

An Annotated Translation of Georg Stein's, 1933, A Research Trip to the Dutch East Indies

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Introduction

Georg Hermann Wilhelm Stein was born in Zittendorf, Germany on 7 April 1897. He became a secondary school teacher who was self-educated in natural history. In 1930, employed by the Botanical Museum in Berlin, he travelled to the Dutch East Indies from 1931–1932. During the expedition he was accompanied by his wife Clara for whom he later named the bandicoot *Echymipera clara*. The highlight of his expedition was an ascent of the Weyland Range in western New Guinea, where he collected at least two mammal species, *Microperoryctes murinus* and *Macruromys elegans*, that have not been sighted before or since. The diaries of his expedition were lost during the Second World War (National Herbarium, Netherlands, no date), making the published account, translated into English here for the first time, a valuable chronicle (Stein, 1933).

In later life Stein became associated with the Humboldt University Museum, Berlin, where his mammal and New Guinea bird specimens are held. During the 1950s and 60s he published on European mammals, including moles and the field mouse (e.g., Stein, 1958). On his 70th birthday the great ornithologist Erwin Stresemann (who had unique privileges to cross the Berlin Wall) gave an encomium which read in part: ‘Now you too have marched with brisk steps over the threshold of old age—a joyful occasion for the circle of your fellow participants and admirers of the long journey you have travelled as a successful, tireless researcher. I have been appointed spokesperson at your beloved place of work because no-one has accompanied your progress as long as I have. It was not mammals that first brought you into the

net of zoological research, but rather birds.’ (Stresemann, 1967). The late Colin Groves told TF of a meeting he had with Stein at the Museum which suggests that relationships with his colleagues were not always rosy. As Stein conducted Groves towards his own office, passing the office doors of other curators, he pointed and said ‘she is a communist; he was a Nazi during the war’, and so on. When they reached Stein’s office, he pulled out a postage stamp which bore the image of Erich Honecker, East Germany’s Head of State, and spat vehemently on it before sticking it to an envelope, saying ‘It is good that they put Honecker on the stamp. I spit on him.’ Stein passed away on 19 April 1976.

Below is a full translation of Stein (1933) in which our edits to his text are in square brackets throughout to include the current taxonomy and other notes. Taxonomy used follows Mittermeier & Wilson (2015) for mammals and Avibase (2025) for birds, with details of the bird collections by Stein available in Roselaar (2003). This translation includes historic language about race and cultural practices. While we would not use this language ourselves, we have retained it here in order to remain faithful to Stein’s original text.

Part I: New Guinea

My journey was intended as a continuation of Dr Ernst Mayr’s expedition to Dutch New Guinea in 1928. It was to consist of ornithological research on several islands in Geelvink Bay, Waigeu Island, and finally the ascent of the Weyland Mountains, the western foothills of the Snow Mountains. Most of the funds were provided by friends of the American Museum of Natural History, New York, at the

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