



CEW Bean Prize Citation - 2016

Dr Tristan Moss

Tristan Moss: 'Guarding the Periphery: The Australian Army in Papua New Guinea, 1951-1975'

PhD, Australian National University

Although it is appropriate that much of the Army's history looks at periods of war, its role in peacetime is often overlooked. This thesis, then, breaks new ground in several ways. It examines the Army in a peace-time context, the experience of the families of soldiers as well as that of the soldiers themselves, and the construction of race in a colonial context in a solidly written examination of Australia's colonial army in Papua New Guinea. This work uses both archival and oral sources to examine the strategic, military and political factors that shaped the Army's role in the training of an Indigenous force on Papua New Guinea's path from colony to independent nation. In so doing, it gives equal weight to the voices of the coloniser and the colonised with some sensitivity, but does not avoid the more controversial elements that include the existence of a white enclave mentality, divisions between national servicemen and regulars, and tensions between the Australians and the men in the Pacific Islands Regiment that led to the disturbances in 1957 and 1961. A welcome component in the thesis was the analysis of the families of the men posted to Papua New Guinea, a too-long overlooked element in the Army's history, and the role of national servicemen. With its solid research, backed by a good command of the secondary literature, and its opening up of new territory in the history of the Australian Army, this thesis is a worthy recipient of the CEW Bean Prize for Military History.