



# **The Race Question in Oceania: A. B. Meyer and Otto Finsch between metropolitan theory and field experience, 1865-1914 (Germanica Pacifica)**

*Hilary Susan Howes*

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In 1873 the German naturalist A.B. Meyer spent five months in New Guinea. He had expected «bloodthirsty and untamed savages» and was amazed to find «men of milder customs». His compatriot Otto Finsch returned from a voyage through Hawaii, Micronesia, New Zealand and Torres Strait declaring Germany's most respected anthropologists wrong. Human races could not be neatly distinguished: they «merge into one another to such an extent that the difference between Europeans and Papuans becomes completely unimportant». This richly interdisciplinary book explores the transformative impacts of personal encounters in Oceania on understandings of human difference, and illuminates the difficult relationship between field experience and metropolitan science in late nineteenth-century Europe.

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