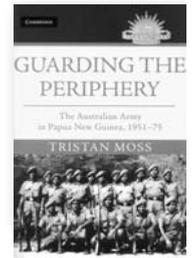


BOOK REVIEWS:

Guarding the periphery: the Australian Army in Papua New Guinea, 1951-75

by Tristan Moss

Cambridge University Press: Port Melbourne; 2017; 266 pp.; ISBN 9781107195967 (hardback); RRP \$59.95



The southern half of eastern New Guinea (the Territory of Papua) came under Australian administration in 1902, following annexation by the United Kingdom. In 1920, Australia was given a League of Nations mandate to rule German New Guinea, and in 1945 Papua and New Guinea were combined in an administrative union. Papua New Guinea (PNG) was ruled by Australia until independence in 1975. *Guarding the Periphery* explores the Australian Army's role and experiences in PNG in the last 25 years before the country was granted independence.

The Australian Army's headquarters and units in PNG had a dual role: to defend Australia from threats to its north and west, while also managing the force's place within Australian colonial rule in PNG. In *Guarding the Periphery* Moss explores the operational, social and racial aspects of this unique and sometimes conflicting arrangement at the height of the colonial era in PNG and during the progression to independence.

The first section of the book looks at the 'experimental establishment' of the Pacific Islands Regiment, which laid the foundations for the post-independence PNG Defence Force. Moss goes on to examine confrontation with Indonesia, the creation of a PNG Command and the development of a

national army and the final mad rush to 'localise' the defence force in the five years before independence.

Combining the rich detail of both archival material and oral histories, *Guarding the Periphery* recounts a part of Australian military history that is often overlooked by studies of Australia's military past.

Moss is an adjunct lecturer in history at the University of New South Wales, Canberra, and a researcher for the *Official History of Australian Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan*, and *Australian Peacekeeping Operations in East Timor*. He is a winner of the C. E. W. Bean Prize for military history.

Guarding the Periphery includes 30 black-and-white illustrations embedded throughout the text, one appendix listing key appointments and two good quality maps. There are extensive notes, a bibliography and a comprehensive index which make this an academic quality book.

Given the close and enduring relationship between PNG and Australia this account is of interest to all Australian Defence and Foreign Affairs personnel with a responsibility for relations with PNG, as well as students of Australia's colonial experiences.

Marcus Fielding