Virtuous Sociality and Other Fantasies

pursuing mining, capital and cultural continuity in Lihir, Papua New Guinea

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Précis

This thesis is concerned with the cultural shifts that have occurred in Lihir, Papua New Guinea, as Lihirians were drawn into greater engagement with the capitalist system, initially through the colonial labour trade and more recently through large-scale resource extraction. This research draws upon 15 months of fieldwork in the Lihir Islands from 2003 to 2004.

This thesis is intended as a critical dialogue with world system theorists. World systems arguments are constructive for understanding how Lihirians have remained economically marginal. However, I reject the assertion commonly propounded in these approaches that the world capitalist system inevitably destroys ‘traditional’ cultures and remakes them to its own specifications. Working from Sahlins’ (1985, 1992) premise that there is always continuity in change, I have sought to illustrate those enduring structures and received cultural values that have shaped Lihirian engagement with the capitalist system. My concern is with articulation rather than penetration; to capture the dialectic of global structural inequalities and Lihirian selective appropriation. This approach allows me to emphasise the heterogeneity of Lihirian culture, not only prior to sustained European contact, or even mining activities, but specifically at the height of their engagement with the capitalist system.

Lihirians have long desired the kind of development that would enhance their lives and provide them with a sense of equality with their Western neighbours. Large-scale resource extraction has brought many material and cultural changes to Lihir. Aside from emphasising the economic differences between Lihirians and Westerners, it has also generated internal stratification. Lihirians have since become aware of the pernicious effects of incommensurable difference. For many Lihirians, the historical denial of a shared humanity with Westerners, and their unrealised desires for material wealth, coupled with the more recent experience of local inequality, have been the source of great distress; over time this has fuelled diverse and diffuse attempts to reverse this situation. I
have concentrated on the various ways Lihirians have sought to transform their lives and enable their ambitions for virtuous sociality – their ideal of an egalitarian and wealthy society configured on local social values. However many of their attempts have been flawed by internal contradictions. I demonstrate that not only do the majority of their dreams remain unrealised, but that they are also unrealisable.

In concentrating on Lihirian engagement with the processes of modernity, particularly as it is experienced through large-scale resource development, I have argued that capitalism has essentially ‘vitalized’ Lihirian culture, most evident in the manifold ways that Lihirians have selectively utilised aspects of capitalism for their own ends. However, I stress the vulnerability of this process, particularly as Lihirians have become increasingly dependent upon the useful things provided through capitalism, which in the Lihir case is ultimately contingent upon the extraction of a finite resource.
This is to certify that:

(1) this thesis only comprises my original work towards the PhD except where indicated in the Preface,

(2) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,

(3) this thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies, and appendices.

Nicholas A. Bainton
Preface

The information contained within this thesis was gathered in the course of research in the Lihir Islands, Papua New Guinea. This is my original work except where given due recognition through the citation of published and unpublished work by others. This research was not collaborated with anyone else. The information contained in this thesis has not been used to gain other qualifications, and work has been completed within my PhD candidature.
For Alex, Cheryl and Diana who kept me grounded in their own important ways.
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Typically throughout this sort of venture one tends to accumulate quite a few debts. Even though at times it often feels like a rather isolating experience, these are rarely solitary missions. Along the way various people have provided assistance in the form of intellectual support (and oft needed criticism), friendship, hospitality, and most importantly those distractions that help keep the whole experience in perspective.

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The biggest thanks of all to Bek and Demas and their families, the people of Kinami Village, and members of Tiakwan and Lamatik clans for inviting me into their lives, humouring my research, putting up with my mistakes and what would have seemed like a lot of strange behaviour, and for always making me feel welcome in Lihir. Apet.

Finally, thanks and praise to our Lord and Saviour, from whom all good things come.
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Prologue

The disenchantment of Cargo

When a large gold mine was constructed on the main island of the Lihir group in 1995, Lihirians began to envision that the sort of life they had long dreamed of was closer to being in their grasp. For the past century Lihirians have been beguiled by the sort of development that would enhance their lives and hopefully provide the moral equality they have been historically denied. Unlike so many of their Melanesian compatriots Lihirians were going to witness the realisation of past prophesies for material and social change that arose during previous political movements – albeit in decidedly unexpected ways. This large-scale resource development project precipitated tremendous economic change and social upheaval; literally in a matter of years Lihirians were propelled from a subsistence existence supported by sporadic copra sales into a modern industrialised economy. They shifted from moving on the periphery of the capitalist system to embracing one of its core activities. Given the changes that occurred within the past 10 years, it is tempting to say Lihirians have been completely bowled over by the juggernaut of modernity that has swept through their villages, men’s houses and social institutions. However, for many years Lihirians have been lining up ready to climb aboard and ride in the direction of the nearest trade store, car dealer, beer outlet or market place. Lihirians have not eschewed the accoutrements of modernity but have embraced the different means for their acquisition to develop their culture on their terms.

After nearly a year of living in Lihir I had become a fairly familiar face on the eastern side of the main island; people were used to me peddling around the island on my bike, stopping at various men’s houses in different villages to sit and talk or simply listen. I
had spent most of my time engaging with men, but I knew comparatively little about the aspirations and frustrations of the younger generation – that is, how they envisaged their future in Lihir. I decided to approach the local community schools and ask the teachers if they would indulge my research with a creative exercise with the students. I asked the children of grades four to six to either draw a portrait of themselves in the future, how they imagined they might look or what they might be doing, or write a short story on what they thought the future of Lihir would be like. Three of these stories\(^1\) from this collection best delineate those aspects of Lihirian history, desire, and entanglement with global processes which consume the thoughts, energies, and concerns of so many of the Lihirian I have come to know:

This story I heard from some grand parents they said long ago in the past when missionaries first arrived here on the island, they form a little group that was called Nimamar. This group was interested in talking about Lihir Island.

They said that in the future Lihir Island is going to develop. And they said, this thing like cutting copra, cocoa and so on is going to stopped. People of Lihir Island will not be sweating when searching for money. They will just sit and have free money coming in. They also said that Lihir Island is going to be like a city.

To conclude, now you can see that Lihir Island is changing and all things that thy said is now coming true. So you can see that people of Lihir Island will be happy in their live time.

Antonia Zanates. Grade Four, Kinami Community School; 2004
I think people in Lihir will not be able to do customs anymore, because now when people make custom they need one thing and that is money. In the future when mining ends, I think there will be no money or many kinds of good things. Where will the people in Lihir get their money from when they want to make custom? People will not be able to travel to other places to look for pigs to make custom. That is why I really think that custom will end too.

Scholastica Lendai. Grade 6, Lakuplien Community School, 2004

I think in the future Lihir Island will not be the same as today. There is going to be changes on our Island. In the future Lihir is going to be an enormous city. Lihirians will be living in high quality permanent buildings with facilities like stoves, TV set, video and fridges. The whole island will be using electricity instead of firewood and lamps. Their ways of earning money will change from what is today. They will no longer use things like fire wood or traditional ways of cooking.

Ways of transporting goods and people from place to place will be much easier. Each family will have a car of its own. Lihir is going to be full of rascals. I think in the future many young men and old men will leave their hausboi [men’s house] and live only in their high quality permanent buildings. They will find life easier and forget their traditional ways of life. Ways of education will be much different from now. Children will be learning and using computers and using modern technology. So Lihir will be different from what it is today.

Francisca Bek. Grade 6, Kinani Community School; 2004
Many of the student’s stories and portraits depicted futures characterized by technological ease and the ability to consume and use mod-cons of the latest variety, in a life typified by the symptoms of ‘modernity’. They imagined themselves living in a world of choice, where the future held infinite possibilities. More importantly they saw themselves as different from their parents and predecessors. Some imagined themselves as rock stars, carpenters, and accountants, or using computers, driving the trucks in the mining pit, operating the massive shovel tractors, or owning modern homes where their mother cooks on a gas stove and the children have their own bedroom. Girls drew themselves as air hostesses travelling regularly to Australia or as Miss PNG in a beauty pageant, while boys pictured themselves in the army or as police officers chasing raskols through town. Others described apocalyptic images of environmental change, social disintegration, abandoned traditions, and familial divorce. These symptoms of modern life included famine, disease, chaos, moral bankruptcy, migration, sad memories of relocation, and the idea that when the mine closes, life possibly might not be any better. For many, the past was compared with the present, and was conspicuously apparent in an anticipated future characterised by a regression towards “backwardness” and “traditional” daily toil.²

Together all of their stories and portraits captured more than I could have imagined about the ways Lihirians perceive their past, present, and future. They expressed the unequal distribution of wealth that shapes different hopes, the intimate connection between their lives, practices and the global capitalist economy, and their increasing dependency upon mining activities to remain active in the game of social advancement and ‘self improvement’.

In Lihir there has always been a lot of talk about the future. Various political movements, such as Nimamar, emphasised a new world order characterised by an abundance of wealth and an inverted political hierarchy. Not everyone has been convinced that mining is the fulfilment of these prophesies, nor is there agreement about possible prospects for Lihir. The changes and inequalities experienced through mining have only strengthened local resolve to achieve these earlier dreams. However, Lihirians have since been
presented with different, complex, and competing ‘roads’ to their ideal land of modernization. But as these stories revealed, not only is there difference of opinion in how to reach this desired state, but there is a diverse range of expectations about what this new life will entail.

The title I have chosen refers to this pursuit, and the manifold ways that Lihirians have attempted to fulfil their dreams that are often seemingly contradictory. I have italicised Other in an attempt to draw attention to its double meaning within this context: the multiple fantasies that different Lihirians hold, and the Other as an enduring category in both Western and Lihirian thought. Likewise, the subtitle has a double reading: here I am pursing greater understanding of the implications and inter-relationship between mining, capital and cultural continuity. Lihirians are engaged in a similar pursuit. They seek to understand the associated changes and connections. However, they are simultaneously pursing each thing: Lihirians want to accumulate capital and preserve their culture, and for many, mining is thought to be to the road through which this will occur – particularly if they can gain control over the processes of production, and ultimately associated wealth.

With this in mind, I have cast my gaze on the ways Lihirians have experienced modernity within the context of large-scale resource extraction, the articulation of local social, economic and political change, and their attempts to direct their lives in an altered milieu towards the different futures they all envision. This thesis is an attempt to understand what historically and culturally located Melanesians desire and seek. This is the story - the history - of what happens when the cargo actually arrives.
I have not used pseudonyms in this thesis. Although many of the male students wrote excellent stories, these three stories, which happened to be written by females, best captured the sentiments of change and future visions. I have presented these stories in their original English; some of the other stories were written in a mixture of Tok Pisin and English. No stories were written in the vernacular. Although Papua New Guinean students are educated for the first three years in the vernacular, for the remainder of their education they are expected to learn and use English. In many cases the national lingua franca Tok Pisin is more commonly used and more readily grasped. Throughout this thesis Tok Pisin words are italicised and vernacular terms are underlined.

Sigrid Awart, an Austrian ethnopsychologist who undertook field research in Lihir in 1990-91 made use of similar material, asking school children to write a short essay on the topic “what would I like to do after I finish Grade 6?” Although her masters thesis was written in German (in 1993), she published one article in English in 1995. In this article (which only became available to me after fieldwork) she makes reference to these stories. The occupational desires are generally similar to those listed in the stories I collected. However, as result of contemporary influences, the students I spoke with listed a greater range of occupations. While she notes that boys were generally more interested than girls in obtaining technical occupations off the island, I found a more even spread between the sexes with both girls and boys generally wanting to pursue a lifestyle outside of the village. However, the most noticeable shift was the number of students wanting a subsistence existence. Awart notes that out of 101 students, 22 percent of the girls and 16 percent of the boys wanted to become gardeners, whereas I found only three out of 120 students suggested they wanted this type of lifestyle. I found the students’ were more concerned about escaping this type of existence, or else they tended to think that mine closure would signal a return to subsistence living, which most considered a harder lifestyle.
Introduction

Working from the Men’s House

An (un)settling experience

I arrived late the first time I came to Lihir to begin fieldwork in mid 2003. The flight from Port Moresby was delayed and it was already dark by the time the plane touched down on Lihir loaded with expatriate and National mine workers returning for another stint on the island. I managed to catch a ride around to the other side of the island with a Lihirian mine worker who dropped me at Natingsangar hamlet in Kinami Village where I had arranged to stay. The place was empty; everyone had temporarily shifted to Lesel Village because only the previous day a young Lihirian man who worked for the company, who was directly related to those who I would become most closely aligned with, had unexpectedly died. As we pulled into Lambanam hamlet in Lesel where the burial feast was being held, I scanned at least fifty males within the confines of the men’s house, and twice as many women and children outside. People had begun gathering for the initial stages of the mortuary feasts that ‘finish the dead’.

I made my way into the men’s house enclosure and sat down with a few familiar faces I recognised from my earlier reconnaissance trip. This was my home for several weeks; here we ate, slept, and socialized. It would be the longest continuous time I would spend in one men’s house during a single event in Lihir. Throughout those weeks pigs, shell money, garden produce, trade store food, and cash were exchanged and consumed. Women prepared food for guests while senior men sat inside the men’s house and talked and chewed betel nut, while younger males brought them green coconuts to drink, tobacco to smoke, and plates of food to eat in the morning and night. Younger males
were expected to follow mortuary taboos that prohibited them from roaming, getting drunk, or acting in ways that drew attention to themselves or disturb the sobriety of the event. During the evenings I sat and watched as some of the older men spoke to the younger men and boys, describing earlier times, giving them instructions for appropriate conduct required of Lihirian males.

In retrospect I should have taken more notice of the movement of males, the mine workers who failed to attend, or who came to the men’s house for a few hours to socialize at night before retreating to their own homes for ‘proper rest’, or the sly drinking by some youths and senior men who simply could not wait until the official mourning period was over, or the attempts of one man to sell baked bread rolls in the men’s house for distribution. And had I been able to comprehend Lihirian language at the time I would have realized the talks being given by senior males were unlike the lessons these senior men received as young men from their maternal uncles, but were rather conspicuous harangues addressing new issues, new forms of behaviour and deviations from men’s house ethos and new concerns over the correct way to make *kastom* (custom).\(^1\) Several weeks later when the mourning period was finished and the taboos were lifted, the assembled men launched into a spectacular drinking binge, spending thousands of kina\(^2\) on beer and spirits, as men of all ages drank well into the following day stating that this was a time for *hamamas* (to be happy).

My introduction to Lihir society gave me a glimpse of an institutionalized form of sociality embedded within the men’s house; it also revealed the existence of new processes, values and tensions. People told me this was ‘true’ *kastom* (custom) and that they were practicing *’pasin bilong Lihir’* (the ways of Lihir). Although I was familiar with the surfaces changes in Melanesian kastom through previous experience in Papua New Guinea, as a fledging researcher, I was still momentarily struck by the initial difficulty of reconciling distinctly ‘un-traditional’ appearances with adamant assertions of authenticity. Kept awake by the sound of a generator that powered a bright light that seemed to shine exactly where I slept inside the men’s house, at the time it was hard to imagine how this could possibly be considered ‘true’ or ‘authentic’. The trade store food,
the blue plastic tarpaulin shelters, the trips to market in hired vehicles to buy more tobacco and betel nut for guests, the ferrying of pigs on the back of trucks, each one’s presence announced with a blast from a car horn, not the deep sound of a conch shell, and the excessive drinking, made the event appear like a parody; not quite ‘modern’, but certainly not ‘traditional’. But if it appeared ‘inauthentic’ or like a distortion of tradition, it was only because I was interpreting things according to my own fantasies of Melanesia rather than Lihirian conceptions of how a significant social event ought to proceed in such a transformed context. My unrealistic expectations (and disappointments), which contradicted what I already knew about contemporary Melanesia, emphasized the endurance of our Pacific ideals and our preoccupation with appearances that often preclude an adequate comprehension of cultural and historical processes. Perhaps this also reflected the lingering legacy of early Melanesian fieldwork that presented an entirely false image of a more ‘genuine’ anthropological experience on account of a ‘lack of contact’.

A virtuous culture

This event typified Lihirian ideals about virtuous sociality. It was collective event that honoured a deceased relative, it expressed community, clan and lineage solidarity: it involved important ‘traditional’ practices such as exchanging wealth and killing pigs – the institutionalised medium for articulating unity – and most importantly the occasion was enabled and enhanced through the expenditure of money and the use of recently introduced resources. It might not have conformed to everyone’s ideals for a ‘traditional’ event, and not everyone complied with social expectations, but this was a virtuous occasion. It was, as one man said, pasin bilong Lihir (the way of Lihir).

This highly contextualised occasion captures the manifold processes occurring within Lihir since the arrival of the mine - many of which form the central points of investigation within this thesis. Here we find contemporary Lihirian social reproduction - the endurance of “received cultural orientations” (Knauft, 1999: 218) within an “altered context” (Gewertz and Errington, 1991). It was an expression of core social values and
indigenous morality that reflected key aspects of Lihirian ideals for virtuous sociality, which include giving, sharing, reciprocity, egalitarianism and cohesion. We see how the presence of the mine and global capital pervades all facets of Lihirian life. Traditional mortuary feasting and ritual exchange of pigs and shell money - Lihirian kastom par excellence - are not insulated from the cash economy; rather, these practices are ‘invigorated’ by access to introduced goods and forms of wealth. The ‘spectre of inauthenticity’ (Jolly, 1992) reflects Lihirian desires for modern lifestyles and the unanticipated paradox of our time: that globalisation develops apace with localisation (Sahlins, 1999: 410). This event is telling of the tensions between Lihirian social ideals and the multiple paths for their achievement made available within this altered realm. More importantly, this event illustrates that Lihirians were not merely advancing towards the final destination in an inevitable world-historical teleology. They were actively shaping their lives and the forces that impinge on their existence; they were using our things for their purposes, and often with unforeseen outcomes.

Like many Melanesians, Lihirians have a deep concern with virtuous sociality. Indeed, Lihirians often argue that their society, which revolves around the institution of matrilineal men’s houses - sites of nurturance, generosity and social reproduction - is fundamentally geared towards the expression of virtue. Lihirians readily assert that their ‘real’ culture (before it was ‘tainted’ by Western influence) was characterised by strenuous egalitarianism. This is in spite of local leadership based on individual merit and ability to outmanoeuvre opponents and garner an expansive support network - what is generally understood as ‘big man’ politics (cf. Godelier and Strathern, 1991). In this instance, these enterprising individuals are recast as benevolent patrons. But even if Lihirians once exemplified the ‘original virtuous society’ there is a sense in which Lihirians have only recently become interested in being virtuous.

Notions of virtuous sociality are ultimately a particular manifestation of modernity. Following Trouillot (2001: 225), who draws upon Koselleck (1985), I take the sense of radical disjuncture between the past and the present and the perception that a different (and uncertain) future is both attainable and indefinitely postponed, to be among the most
crucial elements of the experience of modernity – essentially a regime of historicity. From this perspective, Lihirians have been decidedly modern for some time. The changes brought through early interaction with the colonial labour trade, mission endeavour, sporadic engagement with the cash economy, the gradual disenchantment of their world and the increasing discontentment that arose through realization of their marginal position on a national and global scale manifest in political movements that preceded the mine are emblematic of this modernity. Aspirations for virtue dramatically increased as Lihirians grappled with changes brought through mining activities. Social transformations challenged received cultural values and institutions; desire for a virtuous society emerged as Lihirians broke with the past and objectified their situation and imagined an alternative future.

Fantastic ambitions and ‘problem deflation’

I use the term ‘fantasies’ to emphasise the overarching themes in this thesis: Lihirian ambition for change, and the various means they have employed to enable these dreams which have consistently drawn upon ontological and epistemological ‘fantasies’. The word is not used disparagingly; rather it is to highlight the existence of ideals or strategies for affecting structural inequalities which often rely upon partial or imagined knowledge of the global economic system. Lihirians themselves often use the word ‘dream’ (driman) to refer to their complex desires for the future, to the imagined world that they will inhabit when the riches from the mine are disbursed. But ‘fantasy’ conveys both the notion of desire and the purposeful construction of the means and ends; they are not mere wishes. The transformations that are imagined are considered achievable – their possibility reinforced by the abundance of money that has come with the mine, material changes that have accompanied it and the long history of prophecies, dreams and desires that preceded them. More generally this thesis aims to reveal some of our own enduring ‘fantasies’ and misconceptions about Melanesia that consistently permeate ethnographic representations.
Lihirian fantasies for a virtuous society - where all Lihirians are wealthy - are historical and on-going. Since the colonial era Lihirians have desperately wanted ‘development’. Until mining began Lihirians were geographically marginal to urban centres and sites of economic activity. Despite over a century of interaction with merchants, labour recruiters, and missionaries, Lihirians existed in a relatively circumscribed and internally focussed cultural environment. Since at least the 1960s, even communities throughout the neighbouring district regarded Lihir as peculiarly insular. Lihirians desired change but this did not mean they wanted to become like us, or to become white. Rather, they wanted those things which they thought would enhance their lives and hopefully enable a shared humanity with their Western interlopers. In this sense Lihirian ‘fantasies’ can be understood as aspirations, dreams, or ideals.

From the 1960s onwards Lihirians responded to their position through a variety of political movements that interpreted this imbalance through local cosmological frameworks. Through a combination of enterprise, ritual and resistance they sought to reverse this inequality. These efforts were sustained by prophesies for change that emerged during this period. As Lihirians attempted to achieve their dreams, their ideas of development were couched in terms of ‘tradition’, collectivism and egalitarianism. Their purpose was to dislodge those who denied their equality – to convert their fantasies for a virtuous society into lived realities.

When mining operations began in 1995 many Lihirians initially thought this was the harbinger of predicted change - the economic salvation that would benefit all Lihirians and provide the desired equality with Europeans, the ultimate virtuous society. Simultaneously many were rightly concerned that economic development delivered through mining would generate an even more sinister form of localised inequality. Tremendous amounts of wealth were distributed throughout Lihir. The Government and the company considered the process of (unequal) distribution appropriate; people who could claim ‘ownership’ or control over land used within the mining area were legally entitled to receive this new wealth. These ‘landowners’ (*papagraun*), which in the Papua New Guinean sense of the term generally restricts it to the recipients of compensation for
land alienated for development or resource extraction (see Ballard 1997; Filer, 1997; Golub, 2005; Jorgensen, 1997), were paradoxically contrasted with ‘non-landowners’ – the majority of Lihirians who also claim ownership or control over land, which unfortunately does not fall within the mining area. This pernicious process of legal delineation soon divided the community. Those Lihirians not receiving royalty or compensation money felt allocation was awarded on an arbitrary basis that only benefited those with a particular relationship to specific portions of land. Their sense of frustration was compounded by the belief that they were entitled to their portion of mining wealth, or that ‘landowners’ should at least share this money because their relationships with ‘landowners’ were historically based on mutual assistance, a fundamental aspect of virtuous sociality.

Lihirians soon found themselves in the paradoxical position as ‘clients’ of what they perceived was their company. They were not the ‘managers’ of this new wealth, instead they were living in a new amplified situation of neo-colonial inequality. To be sure, economic transformation was rapid, and Lihirians were highly engaged with negotiations and the processes of mining, and they have regularly interrupted and influenced operations in order to gain concessions from the company. Yet, Lihir was being torn apart by processes largely beyond their control.

Lihirian leaders have tried to stem what they perceive as the most deleterious effects of change and to maximise the opportunities generated through mining to achieve their social and economic dreams. Their attempts at social engineering - to transform Lihir into their vision of a modern society - were diverse and diffuse. Many of the strategies devised and employed by Lihirian leaders have been inherently contradictory. Often the chosen means have been objectively incapable of achieving the desired ends. Contradictions and thwarted plans have been a recurring theme in Lihirian political and economic schemes for social advancement. Illusions about the nature of global capital ultimately frustrate their attempts to achieve the desired outcomes. These can be understood as fatally flawed fantasies underpinning their efforts to achieve virtuous sociality.
In our effort to discern the presumed logical consistency in various practices, traits and beliefs within sociocultural systems, we tend to overlook dysfunctions or inconsistencies. This bias, which Room (1984) describes as “problem deflation” (the tendency to deemphasise problems and incoherencies), often produces an unbalanced representation, most evident in earlier functionalist approaches premised on the anthropological fantasy of social cohesion. In order to produce an adequately ‘thick description’ of Lihirian fantasies that characterise their engagement with capitalism it is imperative to recognise the various forms, moments and absences in this process, and the ambiguities and ambivalences of Lihirian ambition. To avoid a romantic depiction of this engagement, particularly within the contexts of colonial administration and large-scale resource extraction, it is important not to sanitise local politics or desires, or overstate the efficacy of local activity. A lack of ethnographic perspective or what Ortner (1995) has called “ethnographic refusal”, can only generate inadequate comprehension of historically and culturally constructed processes. Thus, broadly speaking this thesis is about the relationship between these fantasies – the means and desires – and their attendant tensions, contradictions and consequences; what the various ideas of virtuous sociality mean and the ways different Lihirians have struggled to enable these ideals.

Points of departure

This thesis explores the changes that emerged within Lihir through large-scale resource extraction and its associated forms of economic development. My interest is directed at the various ways Lihirians have historically responded to change, their desires and frustrations and the persistence of cultural categories, beliefs and practices which influence daily practices and local attempts to fulfil dreams of social cohesion, equality, and a shared humanity. My analysis of Lihirian engagement with modernity through large-scale resource extraction is intended as a critical dialogue with world systems theorists, especially as propounded by anthropologists like Eric Wolf (1982), who essentially argue indigenous culture is only the product of the world capitalist system.
This position casts doubt over the authenticity and integrity of local cultures and the ability of indigenous people to affect the course of events that occur as they are caught up in the world system. Lihirian culture was keenly shaped as Lihirians were steadily drawn into the world system through early capitalist interactions in the labour trade, mission activities, the copra industry and finally through mining activities. While world systems theory is useful as a grand narrative for understanding some aspects of global economic processes, I reject the assertion commonly found in world systems arguments that the world capitalist system inevitably destroys ‘traditional’ cultures and remakes them to its own specifications (cf. Wallerstein, 1974, 2004). Nowhere has this been evident in Lihir where mining has unleashed global capitalist forces with a vengeance.

The central concern of my analysis is ‘development’ - externally-derived, planned change - an ambiguous and contradictory enterprise that privileges the interests of developers and certain community members (particularly ‘landowners’) over the majority of the local community. The focus on impacts of development on local spheres lends itself to post-development theories that articulate the kinds of negative processes associated with development projects and scenes of radical social change. However, the processes occurring in Lihir suggest that critical post-development theory must be used with caution to avoid engaging in fruitless debates over negative outcomes that usually deny agency to local actors who often consciously seek change and development (cf. Golub, 2006). From this perspective I have considered the type of development Lihirians wanted and why and how such desires were created.

As anthropologists we might delight in the diversity and multiple realities that are created by global forces, but on its own this approach will not do justice to the changes so keenly felt by individuals. Lihirians are active authors of their own history, but it is imperative to acknowledge local interpretations that highlight community fragmentation and the need for mutual support. This thesis explores the consequences of economic expansion and the relationship between Western nations and their developing counterparts; in particular how processes and relationships foster an attitude of dependency on multinational companies who exploit a country’s mineral resources under the guise of providing
economic and social development for the host country. This reliance, or what Filer has dubbed the “dependency syndrome” (Filer, 1995: 14), is most evident within local spheres, where community relations with the company are often formed around rent, royalties and compensation; relational foundations which rest precariously upon a mentality of ‘get what you can while you can’. Thus, understandings of mining and its attendant social consequences continue to be inflected with local cultural conceptions of change, wealth and expectations (Filer and Macintyre, 2006).

Globalisation is often used as a loose term to imply the processes whereby economic and political activities in marginal places are shaped or dominated by distant developed nations and their linked trans-national corporations. Other understandings emphasise the articulation of new forms of social organisation in an increasingly borderless world where flows of capital and new technologies propel goods, information, people and ideologies around the globe at unimaginable speeds (Lockwood, 2004: 1). Even though mining has provided infrastructure, technologies, goods and opportunities that culturally transform Lihirian lives and provide many with a sense of ‘interconnectedness’, most Lihirians have remained on the periphery of the global network. Villagers do not have access to the same technology and forms of communication that most Westerners take for granted within their homes. Although more information has become available through media resources, many Lihirians lack the educational and experiential background required to make sense of these new influences. Furthermore, given that community negotiations with the company are often based on misunderstandings about the price of gold and the prevailing belief that the company has access to inexhaustible funds which they are deliberately withholding from Lihirians, it is difficult to consider Lihirians as equally informed participants in any aspect of a globalised economic system (Macintyre and Foale, 2004b: 154). While I seek to further our comprehension of the types of innovative responses to change that arise within ‘altered contexts’ as structures and ideologies undergo change from internal desire for progress and external pressure to conform to ‘rational’ institutionalization, I maintain a critical stance towards global inequalities that preclude meaningful participation in those economic and political process that shape local lives.
In the remaining section of this introduction I define the key theoretical concepts that underpin my analysis of Lihirian responses to change. I then provide an overview of the ethnographic context and the particular events and historical processes upon which this research is based, followed by an outline of the progression of the chapters.

The inevitability of continuity and particularity

The misleading arguments in world systems theory have found new life in the grander theorising of globalisation that asserts that the global envelopes the local, creating similarity in the place of alterity. The significant issue in this thesis is the construction of particularity in the face of apparently homogenising and universalising forces. The discourse of globalisation is often uninformative because of an over-emphasis on global homogeneity. Too often we assume the globalising capitalist economy obliterates local economies only to remake them in its own reflection. However, as illustrated by the stories in the prologue, we can see that regardless of the ways “our epoch unleashes capitalism, it is always as an intertwining with local markets, paths of circulation, modes of production, and conceptions of consumption” (LiPuma, 2000: 12).

Neo-Marxist interpretations of cultural change rarely advance beyond Marx and Engels’ observation that the spread of capitalism “compels all nations, on the pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In a word, it creates a world after its own image” (Marx and Engels, 1971 [1888]:40). Such arguments generally presuppose a depressingly inevitable conclusion. World systems analysis and Marxist theory might have waned in academic popularity, but there is a lingering sensation that deep down most people still think that as the West materially and intellectually invades the rest of the world, peripheral peoples are merely “victims and silent witnesses” of their own cultural subjugation (Wolf, 1982: x). Too often we only pay attention to the ways people are encapsulated by the world system to “suffer its
impacts and become its agents” (Wolf, 1982: 23) rather than the ways they appropriate elements of this system for their own purposes.

If we are going to avoid these interpretive pitfalls - of delineating an inexorable and inevitable history (Errington and Gewertz, 2004: 10) - and genuinely understand cultural change, then we need an anthropology that locates indigenous people within their own history, not only ours. We require an anthropology that recognizes the multifarious ways all people are agents of their own history; an approach that emphasizes local articulations of global modernity and moves beyond simple binary oppositions between the West and the Rest while illuminating “the social and discursive space in which the relationship between modernity and tradition is configured” (Knauf, 2002b: 25). In a place like Lihir where Western capitalism apparently stands in opposition to ‘Lihirian culture’ it would be easy to revert to a dualistic approach. Many Lihirians do this themselves. Like a monument to the ‘immorality’ and exploitation of capitalism, the mine towers over local men’s houses and their ‘moral economies’ of exchange that sustain social reproduction (cf. Bloch and Parry, 1989). Looking like a Manichean showdown between the local and the global, it is only a matter of time before mining delivers the fatal blow that ensures Lihirians can do nothing more than recreate themselves according to an imposed image of civilisation. However, although mining projects epitomize modern technology and the distilled essence of capitalism, and bring the differences between the local and the global into stark relief, we cannot simply equate this moment of neo-colonial capitalist expansion with Lihirian history. As Sahlins argues, “it remains to be known how the disciplines of the colonial state are culturally sabotaged” (Sahlins, 2005e: 486).

If Lihirians are seen as somehow ‘inferior’ and ‘peripheral’ to modernity and history it is only because we have cast them this way; similarly when Lihirians perceive themselves as such, it is because they have adopted our definitions. This is not to deny that Lihirians have long existed on the margins of economic development, or that they are not justified in their desire for material and moral change. Rather, it is to highlight how Western discourses and modes of imagining the world and others so often shape local conceptions and cosmologies (Carrier, 1995a). Lihirians were not merely subsumed into our history;
while they existed on the margins of modernity, their lives were characterised by active encompassment. Thus, it is necessary to understand the field of struggle in which Lihirians find themselves as they wrestle with externally and internally derived change. I am interested in the cultural distinctiveness of Lihirians, not only apart from or before their encounter with Imperialism, the colonial Administration, or even mining activities, but also as they endure and challenge the ways in which capitalism is delivered, and more particularly how this uniqueness is manifest in their fantasies of a capacity to influence the world capitalist juggernaut.

Given the relatively limited textual records that exist for Lihir, it would be easy to ignore their history, or to pretend that prior to the arrival of the colonial Administration (or more extremely, even the mining company) the only thing happening in Lihir was the static reproduction of ‘traditional’ social forms; certainly some Lihirian renditions of the past would suggest this was the case. Thus some might argue Lihirians only gained a history when the first white men arrived, bearing fancy goods and homiletic sermons, implying Lihirians have no historicity or that historical processes are merely epiphenomenal to the real business of contemporary structural arrangements. However, as I demonstrate in chapter one, many Lihirians conceptualise the historical break in different ways that entail alternative conceptions of the cultural qualities of time and change: historical time is often configured according to the arrival of the mine, not the arrival of foreign goods or currency. For Lihirians syncretism and the utilisation of introduced forms of wealth has always been the systematic condition of their culturalism – their authenticity and autonomy.

An adequate account of Lihirian lives within the context of mining must be approached from a temporal perspective that concentrates less on enduring structural relations and more on the relations between structures and time (Schieffelin and Gewertz, 1985: 2). Here it is instructive to consider Sahlins’ approach to history and anthropology which is guided by the premise that “in all change there is continuity” (Sahlins, 2005b: 9). His theory of cultural change allows for a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between continuity and change that demonstrates how “the transformation of a culture is
a mode of its reproduction” (Sahlins, 1985: 138). More importantly his work reveals how continuity is an historical product, not the indication of a lack of history; continuity is the result of ‘happenings’, not stasis (1985, 1995, and 2005a). Sahlins has consistently worked to develop a theory that demonstrates how a culture can shape the processes of change and in doing so retain its integrity for a longer period than many typically expect – a theory that is committed to recognising the power of indigenous agency in securing cultural continuity in moments (or extended historical periods) of change.

His theories of continuity are most explicit in his work on Hawaiian history which outlines how an “event is the relation between a happening and a structure (or structures): an encompassment of the phenomenon in itself as a meaningful value, from which follows its specific historical efficacy” (Sahlins, 1985: xiv, emphasis in original). Sahlins understands events, or these ‘relations’, as the practical realization of the interaction of cultural categories in specific historical contexts - what he terms the “structure of the conjuncture”. It is this theory that best captures how cultural categories shape moments in history and can endure in spite of change, even in those cases where the other player represents the dominant forces of the global capitalist system, such as a colonial administration or a multinational mining company. What emerges is an image of particularity that results from the interaction of internal social and cultural structures with the external influences that effect change.

Developing integrity

Sahlins’ opposition to the determinate hegemony of world systems theory and his ideas on cultural continuity, indigenous agency and cultural integrity are most ‘economically’ combined in his lesser known “developman” model (Sahlins, 1992, 2005a). The term was coined out of his mishearing of a Papua New Guinean Tok Pisin speaker’s pronunciation of ‘development’. The developman paradigm is intended to capture that particular moment where indigenous peoples use Western goods (and institutions like capitalism and Christianity) to enhance their own ideas about life - ultimately the period where indigenous people use our things for their purposes. According to this model, which has
recently been subject to intense scrutiny (see Robbins and Wardlow, 2005), developman represents a “happy misunderstanding that seems to express truly the initial relation of Pacific island peoples to the encroaching Western economy” (Sahlins, 1992: 13). His neologism is meant to capture the “indigenous way of coping with capitalism, a passing moment that in some places has already lasted more than one hundred years” (1992: 13). He argues that the first commercial impulse of indigenous people is not to become just like us, but more like themselves: to build their own culture on a bigger and better scale than they ever had it (1992: 13). It is precisely development from the perspective of the people concerned.

Sahlins is renowned for his Pacific typologies: big men and chiefs remain the most enduring and contested political types in the anthropological literature (see A. Strathern, 1971; White and Lindstrom, 1997; cf. Godelier and Strathern, 1991; see also chapters two, six and seven for further discussion). His developman classification is easily recognised in many Melanesian societies: with the introduction of capitalism there have been more pigs and shells exchanged than ever before, not to mention the introduction of other exchangeable commodities that have made their way into kastom. Lihirians might argue that things were better in the good old days, but the ancestors have never been venerated with such style, colour and magnitude. In short, for Sahlins, developman represents nothing less than the “enrichment of their [indigenous peoples] own ideas of what mankind is all about” (1992: 14). For Lihirians, ‘development’ has always meant to develop ‘man’ – their analogue of virtuous sociality.

Lihirians have proven themselves quick students of commercial cunning – especially as they craftily extract concessions from the company – which they use to stage the most elaborate ‘traditional’ feasts they have ever known. Lihirian economic practices amply demonstrate that although Western capitalism is planetary in scope, it is not a universal logic of cultural change (Sahlins, 2005e: 495). Lihirian ‘inventions’ and ‘inversions’ of tradition are their attempt to create a differentiated cultural space within the world system – effectively the ‘Lihirianisation’ of modernity. Thus contemporary kastom (custom)
should be seen as a new form of cultural process, not the symptoms of the ‘death of culture’ or its incoherence or irrelevance (Robbins, 2005: 10).

When Lihirians talk about *kastom* (custom) and *pasin bilong Lihir* (the ways of Lihir) they are referring to a set of social values and institutionalised practices which they regard as axiomatic and enduring. In the context of rapid social change engendered through large-scale mineral extraction these values and practices have become the idiom for reified notions of Lihirian morality. In Lihir, *kastom* is the principal arena for enacting this morality. More generally *pasin bilong Lihir*, which explicitly draws impetus from Lihirian discourses of *kastom*, is a comment on the appropriate way of doing ‘traditional’ activities and ‘being Lihirian’ (essentially the embodiment of dominant social values such as virtuous sociality). Lihirian notions of *kastom* and *pasin bilong Lihir* reflect their concerns about cultural change. They are abstractions from practice that draw upon reconstructions of the past where people were supposedly more giving and caring, and performed traditions according to how they were received from the ancestors; a time that was stable, static and ‘authentic’. They represent disjuncture with the past and the disembedding tendencies of modernity, as characterised by cultural reflexivity and the perception of a different future.

While it was once an established anthropological tradition to regard contemporary *kastomary* practices, such as the one I described at the beginning of this chapter, as signs of cultural decadence or a factitious recuperation that only reproduces a simulacrum of a dead past (Sahlins, 2005e: 479), it has also become increasingly common to see Lihirians rejecting contemporary *kastom* and arguing for a return to more ‘genuine’ practice. Yet as Roger Keesing and various others have noted, the leaders of these cultural revival movements are often among the most acculturated people (Keesing, 1982b: 371; 1989; see also Babadzan, 1988; Filer, 2006; Foster, 1995b; Narokobi, 1980). In Part Two I show how educated Lihirian leaders simultaneously repudiate the values of the West in the name of ‘tradition’, while promoting neo-liberal ideologies as the key to advancement. Their answers to the development riddle – that is, how to achieve a wealthy virtuous society – include the conceptual and practical sealing off of tradition from
modernity, understood locally as *kastom* and *bisnis* (business, or the wider cash economy). But as we will come to see, Lihirian predispositions towards develop*man* and the inextricable bond between global capital flows and local economies reveal the ‘fantastic’ elements behind these strategies.

Disjuncture, or confirming continuity?

If develop*man* represents the processes of expansive cultural reproduction, then what is required to break this cycle so that people will embrace Western values and make achieving development the definitive goal? How do people move from one stage to another? Sahlins has generally not considered the types of transformation that rupture the process of cultural continuity-in-change. As a *sequitur* to the bulk of his work, he suggests the answer lies in cultural humiliation; that is, people will not stop interpreting the world through their received cultural categories and bending things to fit their values until they come to see their culture – their values and categories – as worthless. Before they abandon their culture they must:

> pass through a certain cultural desert to reach the promised land of “modernization”…People must first learn to hate what they already have, what they have always considered their well-being. Beyond that, they have to despise what they are, to hold their own existence in contempt – and want then, to be someone else. (Sahlins, 1992: 23 - 24)

This is a critical observation. Most Lihirians have not yet come to see themselves or their culture in this way. However, there was a small selection of Lihirian leaders bent on maximising the opportunities presented through mining to establish development. They rejected the processes of develop*man* – the essence of contemporary Lihirian culture which is geared towards achieving local notions of virtuous sociality. Their intention was to modernise Lihir according to perceived Western values: to hasten the transition from develop*man* to development.
While these men were specifically concerned with change, their plans and attempts to rupture the developman phase actually served to highlight the continuity of Lihirian cultural traits. As we shall see in Part II, their endeavour to impose a perceived modernity problematises Sahlins’ model of disjuncture, specifically because their plans sought to create a grand, modern Lihirian society. They were simultaneously rejecting developman while inadvertently reproducing the same process of cultural continuity in more complex ways. Either these Lihirian leaders were still wandering through the desert of cultural humiliation and had not yet reached the other side, or their activities emphasise that cultural transformation does not occur on a linear scale. Rather it occurs as people negotiate their way between these two idealised and supposedly opposed states.

The experience of these Lihirians precisely illustrates the presence of continuity in the processes of change and the limitations with Sahlins’ notions of cultural rupture. What this thesis seeks to present are the tensions that exist as people move between developman and development and negotiate a new hybrid space: the cancellation of essentialised difference through imaginative synthesis (cf. Errington and Gewertz, 2005; Foster, 2005). It is here that cultural transformation takes place. Transcending the binary opposition between developman and development is crucial for avoiding the same totalised distinctions between the West and the Rest.

Lihir and its gold mine

The Lihir islands, comprised of Niolam, Malie, Masahet and Mahur, are situated off the east coast of mainland New Ireland (see Map 1). With lush tropical forests, white sandy beaches and fringing coral reefs, these islands conform to European fantasies of the South Pacific (see Plate 1). Despite their involvement in the cash economy through mining operations, in 2003 Lihirians were predominantly subsistence farmers, harvesting small amounts of marine life from local reefs. Senile copra and cocoa plantations are the only signs that prior to mining operations Lihirians embraced some form of income-generating activity. Over the past century the population in Lihir has gradually increased from 3626 in 1925 to 5505 in 1980 (Filer and Jackson, 1989: 29). As mining operations got
underway there was a significant population increase with many ‘expatriate’ Lihirians returning to Lihir to benefit from mine related development. The combination of returned Lihirians, improved health facilities, more resources to support larger families and perhaps the Catholic Church’s messages against contraception, meant that by 2003 the population had risen to approximately 11,000. This figure excludes the presence of approximately 1000 expatriates and Nationals (the term widely used for Papua New Guinean citizens) working for the company, as residents or on a fly-in-fly-out basis, and an estimated 2000 migrant Papua New Guineans.

The gold mine is situated in the Kapit Lado lam area of Niolam Island (see Map 2). The Lihir project has been operated by Lihir Gold Limited, which was owned by a consortium, with Rio Tinto (17.5 percent) and Vengold (18.5 percent) being the largest shareholders, and with a public shareholding of 39 percent. Rio Tinto managed the project through the Lihir Management Company (LMC). In 2005 the Rio Tinto management agreement ended and a new independent CEO was appointed.
Unlike other mining districts in Papua New Guinea, Lihir does not have a history of alluvial gold mining. Gold traces were initially discovered during a geological survey of Papua New Guinea conducted by the Bureau of Mineral Resources (BMR) between 1969 and 1974. The results fuelled great expectations for substantial gold reserves on Niolam. The report identified hydrothermal alteration and thermal activity on Niolam, suggesting the possibility of an environment favourable to epithermal gold mineralisation. Prompted by these promising projections, in 1982 Kennecott Explorations Australia (KEA) and its joint venture partner Nuigini Mining Limited employed Macnab and Rehder to conduct sampling work on the islands.

Rock chips sampled off the base of the large Alaia rock situated along the coast in the Luise Harbour yielded favourable samples which averaged 1.7 grams of gold per tonne. Based on these results Kennecott lodged an application for an Exploration License which was granted in 1982; extensive drilling was carried out between 1983 and 1992. The Alaia rock is effectively in the middle of the Special Mining Lease (SML) area and acts as a cap to the main lode. More significantly many Lihirians believe this is a sacred place,
Map 2 The Lihir Group
the spirits’ entrance to the afterlife. Consequently this rock has become the source of political struggles between Lihirian ‘landowners’ and the company. While the company would dearly love to remove this spiritual monument to access gold reserves found underneath the rock, Lihirian ‘landowners’ have forced the company to recognize the cultural significance of the site and have used this to extract concessions from the company in the form of compensation payments (see Macintyre and Foale forthcoming).

In 1988 the RTZ Corporation (now Rio Tinto) acquired Kennecott from BP Minerals America and took over as the joint venture partner with Niugini Mining Limited. The Joint Venture conducted several years of extensive drilling as well as detailed metallurgical test work and geotechnical, geothermal, groundwater, environmental and engineering studies, which finally culminated in the Feasibility Report for the Lihir Project. Following community consultation and the submission of the Feasibility Report to the Papua New Guinea Government, the Joint Venture was granted a Special Mining Lease (SML) on 17th March 1995, valid for the forty year term of the company’s Mining Development Contract. In June 1995 Lihir Gold Limited (LGL) was incorporated in Papua New Guinea for the purpose of acquiring the Lihir Joint Venture Project. Four months later, on 9 October 1995, the initial public offering of shares was made.

The Integrated Benefits Package

In June 1995 the major stakeholders of the mining operation – the Lihirian landowners, the State, and the mining company – reached a landmark agreement known as the Integrated Benefits Package (IBP). This package is a contract that outlines the specific range of agreements and memoranda that cover different aspects of mine related development, including compensation, housing relocation, infrastructure commitments by the Local and National Governments and the mining company, and commitments relating to environmental monitoring. This agreement was the result of nearly a decade of stakeholder negotiations and became “the new benchmark within Papua New Guinea for such arrangements” (Banks, 1998: 62; see also Filer et al, 2000: 53 – 58, and 71 - 76).
Lihirians had played ‘hard ball’ with the State and the mining company and eventually secured an agreement that gave them 50 percent of a 2 percent royalty rate, which was far higher than any other Papua New Guinean landowning group had ever received, and 30 percent of the national Special Support Grant to the provincial authority. The IBP also includes funding for a village development scheme to be managed by the Local Level Government that provides 1 million kina per annum for the construction of houses, water supplies and other amenities throughout all villages, regardless of whether they are in the ‘affected’ zone or not.

This agreement was to be reviewed every five years, meaning the first renegotiation would begin in 2000. In the first years of the construction phase from 1995 to 1997 the company spent over an estimated K80 million on community benefits and landowner compensation (Filer et al, 2000: 100). However, Filer notes that in 1998 he found most Lihirians were still dissatisfied, regardless of their share in the proceeds (Filer, 2001: 15). From my observations in 2003 - 2004 not a great deal had changed. The IBP review was still underway which meant the review process was coming to rival the original negotiation period (see Filer, 1995). This review process provided the opportunity for Lihirian leaders to assert their idea of modernity. This on-going negotiation is the context in which I explore how Lihirians leaders reconstructed previously held Lihirian dreams, and reproduced themes and practices from earlier political movements such as Nimamar.

Construction, Compensation, and relocation

The construction phase began in November 1995, giving many Lihirians their first opportunity to experience wage labour. Despite community fears that mining could result in similar social disruptions to those experienced in Bougainville (see May and Spriggs, 1990; Spriggs and Denoon, 1991), most Lihirians were generally enthusiastic about the opportunity to work and earn money. Many Lihirians described this as an exciting period characterized by the introduction of conspicuous consumption. It was also the inauguration of community disruption and escalating economic stratification. By 1997, the construction of the processing plant was complete and the mine began turning out the
first bars of gold. Since then, the amount of gold produced annually has increased from 244,258 ounces to over 600,000 ounces per year. Current estimates indicate open pit mining will continue until at least 2020, during which time high grade ore will be processed. Lower grade ore, which has been stockpiled, is expected to be recovered and processed over the subsequent 28 years.

In accordance with the IBP, Kapit and Putput villages were relocated to clear the SML zone for operations. Putput villagers had land within close proximity to which they could relocate, which meant they could retain a semblance of village cohesion. But Kapit villagers lacked land nearby that was not required for mining operations. Many had access to land in the south-Western side of Niolam, while the remainder resettled in other areas, meaning Kapit people became more dispersed.

When the IBP was signed the lease areas under customary tenure were divided into 140 ‘blocks’ of differing size, and most of these blocks were assigned to a ‘block executive’ ‘nominated’ by the respective landowning clan. Several of these blocks have been the subject of continuous dispute causing severe division within villages and between clans. The lease area under customary ownership, which excludes the Londolovit Township, portions of the Luise Harbour, and other areas previously alienated such as church blocks or government land, amounts to approximately 2700 hectares, which equates to roughly 15 percent of the surface area on Niolam that remains under customary title (Filer and Mandie-Filer, 1998: 3). The IBP has provisions for the payment of various types of compensation to six villages on the northeast side of Niolam that possess varying degrees of land within the mining lease zone (Putput 1 and 2, Kapit, Londolovit, Kunaye, and Zuen).

Not all residents of these villages had equal rights to the land within the lease zones, and in many cases these ‘landowners’ were not even resident in these villages, instead residing in villages outside the ‘affected’ area. Filer and Mandie-Filer suggest this reflects the combination of village exogamy, virilocal residence and matrilineal inheritance, and the ability of some men to usurp the titles which might have otherwise
been claimed by more junior, or less powerful men within their clan (1998: 4). The main compensation agreement recognized 90 “block executives” with either disputed or undisputed claims over one or more of these 140 blocks (see Filer and Mandie-Filer, 1998: 3 - 4; and Filer et al, 2000: 97 - 100). Nearly all of these executives were men, and in the cases where women were given seniority, they were often still subject to the demands of their male kin. Within the ranks of these 90 block executives there is further division as 58 of these men have customary claims over land in the Special Mining Lease (SML) zone and the remaining 32 only have land claims in the other (‘less prestigious’) lease areas. SML block executives are entitled to a 20 percent share of royalties in addition to compensation for damages and destruction to resources. Within this group of SML block executives is an even more ‘elite’ group of core SML ‘landowners’ who act as family or clan ‘heads’ and have the responsibility (or obligation) to distribute mining money throughout their respective clans. Tensions invariably flare when this money is not distributed according to people’s expectations. On average SML block executives received an annual income of at least 20 000 kina; this might be the envy of ‘non-landowners’, but in reality this money is stretched between demands from extended kin networks. Nevertheless, in 2006 the unequal payment and distribution of mine related wealth continued to be the biggest source of community division.

In addition to compensation distributed throughout the ‘affected’ area and the general construction of infrastructure throughout the islands, Lihirians benefit from the Village Development Scheme (VDS). This was initially intended to finance the construction and maintenance of basic infrastructures and amenities throughout all villages, but has essentially become a housing fund whereby funding is allocated to each ‘ward’ (see below) for the construction of several new permanent houses every year. It is up to Ward Members and the village planning committees to decide who receives these houses, and the style of house to be built (see Plate 11). In many villages these VDS houses have become flashpoints for jealousy and hostility, spurred by questions over ownership, land upon which these houses are built, inheritance, and whether the company or Lihirians are responsible for maintenance costs. Although many Lihirians eagerly await their own
Representing Lihirians

Lihirians are represented by a variety of institutions and bodies that enable them to exercise direction over community life and the social transformations that emerged in the context of large-scale resource development. The main organisations are the Lihir Mining Area Landowners Association (LMALA), the Peztorme Women’s Association, the Nimamar Rural Local Level Government (NRLLG), and the church leaders who represent the various denominations throughout the island. Ideally these institutions work together to serve the community, but in reality they function in such a way to ensure most Lihirians are not well informed about the political processes and decisions taking place on their island.

LMALA was initially formed during the negotiation phase. Although it was specifically designed to represent those within the ‘affected’ area, to some extent all Lihirians expected LMALA would represent their interests. LMALA has its own offices located in Londolovit, a fleet of vehicles, a hierarchy of staff and a body of ‘executive members’, and enjoys considerable administrative and financial assistance from the company. Similar to Filer’s earlier observations I found that most men on the LMALA payroll appeared to spend more time standing around the LMALA offices, acting as ‘heavies’ who shore up the association’s authority in the presence of the mining company’s Community Relations department located directly opposite LMALA offices (Filer and Mandie-Filer, 1998: 7).

During the negotiation period community members nominated a young Mark Soipang as President6 of the organisation who would supposedly fight for the rights of all Lihirians. After partially completing some tertiary studies in Lae, he was promoted by Lihirians as a ‘saveman’ (educated man) who could interact on behalf of his community with Western
company representatives. He played a major role in the negotiation of the IBP and later went on to assume directorships of both Lihir Gold Limited and Mineral Resources Lihir, which serves as the trustee for Lihirian equity in Lihir Gold Limited. Mark Soipang’s leadership and interaction with the company and the State has been strongly influenced by some strident advice from Francis Ona. Like most Lihirians, Mark Soipang is extremely mistrustful of whites and Government representatives. However, with the escalating inequality in Lihir, and Mark Soipang’s rise to relative power, status and wealth, most Lihirians shifted their suspicion and anger from foreigners and the Government to Soipang and his close associates. Lihirians living in the ‘non-affected’ areas have become increasingly hostile towards LMALA and Mark Soipang’s Presidency, which in their opinion has not delivered the expected goods. This is undoubtedly fuelled by his coveted lifestyle; he occupies LMALA House (which is built in the style of those constructed for resident senior mining employees and only exceeded in size by the CEO’s house) at the Marahun town site (see Map 2 and Plate 9; see chapter three for description), drives a four-wheel-drive vehicle, and regularly jets off the island to overseas locations for ‘business negotiations’. Regardless of whether Mark Soipang and LMALA actually serve community interests, most Lihirians primarily see the disparity between his life and their own living standard, which reinforces their desire for a wealthy egalitarian society.

At the level of local community governance all Lihirians are represented by the Nimamar Rural Local Level Government (NRLLG) which emerged out of an earlier political body called Nimamar (mentioned in the first story in the prologue) which was overtly antithetical towards the State (see chapter one; see also Filer and Jackson, 1989: 173 - 182; Filer and Mandie-Filer, 1998: 13). Lihir is divided into fifteen wards, represented by ‘democratically elected’ Ward Members. Although the original Nimamar members have since been replaced, many Ward Members remain suspicious of State and company intentions. The NRLLG is one of the wealthiest local governments in the country due to funding received through Special Support Grants and mining royalties.
Lihirian women are represented by the Peztorme Women’s Association (PWA) which was originally formed when the company realised the need for a women’s section within the Community Relations department. The first task of this section, which was headed by a Lihirian woman trained as a social worker, was to form an overarching women’s organization that would bring together women from different villages and church denominations and provide assistance to women in those villages that had been relocated due to mining operations. In Lihir Peztorme means ‘working together’; this name was meant to capture the spirit of the organisation. With administrative and financial assistance from the company, the PWA supports women’s economic activities such as marketing, and regularly organises educational programs in cooking, health and nutrition, and provides an important voice for Lihirian women who seek recognition of their status as landowners in a matrilineal society (see Macintyre, 2003).

On the spiritual level Lihirians are well represented by a variety of church leaders who intercede on their behalf with their Maker and increasingly in the secular realm with their ‘developer’. In addition to their pastoral duties, church leaders have been drawn into the political sphere of mining negotiations and development and are often expected to disseminate information to the community and work with other bodies to help alleviate and find solutions to growing social problems. At least 80 percent of the population nominally subscribes to Catholicism, while the remainder is divided between the United Church and an array of charismatic and revival style denominations.

Reviewing the IBP and the formation of the Lihir Joint Negotiating Committee – challenging and facilitating Lihirian fantasies

In 2000 the review process began for the IBP. It was expected that this would be a relatively easy affair and it was hoped that it would take only a year to finalise. This review process saw the formation of the Lihir Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) comprised of Lihirian representatives from LMALA, the NRLLG, and other local businessmen and influential and educated Lihirian men (see chapter six). This group had
the task of representing Lihirian interests throughout the renegotiation of this agreement with the State and the company. It was primarily seen as an opportunity to reflect upon the first five years of the mining, to assess what had and had not been achieved, and to find solutions to new issues and concerns that had arisen. After five years of mining, Lihir was already in the advanced stages of the “resource dependency syndrome” (Filer, 1995: 14). The JNC initially saw these negotiations as an opportunity to secure the economic future of Lihir through more concessions that would supposedly benefit all Lihirians. Their major concern was to redress economic inequality; they had not yet devised plans for post mining scenarios, particularly continued service delivery, and the maintenance of vital infrastructure and the standard of living associated with industrial employment and higher per capita income. Initially they aimed for increased compensation (in the most inclusive sense of the term, cf. Burton, 1997; Jackson, 1997) rather than ‘economic autonomy’.

During this period the JNC were introduced to the Personal Viability course, which had radical ramifications for the review process (see chapter five). The Personal Viability course (commonly known by Lihirians as ‘PV’) was designed by a Papua New Guinean-born Chinese businessman who hoped to address grassroots ‘poverty’, Papua New Guinea’s struggling economy and national dependency upon foreign aid through the development of an entrepreneurial class. The sentiments of PV reflect notions of bottom-up development, self sufficiency, Christian morality, a neo-Protestant work ethic, Western individualism and faith in neo-classical economics. It is a jumble of nationalist and entrepreneurial sentiments, designed to compel individuals to play their economic role for themselves and their country. PV has been endorsed by the national Government and various religious institutions who promote PV as the new answer for Papua New Guineans. PV received mixed reactions throughout Lihir, ranging from total commitment to ideological opposition based on a comparison with the supposed morality of Lihirian economic and social values. The Government has regularly used the course for ‘capacity building exercises’, and there has been a growing interest among community groups looking to advance their own grassroots economic activities.
The JNC were highly receptive to the philosophies of PV which became the foundation upon which they would attempt to achieve their concept of a modern Lihirian society. This entailed all Lihirians adopting PV values and practices – a process designed to curb ‘wasteful’ development ways and develop economic rationalist sensibilities. The IBP review became the context in which the JNC designed their Lihir ‘Destiny Plan’ – what they called the Lihir Strategic Development Concept (LSDC) - moving the focus from the immediate future to the long term economic viability of Lihir, with particular emphasis on the post closure stage. Ultimately this plan fused neo-liberal ideologies with previously held dreams or prophesies for ‘becoming a city’ and on-going aspirations to control mining operations. Their intention was to maximize the opportunities in the IBP to gain the sort of development that would fulfill their idea of the Lihirian ‘destiny’.

Many of their ideas could not be accepted by the company or the State who refused to allocate funding for plans that appeared unstable, unlikely to work and unlikely to be positively received by the wider community. As I demonstrate in chapter six, the JNC had devised neat models that supposedly accounted for every aspect of economic development; however these were based on a stylized (and in many respects partial) understanding of Lihirian society, politics and economic practices: ignorance of mining operations and idiosyncratic interpretations of the wider system of capitalist relations. In meetings with the company they often appeared doctrinaire, refusing to accept alternative options or approaches to economic development. Although most of the compensation aspects of the IBP were agreed upon (those concerning SML payments and delivery of services and infrastructures), there has been little concord over those aspects regarding the funding and imposition of PV. Gradually these plans grew in scale and complexity to include a Lihirian-run bureaucracy that would generate a nation of entrepreneurs; as Lihirians developed themselves they would lead the charge to save their floundering nation. The State shifted between supporting their plans for economic autonomy and dismissing them as ‘cargo cultists’, while the company worked extremely hard to interpret their intentions and desires and reach a satisfactory agreement.
The company was offering the most attractive benefits packages in the history of Papua New Guinean landowner compensation. They were committed to spending 100 million kina over five years until the following review. This included the entire range of compensation and royalty payments, development of infrastructure and service provision. Given that this expenditure would be largely contained within Lihirian shores this was an exceptionally large amount of money concentrated on a disproportionately small area and population. The JNC rejected this offer, claiming that it would take at least 4 billion kina to develop Lihirians and ‘balance’ the disturbance generated through mining. With their new awareness of ‘holistic human development’ gained through PV, the JNC were adamant the IBP must meet the needs of all individuals.

This ambit claim was not a copycat performance of Francis Ona’s infamous demand for 10 billion kina for damages caused by the Panguna Mine in Bougainville (see Filer, 1990, 1997). Lihirians have not yet undergone the same level of social atrophy or experienced similar environmental destruction. Rather, this was intended as a bargaining chip. The JNC realized their demand was simply unfeasible; their intention was to express their commitment to PV and their ‘Destiny Plan’. By their logic, if the company could not meet their request, then they had no alternative other than to support the JNC design. This revealed the extent to which both parties were approaching compensation from different angles. For the company compensation should be proportional to the level of destruction, and once payment is made, all on-going obligations are negated; for the JNC, compensation was aimed at developing new and on-going economic relationships (cf. Jackson, 1997: 106 - 108). The company argued they often exceeded their obligations in areas of development and community service provision and that their offer expressed their altruistic intentions. On the other hand the JNC appear to have interpreted the Mining Act to mean the company should fund anything regardless of scope or nature.

Effectively the JNC told the company they wanted to develop themselves in isolation; the only role for the company was to economically facilitate these plans. In their words, “the mining company was the stepping stone for the ‘Lihir Destiny’ of “financial
independence and self reliance”. The company responded by saying they could not fund or support what appeared to be a politico-economic manifesto that would potentially have immense socio-economic implications for Lihirians under a system likely to bring the company into conflict with the Government – a somewhat hypocritical point given the social, economic, and political impacts inherent to mining operations. As one company representative stated, the PV system was untried and untested and they were hesitant about locking the people into a system that “emphasises personal income, via entrepreneurial development”; instead they preferred to encourage (perhaps more insidious) wage labour relations. Regardless, the JNC were resolute, they were convinced they had finally discovered the key to economic prosperity and refused to adjust their plans.

Several times negotiations reached a stalemate and by 2006 the review was still underway. These negotiations and the plans of the JNC, particularly the imposition of PV, capture the changes, tensions, and contradictions in Lihirian engagements with modernity and their longing for social and economic advancement. More importantly for the purposes of this thesis, this ‘Destiny Plan’, represents the reconstruction of Lihirian desire, and the unwitting reproduction of ‘cargo’ like behaviour – namely an insular political perspective and the mimetic performance of neo-liberal strategies.

Modern Lihir in the global network

Since the advent of mining Lihirians have been thrust into the modern world; compared to previous years and other rural Papua New Guineans they have considerable access to modern services, infrastructures and technologies and an enviable amount of money: more than 8 million kina has entered Lihir each year in wages to Lihirian employees, compensation and royalty payments. Lihirians have benefited through the establishment of the mining town in Londolovit which contains numerous supermarkets and speciality stores and businesses, a fully manned police station, fuel outlet, and banking facilities, and offices for the mining company, LMALA, and various Government agencies such as the district magistrate, agricultural officer and health officer.
Lihirians have gained from the construction of a modern hospital that it is staffed by two doctors (an expatriate and a National), a team of nurses and ancillary staff, and a fully stocked pharmacy. Although a hospital was required to service mining personnel, it was designed and constructed on a larger scale so that Lihirians and people from the surrounding district could make full use of this service. The presence of this hospital has also meant upgrades for the existing Catholic Mission hospital at Palie, and the construction of village Aid Posts in all wards. Health facilities and programmes in Lihir rival those found in many urban areas and exceed almost all other rural areas in Papua New Guinea.

In addition to this, Lihirians have access to a variety of media sources and telecommunications. The national papers are delivered daily to Lihir, TV services exist in villages close to the mining area, and there is a daily flow of Lihirians and non-Lihirians on and off the island who act as important conduits for information about life outside Lihir. In short, mining has already brought a lot of the material, cultural, and temporal features of ‘modernity’. Lihirians are not equally informed participants in the global economic system, but compared to their neighbours and to pre-mining days, Lihirians have become decidedly more ‘connected’ and exposed to the lifestyles and cultural visions of others very different from themselves.

The chapters

While there is a certain linear progression to these chapters, I have written in a compositely cumulative style. I have tried to convey the ways Lihirians responded to change and to delineate cultural continuity in a period of transition. I approach this from two angles: the wider and historically located community response – which represents the processes of developman; and the JNC’s reaction manifest in the ‘Destiny Plan’ (a result of the peculiar context in which they are located) aimed at enabling their vision of a modern Lihirian virtuous society – what they understand as development. In Part One I contextualise their scheme and what they seek to change through neo-liberal philosophy.
In Part Two I consider their attempt to instil change, the historical themes that feature in their approach, and the contradictions in their strategy that ultimately impede accomplishment.

Chapter one provides an historical perspective on the economic and social changes occurring within Lihir prior to mining operations, particularly their encompassment into the world system and the various ways Lihirians responded to marginality through political movements understood by the colonial Administration as ‘cargo cults’. In the minds of many older Lihirians, the beliefs and prophesies for change that emerged during this period contextualise the arrival of mining operations. My purpose is to illuminate those aspects of Lihirian history which continued to shape the political and economic climate of large-scale resource extraction.

In chapter two I outline the social structures and received cultural orientations which influence practice and social ideals. I explore the notion of pasin bilong Lihir and the principles and influences behind Lihirian social and economic practices. In chapter three I shift my attention to contemporary Lihir and outline the social and economic transformations that arose through mine related economic development; specifically, the rise of inequality associated with the arbitrary distribution of wealth between ‘landowners’ and ‘non-landowners’. I argue that while there are traces of class formation, community division is best understood according to the status associated with the capacity for conspicuous consumption.

In chapter four I consider the processes of development. Building upon the previous chapters, I delineate how Lihirians engaged with money, why their attempts to accumulate capital were often frustrated, and why Lihir has not become stratified according to the classic image of ‘owners’ and ‘workers’. I specifically take issue with Robert Foster’s (1995a) dualistic model that separates kastom and bisnis as ideological and practical spheres; here I illustrate the interconnectedness between the cash economy and Lihirian ‘traditional’ exchange practices.
In Part Two I concentrate on the Personal Viability course, the Lihir ‘Destiny Plan’ and the extent to which local economic activity is entwined with the global capital trends. Chapter five addresses the potential and realised effects of Personal Viability and its function within the ‘Destiny Plan’. PV is essentially an introduction to the assumptions of ‘possessive individualism’; its emphasis on the individual aspects of personhood and private wealth accumulation often generate tensions within the village. Moreover, while many Lihirians embraced PV as the means for economic development, in some cases the PV course was understood as a means unto itself – it was supposed that merely attending the course would affect economic outcomes. The repetitive rote learning of mantras and ideal economic practices provided the template for the ‘Destiny Plan’ which encourages behavioural regulation.

In the sixth chapter I provide a detailed description of the Lihir ‘Destiny Plan’ as set out by the JNC. I aim to show the influences and continuities with past political movements and attempts at social and economic advancement. I argue that their plan for achieving a modern egalitarian and rich society (based on rejecting ‘cargo beliefs’) is inherently contradictory given their reliance on PV’s neo-liberal philosophies and that they want to achieve social equality through economic competition. I demonstrate how the position of the JNC – in terms of their access to money and their commitment to PV – enabled them to convert existing micronationalist sentiments into an actual blueprint for a micronation: the ‘Lihir Destiny’.

The emergence of Lihirian kastom discourses profoundly shaped Lihirian practice and ideology. In chapter seven I concentrate on kastom as a particular aspect of change, the question of ‘authenticity’, and the relationship between kastom and Lihirian ethnic identity. As part of the ‘Destiny Plan’ the JNC began codifying kastom to assist social and economic regulation. Codification was deemed essential for ‘cultural preservation’ and market regulation. Their aim was to standardise kastomary practice to control the amount of money channelled into kastom – to alter the processes of development. This approach was based on the fantasy that once kastom is identified it can be separated from
bisnis or the wider cash economy, thus preserving the purity of kastom and the integrity of the Lihirian economy.

In chapter eight I return to the men’s house with an account of a particular mortuary feast. Here I demonstrate through ethnographic description the interconnection between kastom and bisnis, and the ways in which kastom is sustained by the cash economy. Together these chapters illustrate the extent to which Lihirian lives are thoroughly entwined with the global capitalist system and the ways which the JNC disregard this reality in their attempt to accelerate the transition from developman to development.

In the concluding chapter I return to the relationship between Lihirian fantasies and their historical and on-going engagement with the capitalist system. In the final section I offer a brief ethnographic addendum by way of conclusion. The specific and interlinked events and processes I describe serve as concluding points on the themes of continuity and change, desires for virtuous sociality, and the vulnerability and fate of the developman process.

A note on ethnographic enquiry

Field research was conducted over a fifteen month period between 2003 and 2004. In 2006 I returned to Lihir to maintain relationships and finalise remaining aspects of my research. During my initial reconnaissance trip in early 2003 I was welcomed by the Ward Member for ward four, Francis Bek, who lived in Kinami Village, and adopted into Tiakwan clan as his ‘maternal nephew’. This provided the reference point for my (fictive) kin relations with other Lihirians.

Throughout fieldwork I lived in Kinami Village. I deliberately chose to position myself outside of the ‘affected area’. Villages in close proximity to the mining lease zone, such as Putput, Kapit, Londolovit, and Kunaye, had already been the subject of numerous studies conducted as part of the company’s general social monitoring programme (see
Filer and Mandie-Filer, 1998; Filer and Jackson, 1989; Macintyre, 1997, 1998b, 1999; Macintyre and Foale, 2000, 2001). More importantly, while villages such as Putput had undergone the most obvious changes and were more closely involved with mining operations, this also meant they had become the subject of frustration, anger and suspicion throughout the wider Lihirian community. Many Lihirians have come to think that ‘landowners’ have been the only people to really benefit from the mine. Being situated outside of these villages provided an important viewpoint from the ‘outside looking in’ that demonstrates the ways all Lihirian lives are implicated by the project.

The title of this introductory chapter signals the nature of my fieldwork and my perspective within this inquiry. My time was often spent within different men’s houses. Therefore this research presents a largely male orientated perspective. Like so many other male field workers my relationships with women were never as sustained or close as they were with men. While I made endeavours to speak with women, the sexual division within Lihirian society, reinforced by spatial dynamics where males largely socialise in men’s houses and are expected to participate in related activities, often made it difficult to achieve the same level of rapport with women that I could with men. No doubt this was aided by my status as a young single white male; despite being incorporated within kin networks, interactions with females always had the potential to be misconstrued.

I primarily maintained a village lifestyle, which included participating in collective garden work, preparations for kastomary feasts and raising my own pigs. Although there was always temptation to retreat to the mining camp and indulge in expatriate life, I made a conscious effort to distance myself from the company and camp life in order to establish myself within the village.

Although I did not conduct ‘multisited’ research in the strict sense of the term, I rarely spent an entire week within Kinami.11 This reflected the high level of mobility in Lihir made available through increased transport options, and the number of significant events in other areas that were necessary to attend. It also reflected the nature of my work as I became increasingly involved with people from other areas, and shifted some of my
research interests to government workers, bureaucrats, mine workers and landowners. This approach allowed me to concentrate on a field of relations rather than a fieldsite. The efflorescence of *kastom* meant that some weeks I was continually making my way around the group of islands attending different *kastom* events. As the re-negotiation of the IBP became more intense, my time was often consumed with attending public meetings in Londolovit, or meetings between the JNC and the company and the Government. I made numerous trips off the island to other centres such as Rabaul and Kavieng to speak with politicians and other leaders, to attend Personal Viability events with the JNC and

Plate 2  A village interview, Masahet Island (photo by Simon Foale)
other Lihirians, or to simply accompany Lihirians as they took advantage of the opportunity to travel and maintain relationships and business ventures in other areas. I travelled to Misima Island in Milne Bay Province with a group of Lihirian landowners (at their request) to speak with Misiman landowners about mine closure. In addition to this I made several trips to mainland New Ireland with Lihirians to stay with non-Lihirians related through marriage or existing exchange partnerships. This research experience reflected the dynamism of contemporary Lihir and Papua New Guinea more generally – a reality that cannot be understood through studies that concentrate on isolated villages premised on the idea of a contained community.

A note on the descriptive tense

I have eschewed anthropological conventions for writing in the present tense about events and institutions I observed during the period of 2003 - 2004. The peculiar timeless air of the present tense does not illustrate how Lihirians grappled with modernity in a particular time and space. There is great temptation to describe events and processes in the present tense when little time has lapsed between research and writing, and especially when many of the things I have considered remain relevant and are recurring at the time of writing. Given my interest in cultural continuity, particularly as it is expressed through change, working in the present tense would only deceive the reader and provide a false sense of Lihirian cultural homeostasis. Lihir has changed in dramatic ways over the past century and was in a rapid state of transition while I knew it, and no doubt it will continue to change in the future in ways that suit some and frustrate others. None of the things I describe in this thesis are immune to this process.
When I arrived I was already familiar with Tok Pisin. This allowed me to enquire about discussions taking place in the men’s house at the time. However, it was not until later on when I gained some competency in Lihirian that I could really appreciate the different character of these original discussions. During later interviews it was brought to my attention that these older men were disciplining the younger men on new and contemporary issues.

Kina is the national currency in Papua New Guinea. In 2003, 1 kina was valued at approximately 0.45419 Australian Dollars. By 2006, 1 kina was valued at approximately 0.46886 Australian Dollars.

While the Lihir gold supply is not suitable for alluvial mining, many other mining areas throughout Papua New Guinea once featured in the early gold rushes. The majority of literary work on the early gold rushes concentrates on the innovative use of technology, aircraft, the scale of undertaking, the wealth created through mining activities, and the often caustic relations between Western miners and Melanesians. In particular see Demaire 1936; Gerritsen and Macintyre, 1986; Healy, 1967; Jackson, 1991; Kulah, 1983; Martin and Ouellette, 1981; Nelson 1976; Newbury, 1975; Sinclair, 1979.

‘Block executives’ refers to the legal title of leaders of clans or groups who owned ‘blocks’ of land within the SML area. They were the principle signatories for group accounts for royalty and compensation payments.

initially Lihirians wanted houses that looked like the Government houses they had seen in Kavieng and Rabaul. These high-set weather board houses were considered by many Lihirians as the epitome of modern living. Many of the relocation houses were built on this design. As the mining company constructed the residential camp at Marahun (see chapter three), many Lihirians readjusted their tastes to suit their new influences. The differences between Lihirian and expatriate homes, which reinforce the structural inequalities within Lihir, have continually fuelled Lihirian discontent. Some Ward Members opted for simpler designs which meant they could construct more houses each year. Other Ward Members have used part of their budget to just purchase materials for community members who use these to construct semi-permanent houses or to ‘renovate’ their existing homes.

Mark Soipang was initially the President of LMALA until his title was changed to Chairman, which was possibly an attempt to appear more ‘modern’ by adopting the same hierarchical titles used within the company.

Francis Ona led the Bougainville Rebellion Army and played a pivotal role in the Bougainville rebellion (See Bedford and Mamak, 1977; May and Spriggs, 1990; Oliver, 1991; Spriggs and Denoon, 1991; Thompson and MacWilliam, 1992; Wesley-Smith and Ogan, 1992; West, 1972). Ona was pro-secession and later became the self appointed leader of the Mekamui Kingdom, which was an enclosed ‘no-go’ zone on Bougainville. He died in his Guava village due to illness in 2005.

The authority of Mark Soipang’s leadership has always been contingent upon his ability to mediate between the company and the often extreme demands of his fellow community leaders. Controversy over his birthplace and maternal line has persistently surrounded his leadership. Interestingly there are no records of Mark Soipang’s matrilineal history on the community data base compiled by consultants. As a member of the Tinetalgo clan he has considerable claim over several high paying ‘blocks’ within the SML zone. It has been suggested by many people, particularly his opponents, that his mother originated from the Tabar Islands, indicating a tenuous relationship with the Tinetalgo clan.

Bishop Ambrose Kiapseni, a Lihirian, once wryly commented to me that Mark Soipang “is the biggest con-man on Lihir...he is the Chairman of the landowners and he doesn’t even own any part of that place. He is a complete stranger in Lihir and he is claiming to own everything in Lihir”. According to the Bishop, Mark Soipang’s great grandmother was brought out to Masahet Island for protection; she was marked as a compensatory payment because members of her clan had killed and eaten someone from another clan from Tabar. While Bishop Ambrose Kiapseni might easily offer opinions and criticise Mark Soipang’s leadership from his spiritual refuge in Kavieng without fear of repercussions, there have been plenty of people in Lihir willing to voice the numerous suspicions, doubts, and resentments associated with Mark Soipang and his relative success.

Nimamar is an acronym formed from the names of all the Lihir Islands that is supposed to represent the unity of Lihir.

The label “cargo cult” has always been grist to the anthropological mill, providing fuel for debate about the Other and our own cultural Self. The label continues to be a useful description because as Jebens notes,
they are good to think with, but also good to think against, for both ‘us’ and their alleged adherents (Jebens, 2004: 1; see also Robbins, 2004b). Throughout this thesis I continue to the use the term despite negative connotations because Lihirians use this label to describe their past activities, both negatively amongst critics and positively among followers.

11 Multi-site research challenges ethnography's tradition of defining fieldwork in terms of people and places, reinforcing the need to study culture through exploration of connections, parallels and contrasts among a variety of often seemingly incommensurate sites. For discussions on multisited approaches to ethnography see Marcus, 1986: 171 – 173, and 1998; see also Tsing (1993) for an excellent example of multisided ethnography.
Part I
Chapter One

The genesis and escalation of desire and antipathy

In light of Lihirian reconstructions of the past and their concerns about the present I am tempted to present pre-mining Lihir in a way that resonates with their images of stability, cohesion, morality, and order. However, while Lihir has been undergoing metastasis for some time, there is little evidence that Lihirians were not always subject to mutability and the inherent instability of political formations. Without suggesting an earlier time of harmonious social cohesion, any ‘stability’ that once existed was purely the result of leadership qualities that were still ‘relevant’ to the social and economic climate. Each generation required new leaders equipped to deal with new changes. However, large-scale resource extraction invariably produces change at a faster rate than local communities (and their leaders) can adjust to (cf. Jackson, 1997: 106 - 107). The recent changes in Lihir highlight capitalism’s pervasive and detrimental effects on even the most flexible social structures, especially through resource development.

There is growing scholarly interest in the ways local narratives of the past are reconstructed from a point in modernity, which often contain antinomies narrators fail to recognize. Recent ethnographic studies in Papua New Guinea have provided historicist accounts that address this reconstruction (Errington, 1974; Gewertz and Errington, 1991; Gewertz and Schieffelin, 1985; Knauf, 2002d; Neuman, 1992; Schieffelin and Crittenden, 1991). In Errington’s study we find that Karavarans in the Duke of York Islands divide their sense of history and time into the present and a distant past characterized as state of ‘anti-society’ known as momboto (Errington, 1974: 19). Contrastingly, Lihirians rarely spoke of such times; only when pressed did they speak of ‘savage’ pre-contact activities,
that were highly romanticized, especially in their renditions to anthropologists. Instead, Lihirian time and history pivots on the start of mining activities and the disruption of the past ten years. Unlike the Karavarans who spoke of a precariously ‘disordered’ past which they distinguish from an ‘ordered’ present, Lihirians compared their state of perceived social anomie with an Edenic and ‘ordered’ past. Social history has been divided between mining and pre-mining days in a process that essentialises the past and the present as dichotomous states.

Lihirians would often contrast the recent changes experienced in the context of mining with a supposedly stable past (bipo). These accounts are deeply imbued with a “structural nostalgia” (Herzfeld, 1990) which emphasises their ‘plight’. It is often in Lihirian political interest to minimise the perception of historical change prior to the commencement of mining. This narrative of unprecedented rupture imposed on an ‘unchanging’ social environment is so pervasive that I doubt many Lihirians would accept a rendition of their history that did not position them as hapless victims of the world system. Those who did not receive large amounts of royalty and compensation payments, new houses, or were provided with on-going high paid work, primarily told a story of relative deprivation and ‘pitiless subjugation’: whites (and more recently the National elite) have always denied them legitimacy, integrity, wealth, knowledge, equality and dignity. Indeed, as many Lihirians will doubtless disagree with my account of their experience of resource development - that posits them as extremely active agents who shape the course of their own lives, and not always for the best - some would argue the least I can do is present their past as constant, static and idyllic. It is impossible to deny that mining has been profoundly disruptive to all facets of Lihirian life, but it would be fallacious to pretend that life prior to the mine was undisturbed and not constantly fraught with the potential for crisis. From this perspective I have tried to uncover the points of articulation that constitute our complex and entangled history.

In this chapter I present a short history of economic and political activity in the Lihir Islands. This account is written with a particular academic purpose and therefore is likely to remain partially conjectural. An historical understanding of the ways Lihirians shaped
and understood the colonial project is necessary in order to comprehend the processes that would keenly influence the course of events during mining operations. Principally I consider how Lihirians interacted with external influences, from early plantation labour recruiters through to the Australian Administration, and Lihirian political, economic and epistemological transformations. More precisely my aim is to uncover why the *Tutukuvul Isakul* Association (TIA) - which evolved into TKA, and later Nimamar - found such fertile ground in Lihir and in doing so, to present a genealogy of Lihirian marginality, discontent, desire and escalating antipathy towards the Administration and later the National Government.

This is not strictly an ‘ethno-history’ (Gewertz and Sheffelin, 1985), although I have utilised personal accounts and tried to present some recitation of the way Lihirians recall their past to themselves. There is historical material of some substance and depth; however it is not my central objective to provide a total account of Lihirian history. Australian Government patrol reports have been especially useful, augmenting historical anecdotes or memory narratives collected during fieldwork. The reports elucidated my knowledge about the failure to generate a viable copra industry and later political developments organised around the TIA. The work of various Pacific historians (such as Corris, 1968; Denoon, 2005; Firth, 1976, 1982; Price and Baker, 1976; Scarr, 1967; Siegel, 1985) provide significant insight into the early stages of plantation labour. On the whole these authors support the view presented here that Lihirians (and other New Irelanders) were not mere puppets of the colonial order, and nor were they ‘forced’ into wage labour. Their history is not of timeless essence, but one of active engagement and interconnection with the forces that sought to alter their lives.

**Intersecting histories**

With a history of inter-island contact, internal change to modes of social reproduction, and decades of sporadic interaction with passing traders and explorers, Lihirians were steadily drawn into the sphere of greater external influence when Germany first acquired Melanesian territory in 1885. Officially known as ‘The Protectorate of the New Guinea
Company’, this area stretched from the northeast mainland of New Guinea to the northern and eastern islands, covering the Bismarck Archipelago, New Britain, New Ireland, Lavongai (New Hanover), and Manus. Geography largely determined where the Germans settled – mainly along the more ‘hospitable’ coastal regions. The primary reasons for their presence were to make money and to impose a foreign system of administration upon the inhabitants. This was the order of priorities institutionalised in the government of the colony from 1885 to 1899 by the Berlin private firm, The New Guinea Company, later perpetuated from 1899 to 1914 by the endeavours of the German Imperial Administration. During the period of imperial reign there was great emphasis on instilling colonial authority through the imposition of government institutions, however the main concern remained the development of a plantation economy through private investment (Firth, 1982: 4).

When Australians commenced occupation of German New Guinea in 1914 as a result of the First World War, they inherited a territory where European control was largely limited to the coastal fringes. They found an ‘ordered’ system of local authority with some 650 New Guinea men empowered by the imperial administration as village police men (known by the Germans as ‘soldier-police’), and village ‘chiefs’ and their assistants, called luluais and tultuls (Firth, 1982: 2). After nearly thirty years of ‘control’, thousands of New Guinea men had entered the international labour trade or signed on as plantation labourers throughout the protectorate. The cessation of German rule and the commencement of Australian occupation led some New Guinea men to believe that they would be free to flee their German employers, break their contracts, and escape back to their villages. The first task for the Australians was to ‘reassure’ people that although the Germans no longer held authoritative sway, the hierarchical order remained the same: whites were vested with power to direct the lives of Melanesians, or as Firth appositely states “it was the old colonial order under new management” (1982: 2).

Lihirians had entered the global system of capital and labour ‘exchange’ in the latter part of the 19th century with the expansion of the Queensland labour trade. By 1883 the north Queensland sugar industry had boomed, utilizing new technology to produce greater
amounts of sugar. However, as Corris argues, while this signalled progress for white inhabitants of Australia, “it did not alter the fact that, as organized in 1883, the sugar industry depended for its existence upon a plentiful supply of cheap coloured labour: the greater the expansion of the industry, the greater the demand for ‘kanakas’” (Corris, 1968: 85). A significant number of men from the New Ireland district went to Queensland to work in the sugar plantations as indentured labourers. Men and women were recruited from various places, with little uniformity across the region. For instance, in 1883 649 men from Lihir signed on – an extraordinary number given that the population for the time was approximately 2000 people – compared to only 368 from Tanga, 37 from Feni, 28 from Tabar and 240 from New Ireland (Price and Baker, 1976: 116). Lihirians also featured in the Fiji labour trade, albeit in much smaller numbers, offering up eight men between 1876 and 1911. Similarly some 36 males from Simberi (Tabar Group), 104 from Lavongai and 325 from New Ireland made their way to Fiji (Siegel, 1985: 53).

While this indicates an undeniable degree of colonial exploitation, the labour trade was also ‘exploited’ by New Guineans for their own purposes. Recruiting was often shaped by pre-existing conditions and relations within a given area. The 1883 figures suggest that, compared to their neighbours, Lihirians were more willing recruits in the labour trade. Lihirians appeared to be headed on a prosperous economic trajectory: a higher number of men being introduced to wage labour and new consumer goods would possibly generate greater desire to trade labour for money and commodities. However, initial enthusiasm for labour participation never translated into organised and sustained economic activity for Lihirians, though perhaps not always for lack of desire, as Lihirian economic fate largely came to rest in the hands of the Australian Administration.

By 1884, public attitudes towards the labour trade began to shift. Douglas Rannie’s personal account of the 1884 voyage of the Heron to the islands east of mainland New Ireland provide a partial and idiosyncratic (yet insightful) view of the dynamics of relations between New Irelanders, traders and recruiters. Rannie recounts the experience of a European trader on New Ireland who had previously attempted to establish a trading
station in the Gerrit Denny group (Lihir). Making his way to Gerrit Denny (Lihir) with four New Irelanders, the trader found after the first night one of his men was missing:

A search was made for him, and they came across his remains, parts of him having been cooked and eaten. They then started in pursuit of the cannibals, with the intention of punishing them for their atrocity; but the brother of the murdered man, eager for revenge, got a long way ahead of his friends, and before long they also came across his remains served up in the same manner as the first victim. So the trader returned to New Ireland with his first two remaining men and gave up the idea of starting a station at the Gerrit Denny [Lihir] group for the time being. (Rannie, 1912: 271)

This is not an example of a Lihirian predisposition towards the rejection of foreign capitalist incursion. Rather, here we begin to see evidence of Lihirian ambivalence towards economic development. As I demonstrate throughout the following chapters, Lihirians have historically expressed a desire for the introduction of economic activity, but they have always wanted this on their terms.

Recruiting efforts were often shaped by the state of local affairs. After visiting Tanga and recruiting approximately thirty men, some accompanied by their wives, including Ambulull, a renowned Tangan big man, the Heron set sail for Lihir. There they were met with a mixture of caution and hostility, as east coast Lihirians pelted stones from slingshots into the boat. Fleeing the area and later landing in more hospitable waters further along the coast, Rannie found that Ambulull was well regarded there as a wise man and a warrior. However, despite Ambulull’s apparent popularity, Rannie only succeeded in recruiting nine Lihirian men. It was suggested they try Fisher Island (Tabar). Upon arrival at Fisher Island they found people equally cautious and that Ambulull could not converse in Tabar language. Rannie “picked out the most intelligent” Lihirian man who was named Paba. He was reluctant to go ashore and explained that Lihirians had recently been engaged in warfare with Fisher Islanders, and that only a “short time ago a Fisher Island canoe full of warriors had visited his island, and had never returned” (Rannie, 1912: 56). Once Paba made himself known to the Fisher Islanders, a great volley of stones and spears were thrown towards the boat. Forced to retreat,
Ambulull suggested they head back to Tanga where there would be more willing recruits (ibid).

These short examples help to counter Wolf’s “quintessential” snapshot of the “forcible recruitment of Melanesians” (1982: 334). In *Europe and the People Without History*, Wolf pursues an anthropology that is simultaneously ‘global’ and ‘particular’ where ‘peripheral’ peoples are not just the passive objects of Our history. But as far as Melanesians are concerned, they might be “participants in the same historical trajectory” (1982: 23), but their history is still written as Our history of pursuit. In a single paragraph his desire to avoid equating the history of the colonized with the history of the colonizers appears to come unravelled (1982: 334): Melanesians have acquired a history, but it is only a tale of exploitation, victimisation, and deprivation. As Sahlins argues, Wolf invites us to see people as historic agents, but instead he only reveals how they “were drawn into the larger system to suffer its impact and become its agents” (Wolf, 1982: 23, quoted in Sahlins, 2005d: 416). When considered alone, these recruitment figures support Wolf’s argument and only provide partial insight into Lihirian experiences with the labour trade. Without ‘details’ we are no closer to understanding their actions and how they shaped our ‘shared’ history. The purpose of this chapter is not just to illustrate that Lihirians served European needs or that their ‘marginal’ status was the result of the expansion of the capitalist system. My attention to detail is intended to show how Lihirians were agents and authors of their own history. Indeed, a key purpose of this thesis is to illustrate how Lihirians steered their history, dramatically conditioning the events, processes and relationships that emerged during mining activities.

**German Imperial Rule**

Labour experience soon shifted to more local waters when the Queensland government reacted to the high mortality rate of New Guinea islanders working abroad. Some 800 islanders died on the plantations, with 85 from New Ireland and New Britain dying between May 1883 and February 1884 (Corris, 1968: 95). The Queensland Premier was forced to ban all recruitment from these areas, reportedly stating that “the natives were
totally unfit for the work, and only came to the colony to die” (quoted in Corris, 1968: 95). Although recruiting efforts later focussed on the D’Entrecasteaux and Louisiade archipelago, the death rate continued to soar (Corris, 1968: 95). Between 1885 and 1899, German possession of New Guinea was principally under the administration of The New Guinea Company, whose intention was to convert the area from a ‘trading’ frontier into a plantation economy. Initially all efforts were concentrated on the mainland of Kaiser Wilhelmsland (mainland New Guinea) around the Astrolabe Bay district. Given that the newly contacted peoples of this area had not previously been involved in the labour trade to the extent of the New Guinea islanders, many were reluctant to work. This meant plantation labour had to be sourced from New Britain and New Ireland. Initial enthusiasm for plantation work soon gave way to reluctance and hostilities towards recruiters as people learned of the risks associated with work in Kaiser Wilhelmsland. Firth suggests these risks are best summarised in a single statistic: an average annual death rate of over 40% among the 2802 islanders who passed through Kokopo control station on their way to the Astrolabe Bay and Western Kaiser Wilhemsland plantations between 1887 and 1903 (Firth, 1976: 53).

Before long New Irelanders were loath to travel and work in these areas and began responding aggressively towards traders and recruiters. The disproportionately high number of Lihirian men who initially signed on for the trade should not suggest Lihirians (or other New Guineans) enjoyed entirely peaceful relations with their new ‘guests’. Violent interactions between traders, labour recruiters and New Guineans were common in northern New Ireland, partly fuelled by community anger and resentment over the loss of kinsmen in plantation labour. Kaiser Wilhelmsland was gaining a reputation in the New Guinea Islands “of being the place where there was ‘no kaikai [food], no Sunday, plenty fight, plenty die” (Firth, 1982: 38). Lihirians might have been gaining an appetite for new consumer goods brought through the mobilization of labour but the loss of kinsmen was not yet considered a fair trade:

Men sought vengeance for the loss of kinsmen on plantations far from home. NGC [New Guinea Company] recruiters in the area of the Lihir Islands near New Ireland were subjected to what appeared to be a planned attack in March 1884, when nine new recruits
fell upon them with their bare hands while kinsmen gave support with axes. The German helmsmen and at least two New Guinean crew were killed. (Firth, 1982: 38)

Reluctance to engage in wage labour stemmed from the atrocious working conditions and a more general realisation that the existence of ‘successful’ workers was not necessarily better than village life. Such sentiments were captured in the words of one Lihirian who in 1900 reportedly asked the Governor Rudolf von Benningsen “why villagers should go to the plantations when they had plenty to eat at home” (Firth, 1976: 54).

Recruitment for Queensland, Fiji and later the Gazelle Peninsula plantations was often thought to be based on “blackbirding” - the kidnapping of unwilling ill-fated islanders. Missionaries were habitually prone to describing the labour vessels as “slavers” based on their assumption that islanders generally failed to comprehend the realities of the contract (Scarr, 1967: 139). Some Pacific historians have reassessed these assumptions, suggesting that once islanders were aware of contracts and the opportunity to travel, they signed on (and off) of “their own free will” (Firth, 1976: 52), and importantly, that the labour trade “required the substantial consent of all concerned, which was, in a considerable measure, forthcoming from the islanders who were involved with it” (Scarr, 1967: 139). However Firth also notes that as Europeans encountered difficulties acquiring labourers, individual (or local) consent was progressively given less importance and replaced by more direct methods of coercion in order to ensure a sufficient flow of labour from villages to plantations. Converting New Guineans into workers was the highest priority of the German Administration; it would serve their own dual purpose to develop the area and provide a source of economic revenue. New Irelanders, like most New Guineans were eventually going to be transformed into labourers whether they liked it or not, effectively meaning recruitment was “transformed from a labour trade into systematic labour mobilization” (Firth, 1976: 52).

The German Administration was steadily consolidating its authority, which began in earnest when the Imperial Government assumed control over German New Guinea in 1899. The new government learned critical lessons from the New Guinea Company,
which had tried to have its imperialism at the expense of rule: if New Guineans were
going to be a useful (and exploitable) labour force then they would have to be brought
under organised ‘control’ (Firth, 1976: 55). A vital element in the mobilization of
plantation labour and the implementation of colonial authority was the installation of
local ‘chiefs’ or luluais, appointed by the German government. These men fulfilled the
need for an outward appearance of obedience to the European official. Luluais were told
to be “unquestioningly obedient to officials, to protect the whites, to settle disputes
among their own people and to depend on the government for defence and security”
(Firth, 1982: 64). With the introduction of forced labour in 1903 and the later imposition
of head tax, luluais soon became an important government apparatus:

Luluais were from the first responsible for the maintenance of roads and bridges in the
village areas. Their minor police powers were mainly as agents of the government police
force. At one time they were seen to have had responsibility for the collection of head tax
where it was imposed, and to have been allowed to retain ten per cent of what they
collected. The luluai had to arrange for the presence of fit adult males for forced labour,
and after the introduction of taxation, for labour in lieu of tax. (Rowley, 1958: 217)

By 1905 the Germans were drawing more of the Namatanai Station District into their
“sphere of control” as Tanga and several villages in both Lihir and Anir were organized
into administrative units. According to The Annual Reports by the end of 1905 one
hundred and sixtyeight ‘chiefs’ had been appointed throughout the district, with 139 on
Neu Macklenburg (mainland New Ireland), twelve in Tanga, nine in Anir, and eight in
Lihir (Sack and Clark, 1978: 257).

In addition to their ‘administrative’ tasks, luluais served as instruments of pacification,
assisting the Germans to suppress local warfare. During fieldwork, older Lihirian men
recalled stories passed on from previous generations about raids, cannibalism, and
warfare between themselves and people from other villages and islands, particularly the
Tanga islands (cf. Bell, 1935a: 82; see also Powderrmaker, 1971 [1933]: 185 - 86). The
renowned German ethnologist Richard Parkinson recalls:
On the island of Lir, or Lihir, an act of cruelty is still prevalent which will hopefully soon belong to the past. Should the chief have a craving for human flesh, he assembles his entire tribe including the slaves who have been acquired during raids, having previously shared the name of the sacrificial victim with a number of his trusted friends. All sit down in a broad circle on the open ground of the village. At a signal from the chief the chosen few fall upon the victim, hold him fast and poke a hole in his body behind the collar bone. Small, glowing-hot stones are crammed into his body through this hole, and the unfortunate person is then released. He staggers about in appalling agony until death releases him. (Parkinson, 1999 [1907]: 119)

It is difficult to confirm the extent of this warfare and the exact time when organised fighting and raids ceased. Much Lihirian knowledge of the past has been lost or reconstructed so that written documents often contradict contemporary oral history. While I could not confirm this particular account, Lihirians would routinely valorise their history of cannibalism, emphasising their ‘savagery’ to illustrate their shift to ‘modernity’.7

After nearly thirty years of European presence, the Annual Reports for 1911-12 claims there was near universal peace throughout New Ireland:

Apart from some isolated villages in the high mountains in the south, the whole of Neu Macklenburg is completely under the control of our Administration. Neu Hannover [Lavongai], with some minor exceptions, has likewise been brought into the sphere of influence of the Administration. The same applied to the Fisher and Gardener Islands. The southern island groups, Lihir, Tanga and Anir, are entirely peaceful and have for a long time been more or less in contact with the Namatanai Station. (Sack and Clark, 1978: 337 - 338)

Contrastingly Lihirians would often attribute peace to various ‘culture heroes’ who supposedly brought an end to the practice of cannibalism and tribal warfare (see chapter eight). The pacifying efforts of one big man named Kombat have since been immortalised in a statue in Lesel Village that depicts him breaking a spear over his head.
As in other parts of Melanesia, the Administration’s project of ‘pacification’ was often shared by various Christian missions. Trompf records that the Sacred Heart Catholic mission sought to expand its influence from Rabaul to New Ireland (then New Macklenburg), particularly concentrating on Lihir and the other outer islands from 1902, later encompassing Manus in 1913 (Trompf, 1991: 169). Despite an early presence, the Palie Catholic Mission Station in Lihir was not established until 1933. Similarly although the Methodists had been permanently positioned in Lihir prior to 1933, they have never built an official station. According to Filer and Jackson the first Lhirian man to be baptised (in 1907) was a ‘reformed cannibal’ named John Targolam from Bulamwei Village on Masahet who was previously languishing in the Namatanai prison. His
‘conversion’ proved instrumental in the transformation of Lihirian social and religious life; the majority of Lihirians soon aligned themselves with either the Methodists or the Catholics. Consequently Lihirian lives were arguably more directly influenced by Christian missions than the Australian Administration.

_Luluais_ were also exploited as conduits for the application of political pressure. Those _luluais_ who wanted to avoid losing their position and to protect their communities from harsh government reprisals were urged to ‘encourage’ members of their community to work on the plantations and ensure head taxes were paid. Firth argues that planters throughout New Guinea wanted to remove consent all together - for the sake of Melanesian ‘development’:

Nothing irked planters more than the thought that the New Guineans might be getting the blessings of civilization free. As a major submission by the big archipelago firms in 1913 put it: while every male German had to serve the Fatherland in the armed forces for two or three years the government thought even milder compulsion for the New Guineans was out of the question. Was the ‘Negro’, the planters asked to have it better than the German worker forced out to work by the need for daily bread? Was he, who did not know anxiety about food, clothing and shelter, ‘in contrast to the hard struggle for existence in which we must all fight’ to have the blessings of European progress fall effortlessly into his lap? The planters argued that in return for these blessings the ‘Negro’ in New Guinea would have to offer an equivalent, which ‘naturally can consist only in the performance of work’ and they complained that the government viewed the labour question ‘almost exclusively from the natives’ standpoint’ whereas it was in fact ‘not so much a question for the natives as, above all, for the white planters’. They called for the government to open up all areas still inaccessible to recruiters, to remove all hindrances to recruitment, and to impose gentle pressure on the New Guineans to make them work. (Firth, 1976: 63)

Government efforts were justified through the wider political vision of the German empire that situated New Guineans as workers, and Micronesians as potential consumers of German goods.⁸ Reportedly in 1907, Governor Hahl stated that “if raising a people able to buy goods appears an aim worth striving for in the island territory [Micronesia]…for New Guinea it should be raising a people to work” (quoted in Firth,
New Guineans would be the labour within the larger colonial scheme of economic expansion. German desire to convert New Guineans into useful labour best characterises the struggle in which Lihirians were historically located. Denied the “blessings of European progress” due to their lack of industriousness Lihirians have consistently struggled to make sense of their position within a global system that seems to arbitrarily direct ‘the goods’ elsewhere.

The Pauperisation of Lihir

In the final years of German rule the Annual Reports state in an ominously prophetic tone that “hitherto…the Administration has not been able to play a more active role here [in Lihir] because of poor communications” (Sack and Clark, 1978: 338). The Australian Administration did not bring substantially greater involvement with economic development, nor did they have considerably greater communications with Lihirians, averaging at best one patrol per year until at least the late 1960s. In this section I shall outline the gradual process of pauperisation that encompassed Lihir during its years under the Australian Administration and argue that ‘economic frustration’ was a major reason behind the development of TIA activities.

Unfortunately there are few records of Administration involvement or Lihirian economic activities during the years between the two World Wars. Lihirians were involved in the Second World War as labourers, carriers, and messengers for both Japanese and Allied troops. It is likely Lihirians received some remuneration for their assistance to the Allied troops. Most oral accounts stress high numbers of males absent from Niolam Island during this time and the harsh conditions experienced under the Japanese (see Zial, 1975). Several older Lihirian males from Niolam recounted to me their forced recruitment to work on the construction of airstrips on mainland New Ireland. Many recall Japanese brutality, describing gruesome deaths for those who refused to work or ‘relaxed’ their labour efforts.
By 1950 economic development in Lihir was still limited. A single copra plantation had been established on the plateau at Londolovit (which is the site of the mine camp and town), employing imported labour from mainland New Ireland, New Britain, Bougainville, and mainland Papua New Guinea, particularly the Sepik region. There were no local copra groves as locally owned plantations were small and mainly used for feeding domestic pigs. Although the Catholic mission ran a small trade store they did not yet deal in copra, providing little incentive for Lihirians to develop their own plantations (PR NAM 4 / 1951 - 52). Few Lihirians chose to work on these plantations, most likely due to negative associations drawn with indentured labour, which amazed and frustrated plantation managers. Again we see the emerging (and contradictory) desire for the arrival and establishment of economic activity, tempered by Lihirian desire to have this exchange on their own terms.

By 1952 the Administration had made the important observation that Lihirians were gaining a sense of economic self-consciousness:

Lihir Natives are awakening to the realisation that they are the poorest natives financially in the New Ireland District. The Lihirs have comparatively small holdings of coconuts and no alternative cash crop. (PR NAM 6/1952 - 53)

Even if the Administration had the foresight to act upon these observations (to avoid future political unrest), they were still constrained by scarce resources. It was some years before Lihirians consciously connected their economic status with a government that denied their equality. Lihirians were beginning to experience a process of ‘pauperization’. As Jorgensen observed among the Telefolmin, this “was rooted not so much in the ‘objective’ features of the local economy – people did, in fact have more in the way of cash and material goods than before – as in their sense about where they stood in relation to future shares of worldly goods” (Jorgensen, 1981:66). These early murmurs of discontent would later flourish in the TIA movement.

Although Government administrators saw agricultural potential in Lihir, their attention was focussed elsewhere. Lihirians were left to their own devices, and expected to show
an unprecedented amount of economic ingenuity. The first recorded instance of Lihirian co-operative initiative was geared towards the purchase of a small work boat, to be Lihirian owned and managed, that would provide more regular travel to Namatanai. The Catholic mission ran infrequent (and overcrowded) trips to the mainland; this service was insufficient to ensure regular copra trade. This was also the first instance where local desires and attempts at (economic) self-improvement were thwarted by an Administration who thought Lihirians were incapable of running their own affairs, said to be the result of “inbreeding” that produced a higher ratio of natives with “sub-normal intelligence” (PR NAM 4 / 1951 - 52). The Administration swiftly decided against Lihirian plans, concluding there would be too many logistical problems associated with local ownership and management of a boat. Such apparently below average acumen did not stop Lihirians from raising nearly £2000 towards their cause (known as the “Lihir fund”), which they were ‘advised’ to deposit into a trust account at the Namatanai Sub-District office.

Throughout the 1950s the Lihirian copra industry advanced minimally and Lihirians remained peripheral to New Ireland economic activity. Both the Hunio and Lakakot Bay plantations were established in addition to those existing at Londolovit, however they did not offer encouraging prices for copra. The total annual income recorded for Lihir in 1959 was £8355, of which £4015 was earned by 162 non-Lihirians plantation workers who came from New Ireland, New Britain, Bougainville and Sepik districts. Only 33 Lihirians were employed as labourers, earning £1720; the remaining money was raised through personal sale of copra and food stuffs including porcine (PR NAM 4/ 1958 - 59). Lihirians were regarded by the Administration as economically “lethargic”. The Administration responded to their apparent disinterest in economic activity and political advancement by deliberately concentrating their efforts and resources elsewhere. Although various patrol officers noted Lihirian interest in forming copra societies and recognised this could be harnessed if Co-operative Officers were sent to Lihir and the Administration had a more regular presence, it was decided that until Lihirians showed more signs of genuine self activity (more economic progress without external assistance), the Administration would continue looking elsewhere. Such policies kept Lihirians relatively entrenched within a cycle of economic marginality.
Throughout the following years Lihirians were encouraged to plant more ‘individual’ copra plantations to develop the local economy and provide a financial basis for political advancement. If Lihirians were to be incorporated into the Local Government Council they would need to show more consistent efforts in their copra production. The Administration was perturbed by the fact that Lihir showed so much potential that failed to materialise. In 1958 Lihirians had over 32 000 mature coconut plants, and 28 000 immature plants, which the Administration estimated should yield at least 170 tons of copra annually. Instead Lihirians were only producing between 60 to 70 tons (PR NAM 5 / 1958 - 59). These minimal results did not endear Lihirians to Administrators who sought to create productive lives for themselves and their subjects and who expected to see the results of their modernist narrative conventions. Essentially the Administration was attempting “nothing less than a transformation of locally embodied experiences and life rhythms” (Errington and Gewertz, 2004: 33): Papua New Guineans who failed to respond positively (according to Australian standards) were largely considered without hope.

The Administration concluded that Lihirians simply did not have the necessary resources for economic development, such as a road, vehicle transport, sea ports and regular marine transport, and that the only option was to encourage people to make use of the marketing channels already available through the mission and the three plantations. The debacle surrounding the wreck and subsequent demise of the Tangan managed M.V. Venus (see Foster, 1995a: 54 - 56), confirmed for the Australians the futility of locally owned and managed boats, causing them to rule such local initiatives “out of the question” for Lihir (PR NAM 4/ 1959 - 60). After a long hiatus, individual tax was reintroduced in 1960 as an incentive to economic activity, with the explicit instructions that no exceptions would be granted where people had the opportunity to make copra. This still failed to lift production levels and the Administration argued that this was the result of a “peculiar attitude” amongst Lihirians, where people only worked enough to cover their annual £1 for tax and £1 for clothing (PR NAM 5 / 1961 - 62). As we will see in the following
chapters, a similar attitude continued to frustrate Lihirian attempts at economic development.

Admitting to years of neglect, the Administration argued that the only remedy for Lihirian economic stagnation was increased contact with Europeans, based on the belief that this would somehow develop the necessary economic sensibilities. At the same time, even as enthusiasm for co-operative societies increased, indicating not all Lihirians were as “backward” as the patrol officers liked to imagine, any economic advancement was still inhibited by the lack of qualified staff and appropriate transport, and for the immediate future there was no intention of rectifying this situation (PR NAM 11 / 1964 - 65). Interestingly the reports repeatedly state Lihirians had not lost “faith” in the Administration despite the lack of attention, and that Lihirians were still optimistic about what the Administration might do for them. These might be interpreted simply as an Administrative delusion, or an indication of Government arrogance, ignorance and conceit. Alternatively, if this is true, it partly explains why support for the Administration declined rapidly in favour of emerging local leaders who promised more immediate returns on local investments.

‘Improvements’ and approaching impairments

Between 1965 and 1970 Lihir underwent three significant developments that paved the way for TIA. These were the establishment of ‘progress societies’, incorporation into the Namatanai Local Government Council, and the emergence of entrepreneurial big men who gained new status through their monopoly on local copra production. The Administration initially interpreted these events as signs of promise and positive reinforcement of their intentions, but I argue instead that these were the cumulative result of nearly 70 years of sporadic colonial relations.

Cooperative societies

The first of these changes involved Sigial, a luluai from Lesel Village who launched what was essentially an embryonic form of mimetic leadership. After a visit from a
Government representative named Mr Brokam, who came to gauge interest for a locally owned boat for shipping copra, believing it would give Lihirians a greater sense of connection to the mainland. Sigial took it upon himself to form a committee with other big men to raise funds through a form of taxation, speak out about a government school for Lihir, the need for increased copra plantings, and something described as “lo bilong Brokam” (Brokam’s law). The Administration found this an “alarming situation”, particularly as there was no consistency in the ‘tax’ levied; women were only occasionally exempted, and men were expected to pay between £5 and £10 (PR NAM 15 / 1965 - 66). A man of immense ambition, Sigial was partly acting on good faith of the Administration, and partly attempting to make himself a man of consequence - describing himself as the ‘member for Lihir’ - who could deliver economic prosperity if people abided by the ‘laws’ he delineated as the key to success. The Administration was wary of the potential for disturbance as a result of Sigial’s activities, but concluded that since no cults had “broken out” all they could do was keep watch on his movements (as much as this was possible through annual visits).

Sigial’s activities coincided with the formation of a number of small co-operative societies, some of which were probably spurred on by Sigial’s messages. Despite infrastructural constraints, these activities represent some level of economic progress. On the outer islands people began forming themselves into functioning societies that worked together to market copra. Similar activities occurred on Niolam as people formed “wok society bilong tesin” (plantation work societies). People paid membership fees to join and spent two days per week maintaining plantation groves ‘owned’ by various members. The Administration understood these activities as positive signs that confirmed their modernist ideals:

Community effort will teach them the basics of working together as a unit and will place the progress of Lihir as a whole uppermost in their minds, and not the fostering of tribal differences, a stranglehold on progress at the best of times. These later will no doubt die a hard death, having been the accepted way of life for centuries, but their exit will be hastened when the benefits of community effort are made manifest. A square mile of
healthy young palms speaks so much louder than an acre of ancient ill kept ones. (PR NAM 15 / 1965 – 66)

Political incorporation

In 1967 Lihir was officially incorporated into the Namatanai Local Government Council and within one year the Council was fully entrenched in Lihir with the appointment of local councillors. Elderly *luluais* were replaced by younger and more educated men. While some *luluais* remained on as councillors, many were happy to relinquish their positions, especially those who lacked authority and were unable to implement their charges. Despite continual references to Lihirian ignorance and disinterest in political progress, it was noted in the 1970 report that Lihirians had a “grossly excessive representation” in the Local Government Council, with eleven members, which far exceeded the number of any other census division on a per capita basis (PR NAM 1 / 1969 - 70). Regardless of whether Lihirians were able to comprehend the Westminster System, or who represented them in the burgeoning national political arena, entry into the new government system did not dampen enthusiasm for government attention or government funded development.

Big men and bisnis

Copra production levels increased but never reached predicted rates. The rise in production levels was partly due to the establishment new cooperative societies but also the emergence of entrepreneurs who began altering Lihirian economic, political and social conditions. Big men like Siandodo of Lataul, Pawut of Putput and John Aisika of Pango represented a new league that drew upon introduced forms of leadership and economic activity to bolster authority within existing frameworks of power; both aspects were made to complement the other, and contrary to Foster’s (1995a) claim for Tanga, *bisnis* was in no way extraneous to or *practically* insulated from the realm of *kastom*. Leadership was consolidated around their management of a local political economy that was completely enmeshed with Council activities and the control of local copra
production. This strategic fusing of the cash economy with the local exchange system represents an early attempt on the part of Lihirian people to control their entry into modernity and global capitalist exchange.

Formerly a luluai, police constable, and then member of the ward committee and chairman of Demarcation Committee, Siandodo (1912 - 1987) was one of the ‘biggest’ men on the east coast of Lihir. He maintained a large coconut grove, employing both relatives and village members as casual labourers, and owned a canoe with an outboard motor used for carrying produce to shipping points and for charter between the islands. He was one of the most competitive big men of his time, assisted by his economic resources and ability to direct labour within clans and the village for his own interests. In the same fashion, Pawut (born in 1923), had been previously employed by the Administration, travelled to Australia during the war, and maintained large copra holdings. Finally, Aisika was the driving force behind the Pango Co-operative Society and at a young age was elected as a Councillor.

Bell’s accounts of Tangan exchange, described by Foster (1995a), correlate with anecdotal evidence from Lihir and provide insights into the ways New Ireland big men managed and utilised introduced items and money within their local political economy. These accounts suggest that Lihirian feasting became grander and more competitive as big men controlled and exploited new forms of wealth gained through plantation wage labour by themselves or those under their influence. Notwithstanding the fact that exchange practices were radically altered through ‘pacification’ and the introduction of steel tools and new forms of wealth (for comparable cases see Clark, 2000; Gregory, 1982; Strathern, 1971), the changes that occurred as new entrepreneurial big men gained a stronghold on the nascent copra industry in the late 1960s and early 1970s represented a new era in Lihirian economic relations. Their ability to manage clan and village labour which assisted their domination of the cash economy bolstered their local authority. This did not create a rural proletariat, but it did mean that the majority of Lihirians were subordinate to the success of these big men and remained peripheral to ‘commoditization’ (cf. Foster, 1995a: Ch 2). Similar to other Melanesian societies engaged in cash cropping,
we begin to see the reconfiguration of the colonial economy in terms of big man politics (see Finney, 1973; Foster, 1995a; Strathern, 1982a). Senior men, some of whom were now Councillors or had once been luluais or tultuls and had been coerced into mobilizing labour for both the German and Australian Administrations, utilised their positions to command a workforce of younger men to work on their own plantations.

After a century of increasing interaction with exogenous (although scarce) forms of prestige – trade, cash, and later copra production – Lihirians were becoming increasingly aware of their relative deprivation in comparison to Europeans and their close neighbours throughout the region. Reluctance to work for Europeans and non-Lihirians on local plantations reflect the minimal wages and returns offered in this ‘exchange’ and the inferiority Lihirians were made to feel at the hands of kiaps (government patrol officers) and plantation owners. Incorporation into the Namatanai Local Government Council (which coincided with the formation of copra-societies) and an increased interest in local economic production fuelled expectations for the changes the Administration promised would arise through ‘self activity’. Inclusion into the new government system brought increased control into their lives but did not secure economic activity in spite of the efforts of some Lihirians. Copra societies might have represented local enthusiasm for collective activity but without the necessary transport and infrastructural support from the Administration these efforts were bound to fail. The rise of entrepreneurial big men who gained prestige across various realms introduced Lihirians to a hitherto nonexistent form of economic stratification. As big men merged their monopoly over copra production with their local political aspirations, many Lihirians expressed discontent over individual wealth accumulation seen to be at the expense of others. Combined with resentment towards the existing colonial hierarchy, Lihirians were receptive to the radical messages that arrived from New Hanover.

**Outbreak**

From the 1950s onwards, the New Ireland Administration was on constant lookout for “outbreaks” of illegal political activity, known generically throughout the Territory as
cargo cults. The Administration was aware, although confused, about the presence of indigenous religious, ritual and spiritual activity. Previously these were labelled “local cults” and were seen as antiquated and benign practices that would soon be abandoned with increased education and more fervent mission activities. The Administration was troubled by ritual activities sometimes lead by ‘charismatic’ and ‘prophetic’ leaders who preached messages seemingly contradictory to European secular rational discourse; they feared these would soon turn into political movements. These activities drew upon local cosmologies and often reflected initial reactions to colonial inequality (see Burridge, 1995 [1960], 1971; Lawrence, 1964; Schwartz, 1962, 1976; Williams, 1979 [1923]; Worsley, 1968). They appeared on the surface (particularly to the Administration) to be fixated with the instant delivery of commodities, goods, and luxury items – the cargo.

Many of these movements, particularly those that arose in Lihir, focussed upon “myth-dreams”. These “myth-dreams” - Burridge’s neologism that was intended in the context of colonial administration to clarify the seemingly ‘irrational’ behaviour and obviously clouded judgment of natives (and kiaps) - supposedly stand in the way of rational economic advancement, de-linking labour and wealth accumulation, while emphasising the esoteric origins of material wealth – the cargo. “Myth-dreams”, writes Burridge, are a “body of notions derived from a variety of sources such as rumours, personal experiences, desires, conflicts, and ideas about the total environment which find expression in myths, dreams, popular stories, and anecdotes” (1995 [1960]: 27); if “intellectualized”, he continues, these are better described as “aspirations”.

The ‘Johnson’ influence

In 1964 the Territory of Papua and New Guinea held the first national elections to provide representatives for the House of Assembly. In New Hanover, which had a population of approximately 7000, nearly half of the adults refused to follow the prescribed voting method, instead voting for America’s President Johnson. These stirrings of discontent soon reached Lihirians as people responded with increased
antipathy towards the Government’s inability to fulfil local desire for economic progress and moral equality. According to Billings, people in New Hanover had been impressed by US Army surveyors working in the district who exercised unprecedented generosity with their food, goods and payment for locally hired labour. This became known in New Hanover as “the American way” (1969: 13). Frustrated with their marginal status and comparatively slow economic progress under the Australian Administration, people from New Hanover voted for Johnson and raised $1000 to pay his fare to New Hanover. The Administration responded to this aversion with more regular patrols, political education and violent punitive expeditions; in return the people of New Hanover refused to pay taxes. Extensive action was taken against defaulters but their imprisonment only encouraged their martyrdom.

The movement was labelled “The Johnson Cult” (at least among its critics), although it was never a ‘cult’ in any common sense of the term: it spawned no prophetic leaders, and the emphasis was practical not ritual. There were no visitations, no deities, no spirit mediums, elaborate doctrines or epiphanic revelations. Whether the ancestors knew how to produce cargo was unclear and to a large extent irrelevant: clearly the Americans knew how and they could teach the people of New Hanover since the Australians apparently refused to share their ‘save’ (knowledge). The main aims of the movement, which gained several thousand supporters in southern New Hanover and parts of New Ireland, were not political independence but rather to replace the Australians with the Americans as a means of improving welfare and the status of the people (May, 2001: 59). In an effort to channel these energies into more productive ends, Father Miller, an American Catholic priest working on the island, encouraged people to form themselves into an ‘investment society’ which they named Tutukuvul Isakul Association, or TIA, which translates as “United Farmers” (literally stand up together and plant) (Billings, 1969: 18). Miller’s American heritage proved influential, often reinforcing the conviction among adherents that the Americans would somehow come to their aid. TIA gained momentum throughout New Hanover, with strong support from Johnson ‘cultists’. They acquired a work boat, a freezer, and in 1977 three plantations. Although TIA membership stipulated payment of taxes, many members remained resistant towards the Council and refused to pay.
Lihirian uptake

The movement soon spread to Kavieng district and groups organised themselves under the title TKA (which translates as “United Farmers” in other New Ireland languages), partly in an attempt to separate themselves from the stigma attached to the Johnson origins. TKA was reportedly introduced to Lihir in 1969 by Theodore Arau from Matakues village who Ramstad describes as a quiet and shy man of about 45 years of age at the time (Ramstad nd 1: 1; see also PR NAM 1 / 1969 – 70). Arau was never a big man in the traditional sense, but he had once been a catechist for the Catholic Mission, and later a native ‘doctor boi’ (Ramstad, nd 1: 2). While living in Kavieng, Arau became a member of the TKA movement later encouraging other Lihirians to join. Reportedly, within three months close to half the adult population of approximately 4500 people had joined and within several years, as influence and membership increased, every village was split between members and non-members. Inspired by the activities in New Hanover, Lihirian members also refused to pay government taxes. Initially the Administration took a hard line stance towards TKA, jailing those who refused to comply with Territory laws, assuming this would deter others. As was the case in New Hanover, however, this only made martyrs of the prosecuted, strengthening local resolve and resistance.

In 1969, patrol officer D.M. Donovan, conducted a “slow and thorough” investigation of all “cult activities” in Lihir (PR NAM 8 / 1969 – 70). The “outbreak” sparked the beginning of more concentrated Administrative attention; this only strengthened TKA support and anti-Administration sentiments. Within a matter of years the Administration again admitted that for too long they had concentrated their efforts on Tanga, Anir, and Namatanai, and that it was “now Lihir’s turn” (PR NAM 8 / 1970 – 71). But their ineffectual best only consisted of more admonishment and rational modernist discourse. At various times TKA resembled a ‘progress society’ or ‘self-help movement’, emphasizing pragmatism over religion and self-help over myth (cf. May, 1982). TKA held regular working days that often drew people away from government work that
required people to clean villages, maintain paths and work on government funded projects such as roads and bridges. TKA “working bees” mainly concentrated on clearing and maintaining TKA copra plantations in various villages. The divide between government and TKA work caused obvious rifts, but according to several elderly (pro-Administration) Lihirians, the problem was not so much the division of labour, rather that TKA “work days” were often spent holding meetings and discussing dates the cargo would arrive. Reportedly TKA charged its members 40 cents for every day they did not spend cleaning and maintaining TKA coconut plantations, which may account for the reluctance of businessmen and entrepreneurial big men to join the association. Membership fees ranged from $2 for women to $10 for men. Most people were unsure where their money was being stored or for what purposes it would be used, except for a sure belief they would soon see a return on their ‘investment’.

After Donovan’s initial foray, it was clear to the Administration that they were dealing with a “full-blown cult” (PR NAM 8 / 1969 – 70). This was confirmed by the high level of membership and the commitment displayed by leading prophetic figures such as Arau (the President) and Tienmua (Vice President or ‘number 2’ for Lihir) and other office holders such as Kondiak (‘board member’ for Lisel) and Pesus from Londolovit (clerk, subject to Arau). TKA ideologies were closely aligned with those on New Hanover, although if Billings is correct and the TIA was more practically orientated than ritualistic, the Lihir version represented a significant departure.

The messages arriving from New Hanover found sympathetic recipients in Lihir. Arau’s prophetic messages and ‘rules’ generally centred around three dominant themes: the need to resist the Council (and the Administration); that change was imminent and was likely to come from America; and that Lihirian ancestors were thoroughly implicated in this process. While Donovan was carrying out his investigations he collected a list of incidents and ‘rules’, which he translated from Tok Pisin, that summarise TKA beliefs and provide some insight into local activities at the time:
Teachings of Aru and Tienmua

1. Now is the time to get rid of the Council.
2. If you see a ‘Kiap’ coming, get your basket and run away into the bush.
3. If you are taken to court, TKA will bring you back.
4. If a person is not a member of TKA, he will be a “rubbish” man and no money will be forthcoming to him. Also if he wants to sell one or two bags of copra to any member of the TKA, he will only receive 50 cents for it and be told to go.
5. All plantations which we have planted are for temporary measures only. If the “Egg” hatches, they will be destroyed or left to feed to pigs.
6. If the “Egg hatches” you will not have to work to find money. You can rest but money will come to you like flowing water.
7. If a person said something bad against TKA that person will become known to the TKA automatically.
8. TKA is a country we have not seen.
9. America is one of the true country and one is at Palie, Father J. Gliexner.
10. USA is one of the Countries that will never die and some of them are here – Fr. Tom Keller (Namatanai); Fr. Miller (Lavongai); Fr. David Milmila (Duke of York); Fr. Peter Vavro (Tanga). These priests are from USA, the country that never dies, but lives for ever.
11. And Fr. P Vavro is from Mazuz (Lamboar Lihir Island), he is not from USA.
12. Now a big ship and an aeroplane are being loaded with cargoes. Both are not fully loaded yet, but they will be sent to us when they are ready.
13. A man and a woman whose wife or husband has died shall not re-marry. They shall await the arrival of his wife or her husband when the “Time Change”.
14. Those children who attending schools today can be saved, but we will await the time when life changes and then knowledge will come unlimited.
15. There are two types of “Crabs”. One type went ashore on Siar and the other on Kavin (Kavieng).
16. If a person dies, do not say he is dead, you must say “He has gone.”
17. If we hear the spirits of the dead, we must not refer to them as “Ghosts”, we refer to them as “Brothers”.
18. If we call them ghosts or devil, this will stop the arrival of cargoes, time will not change and the “Road” will be open to us.
19. Supposing this country wants to declare war with another country, our country will destroy that country.
20. It is the same with money, where the white man have change their face value e.g. 10 cents = $ 1.00 and 20 cents = $ 2.00
21. All of our money have been sent to the Bishop in Kavieng who will convert into American currency and then send them to America.
22. During March 1970, shipment of cargo will arrive from America. Note: Previous to this THE target date January and Feb were also marked for such.
23. Tienmua and Kaiprot of Konogogo (W.C. Namatanai) have been going around showing pictures from a book to people.
24. Arau and Tienmua have been telling the people that they propose to go to another place by secret means.
25. The people believed that they went to Lavongai in a submarine.
26. All male persons must marry before they could become a member. Because when the time changes, they must go inside the “House” with their wives.
27. Iaspot [correct spelling Yaspot] of Malie Island asked Cr. Lusom why the Council knew more about this work. Why haven’t they bothered to find out the truth of government laws which are “eating” the people.
28. On the 5th of January 1970, Toron of Malie island Committee for TKA collected fees from members at Malie Island. $ 1.00 for males. 50 cents for females. This they said is to purchase a car for the members use.

(PR NAM 8 / 1969 – 70)

This long list provides one of the few detailed accounts of TKA beliefs recorded during the early stages of the Lihirian movement. Although many of these points resonate with more general themes from New Hanover, some require clarification. This list also provides a useful opportunity to consider some of the ‘cult activities’ and enduring TKA beliefs that shaped Lihirian expectations for development and the contemporary political and economic climate of the islands.

Arau often used the metaphor of an “egg breaking” (kiau bai bruk) to describe impending change and the deliverance of cargo - the new millennium. This was not his own prophesy or words. Rather we find them used elsewhere some years prior to the introduction of TKA in Lihir. Billings recalls during the elections in Kavieng in 1964 that she heard rumours of “a Big Egg which was said to be believed to be hovering over New Britain and about to hatch cargo” (Billings, 2002: 29). The idea that money would flow like water regardless of labour input was also expressed in the idiom of “live money” and “dead money”, an expression some older Lihirian men later applied to wage labour earnings and royalties, compensation and equity monies. For some, mine derived wealth is the fulfilment of “live money”: wealth obtained without physical or moral diminution as opposed to the back breaking and humiliating work of “cargobois”, cash cropping for minimal returns and low paid unskilled industrial work in the mine.
American annex

Throughout the 1970s TKA members came to believe America would eventually replace Australia as the governing body. At this stage Lihirians were not discussing political independence, or at least not in the way it would later surface in the Nimamar movement or during the mining project (see below and chapter six). The Administration naively regarded this belief as a gross manifestation of big man politics:

In their social structure, if their head man does not give them what they want, they merely keep replacing the head man until they find one that satisfies them. In the same way they wish to replace New Guinea’s head man (Australia) and obtain a new one (America), which in their opinion will be more beneficial to them. (PR NAM 4 / 1970 - 71)

It is unlikely positive interaction with the Americans in the Second World War was the sole impetus for their desire to be annexed under America and their belief that America is the “true” country that would deliver the promised cargo. It is probable that these experiences confirmed TIA’s strong pro-America messages and that the stories of harmful race relations in New Hanover resonated with their own experiences with the Australian Administration. Lihirians deeply admired the people of New Hanover who surmounted Government persecution and opposition. Letters of encouragement were sent from New Hanover urging people not to support the Administration and that soon New Hanover and New Ireland would be a state of America (PR NAM 16 / 1970 – 71).

Ancestral connections

It is difficult to know how many Lihirians actually believed the cargo would arrive by ship or plane in the near future. In an effort to de-exoticize her New Hanover friends, Billings argues that they only “hoped” and never actually believed Johnson would arrive or that America would take them under their protective political wing (Billings, 2002: 165). Nor did Lihirians express a ‘belief’ which they backed with ‘evidence’ that Johnson or America will come to Lihir, but the ancestors were central to the expected future change. Possibly this is influenced by Lihirian spiritual beliefs surrounding the departure
of kin and other relatives (see chapter two). These beliefs found new expression when the
Kennecott mining company later arrived in the 1980s and white employees were
incorporated within this cosmology as returned ancestors, emphasising the idea of the
European-as-relative (or as someone with access to the ancestors) as a central premise in
cargoistic orientations (Leavitt, 2000: 306). Although the original impetus for TKA came
from New Hanover, Lihirians developed their own distinctive set of beliefs and practices
that served their purposes within their own epistemological framework. At the time when
this list was recorded Lihirians were wavering between their high esteem for American
missionaries (who at that stage were the only Americans on the scene) and their belief in
America as the Promised Land, and an idea of a ‘new heaven’ that posited TKA members
at the top of a new world order.

Phrases like “Time Change” and “TKA is a country we have not seen yet” represent the
 genesis of later millenarian conceptions expressed in the term “last country”, the idea of
 becoming a ‘city’ and the return of deceased ancestors. Possibly the concept of a ‘city’
 has been applied retrospectively to Arau’s prophesies. Certainly their recent urban
 ambitions are vastly different from how they would have appeared in the 1970s. Arau’s
 ‘prophesies’ generally appeared vague and non-committal; instead of concrete images,
 TKA hinged on the expectation of some form of revolutionary departure from their
 supposed condition of subjugation and material poverty.

Rumours circulated as far afield as Kavieng and New Hanover that Lihirians were
 erecting large storage houses in anticipation of cargo ships sent by their ancestors. Some
 Lihirians have admitted these and other structures were attempts to prove that they were
 ‘ready’ to receive the cargo. The enduring relationship between Lihirian ancestors, whites
 and receiving cargo (or obtaining development), is located in proving their ‘modernity’
 rather than fixing any rift in their relationship with ancestors who are supposedly
 withholding the cargo until such time (cf. Leavitt, 2000). This theme reappeared in 2000
 when Yaspot (from Malie) constructed a large two storey men’s house which many
 thought resembled a ‘hotel’ rather than a men’s house (see plate 4). Criticism
was largely directed at the deviation from ‘traditional’ or accepted styles for Lihirian men’s houses. His rationale for this style was twofold: he thought it would be a more appealing place for young men to spend their time, which was an indication of the declining role of Lihirian men’s houses; and more importantly (and surreptitiously), this was his way of proving he was ‘worthy’ (or ‘modern’ enough) to receive the anticipated cargo from his ancestors.

Arau’s prophesies were manifest in the Lihirian concept of a peketon, which refers to waves crashing on the shore, washing flotsam and jetsam onto the beach and then with the receding tide, carrying the debris to other places: as change (Cargo) comes to Lihir, it will then emanate outwards from the new centre. While Lihirian millenarian concepts have undergone transformation as new leaders emerged together with new political goals.
and radically altered conditions through mining, the metaphorical concept of a peketon has remained central.

*What did they really want?*

Billings argues that as the descendent organization of the Johnson movement the TIA was principally concerned with social equality and not just cargo. Being primarily a politico-economic movement it was not “fundamentally religious” nor was it “a manifestation of gross materialism” (2002: 165 – 166):

> They wanted to understand history, historical forces, and power well enough to maintain their place and their ability to control their lives. Those with the broader view did not like being considered ignorant and poor, and did not like feeling constantly humiliated by white people and by their own educated compatriots. They wanted equal status, and equal knowledge, in the modern world. (Billings, 2002: 108)

Lihirian desires were focussed on both cargo and a deep dissatisfaction with moral inequality. The denial of a shared humanity was definitely central to TKA beliefs and motivations. This has become the accepted interpretation of cargo movements as anthropologists try to avoid irregularities in cargo cult phenomena and grapple with the political, social, and economic inequalities that have such detrimental effects on Melanesians and their collective perceptions of themselves (cf. Fanon, 1966, 1967; Lattas, 1992, 1993; Robbins, 2004a). However this approach provides only partial insight into the reality of ‘cult’ activities and how they are reproduced in new contexts.

While cargo per se (in whatever form it materialises) holds incredible symbolic power, as a marker of equality, worthiness, prestige or the road to respect, it is difficult to deny the vulgar materialism behind Melanesian aspirations. As keen modernists, Lihirian desire for cargo has always been based on awareness of the status and utility of certain items (cf. Errington and Gewertz, 2004: 25 - 26). However, increased knowledge and access to goods has not diminished previously held desires to transform pervasive and damaging relationships of inequality. In fact, as I shall argue in chapter six, even though Lihirian
political movements had their roots in the desire for moral parity, by 2003 Lihirians no longer articulated their aspirations only in terms of equality. Not only did they want unlimited access to the ‘blessings’ of industrial technology, but they wanted to be in control of these processes so that expatriate mining personnel would ultimately be subordinate to Lihirian management. Arguments for equality commonly employed by anthropologists attempting to make sense of politico-religious movements only partly capture the reality of contemporary Lihirian ambition.

Internal division

As the Association expanded and consolidated its membership, tensions increased between followers and non-members. Lihir was united in ways previously unimaginable, but divisions between members and non-members cut through all villages, hamlets and even some households. The Reports, Ramstad’s paper and a range of personal accounts, conjure an image of Bateson’s (1935) schismogenesis, where the actions and reactions of each side reinforced division and strengthened their opposing identities. However, both groups shared similar goals, and many people hovered between the two factions. At the broadest level the split was between supporters of the Administration and followers of TKA who were antagonistic towards the Administration.

On another level, the split was largely between the Methodists and the Roman Catholics. Although TKA was not publicly endorsed by the Catholic mission, given that the majority of members were Catholic converts this gave the impression that TKA was a Catholic phenomenon. This was aided by the New Hanover origins and the support they enjoyed from Father Miller. The Catholic mission did attempt to channel Lihirian TKA energies into a legitimate working society and to some extent progress was made in this direction, however, the underlying ritual and spiritual beliefs of TKA eventually overrode practical endeavours. Filer and Jackson recall that the brand of Catholicism preached in Lihir by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart “cultivates the symbolic elements of traditional religion, or ‘custom’, to an extent which is unusual even by Catholic standards” (Filer and Jackson, 1989: 175). Without publicly espousing TKA, the Mission
was careful not to fully eschew their intentions or activities, instead treating them as misguided sheep requiring direction and incorporation. Combined with a pervasive ‘liberation theology’, emphasising the inevitable triumph of the poor over the rich and the meek over the powerful, TKA developed ritualistic overtones and members saw an affinity between the Church and their own goals.

Ideological division was most pronounced at the household level. Patrol officers noted that women increasingly joined TKA without the consent of their husbands. Disagreement over which ‘road’ would lead to the desired destination remained a key division between members and non-members. All Lihirians wanted to see change. Not everyone articulated this in the same way, and not everyone was convinced Arau was capable of delivering his promises, but even non-members admitted some disillusionment with the Administration and some doubt as to whether they would ever bring ‘development’ to Lihir.

Many sided with the Administration out of loyalty and the belief that their own (relatively) close connection with *kiaps* and other whites would eventually bring them closer to what they sought. Similarly, Councillors rarely joined because the Administration provided them with political authority and a consistent income. John Yaspot’s assertion that the Councillors were colluding with the Administration and ‘fooling’ the people is indicative of the tension between Councillors and TKA members. Yaspot was a vocal advocate of TKA on Malie Island and showed formidable opposition to Councillors and the Government. In a twist of irony, Ambrose Silul, his first born son, later become the President of the Lihir Local Level Government. Disagreement over the correct ‘road’ to achieve dreams of ‘emancipation’ continued to characterise political events during mining activities and negotiations over ‘development’ (compensation, royalties, infrastructure and business). Persistent tensions between the desirable and feasible (Errington and Gewertz, 2004: 15), and between ‘truth’ and ‘deception’, have been central to Lihirian relationships among themselves and with whites and governing bodies.
New directions, old concerns

The most pragmatic moment in the history of the TKA came in 1973 when a young and educated member Bruno Sasimua, with the aid of Father Tom Burns from the Palie Mission Station, attempted to transform the movement into a registered business group, adopting the name TFA (Tutorme Farmers Association). The Administration commended these efforts, recognising it as “an honest attempt to create business opportunities amongst its followers” (PR NAM 16 1972 – 73). As a result they promised to send more regular boats to the island for the transportation of copra. This failed to transpire and as Independence approached Lihirian attention was soon riveted on the new National Government that was expected to ‘deliver the goods’. In the final years before Independence the Administration attempted to keep TFA members “onside” and encouraged Association leaders to stand for Council. Part of their strategy lay in the realisation that denouncing TFA would only strengthen the conviction that the Government was hiding something from them.

The death of Arau in 1975, combined with Independence, temporarily threw the Association into chaos. Independence fuelled expectations that were simply beyond the capacity of the newly formed Government. Ferdinand Samare assumed Presidency in 1977, and during his reign anti-Government sentiments were back on the agenda as TFA members refused to pay taxes or vote for anyone but Jesus Christ. Samare and others were jailed, which again only made them martyrs in the eyes of their supporters. While the association had always uneasily existed as a combination of ‘development association’ and ‘cargo cult’, during the latter part of the 1970s there was a marked withdrawal from ‘politics’ and ‘business’. Frustration over the lack of change delivered by the new Government led TFA members to seek more esoteric options. Filer and Jackson (1989: 174) note that visions, prophesies and supposed miracles sustained people’s belief in the new millennium and members met in designated areas, where they prayed, sang and performed dances.
As the Association shifted away from pragmatic endeavour towards ritual observance they abandoned their ties with New Hanover and its nominal links to ‘farming’. There was a greater push towards self government and TFA leaders reformed under the new name of Nimamar. Acronyms often form part of the deliberate mimicry of bureaucratic officialdom, which might explain why they are so common in Melanesian cargo movements. In later years this was especially noticeable in groups like the JNC and programmes like Society Reform that adopted the trappings of modernity and neo-liberalism (see chapter six). Nimamar represented an official reformation of the TIA movement. This group would eventually become the Nimamar Rural Local Level Government (the Lihir LLG). As I noted in the introduction, while all of these original Nimamar leaders have since been replaced, it initially assumed an anti-State position combined with millenarian sentiments.

Ancestors, geologists and white ships

In 1982 Kennecott Explorations Australia and their joint venture partner company Nugini Mining Limited came to Lihir to conduct sampling work which identified the potential for extensive exploration. On the basis of these samples an Explorations Licence was granted in 1982 and by 1983 extensive exploration around the coastal areas of Ladolam and later Lienetz was underway. Initially some Lihirians were ambivalent to negative about the prospect of mining. By this stage Nimamar had developed strong anti-Government sensibilities and many Lihirians were involved in ritualistic behaviour that reinforced the belief that change was immanent. For some Lihirians the arrival of huge cargo ships loaded with drilling and exploration equipment and supplies was an all too obvious realization of a pekaton. Kennecott’s deliberate attempt to foster good relations with Lihirians, particularly through the generous dispensation of food stuffs and basic goods, was interpreted by many as the fulfilment of Arau’s prophesies, reinforcing the efficacy of ritual. As Bah Arom from Kinami put it:

All of our talk [prophesies] were coming up. Those who died before, now they had come up, they had come up and we recognised them. But they couldn’t talk to us and tell who
they were, but we saw them and knew...we recognised their walk, their eyes, their head...now if you have a mark and you die, we can still recognise you...When Kennecott was here, if you were hungry, go and eat first, you don’t need to buy anything...we took all sorts of white man’s food, and we did not buy it. Food wasn’t anything, if you were hungry, you go and eat, you just go. Everything was free...Arau’s talk was true, the ships were full up. Later he said when the ships come here, money will capsize on us. Every house will be full up of things belonging to white men. Now all the men started to look and they believed him now...When Kennecott left so did all of our ancestors. Who will make these things come up now? Arau had said that everything will be free for us, but they [Kennecott] went back now and now things were not free, everything was hidden again. (Bah Arom, Kinami Village, 2004; translated from recording in Lihirian and Tok Pisin)

The idea that Lihirians ‘called’ the company to their island has persisted. Despite the reorganisation of Nimamar into the Local Level Government and the restructuring of leadership, ardent members of the Association have maintained that somehow their deceased relatives are involved in the transformations occurring on their island. These beliefs have not necessarily declined with their awakening to global capitalist processes and the unequal distribution of this wealth. Rather some insist that the combined greed of the National Government, Rio Tinto, or Putput villagers (the original recipients of royalties and compensation payments) has intervened and blocked the road for the deliverance of what is rightfully theirs (cf. Burridge, 1995 [1960]: 184). Aside from the belief - that is universal throughout PNG - that the Government does not own or have rights over the ground or resources, this ‘spiritual’ and personal connection to the processes of mineral exploration fuels the conviction that Lihirians own the mine and should be the sole beneficiaries of production.

Rational responses to irrational conditions (or vice versa)

Lihirians have actively directed the course of events in their history; however their actions have not always produced the desired outcomes. They have responded to marginality in multiple ways, all of which express dissatisfaction with inequality. As Lihirians were drawn into the world system they gradually became aware of their objective position within the global economic order. As their aspirations for moral
equality and material wealth were consistently denied (and their ritual means proved inefficacious) this generated antipathy towards the Administration and later the National Government.

To accommodate the dramatic changes experienced in the latter part of the twentieth century many Lihirians framed their experience with some kind of personal relevance that helped bring Europeans under a familiar mode of control – namely ritual and exchange (cf. Sahlins, 1995: 181). The belief that local ancestors controlled the flow of wealth and the ways in which Kennecott was later subsumed into Lihirian cosmology immediately brought the outside world in, rendering global connections meaningful and extremely local.

Anthropological treatment of Melanesian cargo cults has resulted in a bewildering variety of analytic responses, yet all approaches are haunted by the spectre of ‘irrationality’. Ever since F.E. Williams (1979 [1923]) characterised cargo cults as a form of “madness”, anthropologists have side-stepped their ‘non-rational’ aspects through functional analysis. As Dalton notes (2000a: 351), although it is often the glaring ‘irrationality’ of cargo cults that initially attract anthropological attention (and government reprisal), anthropologists have typically sought to clarify and normalise cargo cults within a neo-evolutionary functional paradigm (see especially Burridge, 1995 [1960]; Lawrence, 1964; and Worsley, 1968). The inconsistencies, contradictions, and ultimate failure to yield the desired results are either ignored by shifting the gaze back to the irrationality of Western bourgeois society (Dalton, 2000a, 2004; Lindstrom, 1993a, 1995; Sahlins, 2005e: 484), or explained through functionalist arguments that assert cult behaviour has no other end than its own being, and that such behaviour is perfectly rational as a self fulfilling non-rational practice.

Leavitt argues anthropologists must pay closer attention to the seemingly ‘irrational’ ways Melanesians incorporate Westerners into their Cargo ideologies (Leavitt, 2000). In many cases Melanesians have interpreted the lack of cargo as a result of their own moral failures, or a rift between themselves and their ancestors. He argues that because
local personal relationships are played out through an idiom of reciprocity “the cargo that so many continue to covet must be conceptualised through its significance as a prestation, as a sign of a continued relationship of goodwill between the secular and the spiritual world” (2000: 322). Failure to acquire wealth implies some residual conflict or rift with those that matter most. The idiom of reciprocity ensures continued preoccupation with the problems in one’s relations with deceased relatives meaning that Westerners are often implicated as central figures in establishing contact across this ontological gulf.

When Kennecott was replaced by other companies this was interpreted by some Lihirians as the severance of (re)established ancestral relations, and an end to the cargo ‘given’ within this context. For many older Lihirians, especially those without land in the SML zone, the flow of wealth from their ancestors had finally begun, only to be thwarted by unknown forces, greed, or Government intervention. Most younger Lihirians were sceptical of cargo philosophy and did not locate the mine within this cosmological framework. Nevertheless, many still expected capital, especially in the form of infrastructural development, would be delivered by a foreign donor without conditions. In Lihir inequality has been interpreted as a result of metaphysical forces or through vague notions of structural disadvantage or a combination of both. Historically Lihirian engagement and comprehension of global capital flow has been underpinned by ‘misinformation’ and ‘misinterpretation’; generally they have not been equally informed participants in the global economic system.

The twin trajectory of the concept of ‘rationality’ somewhat complicates anthropological analysis of cargo cults. Instrumental or reductionist perspectives are seen to be at odds with culturalist approaches; however, in both instances, the idea of internal cohesion or logical consistency is paramount. Thus, in terms of ‘substantive’ rationality Lihirian responses were consistent with their cultural belief system; these means were perceived as appropriate (cf. Burridge: 1995 [1960]: 222 – 228). Some Lihirians had drawn from their traditional knowledge and myths to find parallels in what they observed - to achieve a satisfactory interpretation of the presence of Europeans and the denial of wealth and a shared humanity. Company personnel were regarded as an extension of local society and
placed in an already familiar spiritual dimension. Although there was a certain *emic* rationality in their response, concentrating on this potentially evokes questions about European imperialistic conceit that depicts Lihirians are as unable to distinguish between the spiritual and the material – or ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’ (cf. Sahlins, 1995; Obeyesekere, 1992). However, adequate comprehension of Lihirian interpretations must consider historically constructed cultural categories – indigenous conceptions or their cosmological reality and what they already knew about being in the world.

While we can necessarily recognise an internal cohesion within TKA beliefs and interpretations (cf. Horton, 1979), from a Western reductionist perspective what was rational *to* these Lihirians was not necessarily rational *for* them - that is, the stated means were irreconcilable with the desired ends. To avoid accusations of Occidentalism (Carrier, 1995b; Lindstrom, 1995; McDowell, 2000), it is necessary to define the characteristics of this Western rationality against which Lihirian practices and beliefs are so often measured – by themselves, the Government, expatriate mining personnel and anthropologists. The notion of bourgeois rationality is far from unequivocal. Nevertheless, drawing from the work of Weber who was committed to the investigation of this rationality as it is manifest in modern capitalist society, we find elucidating patterns: the depersonalisation of relationships, the refinement of techniques of calculation; the enhancement of social importance of specialised knowledge; and the extension of technically rational control over both natural and social processes. Most significantly, this notion of rationality is underpinned by the belief that there are no incalculable forces: the disenchantment of the world and the displacement of magical and religious views of the world by a scientific view that privileges technical means and calculations in order to reveal causal mechanisms (Brubaker, 1984: 2).

Thus, from the perspective of the “specific and peculiar rationalism” of the West (Weber, 1958: 26) – Weberian ‘formal rationality’ - the TKA movement was ultimately non-rational; the chosen means did not achieve the desired change. Moreover, emphasis on socially positive cultural consistencies or the internal rationality of cargo cults effectively censures the obvious judgement that people perceive themselves as effecting particular
ends through activities that ultimately fail. Judgement is economically by-passed through “interpretive refusal” (Ortner, 1995).

This is a crucial point because in chapters five and six we come to see how a group of Lihirian leaders (the JNC) employ this same bourgeois rationality to critique and reject these cultural interpretations - the ‘mythologies’ of wealth - only to repeat the same ‘failures’ within a more complex scenario. While TKA beliefs can be culturally normalised, this is difficult with JNC beliefs and practices, specifically because they have adopted Western cultural approaches - which are only partially understood - to interpret and reverse material inequality. The points of continuity are the fantasies about global wealth production, based on the idea that there is an unlimited source of wealth being retained from Lihirians, and that they only need to configure the correct means for access. In their attempts to solve the development quandary we find the reconstruction of cosmology and the reproduction of mimesis and insular political views. These aspects continually feature in TKA, Nimamar, the Society Reform Programme and finally the PV course and the Lihir Strategic Development Concept which I discuss in Part II. Their efforts to enact change and gain access to a modernity characterised by wealth and greater political power contain inconsistencies and ambiguities and ultimately fail to achieve the desired goal. Lihirians have been trying to interpret the world and change their position, but through no fault of their own, marginality has precluded complete comprehension or successful accomplishment.

Mining has not perpetuated a discourse of inferiority among Lihirians; rather, they have consistently believed they possess the capacity to reverse structural inequalities – a fatally flawed fantasy that would later haunt the JNC’s approach to development. Lihirian responses to inequality are vocalised and expressed through angry responses to the Government and the mining company. Injustices are made known; Lihirians have not internalised their concerns and they do not exist in an abject state (cf. Robbins, 2004a). However, the ways they set out to achieve their ends are varied and diffuse. Lihirians have regularly employed numerous political strategies (that are often contradictory) when dealing with the Government or the company. Understanding these responses to
inequality, the demands and expectations they put on the company, and the more general way they “menace the mining industry” (Filer, 1998), means acknowledging the vicious circle that connects resource dependency to the apocalyptic elements of Lihirian Christianity and the secular decline in the legitimacy of the post-colonial regime (Filer, 1998: 170 – 71).

The mining project with its related infrastructure, services, opportunities for wage labour, and payment of royalty and compensation monies – what Lihirians recognise as development – has been generically interpreted as the fulfilment of prophesies, but for many the ‘dream’ has not transpired in expected ways. As we shall see in chapter three, this was not the new millennium, but instead the perpetuation of inequality through the unequal distribution of wealth and development. For those that retrospectively interpret Arau’s prophesies as the forecasting of a Lihirian ‘city’, in many respects these have been fulfilled. But for those who hoped for a just and equitable future – a virtuous society where everyone was rich - then the recent experience only confirms the “horror” of Cargo (Lindstrom, 2000, 2004).
As Filer so eloquently stated as justification for his apparently ‘deterministic’ appraisal of the Bougainville crisis, Melanesian communities have always been on the brink of destruction, and it has always taken certain leadership qualities to prevent them “splitting apart at the seams” (1990: 9). Filer’s despairingly ‘deterministic’ hypothesis of “accelerated social disintegration” predicts major ‘blow outs’ after about fifteen years of mining operations. His hypothesis has yet to be validated in other mining projects, although in all other projects serious tensions have arisen. Gerritsen and Macintyre’s (1991) capital logic model based on the Misima mine provides an alternative which convincingly argues the mining time bomb will not necessarily blow out to the level of “social disintegration” witnessed in Bougainville. Based on their involvement in the socio-economic impact study for the Misima gold mine (Gerritsen and Macintyre, 1986), the capital logic model seeks to explain the creation of a web of tensions and locates the social, political and economic impacts of mining within the sphere of distribution and redistribution of mine related benefits. An essentially structuralist account, this model argues that it is the imperatives of project implementation, not greed or malicious politicians that cause governments to devastate villagers. They have argued that the lack of government attention to community concerns is due to chronic inter-governmental tensions and financial feuding; incapacity and greed plague both national and provincial levels of government.

2 **Mombo**to is an image of disorder, and a clear statement about the Karavaran view of basic human nature: greed, violence, and untrammeled exercise of individual interest (Errington, 1974: 21). Errington argues that the **momboto** is a reference point which shows indirectly the principles upon which their society now rests; human nature has not changed, rather what has changed is the means by which human nature can be regulated and social order established (ibid: 21). Karavarans say that the **momboto** ended when the missionary George Brown came ashore bringing **divara** (shell money) and the principle of moiety (obviously he did not literally bring these social institutions, rather it seems their association with stability is conflated with mission influence). Matrilineal and exogamous moiety division and **divara** domesticate disruptive human energy and turn it into orderly channels. **Mombot**o is not just a state or event in the past, it is an ever present condition of human nature that threatens social order; it cannot be suppressed but it can be controlled in the context of moiety and **divara**, when it is directed into social forms such as kinship, marriage and politics (ibid: 23).

3 Although Billings (2002) provides insight into the origins and growth of the TIA movement in New Hanover, there is still a need for real comparative analysis that would consider why some areas throughout New Ireland were more ‘prone’ or open to the movement than others. While I offer insight into the introduction of TIA in Lihir, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to address other areas of New Ireland.

4 Patrol reports for the Australian Administration of Papua New Guinea from 1945 – 1974 were accessed on microfilm at the Australian National Archives in Canberra, Australia, 2005.

5 The words **luluai** and **tultul** originate from the Kanua language in New Britain.

6 The Lihir Islands were first named Gerrit de Nijs Eylandt by Dutchman Abel Janszoon Tasman in 1643 (Skalnik, 1989: 8). The name Lihir, which appears to be a corruption of the local name Lir, was not introduced until the 19th century. The term Lir traditionally refers to the language shared by the inhabitants of these islands.

7 This has become a common practice throughout Papua New Guinea; people often speak proudly of the actions of their descendents. This could be compared to the changes in Australia where convict history has been de-stigmatised, with many people actively seeking out connections to colonial convicts.

8 Governor Hahl originally thought the Micronesians would eventually become consumers of German goods produced in German New Guinea. His intention was to create new production zones and markets that would assist the expansion of the Empire (Firth, 1976: 56).

9 The introduction and use of steel tools as prestige items in exchange gave certain big men more status and ultimately assisted garden production, enabling these men to hold larger feasts. Similarly some of those who worked in Australia on the sugar plantations returned with knowledge of the cash economy which they were able to use to their advantage.

10 The earliest recorded ‘cult-like’ activities in the Namatanai Sub-District occurred around the Samo district south of Namatanai in 1952. It was not reported to posses ‘militant’ or ‘religious’ qualities that had surfaced in other well known movements throughout the Territory. The ‘cult’ allegedly combined **tumbuan** beliefs with economic desire: the “presence of the **tumbuan** led to communications with the Spirits...
were engaged in obtaining materials from Australia and England which would be shipped in due course” (PR NAM 6 / 1952 - 53). According to the Reports the movement did not flourish and as a ‘remedy’ the Administration prescribed more engagement with copra production.

11 Interestingly there are evident correlations between Arau and Mark Soipang (the Chairman of LMALA and the leader of the JNC) who we meet in chapters five and six. These men have similar characteristics, and have been the most influential men in terms of attempting to bring ‘modernity’ to Lihir.

12 In chapter five we see that these payments assumed renewed significance when some ex-TIA members interpreted equity payments from the mining company as a ‘return’ on their original tax payments which have since been recast as ‘investments’.

13 This list was produced in both English and Tok Pisin in the Patrol Reports. See Appendix One for Tok Pisin version. This list is a valuable supplement to Ramstad’s (nd 1) brief paper, and more recent investigations by myself and other anthropologists, such as John Burton, Colin Filer, Susan Hemer, Richard Jackson, and Martha Macintyre, who have mainly made inferences from information gleaned through retrospective accounts.

14 See chapters five and seven for further discussion of equity payments.

15 Bateson outlines three main forms of schismogenesis: complementarity, symmetry, and reciprocity (1935: 181). Each form is based on different variables or responses between groups to particular behaviour. The different ways that TKA followers and non-TKA followers responded to each other was a form of complementarity; each group responded in different ways to the behaviour of the other. Bateson notes that such differentiation, if unrestrained will lead to a distortion of the personalities or traits within each group and will inevitably lead to inter-group hostility. While tensions between followers and non-followers did arise, especially as differences between the groups became more pronounced, these tensions certainly did not generate a breakdown of all social relations within Lihir.

16 The close (but troubled) relationship between the Catholic Church and Nimamar was reflected in the higher number of members in the southern part of Niolam closer to the Palie Mission station. While antagonism continued to exist between members and non-members Filer and Jackson note that in 1985 “the Catholic Church accommodated the internal division of its flock in a rather ingenious way” (1989: 175): on Saturday afternoons Nimamar members came from as far away as Lamboar and Putput to engage in charitable exercises, such as prayer for the sick and giving food to patients at the Palie Health Centre. These occasions were often followed by ceremonies that combined Bible study and worship. Due to the altruistic emphasis, some Nimamar supporters have failed to comprehend the reason for opposition from non-members. In conversations with ex-Nimamar members about the ‘greediness’ of some Lihirians (see chapter three) many lamented the demise of Nimamar with its ideological emphasis on sharing (noken holim pas wanpela samting). From this perspective, it is little wonder that people would often state that if Nimamar still existed (in its previous form) then Lihirians might experience more equitable wealth distribution.

17 A friend of mine from Manus who worked as a community school teacher during the height of the movement and was not a follower once recalled the division between himself and his Lihirian wife who remained committed to TKA philosophies. In the early 1970s, in regards to her membership, he asked his wife ‘what else she was looking for’. They were economically successful and owned a generator, a permanent house and a boat. She replied that it was not possible for the two of them to be buried in the same grave (which according to Lihirian kastom would have been unlikely anyway as people are generally buried in their own men’s house – see chapter two) and that what she chose to believe was her concern and if he chose not to hold the same beliefs then he could not ‘follow her’. Thirty years on he was still troubled and puzzled by this statement. It seems that this is an example of a general belief within TKA that the ‘new earth’ (Burridge, 1971) will only be open to members and that when the Second Coming arrives deceased members will be raised for life in the new world. Possibly this is a conflation of New Testament Biblical teaching that states Jesus came to divide, and that people could only reach heaven through personal belief, not through their close association with other Christians. See Michah 7.6; Luke 12:51-53; Mark 13.12; Mathew 10: 35 -36. See also Robbins (2004a) and LiPuma (2000) for discussion on the individual aspects of spiritual salvation that confronts the relational facets of personhood within Melanesian communities.

18 Lihirians only began fearing disturbances similar to those already occurring in Bougainville around the time of the 1987 national election when political conflict over the distribution of benefits from the Panguna copper mine received widespread publicity.
According to some older Lihirians I was interpreted as one of their returned ancestors. This partly came about through a series of events beyond my control. In the morning after my first night of sleeping in the men’s house I asked to see the grave site for the young man who had recently died. I was told it was at the rear of the men’s house where deceased clan members are normally buried. As I entered the grave yard enclosure adorned with brightly painted cement crosses, I unwittingly stopped at the first grave I came across. This grave happened to belong to Nicholas Likon, a respected leader who had passed away some years earlier. Older men and women paid close attention to my movements and immediately noticed when I stopped and asked about this grave; connections were instantly made.

By the following week it was decided that if I was going to be incorporated into Tiakwan clan then I should also be given a name. I was told I would be called Likon. At the time I assumed it was because I shared the same Christian name with the deceased Likon. I was unaware of my new status as the returned ancestral spirit of Nicholas Likon. It was some six months before this was brought to my attention. For some people my Tok Pisin and fumbling attempts to speak Lihirian were deemed proof of my identity. My comparatively poor linguistic skills were interpreted as a ruse - a cunning attempt to trick people into believing I was not Likon. My ceaseless questions about Lihirian practices and past people only added to their suspicion. While I was certainly not interpreted as a deity, I had assumed a spiritual dimension that located me within a particular cultural framework held by certain members of the community. These older Lihirians were not new to the concept of returned ancestors. Similar to others who come before me, such as employees of the Kennecott mining company, and other anthropologists working in Lihir such as Martha Macintyre and Susan Hemer, who were also slotted into Lihirian cosmology, it made sense to some that I too should be understood in this way. Some younger Lihirians mentioned to me they had tried to convince these elders that I was just a student from Australia and that had I my own family. Despite my attempts to be clear about my origins, when I was leaving Lihir I was still unsure how some older Lihirians interpreted my presence.
In the course of increasing interaction with external agencies throughout the colonial period and more recent social changes engendered through mineral extraction, Lihirians have come to hold particular ideas about what social values and forms of behaviour are truly Lihirian. This is part of an on-going process of cultural reflexivity characteristic of the experience of modernity. This reflects the more general Melanesian phenomena whereby specific ritual practices and forms of sociality are reified as indigenous kastom and held in contradistinction to Occidental images of Western society, politics, economic practices and personhood. The emergence of the discourse of kastom is not solely the result of the changes and development brought through mining; this discourse has been present for some time, however it has gained a greater conceptual stronghold since operations began. Throughout the following chapters I shall explore the idea of kastom in more detail specifically focussing on the interpenetration between the ‘traditional’ realm and the capitalist system. However, for the moment I am concerned with the enduring social structures that provide the basis for this kastom discourse and more particularly the concept of pasin bilong Lihir (the ways of Lihir); that is, those forms of behaviour and being that many Lihirians consider axiomatic.

Custom in the contemporary world has received much anthropological attention, particularly the different ways it is manifest in Melanesia through the concept of kastom (see especially Clifford, 1988; Geertz, 1973; Handler and Linnekin, 1985; Hanson, 1989; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983; Jolly and Thomas, 1992; Keesing and Tonkinson, 1982;
Kuper, 1988; Linnekin and Poyer, 1990; Said, 1995 [1978]; Shils, 1981; Wagner, 1981 [1975]; White and Lindstrom, 1993). Lihirians expressed very definite ideas about what *kastom* should entail; although this does not mean there has been unanimous agreement over the details. Similarly *pasin bilong Lihir* is an idiomatic expression that denotes ideas about ‘correct’ forms of behaviour and ways of living and acting. More often that not, ideas about correct *pasin* were articulated via the negative example. People were less inclined to directly state what correct *pasin* is, but people could recognise it when they saw it, and nearly everyone would happily point out what is not *pasin bilong Lihir.*  

*Pasin* has become somewhat conflated with *kastom,* as in *pasin bilong peles* (way of the village), which like *kastom,* is often used in opposition to some other form of taxonomic category, such as *bisnis* (business) or *pasin bilong waitman* (ways of the white man) – which is contrasted with *pasin bilong tumbuna* (ways of the ancestors). However, *pasin bilong Lihir* is distinct from *kastom* as it may be used to criticise Lihirian *kastom* events that are not performed according to ideas of correct procedure (such as the examples we see in chapter four). Nevertheless, when Lihirians use the term *pasin,* it often carries immediate connotations of appropriate Lihirian behaviour that include activities associated with *kastom* or ‘traditional’ ways of living. *Pasin bilong Lihir* implicitly holds legalistic overtones, particularly due to the upsurge of interest in *kastom* and attempts at codification. Thus *gutpela sindaun* (good lifestyle or good ways of living) usually equates with *pasin bilong Lihir,* which entails ideas about adherence to *kastom* and *pasin bilong peles.*

When Lihirians use these terms they are drawing upon certain inherited cultural references. Despite the transformations that occurred in Lihir, these values and ways of living perdure and have continued to shape social practice and ideology. While *pasin bilong Lihir* does represent the essentialisation of certain aspects of Lihirian culture, underlying social structures continued to form the framework for a Lihirian world view and the basis for assessing practices, events and ideas. In next two chapters I take up the issue of contemporary Lihirian economic practice and values and I argue that they are strongly influenced by notions of *pasin bilong Lihir.* Here my intention is to unpack these
received cultural values and enduring social structures that inform Lihirian approaches to their society and economy and disposed Lihirians towards certain types of behaviour and ideologies. While this provides some form of socio-cultural baseline to compare contemporary social practices and collective values it also allows for analysis of cultural continuity within a period of rapid social change. Recognising this continuity helps us better understand negative and positive transformations in Lihirian society that result from economic development. This is particularly significant for the following chapters where I consider the changes and enduring patterns of social and economic practice. More importantly, this is useful for exploring the values and practices that lay at the heart of Lihirian notions of virtuous sociality, their objectified concept of indigenous morality.

Birds of afar?

At the most superficial level, Lihir is a matrilineal society divided into two exogamous moieties which follow the New Ireland Tok Pisin names bikpisin (big bird) and smolpisin (smaller bird), respectively identified with the sea eagle and the fish hawk. In Lihir these terms may also be used to simply mean ‘signs’, because unlike their mainland counterparts, there is no strong identification with these totemic markers. In the vernacular they are termed tumbawin-lam (big people cluster) and tumbawin-malkok (small people cluster). Tumbawin is a generic term that literally translates into a bunch (tum) of bananas (win), and is often used to refer to all groups of people – moieties, clans, sub-clans and lineages (cf. Wagner, 1986: 84 - 86). The metaphorical reference to a bunch of bananas conveys the idea of a group with a common ancestress that is already in the process of dividing into separate branches, if it has not done so already. The ‘totemic’ designators cannot be understood in the Durkheiminan sense of the term. Lihirians did not express a sacred or ritual relationship between their social groups and their ‘totems’ as emblems of membership and the foci of social solidarity. Perhaps in this instance, as Kroeber once asserted, totems are merely epiphenomenal (Kroeber, 1938: 305). As in other parts of New Ireland, Lihirians do not have theories of descent from their ‘totems’, and there appear to be no myths or stories that account for the origin of the moieties.²
The practical significance of the moiety arrangement was mainly limited to marriage alliance, although genealogical records suggest this practice has been in decline for some time. Most Lihirians insist there were once strict prohibitions on marrying within the same moiety; marriage within the clan has remained relatively taboo. This means individuals are chiefly defined in relation to each other according to whether they belong to the same moiety. Eves (1998: 123) notes that among the Lelet moieties might be the largest and most fundamental kinship category, but they are not corporate groups; they are the means by which marriage is ordered and structured, not the means whereby people gain access to land, resources, valuables, or property (this is the role of the clan). On the other hand, Wagner argues that Barok moieties (in the neighbouring Namatanai district) cannot adjudicate or settle matters; “they are less a means of organisation than one purely of elicitation” (1986: 51), as exchanges and alliances between the two groups educe important social values. Both of these positions can be applied to Lihirian moieties, but for the most part moieties do not play an overly practical role.

This makes it tempting to speculate whether moieties are actually indigenous to Lihir, and whether they might in fact have been ‘introduced’ or ‘adopted’ from marriage and exchange alliances with people from mainland New Ireland where moiety division is a common structuring principle for marriage and exchange (see Clay, 1986: 55). While Lihirians claim there used to be greater adherence to exogamous moiety marriage patterns, unlike people from Lesu or Lelet, Lihirians do not readily recall times when breaching the rules of moiety exogamy were met with violent death at the hands of kinsmen (Bell, 1938: 318; Eves, 1998: 133; Powdermaker, 1971 [1933]: 41). The apparent lack of discipline calls to mind converse cases noted by Powdermaker, and even Hogbin’s observations in Guadalcanal where intra-moiety sexual relations were regarded as ‘breaking’ the moiety (1937: 78). What we find throughout most of central and southern New Ireland is “differences of degree, not differences of kind; of generality, and not of type” (Levi-Strauss, 1969 [1949]: 75). As early as the 1930s, Groves notes that it was common in Tabar to see marriages between individuals belonging to the same
moiety and that these were not regarded with particular “disfavour” if there was sufficient residential distance or no traceable degree of consanguineous connection (1934: 239).

On the other hand, Tangans do not claim to have moieties, despite practicing what Foster considers ‘moiety like behaviour’. Historically their ties were closer with Anir and Southern mainland New Ireland. Tangans have preferences towards particular clans for marriage and alliance, and usually clans ‘hostile’ to one another are more suited for marriage and are likely to be closely located, while allied clans are less preferred for marriage and do not occupy contiguous land (Foster, 1995a: 71-72). Although Tangan marriage patterns do not reflect a pattern of moiety exogamy and there is no overarching moiety organization that links all clans, Foster concludes that regular marriage preferences and “brotherly” support relationships (allied clans which form relationships based on either patrilateral or matrilateral ties which they liken to ‘brotherhood’) intimate the presence of dual organisation (1995a: 71). Possibly Lihir was previously organized in similar ways to Tanga; these practices would provide a favourable basis for the development (or introduction) of moieties.

In each case these societies are structured by the principle of dual organisation, despite variations and the fact that duality is called upon to play varying roles as circumstances require. As Clay notes, Mandak lives are involved with duality and “balance”, which are manifest in “such diverse sociocultural features as moiety divisions, seasonal duality, and an insistence on balanced reciprocal exchanges” (Clay, 1986: 55). There may be cultural myths which attempt to explain the presence of moieties, but as Levi-Strauss observes, we are likely to remain ignorant of their origin, and the “problem of whether clan organisation resulted from a sub-division of moieties, or whether moieties were formed by an aggregation of clans” continues to have little significance whatsoever (Levi-Strauss, 1969 [1949]: 74). Lihirian patterns of social organisation are similar to those found throughout the region. Although people maintain the structuring principles of dual organisation as a stated ideology, there are relatively few domains where it affects practice.
Social units

Pre-capitalist (and perhaps even pre-mining) concepts of the clan can be understood as a social unit that fuses three core symbolic elements: a le (shell money), a rihri or the hausboi (men’s house), and tandal, otherwise known throughout New Ireland by the term masalai (spiritual beings that inhabit the land and mindscape). While the nature of Lihirian clans is culturally determined, in so far as they exist they are units of social structure. Big men were necessarily implicated in this symbolic trinity as the ‘owner’ and leader of the men’s house; the mediator and human counterpart of the tandal; the custodian of the clan’s store of mis (shell money); and the arbiter of protocol and the organizer and chief orator at feasts within the men’s house. It was impossible to conceive of big men outside of the cultural conception of the clan and vice versa. Through the autonomous actions of big men, these elements gained symbolic and practical significance drawing people together in ways that created and maintained unity and group identity. This image is structurally similar to Wagner’s (1986: 84) depiction of Usen Barok clans however, in both cases such a depiction no longer adequately captures the dynamics of contemporary leadership or group organization.

The structure of Lihirian clans has been transformed since the inception of mining activities, particularly as the distribution of mine related wealth (ideally) occurs along clan lines, ultimately defining clan membership according who is eligible to receive this money. The boundaries of Lihirian clans have always been extremely permeable and ‘thick’, as opposed to hard and incontrovertible. The “entification” of clans (cf. Ernst, 1999) as a result of mining, has meant relationships with non-Lihirians have become more circumscribed and incorporation of ‘outsiders’ has become the source of great tension, a point which I shall return to in chapter seven where I discuss the connection between Lihirian identity, kastom and mine derived wealth. This is also intimately connected to the development of an incipient Lihirian ethnic identity (cf. Nash and Ogan, 1990), an extension of the process I outlined in the introduction, where Lihirians have become divided between the crude distinction of ‘landowners’ and ‘non-landowners’.
Although Lihirians would often speak of a ‘clan system’ it has proven exceptionally difficult to reach consensus on how the various clans, sub-clans and lineages are systematically linked. However insistence from all Lihirians that the clans can ‘fit together’ despite inconsistencies between all the models that have been offered suggests the extent to which Lihirians have come to believe in the ideal of ‘organized’ group membership and unity. Regardless of the difficulty of working out how, or whether all of the clans can fit together in a cohesive way, the important thing to remember is that Lihirians clans are not mere fabrications of economic and political necessity designed to assist the distribution of mine related wealth (cf. Filer, 1997: 177). However, there is a sense in which Lihirian clans have become bureaucratic units organized around the administration of mine derived wealth, with some (re)forming themselves as businesses and corporations based around contracts with the company.

After presenting four versions of the clan ‘system’ in their social and economic impact assessment of the Lihir gold mine, Filer and Jackson decided that “local people’s models of the system are as diverse as the interests in which they express”, and that the ‘system’ as a whole is “best understood as an ideal world which must be constantly adjusted to a set of personal relationships whose instability it is intended to conceal” (Filer and Jackson, 1989: 55). My own frustrating attempt to make sense of the clans as a cohesive system also revealed that “more extensive investigation would only serve to multiply the number of models, and not to establish a single ‘authorised’ version” (Filer and Jackson, 1989: 56).

In the late 1960s, Ramstad (nd 2) identified six major clans in Kunaye Village. He acknowledges that some clans may be regarded by other names in other parts of the island, and that the major clans were best understood through the local idiom of the Canarium nut; the kernel of which contains several parts, illustrates how numerous clans can be included or ‘covered’ under the one encompassing clan name. When viewed from one or two villages, it is easier to make sense of the relationship and ordering of the clans; the number of clans is usually limited and there is more likely to be consistency between various versions of the ‘structure’. Hemer (2001: 16) found a similar situation
when working on Mahur Island, noting that the isolation of Mahur, the smaller population, and lesser number of clans made it decidedly easier to comprehend how those clans were ordered. Given that my research was not restricted to a single area, but rather reflected the high level of mobility in Lihir, it was only when I considered Kinami as an isolated area that I could draw limited conclusions about how the clans ‘fit’ together. As others have found, difficulties arise when Lihir is considered as a whole, as a group of five islands, approximately 35 villages and over 400 hamlets.\(^6\)

My own findings from the east coast of Niolam identified the following major clans and sub-clans:

**Main clans:**

Unawus, Lamatlik, Tengawom, Tilnetalga, Nayal and Nisal.

**Sub-clans:**


In the process of compiling this list it became increasingly obvious that most Lihirians only had a basic comprehension of those clans and sub-clans to which they are immediately related. This enables people to work out their own position in relation to other people and clans, and more importantly to know what resources they can access.

Towards the end of my research Luke Kabariu from Masahet Island, who works as the Cultural Information Superintendent in the Community Relations department for the
company, presented me with a copy of his own findings which listed over fifty different
clans and sub-clans across the group of islands. Many of the senior men from Kinami
had not heard of every name; even when they were familiar with the name, it did not
necessarily mean they knew where to position these clans and sub-clans in relation to one
another. Some men would tell me their versions of the ‘clan system’, but would then
stress the ‘secrecy’ of their account. This ‘secrecy’ indicates two things: that there has
never been unanimous agreement over the ‘clan system, nor has it ever been necessary;
and with the escalating ‘entification’ as a result of the legal processes entailed in mineral
development these accounts have assumed greater significance. As the influence of senior
men is gradually undermined by new paths to leadership and prestige, these stories are
one of the few remaining pegs upon which senior men can hang their authority.

Collective rights

Not surprisingly, Lihir reflects a typical Melanesian pattern of chronic fission and fusion
between individuals and groups of various sizes. According to Filer and Jackson the
colonial administration consistently construed this reality as a rigid expression of
customary land rights; they have imposed their ‘charter’ on a set of personal relationships
whose instability they could not possibly fathom (Filer and Jackson, 1989: 55). The irony
of the situation is that Lihirians have adopted a similar conception of their clan ‘system’
and land tenure.

In Lihir the principal benefit of clan membership is the right to access clan land and
resources in order to subsist. There are several main categories of customary land rights:
clan land, lineage land, individually ‘owned’ land, and land provided for newcomers or
adopted clan members. As I explain below, Lihirian clans consist of a large number of
lineages which may be dispersed across the islands. This means that collective rights to
cultivation or use are generally associated with the lineage, and they are distributed, in
practice, by the senior male(s) in each lineage. Contrastingly the ownership or transaction
of land generally occurs at the clan level, and ideally any transactions or decisions must
have the consent of all significant clan leaders and be publicly agreed upon.
Clan land generally includes bush and gardening land, beaches or fringing reefs, and sacred sites that contain prominent physical features such as rocks or water sources. Lineage land tends to be more specific, often including hamlet areas, men’s house sites, and gardening land. Senior men within a clan will generally work together to control and maintain clan resources, while lineage resources are more likely to be controlled by the head(s) of a particular lineage.

Land rights have always been intricately bound to ‘traditional’ exchange (kastom). Competitive feasting and exchange have remained the most important avenues for securing control over land and resources within a clan. In the past, inter-clan exchange debts (and in some cases compensation debts) could be settled with land transactions. With the commodification of land these practices have become rare; clans are reluctant to part with (potentially valuable) resources. With the increasing influence of external agencies Lihirians have come to view traditional land rights as neat parcels that can be handed out to clan members, reflecting the hardening of previously flexible group boundaries and the precise delineation of group territories.

Land which is exchanged or ‘purchased’ in the context of kastom is generally held by individuals in perpetuity and inherited by specific matrilineal heirs. These transactions ordinarily take place within clans. In the past it was more common for land to be exchanged between clans, however with the changing value of land associated with mining activities, clans have become reluctant to part with their resources. Similarly, in previous years Lihirians were more willing to provide land for their long term guests or adopted members. If these people made feasts for their hosts, or provided assistance with cash, shell money, or pigs, this generally ensured access to land and resources.

Primary rights include access to clan resources and land. Adult clan members generally have equal access and proprietary claims over garden land and residential hamlet land. Individuals have rights of access to clan land for purposes such as gardening, hunting, gathering food and the use of timber and other materials. Although individuals can claim
damages for destruction to land and resources they own, generally this process will be arbitrated by clan leaders. Secondary rights are those of usufruct where individuals can use land and have rights over any trees or gardens on that land. Normally in-marrying people will be granted usufruct rights over the land of their spouse, or they may be granted usufruct rights over other clan land. Similarly in-migrants from other villages or areas can be granted usufruct rights upon their acceptance as residents. Secondary rights can be converted to primary rights if the person in question has been accepted as a member of the clan and has significantly contributed to kastomary feasting with gifts of pigs, shell money and cash. Ideally these rights must be conferred by all members of the clan who also decide upon the incorporation of the new comer.

While there are instances where fathers can give land to their children, such as when children make kastom for their fathers in the form of the ikineitz feast described below, theoretically land is inherited through the female line. Since mining began there has been a growing tendency to ‘bend the rules’ of inheritance as fathers increasingly concentrate on their children’s needs at the expense of their sisters’ children, or as people attempt to isolate land from the kastomary system. However, while mining has had the most profound impact on Lihirian land tenure practice and ideology, the emergence and acceptance of individualistic (or at least restricted) ‘ownership’ owes it origins to earlier cash cropping ventures that encouraged individual holdings and missionary emphasis on the nuclear family.

Tensions have emerged due to a reluctance to acknowledge the extent to which contemporary land tenure practices differ from those of a supposedly immemorial tradition (cf. Ward and Kingdon, 1995: 36). Local attempts to maintain an image of an idealised ‘traditional’ system continuously confront the fact that land has become a commodity rather than simply a stage on which activities take place. As I shall argue in chapter four, such changes effectively reinforce reified ideal values and practices – what is known in Lihir as pasin bilong Lihir.
Organising ‘principles’

Clans (tumbawin) are comprised of lineages (bior) each of which can theoretically trace their decent to a common female ancestor or point of origin. When people are born they are immediately accepted as members of their mother’s clan and the men’s house which is looked after by her brothers (of which she is also member). This aspect of one’s identity is axiomatic and immutable. Lihirians differentiate between different members of a single clan through lineage affiliation. Lhirian clans consist of numerous lineages, some of which are larger than others and might be regarded as sub-clans in their own right. Typically a lineage revolves around a men’s house and the leadership of its members. Genealogical knowledge of the lineage tends to be lateral rather than vertical and most people can only recall genealogical knowledge two generations distant from their own position (cf. Foster, 1995a: 73); often people who were not renowned as leaders or for some other prominent reason are dropped from collective memory.

In reality a Lihirian lineage is that group of people whose lives revolve around a particular men’s house, who work and garden together, and come together to host various feasts. Membership is reckoned on the basis of maternal blood ties and lineage identity is fixed at birth, but in practice membership is defined performatively rather than genealogically. This is partly attributable to residence as people within a single hamlet are drawn together through the necessity to pool labour in gardening and kastom work. The flexibility of residence attests to the ‘openness’ of Lihirian ways of calculating relatedness. Thus people living away from their own land, sometimes because of marriage arrangements, may find that for all practical intentions they have become incorporated into another lineage. This similarly applies to people (both Lihirians and non-Lihirians) adopted by other families; they are expected to contribute to the well being and maintenance of the adoptive group.

People who arrive in Lihirian villages, hamlets or men’s houses, regardless of whether they are Lihirians from another village, or non-Lihirian and from another island, are generally regarded as wasier (although, as I explain in chapter seven, there have been
recent shifts in the ways that people describe and regard ‘outsiders’

In the vernacular, the term means guest or visitor. 

Wasier differ from members of the household or lineage as they are the recipients of the work and hospitality of the household or the lineage associated with a particular men’s house. Implicit in the use of this term is a sense of obligation to pinari wasier (to provide food, hospitality and gifts for guests), a vital function of households and men’s houses. Wasier, or visitors, are an accepted category of relations across the spectrum of villages and islands, and traditionally wasier from the neighbouring district knew they would be assured of hospitality, and if so desired, could stay on as incorporated guests.

The fluidity of Lihirian descent is illustrated in the ease with which people can reside in other hamlets. Often people will be closer to those people with whom they are in daily contact, meaning that even though there might be other kinship categories that ‘stipulate’ a close relationship, if these people are not present then closer bonds will be established with those people who have a more direct bearing on daily life. However, it is more common for the ‘relationship’ to overrule residence; ‘distant’ relatives often appeal to the relationship category in order to establish claims for assistance. This means that despite the flexibility of Lihirian kinship, there are certain kinship categories that carry greater purchase on the demand or obligation to give.

Individual relations

The structures of Lihirian kinship generally follow similar matrilineal patterns to neighbouring communities. While there are minor variations, the most prominent relationships common to this region of New Ireland can be found, such as a strong connection with maternal uncles, cross-cousin relationships marked by forbearance and conviviality, avoidance between uterine siblings, and relationships between in-laws that are constrained, but highly respectful.

The strongest relationships in Lihir are those between a man and his sister’s children. Mother’s brothers are referred to as motung or kandere by their nieces (liling wehien) and
nephews (nunglik). The mother’s brother is the most important man in a child’s life and they can expect nurturance, guidance, assistance and discipline from him. Ideally he will pay their bride price, and provide them with access to clan land and resources. Traditionally motung would hold and control any mis or cash gained by their nieces and nephews; it is for good reason that mother’s brothers were regarded as their ‘big man’ (tohie). Through their mother’s brother children can expect to inherit land, resources, and money, and in the past, for young men motong were the primary source of knowledge. For males this is a relationship of co-dependency, as younger men rely upon their uncles for their own growth, knowledge, development and support (for both cash and shell valuables), while older males rely upon their nephews for labour, political support and lineage succession (social reproduction). Younger age mates existed in symmetrical relationships of relative equality until they were old enough to begin displaying personal qualities that set them apart from other males. Senior men exerted control over younger male labour power, time, and economic resources.

Similarly women were also directed by male kin and husbands. Despite the payment of bride wealth (rapar), there is tension between a woman’s brothers and her husband. Brothers often attempt to maintain any wealth gained by a sister, fearing her husband may convince her to part with her wealth, whereby mis (or money) would ultimately be utilized by another clan. This gendered hierarchy is played out in numerous situations where men assert their influence and authority over women in daily affairs. In contemporary contexts this dominance is often maintained through appeals to kastom and an ideological distinction that posits femininity with pasin bilong tumbuna (the ways of the ancestors) while masculinity is selectively modernized (see Knauf, 1997; Wardlow, 2002; and Bainton, forthcoming).

Lihirian cross-cousin relationships represent classic text book joking relationships. These are most obviously contrasted with the strict avoidance between uterine brother and sister (cf. Bell 1935a; Clay, 1977: 47; Wagner, 1986: 70) and the sense of competition and latent tension between uterine brothers. The level of competition between brothers is not matched by similar competition between sisters because unlike brothers, sisters are not
vying for leadership positions within the lineage. Competition and tension emerges from political pursuits; essentially brothers utilize the same resources in their competition for influence and esteem. Given that brothers are united under the influence of the same man (their senior motung), jealousies inevitably arise as one brother gains more favour. Jealousy between brothers is said to have complicated the relationship between kinship and residence, which has continued to discourage them from settling in the same hamlet. Previously it was typical to find within a hamlet one senior male member of the lineage, who usually ‘owned’ the men’s house, while the remaining male residents were related as either sons (zik) or sister’s sons (nunglik), or even sister’s husbands, or sisters daughters husbands.8 Previously high levels of village endogamy meant brothers were not split by marriage, and younger nephews were in constant contact with their uncles.

The close bond between cross-cousins and the idealizing of this relationship must be seen against the background of uterine sibling relationships. Cross cousins are typically separated by belonging to different moieties or at least different clans. They exist under the influence of men who are related as affines and avoid each other. The relational distance between cross-cousins and the existence of different authority figures means they are not likely to be divided by jealousy or competition. These links are extremely strong, and it is particularly difficult to resist demands and requests from cross-cousins (whether they are for betel nut, money, beer or finding a sexual partner). Cross-sex cross-cousins are similarly close, and this relationship is equally characterized by joking and conviviality and stands in marked contrast to opposite-sex uterine sibling relationships. Between opposite sex cross-cousins there is a taboo on the use of personal names and kinship names are used instead; in the past cross-cousins who are not first cousins were seen as ideal marriage partners, largely due to the practice of moiety exogamy.

Similarly there is a close bond between fathers and their children that was said to be expressed through their relationship with their father’s tandal. It is believed that when children, especially sons, ask their father’s tandal for assistance it will willingly oblige. In addition to feasting and exchange relations, these relationships unite people across moieties and clans. Fathers can choose to bequeath land and resources to their children. It
is difficult to say whether or not in the past it was easier for fathers to pass their wealth and resources on to their sons. The idealization of the relationship between young males and their maternal uncles suggests this practice was less prevalent. However, it is also probable that prior to mining there was less pressure on clan resources, meaning that when this did occur it was less likely to cause inter-clan dispute. At the same time this has to be considered against contemporary inheritance patterns where fathers are increasingly giving wealth to their sons and ignoring their responsibilities as uncles; increased pressure upon limited clan resources means this has become the source of considerable antagonism among expectant nephews.

In the past, relationships between in-laws (poas or tambu) were more circumscribed, involving the strict avoidance of names, not entering each others houses and not walking past their head if they were lying down. This relationship is not symmetrical; the spouse must show respect towards their in-law. Generally a man avoids or feels shame towards those people who share a part of the bride wealth. For this reason people may find reasons not to accept part of the bride wealth in order to maintain the existing relationship. Likewise, some people may take the opportunity presented by marriage to assume a relationship of formal avoidance to alleviate difficult or stressed relationships. Similar to Mandak practices, “people often have a choice among two or more alternatives in the determining a particular social category, and individuals often seem to emphasize certain relationships for political purposes” (1977: 43).

Although Lihirians have firmly stated ideas about certain relationships, in practice there is flexibility. It is becoming evident that many of the former rules of avoidance are not being adhered to by younger generations, or being enforced. People are active agents in relationships: kinship sets the boundaries or the field of action, often establishing what is impossible, possible, or probable, but it does not wholly determine the decisions that individual agents will make or the character of a given relationship.
Dead men and persistent values

It may appear like a tired truism that Lihirian kinship and ‘traditional’ politics (by which I mean male leadership roles, mortuary feasting and economic exchange) both as ideologies and contexts for meaningful action are coterminous with one another. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1958 [1940]) made this point in relation to African kinship and political systems, and Allen (1984) has reiterated this in relation to Melanesia. However, in consideration of Lihirian male leadership and sociality, it is worth noting the extent to which both kinship and politics were intimately bound; a point which has assumed greater salience as men seek to divorce their kinship obligations from their personal, political and economic aspirations.

Filer and Jackson concluded that Lihirian big men, for the most part, were essentially “dead men” (Filer and Jackson, 1989: 185). This might seem overly pessimistic if not for the fact that the sort of leaders who could actually qualify as big men ceased to exist when the traditional economy which bolstered their position was subsumed by capitalism. The ritual and esoteric knowledge they alone possessed no longer provided appropriate responses to their changing environment. While Lihirians often claimed they have contemporary big men and readily point out men believed to possess requisite qualities, there is no unanimity on the question of what is a big man.10

Male and female status

Lihirian leaders are referred to in the vernacular by the term tohie, which finds translation in Tok Pisin as bikman (big man). Although tohie is used as a title of status, it is also used generically to mean leader. It is not the sole reserve of male leaders, as it can be applied to senior women who have proven themselves in areas of kastom, and where they are the sole surviving senior member of the lineage and have thus become the ‘owner’ of the lineage’s men’s house. These women are described as weyentohie (big woman). However, although women can achieve status and renown within their clan this does not mean they enjoy the same level of influence accorded to senior male leaders, nor does it
translate into increased rights or status for other women ranked beneath them. While they might be recognized as the ‘owner’ of the lineage’s men’s house by default, this also does not mean that they are entitled to additional rights within the men’s house. Equally, given that most discussions take place within the men’s house, women are generally excluded from taking an active role in clan and lineage affairs, which contrasts with the situation described by Nash for the Nagovisi of Bougainville (cf. Nash, 1987).

Unlike male status which is cumulative, female status is two-staged. There are no male initiation ceremonies. Men gradually achieve higher rank through political and economic endeavour, whereas women are generally seen as mature or immature, based on their ability to carry out tasks such as cooking, gardening, rearing children and raising pigs. Previously pubescent women were initiated into womanhood through the tolup or ba’at ritual where they were kept in seclusion for some months before being married however since missionization this practice has been abandoned.11 Even women who achieve fame through kastom or as the ‘owner’ of a men’s house are undistinguished from other females, in so far as having extra influence in clan or community matters or being able to manage the labour of men and women in their lineage or clan.

Abilities and possessions

Traditionally big men were rich in land, pigs and shell money. They were outstanding warriors, excellent orators, and true leaders with courage and wisdom. They were the guardians of ritual, and the storehouses of ritual and esoteric knowledge. These positions were not hereditary, conforming to other images of big men throughout the region, where the office of leadership is solely a personal achievement (Clay, 1986; Eves, 1998; Foster, 1995a; Oliver, 1967 [1955]; Powndermaker, 1971 [1933]; Wagner, 1986). Being the son or nephew of a successful big man may in some instances provide an ambitious young man with extra resources and a platform upon which to launch his own career; nevertheless, theoretically every man is eligible for bigmanship.
In the past a clan’s leading big man was the custodian of their store of *mis* (shell money), and he controlled the distribution and use of all pigs and garden produce. It is hard to assess the extent of their reach and control within the clan, even though elderly men argue the authority of the clan head was absolute. This is a difficult image to reconcile with contemporary leadership practices and the extensive splitting and atomizing of all Lihirian clans, and most lineages. Needless to say, this style of leadership found contest among younger men determined to assert their own autonomy and retain money earned through wage labour and cash cropping.

*Melanesian managers*

In light of anecdotal evidence and ethnographic records for New Ireland prior to the Second World War (Bell, 1934, 1935b; Groves, 1934, 1935; Powdermaker, 1971 [1933]) it is reasonable to conjecture that the group surrounding a big man was stronger and more politically integrated than modern alliances. These big men were different in so much as they were more active in their recruitment of followers, seizing opportunities to provide security, pay bride wealth, and pay compensation on behalf of others. As we shall see in the following chapter, individual access to cash through wage labour, market sales, and *bisnis*, combined with the gradual atomization of Lihir, has meant most Lihirians no longer solely depend upon big men or clan affiliation for access to wealth. The situation is obviously different within ‘landowning’ clans where wealth is highly concentrated in the hands of those big men designated ‘block executives’ and ‘signatories’ to clan accounts into which royalty and compensation payments are deposited. Individual clan identity might be self-evident and unassailable from birth, but the clan as a cultural entity (which I distinguish from the clans as bureaucratic political units) could only truly come into existence through the organizing efforts of big men.

Traditionally men achieved their status and authority through a mixture of fear and love. A big man’s benevolence would endear people towards him and the love he expressed for his followers through his actions on behalf of them was reciprocated through their commitment or love towards him. At the same time, he was respected because people
feared his powers and capabilities. Military prowess played a strong part in the construction of a leader. Claims to cannibalism cannot be validated however Lihirians did fight internally with other clans, and practiced raids on other villages. This is somewhat validated by the various stories of ‘culture heroes’ who brought peace to Lihir, and stories about success in warfare and the competitions between big men as one sought to avenge the offence of another (see chapter eight). While men had to have competency in hosting feasts and making exchanges, it was imperative they display their physical strength, usually through fighting, to initiate their status and provide a base for their political careers. Apart from their own autonomous actions, big men also gained status from feasts held by their clan in their honour such as the rarhum feast described below.

*The power of esoteric knowledge*

Big men usually held vast amounts of knowledge on matters of sorcery and magic, and would boast of their strong connections with the local spiritual environment. While a man may gain a reputation as a sorcerer this does not always mean he will become a significant big man. On the other hand, big men without great knowledge of sorcery and magic often align themselves with those in possession of such knowledge, for their own protection and to boost their own abilities and resources. Big men who were sorcerers would usually align themselves with similar men. Controlling knowledge was vital to the continuation of their authority, especially given that “power based on knowledge control may be more subtle than power based on economic control, but this sort of power is also more persuasive in that it involves the communication and validation of cultural categories and truths” (Lindstrom, 1984: 299). As we will see in Part II, Lihirian big men compete over the legitimacy of knowledge. As members of the JNC attempted to convince Lihirians of their neo-liberal philosophies, other big men responded by proclaiming the ‘truth’ of their understanding of the world (based on *kastom*, notions of virtuous sociality, and in other instances cosmologies and prophesies derived from TKA).

Knowledge of the spiritual world was most commonly expressed in the relationship between a big man and his clan *tandal*. These are the most frequently mentioned and
encountered spiritual being in the Lihirian land and mindscape and for big men they are an important source of power (cf. Wagner, 1986: 102, 107). Since the introduction of Christianity, most Lihirians have come to view the world through the sort of classical Cartesian dualism that separates the spiritual and physical. However this does not preclude the possibility that Lihirians once perceived and experienced a seamless continuity between the spiritual realm and physical world, or that some people have continued to hold this view despite exogenous influences. Much of the New Ireland ethnography pays keen attention to the presence and role of the local spiritual environment and the various forms of interaction between humans and these spiritual forces. Like their neighbours, Lihirians have a rich and complex system of spiritual beliefs that historically shaped their knowledge system and framed their ‘world view’.

Tandal are believed to inhabit prominent physical features around the islands, such as cliffs, caves and large rock formations, sections of reef, creeks and river mouths, points, bays, and even large trees. The connection between tandal and certain portions of land is regarded as a sign of ownership by the clan identified with a particular tandal. Jessep (1977: 172 - 202) has recorded similar beliefs in the mainland New Ireland village of Lokon where clan masalai are said to legitimate claims to ownership of certain tracts of land. Tandal are also able to transform themselves into animate beings, such as eagles, sharks and snakes, and even incorporeal forms such as strange lights or sounds that can be seen and heard during the night.

Tandal inhabit a central space in the cultural conception of clans; origin stories about various clans often mention the location of the tandal, indicating that clans emerged from these places. Each clan is said to have their own tandal that inhabits particular places and takes the form of certain animate beings that are recognizable to clan members, especially big men who are expected to maintain close rapport with tandal on behalf of the clan. The clan tandal is both benevolent and frightening, and when called upon it inspires awe (particularly when big men call out the name of their tandal during exchanges in the karat feast). It is metaphorically glossed in Tok Pisin as “strong bilong graun” (the strength of the ground), which has even greater salience in respect to the belief that tandal support
and provide a kind of invisible shield around the islands from negative outside forces, thus assisting social harmony. The ‘connection’ between different *tandal* is crucial to this balance; negative human activities and changes to the relationship between humans (especially big men) and their *tandal* weaken the bonds between *tandal*, allowing the further intrusion of socially negative forces. Big men are morally required to maintain close relationships with their *tandal* for collective benefit.

**Paramount authority**

In addition to *tohie*, Lihirians recognized men whose status and authority exceeds all other men. These men are referred to as *pukia*, and might be regarded as the big men of all big men (cf. Clay, 1977: 22). *Pukia* is the term for a fig tree that has many branches, houses many birds and provides shelter. Its wide stretching branches are symbolic of the reach and remarkable networks of these men. This image conforms to Hogbin’s (1944: 258) description of the North Malaitan “centre man”, who according to Sahlins “connotes a cluster of followers gathered about an influential pivot” (1963: 290). Such men provide advice which is sought by other big men, and their status is due in part to their ability to unite various clans, often across moieties. Some people suggested these men received deferential treatment, indicating that in the past there were more recognized status differences; certain material and behavioural attributes were said to be the exclusive prerogative of *pukia*.

These men were not ‘elected’ by any sort of council, but rather as their influence grows they slowly reach a position of paramount authority. Apart from their political prowess and exchange capacities, such men held stores of knowledge on ritual, sorcery and magic, and have the deepest affinity with local spiritual beings that inhabit the Lihirian land and mindscape. Numerous Lihirians mentioned several such men (now deceased) from Masahet and Mahur Island. Those men who were still alive that some people referred to as *pukia* did not exercise the sort of influence within and across clans, characteristic of the position. Furthermore, in such an altered milieu, these men, in addition to being ritual experts, would have to be tertiary educated bureaucratic managers, preferably with
training as a mining engineer, and for good measure, have experience as a peace negotiator.

The house of *kastom*

The centre piece of Lihirian social, economic and political (and *kastomary*) life is the men’s house known locally as the *rihri* or in Tok Pisin as the *hausboi* (see Plates 5 and 6) Although females are connected to a men’s house, it is typically a male domain; women may enter the men’s house with which they are connected, to bring food, sweep, or speak with relatives, but it is rare that women would spend extended time within the enclosure. It is taboo for women to enter the men’s house of their husband and his kin. The men’s house was more than just the arena for enacting political roles and affirming kinship relations, it legitimated Lihirian culture; it was the locus of social reproduction, containing ancestors and maintaining current generations, and embodying the status of the clan. It was the physical and visual manifestation of social value in Lihirian society. Its primary function can be understood in terms of nurturance and social reproduction – the essence of men’s house ethos. It was (and has since become even more so) the most distinctive and recognizable feature of every hamlet.

Theoretically, the men’s house is open to all men. In the past they could be assured of hospitality for the duration of their stay. Lihirians pride themselves on their ability to look after *waisier*. At the most basic level, Lihirian male leadership has always focused on the maintenance of the men’s house as a social institution and physical edifice, and the guidance, discipline and nurturance of its younger members. Typically the eldest man within a lineage is regarded as the leader and ‘owner’ of their men’s house however there is often competition between younger brothers and younger nephews for succession. The men’s house is considered ‘inalienable’ from the clan, which is mainly because they contain deceased clan members. Unlike the Barok, where it is said to be an acceptable form of inheritance from father to son, despite being at the expense of the matriline (Wagner, 1986: 63-64), Lihirian men cannot pass their men’s house to their sons.
Plate 5  Men’s house constructed from bush materials, Malie Island

Plate 6  Men’s house constructed from permanent materials, Malie Island
Most Lihirian men’s houses are easily recognized by the dry stone wall (welot) that encompasses the actual house or temporary shelter and the distinctive large Y shaped stile (matanlaklak) that people must traverse in order to enter. Even when they have fallen into disrepair and (temporary) discontinued use, the welot remains as a reminder of the significance of the site. They are the pride of every hamlet and its associated lineage. Great care is taken to ensure they do not fall into a state of disrepair however; the emphasis is more economic than aesthetic. The men’s house is comprised of feasts as every aspect of its construction must be marked with a pig, which similarly applies to all major maintenance. The construction of the welot, the shaping and planting of the matanlaklak, the erection of the house frame and the placing of the walls and roof, down to the bed or table-like structure upon which feast food is placed, all require validation through a small scale feast of at least one pig within the men’s house.

The necessity to consummate all aspects of the rihri through the consumption of pork also partly accounts for the incidences where rihri are left seemingly unattended and in disuse and poor condition for long periods of time. (Re)construction is more than a matter of building materials and labour supply. Depending of the amount of work required it may take years to assemble the necessary resources (pigs, garden produce, shell money and cash). The use of permanent materials and new building styles means men’s houses are symbolic of clan wealth and markers of economic difference. Many of the newer men’s houses, especially those in Putput, are constructed entirely from permanent materials, have cemented floors, electricity, and in one case even a TV, electric kettle and a microwave oven.

Lihirians often described the rihri as their own mini “parliament house”. Historically this is a fitting description; it is where the majority of their politics, feasting and exchanges take place, and where men have made their renown, where they lead, nurture and discipline. This is where men gather to make decisions at the hamlet, clan and village level, and it is where men may simultaneously feel among equals, or realize their position within a status hierarchy. While this description has continued to hold, the political realm, especially those aspects concerned with development, has largely shifted outside of the
rihri into other more bureaucratic domains, such as the Local Level Government, the Church, or institutions and groups connected to the mining company. At the same time the rihri has been similarly bureaucratized and become the focus of policy making, identity construction and authorization. Often called the as bilong kastom (the origin of kastom), it has become the objectified stage of kastomary performance.

The money of kastom

Lihirian kastom explicitly involves the exchange of pigs and shell money (and cash and other commodities) in the series of feasts that surround specific life-cycle-events. While trade and exchange historically occurred between the islands of this region, the majority of exchanges were between established partners within Lihir. In the past there was a high level of village endogamy, meaning most exchange relationships were between residents of a particular area; this seems to increase the impression of parochial exchange patterns, in marked contrast with other notable inter-island exchange regions like the Massim Kula (see, Damon, 1990; Leach and Leach, 1983; Macintyre, 1983; Malinowski, 1961 [1922]; Munn, 1986; Seligman, 1910; and Wiener, 1976).

Lihirian shell currency, known as a le in the vernacular, or more generically as mis in New Ireland Tok Pisin, was commonly used throughout the region for a broad range of transactions involving pigs, land, compensation, and other ritual purposes associated with the men’s house and the life-cycle. Ultimately the aim was to have as many high ranking mis as possible to purchase large pigs to be used in exchange. Mis consists of minute highly polished shell disks (approximately 3mm in diameter and 1mm thickness) strung together in fathoms called param in New Ireland Tok Pisin (see Plates 7 and 8). The shells, and sometimes the rough cut disks, were acquired from people on the north east coast of the mainland and the Tabar Islands, who sometimes first received them from Lavongai (New Hanover). It is best glossed as moni bilong kastom (the money of kastom). It would seem that for at least the past eighty years, Lihir has been known as a production centre for shell valuables common to this region of New Ireland (Groves, 1935: 350 - 51). Clay (1986: 193) suggests that post Independence, Lihirians increased
production as the new Provincial Government actively encouraged *kastom* throughout the province.

Elderly men have described times when Lihirians did not know the origin or craft of producing *mis* for themselves. Only males were permitted to produce *mis*; they worked in secrecy with a great deal of ritual and formality which undoubtedly increased its value. *Mis* was certainly a genuine shell currency, similar to the Tolai *tabu* described by T.S and A.L. Epstein, and Salisbury (A.L. Epstein, 1963a; 1963b, 1969; T.S. Epstein, 1968; Salisbury, 1970; see also Counts and Counts, 1971 and 1977; Gewertz and Errington, 1995). It had token value rather than use value, so that it served as means of exchange - an indirect bridge between goods (Sahlins, 1974: 227). At the time of European contact it probably functioned more as a divisible form of currency than contemporary practices suggest.
Lihirians recognize different categories or ranks of \textit{mis}, some of which are used for more ‘everyday’ transactions while others might be regarded as clan heirlooms considered ‘priceless’ and without exchange value. It is likely that there were more varieties of \textit{mis} in existence in the years prior to Independence. I have only been able to identify several types, although discussions with elderly men indicate the presence of others, many of which have been lost over the years when big men were buried with their wealth, or disposed of it prior to their death, by either throwing it out to sea or burying it somewhere inland. While most Lihirians could identify \textit{pangpang} as the highest ranking \textit{mis}, many were confused or unsure of a definite ranking system for the others.\textsuperscript{21} This differs from Kula ranking systems where people have maintained certainty about rank.

\textbf{Pangpang} – dark red shiny disks that are very fine and polished very smooth.
\textbf{Tsien Pangpang} – unsure.
\textbf{Tumgiet} – unsure.
\textbf{Met} – similar to \textit{pangpang} but with a duller appearance.
\textbf{Bobreu} – consists of both orange and dark red disks; also very fine and smooth.
\textbf{Kawas} – orange disks, less smooth, usually not ground so evenly or fine. This is the most common type of \textit{mis} which is not as highly valued and is used for everyday purposes.
\textbf{Lolot} – mixture of both white and orange disks; finely ground and often highly polished.
\textbf{Tingirip} – red disks with a similar texture to glass.
\textbf{Kolmoni} – usually three \textit{param} lengths; the middle length is white while the outside two are red.
\textbf{Malyang} – yellowish coloured disks.
\textbf{Zikilde} – unsure.
\textbf{Puas} – may be another name for Lolos.
\textbf{Lerau} – generic form of \textit{mis} used for everyday purposes.
\textbf{Zilerau} – white and red disks.
\textbf{Lemusmus} – new \textit{mis}, generally made with shells from Lemusmus on mainland New Ireland.
\textbf{Nuas} – all white and very rare.
Although a surplus of *mis* has emerged due to the expansion of production, there were still invaluable items held by elderly men. However, these items were generally hoarded and have ceased to play an active role in the exchange economy; subsequently few people knew what these looked like.\(^{22}\)

*Mis* has a definite cash value, which has nearly doubled since the early 1990s, not through scarcity, but general market inflation. When mining first began a fine *mis* was sold for 30 kina. By 2004, the same *mis* could fetch over 50 kina. It has since become a source of income for people on the smaller islands of the Lihir group with some people referring to this as their ‘cash crop’. Access to cash has enabled people to purchase greater supplies of shells from mainland New Ireland for local production. These are later used in exchanges or sold to Lihirians or other New Irelanders as this is a generic form of shell money used throughout the region. Until the 1960s low ranking *mis* was used to purchase trade store items, and Ramstad (nd 2: 16) notes that *mis* was used interchangeably with cash for minor transactions in the village. Given that it could be easily divided it is not surprising that Lihirians substituted cash for shell money. Contemporary pig transactions invariably involve both *mis* and cash payments. In 2004, a medium sized pig would require at least 1000 kina and up to five fathoms of *mis*. Occasionally people request a total *mis* payment, but it is unlikely that a Lihirian pig would be purchased entirely with cash.\(^{23}\) The cash value of pigs and *mis* has become highly important; as we shall see in the next chapter, pigs are not just valued in themselves, but for their total cash value as increased prestige results from the amount spent for their purchase (and delivery).

Although *mis* has long been used in conjunction with cash and has a monetary value, it primarily derived value as a ‘moral’ currency. It was prized for ‘buying the shame’ (*baim sem*) between newly established in-laws, for uniting clans, and representing the ‘honour’ or ‘social merit’ of a particular big man and his clan or lineage, as an objectified visible validation of the social transactions in which he and his lineage or clan have been involved. It was the big man who held the clan’s store of *mis*, heirloom and decorative *mis*, and those intended for circulation. The store of *mis* was thus a moral evaluation of
both the big man and his lineage. The same can be said of pigs. Jaw bones (trias) from pigs butchered during ceremonial exchanges are often hung up in the rafters of the men’s house. These mark the ability to host feasts, provide hospitality, and actively engage in exchanges which create, maintain and confirm social relationships. Together pigs and mis are the principal media in Lihirian kastom.

Funerals and feasting

Lihirian mortuary feasts and exchanges, glossed in the vernacular as the karat cycle, were the primary arena where men were able create renown and to secure wealth and land. Celebration of the life cycle is a major aspect of New Ireland political economy, which culminates in a series of feasts designed to ‘finish’ the deceased members of a particular lineage. In the 1930s F.L.S. Bell remarked that death is the leitmotif of Tangan culture (Bell, 1934: 291). This observation still stands for much of New Ireland, especially Lihir.24

Mortuary feasting in New Ireland has become somewhat ‘immortalised’ through anthropological accounts of the ritual practices associated with the production, form, use and iconography of malanggan carvings (see Albert 1986; Billings and Peterson, 1968; Bodrogi 1987; Brouwer 1980; Gifford 1974; Lewis 1969; Powdermaker, 1971 [1933]). Generally malanggan (Lihirian spelling) are produced in Northern and Central New Ireland, and range from elaborate wooden carvings (found in just about any Pacific Islands museum display) to large intricately woven disks (see Eves, 1998: 173). Malanggan serve as effigies of the deceased and are central icons in the process of ‘forgetting’ and ‘finishing’. Historically Lihirians did not produce malanggan however those clans with close ties to Tabar were more likely to have incorporated these into the successive burial rituals that comprise the final tutunkanut feast (cf. Clay, 1977: 82). As in most of New Ireland, Lihirian mortuary feasts are principally concerned with honouring clan members, lineage succession, and the transfer of authority and resources, and enabling notions of virtuous sociality.
In the past, during the tutunkanut the skull (and in perhaps in some instance the skeleton or body) of the celebrated person(s) was mounted on something like a totem pole (mormor) and decorated with mis and other shell valuables. According to some accounts the skull may have also been decorated with ochres and plants to signify skin and hair. The ultimate purpose of these impressive figures was to remind guests who was being remembered (or forgotten). These figures were treated with magic to enliven them, undoubtedly instilling fear into guests and boosting the prestige of the host through the display of their spiritual prowess; here the dead (kanut) are transformed into an asset for the host clan as they help ensure the feast is made memorable. Mission and Administration concerns over hygiene and the supposed sacrilegious disturbance of the dead were the main reasons for the cessation of this ritual. Some sources say the last time this occurred was in the 1970s on Mahur, otherwise it seems likely it was abandoned before the Second World War.

Although large-scale feasting in New Ireland is primarily motivated by the death or aging of clan members, ethnographic accounts are generally structured by a dualistic approach that emphasises the role and interaction of guests and hosts while largely ignoring the deceased (kanut). Hemer (2001) has made similar observations and she approaches Lihirian mortuary feasting from a tripartite perspective in opposition to the dichotomous structure found in the works of Clay (1986), Foster (1995a) and Wagner (1986). Given that Lihirian ‘mortuary’ feasts often occur while the celebrated person is still alive it is difficult to remove them from the analytical equation. In the process of achieving fame and prestige or nurturing the opposite moiety (or at least the assembled guests) individuals and groups are specifically attempting to honour their kanut. From a purely political perspective, status is ultimately contingent upon who can show the most respect.

There are over twenty different feasts that mark various stages in the life cycle and other important events in lives of Lihirians, all of which involve the exchange and consumption of pigs, garden produce, mis, cash and commodities. Some of the more significant feasts include katipsiasie, the first pregnancy feast; kale kiak daldal, the purification feast that symbolically washes the mothers blood off the new born child; katipkah, the first hair
cutting feast; the tolup ritual which prepared young women for marriage; minakuetz and rapar, the exchanges involved with marriage; usnie arihiri, the consummation of a new men’s house; the men’s only rarhum feast which honours important men and women within the clan; the mbiekatip which marks the first mourning period; and the katkatop or pkepke and tutunkanut or karat feasts, known as the karat cycle, which are the most elaborate forms of ‘forgetting’ and ‘finishing’. Although an aspiring big man will utilize all of these opportunities to increase his influence, rarhum, katkatop and karat are the most important categories of ceremonial feasting. These feasts are vital for establishing the authority of individual big men and the organisation of supporters and allies of a given lineage. They are highly relevant to the transfer of land rights and lineage leadership. They provide the opportunity for individuals to honour the deceased members of their own and other lineages, thus potentially allowing them to claim the wealth of those lineages. In the past this included land, however since certain portions of land have acquired monetary value, Lihirians are loath to part with their land to other clans.

Although most Lihirians agreed there were certain stages that must be performed within each type of feast to authenticate the event, there is not always agreement over the correct order for performing these stages (see chapter eight). Similarly, while people often spoke of an ideal sequence for the three major mortuary feasts, in reality the timing and order of these feasts is subject to prevailing circumstances and clan requirements. Ideally, as a person approached senior age their clan would host a rarhum in order to show respect and commemorate their status. When this person died there would be burial feasts and the mbiekatip which ends the mourning period. This would be followed by the katkatop or pkepke, which may be held only a few months later, or if the clan is unable to organise the necessary pigs and garden produce or decides to commemorate several people in the one katkapton, it can be years before this is held. Finally, after a number of years the clan will stage a tutunkanut (or karat) to ‘finish’ the deceased, which confirms leadership succession and the inheritance of land and resources. It is likely there has always been an element of variation, particularly since big men are praised for their ability to demonstrate innovation in order to make an event memorable. Also, as the example in
chapter eight illustrates, people’s lives never follow a set trajectory. People often die unexpectedly or at an early age, but certain feasts and obligations still require fulfilment.

Unlike the tutunkanut feasts, the rarhum is normally held while the honoured clan member is still alive. Similar to other feasts in the karat sequence, the rarhum (taboo) feast also provides the opportunity for direct comparison between clans and their big men. Generally this feast is performed when the tooth of a senior man or woman falls out, indicating the demise of the body and their decline towards inevitable death. The tooth may be put on a section of reef or planted at the base of a coconut tree, rendering the area or the tree taboo (rarhum) until the appropriate feast has been held to lift the sanctions.26

*Rarhum: exaggerated respect*

Rarhum feasts are intended to celebrate the life of important clan members. Allies and supporters, which include the sons of the honoured person, will contribute pigs, shell money and cash. These cancel any outstanding debts and begin a new round of reciprocity within the rarhum cycle. There are strict notions of equivalence within these transactions; pigs and portions of pork exchanged within this feast must be reciprocated exactly at a later rarhum. Pork and garden produce are supplemented by rice and tinned fish which are distributed to the various clan groups who attend. Guests ‘pay’ for their attendance by contributing shell money and cash to the host lineage. According to oral history, by the 1960s it was common for Lihirians to use cash in this context. These ‘gifts’, which are directed by the rarhum person (the honoured clan member), are redistributed among those who contributed pigs to the feasts. This wealth is then used for purchasing new pigs that are ultimately destined for use in later rarhum feasts.

The most important pigs within the rarhum feast are the balun kale and the ber pelkan. Balun kale refers to a particular style of cooking where food is cooked hard on the fire. It has been said that because rarhum is usually made when men begin to lose their teeth, which often coincides with age and status, balun kale symbolises their difficulty eating this style of food. It is a mark of distinction as these men will now eat inside the men’s
house with other elderly big men, partly because there is an element of shame associated with their status; having fewer teeth makes it difficult to chew or keep food in one’s mouth, signifying aging and the inevitable decline towards death. Within the moral framework of rarhum, the ber pelkan, the separate pig(s) for in-laws (poas or tambu) and cross-cousins (pelkong or palik), is crucial to the expression of respect. The function of these pigs within rarhum mirror Wagner’s description of the Barok equivalent, the ararum feast, which “amounts to the invocation of exaggerated protocols of respect and avoidance” (Wagner, 1986: 174). In the past the spatial dimensions of male interaction within the confines of the rarhum feasting area objectified relational status, distinguishing leaders from lesser men.

Besides honouring particular clan members, the rarhum feast functions as a mechanism for converting pigs into shell money and cash. Although a group may not necessarily make a ‘profit’, particularly if they ‘spend’ a lot in order to honour their member, the prestige gained through their expenditure has greater social currency. Thus rarhum provide a material dimension to individual prestige and acts as a vehicle for competition between various social groups. Often the men’s house in which the rarhum is held is conspicuously marked by a tall woven screen made from coconut fronds placed around the outside of the enclosure, emphasising the element of ‘containment’ (cf. Wagner, 1986: 153). During this feast all food within the enclosure of the men’s house is rarhum (taboo) and should not be taken outside or consumed by women. Traditionally the men’s house remained sacred for some time after the feast and only big men were permitted to enter the enclosure until another small feast was held to lift the rarhum. This served the double function of honouring not just one big man, but also distinguishing all big men from other ordinary and younger men within the community.

Karat: finishing the dead

Karat feasts serve similar functions to the rarhum feast, except they are performed on a much larger scale and generate fiercer competition between social groups (cf. Young, 1971). These are the largest and most spectacular feasts that require months, sometimes
years of planning, and vast amounts of pigs, garden produce, shell money and cash. Held over several weeks, with impressive and competitive dancing, and the slaughtering and exchange of what can amount to hundreds of pigs, they are the most stunning display of clan solidarity, wealth, and prestige. Essentially these feasts are concerned with ‘finishing’ deceased clan members and transferring their possessions and authority to the next generation. The term karat refers to the series of feasts required to complete this process, comprised of the katakatop and tutunanut, however often karat is taken to mean the final stage in this complex. In chapter eight I pay closer attention to the performance of katkatop which in many ways is similar to karat. Due to the scale and intensity of these feasts normally several clan members are commemorated in the one event. It has become common for katkatop and tutunanut to be collapsed into one main feast; this adds greater intensity to the event, often enhancing the prestige of the hosts. It is difficult to know how often this occurred in the past. Since mining began this practice has become more common, partly because workers cannot always take long periods of time off work, but mainly because a larger event potentially creates greater renown.

Ultimately these feasts are judged according to their memorability. The size of the event, the number of attendants or the range of social groups, and quantity of pigs and other food stuffs that are distributed and consumed, gauge the status of the deceased and the host clan. Typically the wealth (which has come to consist of shell money, cash and other material possessions) of the deceased person and their lineage will have been distributed after their death in such a way that they produce a series of pig debts that can now be ‘called in’ for the final feast. Affiliation with the lineage of the deceased is crucial for receiving what remains of their wealth. Lineages rely upon this affiliation for the successful hosting of feasts, and at this stage it becomes apparent who are group members and who are merely supporters or allies. Ideally, the strength of a lineage is formed by increasing the number of supporters while maintaining the solidarity of the core group members.

As Filer and Jackson noted, even though mis and pigs are the central items in the ‘traditional’ mode of exchange (kastom), the ultimate purpose of this ‘system’ is not the
production of these two things, nor the exchange of one for the other (1989: 66). These items should be seen as central components in the expression and reproduction of Lihirian values, such as ‘authority’, ‘prestige’ and ‘solidarity’, which are used in processes that enable the reconfirmation and sometimes redefinition of group membership and the property of these groups (Filer and Jackson, 1989: 66).

**Structuring dispositions**

My intention has been to sketch the social structures that continued to form the basis for Lihirian social relations, behaviour, and world view and underpin the discourse of *kastom* and notions of *pasin bilong Lihir*. These elements help form the cultural order that Lihirians use to interpret the world. When Lihirians ‘act’, in what has become a fundamentally transformed environment, these cultural constructions are put into play. To an extent these structures encourage the processes of development; as Lihirians have pursued aspirations for virtuous sociality, these categories find purchase on the world and there is a ‘continuity of meaning’. Here we also see the ways that Lihirians reproduce their ‘traditional culture’ even as they subject it to change. These structural elements dispose Lihirians towards certain behaviour and values. These structures are maintained through habitual or typical action and through alternate ways of knowing and interacting with the world that simultaneously challenge and adjust this order and reinforce this “acquired system of generative schemes” (Bourdieu, 1990: 55). The notion of *pasin bilong Lihir* derives impetus from these ideological constructions, but as we shall see in the following chapters, Lihirians continually experience tension between dogma and praxis. Understanding this cultural order is important for comprehending what the JNC sought to alter through their adoption of modernist philosophies for social and economic development. Similarly these structural constraints often confronted Lihirian attempts to adopt or follow Western economic practices and values, frustrating their economic endeavours.

Lihirians have maintained strong ideas about the performance of *kastom* that provide enduring templates for action, however ideal models for the sequence of feasting, the use
of certain items, the nature of exchange, or the character of certain kinship categories were not always (and sometimes rarely) adhered to. Their world views, cosmologies, and feasting and exchange practices were often presented in legalistic terms as a rational categorized system – one that could be easily codified (see chapter seven). Many Lihirians often assumed a doctrinaire manner, commonly asserting their position as absolute; an approach used amongst themselves and towards outsiders regarding all manner of things. In Part II it becomes evident their tendency towards ‘systematizing’ things - such as *kastom*, the economy, and various other aspects of individual and collective life - reflects their ideas on modernity. However, this systematization is merely an abstraction from reality. Although it is easy to locate contradictions between practice and ideology - in *kastom* and economic practice - Lihirians appear to respond or cope with these in such a way that it is almost as if ‘practice’ constitutes an anomaly. Their refusal to acknowledge contradictions, whether it is between different versions of the clan system, feasting sequences, cosmologies, or plans for economic and social reform, is reflected in their construction of neat models. The contradictions in these models are most evident in their confusion as to why Lihirian economic endeavours are continually frustrated by approaches that treat *kastom* and *bisnis* as separate spheres. This will become even more apparent in Part II when we see the JNC’s neo-liberal plans which largely fail to grasp the machinations of international capital flow.
Often Lihirians also used the term *sindaun* (sit down) to refer to ideas about acceptable ways of living. In the intransitive verb form *sindaun* literally means to ‘sit down’, but when used as a noun it denotes ideas about personal and moral conduct (as in *ol i gat gutpela sindaun* – they are leading good lives) or the customs and practices of a people (as used by anthropologists, *mi laik painimaut olgeta samting long sindaun bilong yupela* – I want to find out everything about your way of living). Lihirians use *pasin* and *sindaun* interchangeably; both can and are used in statements that pass judgement on people and their behaviour.

Powdermaker notes a similar situation among the Lesu, but mentions that the origin of the moieties, clans, and social organisation can be found in stories about an ancestral heroine (1971[1933]: 34). Macintyre (pers. comm.) recalls being told one story about a ‘conflict’ between sea eagle and a brahminy kite near the Alaia rock, where it is said that the ‘spirits’ of the deceased eventually go to reside. She suggests that this story may have originated from the mainland.

This complex system, often referred to as the ‘classificatory system’, is readily accounted for by dual organisation. However, as Levi-Strauss points out, dual organisation is not the origin of the classificatory system, rather, the principle of reciprocity (1969 [1949]: 72). Anecdotal evidence suggests at one stage Lihirian moieties were linked by the furnishing of reciprocal prestations and counter-prestations, of an economic, social and ceremonial manner, mainly played out through the feasts and exchanges associated with mourning rituals known as the karat cycle.

A quick glance through the Melanesian literature soon reveals the Tok Pisin term *masalai* connotes an amazing variety of local conceptions, covering various permutations of what can be regarded as ‘bush spirits’, yet in each place people have very specific ideas about what constitutes *masalai* (see Lawrence and Meggitt (1965).

When I returned to Lihir in late 2004 I brought a copy of Wagner’s (1986) ethnography with me. During this time I travelled with a group of Lihirians who were engaging in kastom with people in the villages close to Bakan, the site of Wagner’s study. I spent much of this time looking for patterns described by Wagner, and discussed his depictions with elderly men. I found that despite the lack of significant exogenous influence (ie. a mine, plantation, or some other form of political and economic development) it was difficult to reconcile his portrayal with what I observed.

The number of hamlets is taken from maps produced and used by the Lihir Gold Limited in 2004. Some villages are not listed on these maps, and some areas are placed under a district name, such as Kinami which is referred to as part of Lataul. In other instances, villages which have expanded have been divided into two sections, such as Kunayie 1 and Kunayie 2.

This is only a general outline. A detailed study would have found numerous qualifications. In some cases where there are no brothers, or sisters sons to succeed ownership of the of hamlet, the son of the current owner may then become the senior male of the hamlet, even though he does not belong to that clan, or technically ‘own’ the men’s house. In such cases they look after the men’s house until younger males in the clan can take over.

As Leach notes, “in all viable systems there has to be an area where the individual is free to make choices so as to manipulate the system to his own advantage” (Leach, 1963: 133) cited in Bourdeiu (1990: 53).

The fact that people say everyone wants to be a big man, and that most big men are really *bikman nating* (*big man nothing* – not real big men) - just senior men with a little bit of money, a few fathoms of *mis* (shell valuables), and a few pigs, but no distinguishing features - indicates the extent of the proliferation of leadership types, and the lack of genuine big men who can control the movements and wealth of those other men within their clan.

In this ritual practice which continued up until about the 1930s young girls were kept in seclusion in a small hut for a number of months. They were only allowed contact with immediate lineage members who brought food and disposed of any wastes. Typically the girls were being prepared for marriage. Upon their release a large feast was held where lineage and clan members bring contributions of shell money which are exchanged for pork. These exchanges initiate new exchange cycles to be executed in future tolokus.

Take for example Lamatlik clan within Kinami village on Niolam Island, which has broken down into three main lineages, each existing under the direction of different lineage leaders who maintain different
men’s houses. Previously these three lineages were united under the one tohie, who controlled the entire store of wealth and resources within the clan.

13 For a similar discussion of the relationship between clans and big men in Karavar see Errington, 1974.

14 The connection between tandal and land is often regarded as a sign of ownership by the clan identified with the particular tandal. Among the Barok, the spiritual equivalent, the tadak, are said to habitually locate to different places, or relocate to follow clan migration. Given the high level of internal migration that has occurred on Lihir it is possible that Lihirian tandal also followed their clan partners. However, the prevailing discourse of kastom and the general hardening of clan land boundaries, means tandal play an important role in establishing ownership and have become completely ‘fixed’ to their locations. The identification of certain places where tandal reside as ‘sacred sites’ which should not be disturbed by mining processes is perhaps the surest sign of cultural and geographical essentialisation of an entity which is simultaneously singular and plural, and incorporeal and manifest in different physical forms.

15 In recent years this rule has been relaxed in the context of funerals. It is not uncommon during burials within the men’s house for portions of the welot (fence) to be removed to allow grieving widows to enter the rear of the enclosure where their husbands were being placed. In many cases affinally related women chose to remain outside. Hemer (2001: 242) notes similar practices in Mahur.

16 One senior man in Lataeu village said he intended to bequeath his men’s house to his eldest son. The justification for this was that the eldest son had been more involved in kastom in his father’s men’s house. This senior man had no eligible nephews to succeed ownership. It seemed unlikely that his son would assume leadership in his natal men’s house; the father thought it was important for his son to have his own men’s house, so that he felt ‘connected’ to an area – a sense of place. This also has to be seen in the context of VDS housing. The father had received a VDS house which was built close to his men’s house and he intended to leave this to his son. Thus ownership of the VDS house, and the men’s house would change matriline, but the actual hamlet ground, excluding the men’s house, would remain with the father’s line.

17 Some men’s houses on the western side of Niolam are enclosed by wooden fences, which is mainly due to a local shortage of stones in this part of the island.

18 See Foster (1995a: 32) for a reconstruction of these trading routes.

19 Measurements are usually taken as the span from the end of one arm to the chest, thus the distance between two outstretched arms would be two param.

20 One senior man from Malie Island claims to have been the first to learn the art of production, saying he was taught as a young man in Lamusong village on north east coast of the mainland.

21 Macintyre (pers. comm.) recalls seeing another type called ndolar, which is a thicker, deep red disc and made from a mollusc shell. These have been out of circulation for some time, and even far back as the 1930s they were regarded as archaic. Previously Lihirians used to produce circular arm shells named kaul which were used in exchanges with mis. Although I have not seen any of these, it is probable that they were similar to those still manufactured and used on Tanga, called am fat (Foster, 1995a: Ch. 6), and those produced by the Mandak called emelot. Prior to the introduction of cash incomes in the 1960s, pigs and emelot were the Mandak’s main source of trade for mis (Clay, 1986: 193).

22 Elderly men have continued to prize these items and define political rank according to possession. Luke Kabariu from Masahet Island, who works as the Cultural Information Superintendent in Community Relations (see chapter seven), has compiled an inventory of Lihirian mis. His elderly father who owns several varieties of rare mis was reluctant to allow him to photograph his mis for use in this project. He was afraid that if people saw pictures of the mis he owned he might become the target of sorcery as a result of jealousy.

23 This is different from those instances where pigs are bought from people from other islands, who only want cash from Lihirians.

24 This does not mean people are suspended in a continual state of grief and oppression, rather all forms of ritual and economic life are focused on the various stages of the life-cycle.

25 In the past the tolup ritual was considered highly important and was regarded as the as bilong kastom (the origin or base of kastom) because this was where the shells for future exchange were initially given. These shells were used for purchasing pigs that would be later used in exchange. The first hair cutting ceremony played a similar role, singling out the significance of the first born, and allowing their entry in the exchange cycle, as mis and cash are given to the first born so that they can purchase pigs.
This taboo is generally known as a mok. It can last for many months. Women are banned from the section of reef or beach under taboo. On Masahet where this practice has remained strong, there is one section of the reef that the entire island used for this purpose. This is mainly so that it is not too difficult for women to walk around this island and so that there are not too many places under taboo.
Chapter Three

When cargo arrives: parochial class formation and status envy

Over the past century Lihirians have increasingly participated in the world system, albeit remaining marginal and highly dependent upon economic trends and decisions occurring off their island. These changes helped generate a *kastom* discourse which became more influential as Lihirians reflected upon their values and practices which they compared with new influences. As we saw from the stories in the prologue Lihirian social reproduction became more dependent upon cash and commodities as these items were strategically utilized for local needs with the intention of reproducing Lihirian culture on a grander scale on local terms, enriching their ideas of virtuous sociality. In this chapter my intention is to explore the wealth-modernity nexus and the emergence of inequality in the context of large-scale resource extraction.

Lihirian social relations have been reconfigured in the process of “encompassment” (LiPuma, 2000), but Lihirians have remained peripheral to the global economy, which could be used to support neo-Marxist theories about an inevitable historical material teleology and the growing dependency of the third world (see Amin, 1974; Wallerstein, 1974; Frank, 1978; Amarshi et al 1979; Sachs, 1992; Escobar, 1995). However, the emergence of a bourgeois has not occurred in the same way as it did historically during the period of industrialization in developed countries. Lihirian engagement with capitalism has not affirmed Marx and Engels’ famous maxim in the *Communist Manifesto* that the bourgeois creates a world after its own image. Inequality has emerged, but with some distinctly Lihirian characteristics. Since mining operations began Lihir
could be divided according to three dominant categories: expatriates and the burgeoning Papua New Guinean middle class; those identified as ‘landowners’, or those who represent a rentier class; and the majority of ‘grassroots’ Lihirians not legally recognized as ‘landowners’. However, while these represent an objective set of economically derived positions, Lihirians were ultimately becoming divided according to status associated with the ability to conspicuously consume.

The differences existing within Lihir prior to mining operations were still largely differences of degree not differences of kind.¹ A contingent of big men emerged as *bisnismen*, commanding greater control over the production and distribution of money; they accumulated capital by producing copra on clan land and purchasing the labour of lesser men and women within their kin networks. However, Lihirians were not truly divided according to the classic sense of ‘owners’ and ‘workers’. These men had minimal and irregular incomes that were often channeled back into *kastomary* obligations ensuring some form of wealth distribution. Lihirians have never been forced to sell their labour to survive, and as I demonstrate in chapter four, enduring moral and economic obligations undercut individual attempts to establish financial independence or gain a monopoly on economic activity. These shared interests frustrated Lihirian attempts at expansive capital accumulation (cf. Thompson and MacWilliam, 1992). Moreover, despite the antagonism between supporters and critics of TKA and Nimamar, Lihirians were united in a collective sense of pauperization that often overrode individual economic gains.

When Lihirians agreed to allow mining operations to commence on their island few seriously predicted their relatively egalitarian community - in so far as nearly everyone had the same lack of access to cash, and had the same relationship to the ‘traditional’ mode of production - would be so rapidly transformed.² Although some interpreted the mining project as the fulfillment of a *peketon*, for most Lihirians mining has not been the anticipated “*rot bilong kago*”. Mining has proved as chimerical as past prophesies for a new world order to be achieved through spiritual and ritual means. During the early stages of the project when the first compensation payments were being made, Lihirians found themselves trapped in a vortex of *winmoni* mania – a Tok Pisin term that literally
means ‘win money’ or windfall, and carries with it connotations of money acquired by luck or that simply ‘blows in’, emphasizing the ‘mysteriousness’ and irrationality of Western wealth accumulation. Notions of winmoni have been central to Lihirian engagement with capitalism. Large compensation and royalty payments, which brought Lihirians to fever pitch, reinforced the expectation for instant wealth and development and the idea that ritual practices and religious beliefs can be economically efficacious. In some instances this fuelled reliance upon the company to continue supplying all forms of wealth and development, perpetuating the so called ‘resource dependency syndrome’ (Filer, 1995: 14; see also Auty, 1993).

Those who received this new wealth spent lavishly, while those not designated as ‘landowners’ eagerly awaited their turn. Lihirians had never seen such wealth, nor had they ever experienced such division and disruption. In 2003 the unequal distribution of mining royalties continued to be the most disruptive form of difference; Lihir was becoming stratified, expressing many of the relationships characteristic of class society. However, overlapping interests such as kinship, moral obligation, and an incipient ethnic identity based on access and control of mine derived wealth, united Lihirians and shaped social and economic behaviour, mitigating the social effects of capitalism. Vestiges of ‘traditional’ society and emotive forms of identification did not fade away as capitalism developed; these non-class elements continued to exercise considerable influence over the shape of Lihirian history. Indeed, the specific conditions in which capitalism is developed through large-scale resource extraction means these non-class elements often remain important points of reference for individual and group action. This does not mean class is not significant; rather stratification or inequality can assume other forms.

Many of the divisions originated from differential access to wealth and the subsequent ability to conspicuously consume. The dynamics of this stratification call to mind Francis Ona’s critical neo-Marxist rhetoric about the need to defeat Bougainville’s “white mafia” and the comprador “black men in top offices” (Filer, 1990: 29). Similar claims have emerged in Lihir, however they were less representative of a class consciousness per se, than the ongoing struggle for control over what all Lihirians regard as belonging to them -
land, gold, the mine, company profits, and opportunities for development and power. Nevertheless, Lihirians were becoming aware of the pernicious presence of incommensurate difference.

Consumer interests

The economic changes that emerged in the first years of mining operations informed the many decisions, political movements and relations that occurred during 2003 and 2004; particularly the attempts by the JNC to impose the doctrines of the Personal Viability course, deemed to reverse inequality through the enforcement of neo-liberal capitalist ideology (see chapters five and six). Although we can identify class relationships in Lihir based on economic criteria such as ownership of productive enterprise and an increasing number of people who have little but their own labour to sell, there are other stratifying elements that are usually identified with ‘late capitalism’ or even ‘post-capitalism’, where consumption appears to determine status differentiation in and of itself, independently of the ways that people acquire wealth (see Appadurai, 1986; Bourdieu, 1984; Friedman, 1994; Miller, 1987). In Lihir, status differences were closely connected to the emergent class structures in this peripheral capitalist society, however status envy rather than class consciousness was the phenomenal form of consciousness of inequality.

Class and status differences are not mutually exclusive; however there are several points of difference. Class is an economic phenomenon defined according to economic relationships – one’s position in the economic processes of production, distribution and exchange. Contrastingly status is concerned with social estimation and prestige, involving subjective estimation and the process of ranking, but this will not necessarily result in a hierarchy of discretely bound strata (Turner, 1984: 60). Status should not be confused with class. However, in Lihir, and more generally throughout Melanesia, there is an emergence of aggregates of people defined according to sets of impersonal economic relationships. These are not necessarily status groups, but they have often produced new avenues for the accumulation of status through education, professional occupations,
political positions and the ability to consume (Turner, 1984: 61). In contemporary Melanesia there is often a convergence between class and status. In Lihir this was most pointedly displayed in the ‘landowner’ population and the nascent middle class whose location in the economic system was often interpreted by ‘non-landowning’ grassroots in terms of social estimation.

Lihir has not experienced the sort of polarization between owners and workers that would enable the conjunction of experience and interests – or ‘class in itself’ and ‘class for itself’. The particular character of inequality in Lihir, ultimately based on the differential access to winmoni, means analysis should be framed in terms of a Weberian view of status that focuses on life styles and the ability to consume (Weber, 1978: 937). Moreover, because Lihir had not yet become sharply divided according to a set of materially based oppositional interests, economic stratification has not been accompanied by an increase in actual class consciousness, confirming Lukacs’ (1971) proposition that consonance between interests and experience is not always inevitable. Lihirians were becoming increasingly aware of their overall position within the global order of wealth; however internal class consciousness was not clearly defined or readily articulated. Lihirian interests and identities - as they were defined by modern capitalism - reflected the ability to consume rather than produce.

In the case of ‘landowners’, who subsist as ‘rent collectors’, perhaps more so than other groups, we can speak of an objective unit with specific interests that relate to their position. Certainly ‘landowners’ represented themselves and were regarded by others (‘non-landowners’, the Government and the mining company) as a separate entity with a specific relationship to the economy. However, was their existence as a defined entity and their subsequent behaviour, demands and beliefs, a reflection of their ‘objective conditions’? Or were they motivated by the ideology of the Melanesian landowner? If landowners represent a class in themselves, did they also function as a class for themselves as a result of a received ideology? Both propositions are relevant. Lihirian landowners were “acting out an ideology of landownership” (Filer, 1997: 167) that has been fostered through colonial discourses and historical circumstances within mining
operations that created roles for ‘landowners’. At the same time, they were motivated by historical and material factors; they were inspired by past and present experiences, their relationship to the company, expectations grounded in TKA and Nimamar and a more general sense of pauperization. Consequently many ‘non-landowners’ came to define themselves in opposition to ‘landowners’ on account of their comparatively limited ‘relationship’ with the company which constrained their own consumption practices – the basis for estimating status.

A global positioning system

Large-scale mining operations invariably represent the perpetuation of the world system where the globe is structured on a core-periphery axis of the division of labour (Frank, 1978). It is important to locate Lihirians within the wider social and economic relations of the world system, partly to understand how global forces shape local scenarios, but also because mining is one of the few obvious examples of the tremendous reach of first world economic processes. The foundation of this world system is the “international division of labour mediated through trade exchanges, without the need for a unified political structure” (Nash, 1981: 395). Essentially this model is based on the understanding that people and firms accumulate capital in order to accumulate even more capital, in a process that is continual, endless, and entails perpetual economic growth. This system contains structural mechanisms that penalize those who act with different motivations, eventually removing them (or their influence) from the social and economic scene, while those who act with the appropriate motivations, if successful, will be rewarded and possibly enriched (Wallerstein, 2004: 24). At the ground level this seems an overly deterministic model; throughout following chapters I delineate more explicitly the generative ways Lihirians have engaged with capitalism. As a grand narrative it is useful for understanding where countries are ‘positioned’ in the global system of relations, and for comprehending the inequalities that produce weak states, and strong states that aim to protect their monopoly on core production processes. In more familiar neo-Marxist parlance, it is constructive for understanding the consequences of the endless
accumulation of capital – an activity with which many Lihirians would like to be engaged, for the purpose of limitless consumption.

In the case of Papua New Guinea, the most notable attempt to situate this newly independent nation within world systems theory is Amarshi et al’s (1979) Development and Dependency, if not for its accuracy, then at least for its commitment to neo-Marxist rhetoric. Despite the criticisms surrounding this book, it would be difficult to convince most Papua New Guineans, especially those whose lives revolve around natural resource extraction, that their country has not been exploited by foreign hands. The overwhelming (and justified) popular belief that the majority of profits from the various extraction industries find their way into foreign pockets is unlikely to be overturned by close politico-economic scrutiny that tries to illustrate how the Papua New Guinean Government has actually advanced towards fulfilling the Eight Aims (the guiding principles underlying the national constitution). As such, ‘dependency theory’ has remained highly influential because most Papua New Guineans still consider themselves to be living in ways that are economically (and often socially) inferior to their Western neighbours (cf. Lea, 2000). Similarly, the corresponding ‘cheap labour’ thesis may not hold up to scrutiny if it is used to argue that the extraction industries are dependent for their viability upon cheap, exploitable, self reproducing labour (Amarshi et al, 1979: 54), but it is reflective of wage labour in Papua New Guinea. On a grand scale we can definitely speak of the ways Lihir is positioned in an international class system, clearly represented by the general relationship Lihirians have with the processes of production, the foreign mining company and the expatriates employed to manage this project.

Such macro-views support propositions about the persistence of nation-wide neo-colonial exploitation but reveal very little about local level economic processes. Peter Fitzpatrick (1980) sought to increase the resolution slightly by applying Meillassoux’s (1981) observations about the ways capitalism preserves the ‘traditional’ mode of production in the third world. In a similarly macroscopic vein, he argues that capitalist penetration does not necessarily eradicate pre-capitalist modes of production, but rather it often leads to their perpetuation and encapsulation, not because the ‘traditional’ mode is the dominant
form, but because the preservation of the ‘pre-capitalist’ sector is advantageous to capitalist expansion. Here the ‘traditional’ mode acts as the necessary ‘social security’ for the continuous provision of labour.

Again this fails to provide deeper comprehension as Fitzpatrick is concerned with the overall articulation of capitalism and the generic village sector. As the Carriers have noted, the Meillassoux-Fitzpatrick model necessarily separates villages and towns, but ignores the sort of detailed village study that would demonstrate how communities are affected by encroaching capitalism (Carrier and Carrier, 1989: 10). Accordingly, villages are only labour reserves that subsidize capitalism; once capitalism has set in they become passive, lose their internal dynamic, and are slowly drained of their vitality. Instead of responding in a generative way, they undergo atrophy. However, as I demonstrate in the following chapters, despite bringing disruption and change, capitalism has ultimately ‘vitalized’ Lihirian society.

‘Articulating’ economic change

There is a dearth of recent anthropological literature that specifically details the articulation between Papua New Guinea’s local political economies and the expansion of the national cash economy. The Carrier’s work on Ponam Island (1989) remains one of the best examples of local articulation of the developing commodity sector. With the exception of Gewertz and Errington’s (1999) pioneering study of Papua New Guinea’s emerging middle class, and their analysis of the Ramu sugar factory in Madang Province (2004) there are few recent ethnographies or monographs that purposely consider economic change and its social dimensions. This is surprising given that Papua New Guineans are now involved with the cash economy to a greater extent than ever. Similarly, with Australia’s return to neo-colonial policies and renewed involvement with Papua New Guinea, generated by the fear of a ‘failed state’ within close proximity, anthropologists should continue to contribute to our understanding of issues concerning
national development, law and order problems, land registration, and the reasons why economic development takes root in some rural areas and not others.

In the 1960s, 70s and 80s, and even the early 90s, there was considerable scholarly interest in the social and economic transformations associated with Papua New Guinea’s burgeoning cash economy. Close ethnographic attention was given to early and contemporary engagement with commodities and capitalism and their absorption into local exchange networks (and their subsequent transformation) highlighting the dynamism of Melanesian economies and the gradual accumulation of indigenous capital. Close ethnographic attention was given to early and contemporary engagement with commodities and capitalism and their absorption into local exchange networks (and their subsequent transformation) highlighting the dynamism of Melanesian economies and the gradual accumulation of indigenous capital. These works produced detailed ethnographic analysis of the various ways Papua New Guineans have adapted to the cash economy and the range of factors that aid and frustrate local participation. As Papua New Guinea emerged as an independent nation there were numerous studies on migration, urban employment and rural labour reserves, documenting new mobility and changes to centres and rural villages. In latter years scholarly interests shifted towards more synoptic accounts of the wider economic changes across Papua New Guinea that include historical engagements with cash and commodities, state formation and the instigation of state currencies, labour movements, and the resource extraction industries.

Despite this previous research there has been a noticeable decline in fine grained socioeconomic study. Recent depictions of Papua New Guinea as ‘two nations’, consisting of a minority of wealthy elites and a majority who live in villages and shanty township settlements, fail to capture the sociocultural dimensions of contemporary economic stratification (Hughes and Windybank, 2005). Moreover, such polarized descriptions, based on early economic developments and inequalities in Papua New Guinea, ignore important interconnections and the emergence of new socioeconomic groups. Blind assertions that “traditional society has broken down” (Hughes and Windybank, 2005: 1) pay no attention to the fluid and dynamic nature of Melanesian societies and their ability to adapt to new circumstances; instead these assertions reinforce those same images of cultural homeostasis which neo-liberal economists have charged anthropologists with.
Current academic debates that concentrate on issues of governance, the delivery of Aid, concerns regarding law and order and economic stagnation, tend to be dominated by economists and neo-liberal policy makers, political scientists, and the occasional geographer and philosopher. In the main, anthropologists have been relatively quiet and made only limited contributions. Many of these issues directly implicate processes occurring in Lihir. Of particular relevance are the on-going debates over the privatisation of land for the sake of industrial development (Fingleton, 2004; Gosarevski et al 2004; Lea and Curtin, 2006; Yala, 2006; cf. Larmour, 1991; Ward and Kingdon, 1995). While Lihirian land and labour have been somewhat commoditized, economic development remains dependent upon mining activities and benefits. The cash economy has been propped-up by a subsistence base; or rather, mining has generated conditions where subsistence living is augmented by wage labour and consumption. From a neo-liberal perspective, this supports calls for private land registration; land is not fully commoditized and remains bound by customary tenure, making it extremely difficult to generate further industrial (or even agricultural) development.

However, neo-liberal analysts who consistently argue for land reforms often fail to recognise that Melanesian resistance emerges not only from an appeal to ‘cultural connection’, but also hard-headed economics. Customary land tenure might provide people with a sense of ‘place’ and social security, and certainly helps impede total class formation, but resistance to registration often stems from a desire to ensure continuing recognition of past economic transactions. In Lihir, the flexibility of customary tenure means people consistently emphasise different elements that ensure entitlement – such as kastomary exchange, clan affiliation, or ‘spiritual’ connection – depending on which approach is most likely to guarantee continuing rights or regain previously held privileges in a given situation.

Similarly, current arguments that enduring Melanesian tribalism is partly responsible for lawlessness, poor governance and the lack of national unity, which ultimately impinge on economic development (Windybank and Manning, 2003), are also pertinent to this study.
Lihirians have been desperate to engage in the international economy, but they have steadfastly refused to acknowledge their existing integration into the national and international arena. As we will see in chapter six, attitudes towards economic development are characterized by an historical desire for economic activity and the fear of losing wealth outside of Lihir.

It is only through detailed ethnographic analysis that we can adequately understand the forms of inequality that emerge in periods of economic transition, the particular values and obstacles that shape economic practice, and avoid simply ascribing class relations as the only expression of difference. The absence of a sharp polarization between owners and workers, and any perceived lack of economic development, is attributable to the shared interests that unite Lihirians, the persistence of the subsistence economy, Lihirian consumption patterns and goals, and economic and social values. Not only did Lihirians ably incorporate cash and commodities into local exchange networks, but this was also the favoured means for consumption.

The rationality of Lihirian expenditure, where money and resources were nearly always completely consumed for local purposes, directly emerges from two factors: Lihirians believe they can always rely upon or return to subsistence agriculture; and as long as the mine is operating, the majority of wealth will be delivered as winmoni – the favoured form for receiving (and generating) wealth, as opposed to production. This means that local business endeavours and consumption patterns will continue to be influenced by the belief that there is always another payment on the horizon, or that the mine is an unlimited source of wealth. Subsequently, within the domestic sphere women’s labour that supports the subsistence economy becomes even more invisible and devalued (see chapter eight). Even though ‘traditional’ items like pigs and yams (products of female labour) are still exchanged, the ability to purchase cars, dinghies, televisions and beer has greater public significance. Through close ethnographic attention the emerging image is one of subsistence-based consumers, rather than dependent labourers or productive capitalists.
Sketches of black and white

Mining activities reproduced the sort of neo-colonial relations that Lihirians hoped would be lost in the transition to Independence. Expatriates were occupying managerial positions, receiving the highest wages, accruing the most wealth and possessions, living the most lavish lives, and enjoying greater freedom and higher status than Papua New Guineans. On the other hand, Lihirians largely remained subsistence farmers, lived village based lifestyles, had comparatively limited purchasing power, were constrained by local values, networks, and structural inequalities, and more importantly, only very recently began engaging in the sort of market relations that underpin the existence most expatriates take for granted. At one end of the scale was the mine manager, who lived in the biggest house, occupied the most important position within the company, and received the most cheques and perquisites. At the opposite end were the many aging Lihirians with few means of acquiring cash, existing on subsistence production, while relying on the generosity of kin for the purchase of basic items like soap and clothes, or ‘luxury’ food stuffs like rice and tin fish. Many Lihirians have endorsed such descriptions, often for various political purposes, but it oversimplifies a set of exceptionally complex circumstances; between these two poles is a scale of social, economic, and political positions held by expatriates, Nationals and Lihirians.

'Better homes and gardens'

The gap between Lihirians and the National middle class and expatriates was most explicit in local housing arrangements. The Marahun ‘camp’ as it is known, situated on top of a raised plateau that was once the location of a large copra plantation, is divided into three sections, with the camp proper (mainly comprised of dormitories for fly-in-fly-out workers), and the company and Government housing sections. Few Lihirians failed to notice the hierarchical symbolism of the camp’s elevated location. The camp houses a mixture of expatriates, Lihirians, and other National workers who share the same facilities, and the government housing section has approximately twenty houses occupied by Nationals and their families. There are sixty five company houses; around five of
these were being used by people on short term contracts, four were used by school teachers at the International School, and around ten were occupied by Nationals in senior management positions, two of which were Lihirian; the rest were occupied by expatriates and their families. In addition to this is LMALA house situated on top of the hill at Marahun. Like a castle on top of the peak ready to fend off any possible assailants, this comparatively large abode was the domain of Mark Soipang and his family. As the Chairman of LMALA, Mark had firmly fixed himself into this semi-urban existence, supposedly fighting for the right for all Lihirians to have the same lifestyle that he presented as the epitome of modern Lihirian living.

Both ‘landowning’ and ‘non-landowning’ Lihirians were frustrated by the massive disparities between themselves and the housing and lifestyles of the expatriate workers. For many Lihirians these differences (in addition to those within Lihirian society) were offensive to the ethos of virtuous sociality, which tended reinforce reified notions of

Plate 9 Aerial view of Niolam Island with Marahun residential site in foreground and mine site in background
egalitarianism. Alternatively, most expatriates from countries like Australia find difference ‘aspirational’; neo-liberalism requires inequality as an economic driver but in pre-capitalist and ‘peasant’ societies - or those like Lihir that (rhetorically) emphasise equality - it conjures up the image of the ‘limited good’. As I shall demonstrate in chapters five and six, it was these entirely alternate ways of approaching ‘difference’ that generated such antagonism around the JNC’s neo-liberal plans for economic development in Lihir.

Regardless of Lihirian aversion to service work, the mining camp has assumed an increasingly ‘colonial’ style of expatriate life. In 2003 most houses had domestic maids and gardeners, and many mothers employed baby sitters to mind their children during the day while they socialized with other expatriate women. Expatriate personnel and their families, and Nationals employed in senior positions and not operating on a fly-in-fly-out basis were provided with very comfortable modern accommodation that conforms to Australian middle class aspirations. Spacious houses with all of the latest conveniences, situated on large blocks with landscaped gardens and ocean views provided these workers with the sort of luxury most Westerners work hard to attain. In addition to company vehicles some drive ways were adorned with new four-wheel-drive vehicles. Many owned new speed boats and yachts that were pulled out on weekends for a leisurely cruise around the islands. Wives and families of expatriate mine workers regularly jetted off on shopping holidays overseas, later returning to Lihir to show off their new wares and tell their stories of luxury resorts. Inside people’s homes it was impossible to tell that you were in Papua New Guinea, much less Lihir.

The expatriate and National elite existed within a relatively closed social environment. Unlike other expatriate ‘camps’ around Papua New Guinea, Marahun is not situated within a fenced compound with security checks on all who enter and leave. Despite the open design, this environment hardly welcomed the presence of Lihirians – or the odd dirty anthropologist who had strayed from the village. Individual houses were not protected with barbed wire fences, and the security presence was minimal. There had been relatively few break-ins, and most expatriates seemed to feel safe; even still, nearly
everybody was careful to lock their houses while they were out or sleeping. In contrast, the Government houses were based on a simple generic design and made with inferior materials. These houses might be metonyms of Melanesian modernity in many parts of the country, but in Lihir they stood in stark contrast to company dwellings, reinforcing the differences between what is ‘sufficient’ and ‘attainable’ for Melanesians and expatriates.

Expatriate sociality

A full description of expatriate life and relations in Lihir is beyond the scope of this thesis, however a key aspect that requires mention is the sense of shared ethos - “the structure of assumptions, values, and meanings which underlie particular and varying expressions of cultural behaviour” (Epstein, 1978: 122) - that serves the double function of uniting expatriates and excluding Lihirians and other Papua New Guineans. Lihirians might have been slowly attaining some of the things they thought would enable a shared humanity, but what many aspiring Lihirians and other Nationals came to realize is that often being qualified for the job, receiving similar wages, or owning comparable possessions was still not enough to transcend old social boundaries.

Being able to ‘get the joke’, or use the right language in the appropriate context is crucial for meaningful social interaction (see Bateson, 1958: 119 – 122); it presupposes membership of a shared habitus where, as Bourdieu states, “what is essential goes without saying because it comes without saying” (1977: 167). The social gulf between Nationals and expatriates with similar backgrounds working in Lihir for a specific purpose presented itself as an obstacle for real cross-cultural interaction. Here we begin to see the relationships between class, habitus, and standards of living that reproduce existing hierarchical structures. What expatriates take for granted and what Lihirians and other Papua New Guineans desire might be the same, but it is these fundamentally alternate approaches to the same lifestyle that reveal differences that are played out in various forms of exclusion.
Aside from the actual work of digging a massive hole in the ground and making bars of gold, the core of expatriate life was the Social Club and the International School for those with children. These two institutions were the focus of family and community life; access and meaningful participation within these environments were markers of distinction that also exhibited the most demeaning forms of public exclusion. Lihirians realized the benefits of sending their children to the International School, but high school fees made this the preserve of the wealthiest ‘landowners’ and businessmen and those families with double incomes. For Lihirians the International School carried the same connotations as private colleges in Australia – it is not just the educational opportunities, but the social prestige associated with these institutions that make them appealing. Students at the Lihir International School were taught by highly experienced expatriate teachers in air conditioned rooms equipped with the latest technology and teaching equipment. Student teachers ratios were the envy of Australian state school teachers and individual attention was a key pedagogic technique.

In comparison, Lihirian class rooms were overcrowded and listless students often sat on hard wooden benches, sweating under a hot iron roof in sweltering conditions. They were taught by teachers who in spite of their qualifications and experience were always overworked, underpaid (if their pay actually arrived), under resourced, rarely accorded much respect within the village, and received little useful attention from the local School Inspector. Not surprisingly disillusionment and apathy were common among many Papua New Guinean teachers. Ultimately the difference can be expressed in terms of means and needs: expatriate parents might have questioned whether the school provided sufficient means for their children’s needs, while Lihirian parents were often left wondering whether they had sufficient means to meet their children’s needs.

Like the international school, the social club expected members to conform to a particular type of sociality. Expatriates rarely discussed financial hardship, for the basic reason that (comparatively) it did not exist. Inability to pay school fees or meet club membership costs was not part of the social equation; it was presumed expatriates could meet these and other costs. No one was denied club membership if they had been invited to join and
they could afford the 200 kina annual membership fee. This was the domain of workers and their families; men and women and children engaged in forms of sociality absent in the village. The club has a restaurant, bar, pool, squash and tennis courts, and a library of books and DVDs and videos. There were organized social events, sporting clubs for various activities such as golf, fishing, diving, sailing and surfing, and the usual entertainment from social interaction in a shared and familiar space where most members were united though a tacit understanding of one another’s lives.

On any given weekend, the club was packed with workers and their families, socializing and relaxing. Conversations often revolved around life in their respective countries and cities and other projects they have lived and worked at, the difficulty of sending their children to boarding school, how long they might remain in Lihir (perhaps until the second mortgage is clear), where they will spend their next holiday, and the always topical rumours of expatriate relationships and liaisons. In short, these long-term expatriates formed an enclave where despite their own employment hierarchies they were united through mutual commitment to resource development. This was an enduring community based on long term residence where one’s absence was noticed, and where there was what Errington and Gewertz describe in neo-Durkheimian terms as an “effervescence of expats” (2004: 130).

The reasons why expatriates generally socialized with other expatriates and Nationals with other Nationals (and also Lihirians with other Lihirians) are both cultural and intricately connected to economic differences - different standards for commonality. In conversation with an expatriate businessman in Kavieng, he recounted his experiences in Lihir, having traveled there several times to attend the annual black tie charity fundraising ball held at the Social Club. After discussing the virtues of Kavieng, he said he was impressed with social activities on Lihir: “just because they are living all the way out on Lihir, it doesn’t mean they have to live like kanakas”. Nearly all expatriates living in Lihir would express similar opinions. This is hardly surprising – anthropologists especially understand the necessity of a few ‘creature comforts’ in a foreign place. But in reality it is often the inverse of this remark that reflects expatriate sentiment: “if they
[Lihirians] are going live close to us, it doesn’t mean they have to continue being *kanakas*. In Lihir, expatriates set the terms for interaction; standards for ‘membership’ and inclusion were determined according to their dominant values, often deliberately knowing that Lihirians could not possibly bridge such social gulfs. Lihirians might have been welcome to join as members of the club, affirming an exterior belief in a shared humanity, but it is still Lihirians who need to ‘move up’ and meet Western values to enjoy this equality, giving double effect to the topography of Lihirian stratification.

*Melanesian middle class aspirations*

Opportunities presented through mining have enabled some Lihirian men to achieve ‘success’ by establishing businesses through their monopoly on royalty payments, or by gaining senior positions within the company. While this nascent bourgeois class comprises a minority, their lives are distinct. Two of these men and their families lived at Marahun in company housing, while others remained in their villages, building their own ‘modern’ permanent houses. These men were educated and wealthy and comprised part of the new Lihirian ‘elite’. Some had lived in or traveled to Australia for work, training, or leisure. Their younger children attended the International School and some of their older children were educated in Port Moresby or Australia. They owned four-wheel-drive vehicles, worked in air conditioned offices, played golf on the weekend, and could be found relaxing after work over a few beers in the club. These aspiring Lihirians were constructing their identity on new influences from Australia or their relations with expatriate residents. They were learning that it was possible to maintain their Lihirian identity and connections – at arms’ length – and simultaneously embody foreign values and life styles. The classic image of influential and wealthy National elites distinctly cut off from their grassroots origins – the traditional image of Melanesian success - was being displaced by images of a global middle class.

This was a precarious social position that required constant maintenance. Kin relations place huge expectations upon these men to share their wealth and ‘success’. These men had to negotiate between keeping their extended network open wide enough to ensure
their own security, but tight enough to maintain their wealth and membership of the National middle class. To exist as a member of the ‘elite’ and to engage as ‘equals’ with expatriates they had to display non-Lihirian social and economic values by adopting Western consumptive patterns, giving primacy to the nuclear family and drawing sharp lines between themselves and their less enterprising kin. Therefore what appeared as ‘class happenings’, as a group of people who distinguished themselves from their grassroots relatives through their greater access to money that provided them with a restricted and desired lifestyle, must be seen as class relations (Thompson, 1964: 9).

These men embodied the contradictions in Lihirian ambition. Many aspired to managerial positions or to become successful businessmen. As we shall see in chapters five and six, Lihirian concepts of modernity involved controlling production and subsequent profits. However, success within these realms is dependent upon distinctly non-Lihirian values and behaviour that are often the source of grassroots’ criticism. Many Lihirians wanted to occupy these positions and receive the associated incomes, status and ‘freedom’, but it was actually ‘landowners’ who really embodied Lihirian values and aspirations. While grassroots Lihirians resented the incommensurate differences between themselves and the middle class and expatriates, generally they did not desire their particular life style. Ultimately winmoni enabled ‘landowners’ to live Lihirian lives on a bigger and better scale; they did not totally rely upon a subsistence existence, nor did they need to sell their labour. Rather, their subsistence economy – the basis of kastom, food security and political status – was augmented by their freedom to consume. Of course this is not to say that the majority of grassroots did not resent ‘landowners’ who often appeared selfish or failed to redistribute wealth in expected ways, but this did not detract from their desire to enjoy the benefits of being a ‘landowner’.

Keeping the network out of view

The ‘camp’ contained its own stratification within the ranks of the company, between expatriates and Nationals, and between company and Government workers. The differences between the various groups were both subtle and overt. It was a microcosm of
cities like Port Moresby with important differences in access to power and resources among the growing middle class. But to most grassroots Lihirians, ‘camp’ residents were a homogeneous group in much the same way as ‘landowners’ were perceived as a single entity.

Although inequality was manifest in various ways, unequal distribution of mining benefits has been the most obvious and socially destructive. Payments for the loss of ground, trees, gardens, gravesites, men’s houses and sacred sites, combined with the relocation of Putput Village, transformed lives overnight. An unprecedented amount of money was immediately available for copious consumption. Huge amounts were spent on beer and other commodities. Trips were made to centres such as Rabaul, Kavieng, Lae and Port Moresby, with the occasional holiday to Australia. New four-wheel-drive vehicles were bought and crashed, mountain bikes replaced walking, fancy fake gold wrist watches became coveted items, personal stereos continually disturbed the peace, people wore new clothes, and the face of kastom was forever changed as pigs were flown in from as far away as Rabaul and trade store items became standard feasting fare. In something resembling a giant potlatch much of this new wealth was instantly devoured, in some cases never to be seen again. At least this is how it appeared to ‘non-landowners’ looking in on villages like Putput, Londolovit, and Kunayie that contained the highest number of ‘landowning clans’ (see Jacka, 2001 for similar ‘outsider’ perspectives at Porgera).

Those who did not live in the ‘affected’ areas had to be content with sitting on the sidelines watching others eat their slice of the development pie. Most Lihirians considered it was right for people relocated from Putput and Kapit villages to have houses built by the mining company and to be compensated financially for the lack of access to traditional men’s house sites, damage to graves, and the loss of gardens and other agricultural resources. New permanent houses were built by the company in the relocated villages, which now had ‘modern’ amenities such as reticulated water and electricity. Men’s houses were refashioned with corrugated iron roofs, cement floors, and painted wooden walls. Putput soon began resembling a poor Queensland suburb (while
Marahun looked distinctly middle class) as people fenced off their hamlets with cyclone wire, made driveways, and enjoyed the evening ambiance of newly installed street lights. These Lihirians were going to remake their lives as rich modern villagers with a mastery of technology that would be funded by the mining company.

In 1998 Filer and Mandie-Filer observed the tendency among Lihirians from the ‘non-affected’ areas to “lump all Putputs together as a bunch of idle, greedy snobs who deserve to have their houses burnt, their cars wrecked, and their daughters raped” (1998: 6). This does not seem so excessive if we remember that all Lihirians looked to the mine as their source of economic salvation. The humiliation that accompanied the unequal distribution of wealth easily transpired into disillusionment and emotional hostility. The general objection that ‘non-affected’ Lihirians continued to have with their ‘affected’ relatives was the refusal to share their newfound wealth in circumstances that are considered normal. Real and perceived boundaries were being drawn within the Lihirian community. At the same time, many Lihirians were reassessing their relationships with those people

Plate 10  Stark moments of disparity: village housing differences
from the neighbouring islands with whom they have had long standing reciprocal relationships of exchange and incorporation (see Bell, 1950; Foster, 1995a; Wagner, 1986). Old relationships have been reformulated, or ‘cut off’, and new relationship have been created internally, and exchange networks have spiralled inwards to avoid losing precious resources to ‘non-landowning’ clans and non-Lihirians.

In his contribution to a recent collection on contemporary notions of Melanesian property ownership in Papua New Guinea (Kalinoe and Leach, 2004), Stuart Kirsch has argued that when making compensation claims against the mining company, Lihirians generally seek to keep the entire social network in view (Kirsch, 2004: 80). This enables Kirsch to make the abstraction that “Melanesian social networks typically include all of the persons who have contributed to another’s success, each of whom may later lay claim to their share of what ever is produced” (Kirsch, 2004: 83). The processes I have described problematize this and his other assertion that “Euro-American property claims place limits on ownership, while Melanesian claims expand the possibilities of participation” (Kirsch, 2004: 80). In this instance, Marilyn Strathern’s argument, which Kirsch cites in support of his own, is pertinent, though not for the reasons assumed by Kirsch. In response to Bruno Latour’s (1993) statements about the length or size of modern social networks compared to the apparently minimal size of ‘non-modern’ social networks (supposedly embodied in Melanesian societies), Strathern argues that Latour disregards the extent to which societies in areas like Melanesia construct and utilise networks, and ignores the fact that although “technology might enlarge networks, proprietorship can be guaranteed to cut them down to size” (Strathern, 1996: 531). That is, Western property claims usually require people shorten or ‘cut the network’ in order to establish ownership. As keen modernists, Lihirians have done exactly this.

Lihirians who receive royalties and other economic benefits from the mining company would argue they have not ‘cut off’ their social network in their attempt to control the flow of wealth (cf. Strathern, 1979). Perhaps this is true, given that these Lihirians host some of the most lavish kastom feasts that continue cycles of reciprocity and increase the chains of indebtedness. Even so, they definitely seek novel ways to strategically manage
these relationships in order to contain wealth within a limited sphere. Kirsch acknowledges that both “Melanesians and miners manipulate social networks to their own advantage”, but he resolutely states that Melanesians manoeuvre their social networks in ways incongruous with Western practices; he emphasizes difference over articulation. His approach essentialises an extremely complex process where Lihirians seek to maximize the available opportunities presented through mining operations, while simultaneously enriching their own ideas of virtuous sociality (Sahlins, 1992; cf. Robbins and Wardlow, 2005).

The insatiable desire for Cargo, combined with the uneven distribution of wealth (the cargo) has meant many relationships have been reconsidered. Close relationships with outsiders once represented the ability to engage in exchange, increase the network of indebtedness, and draw wealth into the lineage and clan. Other people respected these relationships because they reflected the leadership qualities of big men. People who maintain relationships with non-Lihirians have come under increased scrutiny from other Lihirians; increasing the network was seen to be at the expense of other Lihirians. These relationships no longer symbolized a conduit through which wealth could reach Lihir. Instead, relationships with outsiders were regarded as an ever widening one way channel through which Lihirian economic resources flow out to the shores of their neighbours and the pockets of other ‘undeserving’ people.

The strategic management of wealth is not uniquely Lihirian, but has been observed in all of Papua New Guinea’s large-scale resource development projects (see Banks, 1996; Connell and Howitt, 1991; Filer, 1990; Gerritsen and Macintyre, 1991). Often senior men have attempted to bolster their position of authority, particularly through the control of new wealth, justified through the rhetoric of the benevolent big man supposedly overseeing the interests of his entire clan. However as Filer noted for Bougainville, the contradictions between local custom and the practical distribution of compensation (in this case financial benefits rather than the entire ‘development’ package) is not just the result of unbridled greed, but perhaps the “simple absence of a custom which prescribes the proper way to redistribute rent” (Filer, 1990: 12). To an extent, the scale and form of
wealth associated with large-scale resource development will always overwhelm and undermine customary forms of distribution and inheritance.

For Lihirians this has been particularly noticeable in the tension between senior mother’s brothers and expectant younger nephews who look to their uncles for their share of ‘clan wealth’. The tendency for senior men to either use this money for themselves or to distribute wealth along lines of the nuclear family produced a generation of disgruntled young men who feel cheated out of what is ‘rightfully’ theirs. Gendered imbalances were also exacerbated in this modern context as traditional sexual divisions were recast to support male dominance in new situations. Macintyre (1998a) has described this as the “persistence of inequality”, readily identifiable in the ways mining money is (not) distributed between the sexes. However, what appear to be traditional gender-based divisions and injunctions that regulate behaviour superimposed over new contexts may in fact be ways of producing new forms of consciousness or means for expressing discontent or insecurities about changing circumstances.

From gardeners to rentiers

Lihirian ‘landowners’ were existing on the ‘rent’ they receive for the use of their land for mining operations. At the core of this group were those who ‘own’ land in the Special Mining Lease zone (SML), which is that portion of land (temporarily) alienated to allow operations to take place. Arguably more than any other group, these people defined themselves (subjectively) according to their legal (objective) status as ‘landowners’ and rent collectors. Their consciousness of this social and economic position inspired and directed their actions and relationships, particularly in relation to the company, the government, and other Lihirians. Alternatively ‘non-landowners’ often defined themselves in opposition to ‘landowners’, yet this formed the basis of their identity to a far lesser extent. They were becoming aware of their objective position, but this did not necessarily generate a class consciousness. Some ‘non-landowners’ argued that reversing inequality would require a comprehensive reorganisation of Lihir society – that would
make everyone a landowner - yet such a revolution would not strictly constitute class action.

Being a ‘landowner’ obviously relies upon a particular conceptual relationship to the land (cf. Gudeman, 1986: 21), but in Papua New Guinea, this land must be productive or possess some qualities likely to yield economic profit. Marx’s insight into differential rent, somewhat inspired by Ricardo, provides a useful starting point for comprehending the existence of Lihirian ‘landowners’. As Marx states in no uncertain terms “the worst soil does not pay any ground rent” (1909: 867); that is, the amount or the possibility of income is overwhelmingly influenced by the location. Nowhere is this truer than in the extractive industries, which in the case of Papua New Guinea has produced numerous ‘lucky-strike’ communities.

From this perspective, Lihirians have become divided by extremely random means. Those who can lay claim to land that possesses something of value are deemed ‘landowners’, while those with nothing of economic use remain part of the unrecognized and undifferentiated hoard of collective custodians. For most Lihirians this distinction has been difficult to swallow, especially since identity politics for all Lihirians have become so embroiled with notions of landownership and control over resources. The ideology of landownership, or more precisely the idea that everyone has an inalienable connection to at least one patch of ground, has become crucial to a national identity: if everyone is a petty landlord then ‘poverty’ or a ‘peasantry’ simply cannot exist, or so the argument goes. On this basis, Papua New Guineans readily identify themselves against the dispossessed masses in third world countries. Yet the discrimination that arises from seemingly arbitrary lines on a map assaults the most fundamental aspect of Melanesian identity: ‘if I am not a landowner, then what am I?’ Everyone might be a landowner for the purposes of a national ideology, but not everyone is recognized as such in ways that ultimately matter. It is these contradictions – the manufactured and contrived public images that do not fit daily, legal and corporate realities – that anger Melanesians (cf. Herzfeld, 1997).
Anthropologists, miners, loggers, the colonial Administration, the National Government, and neo-colonial liberal economists have all realized that Melanesians do not have simple or uniform ways of delineating land use and ownership, few of which easily meld with Western notions of registration that recognize individual possession (cf. Fingleton, 2004; Gosarevski et al, 2004). Nevertheless, ‘development’ (and those vehicles through which it is delivered like mining, logging, or hydrocarbon extraction and to a lesser degree commercial fishing) relies upon the existence of ‘landowners’; in Melanesia such creatures are a fabrication of economic necessity. In a typically insightful article Filer has traced out the emergence of ‘landowners’ in Papua New Guinea, arguing that Papua New Guineans have only really become ‘landowners’ since the mid 1980s: the emergence of a population of ‘customary landowners’ “owes a good deal to the mineral prospecting boom of the early 1980s, when substantial sections of the rural population began to formulate the view that roving white geologists were the new heralds of true ‘development’, drilling their way through the failures and disappointments of the post-colonial political system” (Filer, 1997: 168). Essentially Papua New Guineans have only acquired an ideology of landownership as more land became commoditized, requiring individuals or groups (clans) to lay claim to ownership, and more importantly any possible dividends.

If ‘landowners’ only represent a minor section of the Lihirian population based on whatever customary claims they can make over a productive stretch of ground, then we need to consider how this status provides economic distinction. Fundamentally we are concerned with those receiving ‘ground rent’, “that form, in which property in land realizes itself economically”, that is, produces value (Marx, 1909: 725). More specifically, we are talking about the collection of ‘resource rent’, the form of surplus that is derived from the combination of mineral extractions and economic activities taking place on their land. Generally Lihirians do not actually use the term ‘rent’, instead preferring a mixture of expressions like winmoni, kompensesen (compensation), royalties, or equity. Lihirians distinguish between these names as they apply to different types of payment for various purposes, but on average most ‘non-landowners’ conflate these terms as a generic income that belongs to ‘landowners’. Essentially rent is an all
encompassing term that denotes the share ‘landowners’ have in the economic enterprise taking place on their property. It is paid in various ways through royalties, compensation, occupation fees and equity payments (see Burton, 1997). Rent per se is part of the larger compensation package that is delivered to the greater community, but unlike infrastructure, services, housing, business, investment and employment opportunities (the development consonant with compensation that has been awarded in the IBP), not everyone can receive rent. Even though Lihirians have agreed that everyone should benefit from the project, those with landed interests are not convinced everyone should be awarded equal status.

Classical political economy tended to view rentiers as ‘unproductive consumers’: rent represented nothing more than a tax of the productive system in order to maintain this group in idleness. They were seen to constitute a class of people who had no active relationship to the production of material commodities - they drew revenue but yielded no productive contribution. It is for good reason that in Lihir this group has become the most envied and despised. Mineral extraction might cause great distress to individuals and entire communities, but in purely economic terms, ‘landowners’ suffer no risk. It is the usurer (the company) that invests and jeopardizes their capital to create improvements (or in this case destruction) in order to milk the land in such a way that generates surplus profit, of which landowners collect their share in the form of ground rent. In the Ricardian tradition, political economy considered landed interests as a drain upon general wealth rather than assisting wealth creation; unlike the capitalist, they do not incur any real ‘cost’, and play no positive role in economic society (Dobb, 1972 [1937]: 49). Thus, while wages feed and clothe the labourer, and increased profit is the source and incentive of capital accumulation for industrious types, rent by comparison is the price of a property right in scarce natural resources: it is an extraction of the fruits of production in order to maintain a ‘passive and unproductive’ section of the community. Classical economists were seldom pre-occupied with such practical interpretations of rent. Instead influential thinkers like Malthus espoused landed interests, concluding that “landlords were not to be condemned as a class of unproductive consumers, but rather to be praised as an element in the necessary balance of a healthy society: a balance between the
accumulating instincts of the industrialist and the market for the products provided by a consuming class” (Dobb, 1972 [1937]: 52).

Apart from arguments about the loss of land, it may be possible to defend Lihirian ‘landowners’ on the basis of the contribution they make to the local economy through their ability to spend and consume, or to argue that since no one can charge a price if they do no service, all classes which draw an income must *ipso facto* be productive and their income the measure of their worth to society (Dobb, 1972 [1937]: 67): if ‘landowners’ hadn’t given up their land then there would be no mine, and no development from which everyone can benefit. However, I would be hard pressed to find any ‘non-affected’ Lihirians who support such rentier apologetics: without the mine there would be no ‘landowners’, thus less inequality. It is this kind of abstraction (the justification for rentiers) that Marx was criticizing, when he warned against mistaking shadow for substance or appearance for actuality. Crude empiricism will not always provide sufficient insight, but in the case of Lihir - particularly from the perspective of the ‘non-affected’- the reality ‘on the ground’ makes it increasingly difficult to justify the lifestyle of this emergent class.

Our image of idle landlords who take the fattest lamb from a flock they didn’t tend is complicated by the fact that Lihirian ‘landowners’ often also want to be labourers, or at least secure employment positions for their children and other relatives. Lihirian rentiers are a self reproducing ‘class’, in so much as kinship determines entry into this exclusive group, but they are not always antithetical to industrialism, wage labour, or management. Indeed, we find the contradictory phenomena of Lihirians wanting to occupy these positions simultaneously to enjoy the associated authority, status and freedom, representing the convergence of their various ideals. The ‘modern Lihirian’ would thus be a wealthy landowning capitalist managing a multinational corporation with the freedom and lack of responsibility enjoyed by labourers and subsistence farmers.

If we consider the spending practices of these ‘landowners’, or the avenues where this wealth is channeled, it is difficult to entirely maintain any criticisms about the
‘unproductive’ nature of their consumption. As I describe in chapter four, aside from personal consumption and acquisition, there is great pressure to pour money into kastom. Given that Lihirians regard kastom practices (feasting and exchange) as necessary to the public good, boosting the local ‘moral economy’, then it could be argued that in contemporary circumstances conspicuous consumption in kastom is an a priori condition for the conservation of this sector and for the balance of society. In this instance, landowner consumption is productive for the collective good. However for those who have become indebted in this process in ways they simply cannot repay, it is quite likely they have come to feel this ‘moral economy’ now represents a more parochial version of orthodox class polarization, where differential access to economic resources create and maintain new hierarchical structures.

While it is unlikely that Lihirians will be well versed in classical political economy they do express a keen insight into the injustices, difficulties, and ambiguities associated with rent collection. The JNC harnessed this awareness as they targeted ‘landowners’ as mere consumers who are unlikely to start productive and successful enterprises that will assist the post mine economy. It is the appeal of this lifestyle that the JNC have tried to reduce through the modernist rhetoric of the PV course, which implicitly asserts personal worth is not found in passive consumption, but rather individual production (see chapter five). Of course, despite the fact that many Lihirians were critical of their rentier relatives this does not detract from the envy they experienced or the feeling they are denied equal status due to extremely arbitrary processes. ‘Non-landowning’ Lihirians were critical of rentiers, not because they can identify inherent contradictions within rent collection, but simply because they were not party to this income or status (cf. Golub, 2006).

Royalties and other forms of rent or compensation conform to Arau’s prophesies in the TKA movement. But for a good deal of the population, it was the resonance between rentier status and ideas of bisnis that made rent collection so appealing, and so galling when unattainable. The consonance between bisnis and modernity is mirrored in the collection of mining benefits. For a long time, owning or managing a business was seen as the epitome of modernity. This might have been due to the lack of business enterprises
in Lihir prior to the mine, but it could also have been a result of comparisons between wage labour (wok moni) and business (bisnis). The labour trade and the copra industry introduced Lihirians to the exploitation that occurs when one ‘exchanges’ their labour for wages, prompting the belief that real wealth accumulation is somehow extraneous from physical work. Ultimately money which is reproduced through such ‘enigmatic’ channels like investment or bisnis is synonymous with rent collection: people grow rich without the investment or expenditure of time, labour, or substance. The appeal of rent collection is an indication of the disenchantment associated with wage labour and capitalism, which for so many Lihirians has historically failed to provide access to the wealth and commodities so desperately desired.

Ground rent also conforms with notional antipathy towards wealth accumulation through personal enterprise or bisnis; that variety of exchange so commonly (and somewhat erroneously) contrasted to ‘moral gift exchange’ (cf. Akin and Robbins, 1999b; Bloch and Parry, 1989; Gregory, 1982). Notwithstanding the fact that landowners tend to reduce, reshuffle, and in some cases cut off their networks of social obligations to contain their affluence, ground rent is justified by a ‘primordial’ connection to the ground, which is ‘good’, compared with bisnis that necessarily requires exclusion (bourgeois social values) for success; accomplishments based on relationships of dominance and inequality, rather than generosity, kindness, or politeness – ideals of virtuous sociality (cf. Bourdieu, 1977: 189).

Inter-village difference

In 2004 economic stratification was just as pronounced as previous years. Other villages around Lihir had begun to receive some of their share of mining benefits and ‘development’, but the ‘affected’ areas were still setting the pace. Perhaps the only difference was ‘non-affected’ Lihirians were less vocal about their economic status, having grown more accustomed to the economic order. People were still frustrated and angry about the state of affairs, but many realized sweeping economic change will probably not arrive. As you drove, walked, rode, or even paddled by canoe along the
coastline in either direction from Londolovit, there was a noticeable decline in the material standards of living as you move away from the SML zone. Moving along the road through the Kunayie, Londolovit, Putput, and Dot villages, the streets were lined with power poles, there were cars in the driveways, non-Lihirian wage labourers and their families rented houses owned by ‘landowners’, men staggered around drunk on royalties and wages, cheap plastic toys imported from Asia laid broken and strewn about the place, women and men seemed to have brighter and cleaner clothes, and television sets continuously flickered with music video clips, C-grade action films, State of Origin repeats and Em TV. People came to these places for entertainment and to benefit from the advances taking place on the island.

While stratification was most apparent in material disparity, this was also expressed in different aspirations. During YBW (*Yumi Bung Wantaim*, which translates into Lets All Meet Together)\(^{20}\) meetings regularly held by the company in all villages as a form of

![Plate 11 Village Development Scheme (VDS) house](image)
disseminating information and maintaining communication with communities, there was a noticeable difference in the issues and concerns raised throughout the islands. For instance, during 2003, Lamboar villagers were still waiting to upgrade their Aid Post and community school, install rainwater tanks, and access better transport. While in areas closer to the mine, people were comparatively less concerned with ‘community development’ projects (partly because these facilities have already been delivered) and attention was increasingly centered on opportunities for personal acquisition or bisnis.

Equally, the dissimilarities between the aspirations of school children from Lakuplien Community School (which services Putput, Dot and Lipuko) and Kinami Community School (which accommodates Kinami, Lataul, and Lesel), reflected the uneven spread of modern technology, exposure to media, and knowledge of the outside world. The short stories that form the prologue illustrated the extent of these disparities on the border zone of the ‘affected’ area. Kinami Community School students talked about the possibility of a life of relative ease with a lack of physical toil and the loosening of customary restraints, focusing on their relative deprivation. Contrastingly, Lipuko students tended to concentrate on possibilities outside of Lihir with grander materialistic dreams, or else they recounted tales of rupture (many of which were quite obviously handed down by their parents) that were mixed with apocalyptic future visions, indicative of an early internalization of their parent’s dependency upon the mining project. In short, even visions of the future are constrained by and bespeak the unequal access to wealth and technology.

Resisting proletarianization

In 2003 in Kinami Village, which had a population of approximately 200 people and thirty households, close to forty adults were employed by the mining company or one of the various support companies, or as teachers in the local community and elementary schools. All households had some form of income; petty market sales were the most common supplement to wage labour if not the sole source of income. Three households operated small trade stores of varying success and size, while others relied on sporadic
labour contract work, or baby sat and gardened for those in full time employment. No one existed solely on mining royalties, although some households did receive minimal amounts from time to time as payments trickled down paths of kinship and clan affiliation.

Wage labourers comprised only a fraction of the overall Lihirian population, but their presence or absence was felt in many ways. Employment levels were not evenly spread throughout Lihir as some areas had a much higher percentage of employees than others. Villages closer to the SML zone had more workers, while villages on the south western side of Niolam typically had fewer people engaged in wage labour. Similarly numbers were not evenly spread on the smaller islands; there was a high concentration of employees from Masahet, which mainly reflected the higher level of education among Masahet residents.

Objectively we can speak of an emerging proletariat: there was a small section of the community that was dependent upon wages for their lifestyles (not necessarily their existence). However, the specific conditions in Lihir where people have retained ownership of their land, and where wages and other forms of income supplement a subsistence existence, make it structurally impossible for proletarianization to occur in full. Quite simply, no Lihirian relied upon selling their labour to exist.

Most villagers did not differentiate between types of employment, or skill and income levels. Within the village, workers received a certain amount of prestige from their positions in the company due to their identification with the wealth, power, and technological sophistication (the ‘modernity’) of the company. Workers often expressed their pride in this association by wearing company issued uniforms and work boots outside working hours in the village. It would be wrong to say Lihirians did not recognize those in office positions or highly technical roles, but this generally did not increase their status (or authority) over other workers in the village, nor could it immediately be converted into influence in customary realms.
Workers were contrasted with farmers, but not all workers used their employment as the source of their identity. Often only those with high levels of technical knowledge identified themselves on the basis of their employment positions. General labourers were less likely to use their employment status to gain recognition in the village. Simultaneously, all Lihirians expressed resentment and frustration over what they perceive as a ‘glass ceiling’ that denies Lihirians the opportunities to work in senior positions or gain further qualifications. Regardless of whether this is true or the result of unrealistic expectations about the roles they would play in mining operations, on average Lihirians did not occupy senior positions. Any prestige gained in the village from being in the company’s employ was offset by their low status in the employment ladder, accompanied by a familiar feeling of denigration in comparison to whites.

The growing number of young males disinclined towards garden work, unable to find paid employment, or sometimes simply unwilling to look (often expecting employment opportunities to arise by virtue of being Lihirian) suggests the emergence of a lumpenproletariat. Disaffected youth with little interest in kastom work, no skills, and no likely prospects, combined with an awareness of their lack of purchasing power formed a disruptive voice within the community (for similar examples in an urban context see Goddard, 2005). These men were jealous of their paid compatriots, hostile towards ‘outsiders’ who were seen to be ‘stealing’ Lihirian jobs, and felt disillusioned about what they considered unfulfilled promises of employment for all Lihirians. The expectation that all Lihirians would find employment highlights chronic dependency upon the company, but also the unrealistic hopes generated by large-scale resource development. The scarcity of work might have added to the prestige attached to employment, but it was also a source of continuing antagonism that reminded people of the unequal access to means of wealth acquisition.

These unrealistic hopes were compounded by the increasing number of people seeking a finite number of positions. Observations about labour supply and demand are pertinent to questions about low wages and a ‘rural proletariat’; or in other words, why Lihirians are paid a pittance in comparison to their expatriate bosses. Orthodox labour market theory
regards low wages as the outcomings of individual shortcomings; as we will see in chapters five and six, such modernist claims were revived in the teachings of the Personal Viability course. Thus pay packets and personal wealth are determined by personal skills. Marxist theory tends to attribute meagre wages to the nature of capitalist class relations, and particularly to the existence of a ‘relative surplus population’, otherwise known as an ‘industrial reserve army’. Marx regarded this reserve army as the population that exceeds the average needs of capital for self expansion. In other words, it is the extra population that cannot be accommodated by the available employment positions. Lihirians who are unemployed (but capable of working) fall into this category.

This also means there is a constant supply of labourers ready to take up available positions regardless of the wages on offer. Consequently, when only a fraction of the Lihirian population can be employed, this surplus population actually eats into the bargaining power of the proletariat as a whole. The company will invariably pay the lowest wages it can get away with, meaning that because of the large ‘industrial reserve army’, there is pressure to keep wages low that originates from other ‘oppressed’ people (Robinson, 1986: 50). Again we begin to see the differences between ‘landowners’ and ‘non-landowners’, or those with a strong political and economic connection to the company, and those who exercise minimal influence due to their employment dependency. While all Lihirians were engaged in struggles over the extent of their involvement in the project, being part of the ‘landowning’ community yielded considerably more influence than membership of the general population. It is the different relationship to the project and the processes of production that provides rentiers with the bargaining chips and clout to keep them in the ‘compensation game’ (cf. Wolfers, 1992), and often reduces ‘non-landowners’ to mere spectators.

Class or status groups?

Mining projects often bring a ready made hierarchy to be laid over the top of existing social structures. Lihirians found themselves existing in historical relationships where “some men [and women], as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel
and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men [and women] whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs” (Thompson, 1964: 9). Expatriates and National ‘elites’ clearly maintained a different relationship to production than the majority of Lihirians. It is only possible to talk of these people as the middle class (or comparatively as ‘elites’) because of their relationship to the grassroots, who occupy positions as wage labourers, petty marketers, and subsistence farmers. This does not mean the Lhirian experience reflects the dominant Marxist paradigm. In effect, despite stratification, the conjunction between ‘class of itself’ and ‘class for self’ - that is, between objective economic conditions and subjectively held identities - is only partial, mainly due to the absence of a distinct division between ‘owners’ and ‘workers’. Expatriates might have controlled most of the capital and many of the processes associated with operations, and Lihirians did form the majority of the labour force, but central political struggles still pivoted around the issue of ownership, which was played out in a confusing battle over the roles of ‘patron’ and ‘client’, (see chapter six and Toft, 1997b).

To be certain, this hierarchy can be seen in terms of classes, but these ‘units’ were not wholly distinct and they converge in ways that obscure marked boundaries (cf. Bourdeiu, 1987: 13). The lack of polarization was the result of several persistent factors that undercut class formation: all Lihirians have some customary land rights; no Lihirian was dependent upon selling their labour to exist; Lihirians were keenly united through an incipient ethnic identity, largely based on access to mining benefits; and strong kinship and customary exchange relations made it near impossible for Lihirians to act as completely autonomous capitalists, let alone independent petty entrepreneurs, or to experience the alienation or total disenchantment of the working class. Authority within the village concerning local affairs was often retained in the hands of elderly men who achieved status through customary endeavours.

The crude distinction between ‘labour’ and ‘capital’ is further complicated by the fact that Lihirians were not forced into wage labour but instead bargained for greater access with ‘Lhir first’ employment policies. They were somewhat dependent upon the
company, but this hampered the development of class consciousness. Some Lihirians have gained greater prestige and access to more money through their seniority within the company or success in other businesses, but they were not numerous enough to form a genuine reproducing class, as either a labour aristocracy with relatively guaranteed high incomes through employment, or as a dominant middle class. Although some of those who had kamap (come up) through new mining wealth had consolidated their position through entrepreneurial capitalist endeavour so that their position conformed to more classical class distinctions, many continued to define themselves through the regular payment of mining benefits that create lifestyles seen by others as synonymous with ‘development’.

Mainly due to political and identity struggles related to the mining project and control over resources that keep Lihirians closely connected with their places of origin, there were no Lihirians permanently residing off the island in towns or cities within or outside of Papua New Guinea. There were no Lihirians who formed a lifestyle for themselves exclusively outside of Lihir with the explicit intention of cultivating cosmopolitan sensibilities in an attempt to completely refashion their personal identity according to certain Western social values. In the majority of instances, mining royalties or ‘rent’ had been ‘reinvested’ back into Lihirian society, through business enterprise, local consumption (both feasting and exchange, and individual acquisition), or through various forms of distribution within kin networks. There were no Lihirians who sought to use this source of wealth to gain entry to status groups outside of Lihir. Unlike ‘landowners’ from Porgera, Lihirians have not even attempted to purchase property in Port Moresby, or Australia, as a source of income and prestige, or entry to a less parochial existence (cf. Golub, 2005).

Gewertz and Errington note (citing Keesing, 1976) that class analysis can be usefully applied to various societies (and eras) because it “leads one to seek out the economic basis of political power, to see the uses to which this power is put by those who have it, to see internal conflict between those in a society who have opposing interests as a driving force for change, and to see a ‘society’ as a temporary stage in the unfolding of
social process” (Keesing, 1976: 344, quoted in Gewertz and Errington, 1999, 153 - 54). Accordingly I have illustrated the clashes that arise through differential access to money, how this affects power structures, and the transitions within Lihir. However, Turner warns us, particularly in the context of Papua New Guinea, that we should not rely solely on class analysis as a methodological device through which all social, economic and political phenomena may be interpreted (Turner, 1984: 57). I have been arguing that the mining project has produced definite - albeit ‘parochial’ - class relations, but essentially the axis of stratification is chiefly the ability to consume which is largely determined by historical occurrences (custom and genealogical affiliation) that have arbitrarily linked some people to ‘productive’ or ‘valuable’ land, and others to comparatively ‘worthless’ ground. Thus it is useful to consider social distinctions in the context of mining through the notion of status groups who define themselves according to their superior access to resources that provide them with sought-after lifestyles.

According to Weber “classes are stratified according to their relations to the production and acquisition of goods; whereas status groups are stratified according to the principles of their consumption of goods as represented by special styles of life” (Weber, 1978: 937). Nowhere is the role of status more apparent than among those ‘landowners’ who have a superior access to money that enables them to live the desired lifestyle of consumption, and to use this wealth to shore up political status and influence. Weber’s admittedly over-simplified distinction does not imply a lack of consonance between class and consumption habits. Indeed, the Lihir context amply illustrates the conjunction, especially given that those who occupy positions within the ‘elite’, middle class and rentier ranks have socioeconomically defined identities and interests that are principally based on the ability to consume in culturally salient ways. As long as wealth is predominantly delivered as winmoni, and this remains the desired form, Lihirians will be principally divided according to status groups – that are highly connected to economic relationships. This also means that the Lihirian project of developman is contingent upon economic relationships and values that preclude class development, supported by an economic base that creates the freedom for constant and expansive social reproduction.
Class analysis is a productive approach for understanding post contact social changes particularly, how the introduction of cash-cropping and the capitalist mode of production has restructured or exacerbated ‘traditional’ inequalities and forms of leadership. Historically Lihirians recognized individual men of distinction, who can be likened to Hogbin’s description of the North Malaitan ‘centre man’ (1944), and explicit differences were drawn between seniors and juniors, complemented by a sexual division of labour and general male authority over women. However, there is little evidence to suggest that that these inequalities represented actual class relationships; that is, even though certain men were more dominant than others (in economic exchange, or in ritual and spiritual knowledge) they did not represent a self reproducing group, nor was their prestige reproduced within the generations of their own families. Various structures and process helped mitigate the establishment of a ruling ‘class’ or other perpetually dependent subordinate groups. There is a long standing anthropological debate surrounding the applicability of class analysis for understanding Melanesian societies and whether a class view can be plausibly erected for ‘traditional’ societies. The most notable contributions to these debates in the Papua New Guinean context have been Godelier (1977), Modjeska (1982), Stathern (1982b, 1982c, 1984), and Josephides (1985). A good deal of ink has been spilt over the question of whether New Guinea Highlands societies expressed patterns of inequality that were masked by ideologies of equality in lineage based agrarian societies (Strathern, 1982e: 43). Attention has shifted from questions over the mode of production to empirical problems found in the different relations to production. These arguments tend to focus on the divide between elders and juniors, and men and women, where relational notions of ‘piety’, ‘authority’ and ‘reciprocity’ are replaced by the analytic idiom of ‘exploitation’; elder men are thus seen to constitute a class vis-à-vis juniors (Strathern, 1982e: 43).

To be sure, inequality did exist in various forms in ‘traditional’ Melanesian society. The most documented (and contested) type has been the existence of big men, who according to Sahlins’ classic typology (1963), is a man who possesses great personal power acquired through his own merits, which are not inherited nor can they be passed on. Likened to the “free enterprising rugged individual of our own heritage”, big men progressively achieve status through acts “which elevate a person above the common herd” (Sahlins, 1963: 289), typically relying upon supporters to amass a fund of power. Numerous studies have focused on the distinguishing qualities of big men (Keesing 1978; Oliver, 1967 [1955]; Strathern, 1971) while others have contested the universality of this model where prestige or ‘inequality’ is found to exist within a ‘system’ of commensurate difference, such as in ‘great men’ societies (Godelier and Strathern, 1991). There were definite systems of chiefdom and rank whereby some men were given the prerogative of polygamy or enjoyed other preferences related to their status (Chowning, 1973, 1979; Hogbin, 1978; Malinowskis, 1961 [1922]; Mosko, 1985; Young, 1971); in some cases fathers had authority over their sons (Meggitt, 1965), while in other areas the collective solidarity and superiority of elders over juniors was maintained through the institutions of initiation or age-grade societies (Allen, 1967; Herdt, 1982; Knauff, 1985). Additionally, in all Melanesian societies men exercised varying degrees of authority over women’s labour and reproductive capacities, who depending on the area could be either sisters, wives, nieces, cousins, or daughters or a combination of them all (Strathern, 1972, 1979; cf. Nash, 1974). However the question remains whether such inequality translates into actual class based difference.

See Garnaut (1984) for a particularly acerbic critique of the ways Amrashi et al (1979) have misconstrued the reality of Papua New Guinea’s political economy in the years immediately following Independence, and the ways in which they have made the ‘facts’ fit the dependency model. Nevertheless, despite Garnaut’s criticisms, this book has pointed to a later reality, where Papua New Guinea is extremely dependent upon foreign investment, especially through natural resource extraction.

The Eight Aims were an important set of guiding principles devised by the emerging Independent National Government. These aims played a crucial role in the construction of the constitution and were later transformed into five National Goals and Directive Principles. The essence of the Eight Aims was rural and regional development, local ownership and control, and equality (Connell, 1997: 25 -28). See Appendix Two for the Eight Aims.

In Lihir, National employees working for the company were paid less than their expatriate co-workers, however, National employees were still considerably better off than other Nationals working for the local government or other businesses. The company said they would like to pay their National employees more.
If this were to occur there would be even greater disparity between company employees and Nationals employed in local businesses. This often means wage labourers are paid more than Government bureaucrats and other Nationals with tertiary level education, adding to the frustration among National workers.

6 There have been numerous ethnographies that consider the more general process and symptoms of the shift towards modernity (Knauft 2002d; LiPuma, 2000; Robbins, 2004a; Smith, 2002); however their focus is not specifically socioeconomic.


11 See Appendix Three for employment statistics by place of origin in 2000; these were the most recent statistics available.

12 When the camp was first established the company refused to landscape the gardens of company houses. Initially workers wives established these gardens. Lihirians were loath to work in such subservient positions. Later people arrived from Namatanai and Rabaul in search of work; many of these people found work as gardeners. Similarly house cleaners and servants are generally non-Lihirian.

13 For an excellent description of expatriate lives and the interaction between expatriates and Papua New Guineans in the context of a resource extraction project, see Ch 5 of Errington and Gewertz’s (2004) study of the Ramu sugar factory.

14 In 2004 school fees were as follows: pre school 3000 kina, company sponsored children primary school were charged in excess of 10 000 kina and non company sponsored were charged over 5000 kina.

15 There was a case of one very qualified National teacher being asked to resign because one expatriate mother felt that she was unable to offer the same level of education as an expatriate teacher.

16 Students without access to electricity, television, and a home environment where English is the predominantly spoken language would find themselves at a distinct disadvantage when such resources are taken for granted and required for completion of homework assignments. Children may also find themselves experiencing the same lack of ethos that their parents experience in their relationships with expatriates. However, one exceptionally bright and extroverted child from Tumbuapil Village (whose parents both had office jobs with the company) who attended the International School showed that these hurdles are not insurmountable.

17 After two years of working at Holy Name School in Dogura, Milne Bay Province, I had become familiar with the difficulties faced by National teachers and students in rural areas. See also Knauft 2002d (Ch 7) for a comparable description of rural schooling.

18 In typical Melanesian irony, the installation of street lights in Putput coincided with local claims for compensation for ‘light pollution’ from the nearby plant site. It is these sorts of contradictions that have been interpreted by other Lihirians as a sign of greediness. Alternatively they might also represent Melanesian ingenuity for extracting concessions from the company by whatever means possible.

19 Jared Diamond (1997) has written an influential book on the history of the modern world which argues the ‘haves’ (as opposed to the ‘have-nots’) exist as the result of where people are born in relation to the luck-of-the-environmental-draw. Such an argument exempts human decisions (and exploitation) from any consideration of inequality. While I agree with Errington and Gewertz (2004) that Diamond only provides a partial (and self-evident and self-interested) account of how history is made, mining (and the discovery and extraction of minerals) does support his thesis: inequality in Lihir is very closely connected to which patch of dirt people are associated with. However, as Errington and Gewertz assert, if we are going to avoid a history of the self-evident and the self-interested, and “replace a history of apparent inevitability with one
of potential accountability” (2004: 14), we must remember that people have the capacity to make choices. Inequality in Lihir might be connected to the relationships that people have with different stretches of real estate, but it is even more tightly bound to the decisions people made and the ways that people choose to relate to one another.

20 YBW meetings were a company initiative that were intended to bring together representative from the company, the health centre, the police force, and the Local Level Government to answer questions from the community or deliver relevant information. This was intended to create some unity between the various institutions and provide community members with a feeling of inclusion. This has also been primarily used by the company as an avenue for regularly collecting information on community concerns.

21 See Appendix Four for employment statistics for Lihirian villages in 2000; these were the most recent figures available at the time of writing.

22 Non-workers also provided some of the most dazzling displays of work place fashion. Workers regularly handed over items from their uniform to kith and kin who often desired these products for their superior materials and workmanship in comparison to the clothes available in the supermarkets. This has caused numerous problems for the company, particularly because workers need more uniform items than necessary, and because it also makes it difficult to distinguish who actually works for the company. This is a problem when ‘law and order’ issues are reported and the perpetrators are described as ‘company employees’ by virtue of wearing company issued clothes. The explosives company, Orica, took a hard line stance and banned their employees from distributing work uniforms in the village.
In previous chapters I have discussed economic, social and political changes that occurred in Lihir and conveyed the different emotional responses to this change that motivate diverse forms of action. I have outlined those social structures that have historically shaped Lihirian society, practice and ideology, particularly as they encounter radically altered circumstances. My purpose, in Part I, has been to illustrate how Lihirians have engaged with ‘modernity’ in their quest for economic development and moral parity, and the ways in which the structure of Lihirian society has evolved since the inception of mining activities. In doing so I have provided a context for Part II, where I consider the Personal Viability course and the development plans of the JNC and what they were hoping to transform. Certainly Lihirian society has become stratified, mainly due to the arbitrary creation of rentiers that has enabled some people to conspicuously consume more commercial goods than others. However, Lihir has not become totally polarized in the classical sense of owners and workers. This can largely be interpreted as a result of the processes of developman – what Sahlins describes as “a cultural self-realisation on a material scale and in material forms never before known” (Sahlins, 2005d: 420). Ultimately contemporary Lihirian economic practice harnessed custom to commerce in such a way that ensured economic inequalities did not override shared community interests.

Lihirians have long been conscious of their marginal economic and political standing in the world system. This has generated great frustration and anger manifest in various
political movements through which they have sought to improve their relative situation. Rather than advancing these efforts, mining activities only increased their sense of inequality with outsiders, a contrast emphasised by living side by side with expatriates whose lifestyles are simply unattainable for most Lihirians. While many Lihirians have refused to give up on the modernist dream that one day they might all enjoy the same material luxury as their expatriate neighbours, they have not agreed on which particular ‘road’ will lead to the desired destination.

If a lack of money or economic opportunity were the only reason for the relative material poverty of most Lihirians then it would be fairly easily to make a statement about the perpetuation of the world system, Western hegemony, and the rapacious nature of multinational corporations. However, as I demonstrated in chapter three, Lihirians were now better placed to advance towards a more familiar form of economic development. Compared to all other parts of rural (and in some cases urban) Papua New Guinea, Lihirians have gained greater access to regular incomes, health, education, and telecommunication services, media sources and transport facilities. Mining operations have driven the establishment of infrastructure and services that are often limited to urban areas. However, while the standard of living dramatically improved at the wider community level due to the indirect benefits of development, the trappings of modernization were often not yet individually owned. The evident inequalities between Lihirians and expatriate mine workers fuelled a sense of injustice on behalf of Lihirians (both ‘landowners and ‘non-landowners’) in relation to those who were seen to be benefiting disproportionately.

For many Lihirians this sense of injustice was compounded by the perception that the profitability of the mine is infinite and that all Lihirians should have equal and continuous access to this wealth. In reality, company executives, Government bureaucrats, economic planners, and the JNC agreed that the money flowing into Lihir is finite, but that it would be sufficient to transform Lihir according their own Occidental dreams. For the JNC, this alteration was dependent upon an uncompromising embrace of neo-liberal capitalist practices and values. In this chapter I shall consider the processes of development to show
how Lihirians consistently ensured their wholehearted engagement with capitalist activities was always compromised.

Reconditioning dispositions

The JNC had become transfixed with finding the ‘correct’ way to use and conceive of money. As we will discover in the next chapter, the Personal Viability (PV) course was designed to call forth the spirit of so called ‘rational’ economic calculation that is supposedly inherent in all humans (see Smith, 1991 [1776], vol, 1: 17); this attribute should not be confused with the notion of a universal ability to calculate which Lihirians have always employed in their daily activities. But the question remains, why was the PV course deemed the necessary ingredient for changing Lihirian economic practices? Or rather, what is it about the way that Lihirians use and conceive of money that is so different from, or contradictory, to the supposed ‘rationalist’ economic principles of capitalism that continually hampers their attempts to become ‘modern’ and live in ways analogous to their white neighbours? In the following chapters it will become obvious that the JNC have attempted nothing less than the total transformation of Lihirian economic logic. While the JNC and many other Lihirians continued to claim economic scarcity results from their inability to completely control the mining operation (and therefore control all profits), the JNC decided that it is also the result of Lihirian attitudes and practices, or what we might understand as the ‘indigenous economy’, or their economic habitus.

Since becoming convinced of the sentiments of the PV course in late 2002, the JNC proudly asserted that the secret to ‘modernity’, the fecundity of money, and the power that seems to accompany wealth, could be found through a certain way of living, relating and using money.¹ In order to understand why the JNC thought there was something ‘wrong’ with the way Lihirians used money - which seemed to obstruct people’s attempts at ‘successful’ entrepreneurial enterprise, accumulation of personal wealth and material possessions, or a ‘higher standard of living’ that resonated with distorted images of Western bourgeois lifestyles - it is necessary to consider Lihirian economic behaviour
and the influences upon these practices. In addition to questions about why Lihirians perpetually failed to enact their economic desires, we might also ask why so many Lihirians were simultaneously cautious, if not antagonistic towards the PV course, yet eager to learn the ‘secrets’ that would help them to achieve their financial goals. Put another way, these are questions concerning why most Lihirians had not yet become ‘afflicted’ by chronic individualism and an endless desire for accumulating an abstract wealth. To answer this we need to consider in more detail the schemes and systems of meaning that allow for the efflorescence of the indigenous economy: those social structures outlined in chapter two. Or to use Bourdieu’s conceptual terms, what are the structures and dispositions, or durable ‘structuring structures’, that shape the practices and beliefs which liberal economists and neo-colonial state officials label ‘backward’ and ‘wasteful’? And what are the processes that enable actors to appropriate aspects of their engagement with capitalism and incorporate these in innovative ways into their networks of exchange?

The pressures of *pasin*

Demas, from Namatanai on mainland New Ireland, worked for the Orica explosives company as a blast technician, a position that carried some level of responsibility. He brought home a reasonably stable income that was among the highest earned in the village. His wife, from Kinami, was a qualified nurse and ran the local Aid Post. Together their combined income enabled them to ‘comfortably’ provide for themselves and their children. Their lives were distinguished from others by the fact that they were both engaged in paid employment. However, their way of life was not marked by the sort of conspicuous consumption enjoyed by ‘landowners’, or even some other villagers who were in more senior positions of employment. They maintained gardens, raised pigs and like so many others, often complained they were short of money. Their double income status placed them among a minority in Lihir (and Papua New Guinea as a whole), and ‘theoretically’ they should have been better placed to purchase some of the ‘bigger’ items they often talked about, such as a television, a generator, a dinghy, a new house, or even a four-wheel-drive vehicle. But to acquire these purchases, or to live a life of greater material luxury, required a certain level of strategic *calculation*, whereby the accumulation
of material wealth within the household was not undermined by social obligations to share wealth outside of the nuclear family.

For example, Demas was often asked to provide financial assistance to various relatives. His resources were often stretched because he had to deal with requests from both sides of his family. His position in Lihirian society was unquestioned: he was married here, had lived here for over fifteen years, and had become significantly involved (and necessarily indebted) in Lihirian customary exchange. This meant he was obliged to assist his Lihirian relatives with money for kastom, or other needs like school fees, food, or trips to the hospital. Additionally he was a source of income and support for his extended family in Namatanai; maternal blood ties ensured he could not refuse their requests for assistance with kastom or other needs. On one occasion he returned from work, angered and frustrated, exclaiming “mi les pinis olgeta!” (I am completely sick of this!). In the space of one day his finances were significantly depleted after receiving requests for money from both consanguinial and affinal kin that he simply could not refuse. I asked him why he gave so much money away, especially when he knew these were not loans that would be ‘repaid’. He replied: Ol i bisnis bilong mi. Emi gutpela pasin tasol, sapos mi no wokim olsem, nogut ol i belhat long mi (They are my relatives. Its just good form, if I didn’t do this, they would be angry towards me).

_Pasin bilong Lihir i pas pinis long mi…_

On another occasion while I was sitting in the men’s house with Bek, one of my adoptive uncles, who happened to receive a regular income through his role as Ward Member, we discussed the difficulty of saving and individual acquisition. He had just given a significant amount of money to one of his in-laws (tambu) who had no other source of income apart from sporadic market sales. He could think of no reason why he should not help his tambu pay his children’s school fees or buy trade store food. This reminded him of the Personal Viability course which he had recently taken. He was in two minds: he wanted to learn the skills that would help him acquire money, but he was somewhat resistant, if not hostile towards what he perceived as ‘anti-Lihirian’ ways and values. His concerns were complex. If he followed these PV ‘rules’ then he might be able to make a profit through a small bisnis venture, but he would be likely to lose favour among others. He told me of the money he often gave to his tambu, and explained how he regularly fed
more than 12 people each day with rice and tin fish. As I probed him with questions on why he felt obliged to use money in this way, and why his few small business ventures had not been successful (despite taking the PV course) he replied with a simple answer: *pasin bilong Lihir i pas pinis long mi* (the ways of Lihir are fixed in me); and with that there was nothing more to add by way of explanation.

**Pigs, porno and men’s houses: develop-sham**

Early in 2004 one of my adoptive aunts who belongs to Alopitien clan, which has a large contingent of ‘landowners’ in Putput, notified us that her clan was building a new men’s house in Putput and that we would be attending the opening feast. On the morning of the feast we were disappointed to find no transport had been sent from Putput to carry us and our food contributions, despite the fact that one of the senior members in this clan owned a small truck, and that other clan members were on the ‘company payroll’, both as wage labourers and recipients of royalties and compensation. Given we were supporting their *kastom* event there was strong expectation that the least they could do was use their (mine derived) resources to bring us to the occasion. When we finally arrived after hiring a local vehicle we found the men’s house deserted as most of the assembled males were already drinking beer on the beach. Several men from our group (who were not ‘landowners’) immediately seized the opportunity to drink some of the money that rarely finds its way back to Kinami.

When the garden food was eventually cooked, supplemented by rice and tin fish, and the pig was ready, the men made their way back to the men’s house in a jovial mood; the smell of cooked pork drew people in. Two very short speeches were made to announce the event, and payment was given to the two men who constructed the men’s house (which was made entirely of iron sheets), neither of whom were from Alopotien clan, nor from Putput. Both of the speakers proudly held their beer aloft, slurring their words, deliberately drawing attention to their ability to purchase and drink alcohol. This was not the grand oratory spectacle one might expect from Lihirian big men during ritual occasions. The food was distributed by youth from Kinami, while Putput youth were conspicuously absent. People from Kinami whispered to me this was now common, as Putput youth no longer know how to follow feasting protocol, which confirmed their (somewhat biased) view that all Putputs do not know how to work.
By nightfall, when all the food was consumed (though there was so little that not all of the women ate as much as the men), most of the males had resumed drinking. Again it was Kinami youths left to clean up. Someone had brought their television set into the men’s house enclosure to screen videos for entertainment. Young children thronged to the men’s house and sat captivated for hours as C-grade action films flickered in the dark. Older males stood on the edges, absorbing it all with a look of casual disinterest that suggested this was all very familiar. Some of these males had planned their own private screening for later in the evening. Pornographic videos which circulate around the island, brought in by National and expatriate employees, are a prized possession. Once the children were satisfied, or asleep, the older males took the TV and video inside the men’s house proper and spent the night drinking and watching foreign porn. Apparently this met with no objection from more senior males. Fuelled by alcohol and rampant libidos, one by one the numbers decreased as young men wandered off to painim goap, to seek out ‘available’ women in the district.

When I arrived back in Kinami, I saw that my aunt was ashamed by the small amount of food that had been provided. Some people were angry about the way the event had been conducted, while others had already resigned themselves to the reality of Putput and simply dismissed things by saying “eni kastom bilong ol Putput…eni no pasin bilong Lihir” (that is the custom of Putput…it is not the Lihirian way). Essentially they had failed to live up to feasting expectations.

**The essential development: Pkepke Putput style**

During a return visit to Lihir in mid 2006, Bruno Minai (a wealthy landowner from Putput, member of the JNC, and Vice Chairman of LMALA – see chapter six) was hosting a large katkatom feast (known as pkepke in this part of Lihir; see chapter eight for a more detailed description of this type of feast). Everyday during the preceding week utilities from around Lihir loaded with drunken males and dinghies travelling back from other islands made their way to Putput to deliver pigs that would be presented and consumed throughout the feast. Several of these pigs had died from exposure; before the kastom had even begun, pig donors were already competing over who had the bigger pig – some interpreted this as showing-off who could afford to let a pig die and then replace it before
On the final and most important day of the feast, over fifty large pigs were presented by allied clans; these pigs were intended to honour the deceased (kanut) for whom the pkepke was being held. Reflective of contemporary Lihirian feasting trends, several of the honoured kanut were still alive. As the pigs were presented many of the male guests became increasingly inebriated; over six pallets of beer had been sold from beer outlets in Putput and the surrounding villages during the previous two weeks. Pigs were typically presented by very lively and drunk groups of men, usually with gifts of garden produce, bales of rice, boxes of tin meat and cartons of beer (see Plate 12); they were met by an equally drunk and excited host group to perform the customary sham fight (see Plate 13) that accompanies the presentation of pigs and dances. After the pigs had been lined up (pasuki) to mark each kanut, and the exchanges of mis and cash for these pigs had been made (ravomatanabual), dance troupes from Malie, Massahet, Mateques, Putput and West New Britain performed throughout the afternoon entertaining the gathered mass.

When a minor drunken fight broke out over sorcery accusations, the day effectively wound down. Nevertheless, with over five hundred guests, approximately 100 pigs slaughtered throughout the fortnight, and an estimated combined expenditure of K60,000 for the entire event, Minai had successfully facilitated an exceptionally large pkepke. In fact, it was perhaps too successful, which meant there was no shortage of criticisms. Again on the way home, it was Kinami residents that keenly observed the deviations from pasin bilong Lihir.

Developing mankind

These vignettes capture the many concerns, constraints, ambiguities, and contradictions found in the ways Lihirians use and conceive of money. They describe situations where people are obliged to give, support, share (and compete). We see this from the perspective of the giver, and from those expecting to receive. These stories reflect judgements made about appropriate conduct; they are manifestations of the particular social and economic structures that endure and continued to influence daily life. In the stories of Demas and Bek, we see the difficulties of ‘breaking away’, or retaining money for personal consumption or strictly for the needs of the very immediate nuclear family.
Plate 12  Guests arriving with (commodity) gifts at Minai’s Pkepke feast, Putput Village

Plate 13  Sham fight between guests and hosts (holding fathoms of mis) at Minai’s Pkepke feast, Putput Village
Plate 14  Dance troupe performing at Minai’s Pkepke, Putput Village

Plate 15  Announcing the arrival of guests with their pigs for contribution; note the aptly drawn ‘backwards’ dollar sign
Their tales are telling of the pressures and obligations that fall on mine workers, or those with access to a regular income, to distribute or share their wealth and resources. In Putput we see similar themes as kin place large expectations on their ‘landowning’ relatives to hold lavish kastom events that conform to certain ideals about correct kastom procedures, and to distribute and use their money through ‘traditional’ channels. These events highlight the different expectations surrounding the performance of kastom. While wealth should be used and distributed through these channels, when there is too much wealth, or too much kastom - or similarly too little - it confronts notions of pasin bilong Lihir. We are also introduced to another common Melanesian scenario, the incorporation of ‘non-local’ items and new forms of prestige into entrenched systems of status and exchange. Underlying this is the more general ideological tension between kastom and bisnis: the rhetorical antagonism between the local ‘moral economy’ and the global capitalist economy (cf. Bloch and Parry, 1989). Ultimately Bek’s comments about the difficulty of adhering to PV rationality - because he is too rooted in local ways and values - reflect an oppositional discourse on Western values and lifestyles.

As these situations attest, Lihirians have well formed ideas about what constitutes pasin bilong Lihir. In relation to the incidents described above, a literal consideration of pasin bilong Lihir would suggest that using money and resources for school fees, acquiring pigs for kastom, buying beer, building permanent men’s houses, financing drunken kastomary celebrations, or purchasing pornography had become ‘the ways of Lihir’. Had I suggested this to any of my Lihirian friends I would have been laughed out of the men’s house. If I mentioned this to my non-Lihirian friends, chances are they would have agreed and thrown in at least another dozen examples. The activities I have described might constitute pasin bilong Lihir in as much as these have become the common behaviour of Lihirian men, but clearly there are some defined boundaries associated with this term; it is the purpose of kastom movements to delineate these limits (see chapter seven).

The concept of pasin bilong Lihir equates with developman. These examples illustrate how Lihirians expect that introduced items and wealth can and should be used to enhance what they already value. This does not mean Lihirians feel that their existence should
parallel the lives of their ancestors (cf. Akin, 2005; Keesing, 1992). Rather their ideas about how they should be living are simultaneously flexible enough to incorporate new items, practices and procedures - attested to by their history of attempted acquisition and incorporation - but also limited by strict notions about what is still Lihirian (albeit an essentialised version). Without doubt contemporary Lihirian culture epitomises the logics and economics of development; the scale and intensity of Lihirian kastom has only increased with mining activities, as cash and commodities (beer, rice and tin fish, cars, trucks, boats, houses and housing materials, televisions and radios etc) have been used in various ways for their purposes. Contrary to popular Western thought, their introduction and use has not meant Lihirians had to adopt the whole cultural package that accompanies money and other useful items, nor has it necessarily set them on an inevitable course of cultural corrosion that will eventually rust out any trace of their ‘traditional’ existence. As Thomas notes, this line of thought reiterates the spurious assumption that “material culture is an index of acculturation” (Thomas, 1991: 186).

In a similar situation, Golub suggests Ipili reactions to the Porgera gold mine can be glossed as a form of “predatory expansion”: the Ipili have “aggressively sought to co-opt and control outsiders in order to gain the experiences that will mitigate unpleasant aboriginal circumstances” (Golub, 2006: 271). Essentially Golub argues that the Ipili have consciously sought to appropriate the life-ways and material cultures of Australian expatriate miners for their own ends. The Ipili have not been passive recipients or victims of change, which can partly be accounted for in cultural terms. Ipili culture has long been understood as syncretic, characterised by an expansive desire to capture foreign novelty, partly a result of their situation in the ‘Papua Borderlands’, “where there has always been a flow of goods, ideas, and people between centres of population” (Golub 2006: 271; see also Biersack, 1995). Even before the advent of mining they ‘welcomed’ outside institutions, such as the Church and the Government, which they successfully used for their own purposes. Golub continues to argue that while Western environmentalists and social activists would like to imagine the Ipili as peaceful custodians of the forest, the mining company and the Government prefer to think of them as savages who are less noble and more “pathologically degraded” (2006: 269). For those Melanesians located in
the higher echelons of power and wealth, the Ipili symbolise the inverse of the ‘civilization’ and ‘development’ that the metropole hopes will result from resource development. As we will see in following chapters, Lihirian responses to mining have yielded similar reactions from the company and State representatives.

The Ipili have perhaps been more successful than Lihirians at turning outside influences and institutions to their needs, most evident in their aggressive engagement with the mining company and the State to ensure a large distribution of mining benefits, their purchase of commercial property in Port Moresby, and their lavish spending sprees that make Lihirian consumption patterns appear conservative. However, there are evident correlations between these two groups. As an obvious disciple of Sahlins, Golub chooses an appropriate selection of articles to make his point. However, what he describes is also a clear instance of Sahlins’ development typology; the Ipili have by no means fully adopted Western ways at the expense of their own cultural practices and beliefs. In their proactive response to mining, the Ipili have not eschewed existing values. Notions of ‘predatory expansion’ resonate with development, and are perhaps equally applicable to Lihir; in their quest for modernity, greater prestige and more equality, Lihirians have latched onto to foreign things that cross their path and used them productively for their own ends. Indeed, both their millenarian dreams of riches and power and the development concepts proposed by the JNC (which I discuss in chapter six) encompass people and institutions beyond Lihirian shores. This similarity reveals an even more important parallel. While Lihirians had a relatively abundant source of wealth at their ‘disposal’, they had not converted this into the ‘civilization’ and ‘development’ that the Government, foreign economists, and Lihirian leaders think should result from this project. In the same way that the Ipili are inclined towards ‘predatory expansion’ Lihirians are equally disposed towards development.

Sahlins asserts that it is actually humiliation that serves as the required catalyst for cultural change, not merely the introduction of goods, money and the system in which they are produced (Sahlins, 1990, 1992; cf. Errington and Gewertz, 2004; Lattas, 1998; Robbins and Wardlow, 2005; Robbins, 2004a). Indigenous peoples must first learn to
hate what they already have and who they already are. By this rationale Lihirians have made some progress, evidenced in the TKA movement and attempts by the JNC to impose Western social and economic values. Generally, however, Lihirians were still miles from any perceived state of modernity: they had not yet experienced the sort of humiliation that Sahlins considers necessary for complete transition from developman to development. If Lihirians were in the advanced stages of developman, that precludes their progression towards total commoditization, then what exactly does this stage entail? Lihirians have encompassed our goods into their system of meaning, but how does this occur and what is this scheme?

Synthesising disjuncture

The project of developman is characterised, above all, by the strategic incorporation of foreign goods and influences into local domains and practices in an attempt to simultaneously look and feel modern while fulfilling ‘traditional’ social obligations. This is best exemplified in the pkepke at Putput. The use of exogenous items in kastom events to further individual and group prestige is one of the most common ways Lihirians spent large quantities of money. These are times when people often unquestioningly contribute amounts they would ordinarily not spend (or claim they do not have). Bruno Minai and his clan members, and the leaders from the Alopotien men’s house, garnered all the modern items typically found in contemporary Melanesia to enhance their position and the memorability of these occasions. The men’s house was constructed from permanent materials, and in both feasts local food was supplemented with trade store goods, modern and traditional entertainment was provided for children and adults, transport enabled more people to come from long distances, and beer was drunk in copious amounts. In the final chapter I will consider a pkepke (katkatop) feast in more ethnographic detail, but what I have described here is emblematic of much contemporary Lahirian kastom. In comparison to more ‘traditional’ forms, more pigs are able to be purchased, more food can be provided (in a more efficient manner than having to wait for crops to mature), more guests can be entertained and things can be organised in a quicker time. The belief
that this is an acceptable, indeed expected way to spend money posed serious difficulties for individual economic pursuit. This was reproduced in the assumption that relatives can be relied upon for financial assistance. Not only does the fulfilment of this expectation drain individual bank accounts, but it can deter people from trying to get ‘too far ahead’.

The ways Lihirians used money could easily be illustrated by other examples. For instance, people often borrowed money from relatives to start a small trade store, only to give away too much credit (which neither party really expected would be paid back) and use the profits from any sales for personal consumption rather than replenishing stock. Insolvency within one week was common. Despite the loss, the relationship between the lender and the ‘proprietor’ was often in no way damaged. Similarly it was not uncommon to see newly purchased four-wheel-drive vehicles ‘borrowed’, driven and crashed (usually under the influence of alcohol) by relatives keen to show off in their piece of metal modernity. Typically the ‘owner’ of the vehicle would say little, accepting that these things happen, and waited until the car could either be repaired or replaced. Failing this, it would sit rusting in their yard, slowly being covered with moss and cobwebs, becoming increasingly entrapped within thick grass and relentless bush vines. Broken cars and failed business remain as monuments to once held abilities to look, act and be modern (Knauft, 2002d: 45; Philibert and Jourdan, 1996). More importantly they represent the possibility that in the future they might again reach this state. Bestowing money upon relatives serves the same purpose; it indicates prestige through access to wealth (not to mention by creating indebtedness). The fact that you could give, signals the possibility for a repeat performance in the future. The events at Putput, and the examples of Bek and Demas’ generosity, reflect those essential qualities of developman. Unlike Marx’s avaricious miser, when available, wealth should be used ostentatiously – it serves no social purpose when it is locked away, invested or used in a guarded manner. In Lihir developman means using money and new resources in generous and ‘prodigal’ ways that enhance those things and relationships that are already valued.

Central to these Putput feasts is a complex internal contradiction between the ways Lihirians (and many other Papua New Guineans) perform and think about kastom.
Despite the discourse of ‘pure’ kastom, Lihirians have an uncanny ability to incorporate outside goods into their ‘traditional’ realm in an attempt to be more like themselves – to make Lihirian kastom bigger and better, and to enhance existing status. In chapter seven I shall take up the issue of kastom in more detail; here I outline features of this concept.

Lihirian kastom discourse is highly permeated by Manichean allegory, comprised of contrasting opposites that help to emphasise the specific meaning of each category. This is a general feature of similar concepts throughout the Pacific where local practices and social values are reified and contrasted against those from the West (see Carrier, 1995a; Jolly, 1982; Kaplan, 1988; Keesing, 1982a, 1992; Lindstrom, 1982; Linnekin and Poyer, 1990; Thomas, 1991); the net result is an ideology that magnifies difference and overlooks articulation. Such all encompassing distinctions are the ‘rice and tin fish’ of Melanesian Occidentalism: kastom is opposed to bisnis, pasin bilong tumbuna is held in contradistinction to pasin bilong waitman, and all whites supposedly treat their family as customers, while everything is always ‘free’ (and distributed without obligation) between Melanesians.

Foster (1992, 1995a) has argued that on the neighbouring island of Tanga people regard kastom as distinct from bisnis (entrepreneurial economic activity). According to Foster the connotations of kastom are wholly dependent upon taxonomic opposition with other “domains of activity” (1995a:25), such as wokmani (wage labour), gavman (government work), lo (the law) and lotu (the church, and Christian religion). During the 1980s the contours of Tangan kastom were the result of struggles over local bisnis in the form of the local copra trade. Bisnis slowly became regarded as the domain of the household, as people began to favour individualised rather than cooperative methods of cash cropping. Big men were not able to maintain control over cash cropping as bisnis slowly led to the atomisation of Tangan society. On the other hand kastom became regarded as the proper domain of big man activity. Kastom belonged to the matrilineal clan and lineage and encapsulated mortuary feasting and ritual exchange, and supposedly formed the sole basis for social reproduction, while bisnis was regarded as a household activity.
Drawing support from Lindstrom (1982: 326) Foster persists with this binary. Tangans evaluate *kastom* and *binis* through moral terms: *kastom* represents balanced reciprocal exchange in long term relationships and *binis* represents the domain of the cash economy, characterised by single isolated transactions that are bounded and presume no continuing rights or obligations between transactors (Gregory, 1982). The antagonistic split between *kastom* and *binis* is the key relationship of the nomenclature that gives *kastom* its meaning. Put otherwise, he asserts that “it is only the emergence of *binis* as a category of lived practice that crystallized the taxonomic definition of Tangan *kastam*” (Foster, 1992: 286). This categorisation is due to a more general perception of the incompatibility between different forms of exchange, and their associated modes of social reproduction. Thus the rise of *kastom* as a separate unit is directly related to the intensification of commodity relations in Tangan society. Although the Lihirian copra industry did not flourish to the same extent as Tanga’s, cash cropping and sporadic establishment of local businesses and opportunities for engagement with the cash economy did assist in the gradual commodification of Lihirian households.

However, it would be fallacious to assume that in Lihir the conceptual distinctions drawn between *kastom* and other “domains”, translates into actual separate “units of activity”. The differences between these categories which inform the values associated with *kastom* are ideological rather than practical. Foster’s emphasis on taxonomic distinction has generated a conflation of ideology and praxis. I will explore this further in Part II where I demonstrate the interaction between *binis* and *kastom*, and the impossibility of insulating one ‘system’ from the other. Lihirians (and many Melanesians) draw a rigid ideological distinction between these ‘domains’. The ‘doctrine’ of *kastom* requires the exclusion of ‘non-local’ items and currencies. However, the difficulty of enacting this is mirrored in the same struggle to retain *binis* as a separate sphere of activity. The inability to implement Western relational and economic practices in their daily lives is deeply entwined with the complexities associated with attempting to segregate *kastom* from the cash economy.
In practice, the conflation of these supposedly separate domains constantly compromised to the pursuit of both. As Thomas has remarked in relation to Fiji and the conceptual contrast between ‘the way of the land’ and ‘the way of money’, when taken too literally these cultural polarities ignore the crucial inter-penetration between the fields of cash cropping and ceremonial activities (Thomas, 1991: 197):

[I]t is arguable, in fact, that the latter energises the former through creating demand for cash and produce. Ironically, the model of dual sectors (traditional and modern, subsistence and capitalist) postulated in much theorization of modernisation, development, and imperialism fails to reflect the actualities of the rural Fijian economy but does correspond at some level with the perceptions among rural people and Fijians generally. (Thomas, 1991: 197)

**Dependent spheres**

In the first chapter I alluded to the ways cash cropping was utilised by certain big men to further their existing positions of power and status. By the late 1960s Ramstad (nd 2) notes that in Kunaye Village cash, and rice and tin fish and other trade store items already featured in *kastom*, and that *mis*, which served as a divisible currency, was used for purchasing goods for different *kastom* transactions. At this time, and later throughout the TKA movement, people were beginning to make distinctions between *bisnis* and *kastom*, but they did not regard introduced goods, cash, or the power associated with their possession, as antithetical to their own lives; their desire for these things was so strong that they did not pause to think it would pose problems for local forms of sociality. People expected they could continue living in the same manner, with lives that revolved around previously institutionalised values, only with the benefit of ‘luxury’ foreign items and more power that would provide the added dimension that they so desperately sought.

Thomas’ observations about the inter-penetration of the capitalist sector and ceremonial activities are pertinent to my analysis of contemporary Lihir. As Scholastica Lendai’s story in the prologue and those in this chapter demonstrate, mining and *kastom* are profoundly enmeshed: people rely upon the money and resources derived through mining
for the performance of all kastomy events, regardless of their size or importance. This ‘energises’ the cash economy; as people use more money to make increased kastom, the demand for cash and resources increases, for both kastom and daily living. Despite the rhetoric of ‘true’ or ‘pure’ kastom, nowhere in the history of Lihir have people attempted to isolate their incomes or access to new goods from their existing system of exchange and prestige.7

Lihirian men are eager to incorporate exogenous goods and styles into kastom to boost their own reputation, and keep kastom contemporary and pleasing to participants. It is through these innovations that men appear to embody a seamless continuity between the past, present and future (cf. Knauf, 1997; Wardlow, 2002). When men strategically appropriate, tame, and ‘indigenise’ or ‘authenticate’ modern goods and non-local forms of wealth through the performance of kastom, they maintain the relevance of kastom in an ‘altered context’. It is through these same ‘deviations’ that males reveal their strength as individuals capable of strong autonomous action which separates them from women and lesser men. Through their ability to host large and successful feasts that incorporate and distribute huge amounts of money, commodities and resources, big men reveal their ‘strength’ and embody the moral values and concerns of the community (cf. Burridge, 1975: 87). Kastom remains central to Lihirian concepts of male and clan status. Unless men leave Lihir, there is little room for them to exist outside of these value constraints. As one man put it:

If you forget about making kastom work and you only work to fill your own pockets, people will say that you are crazy, and that you only know about earning money and that you do not know about kastom work, and if you finish your money work and you want to come back to your own ground, now you will need kastom, it would be no good if people called you a fool. (Alphonse Ama; Lesel Village)

Men who cannot, or choose not to be involved in kastom lack status within the village, regardless of career or monetary wealth. Respect is accorded for different attributes, qualities, and accomplishments, but kastom remains a central trope within the discourse of prestige.
Given that Lihirians do not *practically* isolate *kastom* from *bisnis* (nor do they have any gainful reason to do so) it is pertinent to ask ‘what processes allow for the selective use of certain non-indigenous items in established networks of exchange, and how are these are put to use by local actors?’ Foster (1995a) suggests we need to consider pre-existing modes of production and exchange in order to understand the nature of this articulation. He argues that societies with multiplicative systems of social reproduction manifest in expansive and competitive exchange (such as Highland *moka* and *tee* transactions characterised by incremental giving, see Lederman, 1986; Strathern, 1971) are pre-adapted for the absorption of capitalist enterprise; whereas in societies with replicative systems, such as Tanga, the introduction of commodities into local exchange systems is disruptive to both the material and moral relations they forge. Where commodity relations are utilised by local communities for their own social reproduction, a process analogous to the development paradigm, they are readily incorporated. *Kastom* is not bracketed off from *bisnis*, instead “the requirements of expansive social reproduction seemingly encourage their marriage” (Foster, 1995a: 297).

While expansive exchange systems have most easily incorporated non-indigenous goods, there is no reason that replicative systems of exchange should disqualify the possibility for absorbing outside goods. There are numerous examples that confound Foster’s supposition (see especially, Akin, 1999; Brison, 1999; Mosko, 1999; and Robbins, 1999). Mosko, in particular, takes issue with Foster’s paradigm because his own findings among the Mekeo refute the “easy association of each of these two kinds of pre-existing systems with only one of the two alternatives” (Mosko, 1999: 61). Despite a clear disjuncture between a reified *kastom* and *bisnis*, or *kangakanga* (custom) and *maketsi* (market), this split involves considerable conceptual and practical antagonism (Mosko, 1999: 61). Substitution may not occur on the same scale as Hagen *moka* exchanges, but this does not mean state currencies or introduced goods will not infiltrate or influence local systems of exchange.
When Foster conducted his research in the 1980s it is likely that news of the impending changes in Lihir had not yet reached Tangan shores, but in recent years the effects of the mining project have extended to Tanga, and other places in New Ireland, in important ways. In the surrounding district, local exchange systems have been altered as a result of new Lihirian spending and exchange patterns. The efflorescence of Lihirian *kastom* has increased the demand for pigs and shell money, also inflating the cash value of these prestige items. Tangan pigs, like those in Lihir, now have an unstable character: they are potentially gifts and commodities.

On any given day Tangan dinghies will arrive on Lihirian shores to sell their pigs. These are not always prearranged transactions. Rather, Tangans recognise the opportunity to exploit a flourishing market as the expansion of Lihirian *kastom* demands more pigs than are reared locally (not to mention the Lihirian proclivity for purchasing non-Lihirian pigs that have an additional prestige value associated with the higher purchase and transport costs). Pigs are valuable for their association with *kastom* and social reproduction, but also because they can fetch a monetary value in excess of 2000 kina. People from other areas have complained of the internal disruption this has brought to local exchange relations. People are disinclined to trade pigs within their own communities or established networks, unless people are willing to match the price paid by Lihirians. In the absence of other avenues for making money pigs are an important source of cash – which is redirected back into other local exchange systems. Effectively the commoditization of pigs for Lihirian *kastom* exchanges has become the means of other communities’ engagement with the cash economy and modern consumption.

The persistence of ‘traditional’ exchange is less a consequence of any attempts by different groups to isolate these practices from outside influence, and more a result of the inherent flexibility and general capacity of Melanesian systems to appropriate introduced goods. As Macintyre has noted in her historically grounded analysis of the traders of Tubetube, the continuity of *kune* (the Bwanabwana term for the *kula* trade) was “contingent upon economic transformations and adjustments and no single island has been insulated from change” (Macintyre, 1983: 355). Similarly in Lihir no aspect of
exchange functions independently of the capitalist sector, especially as commodities are systematically put to the service of local modes of producing sociality. Bales of rice and cartons of tin fish are almost always included in *kastom* events as ‘gifts’ from different guests and allies, and increasingly yams and mami (the staple of *kastom*) are purchased at the market as commodities and given as gifts, maintaining the illusion of customary continuity. Hosts keep a close record of what has been given and what ‘commodity gift debts’ they have now incurred.

Of course it must be recognised that, “assertions of indigenous agency which merely mirror the thesis of overdetermination by the world system cannot deal with the very different capacities of some indigenous exchange systems and polities to manage or seize upon the potential of foreign contact” (Thomas, 1991: 119). The specificity of particular exchange systems must enter discussions of change, again highlighting the fact that Foster’s observations – that reflect the conjuncture of local particularities and historical circumstances – cannot be applied across Melanesia. Any consideration of Melanesian exchange should be situated in the long history of incorporation, adaptation, and reformulation that has occurred in both pre-contact and post-contact exchange regimes. The *bisnis / kastom* dichotomy does little more than reproduce “numbingly familiar and dogmatic propositions extracted from Mauss” (Thomas, 1991: 33) that ignore important differences and variables in ‘traditional’ exchange (cf. Sahlins, 1974: Ch 5). In light of Foster’s analysis that “reiterates this to the point of canonization” (Thomas, 1991: 33) it is fruitful to consider Gell’s (1999) heterodox conclusions about the close relationship between barter (commodity) and reproductive (ceremonial) exchanges in Old (pre-contact) Melanesia. If, as he proposes, barter really does provide the ‘template’ for ceremonial exchange, then perhaps contemporary Lihirian exchange is as traditional as it ever was.

**Virtuous sociality and other Lihirian fantasies**

If the practices of those people from Putput were the expression of their own agency as they performed what they considered a ‘better’ version of what they already had, why
were people from Kinami so dismayed and disappointed with their efforts? Why were these instances so confronting? Similarly, why did Bek and Demas not refuse to give financial assistance, that is, to use their (hard earned) money (as opposed to ‘easily obtained’ winmoni) in a particular and expected way? What I am asking is, from where do these dispositions arise, such as the compulsion to give, the unquestioned sense of responsibility, and the belief that acceptable norms have been either transgressed or not met (the limits of development)?

The opening of the new men’s house and Bruno Minai’s pkepke reflect the mixture of concerns Lihirians hold about kastomary events and the waning significance of the men’s house and its associated ethos. These occasions quite obviously failed to maintain some people’s standards for correct kastom procedure. They capture the ways Putputs both succeed and fail at the development project. The hosts would doubtless claim these were valid events; pigs were killed, money was spent, people came together and ate. For the Alopotien leaders this event was a success because the inauguration of the new structure was consummated as the smoke from the burning pigs impregnated the edifice. For Minai and his clan members, the most important aspect of the feast was successfully fulfilled: many pigs were lined up in front of the men’s house to show respect and honour to the various kanut for whom the event was held.

But the reactions some people had to this occasion suggested otherwise. People were concerned that the men’s house was no longer the sacred ground of big men where they nurture, discipline and teach younger males. Some were angered by the fact that drinking has become a fully integrated aspect of Lihirian kastom. While others, who are more committed to the discourse of pasin bilong Lihir, rejected Minai’s feast because it was too excessive: the high number of pigs purchased off-shore, the presentation of trade store goods, the drunken celebrations, and the inclusion of dancing were all heavily criticised. Traditionally dancing only occurred in karat feasts; only the mournful yiarngen songs would be sung during the evening of the pkepke feast. For some, the energised festivities of this style of pkepke detract from the sobriety of the event, making it difficult to distinguish from a karat (see Plate 14). But the most damning critique came from those
who boycotted the event because they felt it was sponsored by mining royalties. Accordingly this *kastom* represented the arbitrary distribution of wealth rather than the actual ‘strength’ of the clan or the actual hosts. They argued that money used to make *kastom* for senior clan members was only available because of the hard work and *kastom* feasts previously made by these same senior clan members being honoured that secured ownership of the very ground within the SML that provides the wealth of younger clan members like Minai.

These responses are elicited by a combination of two factors: enduring kinship and social expectations, and historical experiences and circumstances. The structures of kinship, men’s house affiliation and its related ethos, and the values inscribed in feasting and exchange shape many of the possibilities for Lihirian social practice. These social structures do not determine what people will do or choices they will make, but they do largely set the points of reference for Lihirian sociality. Additionally, the changes (perceived and real) that have occurred over the duration of the mining project have altered people’s perceptions of the past in ways that profoundly impact upon their daily lives in the present.

At the heart of these incidents about sharing, reciprocity, social obligation, *kastom*, disappointment and frustration, is an idealization of the past and the social relationships entailed in this time. Lihirian economic practices (and people’s reactions) are strongly influenced by ideas about what *ought* to occur. The discourses of *kastom* and *pasin bilong Lihir* (which include rhetorical ‘opposition’ to capitalist relations) both draw upon idealized recollections of past sociality. The combination of the particular social structures that constitute Lihirian society and a reified sense of prior social cohesion and morality effectively compel Lihirians to be more ‘traditional’ than ever before. I am not suggesting there is something so specific about Lihirian social structures that inevitably disposes people towards ‘irrational’ economic practice. Similarly I am not arguing that these structures *sui generis* make Lihir a complicated site for economic development. Lihirians feel obliged to offer hospitality but they do not have the social flexibility characteristic of areas like the Porgera Valley that makes it particularly difficult to
establish individual claims to ownership. This is especially expressed in Porgeran notions of *epo atene* (an Ipili verb construction meaning ‘come and stand’ [Golub, 2005: 347], otherwise understood as a guest/host relationship), which includes both kith and kin; guests may reside on land at the sufferance of the host who grants rights of usufruct and sojourn (Biersack, 1999: 267). This also means a person can reside or garden in any area provided they have permission of the landowner, creating implications for compensation and expectation for relocation housing. While to an extent ensuring distribution and inclusion, this system is complicit in the influx of migrant Engans who are eager to share in mine related wealth and services, creating ‘landowner’ desire for exclusive, or at least priority access to these benefits.

*A slight matter of scale*

Alternatively, Finney has argued that some Melanesian groups are ‘pre-adapted’ to capitalism (1973). There is merit in this position, however his argument is tautological; essentially he argues that Gorokans were good capitalists because they exhibited the qualities of successful entrepreneurs in their cash cropping endeavours. Aside from this criticism it is worth noting that certain exchange systems more easily lend themselves to incorporation and adaptation than others. Certainly the pre-existence of a divisible shell currency enabled the Tolai to more readily grasp the logic behind state currencies (see Counts and Counts, 1971; Epstein, 1968; Salisbury, 1970). The divisibility of Lihirian *mis* provided similar results, although other structural factors prevented them from realizing comparable levels of economic development.

According to Finney, without the combination of favourable social, political, and economic structures and a positive colonial experience, Gorokans might well have remained on the periphery of the cash economy and looked to cargo cult activities to achieve economic progress (1973: 125). Lihirians turned their hand to more esoteric means of wealth production, partly as a response to their particular colonial experience, but this alone does not account for contemporary economic practices. Essentially Finney claims “Gorokans already had their own analogue of the spirit of capitalism and needed
only linkage with the cash economy to express it” (1973: 122). By this rationale, either Lihirians lack the requisite ‘spirit’, or mining has not provided a suitable stimulus.

However, the incorporation of agricultural production entails the mastery and extension of primary subsistence activities, whereas mining introduces industrialisation instantly and on a grand scale. In a matter of years Lihirians have been confronted with a range of significant changes to their lives, including the dramatic transformation of the landscape through mining activities and the establishment of modern infrastructures that support these operations; the introduction of industrial wage labour relations; the massive influx of foreign workers, as well as the marked shift towards modern technologies and techniques. Coupled with the pace of economic change and the fact that most Lihirians are typically restricted from participating, or even observing financial and contractual arrangements, so that such processes remain ‘invisible’ or mysterious, this means their engagement with capitalism has occurred on a wholly different scale to most other Melanesians.

There is little evidence to suggest that Lihirians are predisposed to either reject or embrace capitalism. Any inability to capitalise on ‘their moment’, is not because Lihirians are maladapted, but rather because particular historical circumstances and the scale and speed with which industrialisation has been introduced has resulted in spatiotemporal disjuncture. This has led to the idealization of certain aspects of their culture which frustrate their attempts at successful enterprise. It is to these social structures I now turn in order to understand from where these fantasies of virtuous sociality arise.

**Idealized solidarity and metonyms of *kastom***

In chapter two I detailed some of those social structures and institutions that Lihirians once considered axiomatic. Despite challenges from alternative options and forms of sociality, these kinship relations, leadership styles, forms of exchange and social
reproduction and arenas for a particular sociality continued to provide the framework for their world view. Lihirian notions of sociality draw upon received ideas of solidarity, generosity and ‘equality’. There are certain relationships, such as those between cross-cousins (pelkong) and maternal uncles (motung) that have greater purchase on claims for assistance and the obligation to give. Previously all relationship categories were characterised by some form of behavioural ‘rule’ or expectation; failure to comply with these ‘rules’ was judged as a breach of kinship protocol. Not all relationships entailed the same level of obligation. However, in changed circumstances Lihirians often equate those relationships characterised by the unquestioned obligation to give as the template for all relationships, or pasin bilong Lihir.

Relationships between cross-cousins and between men and their sister’s children have assumed greater salience. The expectation for maternal uncles to share their wealth and provide nurturance for their nieces and nephews is amplified by the trend towards passing wealth and support from fathers to sons and daughters. Consequently failure to maintain these inheritance patterns has resulted in the emergence of a disenfranchised generation of young men (cf. Filer, 1990; Gerritsen and Macintyre, 1991). Additionally, the implicit expectation that pelkong will unfailingly answer the call for assistance seriously problematises any attempts at individual wealth accumulation.

Male pelkong and female potsung (same sex cross-cousin) relations that are characterized by mutuality and reciprocal obligation have come to epitomize the ideal relationship. This has become the standard for all social relations in an idealized system, so that any lapse in fulfillment of obligations between kin is seen as a contravention of pasin bilong Lihir. The combination of the flexibility of groups and the general idealization of all Lihirian relationships, kinship categories and the supposed morality of these associations, disposes people towards certain practices and beliefs. Such veneration does not mean Lihirians will always share or distribute their wealth in an equal fashion. But when this does not occur, Lihirians invariably feel that people have contravened expected norms, or failed to live up to pasin bilong Lihir. For example, the stories of Bek and Demas are offset by the experiences and disappointments at Putput.
The Lihirian concept of ber turan (which can be translated as ‘a group of friends’, but is also used as an expression of moral commitment, as in ‘we are all friends’) captures the sentiments of this new reified sociality. Hemer notes that in Lihir there are no abstract nouns for ‘friendship’; terms are applied to people not the relationship between them: a friend a truan, my friend a trong, your friend a tro, two friends lo truan, a group of friends ber turan (Hemer, 2001: 35). However, collective terms like ber turan implicitly contain connotations of virtuous sociality. Kin terms and categories do not always determine how people will relate, but there is an increasing expectation (and disappointment when it does not occur) that the exalted notion of ber turan should be a determining factor in all relationships.

The fluidity of group membership and access to resources within other groups is both challenged and maintained by the claims for new economic resources and the necessity for distribution. The gradual ‘entification’ of the clan has simultaneously closed the boundaries of these groups whilst providing a heightened sense of inclusion for members, resulting in an increased expectation that wealth and resources will be shared. These ideas typically distort the image of the benevolent big man who maintained the welfare of his followers by positing a ‘law’ of equitable distribution.

Similarly notions of group equality are bolstered by the belief that traditional exchange is the basis for the distribution of clan wealth. While exchange functioned as a levelling device in the past, providing an important avenue for dispersing wealth and resources and consolidating membership, the form and scale have since increased. The exchange system previously entailed an ebb and flow so that wealth and prestige was somewhat ‘regulated’ by human productivity. The huge influx of money (particularly when it arrives in the form of winmoni) destabilises the cyclical nature of exchange as exchange wealth follows an upward trajectory within the hands of a minority. Inequitable distribution of money means there is no equilibriy underpinning exchange. Additionally, monetary wealth is also influenced by global factors beyond Lihirian control; royalty payments depend on the level of gold production and the price of gold in the international
market. The scale, form, and lack of control that Lihirians exert over their economy have resulted in a level of inequality that can no longer be levelled through traditional means.

Simultaneously the fluidity of this system has allowed it to perdure in such an altered milieu. As long as land transactions, wealth inheritance, leadership succession, and prestige require the performance of kastom, and death remains a socially significant event that engenders feelings of indebtedness, Lihirians will continue to employ new found foreign wealth to obtain their own ends of human relatedness. Kastom may be overwhelmed by mining wealth, but Lihirians still feel bound by obligation to honour deceased clan members, and nurture other groups and maintain core social values.

It is not just relationships that are reified. The men’s house has become the most essentilialised aspect of Lihirian culture, reflecting the spectrum of values implicit in notions of virtuous sociality. In his inimical style Wagner describes Barok men’s houses (taun) as the “icon of containment”. The similarities between Barok and Lihirian culture make this an apt description for Lihirian men’s houses:

The taun is essential as the visual matrix of meaning for the feast [in this case the ararum feast which is very similar to the Lihirian rarhum] – not only its setting, but also its icon; not only its container, but also the container of the previously interred dead (the “ancestors”) and the pigs’ jaws and other carefully preserved relics of previous feasts that lend the weight of precedent and authority to the occasion. (Wagner, 1986: 146)

The metaphorical and practical association between kastom (as culture and discourse) and these institutional structures, means we may also understand Lihirian men’s houses as the icon of kastom or pasin bilong Lihir. They continue to function as the condensed symbolic icons of morality and social cohesion, and the matrix of relationships confirmed in the processes of exchange and distribution of various forms of wealth. The men’s house is redolent with meaning as a physical structure that contains socially important transactions and as a metonym of a glorified Lihirian sociality; it is for these reasons that the ‘failures’ and ‘successes’ of the Putputs were seen as alien and affronting.
Baffled logics

The problematic outcomes associated with changes in the scale and form of capitalism reveal some aspects of the tension between structure and individual agency. Lihirian engagement with capitalism has been characterised by an insistence on autonomy and agency. Their marginal position to the international flow of capital and goods no doubt meant that historically they would have felt their agency was severely constrained by outside forces. This would have been exacerbated by their inability to actively consume or appropriate modern goods or benefit from capitalism to the extent that they would have liked. Nevertheless, this has not subtracted from their ability to purposefully utilize their involvement with the capitalist sector (however minimal this might be on occasions) for their own social and political needs. The incorporation of exogenous goods and new forms of currency into local spheres of exchange illustrates that Lihirians were not simply puppets of the world system, nor were their actions totally determined by local social structures and conventions. Since initial encounters with capitalism, the traditional ‘sphere’ of exchange has been continuously spliced by the use of money and commodities. The synthesis of kastom and bisnis (if they were ever actually separate domains) in order to expand existing forms of sociality is the leitmotif of this indigenous agency.

Even though Sahlins does not often use the term developman, it does encapsulate his general framework for analysing particular cultural configurations. For instance, in ‘Cosmologies of Capitalism’ (2005d), he demonstrates how the agency of indigenous people – an agency which they exercised in the project of developman – decisively influenced the development of the world system rather than capitulating before it. According to the logics of developman people always remain active agents, pursuing their own ends even during times of rapid change spurred on by their encounter with Western institutions. However, it must be noted that in the process of making their world meaningful, people are continuously influenced by existing structures and ideologies, while simultaneously reinforcing and altering these configurations through daily practice. These structural and ontological factors provide the basis for assessing the ‘success’ of
individual and group action; in Lihir this ultimately means whether or not they comply with notions of *pasin bilong Lihir*.

Sahlin’s *developman* contrast is analogous to other all encompassing distinctions so common to anthropological theory, such as Orientalism and Occidentalism, gift and commodity societies, and Melanesian and Western personhood. Likewise, the criticisms directed at these theoretical distinctions may be applied to Sahlin’s contrast with comparable relevance. Lihirians have come to exist (uneasily) between *developman* and development. They continuously negotiate these two ‘ideals’ in their daily lives as they look for ways to transcend this binary opposition. In this instance, perhaps it is useful to return to Bourdieu’s notion of habitus that can be understood as the ‘embodiment of history’ manifest in the practices of various agents. It is a conceptual apparatus that is specifically intended to overcome the most pervasive dualisms within the social sciences: objectivism and subjectivism. As a bridging exercise it has considerable merit however, there is no shortage of commentators left unconvinced that Bourdieu actually achieves his theoretical goals. His ideas have often been criticised as analogous to Talcott Parson’s structural functionalism, another form of determinism, mechanistic conformism, or simply lacking a causal mechanism that links practice with the habitus (see Connell, 1983; Elster, 1983; Jenkins, 1992). Notwithstanding these criticisms, the idea of the habitus is useful for understanding why Lihirians continually fail to act according to certain economic patterns, or why it is that so many seem predisposed towards *developman*, and not development. Indeed, Bek’s comment about the bodily fixation of *pasin bilong Lihir* confirms Bourdieu’s notion of habitus; and in Sahlin’s formulation for cultural change, he is just not yet humiliated enough.

Ideas about the ‘ways of Lihir’ are guided by inherited cultural orientations but also influenced by desires for modernity: *developman* is the conscious attempt to manage a meaningful combination. Local notions of kinship, the institution of men’s houses, and the exchange of wealth between people and groups and the social values inscribed in these structures and conventions, set many of the coordinates for sociality and a world view. In the context of change these factors have gained increased efficacy; as more
Lihirians act in ways perceived contrary to the supposed status quo, the expected and accepted norms, it reinforces the idea that pre-existing forms of sociality are ‘correct’ and that new practices, or deviations, are potentially damaging to social stability. Over the years this essentialised traditionalism has gained considerable inertia partly explaining why Westernization has not occurred in toto. More importantly, notions of *pasin bilong Lihir* overlook the traditionally relevant social distances between people and its relationship to the gradations of sociability historically contained in economic activities (Sahlins, 1974: 191). Contemporary economic practice is thus measured against idealised forms of reciprocity and kinship; in such contexts “gift-giving becomes the bearer of a utopia (a utopia which can be projected into the past as well as the future)” (Godelier, 1999: 208).

The logics of development concurrently rely upon, and reinforce, a heightened traditionalism and reified morality that is also the source of disappointment, frustration and cultural despair. Complaints that *kastom* is losing its meaning, that it is not performed correctly, and that the general moral fibre of the community has been steadily unravelled, are partly motivated by, and directed at, events like the ones that took place in Putput. Of course increasing stratification, the demise of men’s house ethos, the fighting over resources, and ‘law and order’ problems associated with migrants and development in general are also relevant to this perceived loss of meaning. The rhetoric of cultural disintegration is driven by comparisons with an idyllic past - an ‘invented history’ if you like - where *kastom* was always ‘successful’, there was always enough pigs, guests were always satisfied, people never subverted the ‘rules’ or the ‘system’ for their own gain, politics never came between groups or individuals, leaders were benevolent and generous, and prodigality was unheard of, or if it occurred everyone benefited (cf. Filer, 1990: 9; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983; Keesing and Tonkinson, 1982).

Since the beginning of the mining project Lihirians have worried about the deleterious effects of development and the probable changes they would encounter. Lihirians fear inequality and are critical of a politico-economic system that perpetuates incommensurable difference. This is not because they recognise an inherent flaw in
capitalism, it is just that many Lihirians have come to realise that such a system does not serve everyone’s interests. Like the Ipili, Lihirians “do not denounce consumer society in the name of a pristine, authentic primitivism, they denounce it for failing to make good on its promises” (Golub, 2006: 288). The problem is not mining royalties or wage labour, but merely the fact that there is not enough of either.

The emergence of inequality and the corresponding alarm over social and moral decay that I discussed in chapter three were primary motivations for both the Society Reform programme and the later ‘Destiny Plan’ (both of which I consider in more detail in chapter six). The staunch belief that customary modes of wealth allocation can adequately distribute the sort of wealth generated through mining is the result of this cumulatively amplified neo-traditionalism. Lihirians have been left baffled as to why this conviction proved tragically false. This is a familiar story throughout all of Melanesia’s resource development projects, where unprecedented amounts of cash and resources injected into communities routinely undermine even the most flexible social systems of leadership and distribution. However, as I have already mentioned, the problem may well be the simple absence of a custom that prescribes the proper way to redistribute rent (Filer, 1990: 12). Yet despite this absence, and the persistent failure of existing forms of wealth distribution, Lihirians remain convinced that kastom is the true ‘road’ that will lead them (back) to a state of equality, but one where they are all equally rich.

Returning to my original questions about the influences on Lihirian economic practices, it is clear that elementary Western economic practices such as earning a wage, saving, using credit, refusing credit, or even investing (in business, property, materials, or other money making ventures), should not be seen as axiomatic. These so-called ‘rational’ economic practices are the result of particular historical conditions. Quite simply, we possess “deeply embedded presuppositions which make us perceive the economic conducts current in our own economic world as self-evident, natural and necessary, and therefore rational” (Bourdieu, 2000: 23). Moreover,
everything that the science of economics takes as a given, that is to say, the ensemble of
dispositions of the economic agent which underpin the illusion of the ahistorical
universality of the categories and concepts that this science uses, is in fact the product of
a long collective history, and it has to be acquired in the course of individual history, in
and through a labour of conversion which can only succeed in certain conditions.
(Bourdieu, 2000: 25)

If we necessarily recognise that Western economic dispositions are the product of a
particular “collective history” then the same equally applies to Lihir. Their economic
practices are the product of their particular history, the processes which have unfolded
throughout this time, and the structuring principles which have influenced their daily
relations and practices. The logics and economics of developman conform to ideas about
pasin bilong Lihir; the kind of developman acts that people perform might not necessarily
be considered true kastom (by strict Lihirian definitions), but they are regarded as
appropriate, necessary, logical and ‘rational’, and therefore inherently good. When
Demas and Bek gave their money away to their relatives to help with kastom events and
daily living expenses, they were acting in ways that accord with the logics of
developman. Money was being used to enhance their ideas about virtuous sociality: it
strengthened, maintained and confirmed relationships and furthered the processes of
social reproduction through collectively valued kastom events. Conversely, the events
that transpired in Putput confronted some people’s ideas about how money and resources
should be used and how people should behave during events that are regarded as
‘traditional’ or kastomary.

Mining has not caused a ‘confrontation’ between a pre-capitalist politico-economic
system and capitalist political and economic values and practices. This characterisation
oversimplifies the changes that have occurred in Lihir prior to mining operations.
Lihirians are not new to capitalism, nor are they resistant to the goods and commodities
that are produced within this arrangement. Indeed it has been their aim for some time to
be equal players within this world system. The situation in Lihir does not represent the
simple clash of ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’, or the collision of a simple and ‘primitive’
economy and an expansive and complex Western capitalist system. Rather, as I have
illustrated, Lihirians have selectively appropriated and utilized certain aspects of their engagement with capitalism for their own needs. Thus, for many Lihirians the economics and logic of development appears self-evident, natural and necessary, and therefore rational.
In many respects this is the basis of criticisms directed at the TKA movement and ‘cargo’ philosophies more generally. However here I am less concerned with the ontological quandaries surrounding the origins of wealth and material items, and more with daily economic practices. Given that only a minority of Lihirians continued to firmly hold TKA beliefs (notwithstanding the fact that these beliefs remained influential, as I will discuss in chapter six), it seems that in Lihir, general economic patterns can be less readily accounted for by cosmological explanations.

The vernacular term for in-law is *poas*, however most Lihirians use the Tok Pisin term *tambu*.

There are approximately 120 cartons per pallet. In 2006 one carton of beer (24 bottles) cost approximately 140 kina from local beer outlets in Lihir.

On numerous occasions I heard people from Tanga and Namatanai area, and various Highlands districts, describe Lihirians as ‘backward’ and ‘wasteful’. This was often in response to the excessive consumption of beer and other commodities and the limited number of Lihirians who had established successful businesses and agricultural enterprises (or even regular market sales) with the opportunities presented through mining. Some blamed Lihirian preoccupation with *kastom*, while others suggested that ‘deficiencies’ were the enduring result of the cargo cult. The fact that Lihirians have become known for excessive consumption does not help their case. Stories (now akin to ‘urban myths’) regularly circulate around the Kavieng market, describing Lihirians who make minor purchases with bills of high denomination and tell the seller to keep the change. However, Lihirian forms of conspicuous consumption have no means reached the excessive heights displayed by Porgeran landowners (see Golub, 2005).

Another story about Lihirian consumption was relayed by a man from Mendi (Highlands) who sold produce at the Lihir market. He once remarked that while his people made their money from coffee, Lihirians spent their money on Milo (chocolate flavoured powdered milk drink). His point was to highlight an economy based on consumption of international goods compared to one based on production of goods for an international market.


I use the word ideology in the Marxist sense: *kastom* is a reification of social relations, not the mis-representation of things.

In chapters five and six I discuss the ways that the JNC based their plans for economic reformation on the (untenable) separation of these realms. In chapter seven I shall discuss their attempts to codify *kastom*.

People travel from all of the surrounding islands to sell pigs and market produce in Lihir. Being situated on the east coast of Lihir meant that I witnessed more Tangan dinghies arrive than from Tabar. I use the example of Tanga as it specifically relates to my argument against Foster.

Similarly, the institution of marriage within Porgera creates ‘roads’ and ‘bridges’ between lines, idioms that reflect physical movement through marriage, and the network of relational connections. The cognatic rule, which guarantees that all lines will intersect, is in stark contrast to unilineal systems; consequently there are no discrete, mutually exclusive groups in Ipili society (Biersack 1999: 263).

It is possible that we can understand some of the antagonism towards various aspects of capitalism, and the PV course and the ‘Destiny Plan’ that the JNC intended to impose on the entire community, as a result of what Bourdieu describes as the ‘hysteresis effect’, where “practices are always liable to incur negative sanctions when the environment with which they are actually confronted is too distant from that to which they are objectively fitted” (Bourdieu, 1977: 80).
Part II
Chapter Five

Imbibing possessive individualism

Instead of man being the aim of production, production has become the aim of man, and wealth the aim of production. (Taussig, 1980: 32)

In the previous section I illustrated the history and escalation of desire and inequality that produced various political movements that sought material wealth and moral equality. Although Lihir had become stratified, this was not according to the dominant Marxist paradigm. The peculiar nature of large-scale economic resource development ensures wealth is arbitrarily distributed to a minority of people according to their relationship to certain tracts of land. A minority of people have capitalised on business opportunities and only a limited number have gained formal employment. However, overlapping interests, enduring social structures, values and institutions tend to undercut ‘class’ developments. ‘Economic progress’ has been shaped and directed by a history of marginalization, millennial beliefs, persistent hopes and desires, perduring structures, the discourse of kastom and notions of pasin bilong Lihir. It is in this context that the Personal Viability (PV) course was introduced to Lihir in an effort to hasten the transition from development to development.

In addition to this cumulative scenario, in 2003 Lihirians were again captivated by the liberating potential of winmoni as they prepared to receive their first ‘equity’ payments. Essentially when the company had begun to make a profit they could begin to release equity payments to shareholders.¹ As part of the IBP arrangement Lihirians received a certain portion of shares in the company. But after the initial boom period when the first compensation and royalty payments were injected into select parts the community, boosting expectations across the entire community, many sank into disillusionment as they gradually realised the iniquity of these new changes and that not everyone was
When it was finally announced in 2003 that the first equity payments would be released this rekindled expectations and soon many believed equity was the new economic salvation.

At the same time the JNC were struggling to conclude the renegotiation of the IBP agreement. They wanted to maximise the opportunities for economic development and ensure that unfilled promises (and expectations) for development from the first five years of the project were satisfied. It was planned that the IBP would be reviewed every five years. The first review began in 2000; by 2003 the JNC admitted they were “lost” and searching for ways to conclude the review and reach a satisfactory agreement that would deliver lasting benefits to the community – or rather maximum financial input from the company. The PV course completely revolutionised the JNC and their approach to the IBP. In the following chapter I consider in some detail their plans for economic development (the ‘Destiny Plan’) that arose as a result of the influential philosophies of the PV course and the platform created by the IBP review. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the themes of the PV course and to lay the foundation for an analysis of the ‘Destiny Plan’. For the JNC the PV course has been the Bible of economic progress. They were convinced the only way to achieve development was through the total implementation of the PV course: as they argued, “all Lihirians must become PV literate”.

The PV course was founded by Samuel Tam, a Papua New Guinean-born Chinese businessman. After watching the steady economic decline of the nation since Independence, he envisioned that Papua New Guinea might achieve self reliance and financial independence by transforming its citizens from grass roots subsistence farmers bound by a world of *kastom* and parochial economies, into self sufficient entrepreneurial capitalists, active in a national if not global market.

With its strong emphasis on personal development and entrepreneurialism, PV is ultimately an introduction to the assumptions of what C.B. Macpherson famously dubbed “possessive individualism”. What Tam and the JNC sought to foster in each Lihirian and
throughout Papua New Guinea as a whole, reflects Hobbes’ “self-moving, appetitive possessive individual, and the model of society as a series of market relations between these individuals” (Macpherson, 1989: 265). However, in this context it would be equally apt to consider possessive individualism with a more literal translation - as a concept pertaining to individuals interested in the attainment and autonomous possession of material wealth. This was the motivation for most Lihirians who enrolled in the PV course. The popularity of PV was largely contingent upon the pre-existing appeal of bisnis as a vaguely understood but desired form of modern economic pursuit. The realization of some form of wealth or profit through adherence to PV teaching has usually been enough to ensure continued allegiance to Tam’s philosophies. The various ways Lihirians responded to PV captures their engagement with introduced institutions, practices and values, highlighting the continuity of ritual activity, expectations for instantaneous wealth, and the constant construction of antagonism to the past and different forms of sociality.

New standards for reasonable accomplishment

The central ideology of PV is based on the modernist claim that anyone can gain access to a certain quality of life if they are willing to work hard enough and accept the supposed morality of capitalist doctrine. Essentially PV promotes “a capitalism that presents itself as a gospel of salvation; a capitalism that, if rightly harnessed, is invested with the capacity to wholly transform the universe of the marginalized and disempowered” (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2001: 2). Participants are taught that not only is individual accumulation practically feasible, but also morally justified when it is achieved through honest and assiduous work. Indeed, PV asserts that not only does everyone have the opportunity to attain a desired life of comfortable consumption, but that it is their right and obligation to do so. Failure to comply suggests laziness, backwardness, and faith in the ‘irrational’ logic of cargo discourse.
Tam’s PV course supported a wider programme for economic and social reform. Generating a nation of entrepreneurs would be dependent upon the creation of a bureaucratic and institutional framework to support them. The PV course was part of the larger programme from his Entrepreneurial Development Training Centre (EDCT) organisation based in Port Moresby that would act as the administrative body for national change. Within the EDTC there were various PV courses, ranging from the entry or ‘village’ level courses to more advanced business courses offered to people who are already “PV literate”. His plans also included the establishment of a national Grassroots Bank (Grassroots Bank) to act as a national microfinance institution for PV members; the establishment of the Grassroots University (Grassroots University) which would have centres around the country, teaching PV and other related courses, and act as bureaucratic hubs for the administration of PV related programmes; to start the National Housing Scheme, whereby people trade resources, mostly timber, to build permanent houses; and build the National Distribution Centre in Lae City, that would provide the market for the sale and purchase of PV goods and services. Tam expected communities around the nation to buy into this plan by purchasing franchise companies that operate underneath the central EDTC organisation. These franchise companies, called Grassroots Pawa Mekim Kamap Limited (enabling the power of the grass roots), which include their own branches of the Grassroots Yuniversiti, Grassroots Benk, and Tam’s system of bureaucratic hierarchy, were designed to apply the total PV package in different areas to create a nation of entrepreneurs linked within his model.

This national plan hinged upon a complex grading system for PV followers whereby ‘PV grades’ or ranks are achieved by completing various levels of the PV course and the measuring individual achievement in entrepreneurial endeavour and other facets of people’s lives such as their ability to meet obligations in kastom, church leadership or ‘family management’. According to Tam (and the JNC), course completion and entrepreneurial achievements would officially determine individual “class”, that would supposedly motivate further individual economic and political ascension. The attainment of a bronze, silver, or gold ranking would objectify social and economic status and
determine how much money PV members would be able to borrow from the Grassroots Bank (when or if it is established).

At this stage it is important to note that the development plans devised by the JNC (the ‘Destiny Plan’) which I discuss further in the next chapter, were wholly integrated with Tam’s development scheme. The JNC had been working with Tam for several years and as Tam developed his programme the JNC were simultaneously devising their own. More importantly, the JNC had become totally convinced that what Tam was offering was the only way to develop Lihir, and that the concurrent development of Papua New Guinea under this schema, was not only beneficial and necessary for Lihirian economic development - to provide a market for Lihirian products - but that national development through Tam’s EDTC would be dependent upon Lihir leading the way, which partly accounts for their firm commitment to the PV course and its associated ideals. Although PV was designed to expose the ‘irrational’ aspects of cargo desire, the JNC’s conceptual plans fed back into earlier prophesies for a new world order led by Lihir.

_A shining example_

Born of Chinese parentage in Rabaul, Tam was a reserved man, suspicious of expatriates, and highly determined to witness change in Papua New Guinea (see Nalu, 2006; and Unage, 2006). He was highly educated, experienced in corporate business and state politics, and he was affectionately known to PV followers as ‘papa Sam’. PV courses were taught by ‘trained teachers’ certified by Tam’s EDTC, working as faithful disciples to spread the good news of his modernist doctrine. Course participants were told various renditions of Tam’s rags to riches experience.³ The story of a businessman of migrant origins, with few familial ties, values wholly derived from modern bureaucratic society, and no customary obligations, was now being held up for Papua New Guineans, of all classes, educational backgrounds, and cultural origins to admire and aspire to. His story had entered what Errington and Gewertz describe as the “intersection between different narratives of the desirable and the feasible” (2004: 15); it was presented as the apex of achievement and the new definition of reasonable expectation and accomplishment.
In the different accounts of his life story there were vague descriptions of the events surrounding Tam’s alleged financial demise. After some form of bankruptcy he was described as a “poor and broken man”. Cast out of exclusive circles, he became involved in the Boroko Uniting Church (in Port Moresby), and was stirred by messages of salvation, but more importantly, the passages that emphasised seeking and finding, and giving and receiving double in return. It soon became Tam’s destiny to help Papua New Guinea (all the while receiving himself), and to talk out about the “secrets of making money”. Additionally Tam’s Chinese heritage undoubtedly played an important role in the positive reception of the PV course among the JNC. Given that many of Papua New Guinea’s businesses are run by Asian families, he represents the new wave of successful entrepreneurs in the Pacific. His ethnic identity does not carry the same racial baggage held by kiaps, mining managers, NGO advisers and employees, volunteers, missionaries, and emissaries of the Australian Government deployed to keep a watchful eye on Australian Aid and to initiate local development programmes.

**Becoming Personally Viable**

I was first introduced to PV during the initial weeks of field research. Having arrived in the middle of a mortuary feast, my time and consciousness was preoccupied with the events in the men’s house and negotiating my new surroundings. I was caught in a mass of pig exchanges, mourning taboos, and politically charged speeches about *kastom* and ‘doing things right’, which was why I was unprepared one morning when a white mining bus stopped in the middle of the village and we were told to climb aboard so we could travel to Londolovit to attend the PV graduation and the public forum on the JNC’s development plans and payment of equity monies. I was quickly learning that ‘traditional’ Melanesian activities often involved lives spliced with global forces, both imposed and sought.

While we were travelling on the bus men talked incessantly about equity and the signing of the IBP. At that stage it appeared equity payments were being delayed until the JNC
had finalised the IBP renegotiations with the company and the State. When we arrived we found the open air LMALA community hall, set adjacent to the mining company’s community relations office in Londolovit, bedecked with banners promoting PV and the new road to “holistic human development”. Some of the banners read:

*Lihir Grasruts Benk, Benk Bilong Yumi ol Grasruts, A Step Towards Financial Independence* (Lihir Grass Roots Bank, The Bank of the Grass Roots People - complete with an image of a pyramid divided into three levels of bronze, silver and gold to represent the various PV ratings that people could achieve with the Grasruts Benk)

*Nui Millenuim Gutnuis, Grasruts Pawa Mekim Kamap, Universiti PNG, Nuipela Rot – Gutpela Sindaun* (New Millennium Good News, Grass Roots Ability, University of Papua New Guinea, New Road, Good Lifestyle)

*In Search of a New Direction for PNG – PV*

*Lihir Destiny – Self Reliance and Financial Independence*

*Personal Viability Training Course, Entrepreneurial Development Training Centre*

*Presents: Are You Viable? Holist Human Development*

*Mental power + mental skills + physical power + relevant knowledge + resources = sustainable development (self reliance and financial independence)*

Canvassing for opinions on these banners, it was obvious that they made little impression on people; most of the assembled crowd were here to find out when they would receive their equity payments and how much would be given. As the graduation ceremony wore on, and participants shuffled forward to collect their diplomas in Holism that certified them as Personally Viable, it was time for the testimonies. Graduates spoke out about the amazing personal transformation they had just undergone. Speaking with excited tones of moral superiority they attested to the ‘truths’ of PV and the need to convert from sinful ‘handout mentality ways’ and step into the bright light of individualism and economic rationalist freedom; Helen Hughes would have been proud (cf. Hughes, 2003, 2004a, 2004b). The most striking testimony came from a young Lihirian woman who
approached the microphone, shuffling her thongs across the cement, with the usual shy look, head down, and hands busy twisting knots in the hem of her *meri* blouse. Mustering her newly received inner-confidence she quickly launched into a tirade on those men who neglect the needs of their family and the women who do not stand up for themselves, urging people to “hurry up and get PV...*yupela mas kisim save!*” (you all must get the knowledge). Continuing along these lines she added “PV is the Bible in action and it is our school and only through PV will our place develop”. Bible passages were read from the New Testament that heralded Jesus’ resurrection reminding people that if they follow the PV way Lihir too will rise into glory.

Samuel Tam gave a short speech to course participants, encouraging them to remain faithful to their new perspective. When Mark Soipang (the Chairman of LMALA and the head of the JNC) rose to give the final speech before the forum began, an old man in the crowd thinking that Soipang would deliver the good news about equity payments, which everyone had really assembled to hear, stood up and shouted out in support of Soipang: “*equity emi destiny bilong yumi!*” (equity is our destiny). Clapping and cheers of agreement were met by Soipang’s denunciatory harangue on this sort of thinking: “If you want good development you must work it good. If you want good development you must get the knowledge! Equity is not the answer to real development!” His speech went on and the ceremony seamlessly elided into the forum as Soipang was forced to explain why equity payments had not yet been distributed, and provide details on the JNC’s proposed plans for ‘sustainable development’. Later when speaking to Tam, hoping to learn more about the course, he said that it was “just a self development and personal development course”, but it would take at least two weeks to explain everything to me. I read between the lines and enrolled for the next course.

Two week transformation

PV courses were usually held in different villages in community halls or church buildings to emphasise grassroots accessibility. Run over two weeks, they were taught by people versed in PV rhetoric and accredited as PV teachers after completing higher level PV
courses. In this instance I found myself participating in a course being conducted at the Local Level Government (LLG) offices in Potzlaka. This course was specifically run by the JNC as part of a ‘capacity building’ exercise for LLG staff, and to train people who would potentially play a prominent role in the deployment of the Lihir ‘Destiny Plan’. There were 23 people who attended from a range of educational and employment backgrounds. Our group was diverse, with an architect formerly employed by the Lae City Council, several builders, tradesmen, accountants and clerks, all of whom were working for the LLG. There were ex-community school teachers, ex-mining company employees, subsistence farmers, high school graduates, a university student (doing agricultural studies), trade store keepers, an ex-Navy officer, Catholic Church Catechists and the anthropologist. This group reflected the emerging social divisions in Lihir. Some of these people were part of the new middle class ‘elite’, in so far as they were educated, ran successful businesses, or were employed as Government bureaucrats. Although the JNC wanted to address new inequalities, particularly as they were expressed in terms of access to cash and resources and the ability to consume, this selection of people illustrated that the ‘Destiny Plan’ would only perpetuate existing class divisions where bureaucrats and managers are distinguished from a population of workers, traders and farmers.

Our teacher, Robert, an enthusiastic ex-school teacher from Kavieng, began the course with a short lecture on the personally viable modern Melanesian. Participants were made to feel inadequate as if they had failed to harness their innate bourgeois potential. Reading from the course booklet he defined what it meant to be personally viable:

PV is the perpetual self-discovery, perpetual re-shaping to realize one’s best self, to be the person one could be. It is the sustainable development of human resources with individual skills to be their best. PV involves the emotions, character, personality, deeper layers of thought and action, adaptability, creativeness and vitality. And it involves moral spiritual growth….it is about finding yourself and owning your self. (Tam, 1997: 11)

Each day began with prayers and the recital of the PV anthem and the national anthem:
This was meant to instil a sense of national pride and foster the feeling of individual obligation. The course was structured around the ideologies of the entrepreneur and the teaching of basic micro economics, and after ten days participants were expected to be
completely familiar with the Entrepreneur’s Doctrine (taken from the official creed of the Entrepreneurs Association of America):

“I do not choose to be a common person. It is my right to be uncommon – if I can. I seek opportunity – not security. I do not wish to be a kept citizen, humbled and dulled by having the state look after me. I want to take calculated risks, to dream and to build, to fail and to succeed. I refuse to barter incentive for a dole; I prefer the challenges of life to the guaranteed existence; the thrill of fulfilment to the stale calm of utopia. I will not trade my freedom for beneficence nor my dignity for a handout. I will never cower before any master nor bend to any threat. It is my heritage to stand erect, proud, and unafraid, to think and act for myself, to enjoy the benefits of my creations and face the world boldly and say: this with God’s help, I have done. All this is what it means to be an entrepreneur. (Tam, 1997: 16)

Grounded in neo-liberal rhetoric and quasi world systems theory, the course aimed to create successful entrepreneurs who could reverse the economic trends of the past millennium. Using terms such as core and periphery, marginal and centre, and first and third world, the group was encouraged to think of the ways in which Western countries have progressively created conditions of dependence for countries like Papua New Guinea. We were introduced to the leading eight countries in the world (the G8) described as the ‘first class’, then ‘third class’ countries like Pacific nations who still possess their land but are unable to convert it into successful industries, and finally those countries on the African continent who seem completely dispossessed. Borrowing heavily from Wallerstein’s imagery found in Amarshi et al’s (1979) neo-Marxist critique of Papua New Guinea’s post independence economy, the idea was to illustrate the global exploitation that keeps countries with people of predominately darker skin on the margins and under the control of the countries in the centre with predominately white skin who are in positions of authority and relative luxury and wealth.

Continuing with this theme the class was told “we are not really an independent nation, we don’t own ourselves – another man is boss of yumi (us)…..and although we have our own leader, Michael Somare, the captain of our ship, he doesn’t know how to read GPS [global positioning system] equipment, G8 gives the directions”. Robert then produced an
overhead projection of a quote from the reports of Sir William MacGregor (the first Administrator of Port Moresby in 1912; taken from Amarshi et al, 1979: 163): “We went to PNG solely and simply to save our own hands and the fact should never be forgotten when dealing with the natives of this country”. He paused and left the words on the wall to take effect. This was ‘proof’ that the ‘system’ was designed to enslave Papua New Guineans and bring prosperity to the colonial powers. Pointing in the direction of the mine we were told nothing had changed. Papua New Guineans were presented as cheap labour and nameless peripheral villages were the sites of necessary labour power reproduction for capital intensive centres (cf. Fitzpatrick, 1980; Meillassoux, 1981). The link was immediately made and people soon recounted their experiences as ‘cargobois’ and ‘wokbois’ for the mine and other companies. Much of this conversation echoed a more general dissatisfaction amongst Lihirian employees concerning the employment policies and practices of the mining company that appear to privilege expatriates over Lihirians.

The purpose of the first day was to understand how the ‘G8’ has constructed and maintained poor and dependent nations: how Papua New Guineans had moved from ‘idyllic pre-contact freedom and autonomy’ into a position of ‘subordination and dependence’. By the end of the day the class was abuzz with talk of global injustices, colonial history, racist policies, dominance and subversion. Their use of new terms (which some barely knew the meaning of, like globalization, structural adjustments, free trade policies, the IMF, World Bank domination and G8) reflected the way cults often develop jargon that people use as if it has quite specific meaning for their situation independent of generic understandings of these terms. In the following chapter I return to this point as I consider the centrality of mimesis in the behaviour and plans of the JNC. Many felt more enlightened to the realities of the world, confirming the day’s message that “the rich get richer and the poor get poorer”. This had become the motivational mantra that would be inescapable for the following weeks. Travelling home that afternoon one participant jokingly imitated Robert: “we don’t own ourselves, another man is bossing us. We are all just yes sir men to the G8”. Then asking what was the use
of this knowledge and how would it make us rich, another fellow participant replied in an off-hand way, “well maybe we have to start acting like the G8!”

‘Independently self-made slaves’

Inadvertently demonstrating the internal contradictions of PV ideology, Robert began the second day by telling the class that personal failure, poverty, and inequality are not the result of a world system that reproduces injustices, but a lack of Personal Viability. On the one hand people were told their ‘plight’ could be understood through a structural analysis of global capital flows, and on the other hand the onus was put back on the individual; no longer could people blame the Government, their marginality, or global history. Generic pictures of starving children and adults in Africa were placed on the wall - the kind regularly used by Aid agencies to pull at the heart and purse strings of the West. Underscoring the pictures were statements like: “Before a landowner with resources. Who is to blame? Politics and himself!” With these images in mind the class was told they were all “independently self-made slaves”. Robert went on to ask “how can we celebrate Independence, when we as a nation continue to beg to Australia for Aid and assistance?” Reworking a well known NGO slogan that was also in the PV anthem, he stated “they give us fish but never teach us how to fish for ourselves… we are just like floating fish, useless to ourselves and our country”.12 The class were being taught important lessons in the rhetoric of possessive individualism, particularly as it shadows liberal democracy and promotes the individual as proprietor of the self, who owes nothing to society and is free to act on their own individual conscience, especially against ‘slavery’.

Practical lessons in mastery

As apprentices of the school of Personal Viability it wasn’t all pithy self-empowering aphorisms. Students were assessed and expected to meet deadlines for small assignments and group tasks. There were daily exercises of ‘grass roots maths’ that taught basic requirements for running a trade store or a small business. A remarkably small proportion
of the course was actually dedicated to these pragmatic and useful skills. These exercises were built upon each day over the period of the course, and as a marker of grass roots authenticity participants were told to do away with ideas of “laptops and supercomputers”, and to start using their own “neck-top computer”. Drawing upon Papua New Guinean agricultural capacities, Tam encouraged people to plant “money gardens”, a PV term that refers to not only cash crops and market produce, but any small entrepreneurial endeavour that ‘grows’ money. Over the following days, Robert continued with the theme of ‘learning to fish’, talking about harvesting “nature’s abundance given to Papua New Guineans from God”, shifting the focus from being custodians or stewards of God’s creation to exploiters and successful managers.13

Within the rubric of personal transformation, participants were taught how to efficiently manage their daily finances, and how to say no to the demands and requests of their relatives for the sake of their own and the nation’s good. For the PV minded, the question should always be, “how much money can I make in this amount of time and how can I improve my performance?” PV maintains that activities not geared towards the accumulation of money are unproductive. A list of productive and unproductive time charts was drawn up for the “average village person”:

Productive – gardening, ploughing, weeding, planting; feeding livestock; fishing; building; selling produce.

Unproductive – gossiping; waiting; visiting wantoks; sleeping during the day; sitting around the village.

These lessons in productivity were especially aimed at Lihirian pelkong relationships. Some of those in the group who had spent time outside of Lihir commented on the financial pressures created by certain relationships and that “this is what is wrong with Lihirians”. Everyone acknowledged the difficulty of saying no to pelkong and other close relatives who request money or simply want to draw your attention away from commercial or productive endeavours, but most agreed it is necessary for business. As they learnt to favour personal ambition over collective stability, economic imperatives came to outweigh social necessities. Participants were warned not to waste their time,
their most valuable asset: “if you cannot control the time you have left in your life you will find it very difficult to control anything else…Time is running out quicker than you think!” (Tam, 1997: 28 - 29). In this new order time has become privatized and individuals are responsible for it is effective use. Thus the highest priority of PV is to quicken the move from development to development.

Self discipline

The course was divided into “the four growth disciplines”: productivity discipline, law of success discipline, the economy discipline, and the integrity discipline. These disciplines which can be ‘measured’ form the basis of the PV grading system. This is an array of measurements designed to gauge people’s Personal Viability, and quantify their ability to “add value to themselves and commodities”. By measuring the quantity sold, or the profit achieved, and the rate of expansion and personal progression, ‘viable people’ can prove they are constantly improving and “adding value”. These disciplines specifically target economic output (productivity), savings and investments (economic), ability to meet projected business targets and maintain satisfied customers (law of success), and finally the individual capacity to fulfill obligations in all areas such business, family, kastom, or church (integrity).14

The grading system assumes a lack of motivation amongst Papua New Guineans; the various ranks were supposed to motivate people to achieve a higher grade that reflects individual earning capacity and credit ratings and supposedly a higher contribution to society. Grading is to be carried out by EDTC accredited PV Grading Supervisors. These supervisors are ranked according to their own PV status, entitling them to supervise various grades underneath their own standing. Grades cost 10 kina for an application, 5 kina per visit, 20 kina for the grading, and 30 kina for an official “EDTC Are You Viable” badge with the name of the recipient embossed, which should be worn to display one’s rank to encourage others to improve themselves.
Grading essentially involved verifying the claims of the PV follower: what activities had been completed; how much money was made annually; where the money was recorded and kept; whether savings were being recorded and where they were kept; production of sales and productivity reports; verifying the quality of goods and services and that they were actually sold to customers; and checking whether ‘surplus cash’ was invested and written up on a savings and investment report. Inspectors should report on the morale of the ‘Team’ (family, or staff who work underneath the graded individual), which means assessing whether younger family members only contribute because they fear retribution, or whether they fully appreciate all the benefits that PV can bring to their lives. These reports and files were to be held at the various Grassroots Universities to be established around the country, functioning as learning centres and bureaucratic hubs.

What emerges from this constant assessment and self-reflection is an extension of the Christian moral ethos of self examination so that it becomes a natural part of the modernising process for the aspiring subject. Regular grading increases people’s openness to the people and institutions identified with power and success of the larger world. As Foucault (1984) observed in his review of Baudelaire’s essay, “The Painter of Modern Life” (1964 [1863]), one of the distinctive features of being a modern subject is the mandate to explore the potential for self improvement and how one might become a different person in the future. Modernity is thus characterised by a deliberate mode of relationship to oneself; the intentional attitude of modernity is linked to an indispensable asceticism (Foucault, 1984: 41). PV encourages a heightened self consciousness and intensifies self derision in the name of personal development.

I am my own boss

Course graduation was contingent upon presenting a short public testimony on what had been gained from the PV course. The graduation ceremony was held at the Potzlaka Local Level Government offices. It was a small affair, unattended by Tam (who lives in Rabaul) but graced by other ‘VIPs’ from LMALA, the LLG, the Catholic Church, and
local businessmen, who made speeches of encouragement and complimented people on their commitment. Similar to the testimonies in the graduation at the beginning of this chapter, all of them expressed sentiments of novelty and personal transformation. Although we had only just finished the course everyone described a personal transition from a life with no aims, where they were stuck in a cycle of unemployment while failing to realise their talents (particularly as subsistence work was increasingly regarded as lowly because it yields no income). Using analogies of ‘slavery’ and ‘imprisonment’ and being ‘blind’ and ‘lost in the dark’ people attested to the ‘truth’ of PV:

I was once a blind man, I was lame, I was deaf, and I was insane. Now I know my destiny. I was like a puppet and my strings were pulled by others. I was always hungry and poor. I live on a small island called Mahur; people would come and take our fish, sometimes they would give us some fish, but they never taught me how to fish for myself. They would only give us enough to satisfy our hunger, but never give us the knowledge of how to catch one. PV heard my cries and rescued me. Now I know about G8 domination and our Government, and how to make a living. (Jerome, high school graduate from Mahur)

And the themes continued:

I was going through a troubled period and I was starting to lose hope for the future. PV came at just the right time. (John Lerau, ex-Naval Officer and local businessman)

PV has made me realize that hard work and self discipline are the key to success. Simple truth of PV is this. With this advice anyone can become a millionaire and self reliant. PV breeds the ability to earn money. (Mary, high school graduate)

PV changed my life and my way of thinking. I was once a prisoner with LMC [the company] working as a slave; now I have been set free and will work for my own life. (Martin Asu, Kinami Village)

The personal changes attributed to PV were often hard to differentiate between repeated PV rhetoric. Many said that they now knew how to be self reliant, to use their “God given talents”, and look after their family, often repeating PV catch phrases such as “stretim
pasin bilong mi” (straightening my ways),  *mi ownim mi iet* (I am in control and own myself), and “*bosim laip bilong mi’*( I boss my own life). Participants embraced the idea of personal dreams and aspirations, none of which included their lineage, the wider clan or Lihir as a whole. Many saw their destiny in terms of their own material pursuit, financial success, self reliance, and personal freedom based on a new world view. This was best captured in the idiomatic response of one participant: “*PV i helvim mi kisim pawa bilong mekim kamap wok bilong lukautim mi iet*” (PV helped me get the power to look after myself).

*Investing (in)dividuals*

While Tam presented PV as ‘merely’ a personal development course, ultimately it supports the neo-liberal ideal of egalitarianism through competition. The intentional emphasis on personal augmentation necessarily implicates local notions of personhood and collective cohesion. PV is concerned with modern desire, which essentially means to speak of individual desire. Previous engagements with Western institutions like Christianity, education, democratic political organisation and Western biomedicine have already imposed their own epistemology of individuality. The shift towards greater engagement with modern institutions that presuppose the existence of autonomous individuals and increase the visibility of the individual facets of personhood confronts existing social structures and institutions that tend to accentuate the relational aspects personhood. PV is designed to tease out a latent individualism so people can capitalise on their own sense of autonomy.

Better comprehension of the *individual* effects of the PV course requires some consideration of the transformation of personhood. It is tempting to follow the lead of the ‘new Melanesian ethnography’ (Josephides, 1991) and argue that Lihirian notions of personhood are necessarily the inverse of PV’s implicit Western individualism. Indeed the above testimonies would make it easy to essentialize Lihirians, Westerners and the effects of PV. But this argument requires the assumption that an opposition exists between societies based on substance and those based on relations, cultures of fully
dividual persons compared to a Western world of individuals. As LiPuma states, this contrast is based on the acceptance of Western ideological notions of the person (which sees the person as undividedly individual) as the basis for constructing the Other as its opposite image (LiPuma, 2000: 132).

This contrast has been most forcibly argued by Marilyn Strathern (1988) who presents a generic Melanesian person defined as dividual or partible that is contrasted with an essentialised Western individual (see also Battaglia, 1990; Foster, 1995a; Iteanu, 1990). Thus the dividual person is regarded as the “plural and composite site of the relations that produced them” (1988: 13). Imagined as a “social microcosm”, the individual is the objectification of these relations (Strathern, 1988: 13). From this vantage person and agency are split, and people are not regarded as the authors of their own actions; thus people act with others in mind (1988: 272).

Foster, who is a self avowed follower of the new Melanesian ethnography, similarly employs the Us/Them contrast, arguing that Tangans are composed of composite relations:

My interpretation of the two glosses “finishing” (farop) and “replacing” (pilis) the dead draws on the model of personhood, agency, and exchange informing the New Melanesian Ethnography. For my analysis works within a set of propositions that do not take for granted autonomous individuals (or groups of individuals) acting as their own cause. Accordingly, I treat Tangan mortuary practices as a form of collective action that constructs collective individuals – matrilineages, in this case – out of composite persons.

(Foster, 1995a: 11)

Accordingly Melanesians are understood as nodes in a given matrix of relations, emphasising solidarity, cohesion and benign social relations; typically this is said to mirror its counterpart in the Western model of individuals. This assumption is problematic because an adequate analysis of Lihirian or Melanesian personhood requires an equally adequate analysis of Western constructions of the person. Although most ‘enlightened’ Westerners would like to imagine themselves as fully independent, many of
the assumptions of Melanesian personhood can be applied to the West. Unfortunately, too many anthropologists define Melanesian persons against an inadequate account of the Western person, which leads them to overstate the differences (LiPuma, 2000: 132). As Macintyre rightly observes, such dichotomies carry “the complications of essentialisation and Occidentalism (Carrier, 1992), and the representation of culture as ahistorical and hypostatic”; the underlying assumptions therefore appear “like old arguments about the about the ‘individual versus society’ and Durkheim’s primitive versus modern solidarity in new clothes” (Macintyre, 1995: 29, 33). This reinforces both Occidentalist and Orientalist assertions that different economies have a corresponding morality (cf. Bloch and Parry, 1989) that are typically antithetical. However, as I have demonstrated, kastom and bisnis are neither oppositional nor easily separated.

Perhaps then it is useful to borrow from LiPuma who argues that in all cultures “there exist both individual and dividual modalities or aspects of personhood” (LiPuma, 2000: 131; 1988; see also Macintyre, 1995: 31-32). This view modifies and explicitly criticises the essentialisation of difference that has dominated discussions based on the premise that Western and Melanesian images of personhood are fully incommensurate because the West constructs individuals while Melanesian societies construct dividuals or relational persons. Rather it makes more sense that “persons emerge precisely from that tension between dividual and individual aspects/relations” (LiPuma, 2000: 132, emphasis in original).

More recently Robbins (2004a) has explored this tension between relational and individual aspects of personhood through his analysis of Urapmin engagement with Christianity. Robbins approaches this tension through Dumont’s (1980, 1986) notion of paramount values, illustrating their complex entanglement with relationism and individualism. For the Urapmin, the conundrum is that their wholesale embrace of Christianity, the original locus for individualism (Dumont, 1986; see also Burridge, 1979; Dumont, 1980, 1994; Morris, 1972), means “relationism has lost its right to occupy without question the paramount slot in Urapmin culture” (Robbins, 2004a: 293). Thus the Urapmin person emerges out of this enduring tension, as local social structures compel
people towards behaviour at odds with their new Christian beliefs that encourage and legitimise the individual aspects of Urapmin personhood. We might consider Lihirian economic practices in a similar vein. ‘Received cultural orientations’, or the ‘paramount values’ that dispose Lihirians towards forms of development, are at odds with those ‘PV values’ that Lihirians realise are necessary for individual (and collective) economic prosperity. Just as the Urapmin have come to realise exogenous beliefs and modes of behaviour underpin their spiritual salvation, Lihirians were learning that economic accomplishment is an inherently individual activity that presupposes introduced forms of sociality and epistemology.

Therefore instead of replacing one ethnocentric notion of Melanesians for an equally totalised interpretation of Westerners we should look for the conditions under which relational or individual aspects of personhood emerge or are hidden. According to LiPuma, the person in Western capitalist society is defined by two salient features: (1) the person is composed, historically and culturally, of individual and dividual aspects; and (2) paradoxically, the person appears as the natural and transhistorical individual (LiPuma, 2000: 134). The dual character of the person is intricately bound to the nature of commodity–determined labour that \textit{a priori} assumes the existence of independent individuals while masking the sociality of production. Alternatively there have always been individual aspects of Lihirian personhood, even if these aspects were traditionally in the background and the margins of practice. As is common in Melanesian societies, sorcery is understood as ‘anti-social’ and the site for the expression of individualism. But we need not only look to ‘negative’ practice; Lihirian big men are by definition autonomous individuals. This is easily overlooked when their actions are only considered in relation to the ‘positive’ project of social reproduction.\textsuperscript{17} The difficulty is that introduced institutions of democracy, freedom and civil society, located in the concept of individual rights (see Foster, 1995b, 2002b) foreground the individual facets of personhood in societies like Lihir where sociality, order, and knowledge were once (though never exclusively) defined in terms of the dividual aspects of personhood.
The conditions of modernity, particularly as they are experienced through large-scale resource extraction, afford the individual more visibility, allow the tension to become more explicit, and the expression of individuality more legitimate. PV and the ensuing development plans of the JNC were specifically designed to capitalise on the individual aspects of personhood. PV builds upon those notions of individuality previously received through mission influence, education, democratic political organisation and the use of Western biomedicine. The intention is to create a society where self-managing, self-contained individuals compete and cooperate in a mutual quest for the self-improvement of mind, body and spirit. Through the imposition of PV the JNC were attempting to counter the inequalities of the capitalist system; this was likely to generate further differences and bolster the system in which they arise. It is as if the JNC were trying to use the underlying principles of capitalism to achieve the Marxist ideal of a classless society, where “the experience of self-development, released from the demands and distortions of the market, can go on freely and spontaneously; instead of the nightmare that bourgeois society has made it, it can be a source of joy and beauty for all” (Berman, 1989: 97).

The personal testimonies listed above, stress that the onus is put back on the individual. People must take possession of their mind, which is presented as the privileged site for the production and reception of knowledge; it has an ontological reality independent of the body and spirit. Their emphasis on the personal ownership of their future, their destiny, and most importantly their faults, failures, and short comings reflects the possessive qualities found in Macpherson’s image of the individual “as essentially the proprietor of his own person or capacities, owing nothing to society for them” (Macpherson, 1962: 3). In short, Lihrians were expected to take possession of themselves reiterating the essentialist contrast between Melanesian relationism where people are wholly dependent upon others for their sense of person, purpose and practice, and Western individualism where people exist as self-contained, self-shaping, independent agents. However, regardless of whether individualism is exclusively modern in its origins and manifestations, Lihirian engagement with modern economic systems entails ideals of
people as both dividual and individual. Tensions exist as people attempt to manoeuvre between and reconcile these ideals.

Collective antagonism

When Robert stood up to make the closing remarks in the graduation ceremony he issued a challenge to the group: “Now that the course has finished, will you go out, work hard, start your ‘money gardens’ and be successful? Or will you go home and sleep? You must become viable now!”

One of the ways people were encouraged to perform their viability was by organising their family according to corporate structure, where each member continually proves their productivity by contributing income towards living expenses. Weekly meetings should be held, and records must be kept to ensure productivity levels increase; here the family is the base model for micro-collective enterprise. Supposedly this will instil the PV mentality at the home level, eventually reinforced through by a community of like-minded families.

The next level is the formation of village based PV clubs, or collectives that pool resources, finances, and labour for group and individual projects, ultimately helping each other fulfil their ‘destiny’. From Tam’s perspective, when left to their own devices Papua New Guineans inevitably fall by the wayside of PV. Clubs provide support and encouragement for floundering entrepreneurs. Modelled on corporate organizations, clubs elect a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer, and various committees for different projects. Ideally there should be a club for every village and a head member for the Ward. Their duty is to make sure clubs function effectively, to help recruit new followers, and guard against declining interest or enthusiasm. Ideally these clubs should run several projects concurrently to secure a continual source of income.

The Kinami PV club had a floating membership of around thirty people. Most adults in Kinami had taken the PV course, though relatively few had joined the club, and even
fewer consistently participated in club projects. These clubs were generally not formed along the lines of clan or *kastomary* alliance. The Kinami club relied heavily upon the initiative and command of Peter Toelinkanut, an ex-Air Nuigini engineer and member of the JNC (who we meet again in the following chapters), who often claimed only he had the ability to keep the club separate from ‘village politics’. PV clubs cut across clan and family ties, and excluded anyone that had not taken the course and proven their ‘PV literacy’, which in the village context increasingly came to mean the ability to converse using PV idioms, rather than demonstrate any recognisable form of entrepreneurial initiative. Using a shared language was complicit in maintaining a sense of group unity. Although the aim was to gain individual profits from entrepreneurial endeavour this did not specifically generate feelings of inclusion or unity, especially because profits tended to be at the expense of fellow villagers and relatives. The use of commonly understood terms and phrases, exclusive to PV followers, generated a sense of ethos among club members. This was important because often their petty market sales were indistinguishable from the economic activities of non-PV followers.

Roadside marketing of garden produce, and other consumables such as tobacco, betelnut and pepper sticks, is a common source of income in most Lihirian households. In a month long economic study of households in Kinami, Lataul and Lesel, I found that nearly all households recorded income from market sales at least once a week, many several times a week, and some on a near daily basis. Although many sold their produce at the community market in Londolovit, most households made sales within their village. For households without members engaged in wage labour, market sales were the most common form of income for meeting daily expenses. Those who regularly engaged in market sales also regularly gave produce to relatives or supplied food to their men’s house. Many people remarked they were selling market produce before they had even heard of PV, suggesting they did not see PV or membership in these clubs as imperative for engaging in the informal economy. From the perspective of club members, the goal is to advance beyond ad hoc sales, to a regular income supported by a growing ‘clientele base’. For non-PV followers, the sporadic nature of market sales tended to reflect economic values, where money is often only sought when specific needs arise, rather
than for the sake of accumulation.\textsuperscript{18} It is these values, and the apparent lack of forward planning that the JNC wanted to address through the institutionalisation of PV.

One of the main projects run by the Kinami club was a small chicken farm that kept around 100 chickens for sale. Members paid a 50 kina contribution into the club pool that was used for purchasing chicks, feed, and any maintenance on the coop. Chickens were sold at 25 kina each and the profits were divided equally between members after expenses were paid and a percentage was put back into the club account. The club also functioned as a microfinance resource, providing small interest-free loans to members (up to 200 kina) to start another ‘money garden’ project, pay school fees, or for other emergencies. It was explicitly stated there was to be no bartering, exchange, credit or favours, regardless of kinship and \textit{kastom} obligations; the clubs and their projects were supposed to operate separately from the exchange economy or the realm of \textit{kastom}.

Of course it was impossible to separate these economic spheres. Members of the PV club liked to imagine PV gave them some level of financial autonomy from local webs of \textit{kastom} and kinship. In reality they were always pressured and constrained by these relationships, and when they intentionally drew a distinction between \textit{bisnis} as business, and \textit{bisnis} as a relational sphere, they invariably incurred resentment from their less enterprising kin. Measured against reified notions of virtuous sociality, PV practices were often perceived as the inverse of \textit{pasin bilong Lihir}. Sitting in the men’s house one evening with a group of men from Lataul and Kinami Village who were discussing PV and the prospect of equity payments, it was often repeated that “PV \textit{emi no olsem kastom bilong yum}” (PV is not like our custom), coupled with adamant assertions that PV will never enter this village. This was despite the fact that nearly all of the assembled men had taken the PV course.

Many explained they were originally interested in PV because they thought it would teach them the “secrets” of making money, which in its more pragmatic state usually referred to running some kind of \textit{liklik bisnis} (small business). Their new resistance was couched in the discourse of \textit{kastom}, but it also stemmed from a realisation that the
“secrets” they learnt were difficult to enact and usually contradicted existing dispositions and values. Many of the men had tried to establish their ‘money garden’, only to find the village was not conducive to *bisnis*. While they liked to imagine themselves as potential businessmen they were similarly disparaging of some men whose success was seen to be at the expense of social relations. Their reaction captured the contradiction of Lihirian desire: people wanted to learn how to produce money for themselves and gain financial autonomy, but they did not want this to be at the expense of existing forms of sociality.

Asking one of my ‘uncles’ to elaborate on this antagonism, he deliberated and pointed to the ground inside the men’s house and said: *yu lukim ol buai skin na skin bilong kulau i stap nabout long graun insiat long hia? Sapos PV i kam long hia, bai yu no inap lukim ol skin* (You see all of these betelnut skins and green coconut husks laying around on the ground? If PV comes here then you will not see them). His response was intended to highlight Lihirian ideals for hospitality and men’s house ethos. Consensus was reached: PV is bad, *kastom* is good. Yet, while opposition was articulated in terms of an essentialist dichotomy it was reflective of the interpenetration between *kastom* and *bisnis* and the impossibility of their separation. PV philosophies are hard to enact not only because they confront *kastom* ideals but also because *bisnis* is always spliced with *kastom* and village obligations. Although people wanted to embrace new means for making money, the methods proposed by PV confronted people’s notions of virtuous sociality - their ideal of a wealthy egalitarian society without economic competition. As we have already seen in chapter four, aspirations for wealth accumulation were frustrated by the confrontation between enduring structures and ideals and bourgeois values. Although Peter Toelinkanut tried to recruit more members, his efforts were often hampered by this reality.

The club was effectively a small business collective with burgeoning middle class aspirations. Non-members wanted to partake in the club’s economic success, but they were simultaneously critical of the lines of division being drawn through the village. In essence the PV clubs came to resemble something akin to Weberian status groups, where members defined themselves against non-members according to their knowledge and
ability to accumulate capital and (hopefully) conspicuously consume (see Weber, 1968). Paradoxically, the long term goal of Tam and the JNC was to create something closer to Marx’s free association for individuals that would benefit all Lihirians. Yet ultimately their efforts would be continually frustrated by the divisive nature of their approach.

The cult of the anti-cult

For Tam and the JNC, Papua New Guineans, and Lihirians especially, have sat on the edges of economic development for too long, watching with growing unrest as the rest of the world ‘develops’, yet unable to change their own situation through a lack of save (knowledge) and opportunity. The PV course was engineered to deliver this save through repetition and reward - through the PV grading system - so people would think and behave like entrepreneurs.

The PV course was so appealing to the JNC because it combated a history of cargo discourse and activity. For the JNC and many other educated Lihirians this is at best an embarrassing moment in Lihirian history; something they liken to their pre-Christianity days when they were naked and didn’t know any better. Its message contests the kind of lottery, or lucky-strike mentality fostered through mining and the millions of kina instantly poured into the pockets of select individuals. The unequal distribution of winmoni created instant disillusionment for those who failed to secure a winning title deed, and promoted the kind of fatal ecstasy classically located in chiliastic movements or cargo cults. However, even as people began to realise that only a minority would receive winmoni, the first equity payments mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, that would be paid to all Lihirians regardless of their ‘landowner’ status, rekindled a form of ‘casino capitalism’ (Strange, 1986): the desire for securing instant returns from a global market and its mysterious natural capacity to yield value free from the input of human labour.

By mid 2004 equity monies were eventually paid and distributed, albeit decidedly less than the anticipated amount, as approximately 1.6 million kina was divided between
nearly six thousand adult Lihirians. One of the reasons offered by the JNC for delay in
these payments was the concern that without the Lihir-wide implementation of PV, this
money would be ‘wasted’ on consumables and kastom instead of being invested in
productive projects.\(^\text{19}\) In chapter seven I will return to the payment of equity as I consider
the relationship between Lihirian identity and the distribution of this money, but for the
moment I am interested in the cosmological relevance of these payments.

Although the mine and its associated development have been generically interpreted as
the fulfilment of TKA prophesies, some men interpreted these equity payments as a
‘return’ on the ‘taxes’ or memberships fees which they paid to the TKA. These original
payments were recast as ‘investments’, an indication of the ways some people have
adopted the language of commercial business in their daily discourse. Some older men
insisted their ancestors produced this wealth that was now presented in the form of
equity, thus fulfilling earlier prophesies. The appeal of winmoni is an indication of the
level of disenchantment associated with wage labour and capitalism, which for many
Lihirians has periodically failed to provide access to the wealth and commodities so
desperately desired. On another level, this appeal originates from Melanesian Occidental
discourse on Western financial practices that overemphasise the role of investment as the
key to wealth accumulation; the allure of high instant high returns for minimal physical
output has not been missed.

PV seeks to unveil the enigma of Western wealth: “of its sources and the capriciousness
of its distribution, of the mysterious forms its takes, of its slipperiness, of the opaque
relations between means embodied in it” (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2001: 7). Instead it
further obscures the reality in which capital is generated by encouraging increased, albeit
sophisticated, mimicry and imitation of capital investment, bureaucratic terms and
practices, entrepreneurialism, and totalised forms of Western sociality and epistemology.
Even if the course reflects the sort of neo-liberal ideologies likely to gain support from
economic rationalists, it is unlikely that the ways in which many Lihirians have
interpreted PV would gain the same level of sponsorship. Despite the intentions of Tam
and probably of the JNC, PV has generated something like a post modern cargo cult. As
we will see in the following chapter, for the JNC, economic prosperity is dependent upon behavioural regulation. PV rationale is set in opposition to the dreams and logic of the TKA and Nimamar movements, and is therefore inherently good, and must also deliver the goods. For those dedicated Lihirians, it has become the cult of the anti-cult, a movement dedicated to the fetishism of the modern and ‘rational’ rejecting all that has come before as immature and illogical.

Conclusion

PV arrived at a time when most Lihirians were enjoying an advanced level of involvement in the cash economy and greater ability to consume commodity items compared to their neighbours and most other rural Papua New Guineans. The widespread belief that the company would continue supplying wealth to Lihirians means many Lihirians failed to see the necessity for PV; indeed, PV contradicted the desired lifestyle of conspicuous consumption where mine derived wealth is used to develop Lihirian culture in its own terms. However, emergent class relations linked to the arbitrary allocation of ‘landowner’ wealth and status, coupled with the daily reminder of global structural inequalities reflected in the wealth of expatriate miners, has left many Lihirians susceptible to PV rhetoric.

The same capitalist system that has consistently denied Lihirians equal footing with their colonial mastas, their proselytizing missionaries, their expatriate bosses, and their adopted anthropologists, has been repackaged and sold back to Lihirians as something new that will enhance rather than detract from their lives. Through a conceptual sleight of hand, capitalism was presented as fair and able to increase rather than decrease social equality. The rhetoric of the PV course presented a capitalist market that simultaneously requires self-regimentation and presents opportunities for hitherto unimagined possibilities for personal accumulation. As Errington and Gewertz consistently point out in much of their work (1991, 1995, 1999, and 2004), through the acceptance of the supposed justice of the capitalist market the differences between the rich and the poor, or the elites and grassroots become seen as differences in degree, rather than differences in
kind. Such differences have come to reflect “a relatively fluid continuum of personal attributes rather than a relatively closed set of categorical differences” (Gewertz and Errington, 1999: 42).

When Lihirians use neo-liberal terminology or enact Western economic values, this emulation is not always simply mimetic. For some people the appeal of PV is ritualistic; learning mantras and repeating prescribed activities is deemed to transform their lot or redirect the flow of money. Often it also reflects identification with Westerners: we desire similar things, such as large houses, disposable incomes, and personal freedom. In these cases Lihirians recognise commonality and these practices are deliberate attempts to imbibe similar values. However as we have seen, in the process of doing so, this often generates inter-personal and inter-community conflict, particularly as it confronts the project of development. The continual tension between emulation and rejection is central to their engagement with capitalism. This is most apparent in the JNC’s economic development plans which highlight the residual conflict between the ‘irrational’ and ‘rational’ aspects of mimesis.

In the next chapter I argue that the JNC’s ‘Destiny Plan’, which is thoroughly dependent upon the PV course, is essentially a political and economic manifesto. Paradoxically, despite its neo-liberal aspirations it is also reminiscent of Marx’s early formula for communist society, which has as its highest goal “the development of a totality of capacities in the individuals themselves” (Marx and Engels, 1976: 96). Ironically the rhetorical appeal to identity politics that imagines Lihirians as a collectivity, and the practice of work on the self, expose the same tensions that emerged in socialist societies.

The emphasis in PV on the relationship between individual development and entrepreneurial activity and an improved quality of life led the JNC to imagine a society characterised by the abolition of class division and of the division of labour; a transformation of production and all social relations; an end to the antagonism between the developed urban centres and marginal backwaters; the transformation of labour from an activity people perform under pressure and compulsion (in order to survive) to a
genuine self-activity of free people; and the disappearance of the State, the instrument of class division. However, the ultimate incongruity of PV and its indiscriminate acceptance by the JNC who consider themselves arch rivals of multinational ‘domination’, particularly as it manifest in their relationship with the company, is the very deliberate attempt to suppress oppositional thinking or alternative ways of relating and engaging with the market. The blind faith they placed in the ability of capitalism to advance the lives of Papua New Guineans, heralds a total submission to the supposed justice of the capitalist market which asserts that economic inequalities between different people are not only fair but necessary, because they represent one’s contribution and effort invested in the processes of production.

This is not to say the PV course and the ‘Destiny Plan’ enjoyed unanimous support or that they were not contested by various sections of the community. In particular, Ward Members (village level government representatives) found themselves divided over PV. While they advocated the idea of financial autonomy, many were sceptical about the chosen means, which also meant they found it difficult to support the ‘Destiny Plan’ that was premised upon wholesale implementation of PV.

For many people PV epitomised an ideological opposition to the supposed moral economy of *kastom* and *pasin bilong Lihir*. This reflects a hyper-valuation of tradition and men’s house ethos of sharing and reciprocity – crucial elements of virtuous sociality. From this perspective PV furthered a stylized image of the West as essentialist as our own Orientalist reading of Melanesian desire often manifest in cargo movements, and perpetuated Lihirian Occidental discourse on Western economic practice. However, opposition to PV was easily discarded by PV followers as ignorance and the perpetuation of a ‘handout mentality’, or simply a hangover of the TKA and Nimamar movements, which all enlightened PV members know, represents a state of confusion and backwardness. But for many Lihirians the rhetorical snares of PV that present a future free from iniquitous arbitrary, categorical exclusions – a world of incommensurate difference – were easily shaken when confronted with the daily reminder of emergent class divisions perpetuated by the mining project.
As part of the Integrated Benefits Package, Lihirians were awarded shares in the mining operation. When equity payments for these shares were finally released in late 2004, all adult Lihirians received a cash payment of 292 kina. Parents collected payments for children and minors under 18 years of age. Most Lihirians were disappointed by this amount of money; many were expecting amounts similar to royalty and compensation payments which often ran into the thousands.

Franchises cost in excess of thirty thousand kina. At the time of writing Lihir was the only place to have purchased a franchise, or with the means or desire for such measures.

As his life story was told, Tam’s father was killed during the Second World War, after which he suffered a great deal from ‘poverty’; his mother struggled to make ends meet all the while teaching him the necessity of ‘self discipline’ in order to endure and succeed. After success at high school, he was offered a scholarship to attend school in rural Australia, and later went on to university. Around this time his mother became sick and he decided to leave university and return to Papua New Guinea, to Rabaul, to look after his mother. This is a particularly strong selling point as the ‘teachers’ emphasise that people do not need university degrees from Australia to be successful, and that returning to Papua New Guinea illustrates his commitment to the country.

He later decided to move to Port Moresby to start his own business and launch his entrepreneurial career, obviously free of the social obligations which plague so many of Port Moresby’s hopeful migrants (cf. Strathern, 1975). He bought an old car at an auction for $100, which he drove around to collect bottles to be exchanged for cash, making $3000 in his first year. From here he opened up a small trade store, later going into the wholesale business, eventually starting the Stret Pasin Stoa chain. While many course participants might never heard of the Stret Pasin Stoa, his leading role in the Maggi Noodles Company - a staple ingredient to any village meal in Lihir, and a desired supplement in other areas - depicted him as truly successful. He wrote a business text book for the University of Papua New Guinea and supposedly made 20 million kina in one year at the height of his business success.

Various versions of his life story indicate that after a working as an advisor to the Development Bank he went back into business, where upon his partner died, then his mother, then as he was brought to court over bankruptcy his accountant died. I was unable to confirm this with Tam.

There are evident correlations between Tam’s messages and prosperity theology found in some of the more charismatic churches throughout Papua New Guinea.

To be sure, Lihirians and many other Papua New Guineans often stereotyped Asians (rarely distinguishing between countries of origin and often describing them as ‘greedy’ due to their business practices) and showed resistance to their presence. For this reason many Lihirians rejected the PV course; in this case Tam represented supposedly alien capitalist values.

Simultaneously Asians were generally recognised as successful entrepreneurs, especially given that many well known and long standing businesses in Papua New Guinea are established and managed by Asian families. Despite the fact that since Independence there has been a decrease in the number of white expatriates, and that there has been an increase in the volume of Asian migrants and Asian run businesses, Asians are generally not located in the same colonial history as their white counterparts. The economic success of many Asian countries, that were previously colonial outposts like Papua New Guinea, provides an alternative example and source of inspiration that counters the paternalistic approach of the Australian Government. Despite existing hostility towards Asian businessmen in Lihir, Tam was accepted by the JNC and their supporters on account of these differences. In one way this seems like a contradiction, however, in this instance, Tam was seen to be offering economic strategies that would ultimately challenge the monopoly of Asian run businesses.

The mining company regularly provided transport with mining buses and dinghies as part of their support for community awareness programmes related to the mine and other associated events.

Women’s top shirt or smock worn over a wrap-around laplap (sarong).

During fieldwork I attended several village level courses. It was instructive to compare the different approaches and assumed knowledge in these two course levels. Throughout fieldwork I attended five courses, numerous graduations, and interviewed over 100 participants. See Appendix Six for PV graduation certificate.

Not all of these people would be directly involved with the ‘Destiny Plan’. However because the JNC’s plans were premised upon all Lihirians being “PV literate”, it was important that people in bureaucratic positions were familiar with PV philosophies.
11 As an extreme example, one participant even suggested that the bombing of the World Trade Centre was an example of non-Western people reacting to Western hegemony.

12 Motivation for the PV course was derived from the well known NGO slogan: “Give a man a fish; you have fed him for today. Teach a man to fish; and you have fed him for a lifetime”.

13 This resonates with Melanesian ecological insights that locate conservation as a practice that yields no financial return; a reality that problematizes Western environmentalist thought that relies upon idealised, functionalist depictions of the relationship between people, place and resources (Macintyre and Foale, 2004a: 235). In the context of large-scale resource extraction Lihirians have quickly come to see their environment as an important source of revenue, whether it is through royalties from gold extraction, or compensation for loss of trees, land and other natural resources. Lihirians have embraced environmentalist discourse and utilize impending ecological catastrophes for increased leverage in negotiations with the mining company as they seek more compensation and a wider distribution of wealth across the community (Macintyre and Foale, 2004a: 249; see also Macintyre and Foale, 2004b; Filer, 1998; Helden, 1998; cf. Kirsch, 2004).

14 See Appendix Seven for explanation of the Personal Viability grading system taken from the Personal Viability course booklet (Tam, 1997).

15 Although PV drew upon overt Christian sentiments, it did not enjoy undisputed support from local church leaders. Ambrose Kiapseni, who was born on Masahet Island and is the Bishop of the Catholic Church, expressed some reservations. His concern was that people would fail to realise the practical requirements of PV and that they would put too much hope in simply attending the course and spouting ‘PV talk’. His anxiety stems from the history of cargo movements and the rumours that PV was just another ‘cult’ (in the following chapter I will demonstrate that these concerns were not completely unfounded). Other local Catholic priests have supported the practical economic skills in the PV course, but were equally wary of the possibility of a ‘cult-like’ movement.

16 Despite access to some of the most modern health facilities in the country, Lihirians continued to draw from a continuum of healing techniques that include counter measures for sorcery, traditional ecological knowledge and Western biomedicines. While Lihirians have embraced medical programs and utilise their access to modern treatment, traditional healing techniques have proven remarkably resilient. In particular, the ancient skill of cranial trepanation has continued to be used by Lihirians to treat a range of illnesses (see Macintyre, Foale, Bainton, and Moktel, 2005).

17 For instance men like Mark Soipang who wax lyrical about the virtues of traditional values, a ‘simple village life’, and the importance of kastom, yet maintain a lavish existence at Marahun, own a four-wheel-drive vehicle, eat Western food, wear a suit and tie, and regularly travel off the island and overseas, epitomise Lihirian individualism. The contradictions between lifestyle and stated social values angered those Lihirians whose lives emphasised the relational aspects of Lihirian personhood.

18 This appears to support the patrol officer’s observation noted in chapter one that Lihirians possessed a ‘peculiar attitude’ where they only worked enough secure enough money for taxes and clothing.

19 These fears were not unfounded. Because people only received less than 300 kina, many felt it was a paltry amount of money and that there was little reason to ‘invest’ it. Most people relished the opportunity to spend their money at the town stores; local beer outlets made some the highest profits for the year. Others used this money in kastom, particularly to purchase rice and tin fish for guests.
Chapter Six

Mimesis, myth-dreams, and micronationalism ...The Lihir Destiny: “Lihir bai kamap siti na em bai bosim wold olgeta!”

Though there is no real solution in the Cargo cult – for the Cargo will never come – the ardent wishes and hopes poured into the movement bolster it up and revive it time after time despite failure. And large-scale activities, some of them quite practical, are carried out under the stimulus of these fantastic yearnings. (Worsley, 1968: 247)

“One of the things they talked about when I went to Lihir and I heard it, I didn’t know whether to laugh or what, they said they are going to make Lihir another New York!”
(Lihirian born Catholic Bishop, Ambrose Kiapsani, in Kavieng, NIP, 20/6/04)

Since the early stages of exploration the prevailing attitude in Lihir has always been to ‘get what you can while you can’. The IBP review provided the first real opportunity to devise new ways to extract more from what Lihirians already regarded as their gold mine. Given that the proverbial pot of gold was now largely being controlled by State and company executives, one might have expected Lihirians to come together to ensure healthy serves of golden wealth were ladled out across the community. But given the Lihirian tendency for constant division and reunion at all levels of society, it should come as no surprise that there has been no unanimity over how best to achieve the desired results. The JNC, who were formed specifically to oversee Lihirian interests in the review process, attempted to address growing dependency and potential post mine insolvency in a package they labelled the Lihir Strategic Development Concept (LSDC), otherwise dubbed the ‘Destiny Plan’. This development plan which was wholly enmeshed with Samuel Tam’s national development scheme (based on the implementation of PV) shifted the focus from the immediate future to post mine activities, with the specific intention of transforming development praxis. Essentially their ‘Destiny Plan’ - the collective result of TKA (both its enduring sentiments and local and State attempts to deny its legitimacy), the IBP review and the Personal Viability course – was a blueprint for a micronation.
Their proposal was more than merely an agreement between the various stakeholders of
the mining project or a prescription for economic prosperity that would secure the future
of Lihir well after the last mining executive has packed his bags. The ‘Destiny Plan’ was
a political manifesto and economic strategy for Lihir, effectively based on the total
implementation of the Personal Viability course and its philosophies throughout Lihir and
eventually the nation.

With a colourful history of chiliasmatic movements, Lihirians are accustomed to predictions
of change. In some ways the mining project is the total fulfilment of earlier prophesies, in
other ways it is a nightmare that left some convinced that things have gone horribly
askew and spoilt the ‘dream’. Despite the JNC’s intention to remove ‘cargo beliefs’ by
imposing modern neo-liberal ideology, the ‘Destiny Plan’ represented a continuation of
past political and material aspirations which first surfaced in TKA and later in the
Nimamar movement. The ‘Destiny Plan’ was an example of what happens when the
cargo actually does arrive, especially when it is delivered through the unexpected and
unprecedented context of mining. The themes of these earlier movements reappear in the
various attempts to regulate and instil change in the context of large-scale resource
development, initially in the Society Reform programme and later the ‘Destiny Plan’
which emphasised ritual adherence to modern bureaucratic procedures and forms.
Lihirians have wanted development since at least the colonial era, but their understanding
of how this would eventuate and appear has always been vague. Although in 2006 the
JNC had not yet implemented their ‘Destiny Plan’ or gained genuine political support
throughout the wider Lihirian community, this was the first time Lihirian leaders had
wholeheartedly embraced a perceived modernity. Compared to TKA, Nimamar and
Society Reform, the ‘Destiny Plan’ imagined a very different sort of development.

The ‘Destiny Plan’ had its roots in the Society Reform programme earlier fashioned by
some of the JNC members. It represented a (re)union with past political activity and
attempts at social engineering, the reinvigoration of micronationalist sentiments, and an
idiom of opposition to the mining company and the State. Crucial to their plans was the
management of both their own lives and the mining company. Elements of this resistance
might be viewed through a neo-Marxist lens as somehow related to the alienating and atomising effects of industrial capitalism that trample local economies and values. Scrutiny of this plan reveals the JNC were more interested in accommodating neo-classical economic and social doctrines which they understood as underpinning Western society. Therefore it is best viewed as a plexus, with its complicated and multi-levelled programme, historical connections and continuities, various political and economic objectives, and the variety of ways in which these can be interpreted.

The JNC were in a unique situation. Their access to resources through the mining project, their commitment to PV, and their involvement in Samuel Tam’s nation wide programme for economic development converted micronationalist sentiments into actual plans for micronation making. The JNC had not merely expressed typical micronationalist desire for greater autonomy (not necessarily full-scale secession), but went to great lengths to create a blueprint for a micronation, with its own laws, economy and leaders, that would not only show the way, but might eventually fulfil prophesies of becoming the “las kantri” (last country). Their outlook was ultimately insular and they relied upon Samuel Tam for instruction, inspiration and engagement with the nation through his programme. There was an intrinsic tension between wanting ‘bottom up’ development, and having an inherently ‘top down’ approach. Their plan was classically neo-liberal, based on a reverse trickledown effect where the rest of the nation would develop after Lihir has changed – which was dependent upon transforming Lihirian leaders, through a process the JNC called ‘mind conditioning’, who would then act as exemplars for the Lihirian population. The combination of mimesis and insularity gave the ‘Destiny Plan’ the distinct appearance of a ‘post modern cult”; the scale of sophistication increased while the essential characteristics remained the same. In essence, plans for the future assumed a scale and complexity that Government and company bureaucrats could have never foreseen.

Melanesian magico-religious and secular political movements are often treated as either ‘cargo cults’ or variations of micronationalism. This separation assumes micronationalist movements are distinct from cargo movements in terms of religious orientation, or
reliance on a secular and rational and not a magico-religious world view, privileging rational means over ritual emphasis. This division is not always helpful, nor is the distinction as clear as some would have us believe. This dichotomy reflects Worsley’s Marxist interpretation of cargo cults as indicators of burgeoning class consciousness and a particular evolutionary phase where “future nationalist developments will probably be less and less under the aegis of millenarian cult leadership” (Worsley, 1968: 255). My analysis of the JNC and their ‘Destiny Plan’ will illustrate the continuity between these categories, and that the ‘Destiny Plan’ was really a rational hoax; for all its modernist rhetoric it did not (yet) represent Worsley’s predicted transition towards a purely secular (nationalist) political movement. The ‘Destiny Plan’ which relied heavily upon the teaching of the PV course (that encouraged forms of mimesis) was presented in modern, secular, rational terms, all the while tapping a rich magico-religious vein historically running through the Lihirian community.

The JNC simultaneously eschewed all association with TKA’s burdensome “myth-dreams” that linked material wealth with the ancestors, while incorporating into their programme those same ideas of predicted and expected change (a dream or destiny). The ‘Destiny Plan’ was a reconfiguration of their historical desire for abundant wealth to be attained without Lihirians having to engage in physical work, and the idea of Lihir becoming independent of the constraints of the Government – this time by leading the nation into prosperity. Their plan, that would transform people into “holistically developed entrepreneurs”, drew on a stylised image of the West, largely gained from their observations of the mining company – an advanced, regimented, bureaucratic and technocratic modern enterprise – augmented by PV’s emphasis on individualism, self improvement and their own imagined system of commodity relations ultimately aimed at continuous and expansive consumption rather than production. It was a mere simulacrum that echoed the outward manifestation of the ‘modern world’, with its incessant categorisation, hierarchies and control. From this perspective we begin to see the centrality of mimesis as practice and the enduring tension between knowledge and implementation.
Alternative attempts

In 2000 the company released a glossy annual report called the Community and Environment Report 2000 that detailed how the company had interacted with the community, what forms of development were established, how the community benefited from the presence of the company, and what sort of environmental monitoring took place. It presented a fairly amicable picture, with positive and encouraging reports from the managing director and the President of LMALA. Alan Roberts, the Managing Director at the time, reported that “much has been achieved since the signing of the Mining Development Contract with the State and the Integrated Benefits Package (IBP) with the people of Lihir”. Mark Soipang did not even mention the IBP or the forthcoming review, instead he urged his fellow Lihirians to “work together to shape Lihir how we want it to be.” On the back pages of the report are a few paragraphs of information on the Integrated Benefits Package, advertising firm commitment to sustainable development and enhancing the lives of all Lihirians. The various stakeholders were encouraged to work together, and there was positive affirmation that even though the review was expected to take some months, “how long the review takes is less important than the fact that it will address and resolve issues that are of real concern to the people of Lihir” (Lihir Gold Limited, 2000: 21).

The company was working on their public image as a caring institution and writing in good faith that the review process would be finalised within a short period. 2001 saw the IBP review in full swing and looking like it might still be completed within a reasonable time frame. The environment and community report provided another short spiel about the IBP and the philanthropic intentions of the review process and the likelihood of completion:

After extensive consultation with Lihirians and the three tiers of the PNG government, the revised IBP will involve detailed phased development plans for the following: health; education and training; community development - social and civil; environment; business development; relocation; and long-term trusts and investments for future generations…A
A key focus is to ensure that they are adequately resourced and funded, so they endure long after the mine has closed. It is expected that the revised IBP will be finalised by mid-2002. (Lihir Gold Limited, 2001: 11)

Alan Roberts was excited by the possibilities:

Clearly, we all have a lot to do to ensure that IBP Mark II is as successful as the agreement that has brought about so much success in the first five years of operation. The future is exciting but also challenging. (LMC, 2001: 9)

Mark Soipang was confident that as they moved into a new phase and identify new priorities, these would be addressed in the review making Lihir “a better place in which to live”. The following year Alan Robert’s picture had been replaced by Neil Swan’s, and the Managing Director’s report was working overtime to convince everyone that the IBP was still on track and that the company was “optimistic” it would be completed by mid-2003. But while Neil Swan was talking about partnerships and thanking everyone for their collective efforts in determining the future of Lihir, Mark Soipang was busy introducing the “Destiny 2023”, a Lihirian vision held since time immemorial that would now be realised in the IBP review:

We will not be able to rely on mine related activities forever. To prepare for a better future we have to shift our focus to non-mining activities. We must develop our human resources to have the spiritual, mental, physical, emotional, and financial capabilities to enable us to be self reliant and financially independent after mining has ceased. We need to have clearly defined organisational structures, management mechanisms and policies in place. We must strive to do that now, rather than later. Only by putting our words into actions can we make our dream come true. By doing this we will not only establish Lihir as a role model for the PNG mining industry, but we will also play a major part in stabilising the economy of the country. We have the support of the Government and the company but what we need most of all is the support of our people in order to face the challenge and, more importantly, to succeed. (Lihir Gold Limited, 2002: 4)

Mark’s prophetic message was perhaps more telling than expected; an unintended precursor for coming events. In 2003 the company tried a different tack and produced a
much larger report for community consumption that tried to answer the questions most frequently raised in YBW meetings between the company and the community. It was specifically designed to inform Lihirians about the company’s social and environmental performance over the past years and represented a marked shift in the style used to disseminate information throughout the community. Progressively the reports were being less obviously written to convince a foreign and educated audience (mostly LGL shareholders) that their investments were sponsoring the development and enhancement of Lihirian lives by an ethical company, and more geared towards convincing the Lihirian community that the company was concerned with their interests. The pictures of happy smiling Lihirians benefiting from a new tap, an ablution block, a road or new VDS house remained, but the content and layout style were noticeably different, but not necessarily any more useful to the community. The report was titled “On the right path”, which might have been the case, but it says nothing of the pace at which they were moving or the political obstacles popping up along the way. The annual report (Lihir Gold Limited, 2003) summed up a great deal of heat and confusion surrounding the IBP agreement in a few sentences that noted there had been delays to the finalising of the review process while the representative teams worked to get it right. It was still laden with enthusiasm and anticipation that the review process will be finalised sometime in mid 2005.

These authoritative reports presented a synoptic image of the company’s performance. The shape and direction of development was easily digestible and the reader could rest assured wheels were in motion, people were happy, and Lihir was on its way to reaching its ‘Destiny’. Despite receiving marginal treatment in these reports, it is obvious the IBP review continually provided the stage for the negotiation of development. Regular review of lease and benefits agreements has been a costly omission from earlier contracts in other projects, such as Misima and Panguna (see Banks and Ballard 1997; Filer, 1990). However, as the Lihir experience has shown, a review process does not imply local desires can be more easily reconciled with company and stakeholder constraints.
The Lihir Joint Negotiating Committee

The JNC referred to themselves as a “master-mind” organisation: PV argot that reflects the status they believed was conferred upon them by the diversity, educational backgrounds and experience of its members. They were a self-styled group of elite Lihirian men who considered themselves the vanguards of social change. JNC members purposely chose not to work for the company. Despite their overall reliance on the company to fund their grand scheme, wage labour was considered a sign of dependency and contradictory to the entrepreneurial emphasis.

At the head of the JNC was Mark Soipang, the Chairman of LMALA. Other members included Bruno Minai, the Vice Chairman of LMALA (the host of the pkepke feast noted in chapter four); Joachim Malele, who studied economics for a short while at the University of Queensland; Peter Toelinkanut, a retired Air Nuigini aircraft engineer; July Totzik, a company trained electrician, who operated one of the few successful Lihirian businesses that made a profit from company operations; Mel Morus, a lawyer working in Port Moresby; Gabriel Kondiak, an outspoken community leader who has occupied numerous position in Lihirian companies; and several Ward Members with varying levels of education and employment experience. Importantly, Lihirian Ward Members did not unanimously support the JNC, nor did all Ward Members fully comprehend the JNC’s plans in order to make a completely informed opinion (or rejection) of the ‘Destiny Plan’.

In 2004 the JNC existed as a separate political entity and they largely operated exclusively and in isolation from other institutions, such as the LLG, church leaders, the Petztorme Women’s Association, and men’s house leaders. The ‘Destiny Plan’ was not a community movement, nor did it have full community, Government or company support. Although the JNC supposedly represented community interests and involved members from these other bodies, there was an ambiguous and at times strained relationship between the JNC and other institutions and the wider community, which partly stemmed from people’s opposition to PV, or their confusion about the proposed direction of Lihir.
While the State (and the Local Level Government) supported Tam’s concept of financial autonomy and often praised the PV course, Tam’s plans had not been officially incorporated into any Government policies. Similarly, although State representatives often rhetorically supported the JNC’s plans for self reliance, they were often confused by their diffuse approaches and alarmed by what appeared as an attempt to reduce State involvement in Lihirian development.

The ‘Destiny Plan’ was the makings of a very small and highly motivated group of ‘elite’ Lihirian males who were strongly influenced by Samuel Tam and his Personal Viability course throughout the review of the IBP. It was the result of the platform created by the renegotiation process and the chance to consider the social, political and economic effects of the mining project on the wider community. As the JNC sought to control the changing means of production and create a just society that favoured the development of individuals, they were also determined to establish an increased division of labour and economic competition between individuals to generate economic growth. On the one hand they rejected burgeoning class antagonisms, and on the other they welcomed economic canons that supported the inherent inequalities of the capitalist system. Great emphasis was placed on the necessity for individuals to set goals and work towards personal accumulation of wealth. From this perspective the JNC and Samuel Tam can be seen as the potential ‘charismatic’ leaders of a movement based on adherence to economic rationalism that was more likely to create internal community division rather than enable Lihir to actually pull away (in any significant manner) from the nation state.

What the JNC considered as Lihir’s destiny was integrated into Tam’s development scheme. It is important to note this because the transitions that occurred in the development plans of the JNC and the way they came to view the role of Lihir in the nation was contingent upon their involvement in his national project. The JNC became totally convinced that what Tam was offering was the only way to develop Lihir, and that the concurrent development of Papua New Guinea under this schema, was not only beneficial and necessary for Lihirian economic development - to provide a market for
Lihirian products - but that national development through Tam’s EDTC was also dependent upon Lihir leading the way.

**Society Reform (or conform?)**

The ideal of bureaucratization of Lihirian life, characteristic of the ‘Destiny Plan’, has its roots in the Society Reform programme. First launched in 1993, Society Reform was principally engineered to stem the spreading tide of social decay both realised and anticipated through the mining project. Initial plans for the programme were couched in terms of “rescuing and reviving Lihirian culture” and developing “fellowship and relationship principles as regards to interactions among fellow Lihirians based on the Christian principles of love and basic wisdom of the Lihir customary ways” (LMALA, 1994: 6). The programme’s three-fold objective aimed to reinvigorate customary activities and ways of relating with Christian moral values, stimulate the local economy through the involvement of all Lihirians in an abstract notion of ‘development’, and create social, political, economic, and industrial stability. By 1996, as the impacts of social change were increasingly felt throughout those villages in the mining lease zones, Lihirian leaders, particularly those associated with LMALA, pushed for the total implementation of the Society Reform programme. This mainly involved Society Reform leaders speaking in different villages about the programme with the expectation that people would then reform themselves into customarily grounded moral businessmen.

In light of the Panguna mine crisis occurring at the same time, Lihirian leaders sought ways to avoid the state of social conflict experienced only a few islands away. This was also the first serious attempt to regulate social change and an early expression of the xenophobia and exclusivity that has characterised Lihirian political ideologies since TKA. In recent years this xenophobia has been regularly expressed in the context of the increasing number of non-Lihirian migrants residing on Lihir, who are blamed for “law and order problems”, generating local plans for systematic monitoring (if not removal) of all non-Lihirians. Although the programme was eventually abandoned in the late 1990s
due to limited results and mismanagement of the company grant, it was certainly not forgotten by Lihirian leaders; in many ways it was the genesis of the ‘Destiny Plan’. However, it would take the PV course to open up a new road for these old ideas.

Society Reform resembled an early ‘capacity building’ exercise. It was proposed in the pre-construction phase that the major political institutions in Lihir would be reorganised according to local concepts of modern bureaucratic hierarchy. This included the Nimamar Development Authority (NDA); a council of Chiefs or Toyie (a concept that would later reappear which I discuss further in the following chapter); the Lihir Human Development Authority; and the ‘umbrella company’, an organisation dedicated to Lihirian economic development. Flow diagrams and images were drawn to illustrate how these various bodies would work together to execute the “Lihir Village Development System” and the “Lihir Master Development Plan” (Glaglas and Soipang, 1993). The Nimamar Development Authority would generate social and community development, with a particular emphasis on law and order, employment and localisation, and infrastructure such as the Niolam island ring road, health centres, wharfs and jetties, schools, and community centres. NDA was formally established by provincial legislation before the passage of the new Organic Law on Provincial and Local Level Government in 1995. The new law had the effect of converting the Nimamar Development Authority into a Local Level Government; it was later revived as a ‘Special Purposes Authority’ to carry out some of the LLG’s development functions under the terms of the Local Level Governments Administration Act of 1997.

The Council of Chiefs would provide a representative body of Lihirian clans and act as the monitoring agency for development, and provide a channel for the dissemination of information throughout the village. The Lihir Human Development Agency would implement the overall programme, promoting and inspiring “integral human development” and Lihir moral regeneration. This would cover areas of religion and worship, kastomary activities, education, and training for leadership, youth, women, family life, and health care. Finally, the ‘umbrella company’ would create a “business and investment environment” conducive to economic development and economic
participation for all Lihirians. This body would work with NDA to ensure the
collection of major infrastructural services. Additionally, Lihir was to be divided into
zones that would enable programme administration, with ‘traditional’ leaders, or ‘chiefs’,
to represent the clans in these areas. LMALA leaders believed this would form the basis
for “orderly administration and operation” across the entire community during and after
mining development.

Written into these plans was the involvement of Ray Weber, an expatriate who was the
first head of community relations for the mining company, specifically for “Westerner
input” (Glaglas and Soipang, 1993: 3). Contrastingly, the ‘Destiny Plan’ was devised
purposely without input from mining personnel or expatriates, reflecting the deterioration
of relations between JNC members and the company, and their very deliberate attempts
to prove their own capacity and independence. Ray Weber’s “Westerner input” was
replaced by Samuel Tam’s ‘home-grown’ input. Tam’s disassociation with the mining
company, his PNG citizenship, and his Chinese heritage – his non-white expatriate
mining personnel status - gave him kudos amongst the JNC who wanted to show the
company and the State that they had their own (and in their eyes superior) expertise in the
matter of business and development.³ As much as these two plans reflect a desire for
change (and finding the right method), they also suggest a continuing anxiety amongst
some Lihirians to prove their worthiness and ability to engage as modern people with
Western institutions (cf. Robbins, 2004a: 177).

One particularly strong parallel between the Society Reform Programme and the ‘Destiny
Plan’ was the desire to escape being labelled as cargo cultists.⁴ This term has been
applied by both outside groups and authorities and locally by Lihirians in a process
Lindstrom refers to as “auto-cargoism” (1995). With its various institutions, Society
Reform would show the Government that Lihirians could manage the social, economic
and political effects of the mine, and that they were no longer cargo cultists, but modern
bureaucratic leaders able to transform “traditional Lihir society” into a “modern Lihir
society”.

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Here we witness early attempts to conceptualise institutional regulation of Lihirian life and the rudimentary concept of integration between economics, society and politics, where individual development promotes social development and vice versa. Supposedly as each person experiences greater personal autonomy and development, coupled with an increased living standard and incorporation into the capitalist market, they concurrently support and are supported by traditional kinship and political structures. It is clear the early intentions of Society Reform were greater than the rhetoric of ‘cultural survival’. It would be not only naïve to assume Mark Soipang and his cohorts were mainly concerned with the moral decay of Lihirian society, but incorrect, given that the mining project has always been regarded as the coming of the Lihirian economic millennium – regardless of whether it is viewed through a religious or secular lens. What Society Reform envisioned was not the creation of control mechanisms to shore up Lihirian *kastom* and Christian morals, but a new regulated society, albeit in elementary form, where Western economic institutions are married to traditional social structures to form a distinctly Lihirian modern environment. It represented the embryonic stage of Lihirian political and social bureaucratization, and the consistent attempts to find the right ‘formula’ for economic development.

**Sailing towards sustainable shores**

“We have a ship, the captain and the crew, the fuel, the food, and water supply that we need to make the journey. We also know in which harbour we will berth….The harbour is the Lihir Destiny. The captain is the NRLLG and LMALA through the JNC. The ship is the Lihir Grasruts Pawa Mekim Kapat Ltd. The course is the Lihir Strategic Development Concept”. (Lihir Joint Negotiating Committee, 2004a:5)

The JNC described the ‘Destiny Plan’ as their version of the legendary ‘Marshall Plan’. It was their “road map” for achieving the Lihir Destiny, and although it grew in complexity to encompass personal, social and national development, the focus was always on some form of *Lihirian* economic progress. According to the JNC, the Lihir destiny is the attainment of “financial independence and self reliance that will promote and maintain sustainable development and enable [them] to be a progressive Christian Lihirian society.
with a highly educated, healthy and wealthy people” (Lihir Joint Negotiating Committee, 2004a: 16). The main elements of the ‘Destiny Plan’ can be summarised as follows: the establishment of the LGPMKL (Lihir Grasruts Pawa Mekim Kamap Ltd. [enabling the power of the Lihir grassroots] – Lihir franchise of Tam’s Grasruts Pawa Mekim Kamap); the total implementation of the PV programme, including the PV grading system; the establishment of the Lihir Grasruts Yuniversiti; the establishment of economic projects to create revenue on Lihir – poultry, fishing, timber, garden produce and cash crops; the Lihir Grasruts Benk; land purchases on and off Lihir for future development; business development; and the establishment of Lihir FM, to provide a voice for Lihirians and to broadcast important information regarding the mine or other issues (such as PV propaganda). It was imagined that over a period of years this environment would produce a ‘micronation of entrepreneurs’. Similar to Society Reform, the ‘Destiny Plan’ proposed a total restructuring of Lihirian society to fit their version of economic development; bureaucratization and increased surveillance were seen as crucial components of modernity. However, the fundamental difference is that for the JNC, achieving this state would be contingent upon everybody becoming “PV literate”; according to the popular JNC adage, PV had to become “second nature” or the new “Lihirian psyche”. The underlying assumption was that total commitment to ritualistic performance of PV would somehow affect the overall outcome.

The Lihir Grasruts Pawa Mekim Kamap Ltd. (LGPMKL) was the governing body designated to install the ‘Destiny Plan’. The name implies ideas of ‘bottom up’ development and that local or Lihirian initiative is more sustainable and capable of reaching better results than ‘top down’ planning imposed by Western NGO’s, consultant anthropologists, development planners, the State or the company. Yet despite their intentions, their approach was inherently contradictory; the management bias of a small group demonstrates the sort of corporate hierarchy they ideologically eschew, and their plans were premised on neo-liberal strategies that actually reduce the opportunity for meaningful grassroots participation. Ultimately, the plan was to fuse LMALA and the LLG together under this organisational structure to centralise execution and administration of the various projects and plans that fell under the ‘Destiny Plan’.
Political restructuring would bring clan leaders into the development process with greater connection between the LLG and the village, with a focus on strengthening Lihirian kastom. Central to this programme was the codification and restructuring of kastomary activity and leadership. As I discuss in the next chapter, the JNC intended to have codified kastom passed as legislation under the LLG, and those not practicing kastom tru (true custom) were liable to receive financial penalization. Following from chapter four, the separation of kastom from entrepreneurial activity, ‘family needs’ and general politics, was central to JNC concepts of modern living. There would be different ‘departments’ in the new government structure that dealt with different aspects of Lihirian life: health, education, the economy, women, children, youth and the environment. Although many of these offices already existed, presumably the idea was to consolidate them under centralised JNC control. So far, religion, kalsa (culture), and sports were lumped together and assigned as one package for monitoring and developing as activities extraneous to ‘bisnis’ (business). If Society Reform lacked direction on how to develop people and society, as individuals and as a collective, PV stipulated a recipe that covers all bases – “physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and economic” – based on this JNC belief:

“Holistic Human Development is integral human development and much more. It cannot be defined in one sentence. Holistic here means the whole human being is only a minute but integral part of the universe. What we do affects everything on earth and the universe. It is not enough to develop the whole person although that is essential. The complete human being must also live in harmony with the overall whole, the universe…It is social, business, financial, spiritual, emotional, family, nature, to be your best. Holistic Human Development is everything in life. It is life itself”. (Lihir Joint Negotiating Committee, 2004b: 54)

However, aside from inundating people with PV rhetoric, there were few details on how this “holistic human development” would occur.
Tam’s wider programme for developing a PV nation involved the monitoring and surveillance of people’s activities and progress which would be carried out through the PV grading system – a process of overtly hierarchical observation that normalises judgment. Through consistent monitoring of PV members and their economic activities recorded in their grading book which they receive upon completion of the course, the LGPMKL intended to monitor the state of the informal economy, and grade individual and collective ‘progress’. The grading system, based on the four “growth disciplines” - productivity, integrity, economy, and law of success discipline - was intended to cover all aspects of individual lives and to rank people according to how successfully they performed certain tasks, ranging from their economic activities through to church and kastom obligations. Specifically these ranks would determine how much money people could borrow from the Grasruts Benk in order to advance their entrepreneurial activities. What the JNC wanted to install was a kind ‘panoptic’ discipline that was not specifically designed to produce power for the JNC, but rather “to strengthen the social forces – to increase produce, to develop the economy, spread education, raise the level of public morality; to increase and multiply” (Foucault, 1975: 208).

Miming the mine

To fully understand these plans for transforming Lihirian circumstances and achieving the desired state of modernity (implying economic and political autonomy that will ‘sustain’ Lihir after mine closure), we must appreciate the centrality of mimesis. The repetitive rote learning of PV laws, mantras, anthems, ‘disciplines’ and entrepreneurial business techniques, is aimed at guaranteeing access to a certain kind of life and status. For PV followers these ‘rules’ were often seen as ends to themselves; following correct PV procedure was often more important than devising ways (that might actually draw upon useful skills learnt in the PV course) to achieve desired entrepreneurial goals. This partially accounts for the gap between ‘theory’ and ‘practice’. For the JNC this was manifest in their ‘Destiny Plan’ that was completely committed to the exact performance
of Tam’s teaching. Unwittingly Tam had become the reluctant charismatic leader of a ‘post modern cult’.

Tam’s educational system, with its ranked hierarchies, reproduced the effects of graded societies that are intended to give people access to new forms of knowledge or ‘secrets’ as they are initiated into higher levels. The JNC spoke as if “sitting down” in the highest level PV course (the Entrepreneurial Business Development (EBD) course) would somehow reveal the answers. Undoubtedly this was not helped by the fact that Tam literally said that he was letting them in on a “secret” (his knowledge gained from years of business achievements that JNC members have not had the opportunity to experience). When one of the JNC members triumphantly explained they had “unlocked the white man’s secret”, I momentarily tried to believe maybe it meant a deeper insight into the self contradictory and exploitative ideology of modern Western bourgeois illusions that would actually locate me in the ‘savage slot’. But as he unfolded his comment with talk about tax evasions and saving schemes, it was obvious the “secret” was material and very economic.

‘Cracking the code’ is a familiar aspect of cargo discourse, whether it is Their attempt to comprehend Their imposed inferiority and realize liberation, or Us trying to better comprehend ourselves through Their mimicry (cf. Boon, 1982; Marcus and Fischer, 1986; Worsley, 1968: 247). The PV course was attractive to the JNC because it provided answers and knowledge seemingly denied by the company and the State. Tam’s entrepreneurial instructions focused on many of the basic managerial elements of business, such as conducting feasibility studies, drawing conceptual flow charts, and regularly producing budgets, report sheets and sales projections. These and other unstated and implicit aspects of economics, which underpin the operational success of the mining company, were treated by the JNC as a form of hidden knowledge that they made explicit through their routine naming and designation, and their ritual enactment of the procedures of business, and the tacit ‘rules’ that govern Western personhood.5
In his work on millenarian movements in New Britain, Lattas argues that humans constitute themselves by internalizing and reacting to the gaze of others; in cargo cults this assimilation of the other is manifest in the “theatrical self-identification in which people’s corporeal gestures become identified with those of Europeans” (1998: 268). To this end, Lihirian plans for economic, social, and political advancement represented the appropriation and internalization of the “moral technology of self improvement” (Lattas, 1998: 234) consistently presented by kiaps, missionaries and miners. PV and its application in the ‘Destiny Plan’ were attempts to overcome the alienating structure of economic and political relations that simultaneously reproduce the very structures and organising principles they sought to reform (cf. Comaroff, 1985).

As Dalton points out, many cargo cults consist of “perfectly rational economic and political action” (2004: 203). The JNC were not mistaken in seeing the regimented bodily routines and gestures, disciplined business techniques, and quests for personal augmentation – all taught by PV – as the ‘secret’ or essence of economically successful modern Western lifestyles. Essentially, their attraction and emotional connection to PV and their ‘Destiny Plan’ stemmed from their attempt to grasp the transformative powers of discipline. It should come as no surprise that the militaristic character of PV and the ‘Destiny Plan’ reflected the same pedagogic regimes used by Western administrators, missionaries, and teachers to create disciplined moral subjects – more ‘civilized’ Melanesians (cf. Foucault, 1975). The JNC’s attempts at totalitarian imposition resonate with Burridge’s concept of “rigorism”: the tendency among millenarianists who believe they now hold the key or have grasped the secret and feel compelled to force it upon others (Burridge, 1971: 135). For the JNC, economic prosperity was dependent upon all encompassing behavioural regulation.

The overwhelmingly bureaucratic and autocratic character of the ‘Destiny Plan’ could not have developed without the daily influence of the company, its workers, regimented constitution and infrastructure. Mining companies invariably fit the Weberian ideal type model of the bureaucratic enterprise, characterised by “jurisdictional areas” ordered by rules and administrative regulations; incessant documentation and storage of “written
files”; the appointment of specialists according to specialised training in different capacities; and fierce hierarchical structures where employees distinguish between their private and professional lives (Weber, 1978: 956 - 957). It is this conflation of modern structures with economic success that caught the JNC eye.

The ‘Destiny Plan’ is consonant with Giddens’ institutional dimensions of modernity, offered in a model that interlinks the four dimensions – surveillance, military power, industrialism and capitalism – on the axis of industrialism (1990: 59-61). These are represented by the move towards increased surveillance of the commercial and private economies; movement of people, especially non Lihirians, in and out of Lihir; customary activities (which are inherently economical); Lihirian political systems (the men’s house ‘system’, the LLG and LMALA); and mining operations, with local views towards microscopic inspection of gold production and export (a consequence of Lihirian suspicions they were being cheated out of profits).

The ‘Destiny Plan’ was wholly concerned with the capitalist sphere, and although mining plays a major part in terms of providing capital, the ‘Destiny Plan’ was aimed at generating a market, both locally and nationally, that would ultimately be independent of mining activities. Failing this, they would happily take complete control of mine production (or wealth accumulation). While hardly developing their own army, the JNC wanted increased police activity and presence on the island to curb what they regarded as a ‘law and order’ problem; ‘border protection’ was paramount. The forceful removal of non-Lihirian settlers from areas around Kul, Kunayie and Londolovit suggests the JNC had few issues with the use of violence. Obviously the mine is the central progenitor of industrialism, but the long term view of the ‘Destiny Plan’ was that other smaller industries would be established in Lihir (and around the nation). The emphasis on small scale entrepreneurial activity could be seen as a resistance to large-scale industrial activity and the lack of control exercised by a ‘pseudo proletariat’ over the materials and organisation of labour. However, given the dependency on mine related income, it is more realistic that any resistance to large-scale industrial mining per se was superficial and the real opposition was aimed at foreign or State control.
As Lihirians were progressively drawn into greater contact with the outside world they have familiarised themselves with new things, movements and concepts, which they incorporated into their way of operating. However, their knowledge of the outside world and global capitalism has remained partial. In earlier years Arau was the main external conduit; he was the chief source of information on life outside Lihir, political developments occurring throughout the province and visions of a possible future. With the establishment of mining operations Lihirians gained access to a range of external sources of information through media, telecommunications, and the constant movement of non-Lihirians on and off the island. Over time Lihirians have filtered more information in a different sort of mimetic behaviour.

TKA envisioned its economic future as lying in plantation agriculture that was no longer managed by their colonial mastas. These plantations would be collectively controlled and worked by groups of Lihirians. This vision incorporated idealised notions of ‘tradition’ and, then current, ideas about ‘co-operatives’. At the time ‘co-operatives’ were seen as the only option for economic advancement that also allowed for the incorporation of an egalitarian ethos. In the context of mining, Lihirians saw their economic future in the management of the mine and in small-scale businesses that capitalised on the wealth generated by the mine. Again Lihirians sought to displace those whom they saw as dominating them – the white mining operational managers and businessmen from other parts of Papua New Guinea who had lucrative contracts with the company. Lihirians have come to envisage a ‘nation of shop keepers and managers’; the egalitarian ethos once again appealed to ‘tradition’, but the model no longer incorporated ideas about collectivism. Appropriately, for a postcolonial economy, Lihirians imagine operating within this economy as individual ‘businessmen’ and ‘managers’.

When Bill Gates comes to hausboi near you

During 2004 the JNC attempted to ‘educate’ the community and other Lihirian leaders about their programme. In these meetings, people were told they can get on board the
boat sailing to the new Lihirian future, or sit on the shore waiting for the “white ships full of cargo” that will never arrive. Through the national implementation of the PV course, headed by Lihir, the JNC depicted itself as the captain at the helm ready to sail PNG through its financial tempest. Ordinarily these meetings were held on Sunday mornings after church in public areas in the village. On one occasion the JNC decided to hold a special meeting in Latual Village in one member’s men’s house; this was partly because there had been growing confusion and antagonism within this section of the community regarding the JNC and their plans.

That evening when I arrived at the men’s house I wasn’t surprised to hear a portable generator whining away and providing power to illuminate the setting. Generators have become a common feature of the villages on this side of the island, and where possible no ‘proper’ event would be held without one. What I didn’t expect to find was a power point presentation of the ‘Destiny Plan’ being beamed onto the inside wall of the men’s house; it seemed slightly contradictory to present the future for “neck-top computer” specialists on a brand new laptop computer. Through a thick fog of smoke, the apocalyptic words “Lihir Destiny” seemed to magically hover above the heads of the older men; I waited for trumpets and horsemen. The presentation began with pre 9/11 pictures of New York with the twin towers still standing as proud monuments to man’s achievement. These were followed by more images of Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Sydney, beamed through the haze onto the dirty inside wall. Gasps of amazement were directed at both the images and the technology. If the JNC couldn’t convince them of the ‘rationality’ and necessity of their plan, then they could dazzle them with bright lights and pretty pictures, or impress them through detailed descriptions and complex flow charts that ‘explained’ how this city would economically function and the role each individual would play. 6 These education programmes had a similar format to Society Reform presentations and many of the mining company’s public awareness meetings on issues such as health and environmental impacts from operations. These campaigns were based on the presumption that detailed and ‘scientific’ explanations would be enough to motivate people to support their cause and adjust their own life accordingly; this was assuming their presentations could be comprehended.
This idea of Lihir becoming a ‘siti’ (city), a generic pie in the sky that promises greater purchasing power and an inverted world order, is a recurrent theme in recent Lihirian history. This ‘driman’ (dream) has evolved from the deceptively simple ‘kago’ (cargo), to images of a thriving metropolis. Lihirian urban dreams were previously based on their knowledge of Kavieng, a small and sleepy provincial centre based on northern tip of mainland New Ireland. Access to media forms and the opportunity to travel overseas has increased their awareness of how cities look. However as Bishop Ambrose Kiapseni’s mocking remark indicates, the problem wasn’t imagining how a Lihirian city might look - people had been doing that for at least the last thirty years, and most people already imagined their urban role would be characterised by consumption, not labour or production. Rather the concern was how this city would eventuate and their shallow understanding of how it would function.

The confusion that often arose around these presentations partly explains the tensions surrounding the JNC and their ‘Destiny Plan’. The JNC had devised elaborate plans without fully consulting or including other groups, including the Local Level Government, which often meant leaders not directly involved with the JNC found it difficult to understand the ‘Destiny Plan’. This compounded community antagonism towards the JNC as people felt that their Ward Members (their democratically elected village level government representatives) were being excluded from the planning processes. Consequently people grew wary of the JNC, partly due to their confusion and resistance to the ‘Destiny Plan’ and PV, and because they thought the JNC were trying to subvert the Local Level Government. These tensions only increased as Ward Members became divided in their support of the JNC, and as some publicly renounced these plans.

Similarly, State representatives wavered in their support of the JNC. While they wanted to see the conclusion of the IBP, and for Lihirians to benefit from the mining project, they were uncertain about the ability of the JNC to implement their plans. They were also concerned by an approach that appeared to minimise State involvement in Lihirian development. Some politicians saw the contradictions in the JNC’s plans, and in their
frustration over the continuous delays to the finalisation of the IBP review, they simply dismissed the JNC as cargo cultists.⁷

Making (myth) dreams come true

Without ignoring or denying Lihirian passion for moral equivalence – a fundamental aspect of their desire for managing their own lives and the mining project – it is important not to miscalculate the material dimension of the Lihir a ninambal (dream). People retrospectively interpreted this dream in different ways. Some recognised the mining project as the logical fulfilment of the prophesies, however, for most Lihirians not receiving mining royalties, compensation payments, or relocation houses, this situation has been regarded as a bastard version of the original vision. In these instances the unequal distribution of wealth and development testify to the falsehood of recent reckoning: if this was the real fulfilment, wealth would be abundant for all. Others assumed that the arrival of the mining company, particularly the early supply ships, were the realization of predictions where ships and planes full of cargo would arrive from America, but that it was the greedy and selfish actions of a few (such as the Putput ‘landowners’) that spoiled this for everyone. This resonates with Bah Arom’s comments in chapter one about the arrival of the Kennecott mining company and other nostalgic recollections of the establishment of the mining camp at the Ladolam site, which was often described as having unrestrained access and “free” food and basic store items.⁸ This romantic period in the relationship between Lihirians and the company played a strong role in encouraging the belief that Lihirians ‘called’ the company to their shores, explaining the common conviction that they own mine.

Underscoring the Lihir Destiny, or the dream of becoming a city, or reaching their state of independence, is the term a peketon. It has long been used by Lihirians to refer to change, and as mentioned in chapter one, it gained metaphorical significance in the TKA. It became the leitmotif of the ‘Destiny Plan’ - as national change will emanate from Lihir - providing moral justification, connecting modern means with traditional dreams of
influence and change. On the one hand the JNC rejected all forms of thinking which supported these earlier prophesies or “myth-dreams”, claiming these hold Lihirians back from ‘real’ development, fostering a hand-out mentality. On the other hand they continued to give credence to these dreams, intellectualizing them as Burridge would, recasting them as aspirations, and through the PV lens as the ‘Lihir destiny’. They seized upon prophesy fulfilment to muster political support throughout the villages, historically contextualising their plan to such an extent that they too came to believe becoming a city (the outward manifestation of being financially independent and self reliant) was truly the ‘Lihir destiny’.

The ‘Destiny Plan’ ‘charter myth’ resonates with what Lindstrom calls the “bildungsroman” story line: the modernist project that accentuates education and moral development (2004: 24). Such narratives show little concern for the psychological and social effects of modernity; the JNC perceived few ramifications from their project, given their “holistic” approach. The aim is to develop and emancipate people from their traditional constraints, allowing people to step into the bright light of economic rationality. On numerous occasions Lindstrom (2000, 2004) has described Burridge’s Mambu (1995 [1960]) as a classic example of “bildungsroman”; “myth-dreams” made famous by Burridge, can only be overcome through native education and “better behaved Europeans”.

“Myth-dreams” abounded in the TKA, hinting at returned ancestors bearing cargo, money, and giving out houses to the faithful. In 2003 some of these beliefs continued to circulate throughout Lihir finding greater currency among the disenfranchised. Burridge’s solution for these “myth-dreams” or esoteric aspirations is a staunch commitment to modernity, to be delivered by the better behaved European, or in the Lihir case, the moral mining manager. The JNC have come to play ‘naïve native’ and the moral and enlightened Westerner; they have (re)created their own “myth-dreams” in the form of the ‘Lihir destiny’, while simultaneously rejecting the ‘real’ “myth-dreams” and becoming the moral agent of change through their ‘Destiny Plan’. As modern myth-dreamers, the
JNC have also become the moral European helping out their less savvy black brothers and sisters.

The JNC wanted to completely revolutionise the way people live, interact, think, and dream. Primarily their concern was to create an entrepreneurial class in Lihir (to which everyone would subscribe, somehow eliminating the possibility for class conflict) which they argued would take Lihir into the “modern era”. Their approach was totalitarian yet altruistic, reminiscent of the paternalistic idealism of colonial administrators who launched moral education campaigns in order that Lihirians could learn the truth and become like Us. While the Administration may not have been successful in their endeavours, the JNC proudly bear the white man’s burden, “out of love for the people”, in their effort to save Lihir from financial (and moral, customary, spiritual, emotional, physical and mental) destitution. As one JNC member proudly exclaimed: “I will act like Jesus did, he died on the cross, to redeem everybody, mi, mi laik halvim yupela olgeta” (I want to help you all). As moral educators (and potential martyrs), they have become the embodiment of what Lindstrom regards as Burridge’s “own pathetic myth-dream” – forlorn hopes for development through education and goodness, the “false cargo of modernity” (Lindstrom, 2000: 299).

The State of exclusion

In their socio-economic report on the potential impacts of the Lihir mine, Filer and Jackson suggested that the significance of the “cargo cults” was best understood by the term “ritual communism” (1989: 181), denoting elements of proto-nationalism, micronationalism and revivalist movements, all of which could be found in pre-mining political activities. Only a few years earlier, Ron May attempted a synthesis of the various political movements throughout Papua New Guinea which fell within his framework for micronationalism. In the introductory chapter of his Micronationalist Movements in Papua New Guinea (1982), May stressed the common tendency throughout different movements to disengage, either ideologically or psychologically, from wider political and economic systems imposed by colonial rule, seeking common
identity and purpose through a combination of traditional mores and modern means to reach their various ends (1982: 1; see also May, 2001: Ch. 4). To this he added a possible anatomy of these movements, including: membership based on ‘community’ or a loosely defined sense of ethnic cohesion; universalistic objectives which usually pertain to some form of ‘egalitarian development’; and an ideological emphasis on self-help or local action as opposed to State hand-outs or State dependent systems of economic development (1982: 2). Furthermore, micronationalist movements are not specifically concerned with separatism - although disengagement or withdrawal is symptomatic of these movements - and separatism does not necessarily imply micronationalism. Similarly, many micronationalist movements have emerged from those described as having definite ‘cargo’ philosophies, emphasising ritual over regulated work.

Filer and Jackson suggested that resentment (towards the State, authorities, business, Europeans, or simply economic inequality) prevalent within ‘cargo-like’ movements could dissipate under the impact of mining, but that these same feelings might resurface and find expression later on in a more “rational” (yet potentially violent) disguise (1989: 177). Feelings of resentment throughout Lihir (and there are many) may not have surfaced (yet) in the type of violence witnessed on Bougainville, but they have certainly been expressed within a more “rational” manoeuvre headed by the JNC. Those aspects of micronationalism that stress some form of loosely defined “ethnic cohesion”, or community membership based on common goals were familiar traits of the Nimamar movement. Mining activities only amplified these sentiments, although they have not been channelled into direct political activity, instead finding expression in daily relations between Lihirians and non-Lihirians. Mining developments have fostered an incipient Lihirian ethnic identity and the emergence of exclusivity throughout the wider Lihirian population in relation to mining benefits and the increasing number of non-Lihirian migrants making their way to Lihir in search of opportunities associated with new development (cf. Jorgensen, 1996). These relational changes stem from past anti-state politics, a history of insatiable desire compounded through the unequal distribution of mine related wealth and development generating competition over scarce resources and local defensive appeal to primordial sentiments. Where Nimamar tapped into a feeling of
discontent, the JNC tried to raise these feelings to fruition, from a micronationalist attitude, to an actual attempt at *micro-nation making*.

Inverting the past

As Lindstrom (1995) has shown, the cover story of the cargo cult tabloid has always been the relationship between rational ends and irrational means. No one has questioned the right of Melanesians to desire fancy or utilitarian goods, or moral equality; what interested anthropologists, *kiaps*, missionaries, miners and the like were the ways in which people thought they could achieve these ends. Most cargo literature has found little trouble in teasing out essentialist dualisms where we are secular, they are religious or magical; we are enlightened, they are confused; we are complex and constantly evolving, they are static and simple; we have social planners, politicians, and separate life into the capitalist market, religion, politics and kin and kith, while they have prophetic leaders and make do with general purpose cults, rolling all these categories into the one package. On the surface, the JNC armed with their ‘Destiny Plan’ and the PV course that preaches its own form of economic rationality, have attempted to transcend these old dualisms, or they have at least moved from one category to the other, claiming that it is some form of bourgeois rationality that enables Us to have the goods and material lifestyle They have only dreamed about.

An historical materialist interpretation might describe the JNC as close to reaching (if not already) rational political and economic action on the road to modernity – some far off state of being quite different from their current ‘vernacular’ modernity (cf. Knauft, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2002d). Hidden within the appendix of Worsley’s seminal work on Melanesian cargo cults, is his identification of a general progression from millenarianism to rational political engagement whereby the “essential rationality of Melanesian thought and action is shown on a larger scale by the directional tendency of the movements, the transition from magical to political action” (1968: 269). Although he is at pains to indicate the inherent rationality or internal consistency within cargo thinking, discourse
and action, and that the transition from ‘culting’ to political action is not a shift from irrationality to rationality, his work is premised upon a notion of evolving reason.

In some ways the intentions and behaviour of the JNC signal a linear progression in Lihirian political engagement with the State and the mining company. Equally tempting (although unlikely to win me any favours with the JNC) is to depict them as having reached the next rung in the climb up the cargoist evolutionary ladder, expressing archetypal mimetic behaviour in a more sophisticated performance. A more useful approach, which combines the elements of progression and mimesis, would consider the JNC as neophyte capitalist social planners who are like apprentice magicians that know the trick they want to pull off, but have only learnt some of the steps, and have not realised that once the rabbit is turned into an elephant it stays that way. Quite simply, the train that the ‘Destiny Plan’ will set into motion cannot possibly be reversed, and despite assurance from the JNC that they know their destination, they cannot (or refuse to) see the approaching derailment.

For many Lihirians, the fecundity of money has been a persistent question. What is the source of this wealth? Why does it appear to reproduce itself, but only in the hands of white people (or the educated ‘elite’)? “Myth-dreams” are an obvious form of interpretation and from Burridge’s cultural rationalist perspective, these serve to bridge any gap in local understanding. However, if the JNC have premised their plans on the realisation that “myth-dreams” do not serve any useful purpose in the accumulation of money and the ‘development’ of Lihir (despite reinterpreting and utilizing these “myth-dreams” for themselves), it is only because they have bought into an equally magical understanding of commodities and the capitalist system. The JNC have tried to put so much distance between themselves and these “myth-dreams” which by their reckoning only increase dissatisfaction and decrease living standards, leaving them completely open to receive all that Tam and his PV course has to offer. It is not that their prior education and experience as wage labourers or petty entrepreneurs gave them a superior understanding so that only they would appreciate the PV philosophy; there are many other educated and experienced Lihirians who have not been receptive to the PV course.
or the JNC’s plans. Rather, the difference has been their totalising emphasis on recanting these “myth-dreams” and making sure everybody complies with this new rationalism (cf. Lindstrom, 1993b).

Conversations with Lihirian mine workers points to an acceptance that wealth and material possessions can usually only be obtained by exchanging their labour time for wages. This is not to suggest they have not come to appreciate the soul destroying aspects of industrial wage labour, but rather, to indicate that for many work is connected to ‘progress’, be it financial or material, individual or communal. But for the JNC, everyone must publicly profess their belief in capitalist logic, not merely utilise it on select occasions. PV has been so influential within the JNC that it crystallised the conviction that ancestor worship is false, irrational and unnatural. On the other hand, it promotes a seemingly rational capitalist system underpinned by what Marx sardonically called commodity fetishism. Their obsession with transforming all Lihirians into homo oeconomicus, the epitome of bourgeois rationality, was based on a partial and stylized comprehension of capitalism and the social relations engendered within this system; an understanding that emphasises endless and expansive consumption over capital accumulation.

The PV course helped articulate a belief that modern capitalist processes must logically be the opposite of “myth-dreams” and somehow be more rational, more right, more modern and more likely to succeed; however, they have merely replaced one type of fetishism with another. If TIA members saw the production of material wealth and capital as somehow connected with the ancestors, making a fetish of productive processes, the PV course had its own form of fetishism in that it ascribed to commodities a reality so substantial that they acquire a life force of their own. Essentially PV taught the normality of atomization and bondage – the phenomenology of the burgeoning market-based system – which are considered efficient, natural and good.

Similarly PV attempted to instil a new set of correspondences between time, space and certain types of behaviour. If Lihirians had not already experienced the sort of
disenchantment associated with entry into a labour force regulated by time clocks, schedules, periods, shifts and rosters, marked by sirens and bus routines that deliver workers to and from the mine, then the PV course was designed to make up any lost time on this front. For the mine to operate, people’s natural productive capacities must become like the ore dug out of the ground; something separate from life itself, an item abstracted into the commodity of labour-time to be sold on the market. From here it appears real and immutable, even though it is nothing more than a social convention designed to order persons relative to one another and to nature.

It is likely that prior to capitalist incursion, seasonal rhythms defined an episodic time in Lihir; it was experienced as practical and phenomenological (cf. Sahlins, 1974 and 2005c). As LiPuma noted for the Maring, time existed in an embodied state – the existential time of doing that is inseparable from its sociality (cf. LiPuma, 2000: 281). Time was not perceived as an intangible, fetishized and animated commodity; simply, “there was no covert equation of time and economy, no metaphors that assumed that time, and hence human activity itself, was a commodity” (LiPuma, 2000: 282). But if this existential shift was already a reality for mine workers, then the JNC decided it must become a reality for all Lihirians for the sake of economic productivity. The time efficiency grading embedded in PV’s integrity discipline was one such measure designed to deliver the concept of time as something like capital, that will run out, or can be wasted, frittered away, invested, saved, used wisely, or exchanged.

Perhaps in one sense the JNC really had inverted cargo behaviour and thinking: what they considered natural, or more rational, was in reality an existence where “social relationships are dismembered and appear to dissolve into relationships between mere things – the products of labour exchanged on the market – so that the sociology of exploitation masquerades as a natural relationship between systematic artefacts” (Taussig, 1980: 31-32). Thus the old rituals and beliefs used for acquiring the moral and material ends have been replaced with calculation, atomization and bureaucracy for the acquisition of commodity relations. As Sahlins reminds us, “not everything in our
rationality is rational”, perhaps just the “cunning way we produce all the idiocies of modern life” (1992: 13).

Envoy

In outlining the roots and details of the ‘Destiny Plan’, it has been my intention to show the escalating role of mimesis and the continuity of past political activities, aspirations and approaches. Like TKA, Nimamar, and Society Reform, there are inconsistencies and contradictions between the means and ends, their stated intentions and desired goals. Their approaches and frameworks might contain an internal coherence, but this does not detract from the reality that these will not achieve the dream of a virtuous and wealthy egalitarian society.

Lattas, who draws upon Taussig (1993), has consistently argued that mimesis should not be construed as passive copying (Lattas, 1992, 1998, and 2000). While the JNC looked towards the future and imagined a liberated post mine scenario they have deliberately appropriated and reworked Western symbolic terms to gain power and create their own framework of meaning. From this perspective the JNC were “existentially corporeally enacting the historical context in which they find themselves” (Dalton, 2000b: 290). The PV course and the development of the ‘Destiny Plan’ were the next phase in a continuum of Lihirian political movements geared towards understanding and engaging with the capitalist system and obtaining the desired goods, lifestyles and moral equality. In this instance, Dalton’s notion of “corporeally doing ‘power’” (ibid) is particularly apt for understanding the JNC’s behaviour and development plans. Through participation in the planning, operation, and regulation of the mine and economic development, the JNC aimed to harness the ‘power’ that appears to innately reside in these activities, hitherto the domain of elites, Western administrators and miners. The ‘Destiny Plan’ is underpinned by the assumption that the total outcome will be changed by the performance of certain manoeuvres and gestures, or adherence to new forms of collective and individual regulation. For the JNC, establishing bureaucratic institutions and
practising total economic and social regimentation is crucial, intimating that economic development will only occur when ‘modern institutions’ are set in place.

The idea of the ‘Lihir destiny’ has been part of an unfolding process, intimately connected to Samuel Tam’s PV culture, and equally inspired by a history of prophesies and Lihirian expectations for modern lifestyles. Most importantly, it has emerged in the context of large-scale resource development and the realisation that mining is not the definitive answer to their economic aspirations. The dictatorial approach of the JNC and their ‘Destiny Plan’ has been met with both caution and outright rejection by the wider Lihirian community. Their plans emphasise individual and personalised activity within an all-encompassing and hierarchical framework that is intended to regiment individual behaviour across the entire community. These neo-liberal plans, which were intended to enable reconfigured “myth-dreams”, confront and offend notions of virtuous sociality inspired by genuine “myth-dreams” - the ideal of a wealthy society without economic competition.

In the same vein, fluid and flexible kastomary practices have been forced to fit this structure so that ‘preservation’ and ‘regulation’ are synonymous. However, any reluctance towards wage labour, or an existence totally commanded by commodity relations, is not likely to have come from moral judgements of capitalism - as much as this is offered in the local discourse of kastom and pasin bilong Lihir - rather that Lihirians were yet to fully accept or gain the introduced traditions, practices and habits that must be regarded as “self evident natural laws” for the successful establishment of an entrepreneurial society (Marx, 1976 [1867]:899). The purpose of the ‘Destiny Plan’ has been to intensify this education and experience so as to destroy all traces of the pre-capitalist metaphysics of production and exchange (or at least relegate them to the realm of controlled kastom, to be wheeled out on “kalsa days” and re-enactments of traditional feasting that will supposedly fulfil customary obligations and bind Lihirians together). Only then would Lihir become ‘viable’.
In many ways the JNC have conflated ‘management’ with their desire for ownership. Despite their production of complicated flow charts and economic projections they had not yet come to grips with the mechanical aspects of managing a multinational operation, assuming unproblematic operations once they are in a position of control. Like so many of the issues which arise in the context of mining, such as compensation for environmental, social and political impacts, the ‘Destiny Plan’ should be viewed as a local response to conflict over the control of resources (cf. Banks, 2002). Controlling their own lives, the mine, access to mine related wealth and development, and the direction and type of economic development generated through this process is central to the JNC’s vision of the future. The scope of Samuel Tam’s EDTC and his plans for resurrecting the tired Papua New Guinean economy is rivalled only by the urgency and sheer scale of the JNC design, evidencing the transformative effect of PV and the internalisation of the modernist rhetoric.

Although the ‘Destiny Plan’ was concerned with national development and the inversion of structural inequalities that would position Lihirians at the top of a new global hierarchy, the primary focus has always been Lihirian economic development and control of Lihirian resources. Tam’s national plans have been synthesized with Lihirian parochial intentions and presented by the JNC as seamless political evolution. While the inevitable closure of the mine will have drastic effects for Lihir, and no doubt the surrounding region, the JNC were convinced they had configured the correct modus operandi to ensure otherwise. But as the JNC resolutely refuse to accept their ‘client’ status and attempt to assert their ‘patron’ identity through their Occidental ‘Destiny Plan’ it is likely that the only changes they will experience are increased discontent and humiliation as they sink further into the maw of modernity.
“Lihir will become a city and boss the entire world”: Bah Arom (Kinami Village, Lihir, 2003), describing the prophesies of the TKA movement that swept through Lihir in the late 1960s and early 1970s which have since left a permanent mark on Lihirian visions of the future.

See Appendix Eight, Appendix Nine, and Appendix Ten.

Previously landowners and other leaders sought to engage consultant anthropologists, such as Colin Filer and John Burton, partly as a demonstration of their ability to employ the same expertise used by the mining company and the State.

In addition to previous admonishment from Administration patrol officers, in 1980, Noel Levi from the New Ireland Provincial Government, visited Londolovit Village on Niolam Island and told Lihirians to abandon any “cargo cult-type beliefs”, and that “achievement comes only from hard work and co-operation between yourselves” (Post Courier, 1980, 27th May: 13; cited in Lindstrom, 1995: 43).

External influences were often expressed through their adoption of management and negotiation terminology. The use of terms like ‘road map’ reflect earlier influences during the construction phase and earlier attempts to appropriate modern terminology.

See Appendix Eleven, Appendix Twelve, and Appendix 13 for examples of these flow charts designed as part of the ‘Destiny Plan’ used during ‘awareness’ campaigns and presentations during the review of the Integrated Benefits Package.

These comments reflect a more general phenomenon throughout Papua New Guinea where politicians and bureaucrats, and other urban elites, tend to dismiss any resistance to the State or attitudes that appear like a ‘handout mentality’ as cargo cult activity, regardless of whether there are any similarities with actual cult behaviour.

When the Kennecott mining company first arrived (by ship) and began to establish a mining camp at Ladolam, it is likely that many people would have made connections between their arrival and earlier predictions about cargo ships. Initial attempts by the company to establish a rapport with the community, through the distribution of food stuffs and basic trade store items, no doubt led some to believe that the company personnel were Lihirian ancestors who Lihirians had ‘called’, and were now here to ‘deliver the goods’.
Chapter Seven

Writing *Kalsa*: The paradox of changing while preserving

The past can only be told as it truly *is*, not was. For recounting the past is a social act of the present done by men of the present and affecting the social system of the present. “Truth” changes because society changes. At any given time, nothing is successive; everything is contemporaneous, even that which is past. And in the present we are all irremediably the products of our background, our training, our personality and social role, and the structured pressures within which we operate. (Wallerstein, 1974: 9, emphasis in original)

*Kastom i no inap dai, em bai stap oltaim* (*kastom* can not die, it will stay forever). Paulus Tala, Puki Hamlet, Niolam Island, Lihir, 2004

Throughout my first few months on Lihir, I attended more *kastomary* events, ate more pork, witnessed more exchanges of *mis*, kina and pigs, and watched more ‘traditional’ dancing and performance than I had ever seen in my other years in Papua New Guinea. But I was perplexed because in response to my questions about *kastom* people invariably responded with comments such as “*kastom bilong mipela i bugarrap pinis*” (our custom is totally ruined), or ‘*nau mipela no save long mekim kastom trutru*’ (now we don’t make true *kastom*). Despite the efflorescence of *kastom* Lihirians spoke as if *kastom* was in peril and expressed anxiety and in some cases real frustration over ‘incorrect’ practice. More *kastom* was not necessarily better and did not always translate into a feeling that *kastom* was being preserved. Regardless of the changes that occurred throughout the second half the twentieth century, such as the steady Christianization and commodification of Lihir, and the cosmological and political changes that surfaced in TKA and later in Nimamar, pre-mining days are often glossed as a time when *kastom* was ‘strong’ and ‘true’, making it impossible to consider the Lihirian *kastom* discourses outside of the experience of large-scale resource development.

During those first few weeks, apart from being absorbed in all this *kastom*, it was brought to my attention that there was no real need for an(other) anthropologist in Lihir because
the documentation of Lihirian *kastom* was already underway and close to completion. My ‘role’ as an anthropologist, as it was understood by some Lihirian men, was obsolete. The first time that Peter Toelinkanut and Gabriel Kondiak sat down with me in the men’s house to talk they tried to find out exactly what I was here for, to stake their claim as uncontested representatives of Lihir, and explain their role in the transformation of Lihir, which included a ‘cultural policy’. I was not in the least bit required for this process. From their perspective, if I had any role at all, it was to document the apparent hegemonic dominance of the company over Lihirians, and the inevitable triumphant success of the JNC through their deployment of the various apparatuses of the Lihir ‘Destiny Plan’. So far their ‘cultural policy’ included a codified list of the major feasts and exchanges practiced in Lihir and plans for the bureaucratization of men’s house leadership.¹ However, what they did not mention was the extent to which these plans were also entwined with the process of self definition. The codification of *kastom* was more than an indigenous attempt at salvage anthropology; it was explicitly concerned with the definition of Lihirian identity. From this perspective, here I focus on *kastom* as a particular aspect of social change and as an instrument in political and ideological struggles that Lihirians have come to wage against their neighbours, the nation, the company, and even among themselves.

**Ideological not practical differences**

As I have already mentioned, when Lihirians use the term *kastom* it takes on a variety of meanings depending on the context and the intentions, but generally it is used to refer to those activities, beliefs and values that are also glossed as “*lo bilong tumbuna*” (the ways or laws of the ancestors). Sometimes it is conflated with *pasin* (behaviour) and it is used to refer specifically to appropriate and inappropriate behaviour and self-representation, which accords with Jacobsen’s view:

> Pasin constitutes a contested area where different social and political strategical considerations in community affairs are played out and where the general understanding of the interplay between social representations and the existing social organisation are
manipulated, thereby modifying and transforming the overall societal constructs. It is thus on the basis of such manipulation that the ideological elements which define the overall perception of … identity, encompassing both social representations and social organisation, are created and recreated. (1995: 86 Jacobsen)

In recent years the Tok Pisin word *kalsa* (culture) has entered Lihirian argot. It derives from the English ‘culture’, but like *kastom*, it is often used specifically in reference to beliefs and practices of the past or colourful events, rather than ‘culture’ per se - all the mundane daily activities and interactions that anthropologists are so fond of documenting. Lihirians alternate between *kalsa* and *kastom*, but both words carry the same connotations. In short, *kastom*, *kalsa* and *pasin* are all descriptive and conceptual tools used by Lihirians to refer to the past and assess the present. At the national level the potency of these terms derives from their vagueness (cf. Keesing, 1982a: 299), but in Lihir it is their specific meaning that gives them such rhetorical strength.

Although *kastom* originates from the English ‘custom’, *kastom* cannot be distinguished from tradition in the ways that Hobsbawm distinguishes ‘custom’ from tradition (1983: 2). According to this binary, the object or characteristic of tradition is invariance, while “custom cannot afford to be invariant, because even in traditional societies, life is not so” (1983: 2). Traditions seem to become increasingly set in concrete, while custom remains flexible up to a point, and has the “double function of motor and fly-wheel” (ibid): custom often reveals a combination of flexibility in substance and formal adherence to precedent. *Kastom* encompasses both ideas of tradition and concepts of custom; it is simultaneously rigid and plastic. Definitions have to be malleable to allow continual practice in a constantly changing world however, as Lihirians reflect upon their *kastom*, their idea of what constitutes real *kastom* tends to become increasingly set and looks closer to Hobsbawm’s ‘tradition’.

Lihirian *kastom* discourse has become highly permeated by Manichean allegory, comprised of contrasting opposites which help emphasise the specific meaning of each category. Missionary discourse has been internalised throughout many Melanesian societies who come to see their world and their history as a set of oppositional contrasts
that depict struggles of Light and Dark, goodness and evil, God and Satan, the indigenous and the exogenous, and \textit{kastom} and \textit{bisnis} (see Errington and Gewertz, 1995; Foster, 1995a; Keesing, 1989: 27; Kahn, 1983; Robbins, 2004a). Keesing (1989: 27) remarks that local representations of past cultures are often redolent with images derived from mission influence, and that development might also be conceptualised as “rebirth” (cf. Burridge, 1971). This dualistic approach assists the objectification of traditions and customs as something ‘thing-like’ that can be (literally) separated from people and communities, and also reduced to written form, or made into a budgetary category, or JNC ‘portfolio’. However, as I have shown in chapter four, it is impossible to practically isolate \textit{kastom} from \textit{bisnis} or the capitalist sector. These postulates inherited from the missionaries and colonial authorities have been inverted in a new Manicheism: instead of associating \textit{kastom} with the heathen, people are expected to preserve their ancestral values and to keep the temptations and ‘cultural sins’ of Western life at bay. Ideologically, \textit{kastom} is “philo-traditional” and clearly defined as the opposite of the Western world (Babadzan, 1988: 206).

The total commodification of Lihirian society has brought the discourse of \textit{kastom} to a new level. The relatively benign and peaceful experience of colonisation and missionization is contrasted with the activities and changes of the past ten years. Earlier preoccupation with becoming modern and achieving a level of independence and moral parity with Europeans overran any concern for ‘cultural survival’. It is only since their experience of modern social and economic forms that they have had reason to regard \textit{kastom} as something significant to be preserved. This is premised on the belief that ritual life before the mining project was untainted or at least closer to the ‘pure’ \textit{kastom} once practiced by their ancestors.

Images of an unspoiled and irrecoverable past are often implicit in the discourse on \textit{kastom}. Herzfeld (1990) refers to this process as “structural nostalgia”: the collective representations of an “Edenic order”, a time before time, where the balanced perfection of social relations has not yet suffered the decay of capitalism and other ills brought through development. Lihirian structural nostalgia, like many functionalist
anthropological accounts, often tends to depict more social harmony and continuity than is the case. *Kastom* is used to describe general collective expectations for harmonious relations based on compassion, reciprocity and sharing, free from economic exploitation. Like Herzfeld’s Cretan sheep thieves, Lihirians also hold a “view of the past that they now counter-pose to the selfish, brutal present [which] bears the classic marks of structural nostalgia: social balance, reciprocity, moral parity, observance of self-enforcing rules” (Herzfeld, 1990: 307). Schwartz recalls a similar theme in Manus, where people remark that “there used to be harmony, solidarity, coordination, [and] obedience to leadership. In contrast, today, everyone is ‘big headed’” (1993: 534).

*Kastom* must be seen as a contemporary interpretation of past activities, beliefs, values, and ways of relating, rather than something which is passively received. If we are to maintain the position that culture is always in a state of flux and never static, and that change can originate from both inside and outside a community, then we must recognise the efficacy of ‘inventions’ and interpretations of culture which occur in the present (cf. Wagner, 1981 [1975]). Following Handler and Linnekin’s discussion on tradition, *kastom* is best viewed as an “on-going interpretation of the past” (1984: 274); it is a model of the past, and like ‘tradition’, it is inseparable from its interpretation in the present. *Kastom* is the product of the present generations’ interpretations of the past as much as it is the residual essence of the past which has trickled down to the present. These present day re-interpretations might include things that were previously practiced, but *kastom* and its reflexivity as a statement about culture is a concept which serves important purposes in situations of rapid social change in the present. In Lihir, *kastom* is a feature of the discourse of change; while its referential meaning is often vague and encompassing, its reflexivity allows for comparison and contrast with other sets of cultural practices. It represents a traditional past that is contrasted with the changing present. In the words of Donner, *kastom* “is not an indigenous past or ethnic identity as much as it is a concept in discourse which uses these sets of contrasts to conceptualise and talk about change and cultural diversity” (Donner, 1993: 541).
Lihirians would often employ a ‘commonsense’ view of *kastom* that was exalted as their tradition, as a body of beliefs and practices inherited from their ancestors. Although older Lihirians may have once practiced certain activities in more ‘pure’ ways, when the roots of social change had not yet fully tapped Lihirian society, most of these elderly Lihirians have since come to view *kastom* in similar ways to younger generations. This is not to say that particular rituals or exchanges are only symbolic or that these older Lihirians were not frustrated over the changes they had witnessed, but rather that they had come to conceive of *kastom* as an ideological domain distinct from other units of activity; a body of practices, values and beliefs which competes with other ways, that was handed to them which they also must hand down to the next generation. This is analogous to the problematic Western ‘commonsensical’ view of tradition that presumes a static body of ideas and customs is always handed down through the generations. One particular problem with this view is that it posits a false dichotomy between the modern and the non-modern, or what is traditional and contemporary. To fully understand *kastom*, it cannot be viewed as an unconscious cultural inheritance as if it is somehow distinct from a self conscious proclamation of the past in the present (cf. Hobsbawm, 1983). It must be seen as a self-conscious construction of the past which is used to inform present behaviour and a sense of identity.

**Tradition Paraded**

Emerging out of this binary between *kastom* and *bisnis* has been an objectification of the visual and material aspects of Lihirian culture. Brenda Clay (1986) records that among the Mandak similar cultural essentialisation surfaced around the time of Independence when the newly independent Government urged people to “take up” their customs. This revival accompanied more open conversation about magic and in Lihir there was increased production of *mis* to be used in exchange throughout the region. This emphasis on *kastom*, which Clay remembers being in “full swing” by 1979, was aided by the Provincial Government’s promotion of the annual *Malanggan* Show, where New Ireland cultural groups competed for prizes and status for the best traditional and innovative songs and dance performances (1986: 21).² Lihirians have quickly come to imagine their
*kalsa* to consist of their ‘traditional’ dress, dances, costumes, songs, and various artefacts and instruments. The inaugural *Kalsa Dei* (culture day) held in Londolivit town site in 2004 might have been the first of its kind and scale in Lihir, but it was certainly not the first time Lihirians have organised themselves into ‘*kalsa* groups’. Lihirians would often stage performances at church openings and celebrations, school break-up parties, and other political and social events around the island. These are occasions to dress up in neo-traditional garb that would otherwise not be worn and has no practical use to a population that has a reputation throughout New Ireland for their ‘style’ and conspicuous modelling of store bought clothing.

The *Kalsa Dei* which transformed Londolivit town site into a huge cultural stage, was organised by the Community Relations Department, specifically Luke Kabariu and the Cultural Information Office, in conjunction with community schools around Lihir, and was endorsed by the Local Level Government (LLG). The event was designed to showcase the visual side of Lihirian culture. The theme of the day was “Promoting and Preserving our Identity: Integrity through Culture”. Throughout the day as children paraded their finest Lihirian regalia and performed their traditional dances mining trucks and other vehicles noisily rumbled past on the road behind the parade ground stirring up dust and drowning out the sound of their singing, providing an inescapable reminder of how this day came to eventuate. Situated next the town supermarkets, where Lihirians regularly spend their money on new clothes, the parade of traditional dress was highly contextualised.

Geoff Day, who at the time was the manager for external affairs and sustainable development, officially opened the occasion and made some generic remarks in English (which were lost on most of the audience) about the effort and commitment that is required to preserve culture, the need to remain united throughout this process and that the company wanted to work together with the community for this purpose. He told people that they “need to not lose sight of the past” and to stand together to create a strong and united Lihir based on “tradition and *kastom*”. He expressed the company’s delight at being the only mining operation in the country to have a cultural information
office, which is something they can all be proud of (how exactly was never made clear). Following Geoff, the local community School Inspector, a Papuan man, made some final remarks about the need to “highlight and preserve what is dying”, then looking across the sea of tiny faces painted with traditional markings, flanked by a generally appreciative crowd, he changed mind and exclaimed “kalsa i no dai, kalsa i stap iet!” (culture is not dead, it is still here!).

Although the day was designed to promote Lihirian traditional *bilas* (costumes and decoration) the cultural diversity existing in Lihirian community schools could not be ignored, so children from other parts of Papua New Guinea were given the chance to wear something from their region, making the day a celebration of local and national *kalsa*. Before the performances began there was a small culture quest. A male and female representative from each cultural group paraded before the crowd, stopping in front of the official’s tent which seated local dignitaries from the LLG, company personnel, and other expatriates who came to marvel at the scene. The performers nervously bowed and made a turn in front of the officials, showed off their outfits, then moved on to a stage where they were asked a few questions about their cultural area and what their outfit represented.³ Like a scene from Noah’s Ark, they made their way onto the raised platform in pairs, representing many of the different areas from around the country: there were people from Lihir, Tanga, Namantanai, West New Britain, East New Britain, Manus, Sepik, Morobe, Hagen, Central Province and the Trobriand Islands.⁴

After a day of dancing, performing, selling traditional wares and local handicrafts, Ambrose Silul (the president of the LLG) drew the event to a close. He spoke of Lihir as a “multicultural island” and that this should be celebrated, which was juxtaposed against his opening call for renewed vigour in holding on to Lihirian *kalsa* so it is not “diluted or lost”. He then hinted at passing a legislation to promote Lihirian tradition, *kastom* and agriculture. Prizes were awarded for the best dressed groups and individuals, and the best performances. Kinami Community School received two of the awards for best dressed and best performance. People from Kinami were proud; they felt they had proven that they knew Lihirian *kalsa* better than the other groups and they derided the others for their
comparatively ‘poor effort’, the mixing of ‘styles’ and the use of non-traditional materials. Purity rather than preservation seemed a more dominant theme in the conversations surrounding the event.

While these public performances are easily distinguished from those that occur as kastom (in mortuary feasts) they also need to be regarded as distinct from those performances in church celebrations. The Catholic Diocese of Kavieng (which covers most of New Ireland) has a policy of ‘enculturation’ and actively promotes the use of kastom and the merging of cultural values with Christian doctrine and general church celebrations. Villages would often compete between themselves to stage the most elaborate church celebrations (cf. Gregory, 1980). One celebration involved the ordination to priesthood of a man from Masahet. For the occasion a balo (a small men’s house sometimes made for

Plate 16  Culture group performing at the ordination celebrations on Masahet Island
the karat feast) had been constructed in the church grounds. Before the service began the candidate was led into the balo where he remained with other priests and men from his clan. All the women, many of whom were crying, stood outside the balo fence, before they entered to lead him out to the church. The priest to be was covered by a ma (pandanus mat) as he left the balo and slowly entered the church accompanied by dancers, and much singing. The event symbolised passing from his maternal clan into ‘God’s clan’, meaning that when he dies he could be buried in the church grounds with other missionaries and priests instead of in his own men’s house. Some thirty pigs were killed for the occasion, and dance troupes and kalsa groups performed well into the night, combining quasi-traditional songs and dances routines with electronic and local instruments (see Plate 16).

For some Lihirians, the display of traditional costumes was not just a thing of the past, trotted out for the touristic gaze of themselves, VIPs, expatriate and national miners, Government leaders, and the occasional anthropologist tempted to dismiss these performances as out of ‘context’. Reactions to the Kalsa Dei suggested that not everyone agreed with wearing bilas (traditional decoration and dress) for the sake of public performance. However, for many other Lihirians, especially the hundreds of community school children who participated in the Kalsa Dei, this was one the few times they would wear traditional costume, let alone learn a traditional dance; these were re-contextualized re-enactments of ‘folklore’ that they would otherwise perhaps never perform, especially in the context in which their ‘teachers’ once learnt and used these dances. Young males performing in kalsa groups often adorned themselves with imitation breast pieces known as kepkep (or kapkap depending on the Lihirian dialect), that were traditionally worn only by certain big men as symbolic markers of status. They were worn when attending feasts in other villages, or previously when leading men into the battlefield. These items which were usually fashioned from decoratively engraved clam shells combined with mis were often handed down through generations. Young men have since learnt to make kepkep from whatever materials they can find, in some cases reflectors and mirrors, which doubly draw attention. In short, the modern divorce between transient costuming...
and parading and deeper ritual and political significance was regularly confirmed throughout Lihir.

**Tradition parodied**

Invariably community events such as church celebrations, and school break-up parties, which include a traditional *singsing* (dancing and singing) and the parading of *bilas* are accompanied by short plays or skits. Often these pantomimes have a moral content and can be the re-enactment of neo-traditional stories or myths (*tumbuna stori*).\(^9\) Many include the enactment of Bible passages and messages in the form of morality plays (cf. Knauff, 2002d: Ch 8). These plays instruct people about the certainty of damnation if one persists in particular sins, while piety and regular church attendance and confession will lead to salvation – a clear reflection of the Lihirian Catholic interpretation of Scripture compared with the Evangelical and Pentecostal doctrines that emphasise the Spirit. Most other plays tend to parody older generations or ‘traditional’ Lihirians in situations of first contact or dumbfounded ignorance of modern technology.

These themes of cultural reflection were captured in one particularly apt play performed by a group of older women at a church celebration to mark the Patron Saint Peter Tarot.\(^10\) Some of the women dressed themselves as young men, wearing long denim shorts and mining company work shirts with the sleeves cut off, holding a portable stereo blasting out pop songs, while drinking beer and ‘hard stuff’ (whisky or other distilled liquor). They were imitating the modern *spakman* (drunkard) that has become a regular feature of every village. These (wo)men were contrasted with the other women who dressed as forlorn *bus kanaka* (bush natives) that walked with sever impediments (despite their own nimbleness) just to emphasise their backwardness and primitiveness. These *bus kanaka* came across a *spakman* who had passed out. Not being aware of alcohol and its effects, these *bus kanaka* thought the man had died, and attempted to resurrect him with magic. As they worked away on the *spakman* with exaggerated movements and sounds, sprinkling him with enchanted leaves and liquids, while reciting the appropriate phrases, the *spakman* leaped into life only to seek out his beer. Much to the amusement of the
Incisive and witty, this play was both a deliberate statement about some people’s perception of the inefficacy of traditional beliefs in a modern world, and a criticism of male drinking habits which bring disruption into homes and villages. Men would commonly get drunk in order to precipitate arguments that they would ordinarily be too ashamed to make with their relatives (cf. Marshall, 1979, 1982). Given that these arguments were often excused on the basis of alcohol, inebriation has become an institutionalised means for the expression of normally suppressed aggression. These plays often targeted both the traditional and modern elements of Lihirian life, revealing a tension that represents a directional historical progression – from the reality of pre-mining Lihir characterised by the hope of progress, to a realisation of these dreams, which in some instances have been an unanticipated nightmarish experience.

The choice of a new generation

These seemingly insignificant plays and the ‘de-contextualised’ enactment of ritual dancing reflect another reality: it is possible to still believe in magic, sorcery, and the efficacy of the Lihirian cosmological realm, and live according to pasin bilong tumbuna, but as the spakman reveals, this is not always the desired choice. Individual freedom to behave according to personal like was becoming more popular than antiquated forms of
sociality (cf. Gewertz and Errington, 1996). The past is best kept at a safe distance or suitably modified to fit the new world. In the context of change, once tacit beliefs and unmediated practices have become self-conscious constructions in historical time vis-à-vis the increasingly materialized modern present; these displays provide a key means of redefining traditions and placing them within an acceptable modern frame of reference.

By periodically performing or exhibiting what Keesing referred to as “fetishized representations of their cultures” (1989: 23), newly emerging bureaucratic elites ‘ritually’ affirm to themselves that their kalsa (or the ‘traditional Lihirian society’), is still intact. Apart from ‘commodifying’ the display of traditional ritual, these events put traditional performance under the authoritative judgement of non-Lihirians who are deemed qualified to measure and rank its aesthetic and bodily merit. Yet few Lihirians resisted these developments. Most people embraced the opportunity to perform in their traditional dress for a wider audience regardless of how different the setting was from the original historical context. However, unlike the Chambri (Gewertz and Errington, 1991) south of the Sepik River, who have been able to turn some of their rituals and initiation ceremonies into paid performances - whilst simultaneously fulfilling local needs - through tourism on the Sepik River, Lihirians had not yet converted their kastom into a source of revenue.11

Anthropological and general Western representations of the Other have often been ‘essentialist’ (Carrier, 1992b, 1995b, 1995c; Said, 1995), seeking to capture and characterise the ‘essence’ of their subjects. This discourse, which is premised on distinguishing Us from Them (cf. Strathern, 1988), is similarly used by Lihirians as they define themselves in a modern world. The School Inspector’s proclamation that “culture is not dead”, is part of a growing discourse among Lihirians as they assert their identity and their continuity with the past, focussing on an ‘essence’ that has endured despite cargo cults, mining, PV, or education. In the process of objectification, a “culture is (at the level of ideology) imagined to consist of “traditional” music, dances, costumes or artefacts” (Keesing, 1989: 23). In light of the European museological tradition, it is little wonder that Lihirians have adopted the view that a “culture is metonymically represented
by its material artefacts” and that by “preserving the material forms and performance genres of a people, one preserves their culture” (Keesing, 1989: 28).

Codification and bureaucratization

Since mining operations began there has been a growing sense of urgency amongst Lihirian leaders over the project of ‘cultural preservation’. Despite a growing body of knowledge acquired by outsiders through missionary observations, doctoral research, academic papers, and the bulk of knowledge tied up in the grey literature of consultancy reports, there have been few local attempts at self representation or documentation of Lihirian culture.\textsuperscript{12}

Filer recalled during his time as a consultant to the Lihir project that he received a call in 1994 from Mark Soipang asking him to support the Society Reform Programme. Upon further inquiry, he was told that it was about “strengthening custom” (\textit{strongim kastam}) as part of their efforts to develop local institutions that could manage the social and economic effects of the mining operation (Filer, 2006: 74). As we saw in chapter six, the Society Reform Programme was more than the documentation of \textit{kastom} and the strengthening of local social and cultural institutions; it was driven by specific political motivations, which might not have been coherently formulated, but none the less existed. In response to Soipang’s call for assistance, Filer suggested among other things that a commemorative film might be made of the performance of specific customary feasts that would accord a certain level of “honour and respect” to both actors and the men’s houses that stage these performances. This potential box office smash never eventuated, and members of LMALA seemed to show equally little interest in Filer’s other suggestion for a manual of customary land tenure that would include a sample of each argument or customary stories and not just a set of rules.\textsuperscript{13}

In 1994 the Combined Lands Committee, comprised of LMALA representatives, village elders, village magistrates, and representatives from the LLG and the company produced an eighteen page document titled \textit{Ol Rot Blong Kisim Graon Long Lihir} (the ways to
acquire land in Lihir). It was this document that Filer thought would need adjusting with detailed case studies or examples if it was to actually serve any useful purpose. This was the first local attempt to codify those aspects of *kastom* directly related to the transfer of land between individuals and clans. It was less an exercise in self representation or the preservation of *kastom*, and more specifically designed to clarify issues surrounding the transfer of land, which was now a source of tension since land had acquired a monetary value. It was motivated by internal politics, rather than the need to define Lihirian cultural boundaries against non-Lihirians and their influence. This account is far from comprehensive; names of feasts and exchanges that might incur land transfer are mentioned, but there is no explanation as to how these are to be performed or what is entailed or prohibited. At the beginning of the paper the committee explained that the purpose of recording these land ‘rules’ was to have them submitted to the LLG and the Provincial Government to be approved as the way for acquiring land. It does not mention whether they would be passed as separate legislation, but it does state that their aim was to make it easier to ‘straighten’ land disputes in the future and to establish the ‘real’ landowners, especially in those cases where ground has previously passed between clans. If this program was fully completed then the agreed upon details were to become the “Lo Bilong Graon Long Lihir” (Lihir Land Laws).

Designed by Peter Toelinkanut, the Lihir Working Cultural Committee’s ‘book’ of codified *kastom* has been the most detailed local attempt at customary definition and self representation. Similar to the Lihirian ‘land laws’ and the intentions of the Society Reform Programme, it was also linked to a political agenda. The collection was produced by Peter with the assistance of several other educated Lihirian men also committed to the preservation of ‘Lihirian ways’. At the beginning of this book is the following inscription:

Major and Minor Customs and Customary Laws: compiled by Lihir Working Cultural Committee, Lihir Island, New Ireland Province, Papua New Guinea

Here is a summary of all Major, Minor customs and Customary laws practiced on Lihir Island. From sleepless nights in all fifteen (15) Wards discussing with elders on Lihirian
customs and laws practiced in the past we were able to put this together for review by Tumbawin Lam Assembly – Nimamar Rural Local Level Government. The aim of the project is to standardize customary practices and laws on the Island hence preserving and reviving it for use by future generations. Reviving and preserving these customs and laws means reviving and preserving unity and identity of Lihir which is fast disappearing because of mining operation on the island. When reviewed by Tumbawin Lam Assembly, the project will go before the Legislative Committee who will them draft it as legislation to be effective for all Lihirians to follow. (Lihir Working Cultural Committee, 2004: 1)

Work was primarily carried out during 2002 - 2004, and the ‘committee’ spent time in at least one men’s house in each ward, discussing and ‘interviewing’ the men they regarded as a reliable source of knowledge. From the outset this was a selective process, designed to produce an even more selective account. Differences between the wards have been taken into account; in some instances there is clear deviation and in other places there is creative innovation and adaptation. Peter’s intention was to standardize practice across the islands to preserve a particular rendition of Lihirian kastom.

The collection is written in Tok Pisin and laid out like a recipe book, with a step by step guide for each major feast. It is divided into two sections: “Major Customs / Customs practiced by a majority on the island; and Minor Customs / Customs practiced by a minority on the island”. The description of each kastom has limited detail, for example (translated from Tok Pisin):

Katkatop / Pkepke

What is it? First step: it is the feast that men make to inherit the leadership place of their bigman and look after or control everything in the clan that came under his authority.

What is the origin or reason of this custom? Whoever makes this feast has the right to control and look after everything that belongs to the clan (tumbawin) and their lineage (bior).

[First step] Ablo peketol One pig worth 1 or 2 param
N.B. If there are a lot of people at this feast, it is alright to kill a pig worth 3 param [this would be a larger pig]

[Second Step] Tamtaz aies (mat) three pigs: Apuia = 2 param ; hausboi = 3 param; and outside for the women = 2 param.

N.B. The size of the pig should be proportional to the number of people that arrive for this feast.

Blo Pkepke One pig worth 3 to 5 param. This is to give to people who have attended or to pay back debts of pig accrued from these people.
One pig worth 10 param for cooking on the mumu and eating that day in the hausboi (iol nizen ies)

And pes (female pig) for the women outside for sharing and giving to any women that have come to attend the feast.

Piliem kitip / Tunkip tie aieh: two pigs worth 1 – 2 param. One goes to the hausboi and the other goes outside to the women. Before pig was not used for this section, instead other meat like fish was used.

Ward Five has given their consent for people to people to bring just rice on this final day to help out so people can eat rice with their pig. This rice will become dinau (loan which must be reciprocated or paid back). (Lihir Working Cultural Committee, 2004: 6)

The book does not explicitly act as a collection of land laws. There is brief mention under each exchange or feast that this might be one way for receiving the ground or resources of particular people, but given the sparse information provided, it could not function as the manual Filer earlier suggested. It is more concerned with the form and content rather than meanings or implications.

The possibility that this book of codified kastom will be passed as legislation is entirely fitting with the JNC’s totalitarian approach. It had not yet been decided how this would be enforced, although Peter did suggest that there may be a sort of ‘kastom police’.
Various commentators have noted the commissioning of local guards to enforce new truths established in various politico-religious movements (see Lawrence, 1964: 113-114; Schwartz, 1962: 268-269). Ideally Peter would be made aware of any *kastom* occurring on the island, and it would be up to either him or his correctional staff to ‘police’ the event. In the case of infringement, monetary fines would be imposed; presumably this money will supplement the ‘internal revenue’ sourced through the proposed Lihirian tax system that forms part of the ‘Destiny Plan’. Although it has not been described as the Law, or “*lo*”, the legalistic approach to the standardization of *kastom* lends itself to analogies with previous movements throughout Melanesia that were designed to regulate people’s bodily experiences, their orderings of time and space, and their unified and cooperative social relationships (see Schwartz, 1962). On the one hand they are using the law to legitimise and preserve *kastom*, but on the other hand this approach is connected to a larger project that seeks to undermine the ability of the State and its various apparatuses to effectively control and regulate Lihirian society.

*Kastom* and the recent attempt at codification cannot be viewed outside the project of turning Lihir into a modern state (as a condition and separate entity). It is important to consider who was making decisions regarding *kastom*, and what implications this would have for a Lihirian ‘cultural policy’. As we saw in the previous chapter, the ‘Destiny Plan’ envisions a total restructuring of Lihirian political leadership. This mainly involves fusing LMALA, the JNC, and the LLG into one body structured around the ‘Destiny Plan’ program, called the *Lihir Grasruts Pawa Mekim Kamap Limited* (LGPKML). Since the Society Reform program, there have been numerous calls for a ‘council of chiefs’, or some restructuring of men’s house leadership so that the domains of government and landowner politics and development have stronger connection with village leadership, not just the Ward Members and their Village Planning Committees (VPC). The name of these councils alternated between a Council of Chiefs or a Council of *Tōhīe*, consciously modelled on the Fiji version (cf. Kaplan 1995; see also Keesing, 1969; White and Lindstrom, 1997).
Towards the end of 2004 the JNC introduced the idea of a *Kastom Lidas Komiti*, or KLK, (*Kastom* Leaders Committee) to their IBP proposal and claimed that their entire ‘Destiny Plan’ now depended upon the implementation of this new political structure. The KLK was intended to represent all Lihirians. A leader would be selected from each clan in each ward so theoretically, everybody would be represented by their leader in some *kastomary* form. One of the main functions of the KLK would be to disseminate information from the LGPMKL to the men’s house, thus supposedly linking everyone to the developmental process. These leaders would also revive *kastom* teaching in the men’s house and strengthen respect for men’s house ethos. The intention of the JNC was to transform Lihirian men into agents of modernity who could transmit PV firstly to their immediate family unit, and then through their lineage within the men’s house. The proposed model would ideally convert the men’s house into a multi-disciplinary ‘learning centre’ where men taught PV by day and *kastom* by night.

This reflects a more general Pacific phenomenon where ‘chiefs’ and big men are selectively transformed into bureaucratic traditional leaders (cf. White and Lindstrom, 1997). From a political functionalist perspective these *kastom lidas* would theoretically extend the reach of the JNC and the LGPMKL at the same time as they improve people’s access to development and modern knowledge, all the while reinforcing Lihirian social values. However this selective modernisation is likely to confront the well documented process where political leaders are happy to become traditional leaders or gain status within the traditional realm to bolster their support base and extend their reach, while preferring that traditional leaders did not become politicians or bureaucrats (cf. Lindstrom, 1997: 221). Secular political leaders need their village big men to remain relatively traditional; allegedly they embody important social and moral values. Once the transition has been made men are supposedly tainted by the polluting waters of Melanesian politics.

However, unlike national political leaders, Lihirian political leaders are not geographically isolated from their support base, meaning that there is always pressure to achieve status within both realms. Peter once explained to me that he felt as though he
had finally “made it” in the realm of kastom after his absence due to working in Port Moresby for most of his life. But it would appear as though this is a one way street; it is very unlikely that those men who have only “made it” as a man of kastom would have much success in elevating themselves as secular political bureaucratic leaders.

Ward Members who are elected by their village communities often rely upon the networks they establish through kastom. In previous years the most influential men in ‘traditional’ domains were usually elected as Government representatives regardless of their education, work experience or knowledge of the Government system. Their position reflected their influence in kastomary terms. Increasingly as Lihirian leaders are expected to filter more information, deal with more complex issues, and manage larger budgets received through mining operations (not to mention understand the complexity of the IBP review and the ‘Destiny Plan’), Ward Members elected on the basis of their village influence have found themselves ill equipped to serve as bureaucratic leaders. People have been looking to younger ‘save men’ (educated men) who understand bureaucracy and can implement business development. Although there has been a growing number of big men who are competent in business, secular politics and kastom, and use their success in one domain to enhance their influence in the other, this has only added to the tension between ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ big men, especially as older big men feel surpassed by younger generations.

‘Holistic’ approach to kastom

The role of kastom within the ‘Destiny Plan’ supports Foster’s argument that kastom is diametrically opposed to bisnis, but can continue to be maintained and play an integral social function when it is kept insulated. For the JNC, the only way to reconcile the apparent tension between kastom and bisnis is to identify exactly what is kastom, and to impose uniform behaviour throughout the island. If this were to be carried out successfully, then we might witness something analogous to Foster’s description of nearby Tanga: the translation of a conceptual ‘sealing off’ into an empirical reality. Kastom is important to the JNC’s new ‘holistic’ approach to development, where
different aspects of people’s lives need to be nurtured and developed, such as their physical, mental, spiritual and emotional needs; *kastom* has become one more box to be ticked off on the personal development flowchart.

The contradictions in the ‘Destiny Plan’ are immediately obvious. Essentially the JNC require people to shift between forms of personhood that supposedly correlate with particular economic practices. For the JNC there is no contradiction between practicing PV and *kastom*, because they envision a *kastom* that can be defined and controlled, and maintained as separate from other ‘family needs’ or the cash economy. This practical isolation of the capitalist economy from ‘traditional’ exchange lies at the heart of PV doctrine and the ‘Destiny Plan’. It imagines a *kastom* that can be fully categorised – as an inventory list, and separate category of activities – that can exist extrinsically from people’s daily economic, political and social lives. PV will supposedly help people organise their time, finances and resources (including family and clan labour) more efficiently, so that *kastom* can be performed smoothly without impinging on other aspects of their life.

When most Lihirians talk about reviving *kastom* or the need to “*strongim kastom*”, it is apparent they are not saying everything their ancestors did or believed should be preserved. Schwartz regards *kastom* as a set of self-constructs of a people’s own culture; what he previously called “culture constructs” (Schwartz, 1962). What Lihirians regard as important and identify as *kastom* is selective and in part figmentary. *Kastom* is a selective process: Lihirians only chose certain items, beliefs, and practices to represent themselves and what they regard as pre-mining, and pre-contact village culture. From this perspective, Lihirian *kastom* is not coterminous with the full extent of their store of ‘traditional’ knowledge (or their daily activities), and there is not always agreement over what things should be preserved.

The process of codification is simultaneously about preservation and defining the bottom line: *kastom* (and other customs like *wantokism*, the hand-out mentality, and excessive compensation claims) take no heed of business and the prerogatives of development.
Errington and Gewertz note a similar process among the Mari out growers and landowners near the Ramu Sugar Limited project in Madang Province. The Mari’s own struggles with the tension between wanting development, and pressure to conform to local *kastom*, led them to the Tolai (in East New Britain) who presented themselves as “mentors, teaching them how to preserve those aspects of their culture that are socially positive while relinquishing those that are negative – those that impede their doing business or that divert income from their own development” (Errington and Gerwertz, 2004: 196). If the JNC were to implement their plans, Lihirians would have to accept the world as defined by the company and the concurrent philosophies of PV, the bottom line of economic rationality to which they must adjust their culture.

The past as contested ground

In the introduction to Keesing and Tonkinson’s (1982) collection on *kastom*, Keesing correctly asserts that *kastom* is “an apt and powerful symbol because it can mean (almost) all things to all people” (1982a: 297). Keesing consistently presented *kastom* as a political symbol that it is selectively used by different groups for their own political purposes: resistance to colonial and ex-colonial powers and the need to create national unity, or local identity formation in opposition to neighbouring groups or even the nation state. I have already shown how Lihirians have objectified their culture, and the ways in which *kastom* was being made to suit the economic and modernist dreams of the JNC. What I now want to focus on is the way that this lays the foundation for identity construction and the ways that the JNC and LMALA have turned Lihirian *kastom* from being the basis of inclusion into the basis for exclusion.

In chapter three I discussed the ways in which large-scale resource extraction has directly fostered an ‘ideology of landownership’. If the ‘landowner’ has come to represent the common man in the street (or the village), then I would suggest that the landowner is often also the totem of distinct cultural identities. When ground becomes a commodity on top of which men can establish themselves as *papagraun*, in places like Lihir this is often the same ground on which they make *kastom*, and it is these performances which
ultimately enable them to become ‘landowners’. The connection between the ideology of landownership, compensation, and *kastom* has become the unholy trinity that defines Lihirians and ultimately who can access development, the most desired form of compensation.

It has often been noted that *kastom* is simultaneously used for national and local purposes (see Babadzan, 1980; Foster, 1995c), but when the elements of compensation and the ideology of landownership are added, the result is an explicitly defined cultural identity that is sanctioned by defensive primordial sentiments with the blessing of legal policy. The ideology of landownership, especially in the context of compensation which is fully based on an appeal to *kastom*, is the basis for the development of a local identity that can be used to exclude non-Lihirians. Richard Jackson once argued that the idea of compensation for mining “is not aimed at bringing back into balance old relationships but at developing new ones” (Jackson, 1997: 115). Although his comments were aimed at the relationship between local communities and multinational companies, this can also be applied to relationships within and between local communities. In Lihir old relationships have been restructured, and new relationships have been created in the process of managing wealth.

The definition of a Lihirian

Ritual feasting (*kastom*) in Lihir often involves people from other areas as exchange relationships are called upon or as people come to contribute and support their *bisnis* (the New Ireland Tok Pisin term for those people with whom one exchanges pigs, and shell money, or their relations through marriage alliance). This kind of activity often occurs with people from the neighbouring islands; Lihirian groups have always been characterised by their fluidity and ability to incorporate non-Lihirians. *Kastom* is an important avenue for inclusion and participation in the host society and in the past involvement in *kastom* was enough to secure group membership and access to the resources of the adoptive group.
Older Lihirians often recalled stories about their relationships with other New Irelanders. On one occasion I was told that people from Tanga who came to participate in *kastom* often stayed on for long periods of time and were provided with access to land and resources; they were accepted because they were *wasier* (guests). People were proud of their ties with Tanga, and the prospect of Lihirian men marrying Tangan women was a positive thing, partly due to the long history of exchange relations with Tangans, and because Tanga was seen as a place rich in pigs, which made them valuable exchange partners. Thus, in earlier years, from the perspective of the host society, *wasier* were considered non-threatenning because in effect they were ‘becoming indebted’.

Since Lihir became a new centre of development non-Lihirians have inevitably migrated to the island in search of new opportunities. As we have seen in chapter three, this population increase and the uneven distribution of mine related wealth meant some Lihirians sought to either ‘cut their network’ or at least strategically manage their relationships. The fear amongst Lihirians of outsiders benefiting from the development and economic opportunities is manifest in new attitudes towards the involvement of non-Lihirians in Lihirian *kastom* and the development of exclusionary policies which seek to remove and stop the future entry of hordes of ‘gold diggers’ intent on unravelling the moral fibre of Lihirian social fabric. These new attitudes and the conceptual realignment of non-Lihirians challenge the fluidity of Lihirian society and one of the primary functions of *kastom*, namely, to establish new relationships.

This migration and consequent Lihirian alarm has resulted in the increasing bureaucratization of Lihirian identity. As a result, the Lihir Law and Order Committee devised a monitoring plan, known as the ‘Sengseng policy’, to screen movement in and out of the island. According to LMALA and the NRLLG the greater influx of outsiders is blamed for “the rapid deterioration of the high moral integrity of the original Lihir society” (NRLLG, 2002: 6). Conflating ideas of past and purity, Lihirian leaders were adamant that such malignancy could be stemmed by closing boundaries.
The Sengseng policy has been applied at various times with degrees of efficiency, evicting non-Lihirian settlers and razing their temporary houses. Future plans included an operational unit to be staffed and equipped to carry out the necessary duties of ‘border protection’. Ultimately the policy aimed to instil a ‘visa system’ that would allow people to enter and stay under observance for limited periods of time. This would require villagers to monitor their own bays and roads and report people who enter outside the designated areas; an unlikely prospect given that no one would regard their own bisnis as illegally entering Lihir. Members of the Law and Order Committee took a blanket approach to the situation, which had the twofold effect of theoretically addressing social disturbance and a more deep seated resentment towards non-Lihirians who use Lihirian services (schools, hospitals, court house and police man power) and gain from the new economic opportunities.

To ensure Lihirians were the main recipients of employment opportunities and mine related benefits, especially as Lihirians came to realize access to limited wage labour was the only way most people would directly benefit from the mine, Lihirians found ways to define exactly who is a Lihirian and therefore who qualifies for work and financial benefits. The Lihir land owners association instituted a system whereby Lihirians were given a Village Population Survey (VPS) number\(^{20}\), which serve as markers of their identity. In job positions with the company where Lihirians are awarded first priority, applicants must have a VPS number. This has been met with much anger by Tangans and New Irelanders in general who think that the project should at least be open to the whole province.\(^{21}\) Some non-Lihirians find ways around this by becoming adoptive members of a Lihirian clan. Generally adopted people are expected to contribute to the well being of the adoptive group, which usually includes participation in *kastom*. It is common for big men to ‘approve’ a VPS number for these people if they are likely to find work at the mine, providing them with an important source of income; essentially adopted people become financially indebted to their patron.\(^{22}\)
Equal equity

One of the arrangements signed between the stakeholders of this project is that Lihirians are to receive equity for shares in the company invested on their behalf. Distribution of these equity monies, which was mentioned in chapter five, has been the single most defining moment of official Lihirian identity. Desperate to ensure that non-Lihirians would not receive payment, the landowners association devised the following definition of a Lihirian:

The Lihirian MATRILINEAL system of descent confirms a Lihirian identity. Therefore a Lihirian is a person who is born of a full blood Lihirian mother or born of a 50% mother or born of a mother who traced her matrilineal link to a Lihirian clan identity. His/her clan membership is a solid fact of his identity no matter where he/she was born.

(LMALA, nd.)

Underneath this definition, the authors explain that they define a Lihirian based on the following categories:

1. A born Lihirian with full and half blood through the matrilineal descent.
2. A person from outside inherits rights by fulfilling customary requirements.
3. A person from outside is adopted into a Lihirian family and clan and fulfills customary requirements.
4. A person from outside that has lived on Lihir since pre-exploration days and fulfils category 2 and 3.

The paper further explains these categories, with four classes of Lihirian who have Lihirian blood, and three categories of non-Lihirian. These essentially state that one is either 100% Lihirian, that is, both mother and father are able to trace their descent through the female line, or one has declining Lihirian status as the blood runs thinner. Those who do not have full Lihirian blood on their mother’s side, or qualify as either 50% or 25% Lihirian must compensate for this through fulfilment of kastomary obligations: long term residence on the island, extended involvement with a clan in both exchange and daily participation in labour and men’s house activities. Equally those who have no
Lihirian blood in their line of descent must illustrate that for at least 10 years prior to the mine their kastomary obligations have been exclusively with Lihirian people.

The ideological shift in notions of sociality, obligation and reciprocity is central to an understanding of Lihirian identity. The obligation to pinari wasier (to provide hospitality to visitors) is regarded as fundamental aspect of Lihirian kastom or kalsa. The social pressures that surround the distribution of mining wealth has given way to a steady decline in the level of inclusiveness and hospitality in Lihirian relationships with their non-Lihirian bisnis. The terminological shift from wasier to weira - from visitor to stranger - to describe non-Lihirians reflects the process in which identities are socially constructed to serve the requirements of the Lihirian population. The term waira originates from the Gunantuna language found on the Gazelle Peninsula in East New Britain (Zwinge, 1953:4, cited in Koczberski and Curry, 2004), though in more recent years it has become considered part of the national lingua franca, Tok Pisin, and is used commonly throughout Papua New Guinea to denote strangers and outsiders, or those who are of different ancestral lands, speak different languages, and come from different descent groups. Its use as a word in the lingua franca carries negative connotations, and when Lihirians use the term to describe non-Lihirians, it is has the effect of stereotyping or lumping all outsiders together, thus marginalizing and distancing them from Lihirians, and implying a lack of obligation. In a conceptual sleight of hand, Lihirians came to label all non-Lihirians waira, thus realigning their sense of obligation and the boundaries of their community.23

*Kastom as culture*

Generally anthropologists have approached kastom as a rhetorical creation at national, regional and local levels. In many ways I have followed suit in my analysis of Lihirian kastom however, I take seriously Akin’s argument that by continually concentrating on this aspect of kastom there is the possibility that we have reified it more than have Melanesians (2005: 185). When kastom is severed from its cultural moorings we are
likely to overlook the intense interaction between culture and *kastom* as both continually shape each other over time; as such we neglect “the concurrent subjectivization of *kastom* as culture” (Akin, 2005: 186). This is important to remember because it reinforces that *kastom* is not merely the essentialisation of Lihirian culture, but part of their “culturally specific modes of change” (Sahlins, 1992: 22).

For all the talk of codification and preservation of *kastom* in Lihir, it did not fully impinge on daily practice. Unlike the Kwaio in the Solomon Islands, codification did not result in the strict adherence to rules (Akin, 2005; Keesing, 1992). Rather than directing their efforts at the maintenance and observance of *kastom* laws in order to please the ancestors or their own notions of traditional *pasin*, for the most part Lihirians continued to work on the project of development where all available resources were employed for the sake of expanding and maintaining the relevance of *kastom*. While codification had not affected daily life, the discourse of *kastom* brought profound changes, particularly to relationships between Lihirians and non-Lihirians.

In constructing their identity vis-à-vis non-Lihirians and the nation-state, Lihirians were drawing on defensive primordial sentiments (cf. Geertz, 1973). The contiguities of blood, *kastom*, language, and shared common descent or ancestry have assumed an ineffable and overwhelming coerciveness for leaders and the community alike. Lihirians regard these ties as more or less immutable aspects of the social person, and fundamental characteristics of Lihirian identity. Central to the above definition of a Lihirian is involvement in *kastom*. Lihirian leaders have used traditional culture in much the same ways as National neo-colonial ‘elites’ who are committed to Western-style style development yet “assert rhetorically that the values and lifestyles of the past will endure despite transistors, tourists, and Toyotas” (Keesing, 1982b: 371). However, while Papua New Guinean elites invoke a *kastom* that is nondescript and all-encapsulating as the basis of national unity, Lihirian leaders use a refined sense of *kastom* that divides and excludes.

In the context of rapid change the project of ‘preservation’ is indeed laudable. However, Peter’s exercise in ‘endo-ethnography’ reflects an on-going struggle for Lihirian self
representation and self-determination. It is precisely the multivalent flexibility of *kastom* that makes it such a potent political symbol. Here it is not Bernard Narokobi’s *Melanesian Way* (1980) propounded in nationalistic rhetoric, but *pasin blong Lihir* (the way of Lihir). It is not inclusive or uniting but rather ethnocentric and divisive. Thus we begin to see a growing link between Lihirian *kastom*, Lihirian identity and authority over local resources. Regardless of whether Lihirian cultural codification is ‘effective’ or whether policies for preservation are ‘successful’, we can be assured that *kastom*, both old and new, invented and inherited, will remain very Lihirian.
Peter initially showed some hesitancy towards my questions about his book of Lihirian *kastom*, and for some months refused to let me look at it. Initially he cited reasons akin to ‘plagiarism’, and argued that if I saw the book, then it would complete my research for me. But as I began to compile my own collection of the major feasts and exchanges, and proved I could engage in conversation about *kastom*, he allowed me access to the book on the condition that I didn’t disclose the information to the company. This was entirely fitting with the JNC’s general stance towards the company, but in this instance it was mostly directed at the efforts of Luke Kabariu from Masahet Island, who was employed in the Community Relations Department as the Cultural Information Officer and was also engaged in documenting Lihirian *kastom*. Essentially, Peter was saying that only he was capable of correctly codifying Lihirian *kastom*, and that what he was putting together was the most accurate account and representation.

Since Independence ‘cultural shows’ have become a common event throughout Papua New Guinea. The Hagen and Goroka cultural shows in the Highlands have reached international renown, promoted on account of their flare, colour, magnitude and staged exoticism. Similarly the Hiri Moale Festival, the Rabaul Mask Festival, the Malaggan Show and the myriad of other local shows that occur on Independence Day around Papua New Guinea draw spectators, ‘VIPs’ and ‘officials’ from around the nation and Pacific region. Dress and dancing performances are judged and depending on the event and the place, winning groups and individuals may receive money or the promise of opportunities to perform in towns, cities, or even internationally. Since colonial intervention, staging culture has been a part of town and station life and has since become one of the few major draw cards for the burgeoning and struggling tourist industry.

National competitions for Miss PNG, Miss Red Cross, and for provincial titles, promote traditional styles and dress in conjunction with fund raising activities. Often these women are highly educated and advanced in Western sensibilities, and live in Port Moresby or other urban centres. Similar to other beauty pageants, these women are judged on aesthetic standards: how good they can make their traditional dress appear. On Lihir, calendars and posters adorned with images of these women are hung up in people’s houses, stores, aid posts, hospitals, Government offices and in the *hausboi*.

Similarly regional high schools that draw students from a range of cultural backgrounds often hold annual cultural days, providing many students with their first opportunity and the only context to wear traditional dress and to learn and partake in their own traditional performance. The staging of local culture represents one of the most distinct advancements in Melanesian modernity.

Some people rejected the idea that non-Lihirian culture groups should have been given the opportunity to perform and said that next time only Lihirian groups should be involved. Others like Bruno Minai from LMALA talked strongly about not following “tru tumbuna style”, suggesting that many of the Lihirian groups needed to look back even further to find real Lihirian traditions and styles. He criticized the tendency for women to perform in bras, when “tumbuna meri bilong yumi, ol i singing susu nating” (our ancestor women danced bare breasted). Despite the win, there were still some people in Kinami who thought that *bilas* should only be worn in the ‘right context’, like *kastom* or *lugara bilong lotu* (large church celebrations).

It was interesting that despite being from Mukawa on the mainland in Milne Bay Province, which has its own distinctive traditional dress, the couple wore Trobriand Islands outfits, signaling the extent to which Milne Bay Province has become represented nationally by the Trobriand Islands.

Even though secular public performances and church celebrations are not regarded as *kastom* (as contextualised rituals during mortuary feasting), both events are often described as *kastom* and involve other *kastomary* activities, such as pouring lime powder on particular dancers to show appreciation. It is common on Lihir, and throughout New Ireland, for *pelkong* (cross-cousins) to show their appreciation of the dancing by smearing lime powder on their cross cousin. Later the dancer will give few a kina or tobacco, or betel nut to thank their *pelkong* for drawing attention to them. There is no local interpretation of why this occurs only that it is common between people of these relations whenever there is dancing (cf. Powdermaker, 1971[1933]: 127).

It has been increasingly common to see Lihirians using cameras to document their own *kastom* displays and traditional dancing. I have also seen some Lihirians using video cameras to capture their own events. Similarly I was often asked for copies of the pictures I took during these events.

*Kepken* were also worn throughout mainland New Ireland (see Powdermaker, 1971 [1933]).
Some big men intentionally disposed of their kepkep in the sea before they died. By 2003 there were few people with the skills or knowledge to make these kepkep, particularly since this information has not been passed on to younger generations. Some older men have said that they will not pass on their knowledge to younger men as an expression of their dissatisfaction with their standing in the community. This is largely a result of the disrespect and lack of interest that some younger men show towards older big men, the men’s house, and kastom.

One example was a short play by the children of Kinami Community School that depicted the relationship between mother and child, characterised by love, nurturance, and concern. One of the children was dressed as a heavily pregnant sow that went deep into the bush to give birth to her children. When the owner of the pig came to collect her to be killed for kastom, she ate her owner to protect her children. When the play was finished, one of the children stood up and told the audience that the moral of the story was all mothers and fathers need to “lukautim gut ol pikinini” (look after their children well), and then referring to the owner of the sow, people must not be greedy and need to preserve their resources. The skit was concise commentary on the state of social change and contemporary developments experienced throughout Lihir.

Peter Tarot was killed by the Japanese in the Second World War.

It is surprising that Lihirians had not tapped into the potentials for staging performances to a mining audience. This is not to say that people did not want to, or that there were not any discussions on ways to achieve this. On another level, large-scale resource extraction does posit kastom as the source of the largest amount of funding available to Lihirians, as kastom secures ownership of ground within the SML zone (cf. Filer, 1997, 2006.).

The earliest locally written account was produced by Bishop Ambrose Kiapseni (Kiapseni, nd 1, nd 2) during his theological training, in a paper that mainly discussed local and introduced forms of leadership. Filer (2006) notes that the company had already attempted to engage some of its Lihirian staff to draft a set of Lihir Land Rules compiled by a committee comprised of landowners, village leaders, village magistrates, the Government, and Lihir Joint Venture representatives. Filer expressed reservation about putting these ‘laws’ into a book when ‘laws’ seem to change during the middle of different arguments or stories attached to different pieces of land. For this reason he suggested that the manual should include detailed examples.

Codification of kastom and ancestral beliefs has become increasingly common throughout Melanesia at both local and national levels. See Gewertz and Errington (1991), and Lindstrom and White (1994).

These other men were Alphonze Ama, Gerry Morus, Chris Takiap, and Beno Daniel. All of these men expressed proficiency in English, had significant work experience, were reasonably educated, and had a strong commitment to the preservation of ’Lihirian ways’.

In the draft copies of the book, there is one man, usually the eldest, who speaks for each ward. For example, in ward four, Rukam was chosen as the spokesperson; he was the oldest and most respected man in the district, and also Peter’s maternal uncle.

One striking issue that I raised with Mark Soipang was the problem of selecting a leader from each clan when the clans in each ward had become so fragmented. Apart from the unlikelihood of agreeing who will represent a given clan in each ward, the other major problem is that clan leadership is not bound to the arbitrary lines of Government wards. Clans cut across these lines and between the islands. Soipang did not see any problems with this model, instead insisting that the KLK would be a return to the “true system bilong ples” (the true system of our place).

Migration poses many problems for resource development projects, not least of all the added pressure on local resources due to the rapid rise in population. Local communities are often wary of the ‘urban influences’ that accompany migration, such as drugs, prostitution, gambling, and petty crime, and the importation of weapons, pornography, and more importantly sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS. At the Porgera mining project in Enga Province, migration is regarded as the largest source of ‘social disruption’ (see Biersack, 1999; Filer, 1999; Golub, 2005). Porgera is distinguished from other mining projects by a tremendously flexible form of social organization that increases the scope for movement and settlement. After the actual mine, the massive influx of ‘outsiders’ to the Porgera Valley who seek to capitalize on the available opportunities, like employment, infrastructural services, or the cash economy, and the multitudes of ‘illegal’ miners who come to Porgera to sift through stock piles in search of gold, are the most significant agents of change.

In the vernacular, sengseng means movement or to ‘walk about’.
The Village Population Survey (VPS) is primarily conducted by the Community Relations department of the mining company. Demographic information is partly required for the provision of services. While this survey work is intended to gather data on the entire population, ‘VPS numbers’ are only given to those people who are identified as Lihirian. These numbers are important for employment positions where Lihirians are given ‘first priority’ over other applicants. On another level, VPS numbers have proven to be important markers of status for some men who interpret these numbers as somehow related to TKA. During the movement, members were said to be assigned numbers that corresponded with the wealth that would later be distributed. Some men have indicated they thought their VPS numbers were linked to the future wealth that will be delivered by ancestors.

These ‘locals first’ policies are common to all mining projects. The Misima gold mine was characterised by very strict regulation of a ‘Misiman first’ employment policy. However, they are harder to monitor in the Highlands where there is more significant migration and extremely flexible systems of incorporation.

For people to receive a VPS number the company and LMALA require ‘authorisation’ from senior clan leaders. This is problematic because Lihirians clans are spread out across the group of islands which means that senior men in some clans are not always aware of the decisions being made by other senior leaders of the same clan who might reside on another island.

For instance, one time when I was sitting in the men’s house in Kinami with the men I was most closely aligned with, a group of Tangan men walked through the village carrying several large pigs that were obviously for sale or exchange with Lihirians. No one moved to invite them in to rest or offered to help. After they had laboured past in the afternoon heat, I asked why nobody invited them in or helped them: why we did not treat them like wasier. To this one man replied “ples ipulap long ol waira, na mipela les nau” (this place is full of waira and now we cannot be bothered).
Chapter Eight

Back to the Men’s House

My original uncertainty over the first customary feast I attended in Lihir described in the introduction initially seemed unfounded. After all this was a socially significant event. People were engaged in the processes of social reproduction; meaningful transactions occurred, and relationships and collectively held values were expressed through ritual celebration. Introduced goods and styles did not detract from the essence of the occasion. Indeed, they enabled the expression of Lihirian notions of virtuous sociality, advancing the developmen project. But perhaps in some ways I was right the first time. Maybe this event really reflected the inherent façade of kastom. Looking beyond the absence of grass-skirts, thatched huts, and big men adorned with signifiers of wealth and rank, this event was acceptable and served intended social purposes. But it did so through processes in which inherent contradictions of meaning were unintentionally concealed or veiled. This was not ‘spurious tradition’ (Handler and Linnekin, 1984) or ‘inauthentic’ culture; to be sure, tradition is not stasis but a particular way of changing in new circumstances. But the performance of Lihirian kastom does represent an extremely successful attempt to present a seamless continuity with the past that masks disjuncture within this altered milieu.

In Part One I began exploring the inter-penetration between the supposedly distinct domains of kastom and bisnis and the difficulty of practically isolating these ‘spheres’ which frustrates certain economic goals. I outlined the salient structures and cultural repertoires that influence economic praxis, with only minimal elaboration on the processes involved in this confluence. Here I concentrate on the performance of kastom and the items exchanged. Beginning with the premise that the capitalist sector and local
exchange are thoroughly interrelated, and that there are not multiple economies – local, moral, national, global and so on – but one economy in which Lihirians fully participate (despite their claims otherwise), this chapter will illustrate the processes that actually sustain *kastom* and the extent to which Lihirian exchange is entwined with the global capitalist system.

‘Staging’ *kastom*

Preparations for my departure towards the end of fieldwork coincided with the next stage in the mortuary sequence for ‘finishing’ Luke Umbi, a young man who had died in the previous year. This *katkatop* (called *pkepke* on the smaller islands) was staged in the men’s house in Natingsangar hamlet in Kinami. This was the men’s house with which I was most closely connected and as such this event was among the few times I was involved as a host (*hurkarot*) rather than as a guest (*wasier*). This feast was hosted by the lineage into which I had been incorporated, headed by Bah Arom, his nephews John Zipzip, Clement Papte and Peter Toelinkanut, and several of their sons and male affinal relations who resided in this hamlet. Two other men, Piong and Rapis, both of whom were still alive, were also honoured in this feast. Piong was a man of considerable standing, and was from another clan; he was included due the close bonds between himself and Zipzip established through past exchange alliances, and partly because it was said his relatives had previously failed to make *kastom* for him. This meant Zipzip would receive the prestige associated with making *katkatop* for Piong. Alternatively, Rapis, who is the brother of Papte, Peter and Zipzip (the host lineage) was in his forties and had what appeared to be Down syndrome. This was considered a suitable occasion to perform the necessary feasts; in the event that he should unexpectedly die this would reduce the additional burden of unfulfilled *kastomary* requirements. Zipzip and his brothers were planning ahead but also maximizing the opportunity to make *kastom*, express leadership skills, and repay existing debts.

Concentrating on this particular feast appears to refute anthropological convention. It is not climatic, nor does it represent the final closure of the ritual cycle. It is not the apex of
political competition nor is it the pinnacle of social reproduction - the deceased are not yet ‘finished’. However it is more common to see a katkatop than tutunkanut or karat, mainly because of the difference of scale and the relative ‘ease’ with which katkatop can be performed. This feast reflects predominant Lihirian kastom practices that frequently include collapsed time scales, the off-shore purchase of pigs and garden produce, and cash expenditure on transport and goods. The scale and character of this particular feast in Kinami also highlights the excessive nature of Bruno Minai’s pkepke (katkatop) in Putput. Here we see the way kastom is affected by the differential access to wealth. Additionally, this feast was doubly significant because it was hosted by Peter Toelinkanut’s lineage. This event entirely captures the complications associated with the codification of kastom and more generally the attempt and failure to insulate kastom from bisnis.

There are two types of katkatop known as katkaptop toh and katkatop miat. Effectively they are the same feast and serve the same purpose, the difference being whether the celebrated person is still alive (katkatop toh) or dead (katkatop miat). Both are directly concerned with the inheritance of political power and resources within the lineage and clan. With the efflorescence of kastom, partly due to the availability of resources, meaning feasts can be mobilized in a shorter time, it has become increasingly common to see katkatop toh. This is also because there is now more at stake; if the kanut sees the host’s efforts then there is a better chance the host will be rewarded. The cumulative result of these changes is the collapse of sequential feasting time; people have to make kastom sooner, while relatives are still alive, to reciprocate existing debts from other ‘prematurely’ performed feasts, to secure their own resources and customary influence, and to maintain prestige within this sphere. In effect, the availability and integration of cash has enabled competition to be ‘brought forward’ and transformed what was formerly a post-mortem competition between ‘heirs’ into a regular ritual performance of the political stratagems that exist and permeate contemporary village and lineage power struggles.
Making Katkatop in Kinami

The hosts had been ‘preparing’ since Umbi had died, but within weeks of the planned date there was still confusion as to whether things would go ahead. Not all of the necessary pigs were secured and most of the food would still need to be bought. Some extra gardens had been planted in preparation, but this harvest would not provide enough yams to cater for the entire event. Some talked about postponing the event, while others insisted on proceeding. As the opening day drew closer it was becoming obvious we would need to travel abroad for our needs. Three days before the feast was planned to start two dinghies were sent to Tabar to find suitable pigs. Lihirians often insisted locally raised pigs are better and carry more prestige, but with the efflorescence of kastom it was often difficult to find enough local pigs for exchange needs. The inflated demand had not been met internally. Some people started small piggery projects (banis pik) as part of the entrepreneurial drive, but at the general household level pig husbandry had not increased. At the same time, while Lihirians prefer locally raised pigs, paradoxically there is definite status associated with importing pigs from other areas. In this instance prestige is located in the extra effort and money required to make these purchases. In this way wealthy big men display their affluence and indebted others in ways that are difficult to match – reciprocation requires an equivalent sized pig with similar expenditure. New Irelanders seized upon this opportunity, and many were raising pigs specifically for sale in Lihir.

The feast was to be held over six days. Ordinarily this would be an unusually long katakatop. In this case the katkatop was combined with aspects of the rarhum feast. Rarhum had not yet been made for Rapis or Umbi. Different feasts are often merged into a single occasion with the combined effect of a bigger event that boosts the reputation of the hosts if it is successfully performed. While the scale has increased, feasts are often shortened and planned for weekends and work breaks so that workers can attend and play their required roles (beyond expectations to contribute financially). Clement Papte worked in a relatively senior position with the company in the Human Relations department and had specifically taken leave so he could be involved. With so many last minute preparations and the lingering doubt over the possibility of acquiring enough pigs,
he was anxious whether things would begin before he returned to work. Several other men involved in this feast were similarly constrained by work commitments, while some could only attend during the evening.\textsuperscript{5}

On the Sunday evening before the event was due to begin five boats arrived back from Tabar with 19 pigs. Another three boats had been sent in addition to the first two. All of these pigs were transported from the boats at Londolvit wharf to Kinami on a large flat tray truck that had been hired at great expense from a neighbouring village. Monday morning was spent putting these pigs into temporary caged enclosures (garum), collecting the final pieces of fire wood, and husking green coconuts for the men’s house. Rice and tin fish were cooked for workers (hosts) and guests who arrived that morning. Another three boats were hired and sent to Masahet to collect women and garden food. Preparations were made for the opening of the \textit{kastom}, \textit{kienkien} (to collect firewood), marking the preparatory work.

Most of the guests had arrived by Tuesday morning; over the course of the week in excess of two hundred people, including women and children, would attend this event. Not all of them would stay in Natingsangar, as many were either from Kinami or travelled on vehicles from the surrounding villages. In Lihir guests are not invited, rather people attend feasts to demonstrate support and alliance. Once hosts have announced their intention to hold an event, news spreads quickly. Generally it is expected that people in the surrounding area will attend and partake in the consumption of food, regardless of clan affiliation, reflecting the open nature of feasting and Lihirian attitudes towards hospitality.

The advent of motor transport and roads have changed the form of ‘hosting’ a feast which formally involved building greater numbers of temporary housing for visitors, both in the men’s house enclosure and outside. Increased availability of transport has meant many guests no longer need to stay for the entire duration of the feast; guests can attend on those days (or in many cases for those hours) when pigs are distributed and consumed. Previously guests from other areas may have stayed with the hosts for several weeks or
even months, increasing the debts and obligations between guests and hosts - giving each party greater purchase on the other’s resources. Although hosts no longer have to support as many guests for long periods of time, the nature of contemporary feasting means that greater amounts of money and resources are expended over a shorter period of time.

By Tuesday evening the polpol (outdoor shelter for women) was full with women and children, while the men and young males slept in the men’s house, and under other shelters constructed for the occasion. A single pig was killed and cooked in the men’s house for kienkien, while women cooked vegetables outside. Zipzip made a small speech to announce the activities for the following day and to acknowledge the beginning of the feast. Guests received pinari (gifts of betel nut, pepper sticks, green coconuts, and tobacco) that had mainly been purchased at the market that morning.

The feasting that began on Wednesday was not the actual katkatop. The purpose of this day was to complete the rarhum that had not yet been made for Umbi and Rapis. This was not a full scale rarhum which meant not all of the stages were performed, only the most important - the balun kale and ber pelkan. After the feast there was some disagreement between different hosts over which stages had actually been completed. Some members insisted that balun peketal had also been made for Umbi on this occasion because it was not made during his funeral. This is a minor point of discrepancy, but it does reveal that Lihirian feasting rarely follows an ideal format, despite the willingness of so many people to offer an ‘authoritative’ version. Donors are not always aware of how their pig will be used or whom it will eventually ‘mark’. Guests are even less likely to be aware of each step within a given feast, or any last minute changes. This usually means each feast is likely to be ‘judged’ by different standards of ‘correct procedure’. Ultimately all three pigs were considered part of the rarhum and were treated as bual tom, which meant that they could not be taken outside of the men’s house.

On the Wednesday morning rice and tin fish and vegetables were served for all guests. All the preparations for the pigs were performed by men. The two pigs which were said to be for the balun kale were both cut into 9 portions. These were then wrapped and
placed in the ground oven and later parcelled out to the 9 matrilineal groups represented at this *kastom*. When the pigs and vegetables were cooked two beds of banana leaves and coconut fronds were made on the ground in the men’s house where the food was placed for distribution and consumption. One of these (the ber pelkan pig) was for the pelkong and poas, and the other was for the remaining guests. The women had made their own separate *mumu* (earthen oven used for cooking) outside which only contained vegetables. When the pigs were finally uncovered that night, the nine portions from each pig were placed in separate piles on the leaf beds. Vegetables, betel nut, tobacco, and green coconuts, were also placed with the pork to form what is known as *pinari lam* (big gift). This is the usual fashion for balun kale. Each clan is then responsible for their own portion of meat, which they will later cook again within the men’s house until it is all consumed. This pig (balun kale) was strictly *bual tom*. During the day women were busy weaving baskets (piar) to be used in later food distributions. They did not uncover their *mumu* until much later that night. The three boats that had earlier been sent to Masahet to collect women finally arrived back that evening and another small truck load of people came from Kunayie.

By Thursday morning the balun kale was completely consumed. Because this *rarhum* was merged with the katkatop, the feast was not concluded with the *susul kwil* (washing the skin), the customary wash after abstaining from washing during the feast. Typically this is a climactic moment that ends a very sombre feast. Instead, when the bebeh pig was announced (the pig which is cooked on this day in preparation for consumption the following day) this signalled the end of the *rarhum* and the beginning of the katkatop.

On Friday, the climactic day of the feast (banien), the bebeh pigs were uncovered and distributed for consumption. Four pigs had been killed; one was consumed separately by pelkong and poas (the ber pelkan pig) for each kanut, while the others pigs known as *iol nizenis* (the pigs that people come to see being cut) were consumed by the assembled guests. These pigs in particular are killed to mark the honoured kanut. It is important that guests witness these pigs being cut and distributed and have the opportunity to partake in their consumption.
Buying sociality

After people had eaten, the remaining pigs were killed, butchered and distributed to guests to carry back to their homes and men’s houses. Before this could take place these pigs had to be lined up in front of the men’s house (a process known as *pasuki*), and public payment was made for all of the pigs used throughout the feast.

Once the remaining large pigs were lined up in front of the men’s house, Zipzip stood close to the pigs with a list of names that corresponded to certain pigs; he went to each pig and called out the name of the donor and who the pig was intended to honour (see Plate 17). This process of lining the pigs up in front of the men’s house is crucial to the succession of leadership. It can be argued that the most essential requirement in both
katkatop and karat feasts is the presentation of pigs in the front of the men’s house. Some
men have suggested that even if nothing else within the feast succeeds, as long as this
process is complete, then the feast is considered ‘correct’ and the hosts have a legitimate
claim on leadership succession and the control over clan resources.

Fundamentally this is the opportunity to honour the kanut. It is also an essential stage in
the transfer of land and leadership succession. In those instances where the kanut is an
influential leader and maintains control over clan land (a title known as a tamboh wan a
pour), it is in this context that the mantle of control can pass from kanut to hurkarat
(host). While not all kanut are influential (or have significant resources to be inherited)
and not all hurkarat can succeed to leadership or inherit land, this remains an important
opportunity for men to prove their leadership skills. Just as hurkarat usually organise
themselves under a central leader, wasier groups similarly align themselves under a
leading man. The presentation of pigs is above all a statement about leadership and
people’s access to resources and their ability to coordinate themselves under their big
man. Hurkarat do not provide all of the pigs presented in this occasion. They will arrange
for certain wasier groups to provide pigs, which either reciprocate existing debts, or
create new ones. This is an important opportunity for wasier to express both their respect
to the kanut and their capacity as a group. For the hurkarat, the ability to manage
relationships is manifest in the number of pigs provided.

Before these pigs were cut and distributed, they had to be publicly ‘purchased’. The
payment for pigs with shell money is referred to as ravo matanabual. Specifically this
refers to the mode of payment (matanabual – the ‘eye’ or price of the pig), where fathoms
of shell money which are joined together are rolled up and placed in a leaf wrapping
(ravo). The person receiving the payment puts their hand into the leaf container (ravo)
and pulls out the shell money, slowly uncoiling their payment. As they walk backwards
the assembled crowd can see how many fathoms (param) of mis have been joined,
indicating the value of the pig.
These exchanges took place outside the men’s house in the malal where the pigs had been lined up. In other feasts, payments took place inside and outside the men’s house, depending on available space and where people were gathered. In some instances the exchanges are very low key as the ‘buyer’ simply walks over to the ‘seller’ in the men’s house and tosses the required amount of shell money at his feet or in his basket. Alternatively ‘buyers’ and ‘sellers’ might line up and make a public show of these exchanges. The most important thing is for them to occur in public to avoid disputes over the amount given or whether the payment actually took place.

There were minor speeches by Zipzip to acknowledge the moment and announce what was about to happen, then the exchanges got underway. All of these involved a combination of cash and fathoms of mis. Only those pigs purchased in Lihir were exchanged in public. Pigs that have been raised and provided by the host group or their allies incur no payment; guests who receive portions of this pork are expected to reciprocate this pork when they later host the same feast. Pigs contributed by hosts or their allies (who are generally regarded as wasier) which have been purchased from someone else or an existing exchange partner must be paid for on the final day of the feast. When pigs are purchased locally, transactors make arrangements prior to the feast and then depending on which stage of the feast the pigs are used for, payment then occurs after they have been consumed or prior to being slaughtered (cf. Powdermaker, 1971 [1933]: 201). The problem with pigs that have been purchased offshore is that they require outright payment and generally the owner does not attend the feast, so the price and payment are not publicly verified.9

When pigs are purchased locally there is an expectation that at a later date the ‘seller’ can call upon the buyer to purchase another pig; transactions often incur an obligation to return the favour and ‘resell’ a pig of similar value. These obligations exist independently of the indebtedness that is created (or repaid) when then pig is later put to use in kastom. The emerging image is one of continual management. Big men must be able to manage their relationships with the people from whom they acquire pigs and the people with whom they exchange pigs. Thus, in addition to the debts that are reconciled or created
between hosts and guests, there is a complex matrix of exchange relations surrounding this event; new and pre-existing relationships are continually being negotiated. The ability to purchase pigs with cash (without on-going obligation) reduces this network. At the surface level most Lihirians would agree with the statement that “your own pigs you may not eat” (Rubel and Rosman, 1978). However, feasting pork is generally indiscriminately heaped and served together and distributed to guests; there is little effort made to ensure that a donor does not receive a portion of pork from their own gift. The emphasis is less on consumption per se and more on use; pigs are primarily instruments for producing and maintaining relationships not satisfying individual hunger.

There were three kinds of pigs being killed in this stage: katmatanarhiri, karemiel, and puatpes. The pigs that have been lined up in front of the men’s house (katmatanarhiri) were intended for distribution to the surrounding men’s houses; ideally every clan group that attends the feast will receive gifts of pork to carry back to their men’s

Plate 18  Peter Toelinkanut exchanging shell money for pigs with young pig owner, Kinami Village

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house for consumption. These gifts must be accompanied by a piar (woven basket full of vegetables), and there is an expectation they will be reciprocated at later dates when these men’s houses host their own feasts; these gifts represent the strength of the host clan. These are important gifts that unite men’s houses. Portions of karemiel are for those men who had helped during the feast, and puatpes distributed to women specifically acknowledges female contribution. Puatpes and karemiel are not necessarily lined up in front of the men’s house; if there are not enough remaining pigs for these categories, pigs can be drawn from katmatanarhiri (after they have been lined up and paid for). Puatpes are contributed by guests and generally hosts will be unaware of how many will be donated. Allies often use this opportunity to ‘unexpectedly’ contribute pigs to the feast to indebt hosts, or to repay existing debts. These pigs, which must be reciprocated at later feasts, are the objectification of solidarity and they represent the level of respect that a host can command. In all, there were eleven pigs lined in front of the men’s house (eight pigs that marked both Umbi and Piong, and two for Rapis, and one extra that covered them all), and approximately another twenty five puatpes and karemiel that were ‘donated’ by a range of people involved with this feast.

Hazarding reputations and expectations

By all accounts this was a ‘successful’ feast. There were no hitches, there was an abundance of food, guests were satisfied, it did not rain, internal politics were kept at bay long enough to stop the event splitting apart, and the hosts ably demonstrated their capacity to provide through the pooled use of available resources. The event was pleasing for guests and hosts and people felt that kastomary obligations were fulfilled and important social values were still in place.

It is possible that an event can be ‘successful’ in some areas and ‘fail’ in others. Ultimately hosts must be able to provide enough food for their guests. This includes not only the yams and pigs - the core feasting cuisine - but also the items required for pinari and even food for additional meals throughout the feast, usually comprised of rice and tin.
fish. Some hosts are known to use magic or have enchanted stones, shells or poles located in the men’s house that satiate guest’s empty stomachs. Some consider this as ‘tricking’ guests, and that ‘genuine’ hosts should be able to provide enough food; no doubt these forms of magic are also a protective measure against attempts to ‘spoil’ a feast or the name of the host lineage and their big man. Hosts must also ensure good weather for the duration of their event. Weather magicians can be employed if there are none within the host group. These practices (or at least the belief in their necessity and efficacy) were not in decline despite the influence of Christianity, demonstrating how Melanesian ‘religions’ or cosmologies are often characterised by a continuum of beliefs that may be called upon at different times for different purposes (cf. Barker, 1990; Clay, 1986: 140-46; Eves, 1998: Chapter 7 and 257–269; Kahn, 1983; Macintyre, 1990; Robbins, 2004; Trompf, 1991). These elements call to mind Eves’ (1998) criticisms about the tendency to present New Ireland mortuary feasts as unproblematic sites of social reproduction, free from contest or ‘failure’. Events are always threatened by back stage tensions within the core group of hosts, the potential for unforeseen problems (especially with last minute preparations), and the possibility that guests will not play their role, by not bringing promised pigs, refusing to eat the feasting food, or disturbing activities through fighting or drunken behaviour.

Peter was reluctant to admit that success was contingent upon the use of trade store food, buying pigs outside of Lihir, and purchasing yams, and pinari items like betel nut and tobacco at the market. Even though he conceded this was necessary due to the reduced planning time, obviously this event failed to reach his codified ideals. If things were unsuccessful, in addition to the embarrassment, this would have been grist to his idealist mill, confirming the absolute necessity for a return to ‘true’ Lihirian ways. But the bottom line was people were happy; there was enough money spent (over 18 000 kina11) and the event appeared to uphold ideas about protocol and tradition. Most importantly, pigs were lined up in front of the men’s house, validating their actions while individual transactions gave rise to a particular sociality associated with kastom.
Gifts of obligation

At the heart of Lihirian *kastom* is the distribution, sharing and consumption of food, a process that objectifies the value of nurturance and reciprocity. Throughout their lives Lihirians incur numerous ‘debts’, primarily from the exchange of pigs and shell money within various feasts, but also debts of ‘nurturance’. Repayment of these debts is central to the transfer of land and resources; more importantly it elicits core social values. Pigs and shell money received in a particular feast must be reciprocated in the exact form during later feasts of the same type. For instance, if a guest receives a certain portion of cooked pork during a *katkatop*, it is expected they will reciprocate an exact piece of meat the next time they are performing this feast. If people die before they are able to ‘settle’ these debts, then close lineage members will carry these debts to be discharged at later events.

Debts of nurturance are usually incurred at the household level and primarily exist between a man and his children and his sister’s children, and between a woman and her children. ‘Children’ can repay these debts during attendance at their parent’s or uncle’s mbie (the feast that marks the mourning period). Another important forum for repaying parental debts and showing respect is the *ikinietz* feast. Siblings usually make this small feast for their parents as they become elderly; it is an opportunity to honour and acknowledge their hat wok (hard work). These feasts are also important to the transfer of land and resources; *ikinietz* is one of the few opportunities for a son to inherit his father’s land. In many ways reciprocating nurturance rather than pigs and shell money per se is more crucial for the transfer of land and political leadership. Feasting reflects the values and function of the household and the men’s house writ large for society; within this context groups and individual big men make Lihirian sociality flourish (*kamap*).

Principles of exchange

Ideally exchange followed a typical cyclical pattern. As groups and individuals exchanged items with each other and hold feasts that nurture others, these processes are
reciprocated, ensuring a sense of inclusion, mutual indebtedness, and ‘repayment’ of ‘investments’. This is the basis for the ideal of equality. In the past when groups exchanged pigs for shell valuables and presented yams for consumption these items were invested with the same ‘cultural value’: pigs were locally raised, yams were home-grown, and mis was not just a token currency but represented the moral standing of individuals and groups. Lihirians would often give the impression that their exchange cycle was once a closed realm that involved the reciprocal exchange of ‘cultural equivalents’. To an extent this was true. Isolation ensured that exchange was very parochial, which may account for the development of strict notions of equivalence.13

An equivalent gift should not only look similar to the original, but ideally embodies a similar level of physical expenditure, nurturance, and culturally significant skills required for its creation, growth, exchange and eventual consumption. What is exchanged represents aspects of the donor; it is the moral autonomy invested in the gift that must be reciprocated. This should not be confused with Maussian notions of hau, or an equivalent ‘spirit of the gift’ (Mauss, 1974 [1925]). As Sahlins argues, we should avoid the temptation to try and understand the economic principle by concentrating on the ‘religious’ overtones of the concept (Sahlins, 1974: 157). Godelier presents a similar criticism, asserting that things do not move of their own accord, only by the will of individuals (Godelier, 1999: 106). In debates surrounding the inalienability of gifts it remains a moot point whether gifts are reciprocated because of claims over the produced object or simply the debt created through giving it to another person (Strathern, 1982e: 549). Nevertheless, in Lihir the obligation is to return and perpetuate what is engendered through the act of giving.

Gifts of the Ground

Yams distributed during feasts are ultimately an objectification of the lineage and the clan’s ability to enliven itself through productivity, their capacity to coordinate themselves underneath their big man, and his competence in making an event successful. In the social language of food, yams are an important idiom that expresses commonality
between the donor and the receiver. In daily contexts women cook yams for the household and often during *kastom* men cook yams in the men’s house. The presentation of yams during feasts is part of the male performance of objectifying and distributing nurturance to clan members, allies, and members of the opposite moiety; these actions extend the daily efforts of women who nurture and sustain individuals and lineages.

The presentation of yams in the ceremonial context represents the ability of people to produce healthy and abundant crops. In the past garden magic was more central to agricultural production. Gardening involves a division of labour between males and females. Much of the ‘strenuous’ work, such as clearing, fencing and tilling, is performed by males, while females are more engaged in planting, careful tending and harvesting. Males usually take the public credit for a successful feast (which implies the ability to produce plentiful crops), but they recognise their dependency upon female labour. Gifts of pork (puatpes) specifically acknowledge this contribution.

On mainland New Ireland where taro is the staple feasting tuber, Clay recalls some instances where Mandak people purchased taro, or hired other people to plant gardens for them after their own crops failed. However, purchasing taro for large-scale mortuary feasts “was a mark against those sponsoring the feast…[and] buying taro with cash from copra and cacao sales added nothing to the buyer’s prestige” (Clay, 1986: 138). Eves cites a similar reluctance among the Lelet to purchase taro for mortuary feasts (1998: 242). At the beginning of the mining project Lihirians insisted they would continue planting gardens for *kastom* and they would not include trade store goods in these events. Despite changes, these sentiments are still central tropes within the discourse of *kastom*. The disdain expressed for purchasing garden produce for mortuary purposes indicates the cultural significance of providing food invested with the giver’s time, substance, effort and knowledge. In this way communal feasting enables groups to nurture and continue a gathered Lihirian sociality.

Lihirians have quickly progressed from an ideological rejection of the use of trade store goods and market produce in feasting. In the first instance rice and other trade store
goods were regarded as a ‘substitution’ for garden produce. Workers (who supposedly did not have time to maintain large gardens) were expected to contribute to kastom by purchasing and presenting trade store items; this was also expressive of the prestige associated with having access to money within the clan. The use of commodities was also initially justified as an appropriate way for workers to ‘repay’ the efforts of parents and relatives who previously paid for school fees, provided food and nurturance, and made other purchases throughout their life. Over time this has evolved into a general expectation that no kastom event is complete without the presentation and consumption of these items.

Porcine Presents

We find similar contradictions in the transaction of pigs. Nostalgia and desire for the exclusive exchange of locally domiciled pigs is set against the common New Ireland practice of purchasing pigs from other areas (cf. Foster, 1995a: 178). The use of pigs from other areas is a concealed statement about the contradictory nature of status: big men should be free of debts, yet the display of pig debts in kastomary feasting reflects their prestige gained through links outside the clan and beyond Lihirian shores.

As in much of Melanesia, Lihirian pigs are significant for their pre-eminent value as food for human consumption, the dominant object of exchange, and as repositories of tremendous symbolic potency (cf. Jolly, 1994: 173). The close identity between pigs and humans is postulated. Lihirians take great pride in domesticating their pigs. The daily relationship is caring and indulgent. Names are given, often with an association to some characteristic and people often develop a close bond with their pigs. Many express remorse when their pig is slaughtered, and some remove themselves from the scene when the animal is trussed before being killed, but invariably pragmatism and exchange obligations prevail.

Despite these connections, Lihirians still have an ambivalent relationship with their pigs. Pigs are a necessary nuisance; they forage through gardens, break down fences, and make
a general mess of the place. On Niolam, pigs tend to roam free throughout the day. Some keep their pigs within a small enclosure (banis pik), although many simply allow their pigs to live around the hamlet. Fines are imposed for pigs that cause damage to people’s gardens, and it is not uncommon for some disgruntled gardeners to indiscriminately kill pigs they find uprooting their crops. Lihirians distinguish between wild and domestic pigs; a wild pig that has been captured would not be used for exchange, but piglets gained through domestication often enter the exchange cycle. While pork is not part of the daily diet, wild pigs that are captured in the bush or found in people’s gardens are often brought back to the men’s house for consumption and distribution. Only a rabis man would kill a domesticated pig for non-kastomary consumption.

Pigs are generally regarded as individual property and it is the responsibility of individual households to rear pigs to be used in future kastom. Children may have their own pigs, although maternal uncles often decide when and how they will be used. In the past big men exercised greater influence over the use of pigs within the lineage. They knew how many pigs were available within the lineage and they were often used at their discretion; contemporary big men struggle to control the use and ownership of pigs, especially when they are regarded as a valuable source of personal income. However, when big men appropriate pigs, this still provides an avenue for the owner to establish status within the lineage. Various individuals within a given household may have their own pigs but often the responsibility for feeding and nurturing pigs rests with a single household member. Responsibility varies between households; women are usually expected to fulfil this role, but it is not an exclusively female domain. In reality, since mining operations began fewer Lihirians are rearing pigs. The stated preference for locally domesticated pigs is a way of presenting Lihirian pride that has little relation to actuality, highlighting the ambivalent character of pigs as practical necessity and symbolic repositories.

Pigs are a primary means for reconstituting damaged social relationships. Domesticated pigs are given when a moral relationship has been violated. In the past when gender distinctions were more crucial to Lihirian moral delineations, only the presentation of a pig could restore the relationship. Often these incidents include the cultural definitions of
gender relations, such as when a man talks about the sexual relations of another man’s sister in front of him. If a man slept with a woman in the men’s house this would be regarded as one of the most transgressive breaches of gendered taboo. Not all violations refer to sexual taboos; in one instance a young man who was drunk knocked over the matanlaklak (the Y-shaped stile for entry) of his father’s men’s house. He was required to kill a pig to repair the situation. Pigs are identified with the donor, and consumption within the men’s house rectifies an impaired moral relationship.

Lihirians describe feeding a pig as tananie a bual, a term that carries the same connotations as nurturing humans, by ‘caring for’ and feeding. Pigs are not equated with humans, but they are regarded differently from other animals. In Lihir pigs are the only animals that receive a plentiful and consistent supply of food. Pigs are not simply the embodiment of labour and productivity. Many Lihirians claim to have specialist knowledge or ‘talk’ that can make their pig grow faster and bigger. While this knowledge is in decline among younger generations, especially those with basic familiarity of biological science, the capacity for raising large healthy pigs is still deemed the result of hard work and the ability to deploy specialist knowledge in productive ways. A reputation for this skill can ensure fame throughout the islands but there are no signs that people favour the pigs of some people over others.

It is instructive to consider the exchange of pigs in relation to the history of Lihirian warfare and claims to cannibalism, or at least the vicious torture of captives (see chapter one). Several men from Malie Island once recalled a story on the origin of pinari (the gift of pork that guests take home or back to their men’s house after attending a feast). The story was later performed as part of the Malie Community School break up (see Plate 19). Many interpreted it as a parody of the past, until community leaders explained the significance of the performance:

A man named Amiso from Malie ‘hunted’ for people at night. By the time he had killed off the entire Malie population he thought of his two grandsons, but was unsure where to find them. Unable to find their hiding spot, he decided to make his way to Masahet where he could continue with his activities. His grandsons decided to lure him back to Malie in
order to kill him. They lit a fire on top the high plateau and waited for curiosity to lead him back to the island. When he found his grandsons he questioned them before they killed him and cut him up into small portions. They wrapped each piece of his body in the large leaves that are still used for parcelling food, then travelled by canoe around Lihir and as far as Namatanai distributing the pinari of ‘meat’ in every men’s house. This was intended to signal a new time of peace.

This story is underscored by notions of morality and reproduction of social relations. Before ‘pacification’ when cannibalism was said to exist, or at least when warfare was common, blood feuds were settled with human life. The substitution of pigs for humans for compensation or ‘balancing’ the moral order suggests the value placed upon human life. Giving live pigs and cooked pork affirms the supreme moral order that underpins Lihirian social relations; it assures social continuity within lineages and between groups. Lihirians do not regard pigs as commensurate with human life because they cannot sufficiently substitute for the loss of kin, but the comparison between nurturing humans

Plate 19  Enactment of the legend of Amiso, Malie Island
and raising large pigs highlights their value in this context (cf. Modjeska, 1982). Accordingly, gifts of pork (pinari) reflect this original peace gesture. Here we can see how pigs help alleviate social disruption caused by death. Pigs given in the context of mortuary feasts are a deliberate response to the social disruption caused by death – the interruption of the flow of nurturance by the abuse of power or through natural human mortality.

Pig prestations are an objectification of the moral attributes of the donor. They are not singular isolated gestures; they predicate a similar response from the receiver at a later date. It is more than merely the contribution of food to assist the host with their burden to provide extended hospitality. It conveys a complex message to the recipient of moral autonomy; it represents the giver’s capacity for autonomous action and their relationship to the kanut. Here morality involves individual self-determined action directed towards the nurturance of relationships.

On commodities, or what is a Lihirian gift?

If exchange items in Lihirian kastom (supposedly) signify personal investment then how should we understand the transaction in this katkatop? Given that commodities are common features of kastom it seems we can take two approaches: we can disregard these transactions as ‘inauthentic’ or a mere simulacrum of traditional exchange, or we can consider how it is possible to use commodities interchangeably with ‘authentic’ or domestic products. However, given that neither approach is sufficient on its own (or entirely correct), perhaps it is necessary to combine aspects of both.

Melanesian exchange systems have been predominantly interpreted vis-a-vis the inherited legacies of Mauss. The inordinate amount of anthropological attention given to gifts at the expense of commodities, or simply an assumed agreement on the nature of commodities (that in many ways amounts to our own Occidentalism), combined with the significance of commodities in the Lihirian economy, means this category necessarily
requires some thought. There has been some insightful work produced on the nature of commodities (Appadurai, 1986; Gregory, 1982; Godelier, 1977; Taussig, 1980), but we should not assume that the character or constitution of commodities is axiomatic.

A useful place to begin is Godelier’s argument that “we must perforce conclude that very often the precious objects we encounter in primitive societies have a dual nature: they are both goods and non-goods, ‘money’ and gifts” (1977: 128) (emphasis in original). A commodity is any thing or item that at one stage in its ‘career’ is alienated and exchanged between relatively independent actors (cf. Kopytoff, 1986). Gifts are items that are specifically given with the intention of contributing towards some aspect of social reproduction. However, gifts, that are said to be ‘inalienable’, should not be understood as merely the inversion of commodities. The terms of reference for gifts and commodities became relatively set in anthropological circles with the release of Gregory’s (1982) *Gifts and Commodities*. His work has since been questioned and challenged but for the most part his distinction is still the template for understanding these supposedly opposing forms of exchange. At the heart of his work lies a tidy formulation that is convincing and easy to remember: inalienable objects are exchanged as gifts between mutually dependent transactors, while alienable objects (commodities) move between mutually independent transactors, typically engaged in market relations. Gregory draws directly from the theoretical wellsprings of Mauss, arguing for an “indissoluble bond” (Mauss: 1974 [1925]: 62) between the giver and their gift (inalienable possession), which is contrasted with commodities that by their very definition are alienated objects to which people have no real connection. From this overdrawn opposition it is usually inferred that the foundational principles of both forms of exchange are reflected in contrasting moral evaluations. As Gell so neatly put it: “Gift – reciprocity – Good / market – exchange – Bad” (Gell, 1992: 142).

Although Gell pithily captures the essence of this overstated contrast, it should be acknowledged that his position is not original. As Sahlins and others before him have noted there are intervals of sociality and morality in reciprocal forms of exchange which effectively place these exchanges within a spectrum of reciprocities (Sahlins, 1974: Ch 5;
see also Gouldner, 1960; Malinowski, 1961 [1922]; Oliver 1967 [1955]). Even if ‘traditional’ exchange is generally characterised by morality and constraint, this does not imply everyone acquiesces in it, or that there are no contradictions, such as inclinations of self-interest in societies that customarily demand high levels of sociability (Sahlins, 1974: 203). Variables such as kinship distance, wealth, rank, and the actual items of exchange inevitably determine the nature of reciprocity. Thus, what we find in the discourse of *kastom* and assertions of *pasin bilong Lihir* are fantasies of reciprocity that overlook or conceal these contradictions, variables and gradations, so that all economic interactions are ‘judged’ against an idealised ‘pure gift’.

Lihirian practices support Gell’s unorthodox proposal that distinguishes between gifts and commodities, not on the basis of the character of the relationship between people and things (alienable / inalienable) or between people and people (independent / dependent), but rather the nature of the *social context* of a particular transaction (Gell, 1992: 146). This has particular significance for Lihir where people exchange gifts that are clearly not inalienable possessions, but nevertheless fulfil the social purposes of gift exchange.

Gell takes issue with the fundamental aspects of Gregory’s definition of gift and commodity exchange. The crucial assumption in Gregory’s formula is the idea that gift exchange involves the transfer of inalienable objects between transactors in a condition of reciprocal dependence, establishing a qualitative relationship between the actors rather than a quantitative relationship between the items of exchange. However, as Gell argues, objects *are* alienated in gift exchange. The very act of giving requires some sacrifice on behalf of the giver; something must be given up, whether it is access to the good, prestige or power that accompanies ownership, or simply the ability to give or use the object. The recipient receives all of these. Any social identity attached to previous ownership of the object is obviously not ‘alienated’, but there would be no glory or status for the giver unless it was recognised they had made some ‘sacrifice’ (Gell, 1992: 145). Moreover, just because gift exchange partners are ‘mutually-indebted’ in a relationship that extends over time, this feature alone does not discriminate between gift and commodity exchanges. This is not the sole preserve of gift exchange; commodity exchange does not occur in a
social vacuum without elements of ‘trust’ or the potential for further exchange at a later
date. Perhaps more controversially Gell asserts that even when partners are mutually
indebted, this is not the desired goal, rather it is to be able to “call it quits” after a long
sequence of high-prestige, socially salient transactions (Gell, 1992: 145). Thus it is more
useful to approach distinction on the basis of the social situation in which transactions
occur.

This exchange of commodities might occur via the medium of money, but this is not a set
precondition. In the heritage of Marx, typical political economic analysis of commodities
regards them as specific kinds of things only produced within the capitalist mode of
production and that are only found where capitalism exists or has penetrated: commodities are the material manifestation of the capitalist mode of production. However, numerous studies on ‘traditional’ forms of trade and barter amply reveal that commodities can exist in pre-capitalist economies (see Godelier, 1977; Sahlins, 1974; Salisbury, 1970).

The production of commodities is a cultural and cognitive process. Commodities must be
made as material items (and labour needs to have a price), but they also need to be
culturally recognised as a certain type of thing. This echoes Simmel’s (1978 [1900]: Ch. 1) observation that value is never an inherent property of objects, but is rather a
judgement made about them by particular actors. Various things might be marked as
commodities at one time and at another treated wholly different, and what one person
recognises as a commodity may not be treated the same by another. Kopytoff (1986)
refers to this as the “cultural biography” of commodities. At various stages or ‘phases’
(Appadurai, 1986) in the life an object it may be a commodity or otherwise. Things
destined to be commodities can become something completely different, such as a gift. In
order to comprehend Lihirian exchange we need to grasp the mutability of objects. The
“fact that an object is bought or exchanged says nothing about its subsequent status and
whether it will remain a commodity or not” (Kopytoff, 1986: 76). If we view
commoditization as a process of ‘becoming’ rather than a ‘terminal’ category (an all-or-
nothing state of being), then it is possible to emphasise the social context of exchange, rather than the object itself.

The use and exchange of trade store food and pigs and yams bought in market relations, illustrates the ways various items can exist as gifts and commodities at different times. This reveals the connection between *kastom* and *bisnis* and illustrates that gifts and commodities do not have to begin in a particular ‘state’ to later be used in certain ways: gifts of food and pork do not have to be grown specifically for these purposes. From this perspective we can understand how these items were employed in this *katkatop*. Focussing on the social context allows for the possibility of substitution. But does this imply that only the act of exchange brings forth the desired social values? Put otherwise, could any token be used for the sake of eliciting an ideal sociality? Clearly it is not possible to use just anything; Lihirians have continued to show rhetorical resistance towards the use of commodities. Despite flexibility, Lihirians hold specific ideas about the constitution of an appropriate gift. Perhaps it is still necessary to focus on the items themselves.

If pigs and yams are meant to embody something of the producer, then they cannot be regarded simply as exchange tokens. But is this the case when these items represent purchasing power rather than productive capacities? The pigs, yams, and store food purchased - as commodities in a context where there are no on-going obligations between transactors - were given in this *katkatop* as gifts of nurturance to *wasier* and gifts of honour to *kanut* with the intention of generating indebtedness or reciprocating existing debts. In this context these commodities became gifts. In this process the same moral loading is also put onto money; it is a concealment of cash as the universal medium of exchange and the idea that everything is reducible to a monetary value. By emphasising the social or moral aspect of money – that is, the obligation to give or use money to maintain relationships – money itself becomes a gift.

More importantly, these items were presented as if they embody the substance, effort, knowledge, and skills of the giver, when in actual fact what they express are the financial
capacities of the donor, or their ability to muster resources and influence other people to make purchases on their behalf. What has emerged in Lihirian *kastom* is a serious disjuncture between the producer and the actual gift. Lihirian exchange hinges on the line of connection between the producer and the final recipient of the gift. Questions over the ‘authenticity’ of Lihirian *kastom* are not specifically about the ability of these practices to produce desired social outcomes. Rather, these are questions about the ways in which these results are achieved. Social reproduction through exchange is dependent upon the link between producers and consumers; notions of reciprocity ensure these relationships feed back into one another establishing the ideal image of circularity.

**Contradicting values**

The contemporary Lihirian economy does not revolve around the exchange of inalienable possessions. Gifts given are supposed to embody the spirit and substance of the giver (or the producer) but there is no ‘insoluble bond’ that compels reciprocity. But as we have seen in this *katkatop*, the absence of substance does not detract from the outward significance of the gift or sociality engendered through exchange. However this is slightly complicated by the ambiguous nature of *mis* and other shell valuables. These are the central drivers of Lihirian exchange, and like pigs and yams, they fulfil multiple purposes and possess a range of values. *Mis* has proven equally fluid; it is concurrently a gift and a commodity. The belief that the gift economy is an isolated and separate sphere, detached from the capitalist system and ‘controlled’ by its customary stewards, is easily debunked through consideration of the pre-eminent media of exchange. As noted in chapter two, even though it is used for different functions, *mis* is universally recognised throughout New Ireland. *Mis* cannot be isolated; the system of traditional exchange constantly ‘leaks’ as Lihirians purchase pigs from other areas or buy *mis* (and shells for the local production of *mis*) from New Hanover and villages on the north coast of mainland New Ireland.
*Mis* is simultaneously a prized valuable, daily ‘currency’ and a commodity. According to Wagner, the Barok equivalent, *mangin*, approximates the functions of three kinds of currency: ‘vital wealth’, as part of the economy of human attachments; ‘money’, as an exchange medium in the local economy and as a good that can be redeemed by state money; and ‘money’ as a medium of moral merit (Wagner, 1986: 83). *Mis* can be understood within this framework and like *mangin*, “it approximates a kind of triple metaphor: each standard of exchange draws away from the definitional certitude of the other two” (Wagner, 1986: 83). Similar to Godelier’s (1977) description of Baruya salt currency, the character of *mis* shifts on the basis of the social context of its exchange.

Lihirians proclaim the value of *mis* in highly moral terms. It is reified as the corresponding pecuniary analogue of the ‘stable’ and ‘social’ nature of Lihirian society juxtaposed against an essentialised asocial cash-based society. On the rhetorical level cash and shell money are considered diametrically opposed. Given that *mis* is called the ‘money of *kastom*’ it is little wonder the qualities of *mis* are conflated with the morality of gift exchange. *Mis* is nearly always used with the intention to establish or maintain relationships, to correct a social imbalance, or provide someone with the means for entering into new relationships: it is an key item in the process of social reproduction.

Despite the immense desire for cash, Lihirians speak as if money is the ‘devilish’ acid that tears away at the fabric of society, reducing personal relations to impersonality while dissolving cherished cultural discriminations and qualitative differences (Bloch and Parry, 1989: 6; see also Akin, 1999; Taussig, 1980). However, notional opposition stems from an on-going struggle for representation of self and other, which has only increased in the context of mining, where Lihirians have willingly adopted contrasting orientalisms and occidentalisms about cash and shell money (cf. Gewertz and Errington, 1995). In reality, antagonism is not directed at cash per se, but the manner in which it is distributed. This lack of control compels Lihirian leaders to believe it is possible to retain control in the ‘*kastom* economy’, if only it could be separated from the cash sector.
Mis derives part of its value as an exchange item that binds people together in different ways, meaning the social history of each strand of mis is an important consideration. When it is produced for sale it does not acquire cultural significance until it is used in kastom. Otherwise it is obtained through social relationships and the acquisition of highly ranked mis is often a pinnacle moment in the life of the owner. As mentioned in chapter two, a big man’s hoard of mis is essentially a store of social merit.

The majority of Lihirian mis are not inalienable possessions. When it is ‘loaned’ or transacted between individuals and groups, the intention is not to receive back the same strand. More often than not, mis functions as general purpose currency that is commensurate with various objects and services. This is not to say that there are no highly ranked shell valuables where ownership reflects political standing. However, by 2003 those categories of prized shell money, such as rare pangpang, or ndolar arm shells that are similar to Tangan am fat (Foster, 1995a) and Mandak emelot (Clay, 1986), were no longer active in the local economy. These precious items were considered priceless and rest in the hands of a few elderly men. As elderly men feel less inclined towards an increasingly ‘disrespectful’ younger generation of men, they were disposing of this wealth, sometimes by burying or throwing it out to sea, to ensure these men are not the beneficiaries of their hard work and status which they claim is no longer appreciated. Simultaneously, some men were hoarding their shell valuables which reduced the use value of this wealth.

Here it is useful to consider Malinowski’s comparisons between Kula valuables (vaygu’a) and European heirlooms such as the Crown Jewels. These items no longer contain a ‘use value’. They are either too cumbersome or too precious to be worn or used: they are “merely possessed for the sake of possession itself, and the ownership of them with the ensuing renown is the main source of their value” (Malinowski, 1961 [1922]: 89). In Lihir these items are rarely displayed. This adds to their value, but it also gradually removes them from collective consciousness and the efficacy of their ownership is slowly diminished. Elderly men speak of certain shell valuables that can be regarded as inalienable. These are exchanged between close partners, and the act of
exchange serves to reinforce the relationship. Unlike common lower grade \textit{mis}, these items must be returned. If the ‘holder’ was to unexpectedly die, then the ‘owner’ or his lineage mates can expect its return. Despite the multiple paths to leadership and authority, owning a multitude of \textit{mis} and shell valuables is still the sign of a big man (regardless of their total influence). If a big man’s authority is challenged he can force the contender to establish rank through a display of wealth (a challenge known as \textit{tutuier piar}). As each man presents a particular shell valuable it is matched by the other man until one party can no longer produce (or borrow from lineage mates) rival wealth.\textsuperscript{20}

Malinowski once observed that heirlooms were insignia of rank and wealth and that in the past these two elements went together. In Lihir economic and political changes have eclipsed the status of big men who retain ownership of shell valuables. The points of reference for male prestige have shifted; wealth is usually measured by access to cash, and ownership of clan heirlooms no longer translates into potent political influence. Elderly men might command some authority in the realm of \textit{kastom}, but it is unlikely as younger richer, influential and educated (\textit{save}) men decide the future of Lihir they will truly pause to consider the opinions of these men just because they are the sole possessors of some dusty antique shells.

As the money of \textit{kastom}, \textit{mis} primarily retains value through \textit{ideological} insulation from the cash economy. It is valuable because it is described as incommensurate; it can only be used for certain transactions which have specific social purposes. Alternatively, money in capitalist societies is the externalised, visible, and most quantifiable expression of a commodity. It renders all commodities commensurate by allowing the exchange of quantifiably different goods, services, and information: “money is the expression, index, and measure of that commensurability” (LiPuma, 1999: 198). Isolation and subsequent control is complicated by suggestions from the JNC that Lihirian \textit{mis} should be converted into a general purposes currency that could also be ‘banked’ (and presumably redeemed for cash) in special Lihirian shell money banks. This would seemingly contradict the distinction between cash and shell money except that the attempts to isolate \textit{mis} and have
it converted into all-purpose currency are both motivated by the desire to construct a distinct Lihirian ethnic identity vis-à-vis a tangible cultural icon.

If shell money was to be used as currency, in a similar way to the Tolai tabu, which can be used for the payment of tax and school fees, mis would be fully commensurate. As noted in chapter four, mis was initially used for purchasing some trade store items, indicating that it once contained this characteristic. Citing Marilyn Strathern (1984: 65) with approval, Foster argues that “total commensurability is a specific feature of the capitalist economic system” (Foster, 1995a: 169). Logically we could argue such commensurability would reduce the cultural value of mis to mere tokens of value to be exchanged against any product or service. However, it is unlikely this would pose any real problems for Lihirians, given that when cash was first introduced it was used interchangeably with mis. It has only been since the development of a kastom discourse, which I discussed in chapters four and seven, that mis has been identified as samting bilong kastom tasol (something only for kastom).

LiPuma has demonstrated that purely economic approaches erroneously advertise state monies as homogeneous, liquid, fungible, or lacking in sociocultural qualities (Lipuma, 1999: 199). Freed from the cultural moorings and fetters of local exchange systems, ritual control, the economy of the gift, and the politics of compensation, capitalist money easily functions as universal medium of commodity circulation (ibid). Total commensurability supposedly renders these currencies ‘meaningless’. However this overlooks the different types of money in Western capitalist systems – bank checks, electronic money, and gold bullion etc. – and the various ways money is regarded and put to use (cf. Hart, 2001). Even if mis gained more commensurability it would not necessarily lose significance; rather, it would increase the basis for meaning. This is indicative of the tripartite nature of mis and the ease with which Lihirians shift between meanings as they use mis in different contexts.

Lihirians happily use mis for their own needs, but people also complain that it is ‘devalued’ and has ‘no meaning’. This reflects the paradox of meaning or the fantasy of
value: people want to insulate or sequester *mis* and other items to increase their moral value, yet simultaneously they want to use *mis* as a currency, to reinforce its ‘token’ value and Lihirian identity. This is certainly attributable to the florescence of shell valuables that corresponds to the loosening of restraints on technical knowledge and who can actually produce and own *mis*. *Mis* is no longer held in the hands of leading big men; it is easily attained by those with money, regardless of their *kastom*ary influence. If men are short of *mis* for purchasing pigs in an upcoming feast they often make arrangements to purchase more. When value is contingent upon scarcity, increased production ensures greater use, but it also assists ‘devaluation’. This is analogous to the pearl shells once used in Hagen *moka* transaction that were devalued and eventually replaced by money due to the massive influx of shells during the colonial period (see Strathern, 1979 and 1982c). However, *mis* has not been abandoned for another exchange medium, and it continues to co-exist with cash in nearly all *kastom* transactions. Arguments that *mis* is too easily produced follow a similar trajectory. But at a deeper level, the production of *mis* as a commodity reveals the dependency of *kastom* on *bisnis*; indeed, for those people involved in the production of *mis*, they are explicitly in the ‘*bisnis*’ of keeping *kastom* alive.

**Splicing the system**

The underlying assumption behind the codification and preservation of *kastom* is the belief that if these activities can be categorised and kept separate from transactions using money where value is determined in an external capitalist system, then it is possible exert control over the value of the items in circulation and to maintain the integrity of the exchange economy. This is an appealing concept except that it is impossible to achieve such ends. Every commodity purchase within this *katkatop* strengthened Lihirian dependency upon the global capitalist system. Lihirians are not likely to exclude non-indigenous goods from *kastom*; there is an increasing expectation within the wider community to perform modernity within a locally defined cultural framework. Every time introduced goods are used and new styles and opportunities are maximised it increases
the inertia of this consumptive pattern; it sets the precedent which must be reciprocated with amplification in every instance.

Many Lihirians believe that the mining company is a bottomless pit of wealth and that development is contingent upon working out the right formula to continue the flow of wealth into the community. By this logic they could control their economy and regulate the amount of money channelled into *kastom*. However, the value of this money that sustains *kastom* (and daily living standards) is dependent upon the fluctuations of the global market economy. Lihirians benefit from an increase in the value of gold, but when gold prices decline, or shares in the company are re-floated to increase the number of investors, the value of Lihirian stakes decrease, effectively reducing the amount of money Lihirians can expect to receive from the operation. Similarly, national reliance on imported goods and the continual devaluation of the kina increase the strain on an already stretched economy. In the mean time, the price of rice and tin fish will increase, fuel prices will follow their set path, and Lihirians will find the purchasing power of their kina is gradually reduced, placing greater pressure upon those who earn money and those groups wanting to perform *kastom*.

Lihirian exchange practices are fully influenced by any changes in the international arena. Ultimately Lihirians are unable to control the realm of *kastom* because of the implausibility of ‘separate spheres’; Lihirian *kastom* is but one aspect of the same economy in which we are all embedded. Some Lihirians persist in believing their exchange system is relatively independent of the capitalist sector, both economically and ideologically. Alternatively others recognise interpenetration and lament the loss of a (false) purity. Following the ‘rationalist’ philosophy of the PV course, the JNC have prescribed a remedy of total separation between these realms: preservation will be accompanied by isolation. Regardless of whether this is actually feasible, it is premised on the modernist claim that it is possible to segregate different aspects of social, economic and political life. Supposedly this would benefit economic development at the individual, household and community level. The assumption being similar to Mandeville’s famous observation, that private vice could yield public benefit. As each
person concentrates on fulfilling their own needs, the entire community will prosper. *Kastom* (which will be separated from *bisnis*) can then be easily wheeled out to oblige the ancestors without the messy economic and political tangle that it usually incurs.

The Lihir exchange system is regularly spliced with the capitalist sector. The purchase of goods for *kastom* represents a more general Melanesian phenomenon: modern Melanesians taming or domesticating commodities as they convert them from market goods into cultural gifts (see Akin, 1999; Carrier and Carrier, 1989; Heaney, 1982: 229; and Weiner, 1976: 78 – 79). The ideal cyclical image where sociality is made to ‘come up’ through the reciprocation of ‘equivalents’ is maintained through *kastom*ary practices that present certain goods as if they embody the culturally valued attributes that were ‘traditionally’ invested in gifts. Female contributions to *kastom* are usurped by men with access to cash, removing female productive capacities from the equation, which effectively reduces the distinction between producers and transactors. Every time commodities are used for *kastom* exchange, be it pigs, shell money, garden produce from the market, or trade store food, it sustains the cyclical image of continuity; in reality this ‘cycle’ is cut and spliced with the cash economy. The processes of development reinvigorate, vitalise, and ‘authenticate’ *kastom* by maintaining the illusion of continuity and reinforcing ideological distinctions every time people deviate from *pasin bilong Lihir*. 
1. The men’s house that I was affiliated with through my incorporation into Tiakwan clan is located in Lesel, the site of the first mortuary feast I attended. However, I was more closely aligned with the men’s house in Natingsangar hamlet where I resided. Francis Bek, my adoptive uncle, is the son of Bah Arom, the owner of this men’s house. In Lihir it is common for at least one son to remain in his father’s hamlet. As a result of my connection to Bek, I was closely involved with Arom’s nephews, Peter Toelinkanut, John Zipzip, and Clement Papte, and the activities that took place in their men’s house.

2. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to concentrate on the entire mortuary sequence or to provide a thorough description of a karat feast. These are the most lavish feasts and represent the best example of developman, but because katkatop feasts are more commonly held, these best reflect the ways people frequently reproduce the developman paradigm.

3. I was among the few who had previously arranged to purchase a local pig, although this was more the result of serendipity than any practical foresight on my behalf.

4. The Human Relations department primarily deals with employees; this is different from the Community Relations department.

5. The company has always encountered difficulties with employees who are not consistently present for work. This absenteeism, which was more prevalent in the earlier years, is partly the result of village obligations and the fact that many Lihirians were simply not accustomed to employment expectations: the realities of wage labour were not yet ‘self evident’ laws. As such the company acknowledges that Lihirian employees have certain village obligations, especially during kastom times. The company accords some degree of flexibility in extenuating circumstances, such as the death of a ‘close’ relative. At the same time, the company who is unfamiliar with Lihirian notions of kinship and social obligation are often at a loss when trying to understand why their Lihirian employees continually request time off to attend a ‘funeral’ for a relative who has been dead for some years. Lihirians have often pushed for more favourable and flexible work hours that would afford them greater time in the village to fulfil family and lineage obligations, which can be anything from baby sitting, gardening, house construction, or simply exercising their ‘authoritative’ and ‘guiding’ presence. At the same time, while these commitments are real, many people in the village, especially women, would argue workers are more inclined to spend any spare time drinking rather than engaging in garden work or preparations for kastom, and that increased employment flexibility would only provide more opportunities for men to spend ‘family’ money.

6. Balun peketal refers to the pig(s) killed to mark the decorations placed on the deceased person during the morning period.

7. In the past these feasts were distinguished by strict taboos that applied to all males. Aside from remaining quiet and showing respect, this also included prohibitions on washing. This relates to the significance of the pigs (bual tom) which should not be carried outside of the men’s house at any time during the feast. Men were expected to refrain from washing off the grease from these pigs during the feast; if they had to leave the enclosure for any reason, they were not to wash. The susul kwil signifies the end of these taboos and the feast. The prohibitions on washing have been lifted mainly due to mission and Government influence in areas of health and hygiene. In some instances those men most closely associated with the celebrated person in the rarhum still adhere to this ‘rule’. The susul kwil often takes guests by surprise. When one of the hosts announces this moment, guests immediately know this means they should to partner up with another man. The man who is left standing alone becomes the target of everyone else; in good humour they throw rubbish and left overs at him. It is meant to be a humorous moment that breaks the sobriety of the past week. Usually there is a pig to mark this important stage; the area where the men wash (which includes the section of reef) is now under taboo (mok). The reef cannot be used for fishing and females are restricted from passing through this area.

8. Again there was some discrepancy over the use of particular pigs. Some thought that one of the pigs had marked Peter’s recently deceased dog that had died of old age and was buried in the men’s house. The reason for killing a pig for a dog was that she had been a ‘hard worker’, having helped to track and kill many pigs which were used in kastom feasts. The owners felt it was right for her to be acknowledged; this received comment from some attendants. No one complained about the opportunity to eat pork, but some felt that it was excessive and ‘showing off’ to make kastom for a dog. The pigs were cut and distributed between the attending clans; the men ate their share in the men’s house while the women ate outside.
In some feasts donors that have purchased their pigs from elsewhere have made a public announcement about the price of their pig and where it was bought from. In these instances the announcement is often intended to ‘show off’ their capacity to spend money or purchase pigs from elsewhere.

In the few instances where men admitted to using this form of magic, they explained that they received the ‘wisdom’ from involvement in buai cults, many of which originate from Tolai and Southern New Ireland region.

After talking with several of the hosts I conservatively calculated close to 18 000 kina was spent on this event by the host lineage and their supporters. Most of these expenses were for boat hire and the purchase of pigs. Other expenses included truck hire, trade store food, generator fuel, and market items like yams, sweet potato, betel nut and tobacco for pinari.

Due to recent pressures upon land and resources there is considerable tension surrounding property transfers from father to son. This has not affected the significance or the necessity to perform ikinietz, although men can no longer be assured that this will secure them a share of their father’s land or wealth. In one instance a relatively wealthy son made a very elaborate ikinietz for his father, spending over 30,000 kina on pigs, garden food, rice, tin fish, beer, and other expenses. When people criticised his lavish style he said that these were the sorts of things that his father worked hard to give him by making copra. As much as he wanted to repay these efforts, this was an occasion for very conspicuous consumption, to display wealth, and secure land. After the feast his father publicly announced that his son had done everything for him, and all that he owned was now his. This caused some level of dispute among his clan members.

The most striking example of this occurs during the tutunkanut feast when clans present their contributions of cash and shell money to the host clan who uses this wealth to purchase more pigs and settle old debts during the next phase of the feast. During this stage, which is known as roriahat (rori meaning to walk and hat being the name of the bed or stage like structure), clan leaders will mount a specially prepared wooden stage upon which they publicly present their contribution and indicate their support for the hosts and the next phase of the feast. This ‘assistance’ is termed either tele (help that is given to another person that will later be reciprocated), yehbi (a metaphor for putting out the fire, which here means to pay off outstanding debts), or saksak (which similarly means to pay back mis that has been given previously). The speaker will hold the individual strands of mis up for public viewing and then throw them onto the ground one by one to be collected by the receiver. When he dismounts he will remove any purpur (leaf decorations) to signal that he has rid himself of any burdens (hevi). Clan leaders who speak at this time will publicly call upon support from their tandal as they attempt to display the strength and power of their clan. When mis is exchanged in these contexts it is not commensurate; it must be reciprocated in exact form.

Hemer (2001: 61) notes that Mahurians were renowned for garden magic, and that compared to people on Niolam, Mahurians were gardeners par excellence. This might be contested by people on Niolam, but it is evident that gardening practices have altered (and in some cases declined) as a result of greater access to store food.

The close bond between humans and pigs and the significance of pigs in various aspects of social life is a general Melanesian phenomenon (cf. Bulmer, 1967: 20). They are central items in exchange cycles (see Megitt, 1973; Strathern, 1971), victims of ritual slaughter (see Keesing, 1976; Rappaport, 1968), and a common feature in bride wealth payments and war compensation, where they can be regarded as ‘substitutes’ for human life (Glasse and Meggit, 1969; Macintyre, 1984; Modjeska, 1982).

In one instance my neighbour raised an exceptionally large pig. His children had grown up with the pig and often used to ride on its back when they were younger. When the pig was finally used for its ultimate purpose the entire family found this a sorrowful occasion.

There are many instances where people kill and consume other people’s domesticated pigs and try to keep this a secret. They may claim that the pig was found in their garden, but in several cases that occurred while I was in Lihir the culprits were young males eager to eat pork, deliberately ignoring the fact that these were domestic pigs. It is invariably difficult to keep this information from spreading. When the owner realizes they are missing a pig it is only a matter of time before the perpetrator is found and fines are imposed. Older men regard this as a particularly heinous form of disrespect.

As Hemer notes, the term tananie is another form of the verb for nurturance. Other forms of this verb are ertnin (to look after someone), and tnindan (to completely look after someone) (Hemer, 2001: 76).

In the distant past big men were also said to have greater control over their juniors within the clan. Men who did not behave according to expectations might be killed by angry big men. The task of killing these men would be given to an allied big man who might use one of his own men for the job. After the man had
been killed his head would be presented to his big man, who would then be obliged to make *kastom* for this man. Later on, should the need arise, this big man would be expected to reciprocate the favour to the other big man.

20 At various times I was asked for my Massim *bagi* that I wore as a necklace. I was told it was valuable (and coveted) because no other Lihirian men have these shells. In such an instance, a Massim *bagi* would bode well for the possessor.
Conclusion

Fantastical Realities

In understanding the manifold nature of Lihirian fantasies I have pursued an anthropology that emphasises the continuity of cultural categories and values that shape contemporary practice and ideology. My approach is intended to accentuate the cultural distinctiveness of Lihirians, not only prior to sustained European contact or even mining operations, but specifically at the height of their engagement with Western capitalism. I have taken seriously the Comaroff’s insistence on an approach that dissolves “the division between synchrony and diachrony, historiography and ethnography”, and that recognises the connection between culture and political economy (Comaroff, 1993: xiv). I have argued against the view that global forces create homogeneity in the place of particularity. My concern has been with articulation rather than penetration; to capture the dialectic of global structural inequalities and Lihirian selective appropriation. I have aimed to move beyond the idea that the world system is ultimately determinate of local social realities and the belief in the relative isolation and autonomy of individual societies and cultures: contemporary Lihirian culture and society is constituted locally, wilfully, and through a process of historical entanglement with others. This has allowed me to stress the continuing heterogeneity and dynamism of Lihirian society and to exorcise the commonsense view that material acquisition is a measurement of acculturation.

I have concentrated on the expression of Lihirian engagement with the processes of modernity, from the initial stages of the labour trade to the peak of colonial administration, and the early days of Independence through to their embrace of mining activities. At no point in their history have Lihirians been passive recipients of an
imposed political order or economic system. Lihirians have attempted to make sense of their position within the world and have consistently utilised the goods and institutions that crossed their path for their own purposes. This is not to suggest Lihirian society has not been radically transformed in the process of encompassment. Rather, their engagement with exogenous items and influences ensured the continuity, indeed the invigoration, of received cultural practices and values.

Mining activities have altered Lihirian society in quite fantastic ways. Lihirians have witnessed unprecedented material, cultural and political change. While many have been disappointed or frustrated by what they perceive as insufficient change, the reality of this transformation is fully appreciated when Lihir is compared with other parts of Papua New Guinea where people are still “waiting for company” (Dwyer and Minnegal, 1998). Lihirian introduction to capitalism has not occurred on the same scale or in the same form as it has in many other Melanesian societies. Similarly, these changes have not appeared in the same fashion as they did in industrialised societies. Lihirians have distinctly shaped the trajectory of this change. The various ways they have conceptualised the mining project and the forms of their interaction with the company and more generally with the capitalist system has influenced the outcomes of this experience.

The ways in which economic development is introduced through large-scale resource extraction has ensured that most Lihirians emphasise consumption over production. Stratification has arisen primarily due to the relationship certain people have with particular patches of ‘pay dirt’; wealth has mainly been delivered in the form of winmoni, which is used for conspicuous consumption to augment existing livelihoods. This is the favoured form of wealth and expenditure. It conforms to previously held dreams of affluence where our ‘goods’ enhance Lihirian lives. However the legal dictates of mining ensure that winmoni is only obtained by a minority. Past prophesies of change have proven tragically false, or at least fantasies for an inverted order have been realised in decidedly unexpected ways.
Lihirian aspirations for virtuous sociality are historical and on-going and have surfaced in diverse ways at different times. The strategies they have employed to achieve their dreams of a ‘fair’ existence - where they would have access to an unlimited source of wealth and possess the sort of political influence that has more often been used against them - are characteristically underpinned by epistemological fantasies concerning the economic realities of large-scale resource extraction, the nature of global capital and the implications this has for local economic practices. The diffuse ways Lihirians have approached their economic and political marginality have consistently failed to produce the desired effects. Ultimately many of their ideals were not only unrealised, but were unrealisable.

Their inability to transform their lives according to their conceptions of a just existence is not only the result of hegemonic global capital relations but also those international inequalities that preclude the attainment of knowledge that would allow for more meaningful and equitable participation within the world system. Lihirians have constantly fought to control the direction of their lives. The arena of struggle has included their relationship to the colonial Administration, the mining project and the company, whites, other Papua New Guineans, the Government, and the extent to which they engage with the capitalist sector. In response to the specific historical circumstances in which Lihirians were located, the JNC reconfigured Lihirian desires to suit a postcolonial environment through neo-liberal strategies that would supposedly enhance rather than detract from the lives of all Lihirians. Their plans were designed to activate those micronationalist sentiments that recur throughout Lihirian political movements. However, in their attempt to counter the ‘irrationality’ of existing cargo philosophies and to achieve a perceived modernity - through the appropriation and mimetic performance of those activities which they perceived as the basis of Western economic success and power - they unwittingly reproduced more sophisticated contradictions and ontological fantasies. Essentially they rejected the ‘cargo mentality’, but they still expected an “uncalculating gift” from the company (Godelier, 1999: 208).
Maintaining a semblance of pride, autonomy and identity has largely been dependent upon a mistaken distinction between local or ‘traditional’ economic activities and the international capital sector and the belief that all forms of wealth could be contained within Lihirian shores. This was chiefly premised on the belief that *kastom* and *bisnis* can be separated. However, the PV course and the ‘Destiny Plan’ were ultimately misguided in their attempt to offer solutions in that their strategies failed to recognize the absolute entanglement of the two socio-economic spheres in question, and instead attempted to compartmentalize them. Needless to say, this ideological distinction - which many Lihirians have continued to hold - is routinely undermined by the ways Lihirians engage with capitalism as they pursue the *developman* project. In the same process, selective constructs of Western society are used as a foil for explicit models of Lihirian sociality that are linked with corresponding projects of condemnation or affirmation of the customary regime.

The cumulative effect of this neo-traditionalism, the fatally flawed fantasies of the nature of capital and *kastom*, and their desires for virtue, wealth, equality and autonomy is a collective antagonism that reinforces notions of *pasin bilong Lihir*, particularly as people deviate from perceived social norms. The combination of structuring dispositions and ideological imperatives compels Lihirians to be more traditional than they ever were before. However, as Lihirians continue to negotiate between development and *developman*, pursuing aspects of both to accommodate and facilitate social and economic requirements, it is likely for the time being that they will fail to fully realise their fantasies in the most inclusive sense of the term.

**Ethnographic addendum**

In mid 2006 when I returned to Lihir, renegotiations for the Integrated Benefits Package were not yet finalised and the JNC had not begun to enact their ‘Destiny Plan’, nor had the Personal Viability course and its neo-liberal values been implemented or accepted throughout Lihir. However, the JNC remained resolute they had the successful formula for social advancement. At this time the company was preparing to release over 1 million
kina that would be divided between each ward and used at the discretion of Ward Members and their Village Planning Committee for community projects. This money formed part of the annual ward grants which had been ‘frozen’ for the past two years due to delays in the renegotiation of the IBP. The JNC were hoping this money would act as the necessary capital for people to begin their ‘money gardens’. They wanted to maximise the opportunities created through the distribution of this money; they did not want it to be interpreted as winmoni or for it to be consumed in a manner that perpetuated the ‘handout mentality’. Ideally individuals, families or collectives would present the JNC with their entrepreneurial plans, who would then apportion money according to the feasibility of each project. These ‘money gardens’, or small business projects, would then be monitored; more money would be ‘invested’ in these projects if they were proving successful. The JNC considered this grant as another opportunity to move closer towards Lihirian ‘financial autonomy’. These plans would require a management team, and most likely the participation and watchful eye of each Ward Member. At this stage none of the bureaucracy outlined in the ‘Destiny Plan’ was in place and most Ward Members had their own ideas about how this money should be used.

Within days of my arrival, Francis Bek, my adoptive uncle and Ward Member for Kinami district, asked for my opinion on this ward grant money and whether I supported the JNC’s ideas. Bek’s plans for this money were not endorsed by the JNC. He argued that people were tired of waiting for their share of mining wealth; they felt their entitlement was overdue and they wanted to experience the economic freedom of being a ‘landowner’. Ultimately this ward grant was understood as mine derived wealth (moni bilong graun): it came from their mine which was built on their ground – even if it was not legally recognised that all Lihirians had a stake in the mining area. He said it was not fair that older people have not had their chance; many had died “without holding any money”, and men like his uncle - one of the most senior men on the east coast - had nothing material to show for their status. His plan was to distribute this money to individual members of the community instead of using it on community projects or according to JNC plans.
Each adult would receive their share, and every family would hold a certain portion for their children. People would be free to use this money as they pleased for their own purposes: Bek wanted to use this money to “develop im ol man pastaim” (to develop the people first). He explained that people thought the JNC had misinterpreted the dream of a peketon. Bek and others understood this metaphor as foremost meaning the arrival of abundant (and hopefully immediate) improvement to Lihirians lives. The future which the JNC imagined and how Lihirians would reach this state was not the same as what others envisaged. Their plans did not promise instant returns, and more importantly they appeared to contradict the spirit of developman. As Bek put it, “PV says money first…this is not our way.”

During this time, Gabriel Kondiak, one of the more outspoken members of the JNC, was hosting a large ikinietz feast for his ‘fathers’ in conjunction with his actual father’s katkatop feast in Tombuapil Village. This was a grand event and Kondiak had mustered some twenty thousand kina to host the occasion. Typically ikinietz is a small affair that is supposed to acknowledge the efforts of one’s parents. In addition to pigs and garden produce, he had organised over thirty crates of beer and several cartons of tin meat and bales of rice. These were divided between the different clans that attended as part of their pinari (gift). The ikinietz was merged into the katkatop which was equally ostentatious. Several members of the JNC attended, however Peter Toelinkanut was conspicuously absent, despite being closely related to Kondiak. Peter said he found it difficult to support the event because it ran counter to his kastom ideals. Clearly he was frustrated that a fellow member of the JNC, who advocated the codification of kastom (and a return to the ‘true ways’ of Lihir), was channelling excessive amounts of money into kastom – this was exactly the sort of behaviour the JNC were attempting to change.

As I sat down in the men’s house with Joachim Malele (who was also a member of the JNC) to eat our rice, vegetables, tin meat and pork, washed down with a warm can of beer, conversation soon shifted to JNC activities, the impending ward grant, and Bek’s plans for this money. He said he was concerned that if this money was not used properly, for entrepreneurial activities, it would probably be ‘wasted’ on beer and kastom – much
like the current event. As he discussed their ideas for this money, which would require widespread bureaucratic surveillance, he explained that he was committed to these plans because “we all want development...we all just want to live like you people”. The ‘Destiny Plan’ was how the JNC thought they could achieve their dream.

Several days later as I was driving back from another feast in Putput I saw what I assumed was a new men’s house being constructed in Lipuko Village. It turned out that ex-TKA members were rebuilding the meeting grounds of the old association. People had begun meeting again with the intention of reviving the association. Since the beginning of mining operations, as Lihirians assessed the changes happening in Lihir and within their lives (or in many cases not occurring) many have nostalgically talked about the TKA and Nimamar. Generally people thought that if the association was still around then there would be less social ills and Lihirians would be able to work together to achieve their dream – their idea of an egalitarian virtuous society where everybody was comfortably rich.

Several meetings had already been held to discuss social disturbances, what they perceived as the breakdown of relations, and how they could realise their dream for development that benefits all Lihirians. People were dissatisfied with the JNC and the lack of change, and they were concerned because the JNC’s dream and how it would be achieved was fundamentally different from their own. Rising frustration and confusion over the completion of the IBP (which was by now being disproportionately emphasised as the new contractual agreement that would ‘deliver the goods’) reinforced the belief among older members that younger educated men (save men) were diverting the cargo that rightfully belonged to them. However, TKA plans and interpretations were in many ways no less vague than the ‘Destiny Plan’; both embraced different visions of modernity – that were characterised by some form of egalitarianism – yet despite their claims otherwise, both approaches were unclear as to how this new future would eventuate, let alone be sustained. Bek’s plans for this ward money were an attempt to partially realise some form of a peketon.
On the surface Lihirians were divided over their hopes of modern life and how they were best achieved. However, nobody imagined a utopian return to primordial life and ancestral ways. Traditional Lihirian culture might have had superior values, but money, trade store food, televisions, beer and cars were not part of this era. Modern Lihirian culturalism is premised upon the demand for exogenous things, or more precisely the stipulation to indigenise them. Kondiak’s kastom highlighted the desire for these things and the difficulty associated with the codification of kastom within such an altered milieu. Although he was doubtless motivated by the desire for status, he insisted that he made kastom in this way to give back the sorts of things his fathers had tried to provide for him as a young man, which they often could not afford for themselves. In order to fulfil expectations and obligations – to acknowledge and reciprocate his debts, and meet community expectations for a virtuous occasion – it was necessary to make purchases and spend the sort of money that would be considered appropriate (and fitting of an aspiring big man) within a modern context. Such distributions, while emphasising differential access to wealth, were crucial for maintaining balance within an increasingly stratified society. Lihirians remained driven by the processes of development; they could not escape the received cultural orientations, values, and categories that shape praxis and set the contours for what is acceptable or possible.

Malele was absolutely correct: Lihirians wanted to live like us. They imagined a modern urban egalitarian existence where everybody had the capacity for endless consumption to advance their ideas about what life was all about. But this was based on an Occidental image of Western life. Where the JNC differed was the degree to which they considered this capacity would be contingent upon a life governed by a system of commodity relations. Although there are differences between these visions of modernity, particularly in terms of how they can be achieved, they are united by a historically shared feature: both are frustrated by a knowledge gap between stated intentions, desired goals, implementation, and how this existence will be maintained. The progression from TKA, Nimamar, Society Reform, and finally to the Lahir Destiny reflected the growing sophistication of Lihirian fantasies for social and economic advancement as a result of
their changing circumstances, and the enduring structural disadvantages that ensure Lihirians are not equally informed participants in the global system.

Bek’s plan to distribute money to individuals, so that people could have the opportunity to develop themselves as they liked - whether it was through kastom, family consumption, building a men’s house, collective drinking sprees, purchasing flashy store items, TVs, cars, and other trappings of modernity, or even through private or collective entrepreneurial business endeavours - may reflect Lihirian dependency upon the company, but it was precisely the Lihirian definition of development: the freedom to develop ‘mankind’ on their own terms. However, as Sahlins notes, not everyone will succeed in realising modernity in their own ‘post-Western’ way (1992: 21). Aside from colonial and neo-colonial subjugation, the project of developman contains an historical and structural paradox which Lihirians cannot avoid. As long as Lihirians continue to equip themselves with fancy and useful things from the market for the vitalisation, reproduction, and progression of their own cultural order, their culture will become increasingly dependent upon relations of the world system as it manifest locally through resource extraction. Unfortunately in such a hostile context of global capital, and with the inevitable prospect of mine closure, there are particular types of developman that will prove devastatingly self-destructive. Perhaps only then will Lihirians experience total humiliation.
References

Patrol Reports Consulted

All of these reports are from the Namatanai Subdistrict, Lihir Island, in New Ireland Province, Papua New Guinea. These reports are stored on microfilm in the National Archives in Canberra, Australia. I have listed only those reports I have directly drawn upon in writing this thesis.

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Appendix One

Lihirian TKA teachings of Arau and Tienmua
Source: D.M. Donovan, Patrol Officer: PR NAM 8 / 1969 / 70

Teachings of Arau and Tienmua

1. Nau i taem belong sekim council.
2. Sapos yu lukim Kiap i kamap, yu kirap na holim basket belong yu na ronwei i go long bus.
3. Sapos ol i putim yu long kot, TKA i ken kisim bek yu.
4. Sapos man i no memba belong TKA em i ken sindaun rabis man tasol, i nogat mani i ken paenim em. Na sapos i lack salim wan (1) or tu (2) bag copra long man em i bin memba pinis, i ken givim em tasol long 50 cents na i ken tok “yu go”, na i go.
5. Ol dispela plantesin yumi planim i belong belong trik tasol. Sapos KIAU i bruk bai yumi raosim ol belong givim pik tasol.
6. Bihain sapos KIAU i bruk pinis yu nonap holim wok nau belong paemim moni. Yu ken sindaun malalo tasol na moni i ken ron olsem wara i kam nating long han bilong yu.
7. Sapos man i tok stil or tok bilas long TKA masi i ken stap long wei tasol, TKA i save pinis long dispela man.
8. TKA em i wanpela country em yumi no save lukim ol. Sapos KIAU i bruk or “Ples i senis” bai yumi ken lukim ol.
10. USA, em i wanpela Country ol i no save dai na sampela long ol em hia: Fr. Tom Keller (Namatanai); Fr. Miller (Lavongai); Fr. David (Milmila); Fr. Peter Vauro (Tanga Island). Em el dispela Pater hia belong USA, ol belong dispela country ol i no save dai, ol i laif oltaim.
11. Na Fr. P. Vauro i belong Mazuz (Lamboar, Lihir Island), em i no belong USA em i belong Mazuz stret.
12. Nau ol i wok long pulumapim yet wanpela bikpela sip aen na wanpela bikpela foensin (Balus) na tupela i no pulap yet long ol cargo. Sapos yupela i pulap pinis orate bai ol i salim i kam long yumi.
13. Man meri belongem i dai pinis na meri man belongen i dai pinis, ol i no mas marit gen long nupela meri or nupela man. Tupela i mas wetim tasol meri or man belongen bai i kam bek sapos “taem i senis”.

14. Ol dispela laen mangi em ol i go daon long school tede, ol i nap sevim ol tasol, tasol yumi mas wetim tasol nau taem belong senis laef bai save ken kamap nating long yumi.

15. I gat tupela laen “Kuku”, wapela laen i bin go sua long Siar na narapela laen I bin go sua long village ol i kolim Kavin (Kavieng).

16. Sapos man i dai, yumi no ken tok em i dai, yumi mast ok “i go pinis”.

17. Sapos yumi harim tewel or spirit belong man i dai pinis, yumi noken kolim em “Taberan” yumi mas kolim em “Brata”.

18. Sapos yumi kolim em Taberan or Tewel long dispela bai yumi passim rot belong cargo na ples i noken senis or apen long yumi.

19. Sapos dispela country bilong yumi i laek pait wapela taem bai ol i brukim tru daon dispela country em i laek pait wantaem longen.

20. Olsem tu long moni ol i tok se ol waitman i tanim tasol na en belong ol or value belong ol. e.g. 10 cents = $1.00, 20 cents = $2.00

21. Olgeta moni i save go long Bishop long Kavien bai em yet i senisim i go long American S. Dollars na bihaen salim i go long America.

22. Long namba 3 mun (March) 1970 bai i gat cargo i kam long America. Note Previous to this target date January and February were also been marked for such.

23. Tienmua na Kiaprot of Konogog (W.C. Namatani) tupela i save go raon soim ol pipol long wapela liklik Book i gat ol Piksa longen.

24. Arau tupela Tienmua tupela i bin tokim ol pipol belong tupela se bai tupela i go long wapela ples (by secret means).

25. Olgeta pipol i bin bilip se tupela i bin go long Lavongai long wapela sumarin.


27. Iaspot of Malie Island i tok long Cr. Lusem se watpo council i save tru long has belong dispela wok? Na watpo ol i nosave paenim aut insaet long ol Law belong Government em ol i wok long kaikaiem ol pipol?

28. On 5th of February 1970 Toron of Malie Island committee for TKA collected fees from the members at Malie Island $1.00 Males, 50 cents Females.

This they said to purchase a car for the members use.
Appendix Two

The Eight Point Plan, or Eight Aims of Papua New Guinea:

1. a rapid increase in the proportion of the economy under the control of Papua New Guinean individuals and groups and in the proportion of personal and property income that goes to Papua New Guineans
2. more equal distribution of economic benefits, including movements towards equalisation of income among people and towards equalisation of services among different areas of the country
3. decentralisation of economic activity, planning and government spending, with emphasis on agricultural development, village industry, better internal trade and more spending channelled into local and area bodies
4. an emphasis on small-scale artisan, service and business activity, relying where possible on typically Papua New Guinean forms of activity
5. a more self-reliant economy, less dependent for its needs on imported goods and services and better able to meet the needs of its people through local production
6. an increasing capacity for meeting government spending needs from locally raised revenue
7. a rapid increase in the equal and active participation of women in all forms of economic and social activity
8. government control and involvement in those sectors of the economy where control is necessary to achieve the desired kind of development.

Appendix Three

Total Number of company employees by place of origin 1998 - 2000

Total Number of company employees by place of origin 1998- 2001

Source: Macintyre and Foale, 2000: 53
Appendix Four

2000 Lihirian employment figures by village of origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>No of Employees</th>
<th>Percent of Total LMC Employees</th>
<th>Percent of Population of Origin.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hurtol</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kapit</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinami</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Komat</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunaye</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamboar</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lialual</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lipuko</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lissel</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Londolovit</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahur</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malie</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masahet</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matakues/Kanan</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazuz</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palie</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pangoh</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palie / Pangoh</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putput 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sale/Lienbel</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samo</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sianios</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talies</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobuapil</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zuen</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Macintyre and Foale, 2000: 51
Appendix Five

Lihirian clan structures for the Lihir Group, with separate information for Niolam, and Ehot (Malie, Masahet, Mahur)

Appendix Six

Personal Viability course graduation certificate
Appendix Seven

Personal Viability Grading.


PERSONAL VIABILITY GRADING
How do we measure Personal Viability? How can we quantify a person's ability to add value?

Personal Viability in Financial Independence or Business Wealth is measured by a person's ability to build equity which is valued in money terms. Financial Independence becomes reality when a person has sufficient income to meet his or her basic needs.

Business must produce goods and services to sell. This is covered under Productivity Discipline. Business must sell to customers and it must deal with people, employees, business associates etc. The business of people is covered under the Law of Success & Integrity Disciplines.

Money is just a by-product, a method of keeping score, a way of measuring business wealth. The road to wealth is clearly illustrated in the Economy Discipline.

That is why, in order to build equity or business wealth a person must use all four Disciplines of growth in order to add value and grow the business habitually.

Apart from financial wealth, whatever other success you wish in life, whatever values govern you, and whatever destiny you choose, Personal Viability through the Value-Added Principle and the four growth Disciplines shows you the road to success. This is because we are all in the business of people no matter what your vocation is.

EDTC PERSONAL VIABILITY GRADING
In Personal Viability grading there are two measurements. One measures quantity and the other measures rate of improvement over time. Both are important. The first measures value-added output and the second measures rate of growth or lack of growth. These two measurements apply to each of the four Disciplines.

All participants who wish to obtain EDTC Personal Viability grading should keep a record book with four sections to record the details of each one of the four Disciplines.

PRODUCTIVITY DISCIPLINE
Productivity is measured by the quantity of goods and services produced that are saleable or consumable thereby saving money. There is no point producing goods and services that cannot be sold. Anything that cannot be sold has no value. Therefore productivity shall be valued in Kina. The ultimate proof of value-added productivity is in the amount of actual sales made from selling goods and services produced.
The quantity of goods and services produced only represents potential value. It must be sold to realize its actual value. Fresh food not sold quickly will deteriorate and become valueless. Therefore it is not enough to produce, goods and services must be sold to convert effort into cash, the process of building equity.

Therefore a person's productivity in the Livelihood or informal sector is measured by his (and his family) ability to produce and sell enough to satisfy his family's needs. For an
average size family, this is usually in the range of K10,000 to K50,000 depending on rural or urban residential status. The ability to satisfy family needs shall earn him a Provisional Grading.

A Bronze Grading in Productivity Discipline shall be measured in terms of surplus income over and above his family's needs. This will be measured by an amount of income that represents twice the amount of his family needs or K50,000 per annum, whichever is greater. This means a minimum of K50,000 per annum.

A Silver Grading in Productivity Discipline shall be measured by an amount which represents three times the amount of his family needs or K100,000 per annum, whichever the greater. This means a minimum of K100,000 per annum.

A Gold Grading in Productivity Discipline shall be measured by an amount which represents four times the amount of family needs or K150,000 per year, whichever the greater. This means a minimum of K150,000 per year.

The Productivity Record book should record all goods and services produced daily. It should also record goods and services sold daily expressed in quantity and value (Kina).

**ECONOMY DISCIPLINE**

Economy Discipline grading shall be measured in terms of savings and investments.

Provisional Grading in the Economy Discipline represents the ability to save and invest up to 5% of annual gross income.

Bronze Grading represents the ability to save and invest up to 10% of annual gross income.

Silver Grading represents the ability to save and invest up to 15% of annual gross income.

Gold Grading represents the ability to save and invest over 15% of annual gross income.

The Economy Record Book should record your daily savings. It should also record any investments made specifying date, amount, type of investment, name of institution where investment is made.

**LAW OF SUCCESS DISCIPLINE**

The Law of Success Discipline shall be measured by a person's ability to organize plus the number of satisfied customers. In the livelihood sector, a person's ability to organize family members is crucial to success. His ability to satisfy customers' needs is also critical.

*EDTC PERSONAL VIABILITY*
The Provisional Grading shall be measured by the successful organization of 1 to 10 family members. Customer satisfaction shall be measured by 61% - 70% of satisfied customers.

Bronze Grading shall be measured by the successful organization of 11-30 people and 71% - 80% of satisfied customers.

Silver Grading shall be measured by the successful organization of 31-100 people and 81% - 90% of satisfied customers.

Gold Grading shall be measured by the successful organization of over 100 people and 91% - 100% of satisfied customers.

The Law of Success Record Book records the productive activities of each person in the organization. Details include rate of progress, quantity of work done daily, value of work done and benefits received for their efforts.

Satisfied customers mean repeat customers and the way complaints are handled. Repeat customers may be determined from sales records of the Productivity Record Book.

What is also required are records of customers' complaints, how customers' complaints are rectified and "services beyond the call of duty" to add value to customers, workers, business associates etc. There may even be a plan made specifically to add value to people after which implementation and results are monitored. Value-added service is what you do when things go wrong, to rectify the situation. This is goodwill at its best.

INTEGRITY DISCIPLINE
The Integrity Discipline shall be measured by the successful completion of commitments. Successful means completely extinguishing your commitments on time. Therefore all commitments must have time limits. Without time limit, there is no firm commitment.

Loan repayments are commitments which can be measured.

A person striving for grading in the Integrity Discipline must keep a record of all commitments made. These commitments may be categorized under:
1. Personal Commitments.
2. Family Commitments.
3. Work Commitments.
4. Church Commitments.
7. Customary Commitments.

The Integrity Record Book should record all commitments. Each commitment must include all relevant details of the commitment. These are: Date, Details of commitment, Name of Recipient, Start/Finish Time, Cost, and whether commitment was honored or not & on time or not.

EDTC PERSONAL VIABILITY
A Provisional Grading in the Integrity Discipline denotes the ability to complete 61% - 70% of all commitments on time and within 1 month.

Bronze Grading in the Integrity Grading denotes 71% - 80% success rate in completing commitments on time over a minimum period of three months training.

Silver Grading in Integrity Grading denotes 81% - 90% success rate in completing commitments on time over 6 months.

Gold Grading in Integrity Grading denotes 91% - 100% success rate in completing commitments on time over twelve months.

CONCLUSION
It must be remembered that a person commences Personal Viability training at the livelihood or family level with subsistence or micro activities. Gradually, this same person becomes more and more commercial oriented and the transition from livelihood to commercial is almost undetectable. The main difference is in volume of production and sales. In this Personal Viability context, a person is deemed to have made the transition from livelihood to commercial when that person has produced and sold a surplus over and above what he requires to satisfy his family’s needs.

EDTC Personal Viability Grading Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading</th>
<th>Productivity</th>
<th>Economy</th>
<th>Law of Wokbung</th>
<th>Success Customer</th>
<th>Integrity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gold</td>
<td>&gt; K150,000 or 4 times family needs</td>
<td>&gt; 15% of all income</td>
<td>&gt; 100 people</td>
<td>91%-100% repeat customers</td>
<td>91%-100% commitments completed over 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver</td>
<td>&gt; K100,000 or 3 times family needs</td>
<td>11%-15% of all income</td>
<td>31-100 people</td>
<td>81%-90% repeat customers</td>
<td>81%-90% commitments completed over 6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronze</td>
<td>&gt; K50,000 or 2 times family needs</td>
<td>6%-10% of all income</td>
<td>11-30 people</td>
<td>71%-80% repeat customers</td>
<td>71%-80% commitments completed over 3 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provisional</td>
<td>Family needs</td>
<td>1%-5% of all income</td>
<td>1-10 people</td>
<td>61%-70% repeat customers</td>
<td>61%-70% commitments completed over 1 month</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix Eight

Initial flow chart designs for the Society Reform programme, outlining the end goals and interconnection between various institutions, political bodies, and Lihirian clans.

Source: Glaglas and Soipang (1993).
Appendix Nine

Lihir Society Reform programme ‘Master Development Plan’.
Source: Glaglas and Soipang (1993).
Appendix Ten

Structure of ‘Lihir Development System’ contained in the Society Reform programme.
Source: Glaglas and Soipang (1993).
Appendix Eleven

‘Lihir Strategic Development Concept’ flow chart designed during review of the Integrated Benefits Package, 2003, and presented to the company and the State during review meetings.
Appendix Twelve

Lihir Strategic Development Concept (LSDC) flow chart for achieving long term economic development in Lihir, outlining the various political bodies in Lihir and the role they will play.

Designed by the Lihir Joint Negotiating Committee during the review of the Integrated Benefits Package, 2003, and presented to the company and the State during review meetings.
Appendix Thirteen

Entrepreneurial Development Training Centre (DETC) outline for a ‘conducive environment’; included in the Lihir Strategic Development Concept (LSDC), otherwise known as the Lihir ‘Destiny Plan’.

Compiled by the Lihir Joint Negotiating Committee during the review of the Integrated Benefits Package, 2004, and presented to the company and the State during review meetings.
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