, Western observers pried the region for new insights into human history. A new intellectual trend popular throughout the second half of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth century clamored for the uncovering of pristine "natives" for a universal history of humankind. These decades, characterized by a search for new societies, pushed the imaginary ethnographic frontier into the Pacific Ocean. The hope was that by expanding one ethnographic frontier researchers could provide universal answers to pressing global ethnographic puzzles.

The term "ethnographic frontier" has been greatly inspired by world historical inquiries. Frontiers have always occupied an important status in the historical profession. Initially outlined by American historian Frederick Jackson Turner, the term expanded in meaning to indicate a process of progressive settlement that promised insights into the unique American character of the early twentieth century. More recent less celebratory studies suggest the term "borderland" to account for the agency of the indigenous peoples involved in Turner's frontier of expansive settlement.[24] Similarly, for historians operating outside the American field, frontiers are significant for

the study of the Roman Empire as well as Chinese dynasties following Qin unification. Specifically the division between "civilized" settled societies and "barbarian" nomads gave the frontier a physical and permanent form.[25] Outside the Chinese and Roman context, historians now regard such frontiers as vital to the process of ethnic formation.[26] The term is now considered a fluid construct that involves constant negotiations, whether peaceful or violent. Mary Louise Pratt, for instance, speaks of a contact zone between European scientists and indigenous peoples, and explores how the latter manipulated and influenced the encounter.[27] In the Pacific Ocean, Greg Dening employs the metaphor of a "beach" to designate a neutral space within which the cultural categories of Oceanic peoples are negotiated with Euro-American arrivals.[28]

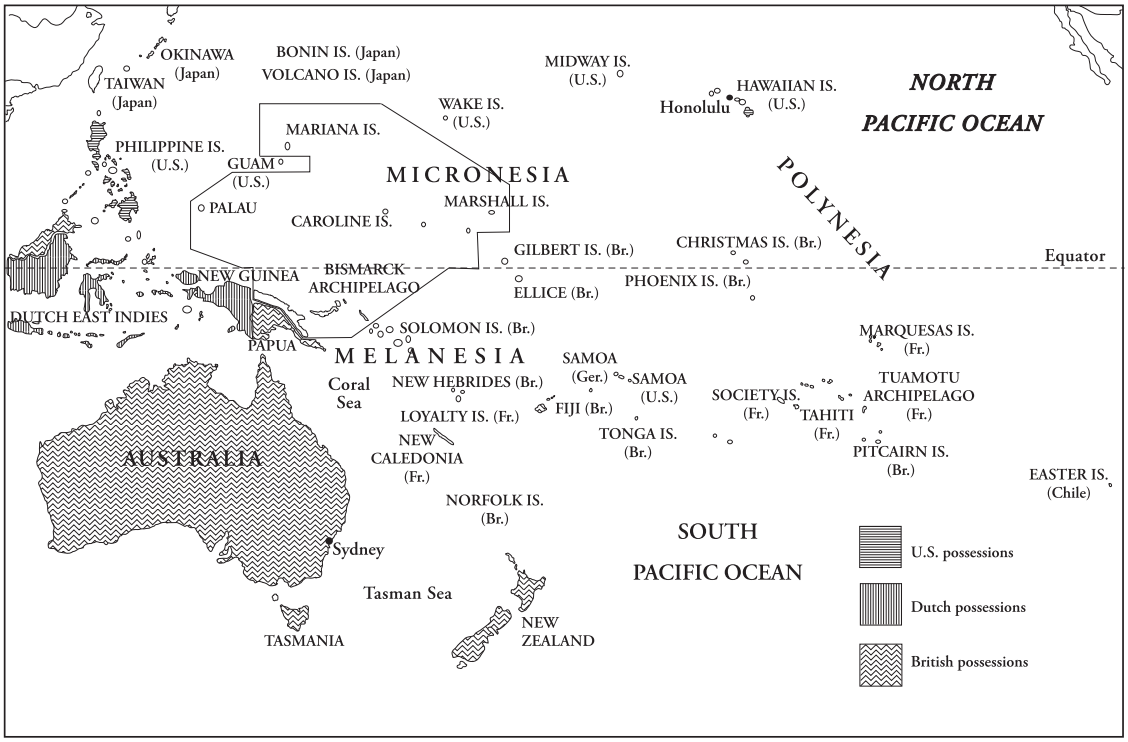
In the pages to come, I will follow such intellectual leads in my exploration of ethnographic frontiers in the Pacific Ocean, which I regard as vital for a global understanding of anthropology. The almost unrelenting pursuit of societies theorized as frozen in time remained pivotal for comparative studies of anthropology up until the onset of the Great War. Comparative ethnological studies required collection of primary data along the frontier as anthropologists increasingly came to believe that the Pacific Ocean offered a final frontier of sorts, a world that time forgot, untainted by European influence.

The Pacific Ocean gains additional significance as an ethnographic frontier from another concept: salvage anthropology.[29] Western anthropologists shared the belief that global cultural diversity would ultimately fade with the arrival of Euro-American civilization. While they regarded this process as an unavoidable fact, anthropologists also advocated an urgent salvage operation for the remaining cultural heritage around the world. In the late 1800s this translated into a rush for the few postulated "unexplored" spots around the globe. The seemingly isolated societies of the Pacific Ocean became a hotbed for anthropological exploration of the expanding ethnographic frontier. Although nagging anxieties about the disappearance of contacted societies accompanied the learned individuals on their eighteenth-century voyages, it was half a century later before they took on prominent dimensions. Renato Rosaldo proclaimed salvage projects to be an outgrowth of an "imperialist nostalgia," a concern about preserving what one had endeavored to destroy.[30] More recently, H. Glenn Penny has argued for a "doctrine of scarcity" that views indigenous peoples and their material culture as precious rapidly disappearing commodities.[31] The project of salvaging the cultural heritage of newly contacted people became the primary driving force behind the ethnographic frontier's shift further into the Pacific Ocean. Even as it provoked intellectual changes in the metropole, this ethnographic frontier remained

tied to the metropole while interacting with related colonial projects during the arrival of the new imperialism in Oceania.

Exploring such ethnographic frontiers transcends mere anthropological endeavors. Indeed many researchers operating within the framework of postcolonial studies have argued that anthropology was merely one among many "colonial projects" that frequently intersected with, for instance, commercial and evangelical concerns along the colonial periphery.[32] The importance of such enterprises lies in their ability to dismantle the colonial juggernaut and to reveal inconsistencies and competing agendas that were ultimately exploited by indigenous peoples. Yet they remain on the whole tied to local rather than global explorations, effectively arguing that colonialism or better colonialisms were locally defrayed and negotiated. The tensions between localism and globalism here resemble those outlined earlier in the case of anthropology and world history. A comparative examination of ethnographic frontiers in the Pacific Ocean does not, however, preclude local examinations of colonial projects. Indeed a comparative dimension provides the global elements frequently missing from anthropology's histories.

Initiating such a study is no easy task. On the whole, the Pacific Ocean is too broad a category in which to conduct a thorough investigation of such



Map 1: German New Guinea (boxed area)

ethnographic frontiers. There is, however, one area that warrants specific investigation: German New Guinea. This colonial territory was a bit of an aberration, since the creation of this administrative unit was a combination of increasing German commercial interests in the Pacific, fortuitous (from a German perspective) colonial conflicts, and negotiations with other imperial powers. Although imperial conquest began in 1884, it was not until 1906 that the territory encompassed the northern Solomon Islands, the northeastern corner of New Guinea, the Bismarck Archipelago, as well as the Marshall, Caroline, and Northern Mariana islands. German tenure in the Pacific came to an abrupt halt during World War I, when all of Germany's colonies were occupied by Allied forces. German New Guinea had incorporated most of the territory designated as Micronesia (notable exceptions were the Gilbert Islands and Guam), a significant portion of Melanesia, and some Polynesian outlier societies. In short, it presented the possibility of investigating solid ethnic boundaries delineating Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia. Moreover, the territory cemented Germany's status as the second largest Pacific colonial power with holdings that, although clearly dwarfed by Britain's presence in New Guinea, New Zealand, and Australia, by far surpassed France's Pacific holdings.[33]

Besides its connotations for anthropological research on ethnographic frontiers, German New Guinea presents intriguing interchanges between the ethnographic frontier and other colonial projects. Recent studies have underscored the unique status of German colonialism. In a fascinating analysis, Susanne Zantop posits that Germans throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries developed "colonial imaginations" that fed the eventual drive toward colonial annexation.[34] In the Pacific Ocean, however, such colonial imaginations were few and far between. To be sure, Germans were frequent travelers in the early expeditions to the region.[35] Yet, on the whole their interest in the Pacific remained lukewarm, fueled mostly by commercial interest in the region.[36] The German public showed more interest in the African colonies that were closer to the metropole.

Such moderate public interest also figured as an important aspect of a recent historiographical controversy over New Guinea. The most complete assessment of German rule in this region continues to be Stewart Firth's monograph, which has drawn controversy ever since its publication in the early 1980s.[37] While Firth asserts that the Germans generally archived much more than other colonial powers in Melanesia, he believes that "[s]uch developments came at a price. The Germans were much more callous than the British and Australians. . . . They were stricter disciplinarians. . . . They tolerated greater loss of life. . . . By various methods they alienated more land from villagers' control."[38] German historians soon took offense to such inter-

pretations. Firth's main detractor is German historian Hermann Hiery, who recently launched a wide-ranging revisionist campaign. "To be sure . . . ", Hiery maintains, "Germany was not the extended arm of the Salvation Army."[39] Yet, Hiery continues, "[t]o compare the German approach and the Melanesian response to the well-known colonial wars fought in German South West and East Africa . . . is absurd."[40] While Germany's African colonies experienced frequent indigenous insurrections, German New Guinea and Samoa had, comparatively speaking, few revolts. According to Hiery, this state of affairs had a number of implications for the German Pacific colonies. In economic terms, it meant that most German possessions in the Pacific operated on a shoestring budget since the majority of government support went to Africa. By the same token, however, this situation lessened the German metropole's hold on its Pacific colonies, allowing greater latitude for colonial officials in New Guinea, for example, than was available to their counterparts in Africa. In turn, this relative liberty permitted the incorporation of "Melanesian principles" in German colonial rule. Hiery is somewhat vague as to what such principles entailed, particularly since his description of administrative measures, involving hostage taking and communal responsibility for individual criminal behavior, better fit general, global patterns than local "Melanesian" ones. Hiery's rosy depiction of German colonial practices has experienced considerable critique in the last few years.[41]

Despite the portrayal of Germans as "better" colonizers, Hiery's argument provides an important point of departure for investigations of ethnographic frontiers in the Pacific Ocean. Far removed from public scrutiny and eager metropolitan administrators, colonial officials and other German residents had a considerable degree of freedom in their actions. This facilitated an increasing engagement with anthropological concerns that speaks to anthropology's global histories. One would be hard pressed to find a better test case than German New Guinea to investigate the interaction between the ethnographic frontier and its interplay with the multitude of colonial projects existing in the Pacific Ocean.

Before advancing further, a brief summary of subsequent chapters is required to underscore the explicit goals of this project. Chapter 1 traces and contextualizes the emergence of the "ethnographic frontier" at the largest German ethnological museum in Berlin, founded in 1886. Director Adolf Bastian's theoretical visions of the ethnographic frontier inverted negative connotations commonly associated with New Guinea and the region known as Melanesia. Through the creation of an African and Oceanic division in the museum, Bastian hoped to monopolize Germany's colonial agents operating along the imperial periphery. Felix von Luschan, future director of this

division, was left to work out the practicalities of such a monopoly, a task that was fraught with difficulty from the very beginning.

Luschan's task to reach out to New Guinea is addressed in the second chapter. His attempt to secure the prominent German commercial presence in German New Guinea soon clashed with the traders' "colonial project" of securing profits from the exchange. The opening section to this chapter illustrates that the conceptual clashes over indigenous artifacts separating science from commercialism predated Luschan's predicament by a century. The disagreement over the conceptualization soon became a widening gap, as Luschan demanded artifacts to be accompanied by exact descriptions. Such qualitative demands on artifact collection clearly contradicted the quantitative German merchant commercial project. In his attempt to gain independence from colonial agents, Luschan now searched for new alternatives, pushing the anthropological field into new directions.

These alternatives are explored in the subsequent chapters and return the analytical focus to the German metropole. Chapter 3 explores how Luschan's African and Oceanic division met with resentment among other German anthropological institutions. Shortly after the turn of the century, Bastian's theoretical visions came under attack for their impracticalities. Similarly, Luschan's division within the Berlin Ethnological Museum was blamed for maintaining a monopoly position among German institutions. Combining theoretical argument with an increasing ability to solicit local civic support for their efforts, museum officials in Hamburg, Stuttgart, and Leipzig soon outflanked Luschan in Berlin. Increasingly isolated, Luschan built upon the methodological innovations developed through his disagreements with commercial agents in German New Guinea.

Novel anthropological ideas were welcomed by a restructured German colonial administration; these developments are explored in Chapter 4. As German colonialism came under close scrutiny following massive indigenous uprisings in Africa, newly appointed colonial directors were drawn to solutions that were at least partially inspired by anthropology. In return, anthropologists exploited such colonial interest to prepare expeditions to German New Guinea. Facing an increasingly divided anthropological community, German colonial officials decided to intervene in the distribution of colonial artifacts. Solutions including mounting all-German expeditions to New Guinea and "nationalizing" indigenous artifacts met with resistance from the anthropological community, and negotiations continued until the outbreak of the Great War.

The massive anthropological interest in German New Guinea coupled with transforming methodologies deeply affected the Pacific periphery. Chapter 5 explores Governor Albert Hahl's reaction to this interest, chroni-

cling his attempts to convince the anthropological community to move beyond artifacts and to consider the mental cultures of the indigenous peoples living in German New Guinea. In essence, Hahl sought to incorporate the ethnographic frontier to solve colonial predicaments affecting his colonial administration. The ongoing methodological dialogue between Hahl as colonial administrator and anthropologists arriving in New Guinea solidified some of the methodological changes.

Chapter 6 assesses the impact of the ethnographic frontier on the indigenous peoples of German New Guinea. Arguing for a dual conceptualization of the anthropological scheme, that is, a Western and Pacific one, this chapter traces selected incidents of indigenous counterethnography in the western isles of the Bismarck Archipelago and on the island of New Ireland. These indigenous attempts at resistance are an important counterpoint to the "colonial projects" descending on German New Guinea.

The loss of Germany's colonial empire following the Treaty of Versailles might seem like a logical conclusion to the present work. Yet German anthropologists did not cease their intellectual endeavors. Chapter 7 analyzes how the tremendous backlog in material culture and ethnographic information gathered during the expedition age in German New Guinea maintained the discipline following the colonial loss. Similarly, Germany's sudden entry into a "postcolonial" age provided an additional stimulus for anthropologists. When practitioners turned to crafting their monographs, their salvaging attempts along the ethnographic frontier were influenced by postcolonial demands to exonerate the German administration from potential abuses against the indigenous populations in German New Guinea.

Finally, a concluding chapter reads the development of the ethnographic frontier in German New Guinea against similar anthropological efforts in the Pacific Ocean. Understanding German anthropological investigations in comparison with American, English, and French ventures in the Pacific not only provides a comparative framework for anthropology's history, but also provides new venues for exploring the global history of the Pacific Ocean between 1760 and 1945.