

Journal
de la
Société
des

Océanistes



Les mises en récit de la mine
dans le Pacifique

138-139
Année 2014

I.S.S.N. 0300-953X



Paris

Publié avec l'aide
du CNRS et du CNL

Photo de couverture. – Vue aérienne de Thio avec la mine du Plateau au premier plan, prise par Geert van Vliet, 2008, avec l'aimable autorisation de l'auteur

Mise en page réalisée par Isabelle Leblic, août-novembre 2014

Journal
de la
Société
des
Océanistes

publié avec l'aide du CNRS et du CNL



Paris

138-139

Année 2014

LES MISES EN RÉCIT DE LA MINE DANS LE PACIFIQUE

Sous la direction de

Eddy BANARÉ et Pierre-Yves LE MEUR

Introduction : Histoire et histoires. Politique et poétique des récits miniers dans le Pacifique Sud

par

Pierre-Yves LE MEUR* et Eddy BANARÉ**

« *Contemporary literary theory is much too useful to let it be limited to the domains of critique, reflexivity, and value pluralism alone.* » (Roe, 1994 : 10)

L'objectif de ce dossier est de mettre en lumière la variété tout comme les points de convergence des questions posées par l'exploitation minière dans le Pacifique, et ce au prisme de la mise en récit de cette activité : comment la mine est-elle racontée ? Par qui, dans quels contextes, à quelles fins et avec quels effets ? Les articles rassemblés ici traitent de ce thème en proposant des analyses et des contextualisations de textes, situations et héritages historiques, ainsi que de productions artistiques qui sont autant de formes narratives portant sur la mine dans la Pacifique¹. Il s'agit ainsi de donner à voir la variété des expériences humaines de la mine dans cette région à travers la multiplicité des narrations évoquant les discours, les pratiques et les représentations de cet objet et enjeu si particulier.

C'est justement par l'objet que nous entamerons cette introduction, à savoir la mine dans sa matérialité, à la fois comme enclave physique au sein de laquelle s'effectue un procès de travail spécifique (Sidaway, 2007), et dans

ses « débordements » (Letté, 2009) extérieurs, ses impacts sur la société qui l'environne. Cette première section nous permettra de jeter les bases de la réflexion sur la manière dont se sont construites des formes narratives portant de manière très variées sur cet objet et/ou ses effets. La seconde section balisera le champ sémantique défini par la notion de récit en recourant à la théorie littéraire. Nous procéderons dans la troisième section à un élargissement de la problématique en direction des usages philosophiques, politiques et anthropologiques de la notion de récit – en particulier les récits sans auteur clairement défini, mais pas sans narrateurs : grand récits, métarécits ou récits de politique publique – avant de revenir sur la question du narrateur dans les formes de « mise en intrigue » de la mine dans le Pacifique.

La mise en intrigue bâtit sur différents modes, comme nous le verrons, un lien entre temps vécu et temps raconté, entre narration et action, dans la mesure où, « par la vertu de l'intrigue, des buts, des causes, des hasards sont rassemblés sous l'unité temporelle d'une action totale et complète » (Ricœur, 1983 : 9). Or, remarque nécessaire, si ce dossier présente un échantillon

1. Plusieurs textes (Banaré, Bencivengo, Chaloping-March, Edwards, Leach, Pollock) sont issus de présentations faites dans le cadre du colloque *Exploitation et politique minières dans le Pacifique : histoire, enjeux et perspectives* (IRD-CPS-IAC-CORAIL-CIRAD-UNC-CNRT « Nickel et son environnement ») qui s'est tenu à Nouméa du 21 au 25 novembre 2011. Ils ont été retravaillés pour aboutir aux versions finales publiées ici. D'autres présentations ont alimenté un ouvrage à paraître à l'ANU (voir Filer *et al.*, à paraître). Nous remercions ici chaleureusement pour leurs lectures et commentaires Michel Jébrak, Dan Jorgensen, Claire Levacher, ainsi que le comité de rédaction du *JSO* et le lecteur anonyme.

* Anthropologue, Institut de recherche pour le développement (IRD, Nouméa), pierre-yves.lemeur@ird.fr

** Docteur en littérature, chercheur associé au Centre des nouvelles études du Pacifique (CNEP, Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie), eddy.banare@gmail.com

significatif d'une diversité de récits miniers, il n'épuise pas le sujet et n'est pas complètement représentatif de son ampleur et de sa variété. Les « récits sans auteur » que sont les récits de la colonisation, du développement ou de la malédiction des ressources traversent la plupart de ces textes, dont certains font de cette entrée la problématique centrale (Bencivengo, Chaloping-March, Pollock par exemple). Les approches plus ethnographiques varient entre, d'une part, l'établissement d'une correspondance entre type de récits et groupe d'acteurs dans le cadre d'une analyse en termes d'arène minière (en particulier Burton) et, d'autre part, un accent mis sur la variété des récits et des pratiques développés par les populations touchées par la mine (en particulier Bacalzo *et al.*, Jorgensen, Leach). Selon les articles, la notion de récit, telle que nous allons en développer les caractéristiques et l'intérêt dans cette introduction, est fortement mise en œuvre (Banaré pour le champ littéraire, Giuliani de manière plus métaphorique pour le champ artistique), ou alors elle apparaît comme une trame analytique nous permettant de mettre en perspective des études de cas à caractère historique (Edwards, Nanau).

La mine dans le Pacifique : récit et matérialité

L'exploitation minière dans le Pacifique se caractérise par sa diversité, plus précisément par son inscription dans les trajectoires historiques spécifiques de territoires et pays aux destins variés. Enjeu économique, social et environnemental souvent majeur, la mine a traversé l'époque coloniale et continue d'imprimer sa marque sur les pays et territoires d'une région caractérisée par une transition tardive vers la décolonisation. Ses implications politiques et ses impacts socio-environnementaux sont quant à eux extrêmement divers. Selon les lieux du Pacifique où elle s'est déployée, l'activité minière a pu être génératrice de désastres environnementaux ou bien le déclencheur de processus de développement économique, ou encore un facteur de troubles politiques (voir Ballard and Banks, 2003 ; Bebbington *et al.*, 2008). Les années 1990 ont vu non pas l'émergence mais la forte médiatisation de dommages massifs causés par l'activité minière. Pour la zone Asie-Pacifique, deux cas sont emblématiques, de par leur ampleur même, mais aussi en raison

des effets de la publicisation de ces crises sur la réputation et la stratégie des firmes. Le désastre environnemental de la mine d'or et de cuivre d'Ok Tedi en Papouasie Nouvelle-Guinée, exploitée entre autres par BHP, et dont les ravages ont été identifiés dès les années 1980, est devenu une affaire publique dans les années 1990 (voir Ballard and Banks, 1997 ; Hyndman, 2005 ; Kirsch, 2006). Les fuites en mars 1996 dans la digue de résidus contenant des produits toxiques dans les rivières en contrebas de la mine d'or de Marcopper détenue par la firme canadienne Placer Dome aux Philippines ont également marqué les esprits (Dashwood, 2013 : 137, 141-142 ; Chaloping-March *ici*)². La firme Placer Dome a d'ailleurs été montrée du doigt pour des dégâts causés par les produits chimiques utilisés pour l'extraction de l'or du minerai dans les mines de Misima et Porgera en Papouasie Nouvelle-Guinée. Par ailleurs, la violence sociale générée autour de la mine de Porgera, dont John Burton nous rappelle *ici* (pp. 37-51) l'acuité et la persistance (voir aussi Filer, 1999), montre bien les limites des dispositifs mis en place par les firmes (dans le cadre d'un discours de responsabilité sociale d'entreprise ; voir Filer *et al.*, 2008 ; Dawshwood, 2013) et les États (les *Development Forums* instaurés en Papouasie Nouvelle-Guinée à partir de 1989 et analysés par Filer, 2012). La mine d'or et de cuivre de Grasberg en Papouasie indonésienne constitue quant à elle un exemple paradigmatique de collusion clientéliste, en l'occurrence entre la firme texane Freeport-McMoRan et les plus hauts niveaux de l'État et de la hiérarchie militaire en Indonésie, sans que la transition démocratique post-Suharto en 1998 ait malheureusement apporté de grand changement à cet égard (Ballard and Banks, 2009). Ce « branchement » direct entre firme et arène étatique nationale – forme d'enclave institutionnelle et politique – contribue de manière brutale à la reproduction de l'enclave minière physique, *via* la mise au service de son fonctionnement des forces de répression locales : violences environnementales, sociales et politiques se renforcent *ici* mutuellement à un niveau rarement égalé (Leith, 2003). Enfin, le cas de la mine de cuivre de Panguna sur l'île de Bougainville, toujours en Papouasie Nouvelle-Guinée, symbolise tragiquement le télescopage d'une crise environnementale, sociale et politique débouchant sur une guerre civile meurtrière (voir en particulier Filer, 1990).

2. Les mots employés pour qualifier ces événements font aussi partie du processus de mise en récit et des controverses qui l'accompagnent. Il a fallu attendre 1999 pour que BHP décrive les dommages causés par l'exploitation d'Ok Tedi comme un « désastre environnemental » (*Asia Times online* du 13 août 1999 ; <http://www.atimes.com/oceania/AH13Ah01.html>). Dans le cas de la rupture de la digue contenant les résidus chimiques de l'exploitation aurifère à Omai au Guyana, la communauté environnementale parlait de « catastrophe environnementale » tandis que les ingénieurs, consultants et firmes minières en faisaient un « incident environnemental » (Dashwood, 2013 : 141).



PHOTO 1. – Mine abandonnée Kaa Wi Paa de Kouaoua (Nouvelle-Calédonie) (2008, cliché Eddy Banaré)

En Nouvelle-Calédonie, l'impact environnemental de l'exploitation minière a fait l'objet de fortes controverses, y compris au sein du monde scientifique (Richer de Forges et Pascal, 2008)³ tandis que sa contribution au développement et à la décolonisation du pays était également soulignée (Grochain *et al.*, à paraître). Le cas de Nauru examiné par Nancy Pollock dans ce dossier (pp. 107-119) apparaît enfin comme la combinaison dramatique d'un désastre environnemental et d'un échec du développement. L'activité minière a aussi généré des problèmes fonciers et politico-culturels, lorsque l'implantation des mines affectait des territoires à forte teneur symbolique et patrimoniale. En d'autres termes, et à l'instar du foncier, la mine est « affaire de pouvoir, de richesse et de sens » (Shipton and Goheen, 1992). Elle marque durablement de son empreinte les sociétés océaniques contemporaines, mettant en jeu l'avenir des populations sur un mode bien souvent conflictuel. La mine comme activité et comme projet se construit dans la confrontation, confrontation de l'homme avec la nature, mais aussi confrontation de points de vue, de représentations, de stratégies, de logiques d'action, d'interprétations des enjeux qu'elle porte ou transforme.

La pratique minière est inséparable de sa mise en récit : mise en récit d'un passé non minier, d'un présent magnifié ou difficile, d'un futur aux contours souvent très incertains, parfois

trop bien dessinés. Les représentations du travail et des effets de la mine dans l'histoire et dans la littérature peuvent nous apporter des éclairages très révélateurs sur la manière dont la mine a modelé les imaginaires et les représentations des populations et des institutions concernées par cette activité. L'enjeu temporel, par exemple selon qu'on se situe dans l'avant, le présent ou l'après de la mine, ou encore en fonction de la profondeur historique de la présence minière dans un endroit, joue fortement sur l'interprétation, la compréhension et les attentes locales (voir Polier, 1996 ; Imbun, 2011 ; voir aussi Nash, 1993, pour son livre fondateur sur le cas bolivien, et Taussig, 2010).

Nous nous intéressons ici à l'ensemble des types de récits générés par cette activité, qu'ils soient issus des enquêtes de terrain, des documents de politiques publiques, des sources archivistiques ou de la création littéraire. En quoi l'activité minière participe-t-elle des grands récits communautaires et/ou nationaux dans le Pacifique ? Comment contribue-t-elle au renouvellement ou à la réactivation de récits et mythes d'origine et à l'élaboration des mémoires collectives ? Dans quel contexte, et en fonction de quels enjeux passe-t-elle d'un statut d'activité économique aux effets négatifs sur l'environnement à celui de patrimoine historique, valorisé comme une extension mémorielle et matérielle d'un collectif ? En bref, de quelle manière et à quelle échelle (locale, nationale,

3. Voir en particulier les controverses internes au centre IRD de Nouméa entre 2004 et 2008, qui ont abouti à l'éclatement d'une unité de recherche, controverses que Julien Merlin retrace et analyse dans sa thèse en cours, doctorat en anthropologie que l'un de nous (P.-Y. Le Meur) codirige avec Madeleine Akrich, directrice du Centre de sociologie de l'innovation de Mines-ParisTech.

globale) la mine nourrit-elle, ou au contraire, empêche-t-elle la création de ce que Benedict Anderson (1983) nomme les « communautés imaginées » (voir aussi Foster, 1995, 2002 pour la Mélanésie postcoloniale) ? On verra que les textes rassemblés ici répondent chacun de manière partielle à ces questions politiques, en fonction du niveau d'analyse privilégié. Ainsi, la question du « nationalisme des ressources » traitée par Minerva Chaloping-March (pp. 93-106) se résout aux Philippines dans le cadre de controverses qui opposent l'État central aux échelons politico-administratifs provinciaux et locaux alliés à des groupes de la société civile, quant à la bonne définition du bien commun auquel le développement minier est supposé contribuer. Un tel débat, qui concerne les formes de « localisation » de l'activité minière et de ses effets, se retrouve en Papouasie Nouvelle-Guinée, mais il se développe dans des espaces narratifs modulables, allant du local au global, comme le montre Dan Jorgensen en particulier.

Récits miniers : éléments constitutifs

Parler de « récit » ou de « mise en récit » implique une clarification d'un terme potentiellement polysémique. Dans *Le nouveau discours du récit*, le narratologue Gérard Genette distingue trois sens. Le récit peut désigner soit « l'énoncé narratif, le discours oral ou écrit qui assume la relation d'un événement ou d'une série d'événements », soit « la succession d'événements, réels ou fictifs, qui font l'objet de ce discours, et leurs diverses relations », soit « l'acte de narrer en lui-même » (2007 : 13-14). Genette choisit de restreindre l'usage du terme « récit » au premier sens, « signifiant, énoncé, discours ou texte narratif ». Il nomme « histoire » ou encore « diégèse » (*ibid.* : n15, 301-302) le second, à savoir un « signifié ou contenu narratif », et « narration » le troisième, qui correspond à « l'acte narratif producteur et, par extension, l'ensemble de la situation réelle ou fictive dans laquelle il prend place » (*ibid.* : 15).

L'objet d'étude de Gérard Genette est la littérature (en l'occurrence, dans ce livre, *À la recherche du temps perdu* de Marcel Proust) et, plus précisément, le récit au sens restreint :

« [D]es trois niveaux distingués à l'instant, celui de discours narratifs est le seul qui s'offre directement à l'analyse textuelle, qui est elle-même le seul instrument dont nous disposons dans le champ du récit littéraire, et spécialement du récit de fiction. » (*ibid.*)

Le champ d'investigation ouvert par le présent dossier est plus large et il est clair que les auteurs rassemblés ici mobilisent d'autres outils que le texte – et donc le récit comme signifiant (le premier sens retenu par Genette) – pour étayer leurs discours : traces archéologiques, matériaux ethnographiques, sources archivistiques, données scientifiques, installations artistiques.

Dans la seconde partie du même ouvrage (*Le nouveau discours du récit*), écrite une décennie après la première partie (*Figures III : Discours du récit*), Gérard Genette revient sur les critiques adressées à ce premier texte. Il précise en particulier l'articulation entre récit, histoire et narration, selon que l'on se situe dans le registre fictionnel ou non.

« L'ordre véritable, dans un récit non fictif (historique, par exemple), est évidemment *histoire* (les événements révolus) – *narration* (l'acte narratif de l'historien) – *récit* : le produit de cet acte, éventuellement ou virtuellement susceptible de lui survivre en texte écrit, en enregistrement, en mémoire humaine. » (Genette, 2007 : 298)

Il ajoute :

« Cette rémanence seule, en fait, autorise à considérer le récit comme ultérieur à la narration : dans sa première occurrence, orale ou même écrite, il lui est parfaitement simultané, et leur distinction est moins de temps que d'aspect, récit désignant le discours prononcé (aspect syntaxique et sémantique, selon les termes de Morris), narration la situation dans laquelle il est proféré : aspect pragmatique. » (*ibid.*)

On pourrait avancer que c'est précisément dans cet espace que se déploie ce que l'on appelle classiquement en historiographie la « critique des sources » : la compréhension (partielle) du récit par l'analyse de ses conditions de production, qui permet, concernant une source directe tout comme un texte sociologique, de tester la « plausibilité » d'une interprétation (Passeron, 1991). Revenons à Gérard Genette :

« En fiction, cette situation narrative réelle est feinte [...], mais l'ordre véritable serait plutôt quelque chose comme narration -> histoire/récit, l'acte narratif instaurant (inventant) à la fois l'histoire et son récit, alors parfaitement indissociables. » (Genette, 2007 : 298-299)

La construction des séquences narratives portant sur des situations fictionnelles ou historiques⁴ diffère donc, même s'il s'agit bien sûr d'idéal types : « [e]xista-t-il jamais une pure fiction ? Et une pure non-fiction ? » (Genette, 2007 : 299 ; voir aussi Ricœur, 1983-1985).

4. Historiques au sens de récits insérés dans l'univers historique qui est celui des sociétés comme des sciences qui les étudient.



PHOTO 2. – Roulage sur paysage minier à Goro (sud-est de la Grande Terre, Nouvelle-Calédonie) (avril 2007, cliché Isabelle Leblic)

Cette frontière floue nous intéresse ici, interface où se développent des notions telles que celle d'identité narrative sur laquelle nous allons revenir, ou encore la question de l'interprétation dans le domaine des sciences sociales. Nous rejoignons ici Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan lorsqu'il affirme que :

« [L']espace épistémologique propre aux sciences sociales est [...] à la fois intégralement interprétatif et empiriquement contraint. » (Olivier de Sardan, 2008 : 266-267)

Dans ce cadre, la légitimation de tout énoncé interprétatif se fonde sur un certain « indice de véridicité », un lien au « réel » que l'on peut retracer (ou contester). Cela admis, l'ouverture du présent dossier minier aux études littéraires et représentations artistiques permet d'élargir le propos et de mobiliser le corpus théorique proposé par les spécialistes du récit littéraire et de la sémiotique. Eddy Banaré suggère dans son article sur la littérature minière néo-calédonienne (pp. 151-164) que les études littéraires peuvent se permettre, dans une logique intertextuelle, de confronter les points de vue :

« en prenant le parti, par exemple, de considérer que la vision des paysages miniers d'une poétesse kanak [...] pendant "les Événements" (situation insurrectionnelle des années 1984-1988) pourrait être une réponse donnée à un chroniqueur colonial de la fin du XIX^e » (p. 152)

Cette logique intertextuelle est par ailleurs très présente dans les récits présentés ici par Dan Jorgensen, en particulier dans la réécriture chrétienne du mythe d'origine d'Afek et l'analogie faite par certains informateurs entre la langue faiwol et celle de l'Ancien Testament ; on peut aussi identifier des indices d'intertextualité en filigrane dans l'article de James Leach. Il ne s'agit donc pas de s'abstraire de la chronologie historique comme Carlos Fuentes a pu se le permettre dans son extraordinaire *Terra Nostra* (1979), ni de plaider pour le plagiat par anticipation, à l'instar de Pierre Bayard (2009)⁵. L'enjeu est plutôt de repérer des récurrences ou des héritages, ou encore de situer des points de vue et d'identifier des dialogues potentiels au-delà de l'irréversibilité temporelle. Il faut également prendre en compte l'« écologie historique » (Clifford, 2013 : 42) dans laquelle évoluent les peuples autochtones (et sans doute

5. Avec la citation et l'allusion, le plagiat est l'une des trois formes d'intertextualité reconnues par Genette dans son acception restreinte de l'intertextualité comme relation de coprésence de deux ou plusieurs textes, de présence d'un texte dans un autre (Montalbetti, 1998 : 64).

pas seulement eux), une longue durée marquée par une double orientation vers le passé et l'avenir, à la base de l'image de la spirale forgée par Epili Hau'ofa (1993). Ian McIntosh montre ainsi dans une étude consacrée aux Yolngu de la terre d'Arnhem en Australie du Nord que l'ancrage à la fois historique et mythique de leurs rapports sur la longue durée à l'enjeu minier, en particulier dans le cadre de relations débutées au tournant des XVIII^e et XIX^e siècles avec des pêcheurs provenant de Sulawesi, a fortement contraint l'interprétation de l'irruption contemporaine de l'industrie minière :

« *There is a complete subordination of history to the ideology of Dreaming. [...] To follow the law and realise a pre-ordained future, mining must occur, but only on aboriginal terms.* » (McIntosh, 2004 : 26 ; voir aussi Jorgensen, 1990 et *infra*)

Pour aller plus loin dans la mise en dialogue des sciences sociales avec le champ artistique et littéraire, nous continuerons de mobiliser les catégories proposées par Genette dans son discours sur le récit empruntant à la grammaire du verbe (Montalbetti, 1998 : 50-56) : temps, mode, voix. Le temps comprend l'ordre – qui s'intéresse aux éventuels décalages ou anachronies entre la succession des événements dans l'histoire et leur représentation dans le récit –, la durée ou vitesse – qui exprime les différences de rythme entre histoire et récit –, et la fréquence – les récits pouvant être plus ou moins répétitifs ou itératifs. Le *mode* renvoie à la distance entre le narrateur et l'événement – distance maximale dans un discours narrativisé, minimale dans un discours rapporté – et la perspective (ou focalisation) adoptée. En d'autres termes, le narrateur en dit plus ou moins que ce que sait le personnage, ce qui pose, entre autres questions, celle, classique en littérature, du narrateur omniscient (« focalisation zéro »). La question du mode peut aussi concerner les sciences sociales, du moins certaines approches d'inspiration structuraliste visant par exemple à révéler des structures ou des raisons inconscientes aux acteurs sociaux. La *voix* renvoie à l'identification de l'instance narrative qui n'est pas nécessairement l'auteur

(Genette, 2007 : 219-222). Elle est pour partie affaire de temporalité puisqu'elle situe dans le temps le récit par rapport à son référentiel : ultérieur le plus souvent (on raconte une histoire passée), antérieur dans le cas d'un récit prédictif, simultané, ou encore intercalé, lorsque le récit se développe entre des moments de l'action. Genette distingue aussi dans cette catégorie de la voix des niveaux de narration, avec la possibilité d'imbrication d'un récit dans un autre. L'opposition principale se situe entre le niveau extradiégétique du narrateur extérieur au récit et le niveau diégétique (ou intradiégétique) des récits des personnages⁶. La seconde opposition, qui nous intéresse particulièrement ici, survient entre récit homodiégétique, lorsque le personnage-narrateur prend lui-même part aux éléments du récit qu'il raconte (s'il en est le héros, on parle de récit autodiégétique), et récit hétérodiégétique lorsqu'il ne participe pas à l'histoire dont il fait le récit⁷.

Les flottements des récits anthropologiques, entre relation des actes et paroles des personnes enquêtées et intrusion plus ou moins discrète de la figure de l'anthropologue, correspondent à la paire hétéro/homodiégétique, voire autodiégétique, pour ceux qui oublient l'aphorisme de Smith cité par Sanjek :

« *The subjects of ethnographies, it should never be forgotten, are always more interesting than their authors.* » (1990 : 610)

L'autre tension qui structure les récits ethnographiques a été décryptée avec acuité par Johannes Fabian ; elle concerne le thème de l'allochronie, et plus spécifiquement ce qu'il nomme le « déni de co-temporalité » des récits anthropologiques (2006 : 79) générateur d'une relation schizogène au temps (*ibid.* : 77) : la co-temporalité constitutive du terrain ethnographique est gommée dans des mises en récit qui sont tout autant des mises à distance de « l'autre », voire un refus de son historicité. Si l'écriture ethnographique a su évoluer depuis ce livre (Clifford and Marcus, 1986 ; Dawson *et al.*, 1997 ; voir aussi Fabian, 2006)⁸, avec en particulier la naissance d'une anthropologie dialogique, attentive aux situations d'interlocution⁹ (voir

6. Le niveau métadiégétique correspond à la prise en charge d'un récit à l'intérieur de l'histoire ou diégèse, pouvant donner lieu à une série d'enchaînements narratifs (on pense ici aux *Mille et une nuits* ou à *Si par une nuit d'hiver...* d'Italo Calvino). Genette distingue finalement six types fonctionnels dans les relations entre le niveau métadiégétique et le récit premier (extradiégétique) dans lequel il s'insère : fonction explicative, prédictive, thématique, persuasive, distractive, obstructive (Genette, 2007 : 365-366 ; 241-243 pour une première typologie en trois classes).

7. Voir aussi Davies (1999 : 218-219) qui parle de métarécit pour qualifier le travail d'organisation de récits primaires pluriels que réalise l'écriture ethnographique.

8. C'est également vrai de l'écriture historique qui a été traversée par de profonds débats en la matière, en particulier quant à la relation entre la notion de récit et le refus – puis le retour – de l'événement (voir en particulier Burke, 1991 ; Hartog, 2003 : 202-215 et 2005 ; White, 2009).

9. La thématique de la rhétorique, du discours comme constitutif de la société a été approfondie dans l'anthropologie océaniste (Brenneis and Myers, 1984 ; Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo, 1990) mais pas dans le champ minier et du point de vue plus narratif abordé ici.

Masquelier et Siran, 2000), on verra que les récits forgés dans le cadre de discours de légitimation de politiques publiques, en l'occurrence de politiques minières, fonctionnent selon des mécanismes proches de ceux décrits par Fabian. Une différence essentielle tient à l'identification du narrateur et surtout de l'auteur. Il nous faut ici étendre notre réflexion en direction d'usages non plus littéraires, mais philosophiques, politiques et anthropologiques de la notion de récit.

La mine entre grands récits et petites histoires

La notion de « grand récit » a été mobilisée par ceux-là même qui en annonçaient la fin, à savoir des philosophes qualifiés par commodité de « post-modernes » comme Jean-François Lyotard :

« En simplifiant à l'extrême, on tient pour "post-moderne" l'incrédulité à l'égard des métarécits. » (Lyotard, 1979 : 7)

Ou, comme l'énonce de manière lapidaire Emery Roe dans son livre sur les *policy narratives*, et en référence à Lyotard : « *Metanarratives have gotten a very bad press lately* » (1994 : 52 ; voir aussi Clifford, 2013 : 40-41). Lyotard s'intéresse surtout au rôle de la fonction narrative dans la légitimation du savoir scientifique, dont les ressorts peuvent être d'ordre politique ou philosophique (1979 : 49 sq.). Les grands récits des lumières, de la modernisation ou du développement peuvent être interprétés en termes de relation au savoir (le savoir scientifique de l'époque de la genèse du récit, souvent peu actualisé, se sédimentant peu à peu en substrat idéologique), mais aussi de rapport au temps : « *A modern future set against a primitive present* », comme l'énonce Frederick Cooper (1997 : 65) à propos du développement colonial (et postcolonial) comme pratique discursive.

La justification de l'exploitation minière s'est souvent traduite par de tels discours du développement et de la modernisation, que ce soit à l'époque coloniale ou après. Yann Bencivengo (pp. 137-149) montre bien comment la Société Le Nickel a émergé en Nouvelle-Calédonie à la jonction de plusieurs trajectoires : celle de la naissance de l'industrie du nickel, celle de l'histoire coloniale française et celle, spécifique, de la Nouvelle-Calédonie,

comme lieu de colonisation de peuplement, de ségrégation raciale et spatiale et d'importation de main d'œuvre extérieure¹⁰. Les récits miniers, que ce soit ceux des prospecteurs individuels ou d'une future entreprise hégémonique sur le territoire néo-calédonien, comme la SLN, ou encore ceux, littéraires, évoqués par Banaré, se situent à la croisée de ces trajectoires (voir aussi Banaré, 2012, 2014).

À ce stade, la distinction entre récit (*narrative*) et histoire (*story*) : c'est la diégèse de Genette, cf. *supra*) proposée par Sivaramakrishnan nous est utile :

« [...] *development – as it is imagined, practiced, and re-created – is best described as stories that can change in their telling, as they are pieced together into contingently coherent narratives. Development's stories are rife with a micropolitics often obscured by the consistency or more orderly progression implied by the terms discourse or narrative.* » (Sivaramakrishnan, 2000 : 432)

Les récits des pionniers qu'ils soient directs, rapportés (par la presse de l'époque) ou encore mis en forme (et en fiction) par des écrivains sont autant d'histoires, hétérogènes, individuelles, comme celle de Higginson, l'un des fondateurs de la SLN, racontée par Thompson (2000). Ils présentent toutefois certains traits récurrents qui relèvent du « récit colonial », celui de la réussite du défricheur (blanc, homme) « mettant en valeur » des terres neuves (« vacantes et sans maître ») et de la mission civilisatrice occidentale. L'identification de l'auteur des histoires spécifiques paraît simple, oscillant entre les postures hétéro et homodiégétiques, tandis que le récit colonial en semble dépourvu¹¹. Ça ne veut pas dire que ces récits sans auteur sont dépourvus de narrateurs (et de narrataires, au sens de Genette : cibles visées par les narrateurs), et c'est tout l'enjeu de l'indexation sociale et politique de ces récits, de leurs usages et des logiques stratégiques et représentationnelles dans lesquelles ils s'inscrivent.

Les récits de politique publique (*policy narratives*) font partie des récits sans auteur relevant d'une analyse en termes de structuration (ou de morphologie) et, pour reprendre le terme de Propp, 1970), de fonctions¹². Les récits de politique publique se présentent sous la forme d'un enchaînement narratif de relations causales visant à soutenir une certaine thèse ; leur fonction est de légitimer une orientation politique (Roe,

10. Voir aussi Bencivengo (2012) pour le cas particulier de l'importation de main-d'œuvre japonaise en Nouvelle-Calédonie.

11. Un peu à la manière dont le droit se construit comme régime d'énonciation qui a « comme réalité propre de précéder tout énonciateur » (Latour, 2002 : 298).

12. Propp place au centre de son analyse de la morphologie du conte les « fonctions » structurales qui organisent les contes : « Par fonction, nous entendons l'action d'un personnage, définie du point de vue de sa signification dans l'intrigue » (Propp, 1970 : 31). Il ajoute : « [L]es contes attribuent facilement les mêmes actions aux hommes, aux choses et aux animaux » (1970 : 12) ; on est ici proche de l'actant du sémioticien Greimas (voir Greimas et Courtès, 1993 : 3-4), repris par la sociologie de l'acteur réseau de Latour et Callon.

1994 ; Mosse, 2004). Emery Roe précise leur rôle de stabilisation d'un argumentaire à des fins de (justification de) décision dans des contextes marqués par l'incertitude, la complexité ou la polarisation de la question traitée (1994 : 3). Il part d'une définition simple du récit comme histoire ou diégèse (*story*) :

« *If they are stories, they have beginnings, middles and ends, as in scenarios; if the stories are in the form of arguments, they have premises and conclusions.* » (Roe, 1994 : 3)

« *Each relates a succession of events, real or hypothetical.* » (*ibid.* : 53)

Roe complexifie ensuite la définition du récit en ajoutant à la catégorie « histoire » celle de « non-histoire » (*nonstory*), « contre-histoire » (*counterstory*) et « métarécit » (*metanarrative*), avec un petit « m » comme il le précise à plusieurs reprises (par opposition aux Métarécits ou « grands récits » de la raison ou de la science, par exemple ; *ibid.* : 12). Une contre-histoire constitue un récit alternatif ou opposé au récit dominant, tandis qu'une non-histoire diffère par sa structure, qui n'est pas celle, linéaire, du récit, et recouvre par exemple les arguments circulaires. Le métarécit est un récit de second ordre déduit par l'analyste à partir de la comparaison des différentes histoires, contre-histoires et non-histoires constitutives d'une controverse politique. Roe voit dans ce métarécit un nouveau récit potentiel qui permettrait de dépasser les contradictions des histoires et contre-histoires et de construire un argumentaire plus ajusté à la question politique en jeu :

« *Today's metanarratives are tomorrow policy narratives, to be superseded at a later date.* » (*ibid.* : 17)

Prenons un exemple traité par Nancy Pollock (pp. 107-119) dans le présent dossier, à travers l'exploitation des phosphates à Nauru : la thèse de la malédiction des ressources (*resource curse*). Il s'agit de l'un des plus puissants récits de politiques publiques en vigueur, tout particulièrement concernant l'enjeu minier. Pollock propose un récit du désastre environnemental et social généré par l'exploitation du phosphate à Nauru constitué d'un enchaînement causal que la notion de malédiction des ressources permet de mettre en forme sur un mode un peu téléologique, dans la mesure où la fin (provisoire) de l'histoire est déjà connue. Ce récit s'inscrit dans une généalogie coloniale mobilisant à la fois le discours de la *terra nullius* (c'est-à-dire sans maître suffisamment civilisé pour être reconnu comme tel), au besoin en construisant

ce territoire vacant par le biais de déplacements de populations (mécanisme également exploré par Julia Edwards à Banaba (pp. 121-136 ; voir aussi Shlomowitz and Munro, 1992)¹³ et une politique d'importation de main-d'œuvre, mise en œuvre en Nouvelle-Calédonie également (comme le montre Bencivengo, ici et 2012 ; Le Meur, 2012). La mise en forme discursive du récit minier comme expression d'une malédiction des ressources a été largement discutée depuis la fin des années 1980 (Rosser, 2006 : 7 ; Robinson *et al.*, 2006) comme tentative de capturer les effets multiples et en particulier les impacts négatifs de la mine sur les économies locales et nationales, en termes de performance économique, de mauvaise gestion, de conflictualité et de type de régime politique. La thèse de la malédiction des ressources a connu un large succès dans le monde des praticiens et des économistes du développement international, car elle propose un modèle repoussoir simple permettant la promotion des solutions développementistes. Ce modèle tend à télescoper des processus hétérogènes dans le lit de Procuste d'un cadre normatif et explicatif unique qui masque les spécificités des trajectoires historiques locales et nationales. Derrière la catégorie fourre-tout (et peu sociologique), il faut décrypter des rapports de force entre acteurs, des collusions et des alliances, des logiques rentières des États, des manières, pour les multinationales minières, de se construire comme enclave physique mais aussi institutionnelle, des réponses et réinterprétations locales, etc. (Le Meur *et al.*, 2013). Ces différents ingrédients constituent l'économie politique de la mine, et la malédiction des ressources n'en est pas seulement le voile, mais aussi un actant – « *a force in themselves* » (Roe, 1994 : 2) – au sens où le mot légitime des choix politiques, en particulier en laissant hors du champ le rôle des entreprises minières et de leurs pays d'origine, comme le montre bien le cas de Nauru. L'ouverture de la « boîte noire » que constitue le discours sur la malédiction des ressources ouvre ainsi la voie (ou la voix) à des récits alternatifs, des contre-histoires au sens de Roe, inversant en valeur la malédiction des ressources pour en faire une opportunité, sous réserve de prendre en compte les éléments clefs du contexte sociétal (Bebbington *et al.*, 2008 ; O'Faircheallaigh, 2012).

Malédiction des ressources ou opportunité, les deux faces de ce récit croisent dans le champ politique d'autres récits, comme celui analysé par Minerva Chaloping-March (pp. 93-106) pour les Philippines. La notion de « nationalisme des ressources » (*resource nationalism*) apparaît

13. On pense aussi à l'enfermement des Kanak dans des réserves par la colonisation française, voir entre autres Saussol (1979), Leblic (1993), Merle (1998).

comme un récit de construction nationale, éventuellement de construction d'un État rentier, dans un contexte capitaliste globalisé, dont la force varie entre autres avec les cycles des prix des matières premières (voir Bremmer and Johnston, 2009 ; Ward, 2009). Chaloping-March déplace la problématique en direction de la relation entre national et local, ou plutôt entre souveraineté et citoyenneté. La question qu'elle pose peut être formulée ainsi : dans quelle mesure le récit d'une indépendance nationale basée sur une exploitation contrôlée des ressources minières fait-il l'objet d'un débat politique national et est-il partagé par une base sociale large ? On retrouve ce type de questionnement en Nouvelle-Calédonie où, depuis la fin des années 1990, les indépendantistes ont placé au centre de leur stratégie politique le contrôle économique sur l'extraction et la transformation du nickel (cf. Grochain, 2013 ; Grochain *et al.*, à paraître), et où les leaders politiques « loyalistes » s'emparent de manière a priori surprenante de l'argument de la prise de participation dans l'industrie minière.

Dans le cas philippin, le nationalisme des ressources fonctionne comme une sorte de métarécit structuré par des controverses entre récits et contre-récits, qui constituent aussi des points d'articulation entre groupes d'acteurs et échelons politico-administratifs nationaux et intra-nationaux. À l'enchaînement causal pensé à plan national [libéralisation économique => investissements miniers => croissance => développement durable => justice et équité] répond un discours de contrôle local sur l'exploitation des ressources et la préservation de l'environnement émanant de coalitions et réseaux politiques qui invoquent eux aussi l'argument du nationalisme des ressources. Chaloping-March montre aussi très clairement le rôle d'événements pivots (désastre environnemental ou nouvelles régulation minière) dans la construction des récits de politique publique. Dans la même veine nationaliste, mais sur un registre nettement patrimonial cette fois, les découvertes archéologiques mettant en évidence l'ancienneté et la continuité d'une activité minière d'origine précoloniale permettent d'ancrer une exploitation minière récente et opérée par une firme chinoise dans un récit national légitime, comme dans le cas laotien étudié par Mayes et Chang (2013). Nakoro (2011), dans un texte sur les relations complexes entre fouilles archéologiques et exploitation

minière à Fidji, décrit en revanche une situation d'opposition entre logiques de préservation patrimoniale et d'extraction minérale, tandis que Bainton *et al.*, (2011) montrent comment le programme de gestion du patrimoine culturel issu d'un accord signé avec la firme exploitant la mine d'or de Lihir en Papouasie-Nouvelle-Guinée est manipulé dans les narrations et arènes politiques locales.

Évidemment, les industriels racontent aussi des histoires¹⁴. Comme le montre John Burton (pp. 37-51) qui revient dans sa contribution sur les controverses ayant accompagné l'exploitation de la mine de Porgera en Papouasie Nouvelle-Guinée (voir aussi Filer, 1999), les opérateurs miniers, sous la pression des gouvernements et/ou de la société civile locale ou internationale, en sont venus à produire un impossible métarécit (au sens défini plus haut de synthèse de *policy narratives* différents, voire concurrents) qui tente de combiner maximisation du profit de la firme et développement durable des communautés, en particulier sous la forme du discours de la responsabilité sociale et environnementale des entreprises. Or l'examen de la pratique des firmes montre la fragmentation, voire la dilution des responsabilités derrière l'apparente cohérence du discours (cf. Filer, Burton and Banks, 2008). Emery Roe note toutefois que les récits de politique publique – et le discours de type RSE ainsi que les régulations globales promues par les multinationales minières rassemblées au sein de l'ICMM (*International Council on Mining and Metals*) sont des fragments de politique produits par des opérateurs privés – ne sont pas validés ou invalidés par la « réalité » :

« [They] often resist change or modification even in the presence of contradicting empirical data, because they continue to underwrite and stabilize the assumptions for decision making in the face of high uncertainty, complexity, and polarization. » (Roe, 1994 : 2)

Les récits de politique publique, comme les « grands récits » (du développement, de la modernisation, etc.), perdurent en fonction du crédit qu'ils acquièrent et ce crédit est moins indexé à l'adéquation entre des faits et des interprétations qu'à la solidité des alliances constituées et à la force légitimatrice de la narration produite. C'est une affaire de degré, mais cet équilibre spécifique donne une couleur particulière aux controverses politiques par rapport aux controverses scientifiques¹⁵.

14. On pourrait ajouter ici les formes narratives émanant d'autres groupes d'acteurs dont le rapport au temps diffère : les géologues, inscrits dans un très long terme tellurique, les ingénieurs, contraints par l'urgence structurelle de trouver la solution au problème du moment. Nous remercions Michel Jébrak pour avoir attiré notre attention sur ce point.

15. Voir Callon (1981) sur les controverses technologiques, Latour (1989) sur les controverses scientifiques, Fabiani (1997) sur les controverses philosophiques. Albert Hirschmann, dans son essai sur la rhétorique réactionnaire (1991), montre bien comment les argumentaires peuvent s'inverser en valeur sans perdre de leur efficacité.

Récits miniers, rhétorique et identité

La section précédente a permis d'aborder, de manière parfois indirecte, le thème de la fonction des récits miniers. Il nous faut à présent poser la question de leurs fins. Dan Jorgensen (pp. 23-36) propose dans sa contribution sur les récits et géographies multiples dans lesquels s'inscrit la trajectoire minière d'Ok Tedi en Papouasie Nouvelle-Guinée (voir aussi Hyndman, 2005), de distinguer les fonctions instrumentales ou stratégiques des récits (et mythes) et leurs fonctions non instrumentales, en s'appuyant sur le cas particulier d'un mythe d'origine aux développements inattendus. Les premières renvoient à la mobilisation et à l'ajustement de récits à des fins de justification d'un accès aux bénéfices de la mine. Les récits d'origine servent ainsi à fonder des revendications foncières portant sur les espaces d'une emprise minière actuelle ou à venir. Ces revendications peuvent prendre des formes non directement territoriales et renvoyer à des réseaux de clans ou de chefferie ou à des liens rituels (Jorgensen ici ; Horowitz, 2003 ; Brutti, 2007 ; Crook, 2007 ; Le Meur, Horowitz, Mennesson, 2013). La fonction justificatrice de ces récits réside aussi dans l'explication de la création et de l'existence de la richesse minérale (Biersack, 1999) renvoyant à une conception de la terre comme bien matériel et immatériel (Strathern, 2009).

La distinction proposée par Jorgensen entre fonctions instrumentales et non instrumentales des récits ouvre sur les deux questions des fins – pourquoi raconter ? Pour persuader, négocier, décrire, (se) remémorer, exister ? – et du destinataire (ou narrataire) : à qui s'adresse-t-on lorsque l'on cherche à persuader, négocier, décrire, rappeler, exister ?

Plusieurs articles dans ce volume mettent en avant, sur un mode instrumental, la volonté de contrôle du territoire et des ressources exprimée par des revendications et des politiques qui peuvent se situer au plan local (Jorgensen, Bacalzo *et al.*) ou national (Chaloping-March, Nanau). On peut traduire ces stratégies en termes de souveraineté, en déconnectant le concept de son usage traditionnellement associé à l'État sur la base d'une définition large et exploratoire : la souveraineté comme acte d'« autopositionnement » :

« *the ability of an entity to designate both its own identity and the scope of its authority.* » (Joyce, 2013 : 35)

La souveraineté peut prendre des formes localisées, souvent, actuellement, dans le cadre

de reformulations empruntant au discours de l'autochtonie, et elle alors parfois qualifiée de « souveraineté interne » dans des contextes de colonies de peuplement (Nouvelle-Calédonie, Australie, Canada, etc.)¹⁶. À cet égard, le cas présenté par James Leach (pp. 53-62) est intéressant, car légèrement décalé par rapport à l'enjeu minier, et permettant de ce fait de répondre à la question posée par Jorgensen sur la dimension non instrumentale des récits associés à la mine. L'analyse de Leach mettant en avant la notion de « possession mutuelle » de la terre et du collectif humain (au-delà de la formule classique de l'homme appartenant à la terre) et le paysage comme processus animé et propriété émergente, déplace la problématique vers le domaine existentiel : les récits qu'il rapporte sont des récits de vie, de continuité de la communauté en tant que collectif, de persistance dans son être (allant au-delà, et étendant la portée de la notion de *livelihood* ou mode de subsistance). La sortie hors de la fonction instrumentale est en même temps sortie hors du registre de la propriété, devenu usuel dans les négociations entre populations locales et compagnies minières, comme le montre par exemple Colin Filer lorsqu'il évoque dans ce contexte, en Papouasie Nouvelle-Guinée, la montée d'une « idéologie foncière propriétaire » (2006 ; voir aussi Jorgensen, 2004). Celle-ci, résultant de l'obligation de réponse à l'injonction au développement des opérateurs miniers, peut toutefois prendre des formes plus ou moins exclusives ou inclusives, et qui varient également en termes de formes sociales et de schéma de parenté et de filiation, comme le rappellent Bacalzo Schwoerer *et al.* (pp. 63-76) dans l'introduction de leur article (voir aussi Golub, 2007). Ils insistent aussi sur la relation entre type de mise en forme de l'idéologie foncière et moment dans le cycle minier : l'hypothèse serait celle d'une tendance à l'inclusion plus grande de la part des populations locales dans les phases préliminaires de pré-exploitation.

Le texte de Jorgensen (pp. 23-36) laisse délibérément ouverte la question de la qualification des fonctions non instrumentales de certains récits miniers, ceux qui en particulier intègrent de manière étonnante des éléments combinant le mythe des tribus perdues d'Israël et des résultats de la génétique moderne. On pourrait avancer que la principale fonction non instrumentale de ces récits est existentielle : ils aident, en lien avec la persistance des pratiques et des savoirs qui les accompagnent, la communauté à perdurer concrètement et symboliquement dans son être tout en honorant

16. Voir en particulier Evans *et al.* (2013). Pour le lien entre autochtonie, souveraineté et enjeux minier en Nouvelle-Calédonie, voir Demmer (2007), Levacher (à paraître) ; Leblie (2007) et Graff (2012) reviennent sur les liens entre autochtonie, souveraineté et décolonisation dans ce même territoire.

sa dette vis-à-vis de la nature (Esposito, 2000 ; Strathern, 2009). On pourrait bien sûr objecter qu'un récit justifiant de la vie d'un collectif revêt une fonction instrumentale. La réponse peut alors ici tenir dans la prise en compte de temporalités différentes, même si l'irruption brutale du capital global crée un effet de compression du temps. Analysant les logiques de l'échange, Parry and Bloch (1989) distinguent deux grands types d'ordres transactionnels, selon qu'ils s'inscrivent dans une durée inférieure ou supérieure à celle de la vie humaine. De manière analogue, on aurait d'un côté des récits plus instrumentaux et stratégiques utilisés pour négocier l'irruption de la mine et l'urgence qu'elle génère et de l'autre, des discours inscrits dans une durée et une continuité étendue. Ces décalages de temporalité sont analysés par Leach (pp. 53-62) dans une perspective analogue. Ces formes narratives ayant trait au mode d'existence d'un collectif peuvent aussi exprimer, comme le montre ici Jorgensen, la volonté d'un groupe social d'étendre son horizon au-delà du local, lorsqu'il s'inscrit dans l'universalisme chrétien par exemple¹⁷.

D'un point de vue pragmatique, la manière dont les récits circulent et se transforment montre de fortes imbrications entre registres instrumentaux et non instrumentaux. Cette imbrication obéit à une logique de bricolage et de mobilisation d'éléments hétérogènes, logique intertextuelle génératrice d'innovation narrative et non de répétition¹⁸. Cette logique d'assemblage n'empêche pas qu'un registre narratif puisse dominer à un moment dans l'organisation de ces récits miniers. C'est ce que nous observons dans une localité du sud de la Nouvelle-Calédonie (Thio, Borendi) marquée par une expérience séculaire et souvent conflictuelle d'exploitation du nickel. Or le récit de cette expérience par les acteurs locaux, en particulier dans ses moments de tension, mobilise un registre largement religieux (chrétien, mais pas seulement) imbriqué dans, et interprétant la trame événementielle¹⁹. À travers ces récits se construit une forme d'« identité narrative » comme forme de mise en cohérence dans la durée de l'action et de l'agent (Ricoeur, 1990 : 137-139 ; Somers, 1994)²⁰ qui à la fois organise une continuité existentielle du collectif et permet dans sa plasticité même de

faire face, dans un rapport de force très inégal, aux bouleversements induits par l'irruption du fait minier. C'est ce que montrent en particulier Doris Bacalzo *et al.* (pp. 63-76) dans leur description fine des transformations des formes sociales locales (le « clan » en particulier) en réponse à l'obligation pour les populations de se positionner dans la compétition pour l'accès à une part de la rente minière. Le passage à des discours de justification moins inclusifs à mesure que la pression de l'enjeu minier s'accroît et se concrétise, comme évoqué ici, pourrait aussi s'interpréter dans une logique de continuum allant d'une réponse existentielle générale à un durcissement instrumental plus compétitif (sur ce point, voir aussi Bainton, 2009 ; Le Meur, à paraître).

La notion d'identité narrative reste en l'occurrence complexe à manipuler dans la mesure où les récits – modes de mise en intrigue par intrication causale – peuvent aussi, de par leur fonction même, contribuer à l'expression et à la définition de réseaux – acteurs réseaux ou dispositifs – visant à construire et légitimer des formes d'intéressement, de mobilisation et d'alliance (Latour, 2006). La composition du collectif se déplace en dehors du groupe autochtone pour inclure différents porte-parole, médiateurs et alliés de tous ordres. Cette voie, dont Bacalzo Schwoerer *et al.* (pp. 63-76) lancent l'exploration dans leur texte (voir aussi Horowitz, 2012), est prometteuse et mériterait une description plus systématique, permettant aussi de croiser ce point de vue avec des situations où les récits semblent plus directement indexés à des groupes d'acteurs nettement identifiés, comme dans le texte proposé ici par John Burton (voir aussi Le Meur, 2014).

Récit et mise en récit : la question du narrateur

Dans cette dernière section, nous allons revenir sur un point central volontairement laissé à l'écart jusqu'ici, à savoir celui du narrateur. Un récit suppose un narrateur et implique un narrataire, nous l'avons dit en première section de cette introduction : qui raconte et à

17. À l'inverse, Francesca Merlan (1994) parle de « récits de survie » dans son analyse des récits aborigènes contemporains rapportant la brutalité des rapports coloniaux en Australie du Nord.

18. Nous remercions Dan Jorgensen pour avoir attiré notre attention sur ce point.

19. Enquête en cours dans le cadre du programme NERVAL (Négocier, évaluer, reconnaître la valeur des lieux), financé par le CNRT « Nickel et son environnement ».

20. Ricoeur voit l'identité narrative comme expression de « la dialectique entre l'ipséité et la mêmété » (1990 : 167), l'ipséité renvoyant à une réflexivité qui interroge la continuité temporelle au fondement de l'idée de mêmété. Dans un texte antérieur, Ricoeur donne la définition suivante de l'identité narrative (1985 : 442), qui met en évidence la porosité entre récits historiographiques et littéraires (voir également White, 2009, sur ce point) : « Le rejeton fragile issu de l'union de l'histoire et de la fiction, c'est l'assignation à un individu ou à une communauté d'une identité spécifique qu'on peut appeler leur identité narrative ».

destination de qui ? Il y a une intentionnalité du récit minier qu'il s'agit de situer par rapport à ce binôme narrateur/narrataire, dans un contexte historique donné, mais en se souvenant qu'une part de ces récits est sans auteur. On raconte pour faire agir, pour légitimer une présence et/ou une action, mais aussi, nous l'avons vu, à des fins non instrumentales, existentielles, mobilisant et contribuant à reproduire les récits sans auteurs déjà évoqués. Qui produit les récits miniers et dans quel but ? La distinction principale à cet égard s'opère entre le narrateur acteur et le narrateur observateur. S'agit-il d'un témoignage direct écrit à la première personne ou d'une description produite par un observateur plus ou moins extérieur à la situation décrite ? Les textes rassemblés ici sont souvent complexes de ce point de vue puisqu'ils incluent des éléments de récits rapportés ou enregistrés (niveau intradiégétique), écrits ou dits à la première personne, et aussi des analyses émanant des auteurs, qui eux-mêmes sont, dans le cas de récits ethnographiques, en situation d'observateurs participants. La proposition de Stuart Kirsch d'une anthropologie inverse (*reverse anthropology*) est celle qui apparemment va le plus loin dans l'effacement de l'anthropologue comme narrateur dans le but de faire la place la plus large aux histoires et interprétations locales :

« Le concept d'anthropologie inverse fut utilisé en premier par Roy Wagner [...] pour décrire la manière dont les cultes du cargo mélanésien traitaient des notions capitalistes de profit, travail salarié et production. Wagner soutenait que les cultes du cargo constituaient la contrepartie interprétative de l'étude de la culture, et par conséquent, une sorte d'anthropologie inversée. Je développe cette analogie en examinant la façon dont les Yonggom déploient des analyses autochtones dans le cadre de leurs luttes politiques avec la compagnie minière et l'État. Je montre aussi dans quelle mesure les éléments dérivés des analyses autochtones peuvent contribuer aux débats politiques et théoriques contemporains sur ces enjeux. » (Kirsch, 2006 : 3, traduit par nous)

On retrouve ici l'un des modes de narration « ethnographique » évoqués par John Burton dans sa typologie des formes de mise en intrigue de la mine, qui n'oublie pas que les populations locales sont des acteurs historiques, politiques, réflexifs. Ce point pourrait paraître trivial si l'on ne constatait pas à quel point les récits produits par les acteurs directement concernés par l'enjeu minier sont souvent recouverts d'un voile narratif (extradiégétique) qui oriente la lecture et empêche

d'en saisir tous les ressorts, y compris dans leurs incohérences et contradictions éventuelles.

L'écriture ethnographique comme travail d'organisation – de sélection, de découpage et de montage –, de récits issus du travail de terrain (cf. Davis, 1999, citée plus haut), peut aussi combiner dans une trame complexe des discours aux auteurs et narrateurs divers, comme le montre aussi John Burton. Ce dernier propose un récit partiellement homodiégétique, puisqu'il revient sur une polémique qui l'implique directement. En même temps, il mobilise dans son analyse non seulement les discours du développement et de la responsabilité sociale d'entreprise, mais aussi un récit cinématographique, le film *Avatar*, pour qualifier les positionnements d'autres acteurs et en particulier de l'ONG Mining Watch qui le met en cause. La construction de son argumentaire repose sur imbrication d'une pluralité de modes narratifs.

Sur un autre registre, Florence Giuliani (pp. 165-174) nous propose une mise en intrigue qui se déploie à deux niveaux. Elle raconte les tribulations d'un projet inspiré du *Land Art* sur une mine orpheline, projet voulu par la province Sud de la Nouvelle-Calédonie et dont l'ampleur se réduira sous la pression de diverses vicissitudes techniques et politiques. Elle nous donne ensuite à voir une installation artistique à plusieurs voix, puisqu'elle implique en particulier des femmes de la tribu de Saint-Louis. Celles-ci sont invitées à « panser », grâce au tressage, la montagne écorchée par la mine. Ce faisant, elles se font les dépositaires d'une histoire qui est à la fois matérialisée par leur production et véhiculée par leur discours sur la mine.

Le jeu des histoires racontées et des récits mobilisés à des fins souvent stratégiques est l'objet d'interprétations socialement et politiquement indexées. Le prospecteur colonial travaille à la fois pour la grandeur de sa patrie et pour la sienne propre, en cherchant inlassablement à découvrir de nouveaux filons et à étendre le territoire de la « mise en valeur » minière. Ces deux niveaux de lecture sont identifiables mais l'auteur du rapport de prospection raconte son histoire, inscrite dans un espace et un temps localisés : on est bien loin de la quête du « temps aboli » que Thierry Hentsch (2005) voit au fondement des grands récits occidentaux (voir aussi Fabian, 2006). Le rapport de prospection décrit une série de « gestes » qui, pour Yves Citton, situe ce type de texte « à la croisée de la vie et de l'art dans la mesure où il représente une sensibilité esthétique inscrite dans la texture quotidienne de nos pratiques » (2012 : 56)²¹.

21. Aux récits et rapports de prospection coloniaux font échos les trajectoires contemporaines d'orpailleurs artisanaux en Afrique de l'Ouest et ailleurs, qui expriment, loin de tout exotisme, la dureté des sociétés qui se constituent sur les frontières minières, mais aussi les normes et les valeurs qui s'y forment, à la base d'une « économie morale de l'orpaillage » (Grätz, 2004).



PHOTO 3. – Roulage sur mine à Thio (2008, cliché Marlène Dégremont)

L'écrivain kanak est quant à lui tiraillé entre les promesses de l'indépendance, le rêve d'un essor économique et la préservation d'une terre ancestrale, comme le montre Eddy Banaré ici. Quant à l'association écologiste, elle peut s'allier à une organisation autochtone pour la conservation de l'environnement tandis que cette dernière trouvera ensuite un terrain d'entente avec la firme minière autour de la notion du développement durable (Horowitz, 2012 ; Dashwood, 2013). La production de discours et d'histoires a donc souvent à voir avec l'exercice, la contestation ou la conquête d'un pouvoir qui passe par un travail sur l'histoire, au double sens de trame historique et narrative. Le récit, qu'il soit littéraire, historique ou à visée politique ou institutionnelle, assigne ou conteste des rôles ; le processus est peut-être plus visible dans un contexte colonial de domination plus explicite.

« Le colon fait l'histoire et sait qu'il la fait. [...] L'histoire qu'il écrit n'est pas l'histoire du pays qu'il dépouille mais l'histoire de sa nation en ce qu'elle écume, viole et affame. » (Fanon, 2011 : 463)

Les rapports de prospection, les chroniques, les carnets de voyage ou encore les nouvelles, romans et poésies qui ont constitué les premiers corpus de récits miniers étaient écrits par des acteurs de la colonisation et destinés aux espaces coloniaux. En contexte postcolonial, on racontera, selon les perspectives, le courage des ancêtres pionniers, sortes de « héros culturels », ou le « trauma colonial » décrit par Patrick Sultan : le terreau mémoriel dans lequel viennent puiser les créateurs, et qui mêle « l'arrachement à un pays natal, la déportation de masse, la transplantation forcée, la destruction et la désorganisation des

lieux ancestraux, la profanation des terres sacrées, [ou] la ségrégation » (Sultan, 2011 : 107).

À un niveau supérieur d'agrégation, ces récits participent d'une écriture et d'une philosophie de l'histoire et, d'une certaine manière, de l'histoire elle-même. C'est cette voie qu'emprunte Hayden White lorsqu'il identifie une « imagination historique » (White, 1973, 2009) de l'Europe du XIX^e siècle, qui se trouve être l'époque fondatrice des mythes pionniers des colonies de peuplement océaniques. On peut la reconstituer à travers les chroniques, les rapports, la presse, tout un ensemble de récits dont l'écriture emprunte ses codes à différents genres littéraires, romance, tragédie, comédie ou satire. Il ne faut toutefois pas aller trop loin dans l'analogie :

« *The notion that sequences of real events possess the formal attributes of the stories we tell about imaginary events could only have its origins in wishes, daydreams, reveries.* » (White, 1990 : 27)

Conclusion

L'activité minière est indissociable de déplacements de populations et de spoliations foncières, et elle génère une violence environnementale, sociale et politique parfois extrême. Or celle-ci est souvent masquée par le caractère épique des grands récits relayés par la presse coloniale ou dans des carnets de voyage, ou par le formalisme et l'apparence d'objectivité des rapports des firmes et des consultants consacrés au développement durable et à la responsabilité sociale d'entreprise.

On peut avancer que l'une des fonctions des textes générés par l'exploitation minière est de circonvenir, au plan symbolique, mais aussi, de plus en plus, d'un point de vue institutionnel et juridique, les débordements environnementaux, économiques, politiques et sociaux souvent mal contrôlés de cette activité : conflits et guerres, accidents, faillites et effondrement des cours, corruption et clientélisme... Cette production de textes relève d'un double effort de rationalisation (l'exploitation minière comme entreprise calculée) et de poétisation (l'exploitation minière comme accomplissement individuel ou collectif). Ce corpus est aussi fait de non-dits (Barbançon, 1992), dont le plus assourdissant est celui généré par une parole coloniale qui « professe le silence de l'indigène » (Said, 2000 :161) et travaille encore le présent des lieux d'exploitation minière et les récits qu'ils continuent de susciter. À travers ces récits, des empires « se sont rêvés », des mémoires et des représentations se sont forgées, constitutives des rapports aux sites et au travail miniers que les articles de ce dossier évoquent sur des registres variés.

Le récit comme discours sans auteur – « grand récit » ou métarécit, *policy narrative* – rencontre dans ces contextes divers le récit comme histoire racontée par un ou plusieurs auteurs situés, participant ou non à l'action qui est dite ou mise en scène. La mine dans le Pacifique constitue le substrat de trames narratives complexes et imbriquées, qui tentent, sur des registres différents allant de l'expérience individuelle à l'algorithme de politique publique, de dire les contradictions d'une activité qui transforme irrémédiablement les hommes et les paysages. Ce dossier rassemble des textes qui contribuent, chacun à leur manière et à partir de terrains variés (Fidji, Kiribati, Nauru, Nouvelle-Calédonie, Papouasie Nouvelle-Guinée, Philippines, Salomon), à l'expression, la mise en intrigue et en dialogue, de ces manières de raconter la mine dans le Pacifique.

BIBLIOGRAPHIE

- ANDERSON Benedict, 1983. *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, Verso.
- BAINTON Nicholas A., 2009. Keeping the Network Out of View: Mining, Distinctions and Exclusion in Melanesia, *Oceania* 79 (1), pp. 18-33.
- BAINTON Nicholas A, Chris BALLARD, Kirsty GILLESPIE and Nicholas HALL, 2011. Stepping Stones Across the Lihir Islands: Developing Cultural Heritage Management in the Context of a Gold Mining-Operation, *International Journal of Cultural Property* 18, pp. 81-110.
- BALLARD Chris and Glenn BANKS, 2003. Resource Wars: The Anthropology of Mining, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 32, pp. 287-313.
- , 2009. Between a rock and a hard place: corporate strategy at the Freeport mine in Papua, 2001-2006?, in B. Resosudarmo and F. Jotzo (eds), *Working with Nature against Poverty: Development, Resources and the Environment in Eastern Indonesia*, Singapore, ISEAS, pp. 147-177.
- BANARÉ Eddy, 2012. *Les récits du nickel en Nouvelle-Calédonie (1853-1860)*, Paris, Honoré Champion, Francophonies.
- , 2014. Aspects littéraires de la recherche archivistique en Nouvelle-Calédonie : d'où vient le pionnier ?, in V. Fillol et P.-Y. Le Meur (éds), *Terrains océaniques : enjeux et méthodes*, Paris, L'Harmattan, cahiers du Pacifique Sud, pp. 307-324.
- BANKS Glenn and Chris BALLARD (eds), 1997. *The Ok Tedi Settlement: issues, outcomes and implications*, Canberra, ANU, Resource Management in Asia-Pacific, National Centre for Development Studies, Policy Paper n° 27.
- BARBANÇON Louis-José, 1992. *Le Pays du non-dit. Regards sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, La Motte Achard, à compte d'auteur.
- BAYARD Pierre, 2009. *Le plagiat par anticipation*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit.
- BEBBINGTON Anthony, Leonith HINOJOSA, Denise Humphreys BEBBINGTON, Maria Luisa BURNEO and Ximena WARNAARS, 2008. Contention and Ambiguity: Mining and the Possibilities of Development, *Development and Change* 39 (6), pp. 887-914.
- BENVIVENGO Yann, 2012. Immigration japonaise en Nouvelle-Calédonie : une illustration de l'affirmation du Japon dans le Pacifique, *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 135 : *Relations internationales et régionales en Océanie* (S. Mohamed-Gaillard éd.), pp. 215-228.
- BIERSACK Aletta, 1999. The Mount Kare python and his gold, *American Anthropologist* 101, pp. 68-87.
- BREMMER Ian and Robert JOHNSON, 2009. The rise and fall of resource nationalism, *Survival* 51(2), pp. 149-158.

- BRENNEIS Donald and Fred MYERS (eds), 1984. *Dangerous Words: Language and Politics in the Pacific*, New York, New York University Press
- BRUTTI Lorenzo, 2007. From fertility rituals to mining companies: Ecocultural issues and land rights in Oksapmin, *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 125, pp. 249-255.
- BURKE Peter (ed.), 1991. *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, Londres, Polity Press.
- CALLON Michel, 1981. Pour une sociologie des controverses techniques, *Fundamentae Scientiae* 2, pp. 381-399.
- CLIFFORD James, 2013. *Returns. Becoming Indigenous in the Twenty-First Century*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press.
- CLIFFORD James and Georges MARCUS (eds), 1986. *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- COOPER Frederick, 1997. Modernizing Bureaucrats, Backward Africans, and the Development Concept, in F. Cooper and R. Packard (eds), *International Development and the Social Sciences. Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge*, Berkeley, University of California Press, pp. 64-92.
- COUMANS Catherine, 2011. Occupying Spaces Created by Conflict: Anthropologists, Development NGOs, Responsible Investment, and Mining (with CA comment by S. Kirsch), *Current Anthropology* 52 (S3), pp. S29-S43.
- CROOK Tony, 2007. 'If you don't believe our story, at least give us half of the money': claiming ownership of the Ok Tedi Mine, PNG, *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 125, pp. 221-228.
- DASWHOOD Hevina, 2013. *The Rise of Global Corporate Social Responsibility. Mining and the Spread of Global Norms*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- DAVIES Charlotte Aull, 1999. *Reflexive Ethnography. A Guide to Researching Selves and Others*, Londres, Routledge.
- DAWSON Andrew, Jenny HOCKEY and Allison JAMES (eds), 1997. *After Writing Culture: Epistemology and Praxis in Contemporary Anthropology*, Londres, Routledge, ASA Monographs.
- DEMME Christine, 2007. Autochtonie, nickel et environnement. Une nouvelle stratégie kanak, *Vacarme* 39, pp. 43-48.
- ESPOSITO Roberto, 2000. *Communitas. The Origin and Destiny of Community*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- EVANS Julie, Ann GENOVESE, Alexander REILLY and Patrick WOLFE (eds), 2013. *Sovereignty. Frontiers of Possibility*, Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press.
- FABIAN Johannes 2006 (éd. or. 1983). *Le temps et les autres. Comment l'anthropologue construit son objet*, préface d'Alban Bensa, Toulouse, Anarchasis.
- , 2006. The other revisited: Critical afterthoughts, *Anthropological Theory* 6 (2), pp. 139-152.
- FABIANI Jean-Louis, 1997. Controverses scientifiques, controverses philosophiques. Figures, positions, objets, *Enquête* 5, pp. 11-34.
- FANON Frantz, 2011. *Œuvres*, Paris, La Découverte.
- FILER Colin, 1990. The Bougainville Rebellion, the Mining Industry and the Process of Social Disintegration in Papua New Guinea. *Canberra Anthropology* 13 (1), pp. 1-39.
- 2006. Custom, Law and Ideology in Papua New Guinea, *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 7 (1), pp. 65-84.
- 2012, The development forum in Papua New Guinea: evaluating outcomes for local communities, in Marcia Langton and Judy Longbottom (eds), *Community Futures, Legal Architecture: Foundations for Indigenous People in the Global Mining Boom*, London, Routledge, pp. 45-58.
- FILER Colin (ed.), 1999. *Dilemmas of Development: The social and economic impact of the Porgera gold mine, 1989-1994*, Canberra, Asia-Pacific Press.
- FILER Colin, John BURTON and Glenn BANKS, 2008. The fragmentation of responsibilities in the Melanesian mining sector, in S. Ali and C. O'Faircheallaigh (eds), *Earth Matters. Indigenous peoples, the extractive industry and corporate social responsibility*, Sheffield, Greenleaf Publishing, pp. 163-179.
- FILER Colin, Pierre-Yves LE MEUR and Jean-Michel SOURISSEAU (eds), à paraître. *Local politics and large-scale mining. Perspectives from New Caledonia and Papua New Guinea*, Canberra, ANU Epress.
- FOSTER Robert J. (ed.), 1995. *Nation Making. Emergent Identities in Postcolonial Melanesia*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press.
- , 2002. *Materializing the Nation. Commodities, Consumption, and Media in Papua New Guinea*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

- FUENTES Carlos, 1979 (éd. or. mexicaine 1975). *Terra Nostra*, Paris, Gallimard.
- GENETTE Gérard, 2007. *Discours du récit. Essai de méthode* (volume regroupant *Figure III : Discours du récit* [1972] et *Nouveau discours du récit* [1983]), Paris, Seuil.
- GRAFF Stéphanie, 2013. Quand combat et revendication kanak ou politique de l'État français manient indépendance, décolonisation, autodétermination et autochtonie en Nouvelle-Calédonie, *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 134, pp. 61-83.
- GOLUB Alex, 2007. From Agency to Agents: Forging Landowner Identities in Porgera, in J. F. Weiner and K. Glaskin (eds), *Customary Land Tenure and Registration in Australia and Papua New Guinea: Anthropological Perspectives*, Canberra, ANU Epress, pp. 57-72.
- GRÄTZ Tilo, 2004. Les frontières de l'orpaillage en Afrique occidentale, *Autrepart* 30, cahier thématique *Gouverner les hommes et les ressources. Dynamiques de la frontière interne*, (J.-P. Chauveau, J.-P. Jacob et P.-Y. Le Meur eds), pp. 135-150.
- GREIMAS Algirdas Julien et Joseph COURTÈS, 1993. *Sémiotique. Dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du langage*, Paris, Hachette.
- GROCHAIN Sonia, 2013. *Les dynamiques sociales du projet Koniambo*, Nouméa, Éditions IAC, Études et Synthèse.
- GROCHAIN Sonia, David POITHILY et Jean-Michel SOURISSEAU, à paraître. From Anticipation to Practice: Social and Economic Management Put to the Test in the Metals Sector. An Example in New Caledonia's North Province, in C. Filer, P.-Y. Le Meur and J.-M. Sourisseau (eds), *Local Politics and Large-Scale Mining. Perspectives from New Caledonia and Papua New Guinea*, Canberra, ANU Epress.
- HARTOG François, 2003. *Régimes d'historicité. Présentisme et expérience du temps*, Paris, Seuil.
- , 2005. *Évidence de l'histoire. Ce que voient les historiens*, Paris, Seuil.
- HAU'OFA Epeli, 1993. Our Sea of Island, in E. Waddell, V. Naidu and E. Hau'ofa (eds), *New Oceania: Rediscovering our Sea of Island*, Fiji, University of the South Pacific, School of Social and Economic Development, pp. 2-19.
- HENTSCH Thierry, 2005. *Le temps aboli : l'Occident et ses grands récits*, Montréal, Presses de l'Université de Montréal/Bréal.
- HIRSCHMAN Albert O., 1991. *Deux siècles de rhétorique réactionnaire*, Paris, Fayard.
- HOROWITZ Leah S., 2003. La micropolitique de la mine en Nouvelle-Calédonie, Analyse des conflits autour d'un projet minier au sein d'une communauté kanak, *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 117 : *Nouvelle-Calédonie, 150 ans après la prise de possession* (I. Leblic éd.), pp. 254-271.
- , 2012. Translation Alignment: Actor-Network Theory and the power dynamics of environmental protest alliances in New Caledonia, *Antipode* 44 (3), pp. 806-827.
- HYNDMAN David, 2005. Shifting Ecological Imaginaries in the Ok Tedi Mining Crisis in Papua New Guinea, *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 120-121 : *Ethnoécologie en Océanie* (F. Brunois éd.), pp. 76-93.
- IMBUN Benedict, 2011. *Anthropology of Mining in Papua New Guinea Greenfields*, New York, Nova Publishers.
- JORGENSEN Dan, 1990. Placing the past and moving the present: Myth and contemporary history in Telefomin, *Culture* 10, pp. 47-56.
- , 2004. Who and what is a landowner? Mythology and marking the ground in a Papua New Guinea mining project, in Alan Rumsey and James Weiner (eds), *Mining and Indigenous Lifeworlds in Australia and Papua New Guinea*, Wantage, Sean Kingston Publishing, pp. 68-100.
- JOYCE Richard, 2013. *Competing Sovereignties*, London, Routledge.
- KIRSCH Stuart, 2006. *Reverse Anthropology: Indigenous analysis of social and environmental relations in New Guinea*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- LATOUR Bruno, 1989. *La science en action*, Paris, Seuil.
- , 2002. *La fabrique du droit. Une ethnographie du Conseil d'État*, Paris, La Découverte.
- , 2006. *Changer la société – Refaire de la sociologie*, Paris, La Découverte.
- LEBLIC Isabelle, 1993. *Les Kanak face au développement. La voie étroite*, Grenoble, PUG.
- , 2007. Kanak Identity, New Citizenship Building and Reconciliation, *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 125, pp. 271-282.
- LEITH Denise, 2003. *The Politics of Power: Freeport in Suharto's Indonesia*, Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press.
- LE MEUR Pierre-Yves, 2012 (6-8 nov.). The New Caledonia/France relationship through the lens of the mine. Colonization and globalization, old and new, Pacific History Association

- Conference 2012 *Generations: History in the Pacific, Histories in the Future*, Panel «Revisiting the “French Pacific”: connected or disconnected histories?», Wellington (NZ).
- , 2014. Anthropologie de la mine: travailler sur/dans/avec le secteur minier en Nouvelle-Calédonie, in V. Fillol et P.-Y. Le Meur (éds), *Terrains océaniques : enjeux et méthodes*, Paris, L'Harmattan, Cahiers du Pacifique Sud, pp. 175-194.
- à paraître. Conflict and agreement. The politics of Nickel in Thio, New Caledonia, in C. Filer, P.-Y. Le Meur and J.-M. Sourisseau (eds), *Local Politics and Large-Scale Mining. Perspectives from New Caledonia and Papua New Guinea*, Canberra, ANU Epress.
- LE MEUR Pierre-Yves, Chris BALLARD, Glenn BANKS and Jean-Michel SOURISSEAU, 2013. Two islands, four states: Comparing resource governance regimes in the Southwest Pacific, in J. Wiertz (ed.), *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Social Responsibility in Mining (SRMining 2013, Santiago, Chile)*, University of Queensland, GECAMIN-SMI, pp. 191-199.
- LE MEUR Pierre-Yves, Leah HOROWITZ and Thierry MENNESSON, 2013. «Horizontal» and «vertical» diffusion: the cumulative influence of Impact and Benefit Agreements (IBAS) on mining policy-production in New Caledonia, *Resources Policy* 38, pp. 648-656.
- LETTÉ Michel, 2009. Débordements industriels dans la cité et histoire de leurs conflits aux XIX^e et XX^e siècles, *Documents pour l'histoire des techniques* 17, pp. 163-173.
- LEVACHER Claire, à paraître. Indigenous people rights and the Goro-Nickel mining project in New Caledonia, in C. Filer, P.-Y. Le Meur, and J.-M. Sourisseau (eds), *Local Politics and Large-Scale Mining. Perspectives from New Caledonia and Papua New Guinea*, Canberra, ANU Epress.
- LYOTARD Jean-François, 1979. *La condition postmoderne. Rapport sur le savoir*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit.
- MASQUELIER Bertrand et Jean-Louis SIRAN (éds), 2000. *Pour une anthropologie de l'interlocution. Rhétoriques du quotidien*, Paris, L'Harmattan.
- MAYES Warren and Nigel CHANG, 2013. Cultural heritage management and local participation in the development of the Sepon mine, in J. Wiertz (ed.), *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Social Responsibility in Mining (SRMining 2013, Santiago, Chile)*, University of Queensland, GECAMIN-SMI, pp. 55-62.
- MCINTOSH Ian, 2004. The iron furnace of Birinydji, in Alan Rumsey and James Weiner (eds), *Mining and Indigenous Lifeworlds in Australia and Papua New Guinea*, Wantage, Sean Kingston Publishing, pp. 12-30.
- MERLAN Francesca, 1994. Narratives of Survival in the Post-Colonial North, *Oceania* 65, pp. 152-173.
- MERLE Isabelle, 1998. La construction d'un droit foncier colonial. De la propriété collective à la constitution des réserves en Nouvelle-Calédonie, *Enquête* 7, pp. 97-126.
- MONTALBETTI Christine, 1998. *Gérard Genette : une poétique ouverte*, Paris, Bertrand-Lacoste.
- MOSSE David, 2004. Is Good Policy Unimplementable? Reflections on the Ethnography of Aid Policy and Practice, *Development & Change* 35 (4), pp. 639-671.
- NAKORO Elia, 2011 (21-25 Nov). Mining and Cultural Heritage Preservation in Fiji, International conference *Mining in the Pacific: History, issues, perspectives*, Noumea.
- NASH June, 1993 (1^e éd. 1979). *We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us. Dependency and Exploitation in Bolivian Tin Mines*, New York, Columbia University Press.
- O'FAIRCHEALLAICH Ciaran, 2012. Curse or opportunity ? Mineral revenues, rent-seeking and development in Aboriginal Australia, in Marcia Langton and Judy Longbottom (eds), *Community Futures, Legal Architecture: Foundations for Indigenous People in the Global Mining Boom*, London, Routledge, pp. 45-58.
- PARRY Jonathan and Marc BLOCH (eds), 1989. *Money and the morality of exchange*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- PASSERON Jean-Claude, 1991. *Le raisonnement sociologique. L'espace non-poppérien du raisonnement naturel*, Paris, Nathan.
- POLIER Nicole, 1996. Of mines and Min: modernity and its malcontents in Papua New Guinea, *Ethnology* 35, pp. 1-16.
- PROPP Vladimir, 1970 (1^e éd. 1928). *Morphologie du conte*, Paris, Seuil.
- RICHER DE FORGES Bertrand et Michel PASCAL, 2008. La Nouvelle-Calédonie, un « point chaud » de la biodiversité mondiale gravement menacé par l'exploitation minière, *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 126-127 : Spécial Environnement dans le Pacifique (J. Trichet et I. Leblac éds), pp. 95-112.

- RICŒUR Paul, 1983. *Temps et récit*, vol. 1 : *L'intrigue et le récit historique*, Paris, Seuil.
- , 1984. *Temps et récit*, vol. 2 : *La configuration dans le récit de fiction*, Paris, Seuil.
- , 1985. *Temps et récit*, vol. 3 : *Le temps raconté*, Paris, Seuil.
- , 1990. *Soi-même comme un autre*, Paris, Seuil.
- ROBINSON James, Ragnar TORVIK and Thierry VERDIER, 2006. Political foundations of the resource curse, *Journal of Development Economics* 79, pp. 447-468.
- ROE Emery, 1994. *Narrative Policy Analysis. Theory and Practice*, Durham-London, Duke University Press.
- ROSSER Andrew, 2006. *The Political Economy of the Resource Curse: A Literature Survey*, Brighton, Institute of Development Studies, Working Paper 268.
- SAID Edward, 2000. *Culture et impérialisme*, Paris, Le Monde.
- SANJEK Richard, 1990. The Ethnographic Present, *Man* (N.S.) 26, pp. 609-628.
- SAUSSOL Alain, 1979. *L'Héritage. Essai sur le problème foncier mélanésien en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, Paris, Société des Océanistes, Publication de la SdO 40.
- SHIPTON Parker and Mitzi GOHEEN, 1992. Introduction. Understanding African Landholding: Power, Wealth and Meaning, *Africa* 62 (3), pp. 307-325.
- SHLOMOWITZ Ralph and Doug MUNRO, 1992. The Ocean Island (Banaba) and Nauru labour trade 1900-1940, *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 94 (1), pp. 103-117.
- SIDAWAY James, 2007. Enclave space: a new metageography of development?, *Area* 39 (3), pp. 331-339.
- SIVARAMAKRISHNAN K., 2000. Crafting the Public Sphere in the Forests of West Bengal, *American Ethnologist* 27 (2), pp. 431-461.
- SOMERS Margaret, 1994. The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach, *Theory and Society* 23 (5), pp. 605-649.
- STRATHERN Marilyn, 2009. Land: Intangible or Tangible Property?, in T. Chesters (ed.), *Land Rights. The Oxford Amnesty Lectures 2005*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 13-38.
- SULTAN Patrick, 2011. *La scène littéraire postcoloniale*, Paris, Le Manuscrit, L'Esprit des Lettres.
- TAUSSIG Michael, 2010 (1^e éd. 1980). *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press.
- THOMPSON Anne-Gabrielle, 2000. John Higginson : un spéculateur-aventurier à l'assaut du Pacifique (Nouvelle-Calédonie, Nouvelles-Hébrides), Paris, L'Harmattan.
- VEYNE Paul, 1978. *Comment on écrit l'histoire*, Paris, Seuil.
- WARD Halina, 2009. *Resource nationalism and sustainable development: a primer and key issues*, London, IIED, Working Paper.
- WHITE Geoffrey and Karen Ann WATSON GEGEO (eds), 1990. *Disentangling. Conflict Discourse in Pacific Societies*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- WHITE Hayden, 2009 (éd. or. américaine 1973). Poétiques de l'histoire, *Labyrinthe* 33 (2), pp. 21-65.
- , 1973. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press.
- , 1990. *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press.

Mining narratives and multiple geographies in Papua New Guinea: Ok Tedi, the emerald cave and Lost Tribes

by

Dan JORGENSEN*

ABSTRACT

Mining in Papua New Guinea has been accompanied by an efflorescence of origin tales that often serve as justifications for local claims to land rights or benefits arising from specific projects. While many of these narratives or myths have a clear instrumental function, there are many other elements of these tales that cannot be accounted for in these terms. In this article the author describes a recent origin story that emerged around the Ok Tedi mine, and places it in the context of traditional mythology, a changing system of regional relations, and circulating evangelical discourses. He argues that the story is best interpreted as an attempt to articulate a local position in relation to multiple geographies in which mining and Christianity are linked across scales ranging from the regional to the global.

KEYWORDS: mining, myth, narrative, Christianity, Papua New Guinea

RÉSUMÉ

L'exploitation minière en Papouasie Nouvelle-Guinée a vu émerger de nombreuses histoires des origines, servant souvent à justifier des revendications locales quant au droit foncier et aux bénéfices relatifs à des projets précis. Bien qu'une large part de ces récits et mythes ait une fonction clairement instrumentale, cette dernière interprétation ne peut rendre compte de tous les éléments constitutifs de ces histoires. Dans cet article, l'auteur décrit une histoire des origines récente, qui a émergé dans le contexte de la mine Ok Tedi. Il replace cette histoire dans le contexte de la mythologie traditionnelle, d'un système de relations sociales régionales en évolution, et des discours évangéliques qui circulent dans la zone. Il défend l'idée que ce récit doit être interprété comme une tentative d'articuler une posture locale avec les géographies multiples qui relient exploitation minière et christianisme, selon des échelles qui varient du régional au global.

MOTS-CLÉS : mine, mythe, récit, christianisme, Papouasie Nouvelle-Guinée

«Claims based on ritual knowledge are frequently heard at the District and Supreme courts in Papua New Guinea, yielding decisions as bewildering to the claimants as the substance of the claims must appear to the presiding judges. The perceived success of some of these claims has played a part in the widespread revival of interest in the continuing communication and enactment of this knowledge [...] Beyond

their more limited function of providing further evidence in support of rights to ownership, the mythology and cosmology of a community are also creatively reconfigured to account for disparities in power and for changing circumstances.» (Ballard and Banks, 2003: 301)

The expansion of Papua New Guinea's mining sector has had a remarkable effect on the

* Department of Anthropology, University of Western Ontario, dwj@uwo.ca

production of indigenous narratives, which have proliferated as the minerals economy has grown. Often these narratives take the form of origin stories brought forward to establish land claims and secure benefits that may arise from such projects. Thus, to take one example, Jacka reports that Ipili living in the vicinity of the Porgera mine have pressed their claims by invoking Kupiane, a spirit snake, as the source of gold, while neighboring Huli make similar but opposing claims by arguing that the snake's head is located on their territory (2005: 647-648; Ballard, 1994). Elsewhere, tales about ancestors and their doings frame the positions of rival contenders over the Frieda mining project (Jorgensen, 1997). Many other examples of narratives linking mineral wealth to a landscape created by ancestors or populated by spirits can be found, and taken together they have filled out a significant part of the scholarly literature on myth in PNG (e.g., Biersack, 1999; Brutti, 2007; Wardlow, 2001; Weiner, 1994).

Much of this can be explained in terms of securing rights or explaining the origins of mineral wealth, but as Ballard and Banks suggest, there is always something more to these tales than that. One striking example is provided by Crook (2007a) in his discussion of the efforts of West Ningerum people to secure recognition of their claims to the Ok Tedi mine. Local activists shaped their story for an intended audience of government officials and the mining company by framing their argument in the language of compensation for damage, but consciously concealed other aspects of their tales that spoke of spirits and tunnels in a subterranean landscape. Their reasoning was that these portions of the account would not gain credence with the authorities, rendering them superfluous to their practical goal.

In this article I discuss an origin narrative also concerning itself with the Ok Tedi mine¹. Though brief, the story is complex, especially in its spatial referents, and much of my account is devoted to interpreting it in the light of traditional mythology, shifting regional relations, and the recent history of the area. Many aspects of the story make sense in such terms, but far more remains unexplained – in particular, why it seems important to claim descent from Israel's Lost Tribes. The remainder of the article shifts focus to understand the connection between

mining and «Christian Zionism» in the tale, and the significance of the different geographies they evoke. Here I argue that much as traditional sacred landscapes linked local and regional scales, so contemporary Christian geographies link these to a sacred landscape that is global. Put differently, the argument is that the tale is less about mines or mining *per se* than about claims to membership in a world transcending local horizons – a world in which local people were always already natives of a distant land². Finally, I conclude by offering some examples to illustrate the ways in which the story's imaginary geographies assume tangible form in contemporary events.

The regional context: mine, people, and landscape³

Ok Tedi was PNG's first post-independence mining project and remains the country's largest mine today. Situated in the northwest corner of Western Province, the mine has radiated influences throughout the North Fly District and adjacent parts of Telefomin District⁴ for over thirty years. The mine itself is located on the site of Mount Fubilan at the headwaters of the Ok Tedi River, and is serviced by the township of Tabubil, which grew from an airstrip and base camp to a town with a population now estimated to be about 20,000 (National Statistical Office, 2009). Tabubil is now the largest town in western PNG, and is surrounded by villages whose populations have grown with influxes of migrants seeking employment or informal economic opportunities. The population of Tabubil and environs consists, therefore, of a mix of local landowners, mine workers, employees in retail sales, banking, and transportation, and a fluctuating number of market gardeners and gold-panners. A purpose-built highway connects Tabubil to the river port of Kiunga, but there are no outside road connections for either town, and the only links to the rest of the country are by air.

People from many parts of PNG live in Tabubil, but most originate from the surrounding hinterland, where Min peoples predominate (Jorgensen, 2006 and Gilbert, 2012 for details). Min trace their origins from a

1. I have discussed the strategic use of myth in claiming mining rights in detail elsewhere (Jorgensen, 1997, 2007); for an account from the perspective of evolving cosmological views, see Jorgensen (1998).

2. Although I do not have the space to develop it here, this point owes something to Sahlin's recent work on alterity and autochthony (2012), in which the alien origins of local people assume a critical role in both internal and external relations.

3. In the following discussion I omit reference to the downstream landscape, which has been the subject of its own literature (see Kirsch, 2006). My concern here is with the mountainous zone that is the home to the Min peoples.

4. In neighboring West Sepik Province.

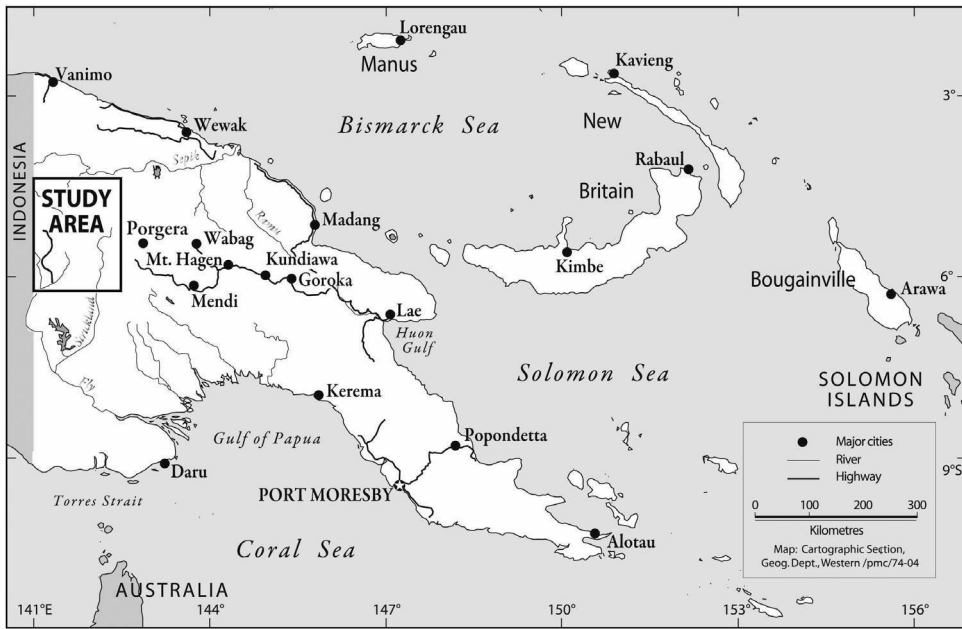


FIGURE 1. – Map of Papua New Guinea

common ancestress known as Afek, and inhabit the mountains of the Fly and Sepik headwaters straddling the boundary between Western and West Sepik Provinces. Afek came from east of the Strickland River and journeyed through this country, establishing the various groups along her route or at her village of Telefolip, where she ended her travels. Taken together, the Min form a distinctive regional grouping of peoples conscious of shared origins and affinities, despite enmities that may have prevailed in precolonial times (Jorgensen, 1996).

The Min landscape is extremely rugged, with relatively narrow valleys situated among steep slopes and high mountain ridges. Much of the terrain is marked by extensive karst development: caves and sinkholes abound, and a number of streams or rivers emerge from or disappear into underground channels. In some places – particularly along the foot of the Hindenburg Wall on the south side of the main ranges – the sound of subterranean streams is audible despite the absence of visible watercourses on the surface. In such a setting it is perhaps not surprising that traditional Min cosmologies take it as axiomatic that caves serve as portals to a subterranean world.

Most people can name and locate several caves, and men still enter them to hunt bats or flying foxes. These caves have stories associated with them, both old and new. In one, a man ventured deep into a cave in search of flying foxes and emerged into the sunlight in the gardens of

people he had never seen before; unbeknownst to him, they were the flying fox people, who killed him and sent him home to die. Stories about Ataanim, the Sun, tell how he travelled underground from west to east at night to begin a new day on the far side of the Strickland Gorge. More recent tales explain the disappearance of a tourist who met two women along the mountain track from Oksapmin to Telefolmin. They invited him back to their underground homes, where he married them and stayed in their golden city until he took a taxi to the town of Wewak on the coast. In a foundational myth, Afek traveled along a subterranean track connecting two key villages on either side of the main range: Telefolip, and Bultem, the central village of the Wopkaimin⁵. Not only do caves afford an entrance to an underground world, then, but they also are gateways connecting distant places.

This view of the world received apparent confirmation in 1975, when a British expedition entered the area and mapped a number of local caves, including one extensive system whose entrance was via a sinkhole roughly 500 metres across. This system consisted of high galleries and long, broad passages stretching for over 3 kilometres (Brook *et al.*, 1977). Cave art was found along their walls (p. 33), and the team found two pits that had been dug into the floor next to the remains of hearths (Gillieson, 1980). Local guides told the team that one of the pits was the hearth Afek used while resting on her

5. *Abiip miton*, «main village», «birthplace».

underground journey from Telefolip to Bultem (Brook *et al.*, 1977 : 40).

A story about two caves and the mine

Today the village of Bultem is located on the road connecting Tabubil and the Ok Tedi mine, and is about 15 minutes from town by bus. In February 2013 I was living in Bultem, where I was carrying out fieldwork on the use of mobile phones. One day Samuel, a village acquaintance who lived and worked in town, phoned to say he would like to visit with the pastor of his church⁶. Samuel arrived with Michael, his pastor, and a third man I had not previously met. Conversation turned to a current dispute in Bultem over some caves on village territory. A team of scientists had, with the assistance of Ok Tedi Mining Ltd. (OTML), sought permission to enter these caves. They were biologists wanting to study cave animals, especially a variety of bearded flying fox that roosted there. When the village councilor and his assistants were first approached, they readily granted permission, but this led to an almost immediate eruption of complaints from some of the older men of the village. The team's work was put on hold while attempts were made to resolve the dispute⁷.

The majority of villagers appeared to have no objections to the researchers' plans, but some of the older men complained that they had been bypassed in the decision and should have been asked. Closer to home, Samuel's uncle also complained that the scientists might steal things from those caves – in particular, gold. These worries focused on a particular cave (*Bultem*⁸), after which the village was named. Samuel and Michael explained that this cave figured in their ancestors' stories about an underground road connecting it with a similar cave below the village of Telefolip. At this point my third visitor, Tanbelok, spoke up, saying that he was actually the person who should have been asked, since he was the «principal landowner» of the cave and should have been offered payment because of this. Tanbelok continued, along with Michael, to explain the basis of this claim by way of a story about the true origins of the Min people and their connection to the landscape.

According to the stories of Afek's journeys, she built spirit houses (*yolam*) that became the focus for their respective ethnic groups' initiation and ritual systems. Thus Telefolip was the main ritual site for the Telefolmin, Demiduvip for the Urapmin, Bultem for the Wopkaimin, and so on (Jorgensen, 1996; see also Michel, 1988). An important feature of these stories was that these sites were connected to one another by an underground track that led from Telefolip to Mount Fubilan – the site of the Ok Tedi mine.

This much is generally known and accepted, though its interpretation had given rise to tensions between the Wopkaimin and other Min people in the past. The Wopkaimin of Bultem and their immediate neighbors, including some Kamfaiwolmin, had been officially recognized as the Mount Fubilan landowners when the mine was constructed, and have since that time received various benefits – company-built housing, hydro power, and royalty payments – that are unavailable to Afek's other descendants (Gilbert, 2012: 79-80). This was an especially sore point for Telefolmin, whose spirit house at Telefolip was generally acknowledged as having ritual pre-eminence over other centers, partly on the strength of being Afek's last abode. As a corollary, Telefolmin were seen as custodians of her ritual and cultural legacy (for details, see Barth, 1971, Jorgensen, 1990a, 1990b).

Tanbelok acknowledged that the tale of Afek and her journeys was the common story, but he went on to say that it was wrong in some crucial details. He pointed out – as most senior men already knew – that Afek's spirit houses were situated near caves that served as sacred sites (*amemtem*). In fact, he said, these caves were the reason she built spirit houses at these locations. What was missing from the commonly accepted story, however, was an acknowledgement of Afek's true identity. Together, Michael and Tanbelok then explained what had been hidden for so long. Afek, they said, was in fact a white woman – a missionary who had come to PNG in the remote past, along with a male missionary. This man was a German, and they each had a book that they were bringing to the Min people. She had killed him, however, and hid his existence and that of his book⁹. His book was the «positive» book – the Bible – while hers was the «negative» book, and had all kinds of

6. I use pseudonyms throughout.

7. After I left Bultem I heard that the team was given permission to enter the caves in company with a representative from the village, but am unaware of further details.

8. I italicize the name to emphasize the reference to the cave, rather than the village named after it. In local logic, the relation is something like that of a prototype (cave) and derivative (village); *-tem/* is a suffix indicating «cave».

9. I was later told his name was Martin Luther. In view of the strong connections between this narrative and others circulating in Western Province (see below), it is tempting to speculate that the killing of the missionary bringing the Bible is an oblique reference to Rev. James Chalmers, who was killed on Goaribari Island in 1901 (Busse, 2005: 445, 460-463). Afek kills men (including close relatives) in numerous myths, so such a claim is not inconsistent with traditional narratives (see, e.g., Jorgensen, 1990b, 2001).



FIGURE 2. – Ok Tedi Mine (© Ok Tedi Mine CMCA Review)

things about witchcraft and sorcery in it. In this way the ancestors were deceived.

According to both Michael and Tanbelok, the Min were also deceived about their origins and the status of Telefolip, which is not the true point of origin for the Min. Instead, the Faiwol village of Imigabip is the original Min settlement, founded by ancestors travelling from ancient Israel¹⁰. One proof of this, Tanbelok insisted, is that the Faiwol language is the same as that of the Old Testament Jews. What is more, beneath Imigabip is a cave with a large pool or lake formed by a subterranean river. This cave houses Moses' *kontrak bokis* (Tokpisin, «contract box») – the Ark of the Covenant brought by their ancestors on their journeys from Jerusalem. This box was authenticated with a photograph that also adorns Michael's church, a copy of which he showed me¹¹.

Michael also showed me a photograph of a large green stone that glowed – a jewel or crystal said to be in the same cave. He said he was convinced it was an emerald, and likely very valuable¹². According to him, this emerald had «spiritual powers». In the old days, Faiwol men would

bring the bodies of enemies slain in battle for cannibal feasts by the side of the subterranean pool, and at these feasts they would give the blood of their enemies to this stone so that their taro gardens would prosper. This stone is what revealed the existence of minerals at Fubilan, and it is also the source of the gold and copper at the Ok Tedi mine. Today the blood of the victims of industrial or automobile accidents there feeds the stone, and it is these deaths that keep the mine productive.

Sacred geography and subterranean sources of wealth

The underground track leading from Telefolip to Bultem, and on to Fubilan, is sometimes referred to as Bagelilep – the Ghost Road. Traditional myth explains that Afek and her younger brother lived at Telefolip, and at one point she killed him in retaliation for spying on her. She then charged him with the task of

10. Imigabip was the central Faiwol ritual site (Jones, 1980).

11. The box itself has an important history, having been taken by white people from Africa – where it had been moved after the fall of Jerusalem. This, according to Michael, was the reason for the Twin Towers attack in 2001 – the Africans wanted to avenge the loss of the box. This plan was fulfilled in the recent re-election of Barack Obama, a black man who governs America. It was not clear to me how this meshed with the story of the box's travels to Imigabip.

12. The photograph of the Ark was a computer print of an image widely available on the internet, depicting a box surmounted by two golden figures of winged angels or cherubim. The image of the «emerald» appeared to have a similar source as the photograph of the Ark, but I have not been able to locate it on the internet. Both of these images were from pages in a book being produced by Michael, which I was unable to examine.



FIGURE 3. – Telefolip Spirit House (1979, picture Dan Jorgensen)

preparing a place for the dead, which they would reach along the track he cleared – Bagelilep. The place he made for the dead is called Bagelam (Ghost Place). One of the tasks he was to accomplish there was to create the large stone adzes – *fubi* – that Telefolmin needed to clear their gardens. Bagelam was thus understood as the source of *fubi*, and that is the reason that the mountain above it is named Fubilan.

Afek visited her brother in Bagelam, and he later returned to visit her in Telefolip. But when he came, his body was decomposing and full of maggots. Embarrassed, he turned into a bird and flew off to the west (i.e., towards Bagelam). When he left, however, the maggots remained: they were *bonang* – the small white *tambu* shells (*Nassarius* sp.) used in traditional bridewealth and mortuary exchanges (cf. Robbins, 1999: 85-89).

Ideas connecting wealth and the dead are widespread in Melanesia, but among Telefolmin and other Min these ideas were mapped onto an underworld geography linking their spirit houses. This preoccupation with subterranean spaces goes a long way towards understanding the Min interest in mining itself, and in a way not entirely reducible to the monetary dimension of resource extraction. This becomes more apparent when we consider the materiality of traditional wealth and its significance.

Everything in traditional Min material culture was perishable – with the exception of bone, stone, and shell. Each of these are linked in the narratives about the origin of death, the land of the dead, and wealth, and each of them has a particular cultural valence of life-giving that evokes their permanence: the ability to withstand processes of decay and degeneration

(Jorgensen, 1985: 218)¹³. To refer back to the origins of death and the creation of the land of the dead, Afek's younger brother in the end left three gifts for Afek's descendants: the stone adzes to clear gardens, the shells given at funerals and recycled at marriage, and his own bones, which became key relics for the taro fertility cult based at her spirit house in Telefolip.

Although there was a great deal of variation in traditional Min ritual systems, their spirit houses were repositories of cult relics, and while ancestral skulls and other bones were the most prominent of these, stones figured as relics as well. Thus the first *fubi* adze made by Afek's brother was housed at Telefolip, at the entrance to the underground track to the land of the dead. Among Wopkaimin and Faiwol-speakers, round stones were often displayed alongside painted skulls in spirit house ritual (Barth, 1987), while among the Bimin-Kuskusmin quartz crystals were placed underneath the houses in which male initiations were conducted (Poole, 1982). Stones, and especially those of unusual shape or composition, were a focus of ritual attention and endowed with power.

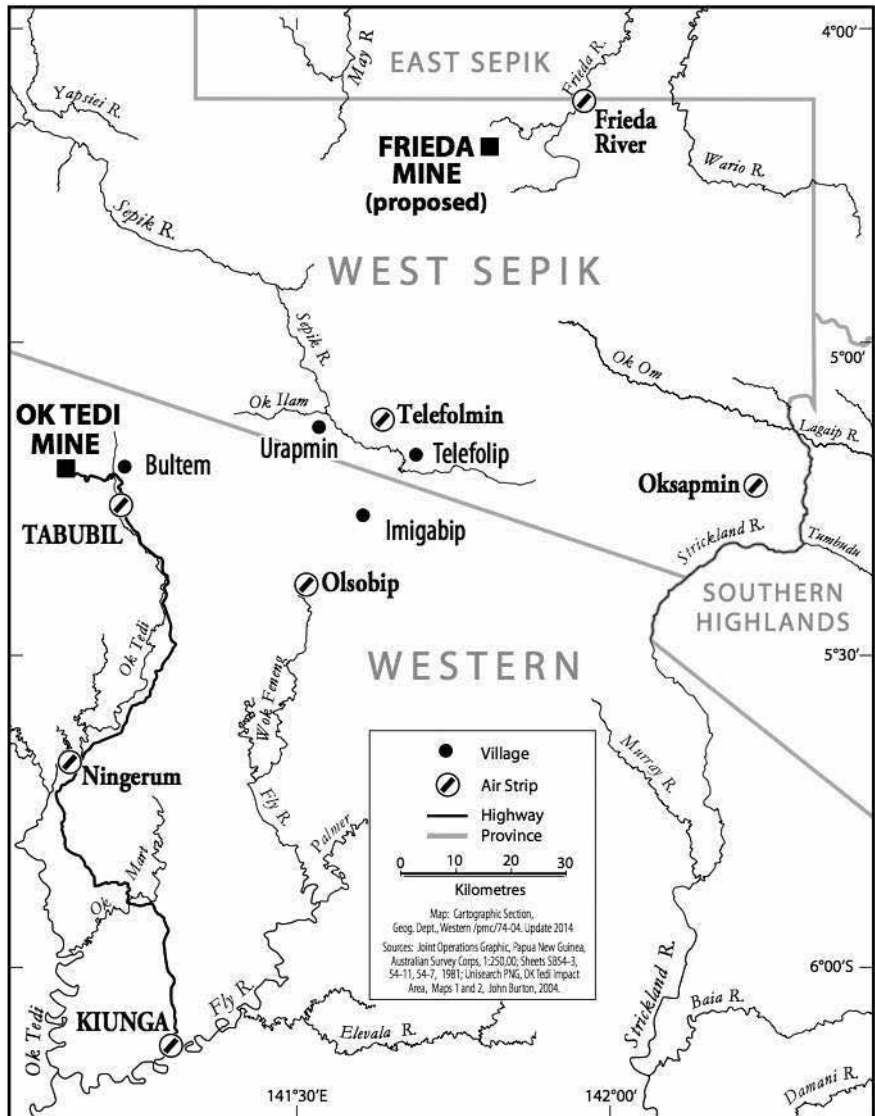
This background, and long experience of working on geological survey teams, may explain why many Min are avid amateur geologists adept at noting anomalies in stone or patterns of vegetation. Such variations reveal differences in underlying formations – signs that often indicate subsurface mineral deposits. Most significantly, stone quarry sites are often associated with mineral deposits. In addition to *fubi* adzes at Fubilan, a second kind of adze – *bangelii* – originates from quarries adjoining the Nena deposit at the Frieda River prospect. According to Telefol accounts, *bangelii* originated from bones placed under the mountain by an ancestor who travelled underground from Telefolip.

Although claims to the area are complex and have been established on quite different grounds, many Telefolmin take this tale as a key part of their case for a share of mining benefits at Frieda. To this should be added a more expansive assertion that a third kind of adze – *mook* – that entered the Min area from east of the Strickland also originated from Telefol ancestors, who placed bones at what is now the site of the Porgera Mine in Enga Province (Jorgensen, 1997). According to elders at Telefolip, these three stone adze types corresponding to the Ok Tedi, Frieda, and Porgera mines are connected as the head and legs of a human figure whose heart is at the site of the Telefolip spirit house. This heart takes the form of a perforated stone club head – *tingji* – said to be the prototype and source of PNG's one Kina coin (also a perforated disc)¹⁴.

13. Compare Golub's discussion of what he terms the Ipili «predilections for the permanent» in the context of their experience with the Porgera Mine in Enga Province (2006: 282ff).

14. It's worth mentioning that the Telefol word for money or «coin» is *tumoon*, «stone».

FIGURE 4. – Map of the Min region



Telefolip, Ok Tedi and shifting regional relations

The ancestors’ subterranean travels connecting caves and spirit houses mapped out a network of ethnic relations ordered by ritual status, often tied to particular powers or competences. For example, Imigabip’s dependence on Telefolip took a particularly vivid form in Faiwol mythology, with Afek’s sexual fluids flowing beneath the main ranges from the Telefolip spirit house to the Imig River, which nourishes all the taro in the surrounding landscape (Jones, 1980: 181; Crook, 2007b: 50)¹⁵. Jones characterizes the overall shape of this regional system from a Faiwol perspective:

«The cult anchors Imigabip in a perpetual relationship with the cult house in Telefolip, where the

primary relics mentioned in myths reside. Imigabip as well as certain other villages, such as Bultem in Wopkai territory, is a semi-autonomous satellite, so to speak, of Telefolip, where many tribal groups may meet for important rituals and initiations such as the rebuilding of the Telefolip cult house [...] According to the Faiwol, Min peoples are all linked by their association with Telefolip: they have the ‘same’ cult beliefs and initiations.» (Jones, 1980: 180-181)

This regional system not only mapped ritual relations, but also corresponded to a network of trading links along which wealth items moved between the Fly and Sepik headwaters (Barth, 1971, 1987; Craig and Hyndman, 1990). The two key upland nodes were Urapmin and Telefolip, situated at the only points where it is possible to cross this stretch of the Upper Sepik. Urapmin, in turn, was connected by a mountain pass to Bultem, and was thus strategically

15. Telefol versions speak of the flow of white fluid from an underground vine (*iman sok*, «taro vine») that nurtures taro like a mother’s milk nurtures children.



FIGURE 5. – Telefop from the air (note spirit house at upper end; 1975, picture Dan Jorgensen)

positioned in terms of the flow of valuables along this track. Telefop was linked to Urapmin by tracks following the course of the Sepik, but it was also connected to Imigabip by a route over the main ranges along which shells flowed north.

When the Ok Tedi project began, people were unsurprised that gold and copper were found beneath Fubilan, situated as it was atop the subterranean source of traditional wealth, and the minerals were seen as substitutes for wealth originating in the land of the dead. If anything, then, announcements about mining tended to confirm traditional views. As events unfolded, however, shifts were making themselves felt across the region – beginning with the disruption and eventual collapse of the overland trade in shells.

Telefolip's centrality in this landscape played an important role in Telefol claims over the Ok Tedi mine as the project took shape. But, as already mentioned, Wopkaimin became the recognized landowners, with Telefol claims rebuffed. Although they were granted hiring preference, Telefolmin and their neighbors felt themselves marginalized as a result. In fact, one of the broader consequences of the Ok Tedi project was to reshape regional relations for many groups in terms of their spatial and practical relation to the mine.

Imigabip's position was also disadvantageous in the post-Ok Tedi era. Whereas Telefol efforts secured the Telefomin District Development Agreement, which provided a national-grade high school for local students, Faiwol educational opportunities were limited. While Telefolmin received no royalties, they had easier access to good employment opportunities at Tabubil; Faiwolmin, by contrast, remained on the fringes and had fewer and poorer prospects in the new mining economy (Polier, 1996). In this light, Michael and Tanbelok's story can be viewed as



FIGURE 6. – Imigabip Village looking north toward the Hindenburg Wall (1975, picture Dan Jorgensen)

another installment in the ongoing attempts to claim a share of the mine's revenue stream (e.g., Crook, 2007a; Gilbert, 2012; Jackson, 1982). But there is something wrong with this picture if the only point is to cash in on mining royalties: the story's only immediate claim was on what biologists might pay to enter Bultem cave (a claim which in any event was not fulfilled).

Tanbelok's story draws upon traditional myths and older ideas about the underworld and stones associated with life, death and wealth. Viewed through this lens, the main point is to reconfigure Imigabip's place vis-à-vis Telefop and Fubilan in the Min regional system. This makes sense as a bid for centrality by denying Imigabip's dependence on Telefop for taro fertility (*cf.* Jones, 1980: 180-181) while asserting Ok Tedi's dependence on Imigabip for its continued operation.

The region and beyond: Operation Joshua

Understanding Tanbelok and Michael's story to this point has turned upon locating its narrative in the context of traditional origin myth, regional ritual and trade relations, and the advent of the Ok Tedi mine. There remains, however, a substantial part of their tale that cannot be accounted for in this way. Moreover, it is *this* portion of the story that held the greatest interest for its narrators. As our conversation developed, they explained why they came to me. Although they were interested in meeting me as someone who knew about Min culture, what they really wanted was to establish the authenticity of the crystal or stone – could I confirm that this was really an emerald? This was why Michael had brought along photographs of the Ark and of the emerald. It was, he explained, their hope to turn the cave into a cultural center¹⁶. The plan would

16. I wasn't able to confirm the stone's status, though I did point out that quartz crystals were widely known for the area. I suggested that – given the proximity of Tabubil – the best course would be to get the opinion of a professional geologist, of which many (including local Papua New Guineans) were readily available. He and Tanbelok said, however, that they wouldn't trust company employees with this information.



FIGURE 7. – Bultem Village (2013, picture Dan Jorgensen)

be to blast the cave open and build a museum that tourists would pay to see, and they hoped to get support for this project from the local MP, PNG's Minister for Tourism, Arts and Culture¹⁷. From this perspective, the key parts of the tale are about the Ark and the emerald – and the Faiwol status as descendants of Israel's Lost Tribes.

In order to understand this part of their story we must look beyond Min mythology to a Christian movement that emerged at Telefolip roughly a decade earlier: Operation Joshua. I first became aware of Operation Joshua when a Telefol woman whom I had never met phoned me in Canada from Tabubil to say that there were «diamonds and gold» beneath the Telefolip spirit house, and that an «operation» was underway to gain access to them.

«OJ», as it became known, was part of a nationally orchestrated campaign aimed at spiritual transformation in anticipation of parliamentary elections. As such, it was linked to events and developments elsewhere in the country and to an evangelical concept of «spiritual warfare» that was circulating globally. The connection between this effort and the gold and diamonds was that the latter were blessings already available to the people of Telefolip – providing they could put «satanic»

(i.e., traditional) practices and influences behind them (see Jorgensen, 2005 for details).

There were confessions, prayer sessions, and the destruction of traditional relics, but OJ's attempts to find the gold and diamonds failed. But people *did* dig up a painted stone and discolored soil that gave off an unusual odor. Many thought this was natural gas, but it was soon concluded that the smell came from a far more dangerous «uranium gas» used in the manufacture of nuclear weapons. It was decided to send soil samples to Israel for analysis in the hope that the gas would prove useful in Israel's struggles. In addition, one of OJ's leaders also claimed that blood samples were sent to Israel for DNA testing, where it was confirmed that he was a descendant of the Tribe of Benjamin (pp. 454-456).

Tribes lost and found

Israelite descent was central to OJ's story, and this is part of a theme – generally known as «Christian Zionism» – that is a favorite among Pentecostals and other evangelical groups. As part of the legacy of colonial evangelism,

17. Busse reports a similar desire to attract tourists to the site the grave of Sido, a regional culture hero further to the south in Western Province (2005: 444).

Christian Zionism held that the Lost Tribes were scattered across the globe and their remnants could be found among colonial peoples; the end times could not begin until prophecy was fulfilled with the return of the dispersed tribes to their homeland in Israel (see Gifford, 2001: 74-77).

This forms part of a globally circulating discourse that has taken root in various former colonial territories, including the Solomon Islands and PNG. In this regard, OJ shared much with other movements in Melanesia, including the Remnant Church in the Solomon Islands (Burt, 1983; Stritecky, 2001). Since the 1950s, further Lost Tribe movements have sprung up in the Solomons, including some claiming that the Ark was in a cave on their territory (Timmer, 2008, 2012; see also Brown, 2005).

Much more directly linked to OJ is a similar movement among the Gogodala of Western Province (Dundon, 2011, 2014). Dundon discusses how Gogodala have taken the notion of Lost Tribes and run with it: Gogodala based in Port Moresby contacted Professor Tudor Parfitt of the School of Oriental and African Studies and invited him to conduct DNA testing to verify their claim that they were indeed a Lost Tribe (Dundon, 2011; Parfitt, 2008; cf. Parfitt, 2002). The Gogodala argument included myths in which the ancestors arrived by canoe with the Ark of the Covenant, brought from Jerusalem. This was said to reside below the surface of a local swamp (see also Parfitt, 2008: 279-311).

Parfitt travelled to PNG in 2003 to take DNA samples and examine Gogodala claims, and was welcomed with Israeli flags and kippa-wearing throngs. He took DNA samples, and although he declared the tests «inconclusive» and no Ark was found, many Gogodala believed their claims had been confirmed. In this they were encouraged by an Australian evangelical group whose end-time preparation turned on facilitating the repatriation of the Lost Tribes to the Holy Land (Dundon, 2011: 37-38).

Dundon's account leaves little doubt that OJ's focus on DNA and Israel drew upon Parfitt's 2003 visit: the OJ leader's assertion of descent from the Tribe of Benjamin echoes identical Gogodala claims. Tanbelok and Michael's tale makes a similar claim, and goes it one better by placing the Ark of the Covenant in Imigabip's cave.

This brings us to the puzzling question of the emerald. It fits with long-standing ideas linking subterranean stones to wealth or cult relics, yet seems too outsized to fit within that frame. The source, however, may turn out to be not very different from stories of the Lost Ark. In 2007 PNG newspapers reported a «New Faith» church on Bougainville whose pastor revealed that the Covenant Box (i.e., the Ark) was hidden in a cave in the local mountains. One distinctive element

of the New Faith was the special importance accorded to «the Jasper Stone» – a gem or gem-like stone imbued with special powers.

«To add it all up, the sect maintains its belief that Bougainville is one of the “Lost Tribes of Israel” is proven by the “Jasper Stone” which is mentioned in Revelation 22 of the Bible.» (Post-Courier, 2007)

Although a fair distance separates Bougainville from the mountains of Min country, news and rumors travel fast in Papua New Guinea. Here it is worth noticing that on Bougainville the Jasper Stone apparently directed people's attention to valuable stones that were being stockpiled for sale: it instructed people to search riverbeds to:

«collect stones of special colors, presumably close to gold...» (Pacific Islands Report, 2007)

The Imigabip emerald's ability to make gold visible at Ok Tedi seems too close a parallel to ignore: it and the Jasper Stone are obviously cousins.

Multiple geographies

Much of Tanbelok and Michael's tale is about reconfiguring Imgabip's place in a region that had previously been dominated by Telefolip and is now dominated by Ok Tedi, and it does this by offering a new imaginary geography. But if we step back from the details of the tale and consider it as a whole, it becomes clear that it is also set in a second landscape full of biblical references, and this raises the question: why two geographies when one would do? Here I would offer three answers.

The first begins with the observation that the story brings together mining and Christianity – the two most profound historical influences shaping contemporary Min experience. This juxtaposition recurs in different forms in the Min region and beyond. So, for example, one premise of OJ at Telefolip was that «spiritual» and «physical» development were linked, and this was the logic underlying the expectation that mineral wealth would be found beneath Telefolip once traditional spirits and their relics were eliminated. And though gold and diamonds were not found, the discovery of «uranium gas» was seen as establishing Telefolip's credentials as an important site in a global Christian narrative. At nearby Urapmin, Robbins describes how conversion to Christianity entailed severing the relation of spirits to the landscape, and it was hoped that one benefit of this would be to enable large-scale mining on their territory (1995; 2004a). This did not take place, but Robbins suggests that Urapmin membership in a global

Christian community nonetheless affords an alternative to failed development on the margins of the regional mining economy (1997).

The mutual implication of mining and Christianity in local perceptions is evident in a different way in Jacka's account of millenarianism near the large Porgera mine. Considering Ipili dissatisfaction with their experience of mining, he argues that they find Christian concepts of heaven especially satisfying as a way of structuring «their own sense of their engagement with globalization and modernity» (2005: 649). Jacka is quite explicit about Ipili disappointment, which is not simply reducible to disparities in wealth. Instead, he says, what frustrates people is «their inability to make social connections outside of the Porgera valley» (2005: 648) or to become enmeshed «within the global social network that they so desire» (2005: 649).

Jacka's remarks bring the spatial aspects of both mining and Christianity to the fore in a way that leads toward a second answer to our question. Several ethnographers have highlighted Christianity's strong conception of a world that transcends the local (e.g., Cort n and Marshall-Fratani, 2001; Robbins, 2004b, 2008; Jorgensen, 2005; Manderson *et al.*, 2008, Telban and Vavrova, 2010), and I would argue that this prospect of access to an expanded world explains much of its appeal. Returning to our question about Tanbelok and Michael's story, the juxtaposition of biblical references to more immediately local or regional locations serves to bridge differences of scale. Much as traditional sacred landscapes linked local and regional scales, so contemporary Christian geographies link these to a sacred landscape that is global.

A third answer to our question takes a different tack and looks instead to questions of provenance in the production of Tanbelok and Michael's tale, which obviously has diverse sources. Much of it is recognizably derived from local variants of Min culture, even when the current version departs from «standard» accounts in detail or implication. But those elements invoking Isrealite descent, the Ark of the Covenant, and so on, obviously originated outside traditional narratives. More to the point, they clearly were not invented on the spot, but were adopted with surprisingly little modification from Christian Zionist models that have been passing around Melanesia for some time. Nor is it necessary to invoke a free-floating cloud of associations, since there are specific examples of proximate links in the chain of transmission, beginning with the Gogodala experiment in DNA verification, followed by an appearance shortly thereafter of strongly similar elements in OJ's development at Telefolip.

This point is important because it directs our attention to an easily overlooked aspect of contemporary PNG life. As Dundon points out,

«Increasingly, through access to the internet, television and mobile phones, people in the so-called "remote" areas of PNG make claims to knowledge and "evidence" to substantiate links with global and Christian others...» (2011: 39)

Put differently, this suggests that the impulse to expand local horizons – and the local presence on them – is not only a theme of such narratives, but a means of producing them.

Comings and goings

Mining stories are never just about mining, and I have argued here that a key question for local people is to understand their place in a world that mining and Christianity have called into being – a world that transcends the local. From this point of view, addressing this question is the real business of Tanbelok and Michael's tale. In closing, I would like to leave the consideration of narratives to mention some practical ways in which the expanded worlds we have been discussing become a tangible reality for contemporary Papua New Guineans.

International travel is something a good many Papua New Guineans desire, and for those who have the means to travel, Israel and the Holy Land are favored destinations. Since the 1990s, a number of Min, including some Bultem villagers and the leader of OJ mentioned above, have made the journey to Israel independently or as members of church groups. As one of my village friends observed, if one doesn't have higher education or much money, church participation often opens the door to international travel.

The same week I was visited by Tanbelok and Michael, I received another visit – this time from old friends from Telefolmin. I had known Sarah and Kabinip for nearly forty years, and we had a happy reunion. They had flown down to Tabubil, and were staying with relatives in one of the other villages just outside of town. They were in a very happy and upbeat mood: they had just gotten word that the results of DNA tests from the previous year had come in, and it was confirmed that they were descendants of one of the Lost Tribes. In their new identity as «Black Jews» they were going to be helped to visit Israel, and were passing through town on their way to Port Moresby to finalize their travel arrangements. Though their families were deeply skeptical, they were delighted and pointed out that they could follow in the footsteps of their brothers and uncles, who had already visited Jerusalem in the 1990s.

I left Bultem and Tabubil shortly afterwards and returned to Canada in early March. Had I stayed, I might have had the opportunity to learn more

about the reaction in Western Province to Tudor Parfitt's third visit in ten years (EM TV, 2013). He was welcomed back to Gogodala country with a banner that said,

«Welcome to Gogodala Tribe DNA Declaration Program, Tuesday 12th March 2013.» (Florida International University, 2013)

Later that year Prime Minister Peter O'Neill led a parliamentary delegation to Israel, where a number of matters were discussed, including security and trade. One of PM O'Neill's crowning achievements, however, was the establishment of a PNG consulate in Jerusalem and an agreement exempting PNG citizens from visa requirements for travel to Israel (Islands Business, 2013; The National, 2013).

Acknowledgements

This article is based on research that was facilitated by several individuals and organizations whose assistance I am pleased to acknowledge. I am grateful to Jim Robins and Georgia Kaipu of the National Research Institute for their timely assistance, and especially to Linus Digim'Rina of the University of Papua New Guinea, who was a helpful and friendly colleague at every turn. In Bultem and Tabubil I have several individuals to thank for their help and friendship, including Stan Tinamnok, Kaiku Beksep, Domi John, Robert Dripal, Wilisep Dripal, Yon Dagayok, Salat Dagasim, Simon Soltumnok, Etnayok Dripal, and Martinus Toim. For helpful comments and suggestions, I thank Alison Dundon, Fred Errington, Don Gardner, Philip Gibbs, Imke Jorgensen, Albert Katz, Pierre-Yves Le Meur, and Marshall Sahllins. None of these people are responsible for any errors or shortcomings, which are all my own. I am grateful to the Dean of Social Sciences and the Academic Development Fund at Western for the financial support that made this work possible.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BALLARD Chris, 1994. The centre cannot hold: Trade networks and sacred geography in the Papua New Guinea Highlands, *Archaeology in Oceania* 29, pp. 130-148.
- BALLARD Chris and Glenn BANKS, 2003. Resource wars: The anthropology of mining, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 32, pp. 287-313.
- BARTH Fredrik, 1971. Tribes and intertribal relations in the Fly headwaters, *Oceania* 41, pp. 171-191.
- , 1987. *Cosmologies in the Making: A Generative Approach to Cultural Variation in Inner New Guinea*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- BIERSACK Aletta, 1999. The Mount Kare python and his gold, *American Anthropologist* 101, pp. 68-87.
- BROOK David, Philip CHAPMAN and Kevan WILDE, 1977. Caves and karst of the Hindenburg Ranges, *The Geographical Journal* 142, 1, pp. 27-41.
- BROWN Terry, 2005. Religious group claims lost ark of the covenant in Malaita, ABC Interview, 15 August 2005. Electronic document available at: <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/international/radio/onairhighlights/religious-group-claims-lost-arc-of-the-covenant-in-malaita> (accessed 2 January, 2013).
- BRUTTI LORENZO, 2007. From fertility rituals to mining companies: eco-cultural issues and land rights in Oksapmin, *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 125, pp. 249-255.
- BURT Ben, 1983. The Remnant Church: A Christian sect of the Solomon Islands, *Oceania* 53, pp. 334-346.
- BUSSE Mark, 2005. Wandering hero stories in the Southern Lowlands of New Guinea: culture areas, comparison, and history, *Cultural Anthropology* 20, 4, pp. 443-473.
- CORTÉN André and Ruth MARSHALL-FRATANI (eds), 2001. *Between Babel and Pentecost*, Bloomington, University of Indiana Press.
- CRAIG Barry and David HYNDMAN (eds), 1990. *The Children of Afek: Tradition and Change among the Mountain-Ok of Central New Guinea*, Sydney, University of Sydney, Oceania Monograph 40.
- CROOK Tony, 2007a. 'If you don't believe our story, at least give us half of the money': Claiming ownership of the Ok Tedi Mine, PNG, *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 125, pp. 221-228.
- , 2007b. *Exchanging Skin*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- DUNDON Alison, 2011. DNA, Israel, and the ancestors – Substantiating connections through Christianity in Papua New Guinea, *The Asia-Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 2, pp.29-43.
- , 2014. Behaviour, *Babala* and the Bible: Israel and a 'Messianic Church' in Papua New Guinea, unpublished manuscript.

- EM TV, 2013. PNG tribe found to have Israeli link: "Lost Tribes" of Israel, video posted March 11, 2013, posted on *YouTube* at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HkM0MTmJ8b4> (accessed 18 January, 2014).
- FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY, 2013. *The Lost Tribe*, video available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ioFpk_8iY5M (accessed 14 May, 2014).
- GIFFORD Paul, 2001. The complex provenance of some elements of African Pentecostal Christianity, in André Cortén and Ruth Marshall-Fratani (eds), *Between Babel and Pentecost Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, pp. 62-79.
- GILBERT Paul, 2012. The development of difference: Social change around the Ok Tedi copper and gold mine, Papua New Guinea, *Durham Anthropology Journal* 18, 1, pp. 61-114.
- GILLIESON David, 1980. Pit structures from Selminum Tem cave, Western Province, Papua New Guinea, *Australian Archaeology* 10, pp. 26-32.
- GOLUB Alex, 2006. Who is the "original affluent society"? Ipili "predatory expansion" and the Porgera Gold Mine, Papua New Guinea, *The Contemporary Pacific* 18, 2, pp. 265-292.
- ISLANDS BUSINESS, 2013. O'Neill talks trade, investment with Israel president, *Islands Business* (online), 22 October, 2013. Electronic document available at: <http://www.islands-business.com/news/jerusalem/3233/oneill-talks-trade-investment-with-israel-president/> (accessed 28 January 2014).
- JACKA Jerry, 2005. Emplacement and millennial expectations in an era of development and globalization: Heaven and the appeal of Christianity for the Ipili, *American Anthropologist* 107, pp. 643-653.
- JACKSON Richard, 1982. *Ok Tedi: The Pot of Gold*, Boroko, Word Publishing.
- JONES Barbara, 1980. Consuming Society: Food and Illness among the Faiwol, PhD thesis, University of Virginia.
- JORGENSEN Dan, 1985. Femsep's last garden: A Telefol response to mortality, in Dorothy E.A. Counts and David Counts (eds), *Aging and its Transformations: Moving Towards Death in Pacific Societies*, Lanham, University Press of America, pp. 207-226.
- , 1990a. The *Telefolip* and the architecture of ethnic identity in the Sepik headwaters, in Barry Craig and David Hyndman (eds), *The Children of Afek: Tradition and Change among the Mountain-Ok of Central New Guinea*, Sydney, Oceania Monographs, pp. 151-160.
- , 1990b. Placing the past and moving the present: Myth and contemporary history in Telefolmin, *Culture* 10, 2, pp. 47-56.
- , 1996. Regional history and ethnic identity in the Hub of New Guinea: The emergence of the Min, *Oceania* 66, pp. 189-210.
- , 1997. Who and what is a landowner? Mythology and marking the ground in a PNG mining project, *Anthropological Forum* 7, 4, pp. 599-627.
- , 1998. Whose Nature? Invading bush spirits, travelling ancestors and mining in Telefolmin, *Social Analysis* 42, 3, pp. 100-116.
- , 2001. History and the genealogy of myth in Telefolmin, *Paideuma* 77, pp. 103-128.
- , 2005. Third Wave evangelism and the politics of the global in Papua New Guinea: Spiritual warfare and the recreation of place in Telefolmin, *Oceania* 75, pp. 444-461.
- , 2006. Hinterland History: The Ok Tedi mine and its cultural consequences in Telefolmin, *The Contemporary Pacific* 18, 2, pp. 233-263.
- , 2007. Clan-finding, Clan-making and the politics of identity in a Papua New Guinea mining project, in James Weiner and Katie Glaskin (eds), *Customary Land Tenure and Registration in Indigenous Australia and Papua New Guinea*, Canberra, Asia-Pacific Environment Monographs, pp. 52-72.
- KIRSCH Stuart, 2006. *Reverse Anthropology*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- MANDERSON Lenore, Wendy SMITH, and Matt TOMLINSON (eds), 2012. *Flows of Faith: Religious Reach and Community in Asia and the Pacific*, Dordrecht, Springer.
- MICHEL Thomas, 1988. Kulthaeuser als oekologische Modelle, Star Mountains von Neuguinea, *Paideuma* 34, pp. 225-241.
- NATIONAL STATISTICAL OFFICE, 2009. *Western Province Socio-Economic Survey Report 2009*, Port Moresby.
- PACIFIC ISLANDS REPORT, 2007. Bougainville villagers lead to worship stone, *Pacific Islands Report*, March 7, 2007. Electronic document available at: <http://pidp.org/archive/2007/March/03-07-15.htm> (accessed 2 January, 2014)

- PARFITT Tudor, 2002. Genes, religion, and history: The creation of a discourse of origin among a Judaizing African tribe, *Jurimetrics* 42, 2, pp. 209-219.
- , 2008. *The Lost Ark of the Covenant: Solving the 2000 Year Old Mystery of the Fabled Biblical Ark*, London, Harper Collins.
- POLIER Nicole, 1996. Of mines and Min: Modernity and its malcontents in Papua New Guinea, *Ethnology* 35, pp. 1-16.
- POOLE Fitz, 1982. The ritual forging of identity: Aspects of person and self in Bimin-Kuskusmin male initiation, in Gilbert Herdt (ed.), *Rituals of Manhood*, Berkeley, University of California Press, pp. 99-154.
- POST-COURIER 2007. 'New Faith' takes hold. *Post-Courier* online for 15 June, 2007. Electronic document available at: <http://www.postcourier.com.pg/20070615/weekend04.htm> (accessed 24 Nov, 2013)
- ROBBINS Joel, 1995. Dispossessing the spirits: Christian transformations of desire and ecology among the Urapmin of Papua New Guinea, *Ethnology* 34, pp. 211-224.
- , 1997. "When Do you think the world will end?" Globalization, apocalypticism, and the moral perils of fieldwork in "Last New Guinea," *Anthropology and Humanism* 22, pp. 6-30.
- , 1999. This is our money: Modernism, regionalism, and dual currencies in Urapmin, in David Akin and Joel Robbins (eds), *Money and Modernity*, Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh University Press, pp. 82-102.
- , 2004a. *Becoming Sinners*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- , 2004b. The globalization of Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33, pp. 117-143.
- , 2008. The future is a foreign country: Time, space and hierarchy among the Urapmin of Papua New Guinea, in Clifford Sather and Timo Kaartinen (eds), *Beyond the Horizon: Essays on Myth, History, Travel and Society*, Helsinki, Finnish Literature Society, pp. 23-36.
- SAHLINS Marshall, 2012. Alterity and autochthony: Austronesian cosmologies of the marvelous, *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2, 1, pp. 131-160.
- STRITECKY Jolene, 2001. Israel, America, and the ancestors: Narratives of spiritual warfare in a Pentecostal denomination in Solomon Islands, *Journal of Ritual Studies* 15, 2, pp. 62-78.
- TELBAN Borut and Daniela VAVROVA, 2010. Places and spirits in a Sepik society, *Asia-Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 11, pp. 17-33.
- THE NATIONAL, 2013 (17 October). Israel visit an answer to prayers, *The National* online. Electronic document available at: <http://www.thenational.com.pg/?q=node/57980> (accessed 18 January, 2014).
- TIMMER Jaap, 2008. *Kastom* and theocracy: A reflection on governance from the uttermost part of the world, in Sinclair Dinnen and Stuart Firth (eds), *Politics and State Building in the Solomon Islands*, Canberra, ANU Epress, pp. 194-212.
- , 2012. Straightening The path from the ends of the earth: The Deep Sea Canoe Movement in the Solomon Islands, in Lenore Manderson *et al.* (eds), *Flows of Faith: Religious Reach and Community in Asia and the Pacific*, Dordrecht, Springer, pp. 201-214.
- WARDLOW Holly, 2001. The Mount Kare python: Huli myths and gendered fantasies of agency, in Alan Rumsey and James Weiner (eds), *Mining and Indigenous Lifeworlds in Australia and Papua New Guinea*, Hindmarsh, Crawford House, pp. 31-67.
- WEINER James, 1994. The origin of petroleum at Lake Kutubu, *Cultural Anthropology* 9, pp. 37-57.

Agency and the « Avatar » narrative at the Porgera gold mine, Papua New Guinea

by

John BURTON*

ABSTRACT

The Porgera gold mine in Papua New Guinea is a subject of contention in the international development community. Anthropologists are among a range of scholars who have investigated community-mine relations since 1981, as solo postgraduate students, as leaders of university research teams, as members of social impact assessment teams, and as members of an oversight body. Recently, in a leading journal, the NGO activist Catherine Coumans accused the anthropologists who have taken on advisory or impact assessment roles of lending legitimacy to the commercial interests of the mining company, while 'remaining silent' about environmental damage and human rights abuses. This paper looks at the various accounts of Porgera in terms of 'narratives' of mining, leading to a close examination of the Coumans' portrayal of the mine through the lens of an Avatar narrative, after the film of this name. The paper presents evidence to reject the arguments of Coumans.

KEYWORDS: Anthropology, development, mining, human rights, Indigenous people

RÉSUMÉ

La mine d'or de Porgera en Papouasie Nouvelle-Guinée est l'objet de dissensions dans la communauté de développement international. Les anthropologues comptent parmi les chercheurs qui ont enquêté sur les relations mine-communauté depuis 1981, en tant que doctorants, chefs de projets de recherches, évaluateurs indépendants des impacts sociaux, ou membres du comité de surveillance externe. Récemment, dans une revue de premier plan, C. Coumans, militante d'une ONG opposée à la mine, a accusé les anthropologues impliqués dans les études d'impact de légitimer les intérêts commerciaux de la compagnie minière, tout en « restant muets » face aux dommages environnementaux et aux violations des droits humains. Cet article montre la diversité des « récits miniers » portant sur Porgera et examine en particulier le portrait de la mine proposé par Coumans, qualifié de récit Avatar, d'après le film éponyme. Les éléments de preuve rassemblés permettent de rejeter ses arguments.

MOTS-CLÉS : Anthropologie, développement, exploitation minière, droits humains, peuples autochtones

The story of the Porgera gold mine in the Enga Province of the Papua New Guinea highlands (see map in Jorgensen, this volume, Figure 1, p. 25) is well known from the works of the scholars who worked in the area from the early exploration period around 40 years ago (Gibbs, 1975, 1977; Wohlt, 1978; Biersack, 1980), the pre-mine period 30 years ago (Gibbs, 1981, 1982; Mangi, 1988; Kyakas and Wiessner, 1992), as well as from those starting their research in the production period (Banks, 1997; Imbun, 1995;

Jacka, 2003; Golub, 2006). At least four books have been written on the mine from the perspective of mine-community relations (Golub, 2001; Imbun, 2002; Jackson and Banks, 2002; Golub, 2014). I do not count myself as a Porgera specialist, but I have also worked in Porgera: in 1990, 2005 and 2006-2007 (Burton, 1991, 1992, 2005a, 2006).

In this paper I look at five narratives about mining in Porgera, that is to say five different written perspectives about «what is going on» in

* O'Connor, ACT 2602 Australia, johnnellissenburton@gmail.com

Porgera, with a view to offering a critical analysis of the last of the five which, for reasons that will become evident, I have called the *Avatar narrative* after the 2009 James Cameron movie of the same name ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avatar_\(2009_film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avatar_(2009_film))).

For the few readers who – judging by the movie's record-breaking ticket sales – missed this film, a plot summary is as follows. In the 22nd century, the Resources Development Administration (RDA) has acquired mining rights over Pandora, a planetary satellite in the Alpha Centauri system, the only source of a rare mineral known as unobtainium¹. A condition of the mining rights is that the RDA must not endanger the way of life and the environment of the blue-skinned, three metre tall Na'vi, intelligent beings who live in harmony with nature on Pandora. In the movie, however, the RDA security force plans to kill or evict the Na'vi and to this end the «Avatar Program» – a community relations team whose members include an «exobiologist» and a «xenoanthropologist» – is tolerated as an expedient way to persuade the Na'vi to evacuate the mining area. When the team comes to realise that RDA will destroy the Na'vi sacred sites, and the Na'vi themselves if they do not move, they switch allegiance and rally the Na'vi to defend themselves. All looks lost until the wildlife of Pandora, summoned by prayer to Eywa, an ecological goddess, intercede and help the Na'vi defeat and capture the evil humans who, with the exception of the «good» ones working for the Avatar Program, are expelled from Pandora forever.

The movie's main theme is clearly an allegory for the unchecked appetite of corporations for the resources of others. Humans in *Avatar*, in the guise of the Resources Development Administration, are not content with having exhausted Earth's resources (read «First World resources») and so turn to the resources of people on other worlds (read «on the lands of Indigenous People in developing countries»)². The commercial success of the film suggests that this theme was popular with movie-goers, indeed so popular it might be argued that the whole thing has become a *meme*, a persistent idea that takes on a life of its own.

As I shall show, a form of this narrative – or even *meme* – drives an NGO's engagement with issues at

the Porgera mine, leading to the publication, in the pages of *Current Anthropology*, of its representative's promotion of her activities at Porgera and her disparagement of the forms of engagement of all other anthropologists in the affairs of the mine.

The questions I raise in this paper are (i) whether the Avatar narrative is at all helpful in understanding the complexity of relationships between mining companies and mine area communities in modern Papua New Guinea and (ii) whether the specific account of Porgera that the narrative gave rise to in *Current Anthropology* is accurate enough to advance knowledge.

The other narratives

A first narrative about Porgera emerges from the collective work of ethnographers, geographers and cultural specialists working towards an understanding the unique social organisation, deep history and interconnectedness of small scale societies in all parts of the Pacific over the last two and a half centuries. Early studies of the Ipili people of the Porgera Valley and their neighbours fall into this tradition, starting with the brief summary by Meggitt based on a short visit in 1957 when the Ipili numbered between 2000 and 2500 people (Meggitt, 1957). They were described as one of several small, remote ethnic groups in Western Enga, linked through ties of kinship, shared threads of oral history, and through trading systems to larger populations in valleys to the south (e.g. Glasse, 1968) and east (e.g. Meggitt, 1965; Hays, 1992). In this *ethnographic narrative*, the political processes of engagement with the outside world that engender development and that development engenders are largely absent. If there is any portrayal – not particularly by the writers of the 1950s and 1960s – of the prospects for development, it is framed only in terms of their curiosity about but incapacity to influence the forces of global capital³. More detail and views informed by another three and a half decades of work by anthropologists expands Meggitt's early glimpse of the Ipili in a collection of papers edited by Biersack (1995).

A second narrative is that provided by more recent scholars, and specialists in social development, social and environmental impact as-

1. Aerospace engineers have been using variants of this name (usually spelled «unobtainium») since the 1950s, usually to describe materials with performance characteristics beyond that of currently available materials, or whose source placed them out of reach during the Cold War.

2. The politics of *Avatar* have been widely discussed (*cf.* www.cbsnews.com/news/the-politicq-of-atar/) with comments pro and con coming from the likes of the president of Bolivia (a «profound show of resistance to capitalism and the struggle for the defense of nature») and Vatican Radio (the film «cleverly winks at all those pseudo-doctrines that turn ecology into the religion of the millennium»).

3. Some Ipili ventured as far as the Wabag Patrol Post, 80 km to the east, in the 1950s where their presence «interested» Meggitt (1957: 31). He says the presence of alluvial miners at Porgera in the 1950s was tolerated by the Ipili «as a source of trade goods» (1957: 32). These are the two mentions of relationships with the outside world.

essment (SIA/EIA). A vein of PhD scholarship emerged in the 1990s to explicitly reject the «helplessness» theme of the ethnographic narrative. An insider's perspective is that of the Engan academic, Benedict Imbun, whose writings focus on Indigenous economic participation. His thesis is that remoteness was quickly transformed through the development brought by mine construction, and that far from being bystanders, the Ipili underwent a rapid transformation from being tribespeople following their traditional ways to a skilled workforce able to operate one of the world's largest mines (e.g. 2000). Among the outsider perspectives are those of Glenn Banks who, while absorbing the above, has profiled the considerable complexity of the economic relationships and «lines» of sustainability at Porgera (e.g. Banks, 1997, 2006); Alex Golub, who started out by looking minutely at the relationships between landowners and the mining company through the prism of year long negotiations over a large waste dump (Golub, 2006, 2014); and Jerry Jacka, who was able to offer a complementary view of a «have-not» group just outside the main mine lease areas (Jacka, 2003). All three take in the ethnographic narrative, but add the extra ingredient of local agency. Arguably the best exemplar of this approach is the treatment of landowner interactions with capital at the Lihir mine in Papua New Guinea (Bainton, 2010). I will call the collective outcome the *ethnographic+ narrative* – «ethnographic» for the traditional deep understanding of local processes and «+» for the emphasis on local agency.

I should clarify what is conveyed here. Obviously all human societies have agency in the sense that they organise their own lives and run their own internal politics, but I am using the word «agency» in the special sense of the *external relations* of the Ipili and other mine area communities that bear on the control of their own destiny. Agency or not-agency has little to do with the popularism/miserabilism discussed in some parts of the development literature (e.g. Olivier de Sardan, 2005: 118ff) or a hypothetically closer identification by the recent ethnographers with the development challenges of the people among whom they work in the activism of a particular form of *encliquage* (Olivier de Sardan, 2008: 93ff). Filer's portrayal of the «moderate» version of political anthropology with its role for the practitioner as «the moderator, the mediator, the negotiator» (Filer, 1999b: 90; cf. Filer, 1996; Kirsch, 1996) is closer, but I am talking of narratives here, not interventions, and in few of the

cases I have mentioned have the scholars been able to be anything other than ethnographers. It is essential to emphasise that political activity at and around mines can be constructive – the ideal, where representative bodies work effectively to advance the interests of their constituents – or it can be destructively conflict-ridden, but the fact is that the kind of agency we are talking about in Papua New Guinea from about the middle 1980s onwards is so muscular that the spaces in which Filer's «moderate» outsiders, *encliqué* or otherwise, might be able to participate are small and politically irrelevant. This also explains my preference for the terms *ethnography* and *ethnography+*, which carry a more observational and witnessing connotation, over similar plays on the term «anthropology».

Those who are active in the production of the ethnographic+narrative incline to be positive about the capabilities of local communities to cope with change. This is no better expressed than by Kirsch in his introduction to *Reverse Anthropology*:

«the Yonggom are actors in world history.» (2006: 5)

In emphasising agency, I suggest, what those concerned with mining are thinking of is that local voices are properly heard⁴, inter-community competition is channelled constructively, the terms of mining agreements are adhered to, companies fulfil their national and international compliance obligations, and the recommendations of social impact assessments are correctly digested and implemented. We do not have to conduct an opinion poll among the ethnographers to find this out; these are views frequently expressed by the members of landowner communities among whom the ethnography+ scholars spend their research stays.

What the insider views amount to is a third narrative, a *narrative of agency*, such as is seen at Porgera and at a variety of other mines in Papua New Guinea. Macintyre and Foale discuss how complaints about the environmental impact of mining on Lihir coexisted with eagerness to engage with it: when the mine opened, absentees flooded back to the island wanting the benefits of development and to escape mainland towns where life is hard and services are poor (2004: 234). I have an empirical involvement with this as it was I who censused the resident Lihirians in 1992. In 2011-2012 I was back to design a survey of migrants living around two mine leases and at both periods local discourse was all about engagement with the mine in one form or ano-

4. Internationally, this is framed in terms of mining on the lands of Indigenous people proceeding on the terms of Free, Prior and Informed Consent, but what this really means is seldom pursued in any detail. For some of the ethnography+ scholars, by contrast, almost the entirety of their written output is devoted to elucidating how local actors engage with mining, what they think about it, what they think they will get out of it, who they are conflicted with, what strategies they employ to pursue their goals – amounting to the intense scrutiny of just one thing: FPIC.

ther. At Ok Tedi, a University of Papua New Guinea colleague and I took some trouble in the 1990s to track down Krenem Wonhenai, the man who had represented the North Fly in the National Parliament at the time when the *Mining (Ok Tedi) Act* 1976 was passed, finding him at his village. All he could tell us was *mi pait strong long kisim main*, «I fought hard to get the mine» (Burton, 1997: 33-34). The same observations could be made of the communities around the Hidden Valley mine in Morobe Province. In 1987, they contested one another in court, not to repel the forces of international capital from their lands but to establish which among them should lead the engagement with it as principal landowners. I first visited these communities in 1995 and my last extended round of fieldwork was in 2012. In that time village elders have never waived in their central aspiration: they have always wanted development and the means of obtaining a better life for their children than they have enjoyed themselves, but it has to be on fair terms.

The «on fair terms» qualification is an indication that no community members at any of these places favour mining for its own sake and it has certainly not been the role of any of the anthropologists mentioned in this paper to advance the case of mining.

A notable anti-mining contribution to the narrative of agency is that offered by some of the ex-combatant groups on Bougainville. These ex-combatants – there are others aligned with the President of the Autonomous Bougainville Government who are thinking of re-opening the Panguna mine with the goal of being able to finance independence from Papua New Guinea – are dealing with many other issues in a post-conflict situation. What is relevant is that they have a voice and that they are using it in a powerful way.

A fourth narrative is the *mine operator's narrative*. At Porgera the mine operator is the Porgera Joint Venture (PJV), currently 95% owned by the Canadian miner Barrick Gold, with 2.5% shareholdings each held by the Enga Provincial Government and the Ipili landowners. Since Barrick has mines, or prospects about to open as mines, in eleven countries, at the general level this narrative is about «responsible mining» and «stakeholder engagement» through which a «licence to operate», it is claimed, is earned by the miner (Barrick, 2013: 11-12).

The *mine operator's narrative* has contradictions that have yet to be resolved in any country, let alone at Porgera. On the one hand, the slogan on Barrick's current home page reads «Disciplined, profitable production», i.e. a Friedmanite view that

a corporation has no other responsibility than to make profits for shareholders, subject to the taxes and production royalties kept by host governments. Dambisa Moyo, a Zambian-born Harvard and Oxford-educated economist, has reinforced this by promoting the economic contribution of mining to the economies of the global «south» as a pathway to development (Moyo, 2009), and it is not surprising, therefore, that she is a recent appointment to the board of Barrick Gold (Barrick, 2011a). But on the other hand, Barrick is a member of the ICMM, at the core of whose sustainable development framework is the undertaking to «integrate sustainable development considerations within the corporate decision-making process», i.e. being profitable is fine, but the sustainable development of mine area communities cannot be compromised.

I introduce these narratives to contrast them with what follows. I will now leave them to devote the rest of this paper to the *Avatar narrative*, because of the popularity of this as a meme-like idea and the black-and-white views it appears to promote⁵.

Porgera and the Avatar narrative

My specific point of departure is a recent paper on Porgera by Catherine Coumans of Mining Watch Canada in *Current Anthropology* (Coumans, 2011). Coumans had close knowledge of the 1996 Marcopper Mine disaster in the Philippines where toxic waste polluted a river and the ocean (cf. Danielson, 2002: 347-248). The link between Marcopper and Porgera is that the most significant shareholder at both mines during the 1990s was the mining company Placer Dome. Placer ceased operations in the Philippines but continued its operations at Porgera until acquired by Barrick Gold in 2006. Legal actions against Placer (and now Barrick) continue to the present day (Cinco, 2014).

The Avatar narrative could easily be about Placer and Barrick's behaviour at Porgera: for example whether they have been exploitative, or operated the mines in breach of basic sustainability principles. However, being a *narrative* it is not about those things. I have linked it with *Avatar* because its main theme is a binary formulation of the relationship between capital and tribal people.

In the film, the two sides were helpfully differentiated on screen: the forces of (interplanetary) capital by their use of enormous machines and the members of local communities by being 3m tall and coloured blue.

5. A sixth, a seventh and however many more narratives as is necessary could be derived from national conversations about the exploitation of natural resources in Papua New Guinea now being played out in villages away from mines, in the print media, on television and, increasingly since the introduction of low cost mobile telephony in 2007, on social media. However, this paper is not about them.

As applied to a real life situation, the narrative must necessarily divide everyone into two camps: the forces of world capital and those who assist them, on the one hand, and the guileless members of local communities, on the other hand. I will call these the *capital* and *blue* teams.

The position of the ethnographic+scholars in this narrative is problematic. Their forebears, the producers of the ethnographic narrative, are clearly with the blue team, and the miners are with the capital team, but it is not clear where to place the newer scholars and the impact assessment specialists. Filer pointed out in the 1990s that a «multilocal, multivocal and multifocal form of ethnographic inquiry» had *already developed* in Papua New Guinea, where practitioners found themselves out of necessity talking to a wide variety of stakeholders, contrasting this with a «unilocal, univocal and unifocal» form of ethnography where the radical agenda was to achieve a transfer of power from the «system» to the «community» (Filer, 1999b: 89). Into the bargain, the Avatar narrative would prefer the members of local communities to be community-minded and fairly unsophisticated, whereas the accounts of mine area politics appearing in the writing of the ethnographic+ scholars in the 1990s and the 2000s – whether they are looking at Porgera, Lihir or Bougainville – show a quite different picture. In these accounts, while some landowner leaders lead in an orthodox way, others scheme incessantly, show shifting allegiances, fail to co-operate with each other, game mine benefit schemes, and endorse quite unexpected ideologies.

In her *Current Anthropology* paper, Coumans shows no uncertainty. She is quite uncritical of «Ipili leaders» (see «The wrong blue team?» below), but condemns anyone who accepts sponsored or consultancy work around the Porgera mine, including those who sit on the mine's oversight body PEAK⁶ as reprehensible «corporate engagement actors» and «for-profit experts». I should say that this also includes Philip Gibbs, who began his engagement with the Ipili as their local parish priest. She moves anyone undertaking impact assessments from the ethnographic+ narrative, where they thought they were, to the mine operator's narrative.

Coumans does not mention the doctoral students at all, despite the fact that, mirroring her experience in the Philippines, their work has been the documentation and analysis of what has been going on in Porgera and it is they who

have contributed so much to the ethnographic+narrative. Following the logic of Coumans «unilocal, univocal and unifocal» exegesis, they must have the concepts of agency with which they have populated their analyses of local political processes stripped away from them. In consequence, it would appear that their efforts are for nothing as their findings are returned to the fold of the agency-less ethnographic narrative.

Glossing over the fact that Coumans' «for-profit experts» may well be handing any earnings from work at Porgera to their university (in my case I turned over project income to the University of Papua New Guinea in 1990-1991 and to the Australian National University in 2005-2007), she says such people have lent legitimacy to the way that Barrick Gold deals with the local communities, while «remaining silent about the environmental and human rights abuses to which they become privy» (Coumans, 2011: S29).

This is much more serious than a mere confusion over what narrative or paradigm Porgera scholars should be assigned to. If substantiated, the accusations would imply that a range of malpractices had been carried out over many years by those undertaking consultancy or advisory roles at Porgera.

A sketch of social impact monitoring in Porgera, 1990-2005

The Porgera mine was opened in 1990 with the Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke in attendance. I was there myself, locked in an office as part of the security measures for Hawke's visit. As a staff member of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at the University Papua New Guinea, it was quite reasonable that I should bring senior students and the late Saem Majnep, an Indigenous ecological researcher of international renown, out on fieldwork to Papua New Guinea's most recent economy-supporting mining project. Given that an influx of migrants from other districts was likely to be one of the project's biggest impacts, we set to work on a census of the Porgera Census Division. Our figures bore out the magnitude of the influx, showing that the population had grown at the rate of 7% a year from the 5,029 counted in the National Census in 1980, not counting the mine workforce (Burton, 1992)⁷. The response of the mining company was to cancel the project.

6. Porgera Environmental Awareness Committee. Coumans singled out the Melbourne University anthropologist Martha Macintyre, alleging that she «became complicit in PEAK's implicit and explicit support for the PJV mine's responses to environmental claims and alleged abuses of human rights in the SML area» (Coumans, 2011: S36). Macintyre successfully obtained an apology from *Current Anthropology* (Aiello, 2012).

7. Growth has continued at this rate ever since. By the time of the later events described in this paper, the population had grown beyond 30,000 with a large influx of people in search of a livelihood in artisanal mining.

I have reviewed what happened next on three occasions (Burton, 1999, 2005b; Filer *et al.*, 2008). In summary, in compliance with PNG legislation, the company was required to have an Environment Management and Monitoring Plan (EMMP), part of which was to monitor social impacts over the life of the mine. Colin Filer, Glenn Banks, Susy Bonnell and I designed the first iteration of the social monitoring part of this (Burton *et al.*, 1993). My participation – to restart the census and genealogy project from 1990 – was cancelled again in mid-1993 (Burton, 1999). Instead, a local leader was contracted to collect fresh genealogies for the seven lease area descent groups⁸ so that river damage payments could be made to them.

Banks and Bonnell began mine monitoring in 1993-94, which overlapped with a standalone study undertaken by Bonnell (1994) and Banks' doctoral fieldwork (Banks, 1997). In 1997 they produced an Action Plan comprising 77 points in urgent need of attention (Banks and Bonnell, 1997). But instead of implementing the plan, Placer Dome cancelled local monitoring and began issuing an annual 24 page brochure with a short section on «social progress» written in Canada (Placer Dome, 1999-2004). A compendium of the work completed before Placer shut down the monitoring studies was later published in an edited volume at the Australian National University (Filer, 1999).

Commodity prices were low at the start of the 2000s and Placer management began mine closure planning (NSR *et al.*, 2002). But at the start of 2006 Barrick Gold acquired Placer Dome and, with rising gold prices, the prospect of mine closure was shelved. Barrick embarked on a new course of resettling the 189 families that its predecessor had moved away from the plant site in 1989. This led to new and controversial work on the resettlement project at Porgera in 2006-2007.

Controversies, 2006-2011

I now come to the issues that most directly bear on what Coumans says about the «for-profit experts».

A first controversy relates to a decade of human rights abuses by company security guards. The incidents included rape, beatings and the shooting deaths of artisanal miners within the mining lease and were investigated separately by the Harvard Law School (HLS, 2009) and Human Rights Watch (2010). Barrick was obstructive for several years, but conceded in April 2011

that it had now «evidence suggesting possible criminal conduct, including some instances of sexual assaults» and that cases had been referred to the police. Barrick assured stakeholders that «external researchers» had been commissioned to investigate the causes and nature of violence against women (Barrick, 2011b). In fact, it had resisted such a step since Bonnell's 1994 report and this initiative was instigated by PEAK, at the urging of Macintyre (Johnson, 2011).

A second controversy was «Operation Ipili» which took place between April and July 2009 when three police mobile squads and a Defence Force communications section were deployed to Porgera to put a stop to the armed conflicts then raging across the Porgera Valley. The operation started on 27 April 2009 when the mobile squads moved onto customary land at a place called Wangima and – inexplicably – burnt down 309 houses (*Post-Courier*, 30 April 2009). This has been investigated separately by Amnesty International (2010). The juxtaposition of these events and the presence (or non-presence) of anthropologists, such as me, is as follows.

Barrick had determined to adhere to the IFC's «Policy and Performance Standards on Social and Environmental Sustainability» in the resettlement project, specifically Performance Standard 5 «Land Acquisition and Involuntary Resettlement». This required a social impact assessment and a study to identify the people to be resettled. I was hired through my university by the consulting firm that was contracted for this work. In this context Coumans (2011: S33-S34) wrote:

«[...] from 1990 on, anthropologists were engaged off and on by the PJV mine in efforts to gather census data and conduct social and ecological mapping and in a number of rounds of genealogies of the mine-affected Ipili communities related to relocation and compensation [...] (Burton, 1999: 286-290)»

The embedded citation is to a paper by me, where I discussed those who had *preceded* me when my university team and I updated the genealogies of the Porgera landowners in 1990. No anthropologist followed me; I was the only one to «gather census data and conduct social and ecological mapping [...] in a number of rounds of genealogies» from 1990. Coumans continued:

«Most recently, in 2006 and 2007, following Barrick's takeover from Placer, anthropological expertise was engaged as part of a major study ... related to a proposed resettlement of all clans living in the SML area. It is fair to say that the most extensive study of Ipili genealogy and culture in Porgera since 1990 has been done by anthropologists under hire by the

8. Golub (2007) should be consulted to get a feel for the problematic ontology of the seven descent lines, which overlap in membership. For good or for ill, the Ipili have chosen to represent themselves in terms of what they term seven «clans» and all genealogical work 1981-2007 has been organised in terms of them.



FIGURE 1. – The mining pit at Porgera and the settlement where the meeting with the Mamai Kenja described p. 46 was held. Sixteen years after the mine went into operation, the settlement had unimproved sanitation and no water supply (picture John Burton, 17 May 2006)

pjv mine and that much of this information remains proprietary.» (Coumans, 2011: S34)

Again, the only anthropologist involved in this was me. I and my field team worked on the landowner identification aspects of the resettlement project from May 2006 until June 2007. There is no escaping the fact, therefore, that the person that Coumans is pointing at under her sub-heading «Mapping the Ipili: Inside Knowledge, Proprietary Data, and Human Rights Abuses» is me alone. She next goes on to discuss the use of genealogies by the company for the purposes of paying out compensation and other entitlements:

«The problem of immigration for the pjv mine is in part related to the need to sort out entitlements to compensation and other mine-derived benefits related to the impacts of the mine. The ability to do this depends on reliable genealogies.» (Coumans, 2011: S34)

Referring to the statement by Filer, Banks and myself that community affairs had been:

«dogged by failure to maintain a proper record of who was actually entitled to receive whatever the company has agreed to distribute among the “local landowners”.» (Filer *et al.*, 2008: 174)

Coumans says:

«The dispute between the [Porgera Land Owner Association] and the pjv mine over the houses that were burned down by PNG military and police during Operation Ipili [...] highlights the need for transparency with regard to the pjv mine’s proprietary genealogical data [...] it is clear [...] that the lists of landowners the company is using may well be deficient, opening the door to further conflict between clans and between clans and the company.» (Coumans, 2011: S34-S35).

The implication here is that negligence by me contributed to conflict in Porgera that led to the launching of Operation Ipili.

Fact check

Coumans’s claim that the information I collected in 2006-2007 became «proprietary» data in the possession of the mine is wrong. I have previously discussed the ownership of genealogical information and the anthropologist’s duty of care to look after it (Burton 2007b)⁹. I was careful to insert a research protocol in the contract governing the Porgera resettlement work to allow me to protect data that we collected¹⁰.

9. Full disclosure: this paper appeared in *TAJA*, a journal now edited by Macintyre; my paper was published by the previous editor.

10. An evolution of this protocol is currently on the web site of the Australian Anthropological Society (<http://www.aas.asn.au/>) and was discussed by me at the Society’s AGM in September 2012 in the context of a review of the AAS Code of Ethics.

Where	Homicides per 100,000	Source
Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, 2009	>132	Associated Press (2009)
Porgera 2002-2006	103	Wiessner et al. (2007, 2010); Jacka (pers.comm. 2007); own data
Iraq 2006 (civilians)	101	Iraq Body Count (www.iraqbodycount.org)
South Africa 2006-07	40.5	South Africa Police Service (2008)
Brazil 2005	29.2	PAHO (www.paho.org)
USA 2006	6.1	FBI (www.fbi.gov)
Australia 2005-06	1.5	Davies and Mouzou (2007)

TABLE 1. – Annual homicide rate in Porgera, 2002-2006, with worldwide comparisons

All organisations in OECD countries have long been bound by data privacy legislation. In Australia's case, the *Privacy Act* 1988 makes it a matter of law that information collected on individuals cannot be used unless it is «accurate, complete and up-to-date» and in cases of «transborder data flow» there must be «a law, binding scheme or contract» in place to guarantee its safe handling at the destination (OECD 1980; Office of the Federal Privacy Commissioner 2001).

As a member of the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation regional organisation, Papua New Guinea falls under the umbrella of APEC commitments to data privacy¹¹, the latest guidance being the APEC Privacy Framework (APEC, 2005). To date, PNG has not made an effort to comply, but as soon as data collected on individuals enters or leaves PNG and crosses the international border of a party to the OECD Privacy Principles (<http://oecd-privacy.org>) (Australia, Canada, France, United States, etc.), OECD data privacy compliance is triggered at the sending or receiving party's end. Sending an email containing genealogical information from a university in Australia to a recipient in Papua New Guinea is «transborder data flow», as is carrying a field notebook across the international border by hand, if the notebook carries personal information.

The company's most recent database of landowners was handed to me at the start of the resettlement project as «baseline data». It proved to be contaminated with around 22,000 duplicates as a result of political interference in data collection and an absence of quality control within the company in the 1990s. Removing the duplicates and establishing verified identities for the real landowners was a major task between May 2006 and July 2007. The poor condition of the data¹² and the lack of understanding of the problems this was causing made it clear that a

«binding scheme» was not in place. Consequently, I did not release raw data to Barrick before a new mine manager called off the resettlement project. I had the Dean of my college write to Barrick's head office to make sure that they understood why this was so.

Coumans is right that the company was using deficient information and that this may have been the cause of local conflict. But she is in error if she thinks this came about as a result of the complicity of anthropologists. On the contrary, it arose in spite of efforts by me to correct what the company already had – in 1990, in 1993 and 2006-2007 – not as a result of me, the only anthropologist to tackle this problem in the period she covers, creating this information.

The heart of Coumans' constructed narrative is that anthropologists have been «keeping silent in the face of human rights problems». This is a bizarre claim. I have noted Macintyre's efforts to have the plight of women in Porgera investigated. For my part, as soon as I became aware of an escalation in local conflicts I warned Barrick management of the likely intersection of the landowner identification exercise and local provocations of conflict. I did so at a workshop in Cairns in July 2007 called to resolve my non-release of the data. At the workshop I presented a 50 page analysis of the community conflicts around the mine (Burton, 2007a).

Coumans knows¹³ that my warning resulted in Barrick's Director of Social Responsibility in Toronto replying to my Dean saying it was «unprofessional» of me to raise the issue of violence as if it was an «unexpected challenge» in working at Porgera. Barrick's letter dismissed my analysis and said a recent government study had established there was no local increase in violence. But this was wrong too; the «government study» was research personally funded and carried out

11. At least as far back as APEC's 1998 *Blueprint for Action on Electronic Commerce*.

12. The duplicate-contaminated data were on a single set of floppy disks. There were no backups.

13. I discussed this with her at a conference in Toronto in March 2009 during the course of a two hour conversation.

by Polly Wiessner of the University of Utah. Wiessner actually showed that in other districts of Enga Province warfare deaths had *declined* between 2001-03 and 2004-06, but in Porgera they had *doubled* (Wiessner, 2010: Table 7)¹⁴:

« [...] in the Porgera area fighting increased to the point where a state of emergency was declared and a massive police operation carried out in 2009 quelling tribal warfare, amongst other things. However, magistrates do not feel that the underlying disputes over land with mine royalties have been solved. » (Wiessner, 2010: 17)

Does Coumans' blanket condemnation of anthropologists working in Porgera cover Wiessner as well?

Statistics included in my analysis, derived from Wiessner *et al.* (2007), Wiessner (2010), Jacka (pers. com., 2007) plus homicides that were common knowledge in Porgera between 2002 and 2006, showed that Porgera had been one of the world's most dangerous places in this five year period (table 1).

When the government did say something about the violence it was that police and soldiers would be sent to Porgera «to flush out the warlords» (*The National*, 6 April 2009). Obviously, the presence of «warlords» would be a bit more for most anthropologists than an «unexpected challenge» during fieldwork.

Coumans knows that Operation Ipili was requested by the local MP after conflict had escalated in 2008 and running gun battles had erupted all around the valley in the early part of 2009, but she neglects to explain this context.

Coumans is also aware that a document entitled *Restoring Justice* was issued in 2008 by the local MP, the provincial governor and the company's corporate affairs manager (Kikala *et al.*, 2008), but did not include it in her bibliography. Given that I had briefed the third author about the escalation of violence on two occasions, there is a fair chance that the document was in part prompted to be written – belatedly and despite the corporate scorn heaped on me from Toronto – as a result of my analysis. It is some comfort that while the Director of Social Responsibility, with no local knowledge, was saying my emphasis on the escalation of violence in Porgera was nonsense, these authors were saying the opposite:

« tribal fighting has [...] increased dramatically in the Porgera District. » (Kikala *et al.*, 2008: 5)

In summary, Coumans' claim that complicity by me and/or other anthropologists in «keeping silent in the face of human rights problems» and



FIGURE 2. – Peakame Taro, a Tuanda woman, venting a grievance about living conditions at a meeting with Burton's research team at Apalaka, a mine area village at Porgera, 9 June 2006 (picture John Burton)

supplying «proprietary genealogical data» that fuelled conflict in Porgera is fiction.

The wrong blue team?

The issue of how and on what terms anthropologists can work ethically in «difficult» field situations merits long and proper debate. What does not help is a forced analysis of the situation at Porgera, making anyone engaging with the Porgera mine fit into a binary formulation of the relationship between capital and tribal people, following the main theme in *Avatar*.

The secondary theme and denouement in *Avatar* concerns the heroic efforts on the part of the Avatar Program team to save the Na'vi and their lands. Accordingly, the Avatar narrative also requires heroes, both within the community and optionally among those who assist them. Coumans stakes a claim to the moral high ground – and perhaps to the role of «assisting hero» – by talking up the way she deals with members of the Porgeran community. She says:

«I have hosted Ipili leaders from Porgera in Canada yearly since 2008. I maintain ongoing communication with these leaders, as well as with members of other organizations and institutions with an interest in the Porgera case.» (Coumans, 2011: S30)

But who are these leaders and who elects them to their positions? Coumans does not name them, but we know perfectly well from media reports that one of her close associates at Porgera is the Chairman of the Porgera Land Owner Association (PLOA), Mark Ekepa, a strident critic of the mining company. Mr Ekepa, as media reports relate, regularly travels to Toronto to protest at Barrick company meetings. Throughout

14. Wiessner's findings were available in draft form in 2007. Her 2010 publication made no substantive alterations.

Ekepe Wuambo

: Mamai - Kenja



FIGURE 3. – «Mark» (thumb print) of Ekepe Wuambo on the signature page of the 1988 resettlement agreement (Placer PNG 1988)¹⁵

her paper, Coumans conveys the sense that the PLOA, as the locally endorsed representative body, is engaged in a valiant activist struggle on behalf of its members. But the PLOA, and Mark Ekepe in particular, appear in a very different light in the account given by Human Rights Watch in 2010.

Under the heading «poisonous local politics», Human Rights Watch reports that Porgeran informants allege that «the organization's leaders are lining their pockets with royalty payments that might otherwise flow to ordinary landowners», citing the fact that in 2009 the dozen or so PLOA executives¹⁶ received US\$1.4m in royalties compared with US\$1.7m paid to the approximately 10,000 ordinary landowners who make up the membership (HRW, 2010: 35). If HRW's arithmetic is reasonably correct, it is obvious that accountability is a problem. The finding is backed by Banks' documentation of inequitable payment distributions in the early 2000s (Banks, 2002: 4). Pressed by Human Rights Watch to explain, Mr Ekepe claimed that Porgerans who laid complaints about the lack of financial transparency were «paid by the company to discredit him». Another PLOA official lost his temper (HRW, 2010: 36).

This completely different light on the PLOA is backed by a scathing report by the PNG National Research Institute:

«The [Porgera Development Authority], the PLOA, the managers of the landowner portion of the equity stake, and [Local Level Government] officials have been unable or unwilling to explain where and how billions of kina are spent.» (Johnson, 2012: xi)

«[...] in the PLOA case, K40.2 million [of royalties] is untraceable and unaccountable to anybody but a very small number of people.» (Johnson, 2012: 88)

Worst of all, it is common knowledge in Porgera that Mr Ekepe achieved his position, not through popular acclaim and regular elections, but by killing his father, Ekepe Wuambo, one of the original 23 clan signatories to the Porgera agreements in 1989. The PNG Mineral Resources Authority's Project Liaison Officer told me this in 2007 by way of explanation why Mr Ekepe was invariably absent from Porgera, living in the

capital city. Neither I nor my field team of three saw him once during thirteen months of field inquiries. In this time we interviewed 892 community members.

To get a feel for Mr Ekepe's local relationships, it is worth recounting a meeting that I held with the people that Mr Ekepe was meant to represent, the Mamai Kenja. My assignation with the Kenja was preceded by three failed attempts where men swore aggressively about the meeting process, the mining company, the mining company's community relations system, and basically anything to do with the relationship between the community and the mining project. In other words I was treated to a classic «blue v. capital» rant.

Finally, persuasion prevailed and the Kenja consented to a meeting with me within the bounds of their settlement at which they could air their grievances. These were wrapped up in a long parable¹⁷ about water flowing down a pipe to a tap, where a person desiring to receive water could reasonably expect water to appear. Except that, in their case, nothing came out of the tap. The metaphor was about the flow of mining benefits which was, they had imagined, assured by the 1989 «mark» of their elder, Ekepe Wuambo (figure 3). Their complaint, once properly deciphered, had nothing at all to do with «blue v. capital»; it was really a «can't you see it's an elephant» tirade about internal conflict. They still did not refer to the fate of Mr Wuambo (his fate = the «elephant») which would have left a listener completely baffled if the background were not explained, as it was by our local advisers.

A search of the Papua New Guinea media fails to reveal any contemporaneous report of the killing, which is a recurrent problem when trying to establish timelines of locally notable events in all provinces, but finally an inquisitive journalist has asked the kinds of questions that Coumans might have thought to ask for herself some seven or eight years ago. In 2012, when looking into the curious relationship between an unnamed NGO – but which can hardly be other than MiningWatch Canada – and the Porgera Land Owner Association, a new journalist to PNG, Mike Butler, asked Mr Ekepe Jnr. some blunt questions:

15. This was one of a series of mine agreements approved by Ekepe Wuambo and his peers in 1988-1989.

16. This may in fact be made up of payments to Kupiane Yuu Anduane, the royalty recipient body whose 14 members include PLOA representatives. However, the conclusion would be unchanged.

17. Parables and metaphors are important forms of expression by those who contribute to the narrative of agency.

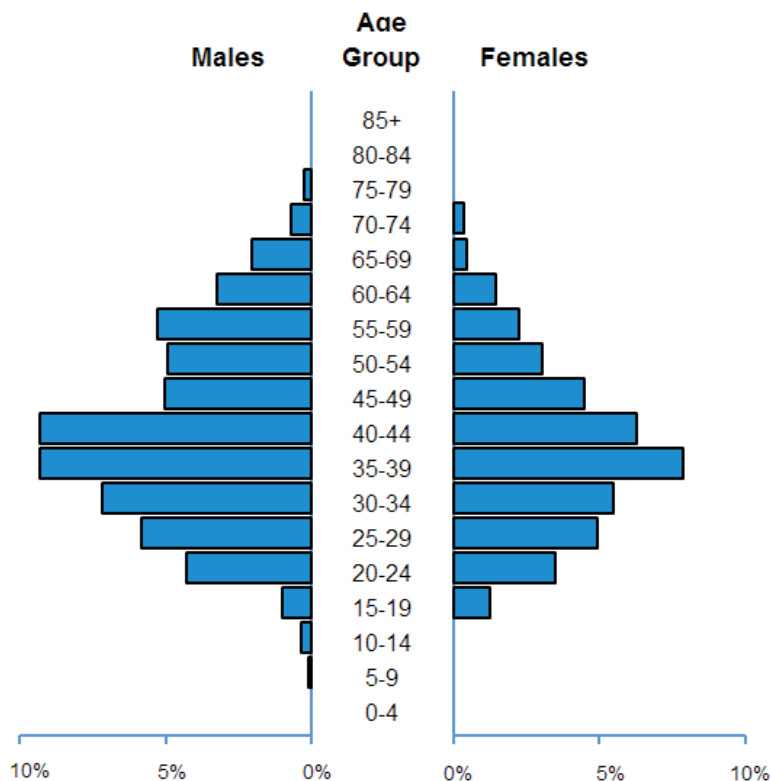


FIGURE 4. – Age and sex of 892 informants during 12 months of interviews at Porgera, 2006-2007

«I saw the glint of a gun on his hip, a Colt 45. “What’s the gun for?” I asked. “For self-defence”, he replied. I asked if he’d ever shot someone. “No” was the answer as we drove on in silence. It wasn’t until later that night that I found that wasn’t true. In 1996, after Ekepa was elected chairman of the PLOA, Ekepa shot his father point blank in the head in a very public dispute that was said to be about mine compensation money.» (Butler, 2012)¹⁸

This is essentially what local informants, and the government Liaison Officer, said in 2006-2007, although in the version I heard, he became chairman after the killing. Golub also says:

«his rise to fame began *after* he took his father’s place by shooting him at close range with a shotgun and killing him in a drunken fight.» (Golub, 2006: 109, my emphasis)

The emergence of violent, mob-style standover men is referred to by Jacka in terms of the rise of a «dangerous class of “super big men”» (cited by Kirsch, 2011: S41).

Coumans knew¹⁹ this information but chose not to disclose it. In doing so she did exactly what she said anthropologists must not do:

«Knowledge of criminal activity or human rights abuses should not remain confidential through contract or through professional courtesy.» (Coumans, 2011: S40)

In summary, if Coumans’ account of Porgera purports to fit the Avatar narrative, it is, as a popular television show says, «busted».

The responsibility to find out «what’s going on?»

In discussing anthropology, we often say we divide knowledge into theory and description or observation. Theory, we imagine, is about concepts and getting our hands on more satisfying or more powerful ones. It has been customary in anthropology to treat description guiltily as the neglected sibling, but we really know that analysis means deploying description and theoretical understanding seamlessly to arrive at the best answer for the basic question «What’s going on here?»²⁰.

18. See also *PNG Industry News*, 9 December 2011, «Wild times at Porgera», and Wikipedia’s entry on the PLOA (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Porgera_Landowners_Association).

19. From my two hour discussion of the situation with her in Toronto in 2009 and/or from Golub’s account.

20. Jorgensen (2002: 271) suggested that «the process of describing what’s actually going on» that emerged from Filer *et al.* (1999a) looked like progress.

The «best answer» means the one most able to withstand inconvenient observations. On that score, Coumans' arguments collapse, as I hope I have just shown. However, there is more to the quality of an analysis than this. As has been wisely said «mining is no ethnographic playground» (Ballard and Banks, 2003: 289) and the manner in which we acquire information (go about «description») is critical. A suggestion is that in difficult field situations, it is wisest to approach investigations with three considerations uppermost:

- (i) avoidance of conflict,
- (ii) respect for basic rights and
- (iii) the maintenance of an equality of opportunity.

My team and I detected the *risks of conflict* early in the landowner identification project, and minimised the risks to the project by protecting the data and warning the client. We were very careful with the *basic rights of community members* to represent their own identities and rights themselves – and not, as had happened so many times in the past, by means of tainted lists made up by factional leaders. Formal oversight for our work was provided by a Resettlement Committee that included many of these leaders, but we maintained an *equality of opportunity* for everyone in the affected communities to participate in the project, removing as many filters to gender and age as was feasible (figure 4). In doing so we expressed no opinion as to whether the members of the Resettlement Committee should provide information *ex officio* or just like everyone else. They were welcome to come to our interview location but, to the best of my knowledge, none did in the course of a year.

Our narrative in respect of Porgera, fitting into the ethnographic+ tradition, may not have been heard much beyond the landowner communities, but that is because the «+» refers to the agency of community members themselves, who came in their many hundreds to tell us how they fitted into the scheme of landownership in Porgera and what their entitlements were in respect of the mine and the resettlement project. These were not passive people, but the old, the young, male and female, who wanted to say something for themselves, in their own words, and in respect of whom our task was to create a safe space for them to say it in. If we have not told the world at large what they said, it is because we have yet to be sure they are comfortable about us saying anything without their permission.

In the end, is there anything of merit to be found in the Avatar narrative? Has Coumans, by taking a polarised view and through dealing with the PLOA, obtained better outcomes for Porgerans than others who have been repelled by its «poisonous politics»? In my opinion, she has not. To answer my earlier questions (i) the

Avatar narrative is not helpful in understanding the complexity of relationships between mining companies and mine area communities in modern Papua New Guinea and (ii) Coumans' account of Porgera in *Current Anthropology* is not accurate enough to be a meaningful addition to «what we know so far».

In informal language we say «don't let the facts get in the way of a good story» and in the end the Avatar narrative is a problem because it is a constructed narrative that demands that we find heroic local champions to resist a corporate juggernaut, whether they really exist or not. There may well be local champions at Porgera, but I have given sufficient examples to show that Coumans has not found them.

Acknowledgements

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the «Anthropology in the World» conference, Royal Anthropological Institute, London, 8-10 June 2012. I thank the following for discussions of Porgera issues and this paper: Chris Albin-Lackey, Glenn Banks, Susy Bonnell, Colin Filer, Alex Golub, Philip Gibbs, Nicole Haley, Jerry Jacka, Pierre-Yves Le Meur, Martha Macintyre and Polly Wiessner. I am grateful for the diligence of my field team members Basil Peutalo, Ando Diya, Terence Kewa, Sheryl Sialis; and the expert local knowledge of Daniel Yaluma. I thank the many others it is not so easy to name publicly.

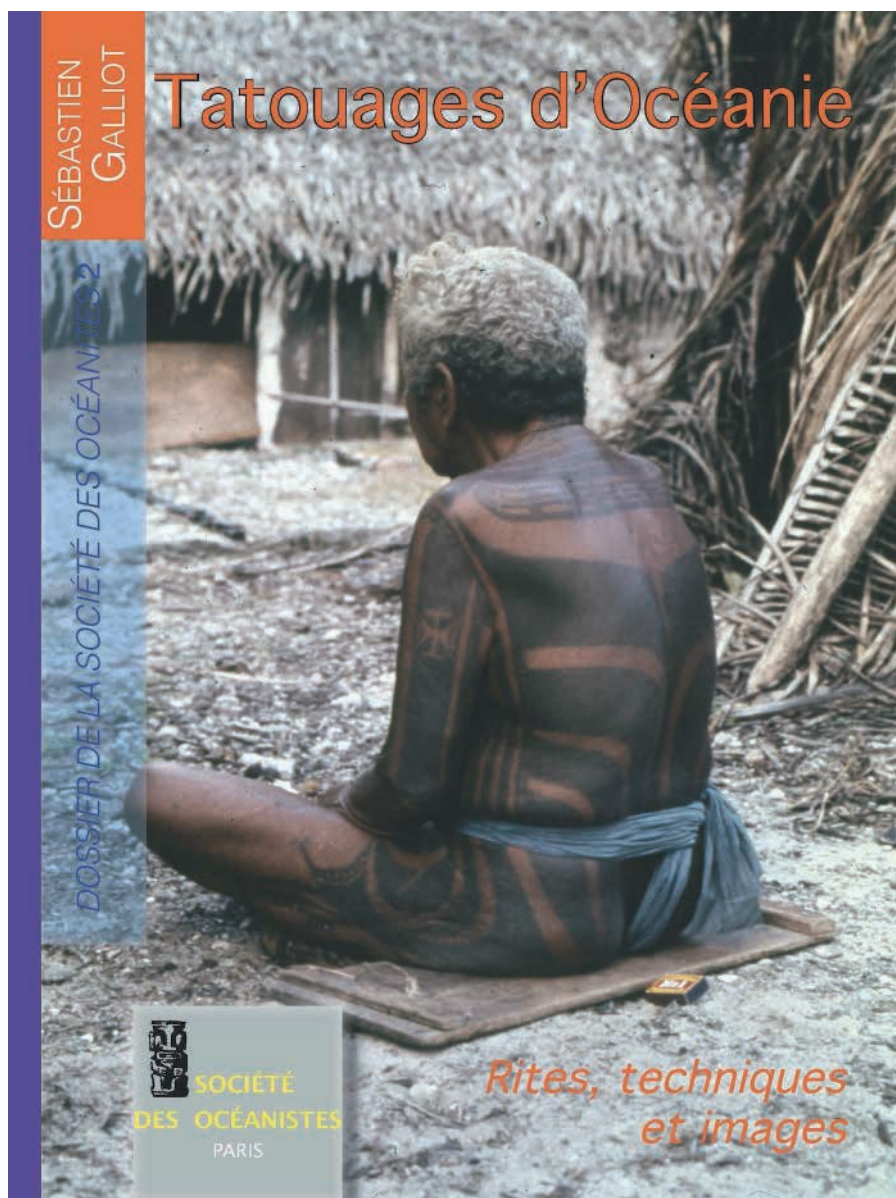
BIBLIOGRAPHY

- AIELLO Leslie C., 2012. Letter from the President of the Wenner-Gren Foundation, *Current Anthropology* 53 (S5), pp. S000.
- AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, 2010. *Undermining rights. Forced evictions and police brutality around the Porgera gold mine, Papua New Guinea*, London, Amnesty International Publications.
- APEC, 2005. APEC Privacy Framework, Singapore, Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation Secretariat.
- ASSOCIATED PRESS, 2009 (21 November). Mexican business groups call for U.N. troops.
- BAINTON Nicholas A., 2010. *The Lihir Destiny: Cultural Responses to Mining in Melanesia*, Canberra, ANU E Press.
- BALLARD Chris and Glenn BANKS, 2003. Resource Wars: Mining and Anthropology, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 32, pp. 287-313.

- BANKS Glenn, 1997. Mountain of desire: mining company and indigenous community at the Porgera gold mine, Papua New Guinea, Unpublished PhD thesis, The Australian National University.
- , 2002. *Landowner Equity Case Studies. Working Paper 5. PNG Mining Sector Institutional Strengthening Project*, Canberra, Project Design and Management
- , 2006. Mining, Social Change and Corporate Social Responsibility: Drawing lines in the Papua New Guinea mud, in Stewart Firth (ed.), *Globalisation and governance in the Pacific Islands*. Canberra, ANU Epress, pp. 259-274.
- BANKS Glenn and Susanne BONNELL, 1997. Porgera Social Monitoring Programme 1997 Action Plan, University of New South Wales and Subada Consulting for Placer Dome.
- BARRICK GOLD, 2011a. *Beyond Borders. August 2011*, Toronto, Barrick Gold Corporation.
- , 2011b. Addressing Violence Against Women at Porgera. A Status Update on Company Actions in Response to Violence Against Women at the Porgera Joint Venture (media release dated 7 October 2011 <http://www.barrick.com/CorporateResponsability/>).
- , 2013. *Responsible Mining. 2012 Corporate Responsibility Report*, Toronto, Barrick Gold Corporation.
- BIERSACK Aletta, 1980. The Hidden God: communication, cosmology and cybernetics among a Melanesian people, Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Michigan.
- (ed.), 1995. *Papuan Borderlands. Huli, Duna and Ipili perspectives on the Papua New Guinea highlands*, Michigan, University of Michigan Press.
- BONNELL Susanne, 1994. *Dilemmas of development: social change in Porgera, 1989-1993*, Brisbane, Subada Consulting Pty Ltd for PJV.
- BUTLER Mike, 2012 (April). Married to the mob, *PNG Report*, pp. 24-29.
- BURTON John E., 1991. *Porgera census project. Report for 1990*, Port Moresby, Unisearch PNG Pty Ltd for Porgera Joint Venture.
- , 1992. The Porgera Census Project, *Research in Melanesia* 16, pp. 129-156.
- , 1997. Terra Nugax and the discovery paradigm: how Ok Tedi was shaped by the way it was found and how the rise of political process in the North Fly took the company by surprise, in Glenn Banks and Chris Ballard (eds), *The Ok Tedi settlement: issues, outcomes and implications*, Canberra, National Centre for Development Studies, Pacific Policy Paper 27, and Resource Management in Asia-Pacific, RSPAS, ANU, pp. 27-55.
- , 1999. Evidence of the « new competencies», in Colin Filer (ed.), *Dilemmas of development. The social and economic impact of the Porgera gold mine 1989-94*, Canberra, Asia Pacific Press, pp. 280-301.
- , 2005a. *The Porgera sustainability documents library*, Canberra, ANU Enterprise for Porgera Joint Venture.
- , 2005b. Knowing about culture: the handling of social issues at resource projects in Papua New Guinea, in Anthony Hooper (ed.), *Culture and sustainable development in the Pacific*, Canberra, ANU Epress, pp. 98-110.
- , 2006. *Porgera SML resettlement social impact – preliminary social mapping report*, Canberra, ANU Enterprise for Barrick Gold Corporation.
- , 2007a. Landowner identification, resource conflict and informed consent procedures at the Porgera gold mine, Papua New Guinea, Unpublished briefing paper for Barrick Gold Corporation.
- , 2007b. Determinacy of groups and the 'owned commons' in Papua New Guinea and Torres Strait, in James Weiner and Katie Glaskin (eds), *Customary Land Tenure and Registration in Indigenous Australia and Papua New Guinea*, Asia-Pacific Environment Monographs, ANU Epress, pp. 175-198.
- BURTON John E., COLIN FILER, GLENN BANKS and SUSY BONNELL, 1993. *Porgera Social Monitoring Programme. Plan and objectives*, Port Moresby, Unisearch (PNG) Pty Ltd for Porgera Joint Venture and Papua New Guinea Department of Environment and Conservation.
- CINCO Maricar, 2014 (3 January). Marinduque town seeks better deal in mining tragedy payment, *Inquirer Southern Luzon*.
- COUMANS Catherine, 2011. Occupying spaces created by conflict: anthropologists, development NGOs, responsible investment, and mining, in Damani J. Partridge, Marina Welker and Rebecca Hardin (eds), *Current Anthropology* 52 (S3), *Corporate Lives: New Perspectives on the Social Life of the Corporate Form*, pp. S29-S43.
- DANIELSON Luke (ed.), 2002. *Breaking New Ground: Mining, Minerals and Sustainable De-*

- velopment*, London, International Institute for Environment and Development and World Business Council for Sustainable Development.
- DAVIES M. and J. MOUZOS, 2007. *Homicide in Australia: 2005–06 National Homicide Monitoring Program annual report*, Australian Institute of Criminology, Research and Public Policy Series 77.
- FILER Colin, 1996. Letter (comment on Stuart Kirsch), *Anthropology Today* 12(5), p. 26.
- (ed.), 1999a. *Dilemmas of development. The social and economic impact of the Porgera gold mine 1989-94*, Canberra, Asia Pacific Press.
- , 1999b. The Dialectics of Negation and Negotiation in the Anthropology of Mineral Resource Development in Papua New Guinea, in A.P. Cheater (ed.), *The Anthropology of Power: Empowerment and Disempowerment in Changing Structures*. London, Routledge, ASA Monograph 36, pp. 88-102.
- FILER Colin, John BURTON and Glenn BANKS, 2008. The fragmentation of responsibilities in the Melanesian mining sector, in Ciaran O’Faircheallaigh and Saleem Ali (eds), *Earth Matters: Indigenous Peoples, Corporate Social Responsibility and Resource Development*, London, Greenleaf Publishing, pp. 179-195.
- GIBBS Philip, 1975. Ipili religion past and present, Unpublished diploma thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney.
- , 1977. The Cult from Lyeimi and the Ipili, *Oceania* 48 (1), pp.1-25.
- , 1981. *Tieni Genealogical statement*, Report to Placer (PNG) Ltd.
- , 1982. *Tuanda and Waiwa genealogies*, Report to Placer (PNG) Ltd.
- GLASSE Robert, 1968. *Huli of Papua: A Cognatic Descent System*, Paris, Mouton.
- GOLUB Alex, 2001. *Gold Positive: A Brief History of Porgera 1930-1997*, Madang, Papua New Guinea, Kristen Press.
- , 2006. Making the Ipili feasible: imagining local and global actors at the Porgera gold mine, Enga Province, Papua New Guinea, Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Chicago.
- , 2007. From agency to agents: forging landowner identities in Porgera, in James Weiner and Katie Glaskin (eds), *Customary land tenure and registration in Australia and Papua New Guinea: anthropological perspectives*, Canberra, ANU Epress, Asia-Pacific Environment Monograph 3.
- , 2014. *Leviathans at the Gold Mine: Creating Indigenous and Corporate Actors in Papua New Guinea*, Durham, Duke University Press.
- HARVARD LAW SCHOOL, 2009 (16 November). Legal Brief, International Human Rights Clinic, Harvard Law School and Center for Human Rights and Global Justice, New York University School of Law. Before the Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs and International Development, House of Commons, Ottawa, Canada, Regarding Bill C-300.
- HAYS Terence (ed.), 1992. *Ethnographic presents: pioneering anthropologists in the Papua New Guinea highlands*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH 2010. *Gold’s Costly Dividend. Human Rights Impacts of Papua New Guinea’s Porgera Gold Mine*, New York, Human Rights Watch.
- IMBUN Benedict, 1995. Enga social life and identity in a Papua New Guinea mining town, *Oceania* 66 (1), pp. 51-61.
- , 2000. Mining workers or opportunist tribesmen? A tribal workforce in a Papua New Guinea mine, *Oceania* 71 (2), pp. 129-149.
- , 2002. *Industrial and Employment Relations in the Papua New Guinea Mining Industry*, Waigani, University of Papua New Guinea Press.
- KIRSCH Stuart, 1996. Anthropologists and Global Alliances, *Anthropology Today* 12 (4), pp. 14-16.
- , 2006. *Reverse Anthropology: Indigenous analysis of social and environmental relations in New Guinea*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- , 2011. Comment, *Current Anthropology* 52 (S3), Damani J. Partridge, Marina Welker, and Rebecca Hardin (eds.), *Corporate Lives: New Perspectives on the Social Life of the Corporate Form*, pp. S40-S41.
- JACKA Jerry, 2003. God, Gold, and the Ground: Place-Based Political Ecology in a New Guinea Borderland, Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oregon.
- , 2007. Whitemen, the Ipili, and the City of Gold: A History of the Politics of Race and Development in Highlands New Guinea, *Ethnohistory* 54 (3), pp. 445-471.

- JACKSON Richard and Glenn BANKS, 2002. *In Search of the Serpent's Skin: The History of the Porgera Gold Project*, Port Moresby, Placer Niugini Ltd.
- JOHNSON Penny, 2011. *Social impact of the mining project on women in the Porgera area*, Port Moresby, Porgera Environmental Awareness Committee.
- JOHNSON Peter, 2012. *Lode Shedding: A Case Study of the Economic Benefits to the Landowners, the Provincial Government and the State, from the Porgera Gold Mine: Background and Financial Flows from the Mine*, Port Moresby, National Research Institute, Discussion Paper No. 124.
- JORGENSEN Dan, 2002. Review of Colin Filer (ed.), *Dilemmas of Development: The Social and Economic Impact of the Porgera Gold Mine 1989–1994* (Canberra, Asia Pacific Press), *The Contemporary Pacific* 14 (1), pp. 268–271.
- KIKALA Philip, Peter IPATAS and Ila TEMU, 2008. *Restoring Justice. Law and justice sector partnerships in Enga Province, Papua New Guinea*, Port Moresby.
- KYAKAS Alome and Polly WIESSNER, 1992. *From inside the women's house: Enga women's lives and traditions*, Brisbane, Robert Brown and Associates.
- MACINTYRE Martha and Simon FOALE, 2004. Politicized Ecology: Local Responses to Mining in Papua New Guinea, *Oceania* 74 (3), pp. 231–251.
- MANGI Jo, 1988. *Yole: a study of traditional Huli trade*, Unpublished MA thesis, University of Papua New Guinea.
- MEGGITT M. J., 1957. The Ipili of the Porgera Valley, Western Highlands District, Territory of New Guinea, *Oceania* 28, pp. 31–55.
- , 1965. *The lineage system of the Mae-Enga of New Guinea*. Edinburgh, Oliver and Boyd.
- MOYO Dambisa, 2009. *Dead Aid: Why Aid Is Not Working and How There Is a Better Way for Africa*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- NSR ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS, Glenn BANKS, Richard JACKSON, Susanne BONNELL, and Gary SIMPSON, 2002. *Porgera mine closure consultation document*, PJV with NSR Environmental Consultants and Unisearch Ltd, UNSW.
- OECD, 1980. *Guidelines on the Protection of Privacy and Transborder Flows of Personal Data*, Paris, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
- OFFICE OF THE FEDERAL PRIVACY COMMISSIONER, 2001. *Guidelines to the National Privacy Principles*, Sydney.
- OLIVIER DE SARDAN Jean-Pierre, 2005. *Anthropology and Development. Understanding Contemporary Social Change*, London, Zed Books.
- , 2008. *La rigueur du qualitatif. Les contraintes empiriques de l'interprétation socio-anthropologique*, Louvain-la-Neuve, Academia-Bruylant.
- PLACER DOME, 1999–2004. *Porgera mine: sustainability reports 1998–2003*, Port Moresby, Placer Dome Asia Pacific.
- PLACER PNG PTY LTD, 1988. *Relocation Agreement for the Special Mining Lease Porgera Project Enga Province, Papua New Guinea between Placer (PNG) Pty. Ltd on behalf of the Porgera Joint Venture and landowner agents of the Tieni, Waiwa, Tuanda, Pulumaini, Angalaini, Mamai and Anga clans of Porgera, Enga Province*, Port Moresby, Placer PNG Pty Ltd.
- PNG INDUSTRY NEWS 2011 (9 December). Wild times at Porgera.
- POST-COURIER, 2009 (30 April). Porgera up in flames.
- SOUTH AFRICA POLICE SERVICE, 2008. *Annual Report 2007–2008. Crime situation in South Africa* (accessed 15 Feb 2008, <http://www.saps.gov.za>).
- THE NATIONAL, 2009 (6 April). Crackdown. Porgera security ops set to kick off.
- WIESSNER Polly, Akii TUMU, Woody TUMU and Nitze PUPU, 2007. *Warfare in Enga Province: from prehistory until modern times*, Wabag, Tradition and Transition Centre and Salt Lake City, University of Utah.
- WIESSNER Polly, 2010. *Youths, Elders, and the Wages of War in Enga Province, Papua New Guinea*, Canberra, State, Society and Governance in Melanesia. Discussion Paper 2010/3.
- WOHLT Paul B., 1978. *Ecology, agriculture and social organization: the dynamics of group composition in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea*, Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Minnesota.



Pour accompagner l'exposition *Tatoueurs, tatoués*, du musée du quai Branly, la Société des Océanistes a le plaisir de vous annoncer la parution du second volume de la collection « Dossier de la Société des Océanistes » :

Tatouages d'Océanie. Rites, techniques et images
de Sébastien Galliot,

36 p. avec de nombreuses illustration en couleur

ISBN version papier :
978-2-85430-117-5

ISBN version électronique :
978-2-85430-119-9

Prix public :

11,50 € pour la version papier
La version papier est disponible à la Société des Océanistes ou en ligne sur <http://www.oceanistes.org/oceanie/spip.php?article3891>

9,99 € pour la version électronique
La version électronique est disponible en ligne sur <http://books.openedition.org/sdo/98>

«The time of money»: property and sovereignty as alternative narratives of land and value near the Ramu NiCo mining project (Madang, PNG)¹

by

James LEACH*

ABSTRACT

Two narrative themes are apparent around the relation to land in the Rai Coast hinterland of Madang Province, PNG at present. Senses of loss on the one hand, and of opportunity on the other, reveal deeper concerns over sovereignty over land and lifestyle. Under pressure from large-scale extractive industry, customary tenure is changing from the condition for constitutive and generative relations with land to a relation of property and control over land. This paper reports on narratives in which places figure as animate, creative participants in relationships between people, and those associated with the mine in which it is seen as the property of individuals, regulated by the state.

KEYWORDS: land, sovereignty, cash economy, customary tenure, Papua New Guinea, Ramu Nickel Co

RÉSUMÉ

Deux motifs narratifs émergent actuellement au sujet de la relation à la terre dans l'arrière-pays Rai (province de Madang, Papouasie Nouvelle-Guinée). Des sentiments de perte d'un côté et d'opportunité de l'autre révèlent des soucis plus profonds quant au mode de vie et à la souveraineté sur la terre. Sous la pression de la grande industrie extractive, le régime foncier coutumier, qui était la condition de relations constitutives et génératives avec la terre, se mue en relation de propriété et de contrôle sur la terre. Cet article rend compte de récits qui font des lieux des participants animés et créatifs dans les relations entre personnes ou qui sont associés à la mine, où ils sont vus comme la propriété d'individus, gouvernée par l'État.

MOTS-CLÉS : terre, souveraineté, économie monétaire, foncier coutumier, Papouasie Nouvelle-Guinée, Ramu Nickel Co

Although Papua New Guinea's current development is highly dependent upon mining and resource extraction, the vast majority of the population rely upon subsistence agriculture and kin based production for their livelihoods (www.indexmundi.com/papua_new_guinea/economy_profile.html). In this context, not only are direct conflicts over land ownership,

benefit distribution and fairness apparent around resource extraction. A more subtle but equally significant source of concern is apparent relating to the significance of customary land ownership². This concern arises in the context of expanding markets and other forms of capitalist enterprise that encourage people to undertake cash cropping with little or no long term

1. This paper is a companion to «20t has no power now», published in *Pacific Studies* 43 (2/3) 2011. Some of the interview data I use here also appears in that article.

2. This paper does not discuss a major concern, what Filer terms « land grabs » (2011), but focuses on a less dramatic but nevertheless powerful shift in the meanings of customary tenure for rural people.

* University of Western Australia / CREDO (CNRS-EHESS -Aix Marseille University), james.leach@uwa.edu.au



FIGURE 1. – Land cleared for planting in the Rai Coast hinterland, 2012 (picture James Leach)

planning. Past sustainable livelihoods based on what amounted to sovereignty over land, and social reproduction organised around principles that treated land as a subject of mutual possession (as explained below) are thus being replaced without the opportunity for consideration of the consequences for sustainability or for social and cultural life. While many rural people feel the pressure to «develop» and thus engage in cash cropping and ancillary activities around resource extraction, they also express deep concerns over the future that show an awareness of the emerging changes to their fundamental condition of life. These concerns are often expressed in narratives and discussions concerning land, money, power, and autonomy.

This paper focuses on the conceptions of land and its value that feed into narratives about sovereignty, autonomy, and community in the rural hinterland of the Rai Coast, an area in which people are experiencing the diffuse and diverse pressures of large scale mining with the advent of the Ramu NiCo nickel processing plant at Basamuk Bay (Highlands Pacific, 2010). My contention is that at present there is a vaguely comprehended but insidious shift underway in the way people relate to their land, one they express through comments about land, money, and an increasing lack of sovereignty.

The basis of the shift is encapsulated in the way that customary tenure of land is now continually visible and contested through various narratives about, and schemes around, land registration, land group incorporation, land seizure, and land alienation. It is also present, if less immediately visible to an outsider, in the way land is being used for individual cash cropping enterprises. Under these circumstances, «customary tenure» of land comes to be a double-edged reality. On the one hand, customary tenure provides security and autonomy to rural villagers, on the other, increasingly, it seems that the only way to realise this autonomy and security is to turn land over to commercial or extractive production, thus precipitating social and environmental changes that result in its degradation. Until the present decade, customary tenure of land allowed for the continuing development of culturally and biologically diverse and rich ecosystems. This diversity was fostered by modes of relating to land, and to other people, that relied on different assumptions about what land is, and where its value can be realised, than those attendant upon cash cropping and market gardening.

While based on one small area, and a limited set of narratives and statements from people there, I address some of the wider underlying legislative and institutional assumptions that

structure interactions between resource developers as purveyors of capitalist development and indigenous land owners. I seek to contrast these assumptions with assumptions about land that lie behind expressions of sovereignty and autonomy as articulated by Rai Coast people when they discuss land, the mine, cash cropping, and their future. I seek to analyse current trends in a particular case study area in Papua New Guinea to inform readers about the implications of engaging land in these two contrasting ways. While there is an implied critique of development rendered through resource extraction, the paper seeks to understand the conceptual and institutional dynamics that mitigate against sustainable and long term productive relations between indigenous life worlds, and livelihoods, and development based around market penetration, as they are made apparent in people's changing narratives about, and activities with, land.

Narrating land in the «time of money»: mutual possession or property?

Approach and Method

The paper is based on long-term anthropological participant observation in an area of the north coast hinterland of Papua New Guinea in Madang Province. That area is the Rai Coast, with a focus on Reite village in the Rai Coast Local Level Government Area of Rai Coast district. This village is located about 20 km from the nickel processing and shipping facility at Basamuk Bay, and is thus well outside any mine agreement area. Significant impact however is apparent, as will become clear.

The paper sets out the issue of state assumptions about property in land, and then draws upon a description of the importance and significance of land in the area of study for indigenous people there. It is noted that the interactions people have with land, and with each other through relations to land, are not the same as relations structured around the core concept of state institutions and resource developers, that of «property» in land. Data from the area is then presented that highlights people's concerns about recent changes that promise some kind of development in association with mining projects, land registration, and markets for cash crops. This is supplemented with a description of contemporary narratives about land and its use that demonstrate a new uncertainty about the autonomy people have under customary land tenure. Following that, a discussion of the history of property and its role in the organisation of human relations to land is briefly outlined, emphasising the difficulty of utilising those concepts when administering

indigenous relations to land. The paper concludes with a summary of the different notions of sovereignty and autonomy now competing for narrative space in Reite people's discourses about land and their future.

Issue

Underlying all the different situations and jurisdictions in which indigenous people find themselves engaged in struggles over land, its ownership, its meanings, and their relation to it, lies a commonality. That commonality is provided by the default assumption that nation states make about property rights being the enforceable and visible manifestation of people's connection to land. As Glaskin writes in the Australian context, «Indigenous relations to country must be translated into categories that can be recognised within the Australian legal system». The legislation articulates a view of Indigenous title that, as Webber (2000: 61) says, presupposes that «it were simply another kind of interest affecting land, slipped into the structure of Australian property law» (Glaskin, 2003: 72). Whether we are looking at native title in Australia or customary land tenure in Melanesia (e.g. Crocombe, 1971; Larmour, 1991), the way that the nation state conceptualises its role, and the assumptions it enshrines in law about property (Filer, 2006) in land generate at least a conceptual co-presence in people's lives and experiences between property thinking and other modes of connection to land (Strathern, 2009). It might be suggested that this is a kind of «legal pluralism» (that accompanies the acknowledged legal pluralism in criminal law in Papua New Guinea [Chalmers *et al.*, 2009; Goddard, 2009]). Just as with criminal law, the state considers its legal code with regard to land unambiguous, but indigenous conceptions of land do not fit with those conceptions in a manner that results in convergence. The underlying logic and practice with regard to land rely upon different principles as is shown below. There follows at least the possibility that a series of problems arise from the translation of one kind of inhabiting land (the state recognised form of property) with another (the indigenous).

On Independence in 1975, the constitution of Papua New Guinea granted customary landowners rights over their territories. The vast majority of the population were then, and remain, such customary land-owners. Over the last decade there has been some pressure, partly created by neo-liberal economic advisors in Australia (who are the major overseas aid donor to PNG) for the economic value «locked away», as these economists see it, in customary land, to be realised and re-invested in «development» (Gosarevski *et al.*, 2004; see Weiner and Glaskin,

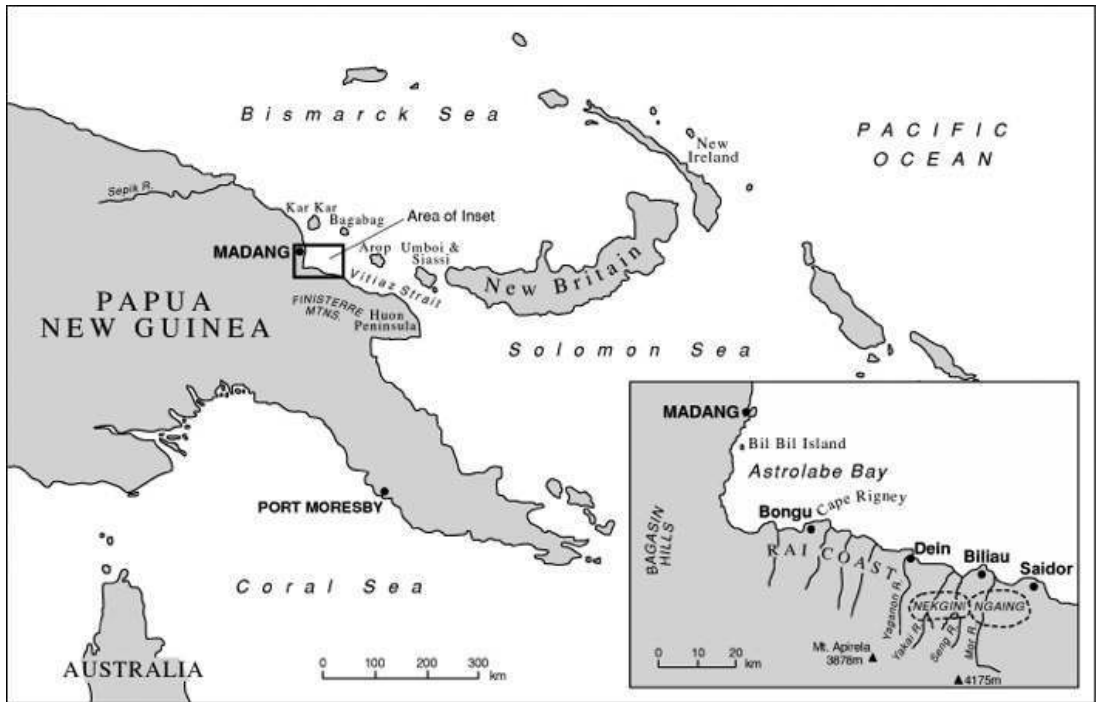


FIGURE 2. – Map of Madang and the Rai Coast

2007: 1-3). Whether or not it was related to such pressure, new PNG legislation in 2009 allowed for the group registration and subsequent lease of customary land (Papua New Guinea Law Reform Commission, 2008). The legislation demonstrates the equation between land and economic value by institutions of the state and significantly, the way the notion of customary ownership is defined as a version of a property right (see Filer, cited above). In fact, the legislation for the registration of customary land is explicit about making it possible to transform complex and embedded, distributed, and fragmented ownership into simple property rights that can be transacted. (The legislation «aimed at unlocking the vast economic potential that is locked up in customary land due to legal and administrative constraints relating to the application of customary land to modern economic enterprise» (Papua New Guinea Law Reform Commission, 2008: 5). This translation to property in turn reflects the discourse of state driven modernisation, making reality legible in its own administer-able terms, as identified by Scott (1998).

Alongside this change in legislation is a more pervasive and inexorable process whereby people are being encouraged in one way or another to realise value from their lands through entry into the inequitably structured cash economy. In the village of Reite for example, cash cropping has been sporadically practised for 50 years, promoted by the colonial regime originally, then more haphazardly by the under-resourced independent state. Today,

a transition from subsistence horticulture to market oriented agriculture is being accelerated by the development of large-scale extractive industry (the Ramu NiCo mine and processing plant) in the vicinity and the produce markets established around that development. There is, then, a rapid move to realise the value of land through cash cropping and marketing of specific produce grown to the specification of buyers from the mine (see Leach, 2011: 302-4). These changes are resulting in a massive increase in the amount of land used each year for market gardening, and subsequent degradation of forest, shortage of land for traditional subsistence cultivation of starchy tubers, and for hunting.

Clearly, access to money is scarce enough and yet attractive enough to make the opportunity for marketing produce attractive. Reite people, as mentioned, do not benefit directly from the mine, either through employment or compensation. In this situation, the catering companies operating at the mine during both the construction and operational phases provide the most visible source of «development» opportunity. The attraction is for reasons of both everyday comfort, emerging village hierarchies, and expectations of future change. There is a perception that somehow in the «time of money», as some describe the current situation, money is the correct (moral) way of realising value in land. These are part and parcel of aspirations based on a limited knowledge of the actual long term effects of a cash based economy on social and environmental relations. Motivation

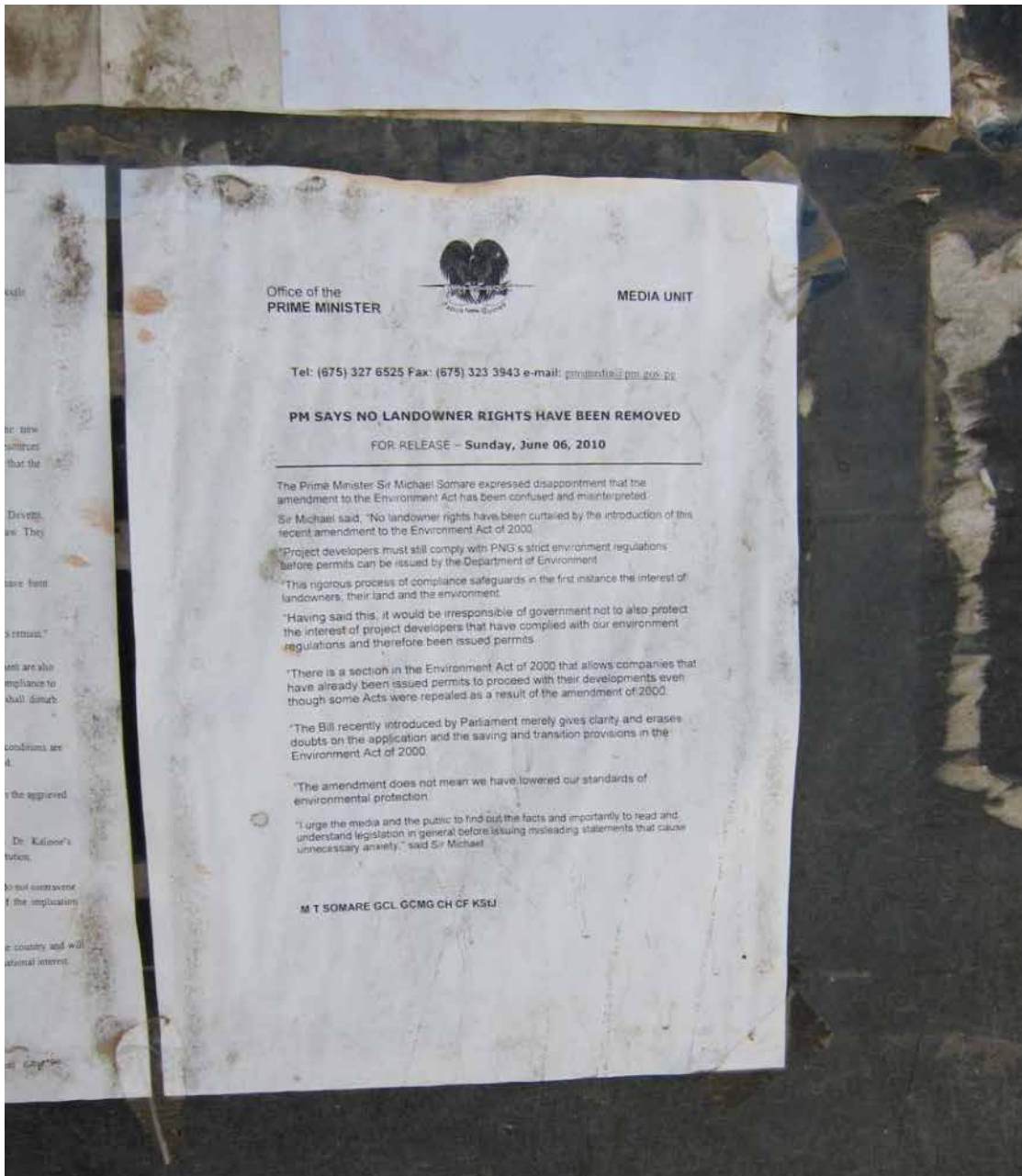


FIGURE 3. – «PM says no landowner rights have been removed». Media release from Office of the Prime Minister, attached to one of the gates at Basamuk Bay refinery (June 6th, 2010, picture James Leach)

for many is about anticipation of an imagined future of wealth and ease, a narrative of radical or millenarian change not unfamiliar in this region (Lawrence, 1964). With no direct development or benefit from the mine operation, Reite people are left with a discourse of intensification and commodification of agriculture.

As I outline below, these aspects are not uncontested in the villages. In fact, there is a deep but generally unfocussed concern about the future expressed by everyone, however enthusiastically or otherwise they participate in

cash cropping. Here is a passage drawn from a conversation with a thoughtful and concerned group of men after a visit to Basamuk Bay. It demonstrates the narrative themes and concerns involved.

«How will we change and develop? If we remain with our ancestral ways, how will we accommodate this new life? What should we do to live with money and its ways? What route will we follow to become like developed countries? We have land, we grow things, some people sell some of this to help them with rice or tin fish. But we get these things for free.

It is through our own hard work that we eat for free. Everyone says that our customary practices are the best as we have all we need for free. Money is not part of that custom. If we desire the custom of money, things will go bad here. So many of us do what we can to strengthen knowledge of custom so it will survive. We like things for free, I don't mean we don't work hard for them, we work very hard, but we don't have to buy things we need for money.

People at home in the village are making huge gardens, and then turn the land into cocoa plantations. People make large blocks. Our land for growing food crops is very scarce now. Forested land is almost finished. What can the Government do to stop all these developments? If they set higher prices for the few cash crops we have then we could implement our own restrictions on cutting new forest, on looking after land and environment and the community would listen to them. At the moment they just say, "it's my land, I will do what I want on it". What can we say? If prices were better for cocoa and vanilla then people would be content with the little income they gain for school fees and for rice sometimes and would not keep cutting forest for gardens for market and turning the land over to cocoa afterwards.

[The mine is] not like a Government station that is put there to assist us, but to take something and go. Sickness and sores were rife, and land gone. The mine isn't old, but brand new, yet these things were there already. They are ruining the land that we live through. Good forest land where we are free and get things for free. They come and buy us to do their work and our land goes to them so we will not be able to have these free things again.» (Leach, 2011: 305-306; see also Nombo and Sisau, 2013).

What is striking in terms of narrative construction is that those challenged about their over-exploitation of forested land have a stock answer: that «now is the time of money», and the land is their land to do with as they wish (*ibid.*: 306). Imagining a future in which all problems will be solved by the new possibilities of money, they forcefully assert that it is *right and proper* to turn land over to market oriented cultivation in order to participate in this new time. In fact, that they are acting morally and those that do not make the effort in this direction are holding back progress. Somewhat in the mode that Nancy MacDowell (1985) outlined in her analysis of «episodic time», the narrative «time of money» is seen as both a radical alternative with different rules and possibilities to «the time of taro and yam», while its current manifestation relies upon the same underlying logic of infinite resource potential provided by the mythic landscape of that previous «time». Two important facts about the current and future situation are thus masked by the idea of «the time of money».

Firstly, «the time of money» does not yet mean that these people could or do subsist through the cash economy. They are subsistence farmers operating independently of the market economy for their everyday needs. They rely upon shifting cultivation to grow tubers and raise domestic animals, and hunt

in the remaining forest to subsist. As we see from the statement above, cash is a luxury item, an addition to this livelihood. The «time of money» as it is currently practiced in Reite could not be sustained without the foundation of the subsistence regime; the social organisation, mutual support, and kin based exchange (including labour) that are integral to taro and yam cultivation. One should note that it is unlikely that the same level of cultural and biological diversity, social equality, or autonomy from wage labour will be maintained under a cash economy proper.

Secondly, the system of taro and yam cultivation is on the edge of collapse because of the use of land in «the time of money». That is, forest is being cut far too rapidly now for regeneration and fertility to be maintained. In other words, the «time of money» is unsustainable in a very immediate sense, and worse, it is destroying the foundation for an existence based on the cultivation of tubers. The hope of «development» arising from the conversion of relations to land from something we might describe as «mutual possession» (see below) to property ownership and exploitation is a chimera, promoted locally by developers who suggest that they bring opportunities to Rai Coast people (markets for produce), and nationally by moves towards making it possible to «realise» the economic potential of land by converting customary ownership into economic wealth.

Given the serious nature of these developments for an area of outstanding ecological and cultural richness, it seems worth examining some of the underlying assumptions about what customary tenure has been, and now is in Papua New Guinea. One of the factors at work here, I suggest, is a shift in assumptions from when customary tenure was a mode of autonomy to one in which customary tenure is a kind of property ownership. Property ownership is indeed what the state in a nation state model can protect for its citizens, giving them rights over land as an object to be exploited or alienated. But the assumption that the realisation of value will be in economically visible wealth conversion fuels the transformation of sustainable, generative and vital interactions with land as an inter-subjective constituent of people, to relations of control over, disposal of, and degradation of land as an object. Far from giving greater sovereignty, the time of money and its underlying mechanism of the individual exploitation of property amounts to the ceding of sovereignty to the state, and the interests of the corporations it relies upon for its income.

Discussion

Land in the time of taro

Let me take one example to demonstrate the relations Reite people have maintained with their lands under customary tenure until the present

crisis: the way that myth, history, cultivation of tubers, and cultural creativity are bound together in the reproduction of persons.

Reite people rely on taro as the staple of their subsistence economy. As an aspect of this centrality, indistinguishable from taro's function of sustaining bodies, taro gardening provides form and structure to people's activities, to their interactions, and to the very landscape in which it has played a major part. Knowing how to grow tubers in the specific manner that Reite people do so is passed to younger people in initiation rites by their maternal kinsmen. Those maternal kinsmen in turn can trace the routes by which they came to grow tubers; that is, the routes by which they share knowledge as a mode of relating to land. This relation to land is an aspect of the connection they trace to specific others. And at some point in the past, that way of existing in that particular place was given to an ancestor by an entity, a character in myth that was situated as an aspect of the land. The name of the myth of taro, the character who gave it to Reite people, and the place in which he resided are named as the same thing: *Samat Matakaring Patuki* which translates as «the story/knowledge/character of Samat Matakaring place». *Patuki* is a nexus, a conjoining of knowledge, myth, transmission, and route related to land. The «narrative» associated with the «time of taro and yam» is a narrative about the emergence of a distinct and sovereign people through their relationship to this taro deity.

By growing taro in relation to this *patuki*, and through doing so, demonstrating a relation to history and specific kin, taro grown under traditional practices is Reite taro, already part of and anticipated as constitutive of, the particular bodies that are Reite bodies, and the particular trajectories, activities and growth of situated people. Land as specific known and inhabited places comes to form the bodies of Reite people, and the cultivation of the land is also the generation of particular people. Land is part of people in a very easily comprehensible manner. The right relations to it and its powers result in the growth of kinsmen. The substance of kinship, the substance of connection between people who are kin, is substance drawn from the land itself and incorporated into bodies through consuming taro. Land is kinship (Leach, 2003: 207-211) because persons emerge from and return to places as aspects of historically constituted groups with particular connections to particular areas. Those places remain animated by the others who live on land, in landforms as manifestations of spirits and powers, and in other people. Further, by drawing their knowledge of production and reproduction from placed others, action and effect are tied into land. Relating to land and *patuki* is relating to

people of different types and histories, modes of effect, presence; but kinds of person nonetheless.

«Landscape» then is an emergent animate process in which a particularly «Reite» mode of life comes into being and is sustained in creative yet known ways. The potential and affordance of specific areas of land are engaged with not as substrate or object, but as an integral part of persons and their identity. Strathern highlights the material *and* immaterial dimensions of land in exactly this context (2009). In other words, landscape and land are shared spaces of common imagination in which bodies and persons, institutions and histories are formed. The land is redolent with human presence, with the history of kinship, of people, of closely allied myth that inhabits space not as an overlay, but as its formation. Myth and person are enfolded in land and land enfolds myth, history and person (Wagner, 2001).

So the Reite social world is one in which land and people are explicitly and consciously interwoven in processes of social formation, production, and reproduction. Kinship is rooted in particular places; land underwrites the social relationships it nurtures. Those relationships manifest in persons, and in things, making these creations aspects of the place itself, drawn from and feeding back into a specific emergent productivity.

Reite people have a strong claim on land through this kind of reproductive engagement. Their ownership of land and long history with it manifests as persons, and as the things those persons make from and generate alongside themselves in a rich artistic and cultural life. People know where others are from because of the sounds of the spirit voices they produce from that place, or their ability to name lands in a recollection not of «use», but of the emergence of people through previous gardening, exchanges, and labour. This kind of connection to places is genuinely different from the kind of relationship to land as an inanimate *object* shaped by regimes of property. Of course property is also a form for a social relation to take, but calling all social relations with regard to land a form of «property» is myopic, a myopia encouraged by the state's need for legibility mentioned discussed above.

The distinguished political historian and philosopher J.G.A. Pocock describes clearly how western state jurisprudence since the Enlightenment has systematically denigrated forms of relation to land such as those described above, relations that are not based on property ownership. He describes the importance of the heavy plough as a technology of appropriation and demarcation in the European imagination and how systems other than those of settled agriculture have been ignored. He argues that systems of human association and tenure that

deviate from the relations of property ownership have been swept aside or dismissed.

Property assumptions under state modernity

Pocock traces a history of the development of western states in which the protection of the person and thus the rationale for the state or sovereign's power could be reduced in essence to the protection of rights over property³. The development of a society or civilization, all the institutions and achievements that made a people the people they were (and see Wagner, 1975: 22-23), were seen as dependent on forms of association (relationship) made durable by the rights each person had over property. He writes:

«Western European theorists of natural law were turning towards theories of natural right, and to that end were constructing a concept of a state of nature, a primeval condition of human existence in which individuals were depicted as without rights, without mechanisms for distributive justice, and without civil government.» (Pocock, 1992: 31)

The individual preceded property in European political theorising according to Pocock. The «state of nature» was an image of a series of individuals roaming the earth's surface. Appropriation of things on that surface resulted in systems of institutionalised values (the recognition of other's property rights over what they had appropriated). Appropriation led to property, which led to social recognition of others' rights, which led to governments to enforce that recognition. In effect, the human individual as a sociable creature was defined by his property after the Enlightenment, and the individual who had not yet appropriated was not fully human. Having not appropriated, they had no reason to develop «social» relations because these «social» relations were fundamentally supposed to be the recognition of others' property rights. Human society was imagined as based on the ownership of property, as relationships between individuals came into being because of appropriation of resources and the need to institutionalise that appropriation. In other words, to use Pocock's phrase «property was their name for relationship». Other modes of relating to land have been swept aside as the state makes visible people's connection to land in the specific mode of property.

Papua New Guinea is a state in which customary ownership has had a positive effect in allowing the persistence of relations to land such as those in Reite. One in which an exchange of yams and taro as part of kinship and marriage have flourished

after 35 years of the country's independence from colonial rule. But this is under threat, not from any direct assault on customary ownership, but from the more subtle redefinition of all relations to land as relations of property, «the move to make all value from land realisable as an economic value» (Farran, 2011). This change has been accelerated hugely by the arrival of the Ramu NiCo processing plant at Basamuk Bay.

Now this leaves a dilemma when it comes to customary tenure, a way of allowing rights over land, guaranteed by the state. For that guarantee to take effect, those rights have to be a kind of property right. That translation means only a very narrow sense of what is valuable about the relationships of «customary tenure» are acknowledged by the state (Filer, 2006).

Land registration and new land «associations».

Nowhere is the pressure Reite people feel about the future more apparent than in their concerns over the status of their connection to land, and the possibility of either losing it to resource extractors, or missing out on development opportunities because they have not properly registered or demarcated their particular holdings. I submit that these anxieties are a knock-on effect of the state's increasing clarity about its recognition of customary tenure as a form of property right.

The concerns over the status of customary tenure and future economic value have fostered a whole series of schemes around land registration on the Rai Coast in recent years. In many cases, these appear little more than a way of extracting cash in exchange for putative inclusion in various land associations or organisations playing on people's fears and ignorance of the law, or on their desire to organise in new ways to take advantage of the «time of money». In essence, they are schemes that propose each local land holding group join an «association» that will act for them in organising a collective registration of land under the new Land Groups Incorporation (Amendment) Act (2009). Holding out the hope of «becoming visible» to the state, or to developers, or at the very least, of maintaining control over their own lands (which by implication could be lost if people do not join the new association), they draw village people into paying locally significant amounts of money to «join» and receive a «certificate» which not only promises membership but also sets out their claims to customary land plots. To not do so, it is implied, will result in a loss of power over land and development. Playing on fears of loss of sovereignty because of loss of land, they accelerate the process of conversion of customary

3. See also Joyce (2013) who describes a similar picture, and outlines possible alternatives based on analysis of indigenous knowledge and social systems.

tenure to a property right, imagined as held by certain individuals, over single plots.

In all the cases I am aware of in which Reite people have paid for membership, the associations have been riven by dispute and become inactive, or have had their membership fees «used» by the leaders for their own consumption. Often both these things happen. The badly printed «certificates» are all that are left of their significant cash investments, while uncertainty and anxiety persist over the status of their customary tenure in the time of mining and money. The pieces of paper are not land group certificates, but locally produced «certificates» of inclusion in a promised application for registered status. Happily (in a rather black way) the failure of all such schemes so far means no changes have actually occurred to land title in the area. It appears there have been no ILGs gazetted. And that is positive, as customary tenure does not require registration at present to remain effective. But that threat of loss of control over land, a most alarming one for Reite people, is no doubt behind the continued co-operation of these villagers with the «entrepreneurs» behind such schemes.

What we see then are the relationships that Rai Coast people have had with land being translated into one where economic value is taking precedence over other value, and thus their ownership of land as a form of property is coming to the fore. The arrival of the mine processing plant at Basamuk has shifted current conditions to a situation in which the autonomy granted by customary land tenure is the kind of autonomy that property relationships bring: the power to alienate, to exploit, and to appropriate. It amounts to the drastic narrowing of the value of land. That narrowing is not built into property per se, but to the system of person/state//subject/object of which it is a key element. One aspect where this narrowing is particularly apparent is in the crucial area of autonomy. That is, property gives a kind of autonomy in that it secures a right to hold something exclusively against the rest of the world, and the right to dispose of it. But to achieve that autonomy, intricate historical relations between land and people, and between people through their connections in land, are substituted for versions of individual property ownership. Mutual possession between people, land, and animate and sentient other beings, are replaced with property rights; and the agency of self-regulation and social order is replaced by the state's putative upholding of equal citizen rights.

Reite people regularly narrate their current situation through different possible scenarios regarding customary tenure, land registration, cash cropping and markets. This is also the narration of different conceptions of sovereignty and the future. Threats to land register threats to a way of life and living, they channel and make

real to people an otherwise unformed sense of deprivation arising from changes in the vicinity. The sense of a degradation of relations to land, and removal from it, speaks volumes about the narrative form of the mine's presence in their lives.

Conclusion

The very clear disadvantage, unsustainable nature of, and increasingly precarious existence for Reite people on the fringe of the mine development is not alleviated by their customary ownership when what that ownership amounts to is the right to exploit and degrade their lands. This tension is apparent in Reite people's concerns about land, the future and development. The concerns and complaints expressed by Reite people in this paper point to the fact that the «name for relationship» is now contested in Reite, with money, as a proxy for property, coming to hold increasing sway. The narrative of money and progress that comes with the mine is rather different in its focus on an individual autonomy supported by rights in land as property, from a narrative of sovereignty and vitality supported by the mutual possession of land and person by one another. It is this conflict in meaning and practice that is being played out in Reite.

Acknowledgements

I thank Pierre-Yves Le Meur for his editorial input and invitation to the conference «Mining and Mining Policy in the Pacific: History, Challenges and Perspectives», Noumea, in 2011, Susana Matos de Viegas and Joao Pina Cabral for the opportunity to discuss its arguments in their seminar, «The Value of Land», in Lisbon, Sept 2011, and Colin Filer for his judicial comments.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- CHALMERS D.R.C, D.B. WEISBROT and W.J ANDREW, 2009. *Criminal Law and Practice of Papua New Guinea: with a Forward by the Honorable Sir Arnold Amet*, Port Moresby, University of Papua New Guinea Press and Bookshop.
- CROCOMBE R., 1971. *Land Tenure in the Pacific*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- FERRAN S., 2011. Introduction, *Pacific Studies* 34 (2/3): *Land and Law*, Special Issue, pp. x-x.
- FILER C., 2006. Custom, Law and Ideology in Papua New Guinea, *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 7 (1), pp. 65-84.

- , 2011. New Land Grab in Papua New Guinea, *Pacific Studies* 34 (2/3), pp. 269-295.
- GLASKIN K., 2003. Native title and the «bundle of rights» model: Implications for the recognition of Aboriginal relations to country, *Anthropological Forum* 13 (1), pp. 67-88.
- GODDARD M., 2009. *Substantial Justice: An Anthropology of Village Courts in Papua New Guinea*, Oxford, Berghahn Books.
- GOSAREVSKI S., H. HUGHES and S. WINDIBANK, 2004. Is Papua New Guinea Viable with Customary Land Ownership?, *Pacific Economic Bulletin* 19 (3), pp. 133-136.
- HIGHLANDS PACIFIC, 2010. Quarterly activities report – for the period ended 31 March 2010 (<http://www.highlandspacific.com>).
- LARMOUR P. (ed.), 1991. *Customary Land Tenure: Registration and Decentralisation in Papua New Guinea*, Port Moresby, Australian National University, New Guinea Research Unit, Bulletin 40.
- JOYCE R., 2013. *Competing Sovereignities*, London, Routledge.
- LAWRENCE P., 1964. *Road Belong Cargo*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press.
- LEACH J., 2003. *Creative Land. Place and procreation on the Rai Coast of Papua New Guinea*, Oxford, Berghahn Books.
- LEACH J., 2011. Twenty Toea Has No Power Now: Property, Customary Tenure, and pressure on Land Near the Ramu Nickel Project Area, Madang, Papua New Guinea, *Pacific Studies* 34 (2/3), pp. 295-322.
- MACDOWELL N., 1985. Episodic Time in Bun, in Gewertz D. and E. Schieffelin (eds), *History and Ethnohistory in Papua New Guinea*, Sydney, Oceania Monographs 28, University of Sydney.
- NOMBO P. and P. SISAU, 2013. *Mi sori long ol. Seeing the ancestors in the collection*, in L. Bolton, N. Thomas, L. Bonshek, J. Adams and B. Burt (eds), *Melanesia: Art and encounter*, London, British Museum Press, pp. 92-95.
- POCOCK J.G.A., 1992. Tangata Whenua and enlightenment anthropology, *New Zealand Journal of History* 26 (1), pp. 28-53.
- PNG CONSTITUTIONAL AND LAW REFORM COMMISSION REPORT 5, 2008. Review of Incorporated Land Groups & Design of a System of Voluntary Customary Land Registration, Boroko, NCD.
- SCOTT J.C., 1998. *Seeing Like a State. How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*, New Haven, Yale University Press.
- STRATHERN M., 2009. Land: Tangible or Intangible Property, in Chester T. (ed.), *Land Rights. Oxford Amnesty Lectures*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 13-47.
- WAGNER R., 1975. *The Invention of Culture*, Chicago, Chicago University Press.
- , 2001. CONDENSED Mapping: myth and the folding of space/space and the folding of myth, in Rumsey A. and J.F. Weiner (eds), *Emplaced Myth: Space, Narrative and Knowledge in Aboriginal Australia and Papua New Guinea*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, pp. 71-78.
- WEBBER J., 2000. Beyond Regret: Mabo's implications for Australian Constitutionalism, in Ivison D., Patton P. and W. Sanders (eds), *Political theory and the rights of indigenous peoples*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 60-88.
- WEINER J.F. and K. GLASKIN (eds), 2007. *Customary Land Tenure and Registration in Papua New Guinea and Australia: Anthropological Perspectives*, Canberra, ANU E-Press.

Mining narratives, the revival of «clans» and other changes in Wampar social imaginaries: A case study from Papua New Guinea¹

by

Doris BACALZO, Bettina BEER and Tobias SCHWOERER*

ABSTRACT

The prospect of mineral resource exploitation, in the context of legal-political pressures on local communities to comply with the bureaucratic visions of mining companies and the state, and the narrative construction of community futures, invariably sets in motion processes of social boundary-making. Outcomes are driven not only by discourses originating in the state or the mining companies, but also in local and national narratives about the financial benefits from mining for legally recognised «landowners». Among the Wampar of Papua New Guinea, circulating narratives about mining interplay with and are informed by local social specificities to produce imagined futures that involve the revival of encompassing groups called sagaseg as a basis for Incorporated Land Groups (ILGs). Yet, the creation of ILGs is sensitive to the particularities of kin relations, including those emerging out of interethnic marriages, thus preserving the long-standing Wampar emphasis on inclusive sociality.

KEYWORDS: mining, circulation of narratives, reconfigurations of sociality, boundary-making, Incorporated Land Group (ILG), Papua New Guinea

RÉSUMÉ

La perspective de l'exploitation minière, dans un contexte des pressions politico-juridiques sur les communautés locales pour qu'elles s'alignent sur les visions bureaucratiques des compagnies minières et de l'État, et les mises en récit sur les avènements des communautés, génèrent des processus de redéfinition des frontières sociales. Les changements ne résultent pas seulement des discours émanant de l'État ou des firmes, mais aussi des mises en récits locales et nationales portant sur les bénéfices de l'exploitation minière pour les «propriétaires terriens» reconnus. Parmi les Wampar de PNG les récits qui circulent interagissent avec les spécificités locales et l'avenir envisagé passe ainsi par la résurrection des groupes inclusifs nommés sagaseg comme base des Incorporated Land Groups (ILG). Cependant, la constitution des ILG s'est révélée sensible aux particularités des relations de parenté, incluant des liens issus de mariages interethniques, ce qui a permis la préservation d'une socialité mise en avant par les Wampar.

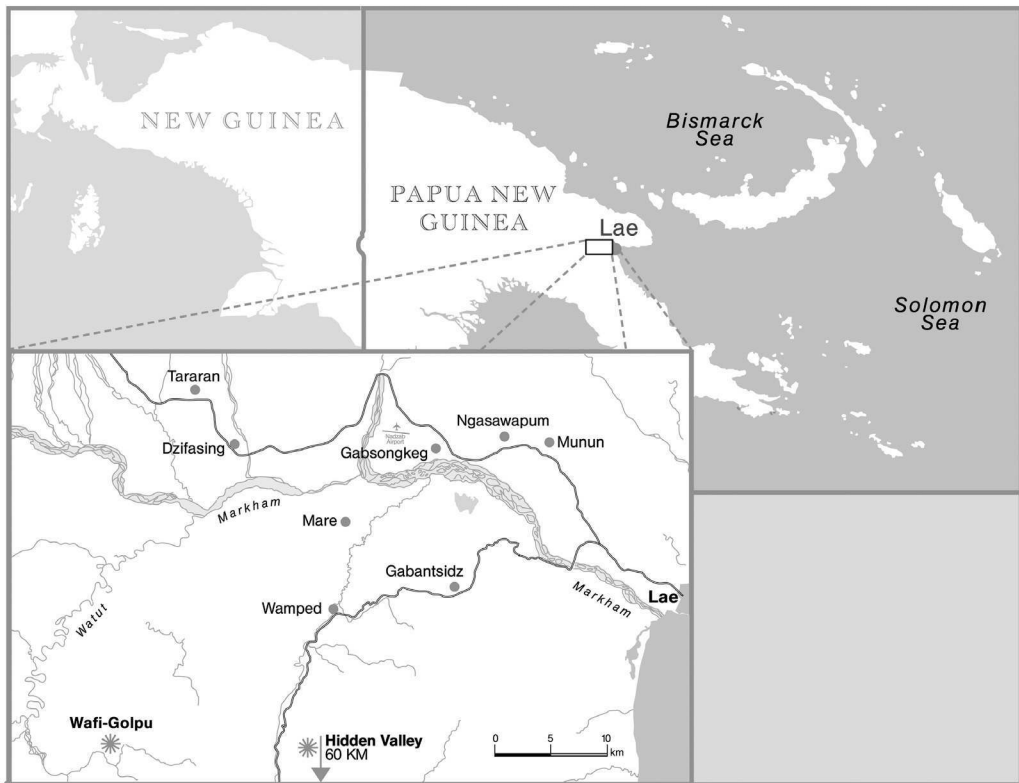
MOTS-CLÉS : mines, circulation des récits, reconfiguration de la socialité, délimitation des frontières sociales, Incorporated Land Group (ILG), PNG

A dominant theme in the anthropology of mining in Papua New Guinea remains the analysis of transformations in conceptions of kinship and land tenure, and ultimately the reconfigurations in sociality that take place in

local communities with the advent of mineral exploration and extraction. Wherever the prospect of resource extraction arises, resource developers and the state demand the identification of landowners who can negotiate over access to

1. The three co-authors have equally contributed to this article with fieldwork data and analysis and are listed in alphabetical order. We would also like to thank Don Gardner for helpful discussions and comments on earlier versions of this article.

* Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Lucerne, Switzerland, dbacalzo@gmail.com, bettina.beer@unilu.ch, tschwoerer@gmail.com,



MAP 1. – Localization of Wampar area and map of the Markham Valley showing Wampar villages and mining sites

the land, compensation, royalties and other benefits (Gilberthorpe and Banks, 2012; Imbun, 2013). As a consequence, local communities come under strong pressure to present themselves according to concepts understandable by the state and developers. As representatives of the state in Papua New Guinea use a popular version of the anthropological idea that unilineal descent groups constitute corporate, landowning entities (Jorgensen, 2007; Filer, 2007), its citizens are required to reshape patterns of sociality to conform to it: creating unilineal descent groups where none have existed before, or by rigidifying, simplifying and standardizing existing patterns of sociality and landownership (Guddemi, 1997; Jorgensen, 1997, 2007; Zimmer-Tamakoshi, 1997; Ernst, 1999; Golub, 2007a; Weiner, 2007; Gilberthorpe, 2013).

Diverse social processes are concerned with exclusion and inclusion, as people strive to limit and/or extend membership in newly legalized groups. Sometimes they pursue exclusionary strategies that produce novel boundaries within existing social fields. This can clearly be seen in the cases of the Lihir Big Men who limit their once important outside connections (Bainton, 2009); among the Sawiyanoo of the Left May River, that reframed land tenure in terms of patrilineal descent within a decade of mining exploration starting (Guddemi, 1997); or in the strengthening of

hereditary kinship to the exclusion of other types of social connections among the Fasu under the impact of the Kutubu oil project (Gilberthorpe, 2013). The opposite tendency, that people operate in an inclusive mode has been observed less frequently, and usually only in the initial stages of a mining project, as among the Gende, where Zimmer-Tamakoshi (1997, 2001) observed the continuing importance of the reciprocal nature of all «kin» relations (that are not bound by a biological reckoning of kinship but rather more by its social nature), and the Ipili in Porgera, who have kept their kinship system of cognatic and ego-centric personal networks intact in a process that Golub (2007a) refers to as a «forging of landowner identities.» However, even the Ipili, in their negotiations with government officials, were compelled to limit membership so that while the out-marrying women, their husbands and children were included, all other affines were not. Among the Gende, exclusionary mechanisms have grown over the course of the last twenty years, from an initial focus on inclusivity. With the mining operations of Ramu Nickel, and a second project in Yandera getting close to realisation, this has created three distinct localised social networks (the two areas around the mine sites and a third area on the Simbu side of the Bismarck range) grounded in concerns about claims to mining royalties (Zimmer-Tamakoshi, 2012).

Such processes of representation as landowning groups, however, are not necessarily directly instigated by the discourses emanating from the state and the mining companies. Particularly in the early stages of resource exploration, when a mining project is still in its infancy, local narratives on the prospects of financial and economic benefits as well as conflicts about «landownership» and what constitutes a «landowner» take centre stage. These narratives² often engender proactive and autonomous preparations by the local people involved, who start formalizing and transforming kinship relations long before a resource development plan even reaches a feasibility stage (Guddemi, 1997; Zimmer-Tamakoshi, 1997).

When we conducted fieldwork among the Wampar people in the Markham Valley of Papua New Guinea in 2009, 2010, and 2013³ we were struck by the preoccupation of the people with a copper/gold mine called Wafi-Golpu, which – apart from exploration drilling – so far exists only on paper (and on colorful powerpoint slides or in an animated video on the mining company's website). Narratives on the wealth that this mine will bring to the Wampar, and the preparations that have to be put in place to ensure it, flowed through the villages. These narratives are diverse, refer to local, regional and national processes and are patterned according to the level and kind of access people have to specific information. It became evident that for the Wampar, Morobe Mining Joint Ventures (MMJV) – a 50/50 joint venture between Australian gold mining giant Newcrest Mining and South-African based Harmony Gold that is developing Wafi-Golpu – has become a kind of «person», who is an important agent, and to whom different people are related in different ways. These relations are carefully observed and discussed by nearly everybody, with a view to acquiring enough understanding of this agent to put social relations with it on the appropriate footing. Existing social differences and inequalities among the Wampar tend to be reinforced by these relations with MMJV, as well as by access to news and narratives that matter.

This circulation of narratives transforms not only Wampar social imaginaries, but also sociality itself. For these narratives inform processes of boundary-making apparent in manifold efforts to enumerate and list group members, which is the central part of obtaining the legal status of an Incorporated Land Group (ILG) under the Land Group Incorporation Act (see Fingleton, 2007 for an analysis of the act's history). What is striking is that through these exercises, Wampar actively began to negotiate amongst themselves with a view to coordinating the creation of ILGs. In the process, they reactivated and reworked the Wampar social category of *sagaseg*, which refers to large, encompassing, clan-like groups. Prior to the discovery of valuable mineral resources nearby, the descendants of a particular person (*mpan*)⁴ had become the primary organizing framework for economic activities that implicate land. The significance of the *sagaseg* had declined because of changing practices concerned with land tenure, kinship and settlement patterns as a result of colonization, missionization, and engagement with market forces. With the advent of mining, the *sagaseg* is being revived in the context of possible future benefits.

In this paper we present two aspects of the way mining narratives shape social imaginaries and ultimately sociality itself: an ethnographic account of the historical fall and rise of the notion of *sagaseg* that shows how the reformulation of groups into ILGs was sensitive to the specific social characteristics of each group; and an account of the way Wampar narratives about possible futures emerge from highly active information circuits of different scales and different types. The presence of state institutions and a large mining company, which the Wampar constitute as corporate macro-agents, might, under contemporary circumstances, have elicited a local «public» that acted as a political subject in the mass-mediated struggle between visions of the future. In fact, the narrative rendering of Wampar futures is still sensitive to a heterogeneous range of specific factors that pre-empt any tendency to the creation of such a large-scale political subject (Cody, 2011).

2. We understand «narratives» in a wide sense as spoken or written representations of states of affairs and events. Narratives encompass gossip, rumours, stories, jokes, or statements on Facebook; we follow the general Wampar practice of differentiating stories according to their content: e.g., war stories (*dzob a tir*), stories about ghosts and myths (*dzob mamafe*), new stories which deal mostly with personal experiences (*dzob wafu*) and stories about people (*gara gab a dzob*) (Fischer, 1994). We favour this notion of narrative over the concept of «discourse» which carries a burden of theoretical baggage we prefer not to deal with here in this essentially ethnographic piece.

3. Tobias Schwoerer and Doris Bacalzo did fieldwork in the village of Dzifasing between 2009 and 2010. Bettina Beer did fieldwork in Gabsongkeg village, first in 1997, and thereafter in 1999-2000, 2002, 2003-2004, 2009, and 2013. Together with other German and Swiss anthropologists who have conducted fieldwork in Wampar villages, they are part of the «Research Focus Wampar».

4. In this paper we use *mpan* as the Wampar do, in the context of land ownership, to refer to the descendants of a named ancestor. It is also used in context-specific ways to refer to quite different social collectives: to the clan (*sagaseg*), to ethnic groups and even to nation states.

Wampar sociality and social change

Previous research on the impact of mining on sociality in Papua New Guinea has been focused on distant communities in mountainous regions or on small islands, which were completely overwhelmed and transformed by their experience with large-scale mining. Wampar communities, by contrast, are almost «suburbanized», for they are all situated in the Markham Valley, close to Lae, the second largest city in the country. Many people are well educated and long accustomed to taking up economic opportunities in whatever form they present themselves. Moreover, and again in contrast to communities affected by mining elsewhere in Papua New Guinea, which were comparatively homogenous prior to the onset of mining, Wampar social life has already experienced significant in-migration, and involves a substantial number of interethnic marriages (Beer, 2006a, 2006b, 2010; Bacalzo, 2012).

The Wampar live in eight villages in the Markham River Valley. These villages are political units in the sense that there is a Local Level Government Councillor (short LLG, *kaunsel* in Tok Pisin) for each village, but they differ substantially in their degree of not only spatial but also political cohesion. The concentration of the population in villages is a post-contact phenomenon, developed under the influence of colonialism, missionization, and «villagisation» (see Barker, 1996) after 1911. The Wampar practice of building houses in gardens away from the villages offsets this centralization in some villages, and in the last few decades many of these garden houses have developed into new hamlets away from the main village. With new economic opportunities through cash crops, cattle and chicken farms, and marketing along the main Highway, additional settlements have proliferated (Fischer, 1996: 124-128). Aside from the growth in number of hamlets, there has also been an increasing factionalism in the dominant Evangelical Lutheran Church and the growth of new religious denominations and churches. Thus, the once centralizing force of a single institutional church as the centre of village life from the early colonial period has been dissolved as well.

Fischer (1975, 1996), who has studied the Wampar since the late 1950s, observed that until the 1970s, all Wampar conceptualized themselves as members of the about 30 named social groups called *sagaseg*. Already, at this time, several of these *sagaseg* were too big to effectively function as corporate units with respect to land, and their members already at the start of the 20th century were spread over different villages. Wampar speak of *sagaseg* as patrilineal, but (as is often the case in Papua New Guinea) the incorporation of non-agnates is common. Also, the fusion of non-related *sagaseg* is historically verifiable. Furthermore, marriage patterns and practices have been diverse and are changing, e.g., with the

increase in interethnic marriages, having children born out of wedlock and adoptions. Marriages within the same *sagaseg* were formerly subject to sanctions, but this is no longer the case, mostly because younger people are unclear about their membership of a *sagaseg* (Fischer, 1996: 129-144, 1997: 75-78; Beer, 2006a).

What appear to be the more important landholding social groups are localised lineages of varying depths (called *mpan*). Accordingly, lineages have become more important with the increase in cash cropping and cattle farming (Lütkes, 1999). Yet, knowledge of lineage depth has also been decreasing (it now hardly covers more than two or three generations) and land tenure more and more individualized (Fischer, 1996: 240). One of the clearest examples to illustrate this central importance of the *mpan* is the set-up behind the Dzifasing Cattle Ranch. This large ranch was founded in the late 1970s with government support as a model cattle ranch and breeding station, and is the only one of these stations established at the time still operating today. It is a cooperative business enterprise, in which 13 *mpan* have pooled their landholdings west of Dzifasing village. Each *mpan* is an equal shareholder in the enterprise. What is notable in this case is that the pooling took place independently of their *sagaseg* affiliation, as the 13 *mpan* identify themselves with different *sagaseg*. At the same time not all *mpan* in each *sagaseg* are involved in this enterprise.

With increasing, but unevenly distributed knowledge about legal frameworks for the registration of land, some of these localized lineages took the opportunity offered by the state to register their portions of land through the Land Group Incorporation Act, leading to a proliferation of small Incorporated Land Groups (or ILGs), which were sometimes in dispute about boundaries. In 2009, a district land administrator informed people in one Wampar village that all ILGs with few registered members and landholdings under dispute would be deregistered. One specific reason cited was that a number of extended families registered their land without informing other members of their *sagaseg*. The land administrator subsequently declared that all future ILG registrations would need approval, from – in his own words – «clan leaders» and the village *kaunsel* (the representative of the LLG), before being handled by the Lands Department. The conflicting narratives about «landownership» evident in these relations between Wampar groups, and between Wampar and representatives of the state, are aspects of a broader contemporary engagement between local, national and international understandings that deeply affect local social fields in Papua New Guinea (Filer, 2007; Golub, 2007b).

Another challenge to local conceptions of sociality results from the relatively frequent rate at which



FIGURE 1. – The Markham River with sedimentation (2009, picture Doris Bacalzo)

Wampar have married individuals of other ethnic groups over the last few decades (Beer, 2006a, 2010). Analyses of census data show that intermarriages between Wampar and non-Wampar have constantly been rising and that the level of intermarriage in younger marriage cohorts is sizeable, with about 60% of Wampar individuals being intermarried (Beer and Schroedter, ms). As yet there is no evidence of the Gende tendency to maintain exclusivity through marriage (Zimmer-Tamakoshi, 2012). Intermarriages, through transformations of concrete practices, challenge normative conceptions of kinship and pose questions about what constitutes a Wampar, who is a member of what *sagaseg*, and how membership of a *sagaseg* is to be configured. Thus, «transcultural kinship» (Beer, 2010), and «the politics of acknowledgement» (Golub, 2007a: 75), which it has entailed, has added to the fluidity of group recruitment and the entitlements that it involves. Fieldwork between 2009 and 2013 made clear to us how kin networks that join ethnically different groups, also act to complexify Wampar narratives concerning boundaries and identities. In practice, the specific circumstances of particular social actors and the kind of relationships that they have among themselves and with their extended families, including those of interethnic marriages, are decisive in accounting for their narrative commitments.

Wampar Mining Narratives

The Wampar have already started to feel the impact of large-scale mining, following the start of operations at the Hidden Valley gold and silver mine in 2007. For instance, people have observed an increased sediment load in the Markham River that threatens to destroy riverside gardens, and sightings of dead fish tend to support narratives about poisoning of the river and increase anxieties that fish from the river are no longer edible. The same mining company, Morobe Mining Joint Ventures (MMJV), is now planning an even larger copper and gold mine in the immediate vicinity of the Wampar at Wafi-Golpu. MMJV just recently completed a pre-feasibility study of the prospect, which is expected to begin full production in 2019. MMJV's activity is evident to anyone living in the area: Wampar hear sounds (detonations, helicopters, etc.) of one or both operations, and they see traffic, storage depots and other installations that form the infrastructure required by Hidden Valley and Wafi-Golpu. Although some Wampar say that these operations cause earth tremors and kill fish, rumours about enormous compensation payments already received by Hidden Valley landowners also circulate frequently, so that

many Wampar anticipate the monetary benefits they too will obtain when production at Wafi-Golpu begins.

Although Wampar communities are differentially positioned with respect to MMJV operations, in ways that will impact on their future options, most of the representations in circulation constitute common knowledge for the population as a whole. However, that people do not have access to all the informational resources they desire is also common knowledge (in the sense that all people know it and know that all know it).

We will address how mining and narratives about it evoke hopes and fears that create expectations and social tensions, and prompt actions, while obscuring political issues and power relations underlying them. These processes, we will argue, result from the way the state – in the interests of mining projects and governmental processes – creates a zone that «black boxes» mining enterprises for local people, who, despite prominent talk of «informed consent», find it almost impossible to get reliable answers to the questions they have. In 2012, for example, local people demanded information from authorities about the dead fish that were being found in the Markham River. But information relating to Water Discharge Permits is not available to the public and it was not possible to determine what responsibility MMJV bore for the fish deaths. So, in addition to the physical enclosures required by MMJV operations, which make parts of Wampar territory inaccessible to local people, there exists a zone of interaction that comprises complex relations of inclusion and exclusion with respect to information: and given the value of such information, we might speak of a local knowledge economy, one that is no less characterised by inequality, tension and the generation of social relations than the circulation of other valuables. Creating enclaves is one of the organizing principles of the political economy of large-scale capitalist projects like mines or factories.

Nevertheless, no government or company is in a position to completely black-box undertakings of the scale of those that MMJV was set up to run: narrative representations of what is going on, in the form of visual images, rumours, gossip, scandal, jokes, critiques and stories are circulating continuously. Precisely because the government and the corporation are so interested in controlling the mines as enclosures these become a realm of such productivity for Wampar projected futures.

Here we want to consider four different ways in which narratives and representations circulate at the local level: first, via sociocultural brokers like village *kaunsel* and other individuals who are invited to workshops and mine visits; second, company and personal Facebook

pages and internet sites with some news but mostly pictures of MMJV operations; third, staged political events and speeches; and fourth rumours of the enormous wealth landowning groups can acquire. These different circuits of representation, charged with values and emotions, all have a «trickle-down» effect on Wampar social imaginaries at the village and household level.

Local socio-cultural brokers

Various members of local communities play a mediating role as brokers (Paine, 1975; Lewis and Mosse, 2006), which involves the interpretation for local circulation of narratives having their origin in external institutions (government, corporations, NGOs, etc.). In the following we exemplify this process through a discussion of the role of a village *kaunsel* who was the representative of the Local Level Government (LLG).

The *kaunsel* of Gabsongkeg was invited three times to MMJV seminars between 2011 and 2012, in his capacity as a LLG representative. In early 2013, he went to a fourth workshop during which the local politicians also visited the mining site. These seminars were held at hotels and restaurants in the city of Lae to which the average village *kaunsel* would normally have no access. Reports that circulated around the villages about the seminars were largely concerned with the food and accommodation they involved and the personal experience of the journey. In addition, seminar participants are picked up from their villages in new and expensive company vehicles and driven into town. Most Wampar don't pay a lot of attention to the topics of the seminars, as they don't expect their *kaunsel* to learn facts, for people do not expect representatives of MMJV to answer their questions truthfully. They are, however, interested in hearing about the otherwise inaccessible lifestyles associated with MMJV.

One seminar, for example, was intended to answer questions about fish deaths in the Markham River in 2012, and a «cyanide awareness training program» was organised in 2013. During and after the fish deaths in the Markham, Wampar had a lot of questions about what was going on, in particular, whether it was safe to eat fish from the Markham. Even well-connected individuals found it impossible to get answers from district government authorities or the company at that time. The workshop later held by MMJV blamed artisanal miners in the Watut for the fish deaths, but it also claimed that fish death had occurred in former times. The *kaunsel* and other villagers did not believe these claims. Many Wampar said that some white scientists had come to the village to test Markham water and had warned against eating its fish. Who they were and to which

organisation they belonged was not at all clear to villagers and nobody could answer questions about these people. Nevertheless, the majority of Wampar in the village of Gabsongkeg are scared and follow the advice of the «scientists». MMJV's explanations are not trustworthy in this matter. More generally, the lack of independent sources of information, the anxieties of local people, and their mistrust of MMJV, put other aspects of seminars such as the hotel, the food, and modern technological equipment at the mining site at the centre of attention. The lack of information about what is going on in the enclave, and the mistrust it creates, thus generate a displacement of the local peoples' attention and focus. MMJV, accordingly, is being identified with a luxurious lifestyle, good modern cars, plenty of food and financial resources, but it is expected to be guarded or even deceptive about its operations. In this respect MMJV is like any other political agent on the local scene: the success of political plans and projects frequently hinge on others not being aware of their exact nature. The extent to which local political representatives are in a position to act as honest brokers in the local knowledge economy is compromised, even while accounts of their experiences circulate as relevant features of the relationships between the Wampar and MMJV.

Another local socio-cultural broker who is indirectly and directly related to MMJV is a young man who founded a land-awareness theatre group, which travels to different places to stage plays about the dangers of selling Wampar land to businessmen. He thinks MMJV corrupts the *kaunsel* with their invitations to hotels and restaurants. He had declined an offer to stage a play at one of the MMJV informational events, in fear that he would not be in a position to criticize MMJV operations in the future. Nevertheless, through his critical engagement with MMJV, and its attempts to associate itself with him, his connections via Facebook to the company's General Manager of Sustainability and External Relations and the support he receives from other supra-regional theatre groups, he has become an important broker for representations of the corporation and NGOs.

The Internet and social media

MMJV presents information on its activities on an official website, as well as via Facebook. The MMJV website shows a movie about the Wafi-Golpu deposit which is a technical and highly abstract account of how MMJV will access the gold and copper deposits. The Facebook page «Morobe Mining Joint Venture» with 1,555 followers is probably known more widely among the Wampar than the company's web

pages. Many Wampar access the Internet by smartphones and have Digicel contracts with very good conditions. Digicel provides Internet access in most Wampar villages. Both MMJV's Hidden Valley and the Wafi-Golpu projects have individual Facebook pages as well, where employed people post pictures and texts. These are the spaces where social relations and networking are represented and enacted, so that who is working for the company or supporting its projects becomes visible. People, like the company's social relations managers, post messages crafted to present the company in a favourable light, for example, that a girl has been rescued by an MMJV helicopter and brought to the next hospital.

Further influential connections between the local social networks and the mine are the personal Facebook pages of Wampar employed by, or engaged in some capacity with, MMJV. Most frequently, the employees post photos of themselves and co-workers (emphasising they are a «team»), wearing shiny orange security vests, drinking together or posing for the camera of their mobile phones. Usually they pose in an office or with heavy machinery at a mining or exploration site. The orange vests, machinery and offices (often equipped with computers) give others an idea of the desirable jobs and enjoyable sociality available through connections to the company and its operations. Photographs of buildings and houses are shown less often. Comments on these pictures usually do not pose questions, but «friends» often express gratitude for being shown the photos, click the «like it» button, or otherwise admire what is shown on the photographs.

Political events

Important political events in the region are usually visited by MMJV's General Manager of Sustainability and External Relations. Less important events, such as a groundbreaking ceremony at a future tailings area, or the opening of a small bridge, are attended by MMJV representatives lower in the hierarchy. The «Launching» of the «Huon Gulf District Five Year Alignment Development Plan» was one important event witnessed in 2013. It was organized by the members of parliament (MP) from the two areas most affected by MMJV's activities. The main aim of the MPs was to show unity in their political strategies and to maintain their own popularity among voters by distributing heavy machinery, trucks and cars to the Local Level Government and food to all guests of the event. The speeches given emphasised that the whole population should stand together, regardless of differences between

settlements and ethnic groups in their levels of expected compensation and royalties. One of the MPs appealed for all ethnic groups to fight together to ensure that lots of money flowed to the population as a whole. He also emphasised, that local ethnic groups should exclusively benefit from work in the mine and not migrants from other parts of Papua New Guinea. People supported his speech with applause – especially when royalties were mentioned.

MMJV's general manager sat on the podium during the event and then gave a short speech in which he thanked the MPs for the invitation. He emphasized that the company would cooperate with the provincial government and talked about employment opportunities for local people. No other information was conveyed by him and he did not address the claims advanced by the MP. Villagers who attended the «Launching» barely listened to the speeches; they were most excited by the food preparations that were in evidence, which included a whole cow, donated by one of the MPs. Many people were involved in the catering for the event, which was the central topic of discussions. Rumours said that another cow would be delivered later for the exclusive consumption of the villagers who had hosted the «Launching». The «Launching» as a joint activity of both MPs and MMJV was interpreted as sign for a bright future, even while its specificities remained unclear.

At a «groundbreaking ceremony» in another Wampar village, at which the spirits associated with the future tailings site were to be compensated and pacified, MMJV also sent a cow, which was central to the whole event. Representatives of MMJV arrived in a car long after the ceremony had started, and left after having a short look around. Local people were most excited by the preparation of food. They explained that one representative of a local *sagaseg*, along with representatives of other Wampar villages, was brought by an MMJV helicopter to a second venue, where the «real» ceremony took place. Again MMJV were thought to be staging one event while others taking place elsewhere involved its true agenda.

People evaluated this event in terms of the same representations that would apply to any church opening or official visit by local politicians or church leaders or the like. The main difference seemed to be that cows instead of pigs have become the new currency for bigger social and political events, introduced by newly elected provincial politicians and MMJV. At such events many stories about explorations, upcoming compensation, royalties and the shape of the future circulate. At these political events, social problems and power differentials remain hidden by a rhetoric of unity presented in a context of commensality, one that is itself rooted in practices

that were already important before large-scale mining became one of the central issues.

However, not all political events were non-confrontational. In 2009, a village meeting was called in Dzifasing to discuss the increased sedimentation load from the Hidden Valley Mine and fears of cyanide poisoning. Representatives from MMJV, the National Department of Mining and the Morobe Provincial Department of Environment and Conservation were all present to assure people that everything was under control. The environmental coordinator of MMJV explained that there was sediment runoff during the construction phase, but this would diminish now that a waste rock dump had been completed. He emphasized that there were no hazardous chemicals released into the environment, since the milling plant that uses cyanide started operating only a day before this meeting. He further explained that the cyanide would in future be chemically broken down and stored within the tailings dam. Following the MMJV presentation, the government representative assured the people that the government is there to make sure everything is safe, and that a mining license and an environmental impact assessment permit would not have been granted had MMJV failed to show it could operate safely. He also stressed the need for economic development, especially because the Ok Tedi mine was slowly ceasing production, but promised that the Wampar would benefit as well, indicating that 100% of royalties would be directed to the Morobe Provincial Government and from there down to the Districts and local LLGs.

A local village leader, who was then preparing to run as a candidate for the National Parliament in the next election, challenged this presentation: the Provincial Environmental representative had to admit that his department had neither the manpower nor the money to monitor environmental impacts, and that the mining company provided this service. The village leader, cheered on by the villagers, then harangued the government representatives present for not working for the interests or protection of the people, as was their duty, but colluding with the mining company. He said that people are sick and tired of «development» which was principally oriented to helping politicians to steal money, thus giving voice to a dissenting perspective on mining development as corruption, one that did not focus on the potential wealth the local population could capture. He told the government representatives that they had this time come to the wrong place, since he and other Wampar were no less educated than the cleverest of them. Finally, he suggested that a feast be prepared to serve the politicians, bureaucrats and mining company representatives a meal of Markham fish, so that

they could themselves experience what it means to pollute the environment.

Being a member of a landowning group

One of the most enthralling narratives to have captivated the Wampar is the extent of wealth that is due to landowners of mining projects. These narratives circulate throughout Papua New Guinea and are fuelled both by newspaper and TV reports, and personal reports from individuals working at or visiting mining sites. As the Wampar are situated next to the main Highlands Highway, which also serves as a conduit for gossip and rumours emanating from the resource projects provisioned by this vital transport link, they are always informed about major developments in the big mining and natural gas projects. Stories about Porgera landowners marrying dozens of wives for hundred thousands of Kina, or Lihir landowners buying real estate property in Brisbane, Australia circulate nationally. The two major national newspapers were, in 2009, full of articles on the negotiations regarding benefits worth billions of Kina for landowners in the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) project in the Southern Highlands. News reports vividly convey messages about the importance to landowners of a strong negotiating position in relation to resource companies and the state. Being a member of a landowning group recognized by the mining company and the state is thus seen as a sure way to «strike it rich».

As a consequence, the Wampar are determined to be recognized as landowners and expect to profit in two ways. First, they claim the area around Wafi-Golpu as their ancestral homeland, where they had been living, as a united group, before migrating down the Watut River and splitting up into the villages that are now located in the Markham Valley (Fischer, 2013). Accordingly, all Wampar see themselves as the rightful landowners of the project area, and claim that they should receive all the compensation and benefits due to those in that position. In fact, they are engaged in a long-standing court battle over landownership with the Yanta and Hengambu communities (which speak a different language) currently living close to the project site, and who, together with the people of the Watut valley immediately downstream from the project area, have hitherto been the focus of community programs by MMJV. The Wampar thus feel neglected despite their historical claims and their much larger demographic profile; this underlines the need for them to increase their negotiating power. Second, there are plans for Tailings Storage Facilities and access roads on land everyone acknowledges belongs to the Wampar. Compensation might thus be forthcoming for these facilities, as well as for possible environmental devastation of the rivers and the land adjacent to it.

ILG formations and reworking of social boundaries

This diverse but related set of narratives has set in motion a pre-emptive move to list group members and register claims to land that might be used for other mine-related purposes. The lack of transparency and the inaccessibility of pertinent information, coupled with mistrust in MMJV led the Wampar to seek to form Incorporated Land Groups (ILG) of their own accord. It is important to note, that ILGs have so far only been used in the petroleum and forestry sectors to organize landowners, with the mining sector having preferred other mechanisms (Filer, 2007). The Wampar decision to use the ILG to safeguard their interests in the context of mining is a result of their establishment in earlier business ventures, mainly in cattle farming. In contrast to these earlier ILGs, the new mining-related ILGs were formed on the level of the *sagaseg*, sometimes even encompassing sections of the same *sagaseg* from different villages, and thus contributing to a certain guarded cooperation between Wampar villages to secure ownership of the land where the mine is located, and to a general «strengthening» of the *sagaseg*. That the incorporation of Land Groups is made on the level of the *sagaseg*, and not on the level of the landholding *mpan*, is clearly influenced by media and government narratives that perpetuate an «ideology» of landownership by «clans» (Filer, 1997, 2007).

We would now like to present cases of ILG formation involving different *sagaseg*. The cases illustrate different levels of expertise involved, and how the particularities of Wampar kin relations inform the constitution of individual ILGs. For the purpose of discussion here, we will describe each case as *Sagaseg 1, 2, 3, and 4*.

Sagaseg 1

Sagaseg 1 started forming an ILG while we were in the field in 2009. They held a meeting under the shade of the mango tree in the dusty yard of one of the village leaders. All male lineage leaders came together and in a lined school notebook drew up a list of those they would count as a member, constructed a genealogy encompassing all the lineage leaders and listed all pieces of land they claim as their own. Being a rather small *sagaseg*, its leaders were able to trace their genealogy to a common ancestor. They quickly reached an agreement on the list of members: it included all living agnatic descendants (male and female), as well as male and female children of women of their *sagaseg* who married a *yaner* (strangers or outsiders who are considered non-Wampar). However, children of these women married to other Wampar (men from another



FIGURE 2. – A *sagaseg* meeting discussing ILG formation (2009, picture Tobias Schwörer)

sagaseg) were not included, as it was argued that they belong to the *sagaseg* of their father and would be included in an ILG of their father's *sagaseg*. When we asked why the children of women in their *sagaseg* who married an outsider were included, the leaders answered that they were only a small *sagaseg* that would benefit from more people. They also pointed out that there would be a lot of money flowing from the Wafi mine, which they can generously share with the families of their sisters and daughters.

The lineage leaders debated whether to include in their list an extended family (*mpan*) that actually claims to belong to a different *sagaseg*. As there was an ongoing conflict between this *mpan* and *Sagaseg 1* over an extensive tract of forest located in an area covered by one of MMJV's exploration licences, it was deemed wise to ask them to join *Sagaseg 1* in order to avoid a lengthy court battle. The *sagaseg* leaders argued that this *mpan* was in their patriline, but that one of its ancestors had been raised by a man of another *sagaseg* after his mother remarried, a fact that current members of the *mpan* had forgotten, so they mistakenly thought they were of the other *sagaseg*. Wampar pre-colonial history is dominated by warfare and its effects; this offers scope for manipulation, through old stories suddenly recalled, to claim or deny membership in a *sagaseg*.

Sagaseg 2

The formation of an ILG for this *sagaseg* was started in 2008 and included all of its lineages in two Wampar villages. The question of inclusion or exclusion of people was decided only by the lineage leaders, who did so in isolation from one another. The result was a mix of different criteria for inclusion and exclusion. While one lineage leader generally followed the same criteria as that of *Sagaseg 1*, except that he excluded female descendants of interethnic marriages, on

the grounds that they would marry out of the *sagaseg*, another leader opted for a more inclusive approach. He listed as *sagaseg* members not only all children of living women of his lineage, regardless of whether they were married to another Wampar or to an outsider, but also the *yaner* husband of his sister, thus incorporating an affine into the *sagaseg*. This difference in approach had much to do with the quality of relationships between the lineage leader and his in-married brother-in-law: amicable relations facilitate their incorporation, whereas when relations are strained, the *yaner* husbands are excluded. The idea of broadening the membership to incorporate all children of the lineage leader's sisters, and even their husbands, is also associated with the sharing of benefits, for he expects to get a larger share of the benefits due to the *sagaseg* as a whole because of these additional group members.

Sagaseg 3

In this *sagaseg*, the formation of their ILG was significantly influenced by a man of mixed parentage, the son of a woman of this *sagaseg* and a father from the Sepik. He represented himself as well versed in the bureaucratic requirements in registering an incorporated land group, noting that he knew the necessary shortcuts and that he had personal contacts with relevant departmental heads in Port Moresby, through his employment with Ok Tedi Mining Ltd. This *sagaseg* had organised several fundraising activities to support his work in registering all of their lineages under a single ILG group. They started the process early, in 2005, and, by 2009, were expecting the final papers to be signed soon. The *sagaseg* was also in the process of registering a landowner company with the Investment Promotion Authority (IPA), and had already opened a bank account in its name. The list of members of the ILG included all cognatic descendants of the original ancestors (of each lineage), thus swelling the total membership of the ILG to over 700. In their view, the larger the group, the larger their share of total payments to the Wampar. In addition, an increase in the number of members was also seen as a way to increase the *sagaseg*'s negotiating power vis-à-vis the mining company and the state.

The inclusive system of *Sagaseg 3*, however, was buffered by some safeguards. They indicated in their ILG bylaws that while all cognatic descendants are considered members of their *sagaseg* as represented in their ILG, only members that have paid the membership fee of 32 Kina will be entitled to receive a share of the benefits expected from the mining operations. In addition, only members descended through the patriline were chosen as ILG representatives.

A chairman who was only related through his grandmother was ousted from his position, which prompted him to cease attending *sagaseg* meetings.

Sagaseg 4

While the three *sagaseg* described above have found ways to form themselves into an ILG, not all *sagaseg* have managed to do so despite considerable effort. The leaders in *Sagaseg 4* explained what makes it difficult to form an ILG from a large *sagaseg* that is already divided by land disputes and other conflicts between its constituent lineages. Pre-existing conflicts between lineages and/or extended families, breed acute suspicions about representation and control of benefits in the context of mining. The cooperation necessary for ILG formation is hard to achieve. In the absence of an ILG for this *sagaseg*, some who would otherwise organize themselves agnatically have decided to actively participate in ILG formation of their matrilineal *sagaseg*.

The three *sagaseg* that successfully formed ILGs comprised members who were strongly motivated to increase membership in order to achieve significant demographic weight. This motivation is, on the one hand, connected to narratives that stress the need for negotiating power *vis-à-vis* the state and the mining company, and, on the other, to the idea that compensation will be a function of the size of an ILG's membership. Both strategies suggest that it is advantageous to increase membership of one's group to gain a larger share of a limited pool of benefits. This applies both to a lineage leader seeking a larger share of payments made to the *sagaseg*, and to a *sagaseg* intent on a larger share of the payments to the Wampar as a whole.

The rationale for this inclusionary strategy is also connected to narratives that portray the immense wealth mining provides for landowners. With such wealth at stake, the importance of a large number of supporters is stressed, as is the capacity to share benefits widely that, precisely, is ensured by success in maintaining that support base. It is thus coherent with Wampar notions of reciprocity and exchange that characterize group solidarity. To gain numbers of members and keep them in the group implies caring and looking after the well-being of the members. The male lineage leaders are also particularly mindful of performing their obligation to look after their sisters. As explained by a lineage leader in talking about the ILG formation, it is in their *kastom* (the Tok Pisin word for «culture», «tradition») to include their sisters, who therefore should not be neglected. Thus, the inclusive motive is expressed through this cultural value that finds another expression through engagement with

the ILG formation. How they actually distribute the wealth across the members once the expected benefits start flowing is another question.

There are nevertheless also differences between the specific mechanisms that the three *sagaseg* employ to bolster their membership. The different levels and categories of inclusion range from children of interethnic marriages, also qualified by their gender, to their non-Wampar fathers, families of women of the same *sagaseg* who married other Wampar men, to all patri- and matrilineal descendants of the lineage ancestors. A further difference is on the level at which decision-making takes place, which also depends on the number of lineages within a *sagaseg*: *Sagaseg 1* is a small group compared with *Sagaseg 2* or *3*. The relatively small *Sagaseg 1* was able to reckon on an uncontested connection to a common ancestor. The relatively bigger *Sagaseg 2* has left it to the respective leaders of the member lineages to organize their list of who is to be counted and who not. Other *sagaseg*, which include several lineages and extended families, have so far not organized themselves the way the three other groups have done so. Their size and pre-existing conflicts between their constituent lineages regarding land boundaries make it hard for them to consolidate into an ILG. And lastly, there is a difference in the levels of knowledge, experience and connections necessary to undertake such a bureaucratic endeavour. *Sagaseg 3* clearly has an advantage in this sense, as they count in their midst a mining professional with the necessary knowledge and contacts.

Conclusion

The Wampar case clearly shows that narratives concerning mineral extraction have a significant impact on local imaginaries and the way conceptions of kinship, sociality, group boundaries and access to land are expressed. The circulation of these narratives takes place on different levels and is distinctively patterned according to relations and contacts people have with MMJV, state representatives, cultural brokers and local political leaders. As MMJV has a very large-scale presence in Morobe Province, many of its activities impinge on local lives in unprecedented ways (directly or indirectly – through companies and political institutions providing services for MMJV) and decisively engage real and imagined futures. If we think in network terms, and constitute MMJV as Wampar do, as a sort of person, then the company represents something like a hypernode in social life. Through the company, local social networks intensify in various ways but also extend outwards – around Papua New Guinea and beyond.



FIGURE 3. – The «Launching» of the «Hulon Gulf District Five Year Alignment Development Plan», members of parliament gave speeches and heavy machinery was handed over to the Local Level Government (2013, picture Bettina Beer)

Whether, though, the company and its state partners have created a single public or «large-scale political subject» seems to be debatable. Even though MMJV is locally interpreted as a sort of macro-actor, the representations at work along the edges of the network, which define the quality of its sub-regions, seem too heterogeneous and locally specific to constitute a single public sphere. The power of the company and the state to inflect the real and imagined futures of the Wampar still over-determines each local impetus, without amounting to anything that would justify notions of ideological control. Moreover, neither national narratives, nor those that result from particular relationships, which are propagated through social space in locally specific ways (even if they include social media and the politics of blogging) to inflect face-to-face encounters and interpretations thereof, are subject to effective manipulation in a state like Papua New Guinea.

We argue, therefore, that mining sites and the narratives relevant to their interpretation do not so much create «publics», those «large-scale political subjects, [...] that are thinkable and practicable by means of mass-mediated communication» (Cody 2011:38), as provoke representations that transform social imaginaries in ways that also depend upon local specificities. MMJV and the mining and exploration sites have become central to Wampar social networks through the imaginaries they facilitate. One of the most important channels for the distribution of representations of mining is Facebook. The majority of the population is actively excluded from access to more direct information, or

classify it as unreliable, so they process these representations and their own everyday observations, along with the accounts of socio-cultural brokers and national narratives, in a manner that produces desires and expectations relevant to their participation in development and modernity. Yet these are locally conditioned: for everyday observations of developments relating to mining – like the growing number of immigrants, the increased readiness of local groups to sell Wampar land, the increase in lethal accidents on the highlands highway, fish death in the Markham river, the mushrooming of fences and security services, which also entail a wider circulation of firearms and an increase in criminal activities – also act to create anxieties.

Access to good information, like access to education, work and income, is still difficult for the majority of Wampar. Though some individuals – for example, return migrants with good education and extensive work experience – were well-placed to benefit from economic developments induced by MMJV's ambitions, others are left to deal with the increased social inequality as best they can. The Wampar case suggests that the representations circulating within communities located on or near prospective mining sites, can – from the first signs of interest by a mining company – create social expectations and tensions while simultaneously disempowering those communities by restricting information and obscuring political questions and power relations.

The complex, diverse, and dynamic local narratives produced at such sites significantly shape imagined futures. They create not only high expectations of future wealth but also anxieties about exclusion, which would mean not only being left out but having to cope with friends, neighbours and relations who are able to enjoy the expected benefits. As the government and the mining company are perceived as untrustworthy, the Wampar proactively acted on these understandings and started to coordinate among themselves (sometimes by coordinating how they compete). They redefine and reshape themselves in novel ways to make the most of this new economic opportunity, and attain what they consider the best possible of imagined futures. Drawing on their cultural categories to craft representative groups legible to the state and the company, they also adapt those categories to be as inclusive as their understanding of the future requires.

That most Wampar operate with an inclusive mode of social boundary-making when confronted with the prospect of resource exploitation is not unique in Papua New Guinea, as the example of Porgera (Golub, 2007a) and the Gende (Zimmer-Tamakoshi, 1997) has shown. Through their engagement with the ILC

framework, they are consciously de-emphasising patrilineality, which is a notion that they would otherwise use and emphasize in other contexts such as when it comes to restricting children of non-Wampar fathers from planting permanent cash crops on the land of their Wampar mother, as this would permanently alienate the land, or the general narrative on the perceived threat that migrants and an increase in interethnic marriages pose for their land resources (see Bacalzo, 2012; Beer, 2006a). In contrast to these exclusionary forms of boundary maintenance, the Wampar are forming ILGs in the context of mining that are as large as possible by drawing both on the biological and social dimensions of kinship.

This thus leads to a «revival of clans» that are actually not strictly unilineal clans. People often use the word «clan», or more precisely, the Tok Pisin word *klen*, to refer to these types of social groups. These *klen* as formed by the membership list of an ILG, however, are not complete innovations, as maternal kin have always enjoyed certain rights in Wampar social life. There are numerous cases of matrilineal transfer of land tenure rights, mostly in the absence of male descendants (see Fischer, 1996: 135-144). In addition, exogamously married women are neither cut off from nor deprived of rights flowing from their natal lineages. Thus, a married woman continues to identify with and is recognized as a member of the *sagaseg* of her father. Women never completely relinquish usufruct rights on land belonging to their natal lineage after marriage. In the context of interethnic marriages, Wampar mothers are even able to transfer some of these usufruct rights to their children.

The revival of the *sagaseg* among the Wampar under the influence of narratives about mining, after their former decline in colonial and early post-colonial contexts, suggests that such categories might always have been sensitive to specific local and broader narrative influence. The analysis of these narrative contexts is thus crucial for understanding the processes at work, especially in settings where other social forces operate (e.g., the state, mining companies), and where social change (here through interethnic marriages and the ensuing transcultural kinship) constantly mediate the conditions for what kind of concepts can be employed (like with the required procedure for an ILG registration and the codification that follows). This also suggests need for caution about predicting the reconfiguration of these categories into the future. It is not yet clear, for example, what will happen to these *sagaseg* once official negotiations between the mining company, the state and landowners take place, or when the mine finally starts operations and the expected benefits will start to flow. The experiences from other mining

areas in Papua New Guinea, lead us not to discount the possibility for more exclusionary processes and increasing inequalities, in the medium to long-term future.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BACALZO Doris, 2012. Transformations in Kinship, Land Rights and Social Boundaries among the Wampar in Papua New Guinea and the Generative Agency of Children of Interethnic Marriages, *Childhood* 19 (3), pp. 332-345.
- BAINTON Nicholas A., 2009. Keeping the Network Out of View: Mining, Distinctions and Exclusion in Melanesia, *Oceania* 79 (1), pp. 18-33.
- BARKER John, 1996. The Category 'Village' in Melanesian Social Worlds: Some Theoretical and Methodological Possibilities, *Paideuma* 56, pp. 41-62.
- BEER Bettina, 2006a. Interethnic Marriages: Changing Rules and Shifting Boundaries among the Wampar in Papua New Guinea, in B. Waldis and R. Byron (eds), *Migration and Marriage: Heterogamy and Homogamy in a Changing World*, Münster, Lit Verlag, pp. 20-39.
- , 2006b. Stonhet and Yelotop: Body Images, Physical Markers and Definitions of Ethnic Boundaries in Papua New Guinea, *Anthropological Forum* 16 (2), pp. 105-122.
- , 2010. Interethnische Beziehungen und Transkulturelle Verwandtschaft, in E. Alber, B. Beer, J. Pauli, and M. Schnegg (eds), *Verwandtschaft Heute: Positionen, Ergebnisse und Perspektiven*, Berlin, Reimer, pp. 145-171.
- BEER Bettina and Julia SCHROEDTER, ms. Social Reproduction and Ethnic Boundaries: Marriage Patterns through Time and Space among the Wampar, Papua New Guinea. Submitted to *Sociologus*.
- CODY Francis, 2011. Publics and Politics, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 40 (1), pp. 37-52.
- ERNST Thomas M., 1999. Land, Stories, and Resources: Discourse and Entification in Onabasulu Modernity, *American Anthropologist* 101 (1), pp. 88-97.
- FILER Colin, 1997. Compensation, Rent and Power in Papua New Guinea, in S. Toft (ed.), *Compensation for Resource Development in Papua New Guinea*, Boroko, Law Reform Commission.

- , 2007. Local Custom and the Act of Land Group Boundary Maintenance in Papua New Guinea, in J. F. Weiner and K. Glaskin (eds), *Customary Land Tenure and Registration in Australia and Papua New Guinea: Anthropological Perspectives*, Canberra, ANU Epress, pp. 135-174.
- FINGLETON Jim, 2007. A Legal Regime for Issuing Group Titles to Customary Land: Lessons from the East Sepik, in J. F. Weiner and K. Glaskin (eds), *Customary Land Tenure and Registration in Australia and Papua New Guinea: Anthropological Perspectives*, Canberra, ANU Epress, pp. 15-38.
- FISCHER Hans, 1975. Gabsongkeg '71: *Verwandtschaft, Siedlung und Landbesitz in einem Dorf in Neuguinea*, München, Renner.
- , 1994. *Geister und Menschen: Mythen, Märchen und neue Geschichten*, Berlin, Reimer.
- , 1996. *Der Haushalt des Darius: Über die Ethnographie von Haushalten*, Berlin, Reimer.
- , 1997. Zensusaufnahmen. Das Beispiel Gabsongkeg, in W. Schulze, H. Fischer and H. Lang (eds), *Geburt und Tod: Ethnodemographische Probleme, Methoden und Ergebnisse*, Berlin, Reimer, pp. 37-91.
- , 2013. Woher wir kamen: Moderne Elemente zur Herkunftsgeschichte der Wampar, Papua-Neuguinea, *Sociologus* 63 (1-2), pp. 125-145.
- GILBERTHORPE Emma, 2013. In the Shadow of Industry: A Study of Culturization in Papua New Guinea, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19 (2), pp. 261-278.
- GILBERTHORPE Emma and Glenn BANKS, 2012. Development on Whose Terms? CSR Discourse and Social Realities in Papua New Guinea's Extractive Industries Sector, *Resources Policy* 37 (2), pp. 185-193.
- GOLUB Alex, 2007a. From Agency to Agents: Forging Landowner Identities in Porgera, in J. F. Weiner and K. Glaskin (eds), *Customary Land Tenure and Registration in Australia and Papua New Guinea: Anthropological Perspectives*, Canberra, ANU Epress, pp. 57-72.
- , 2007b. Ironies of Organization: Landowners, Land Registration, and Papua New Guinea's Mining and Petroleum Industry, *Human Organization* 66 (1), pp. 38-48.
- GUDDEMI Phillip, 1997. Continuities, Contexts, Complexities, and Transformations: Local Land Concepts of a Sepik People Affected by Mining Exploration, *Anthropological Forum* 7 (4), pp. 629-648.
- IMBUN Benedict Y., 2013. Maintaining Land Use Agreements in Papua New Guinea Mining: «Business as Usual»?., *Resources Policy* 38 (3), pp. 310-319.
- JORGENSEN Dan, 1997. Who and What Is a Landowner? Mythology and Marking the Ground in a Papua New Guinea Mining Project, *Anthropological Forum* 7 (4), pp. 599-627.
- , 2007. Clan-finding, Clan-making and the Politics of Identity in a Papua New Guinea Mining Project, in J. F. Weiner and K. Glaskin (eds), *Customary Land Tenure and Registration in Australia and Papua New Guinea: Anthropological Perspectives*, Canberra, ANU Epress, pp. 57-72.
- LEWIS David and David MOSSE (eds.), 2006. *Development Brokers and Translators: The Ethnography of Aid and Agencies*, Bloomfield, Kumarian Press.
- LÜTKES Christiana. 1999. «Gom»: *Arbeit und ihre Bedeutung bei den Wampar im Dorf Tararan, Papua-Neuguinea*, Münster, New York, Waxmann.
- PAINÉ Robert, 1971. A Theory of Patronage and Brokerage, in R. Paine (ed.), *Patrons and Brokers in the East Arctic*, Newfoundland, University of Toronto Press, pp. 8-21.
- WEINER James F., 2007. The Foi Incorporated Land Group: Group Definition and Collective Action in the Kutubu Oil Project Area, Papua New Guinea, in J. F. Weiner and K. Glaskin (eds), *Customary Land Tenure and Registration in Australia and Papua New Guinea: Anthropological Perspectives*, Canberra, ANU Epress, pp. 117-134.
- ZIMMER-TAMAKOSHI Laura, 1997. When Land Has a Price: Ancestral Gerrymandering and the Resolution of Land Conflicts at Kurumbukare, *Anthropological Forum* 7 (4), pp. 649-666.
- , 2001. Development and Ancestral Gerrymandering: David Schneider in Papua New Guinea, in R. Feinberg and M. Ottenheimer (eds), *The Cultural Analysis of Kinship: The Legacy of David Schneider and its Implications for Anthropological Relativism*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, pp. 187-203.
- , 2012. Troubled Masculinities and Gender Violence in Melanesia, in M. Jolly, C. Stewart and C. Brewer (eds), *Engendering Violence in Papua New Guinea*, Canberra, ANU Epress, pp. 57-81.

Local experiences with mining royalties, company and the state in the Solomon Islands

by

Gordon Leua NANAU*

ABSTRACT

Royalties, rents and other material benefits from mining ventures have been of interest to development discussions. These benefits are important to all stakeholders but the first mining agreement in the Solomon Islands only accommodated a tiny percentage of the gross value of gold and silver produced as the mining lease to landowning groups. The questions that led me to the Gold Ridge mine and surrounding communities on Guadalcanal in 2007 and 2010 are: (i) Can royalties from the mine be sustainable agents to improve people's livelihoods? (ii) To what extent have royalty payments, licence fees and rents from mines impacted on local Solomon Islanders' lives? (iii) How do mining agreements and courts of law do or do not safeguard local social capital and the environment? In analysing the data, the processes of negotiating mining agreements; movement and resettlement of people; livelihood and gendered opportunities offered by the mine; and the state's role in the mine are discussed in this paper. Moreover, the paper responds to the three questions above and assesses the sustainability of mining royalties and the role of the modern state and processes in the Solomon Islands mining sector.

KEYWORDS: relocation, landowners, livelihoods, royalties, mining

RÉSUMÉ

Les débats sur le développement se sont intéressés aux royalties, rentes et autres bénéfices matériels issues des opérations minières. Ces bénéfices sont importants pour toutes les parties prenantes mais le premier accord minier aux îles Salomon n'a accordé qu'un pourcentage minime du revenu brut de l'or et de l'argent produits sous forme de rente minière aux propriétaires de la terre. Les questions qui m'ont amené à m'intéresser à la mine Gold Ridge et aux communautés riveraines en 2007 et 2010 sont : (i) Les royalties minières peuvent-elles être des vecteurs durables de l'amélioration des modes de subsistance des populations ? (ii) Quelle a été l'influence du paiement de royalties, de droits sur les permis et de rentes minières sur les modes de vie des populations locales des îles Salomon ? (iii) Dans quelle mesure les accords miniers et les tribunaux protègent-ils ou non le capital social local et l'environnement ? Les données analysées dans cet article permettent de discuter des processus de négociation des accords miniers, des mouvements et réinstallations des populations, du mode de subsistance et des opportunités en termes de genre offertes par la mine et du rôle de l'État face au secteur minier. En outre, l'article répond aux trois questions posées ci-dessus et évalue la durabilité des royalties minières et les rôles et procédures de l'État moderne dans le secteur minier aux îles Salomon.

MOTS-CLÉS : réinstallation, propriétaires fonciers, modes de subsistance, royalties, mine

The Gold Ridge¹ mine project covers a leased area of 32 square kilometres and it also has a Special Prospecting Licence (SPL) area of 132 square

kilometres on the island of Guadalcanal (ASG, 2007: 4). It commenced production in October 1996 until June 2000 when the mine operators

1. Primary materials used in this paper are from the author's research work among the Gold Ridge and downstream communities since 2007 and subsequent visits after that. I thank the leaders and community members for their support and frank discussions on these trips.

* Lecturer in Government, Development and International Affairs, University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji. gordon.nanau@usp.ac.fj

abandoned operations due to social tensions between indigenous Guadalcanal people and Malaita settlers (Nanau, 2008). The Asia Miner reported that in the first 22 months the mine was in operation:

«[...] [it] produced 210,000 ounces of gold and was the source of 30% of the Solomon Islands GDP.» (Asia Miner, 2007)

The mine, the first in the country, anticipated losses to homes, spaces, environment and livelihoods and this necessitated the need to negotiate royalty and land rents and other compensation arrangements. Such negotiations take time and agreements initially reached are often amended to suit prevailing circumstances. Manegulai² (pers. com., 3 July 2007) indicated that it took about 30 years of prospecting and 17 years of negotiations to establish the Gold Ridge mine. He conceded that to negotiate an agreement that could be regarded well by all stakeholders is very difficult. For Gold Ridge landowners, it was more of a trial and error over 17 years and the post tension Subsidiary Agreement (2006) attests to these continuous demands for improvements (see GRML and GRCLAC, 2006). It should be stated at this juncture that the people of the Gold ridge area have had previous experience of artisanal mining and are therefore conscious of the value of gold. As such their understanding of industrial mining is influenced by that experience. Moreover, those living downstream have never had the experience of dealing with mining pollution in the past and that experience also influenced their understanding of industrial mining.

Methodology

The methodology used in this research is more a constructivist/critical realist epistemology. One aspect of this position is that knowledge claims are always socially situated rather than universalistic (Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo, 2002). Critical realists argue that people possess knowledge by being in the world with elements of a predisposed historical, path dependent framework. As Proctor (1998) puts it:

«[k]nowledge to critical realists is neither wholly objective nor subjective but is in fact the result of interaction between subject and object. [...] the truth contents of ideas can be compared on a relative basis: some (social) explanations are more adequate representations of reality than others, though all are, by virtue of the dialectic (subject-subject) nature of knowledge, always “partial truths”.» (Proctor, 1998: 361)

In this research, the focus is primarily on the experiences of landowning groups and the Solomon Islands Government. Official company documents and agreements are also consulted to indicate the company position.

A variety of interrelated methods were used to access information from the different actors in the natural resources sector. The first and most used method is individual **face to face interview**. Appointments were made with respondents and with the help of lists of questions specifically targeting three different groups in the landowning communities, interviews were conducted with individuals. In a number of situations, individual interviews were not possible so **focus group discussions or workshops** were carried out to gauge group views. Such focus group discussions were held separately for males, females, youths and community leaders. Apart from interviews and focus group discussions, **observations** and *talanoa* or *tok stori* were relied upon to verify and confirm or disregard information obtained in the interviews and focus group discussions. *Talanoa* (tok stori in Melanesian pidgin) according to Vaoleti:

«[...] can be referred to as a conversation, a talk, an exchange of ideas or thinking, whether formal or informal. It is almost always carried out face-to-face.» (Vaoleti 2006: 23)

These conversations also produced rich information used to verify materials provided by other informants.

Historical and Political Context of the Study

Before venturing into the experiences of landowners with the state, state institutions and company, it is important to briefly contextualise the history and political context in which the mine was established. Some accounts attributed the name of the country, Solomon Islands, from a gold nugget that the first European to visit the Solomon Islands, Alvaro de Mendana, picked from one of the river's mouths along the Guadalcanal coast. He called them the Solomon Islands in «the mistaken hope of mineral riches matching those of the biblical king» (Johnson and Powles, 2012: 140). Of course this is a contentious piece of history but the point is that, interest in gold and mineral deposits in the Solomon Islands started way back in those very early days of contacts with the outside world. The declaration of Solomon Islands as a British Protectorate in 1893 gave way the opening up of the islands that are now called Solomon Islands to the outside world. Solomon Islanders

2. Pseudonyms are used in place of real names as part of a total ethical approach used by this research.

were introduced to the outside world through the labour trade (black birding), World War II experiences and the introduction of waged labour through plantation development (see Bennett 1987). The movement of people between islands in response to plantation and urban administrative centres continued to increase even after flag independence.

The Protectorate also introduced modern laws based on the British laws. Prominent among these were laws relating to land. Land titling and the possibility of leasing land for «development» activity was a feature of the modern tenure, something totally different from traditional land tenure that is based on communal ownership. A controversial regulation called the «Solomon Islands Wasteland Regulation» saw the alienation of huge areas on many islands to plantation owners and other business people. A bulk of these is found on Guadalcanal where huge coconut plantations were established. The aftermath of World War II also saw the shift of the government's headquarters from Tulagi in the Central Islands group to Honiara on Guadalcanal. Urban migration and the movement of people from other islands to Guadalcanal were exacerbated and this brings with it all the social and economic ills of modern society like crimes, poverty and disputes over land. The indigenous people of Guadalcanal also felt exploited by the state because of the assumption that they gave more than the other provinces in terms of revenue from their land and resources. Unfortunately, they felt that provinces with fewer contributions to the national economy are benefitting more from Guadalcanal resources and employment opportunities created there. Moreover, migrants allegedly failed to respect the traditions and cultures of the indigenous people of Guadalcanal and have settled illegally on customary land owned by Guadalcanal tribes and clans. This fear of the «outsider» is also discussed by Filer (1990: 7) in the case of the Bougainville copper mine and is therefore not peculiar to Guadalcanal.

These frustrations and feeling of being exploited were demonstrated through various peaceful petitions and demonstration by Guadalcanal people. The first one was held in 1978 just before independence (Guadalcanal Provincial Council, 1978). The state responded and promised to the



FIGURE 1. – Map of Solomon Islands (source: SSGM, ANU, 2014)

address their concern. However, ten years down the road in 1988, Guadalcanal people again petitioned the state on their concerns after multiple murders by settlers in a Guadalcanal village. This time, one item prominent on the agenda is the need for more autonomy by provinces to determine their own destinies by benefiting more from their resources (Gatu, 1988). The government received the petition and again promised to address the issues of concern. Nothing really eventuated and another ten years on, another set of demands was submitted to the state by the Guadalcanal Provincial Assembly after another murder of a Guadalcanal woman (Guadalcanal Provincial Assembly, 1998). It was alleged that the petition triggered anger and resentment in some Guadalcanal youths who formed a militant group, the Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army (GRA) later called the Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM) to harass and evict migrant settlements, especially from the neighbouring island of Malaita, out of rural Guadalcanal, from plantations and other establishments on the island. The settler population from Malaita responded to the intimidation and harassments by forming a counter militia force, the Malaita Eagle Force (MEF). With the help of some members of the Police Force, they

removed arms from the national armoury and retaliated. An estimated 200 people were killed and more than 20,000 displaced in the conflict. Several peace agreements and reconciliations failed to broker sustainable peace. The Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) of 2000 (see SIG *et al.*, 2001) brought an end to overt fighting but it did not stop criminal activities, thus the intervention by the Pacific Islands Forum sanctioned Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) in 2003 (see Carter, 2006).

The historical, political and cultural issues described here would explain the complex situation in which the Gold Ridge mine was established. Moreover, it explains the relationship between the state, landowners and company and the challenges such a relationship entail. The fieldwork was carried out in a post conflict society where huge plantations, mining and other industries on Guadalcanal and the Solomon Islands more generally were struggling to be reopened. The Gold Ridge Mine was closed in 2000 after police officers moved out of the mine site and militants took control of it and looted/destroyed its facilities. The same could be said for the asset of the Solomon Islands Plantations Limited (SIPL). In this instance, the state leased customary land from custom owners and subleased these mine and plantations lands to companies. The state in most of these undertakings is a middle man instead of it being the driver of such developments. The next section looks at the mining agreement, how wealth is redistributed by local landowning groups, and how landowners perceive the role of the state.

Negotiating the Mining Agreement

All issues involving royalties and company activities are catered for mostly under the Mines and Minerals Act, the Land and Titles Act, environmental legislations and the Mines and Minerals (Royalty) Regulations (SIG, 2011). As Gold Ridge lease is on customary land, negotiations had to involve the Guadalcanal Provincial Government (GPG), the Commissioner of Lands (CoL) and Solomon Islands Government (SIG), Company, originally the Ross Mining Company Limited, later Allied Gold and now Santa Barbara (St Barbara Limited, 2014). The customary land owners and people of Gold Ridge formed a Charitable Organisation, the Gold Ridge Landowners Council (GRLC) to represent them in these negotiations (GRCLAC, 2006), a process of

representation but exclusion of the masses. They were therefore required to institutionalise their local structures and leadership to cater for this new undertaking. The mine ultimately led to the establishment of the Malango and Vulolo House of Chiefs with a constitution that empowers the bigmen³ to negotiate or instigate protests on development activities in Central Guadalcanal (Malango House of Chiefs, 2004).

Negotiators usually try to derive maximum benefits from the mine's revenue. New local organisations and structures emerged in response to such expectations from the mine. For example, the mine resulted in the increase in the number of tribes from around five in pre-royalty period to sixteen in response to the need to redistribute royalties and other benefits. What were only clans and «sub-clans» became separate tribes in the formal agreement, possibly confusing the *kastom*⁴ bases of lineages in that particular area. The sixteen «tribes» that became parties to various agreements are Kaokao, Kaipalipali, Roha, Chavuchavu, Lasi, Charana, Chacha, Sahara, Salasivo, Halisia, Soroboilo, Sobaha, Sutahuri, Rausere, Vatuviti, Koenihao and Kolobisi (Gold Ridge Mine Agreement, 1996: 14)

Trustees become important individuals and councillors are voted in to the GRLC (mostly based on seniority or literacy levels) to negotiate on behalf of the local *wantok*⁵ groups. The bigmen therefore become leaders through elections and not necessarily based on *kastom* merits. The only individuals who became automatic members of GRLC were five Principal Landowners. The educated and articulate members of *wantok* groups are elected into GRLC. They become trustees entrusted to control royalty payments and decision making on revenue redistribution for their own «tribes». A landowners' council was established with elected members every three years (GRLCAC, 1996: 5)

A youth workshop conducted for this research in Obo Obo village reported that council members are responsible for negotiating with the company. When asked about their understanding of lands leased to company, one respondent indicated that:

«only the Councillors knew about such issues. We youths do not know anything about these. To give an example, Mr. Kulamuloki is a council representative in our village but for some of us, our tribal representatives live far from us.» (Obo Obo Youths, 5 July 2007)

thus the difficulty of getting accurate information. A men's group at Obo Obo also shared the same sentiment saying that:

3. *Bigmen* is a term that refers to respected leaders of specific family groups and communities.
4. *Kastom* refers to local knowledge systems, ways of doing things and political organisation.
5. The term *wantok* in this context refers to blood members of an extended family, clan or tribe.

«[they] vote representatives into the Gold Ridge Landowners Council (GRLC). These councillors should report back to members of the tribes. Unfortunately, some representatives in the GRLC never report back to their tribes or villages. One man make decisions in Council on behalf of say 5,000+ people.» (Obo Obo Men, 4 July 2007)

Tribe members nevertheless are empowered by the GRLC constitution and could remove their representatives before the three years lapse although no such removals have yet been reported.

The mining agreement and wealth redistribution

The Gold Ridge Mine Agreement 1996 laid out clearly how royalty, compensations and related matters are to be paid to landowners and the state. Section 6.1 of the Agreement ensured that the company pays 1.5% of the gross value of gold and silver produced from the mine as the mining lease into a Mining Royalty Special Fund (1996: 7). Eighty percent (80%) of this will be paid to the 16 groups with registered interest on the leased area and 20% into a Guadalcanal Province Royalty Special Fund after it is subjected to a 7.5% government withholding tax. A specific regulation for the Gold Ridge Mine royalties was passed and gazetted in 2011 (SIG, 2011). A breakdown of how such royalties (80% of 1.5%) are to be paid to the respective «tribes» of Gold Ridge area is listed below.

This research uncovered how benefactors of such royalty payments use royalty benefits. Manegulai, explained that his tribe received approximately SI\$200,000 per payment while the other smaller groups receive at least SI\$10,000 per royalty payment (pers. com., 3 July 2007). It should be pointed out that agreements for the mining campsite and the tailings dam are different from the mining lease agreement which is the focus of this paper.

From the various workshops organised with the landowners, their stories revealed that they only benefitted from quarterly lease agreement payments paid by the company. A member of the Chacha tribe illustrated how far such monies are redistributed at the local level. His tribe receives SI\$12,000 per payment for a group of around twelve families. He claimed that:

«[...] [they] have 12 passbook accounts which mean that we deposit SI\$1,000 per passbook. It depends on the families whether or not they redistribute their shares further to distant relatives.» (Men's Group, 4 July 2007)

As most households in the area are headed by males, distribution of royalties to female mem-

Gold Ridge Landowning Tribe/Line	Percentage of Royalty Received
1. Rausere	36.500 %
2. Charana	6.300 %
3. Kaokao	6.300 %
4. Roha	6.300 %
5. Sutahuri	6.300 %
6. Vatuviti	6.300 %
7. Halisia	6.200 %
8. Soroboilo	6.200 %
9. Chacha	5.000 %
10. Sabaha	3.925 %
11. Salasivo	3.225 %
12. Chavuchavu	2.500 %
13. Kaipalipali	1.325 %
14. Koenihao	1.225 %
15. Lasi	1.200 %
16. Sarahi	1.200 %
Total	100.000 %

TABLE 1. – Gold Ridge Landowners and Royalty Shares (Source: Gold Ridge Mine Agreement 1996)

bers of tribes and individual households is dependent on the decisions of fathers, brothers and uncles. The influences of subsistence living and cultural exchanges impacted very much on how these people redistribute mineral royalties. There is very little indication of savings or reinvestment. Money is shared as soon as it is withdrawn from the bank by trustees (Youths, 5 July 2007). The role of the state in this arena is very limited facilitating payments from company to landowning groups as per the mining agreement. The state in this instance would only support in terms of organised workshops to assist landowners and other stakeholders identify common pitfalls to be addressed. In one of these workshops in 2013, the Special Secretary to the Prime Minister highlighted that:

«[...] the Government has seen that landowners of Goldridge mining did not invest their royalties in sustainable enterprise after receiving it.» (Osifelo, 2013)

After the country's civil uprisings from 1998 to 2003, efforts to reopen the mine also instigated compensation claims from various groups. People asked to be compensated by company and the state for damages caused by Ross Mining, outstanding commitments by the previous mining company and government, and assistance to deliver public services and build amenities in the area. Prior to 2000, the Gold Ridge Mining Limited (GRML), a subsidiary of Ross

Mining NL owned the mine. During the period of unrest and tension, ownership was passed to the political risk insurer, American Home Assurance Company (AHAC) and Australian Solomon Gold (ASG) took over the company in 2004 after an international tender (ASG, 2008: 8). Allied Gold bid for and compulsorily acquired ASG in October 2009 and is therefore the 100% owner of Gold Ridge in 2010. In September 2012, St Barbara Limited again took over from Allied Gold and is currently operating the mine (see St Barbara Limited, 2014). During the period leading up to the reopening of the mine, landowners insisted on the company and the state to meet financial and service needs of people in the area. This is regarded as a measure of company commitment to operate a mutually beneficial mine and to appease disagreements among them and other parties. The signing of a subsidiary agreement in May 2006 attested to additional claims for benefits.

Quite obvious is the perception that the state is another external entity. The state is not seen as an entity safeguarding the interests of local landowners communities but an institution more supportive of company interests. Mr. Kulamuloki, a member of the GRCL made a telling statement when he lamented that:

«the state should be the referee in the game between the mining company and the resource owners. In this case, the state also wants to score the ball!» (pers. com., 3 July 2007)

Various community and local level organisations looking after the affairs of Obo Obo community and surrounding villages like Bemuta submitted demands in the form of wish lists to both company and the state as urges to reopen the mine around 2004 and 2005 were becoming apparent. The Obo Obo Community for instance negotiated and signed a MOU with ASG for the company to retrieve its equipment rescued by the villagers before and after the Guadalcanal tensions (see Bemuta Community Relocation Committee, 2006). GRML and ASG Limited therefore committed themselves to support various projects in the village including the restoration of a water supply, repair and maintenance of roads, support in constructing a kindergarten, church and community hall buildings and other support to women groups and income generating projects (MOU signed on 9th June 2005). A recent example was made by Chovohio Midstream Association members in April 2013 for St Barbara to compensate them for activities negatively impacting on the environment (water) and livelihood (STO, April 2013). These MOUs do not have time lines and are not legally binding but a form of negotiated compensation (see Filer and Macintyre, 2006; Banks, 2008). The role of the

state in such arrangements is usually to facilitate such meetings where understandings are reached between landowners and the company. In certain instances, the MOUs are only an understanding between the company and communities and nothing to do with the state. It is when such MOUs are not adhered to by the company or violence is eminent that landowners usually request the state to intervene with the hope of forcing the company to meet its agreed obligations to communities.

At times, landowning groups make submissions to the state with the hope that they be listened to because of the contribution they make to state revenues from mineral resources on their land. An example was the submission by the Gold Ridge Community and GRCLAC to the Solomon Islands Government in April 2007. Some demands in this particular submission included the transfer to the investment arm, GIL the perpetual title of the Lunga land on which the first relocation village was situated; that SIG and GRML to build houses for those displaced by the mine in two new locations of Kovalei and Ravua; the quick payment of land premium by government; the closure of water sources for the mining plant as it was not paid for; the quick transfer of prime site land in Honiara as per previous agreements and waiver of SI\$42,000 stamp duty fee; compensation for loss of crops; immediate payment for lost property to people of Malango and Vulolo Wards as a consequence of the tensions; and, that government give a loan guarantee to Gold Ridge Investment Limited (GIL) of up to SI\$6 million (GRCLAC, 2007: 1-10).

Apart from the establishment of GIL which is yet to undertake business activities, most requests and demands to the company and the state are unsustainable in the long run. The establishment of the mine also comes with increased expectations that could hardly be met through royalties and these gave rise to more demands and compensation claims. These resulted in the signing of several separate agreement and MOUs between the landowners and other stakeholder in the Gold Ridge mine apart from the main mining agreement, a divide and rule strategy by the mining company. This is not peculiar to Gold Ridge as it was also the case in Australia and Papua New Guinea (O'Faircheallaigh, 2008: 37). At times this result in companies gaining tax relief to provide basic services to areas around their operation sites (Callick, 2005: 183). These may include building health centres and schools, maintaining roads and providing scholarships. Since the negotiations and demands mostly relate to environment and livelihood concerns, it is important to have a discussion on how modern law and local kastom do not usually complement each other.

Modern laws and local *kastom* discrepancies

The idea of trusteeship contradicts local understandings of collective land ownership (Nanau, 2008). Collective ownership on Guadalcanal is a complex concept whereby certain clans (commonly known as mamata) are custodians of land used by themselves and other members of the community. The mamata, an off shoot of the Kema (tribe) has a lot (but not ultimate) influence over the overall use of the land. Members of the same mamata have equal rights over the land but they have specific areas where they make their food gardens or homes that are respected as primarily owned by distinct families of the same mamata. In a way, there are areas with the mamata land those individual and extended families (still collectively) of the same clan and their associates (children, marriage relatives, etc.) have «respected» control over. Other members of the clan simply have to ask before using or getting things out of that area. Indeed there are bundles of rights over land but control over land is culturally a collective effort by members of the mamata (see Nanau, 2011). When giving titles to land, trustees sometimes behave like sole owners of tribal land and shares. Allen state:

«While both state law and customary practice dictate that trustees are obliged to share royalties and rents with other members of their landowning groups, in practice they have not done so.» (2012: 308)

Once communal land is registered under the trusteeship of individuals, disputes within these local wantok groups can be very difficult to sort. This is because the written agreements and titles are extremely difficult to challenge under laws imposed by modern states.

These laws do not recognise secondary rights by clan members to cultivate, hunt, collection of building materials, other common properties, and even historic rights in those pieces of land (O’Faircheallaigh, 2008: 39). Even maternal and paternal rights and privileges to use land are not recognised by modern state laws. Modern laws and court systems differentiate between primary and secondary rights while it is not that clear cut in local understandings of landownership. Maenu’u (1994) and Filer (2006) provide somewhat opposing views that could be the basis for further investigations into the communal versus individual land ownership perceptions in Melanesia. Suffice to say that in the Solomon Islands, there is communal ownership of land but that the landowning tribes also respect individual members’ ownership of properties built on or planted on communal lands. Extractive industries such as logging and mining complicate ownership and use of land in communities as the two external entities, the state and company

become part of the equation. The notion of the «enclave economy» (see Le Meur, Ballard *et al.*, 2013) is fitting in where there is community/state/company interactions.

A court case against Ross Mining and Others by John Maningelea and Others (1997) will demonstrate this incompatibility. Part of the claims in this particular case, Maningelea and others alleged that:

«[...] the said Agreement [Gold Ridge Mine Agreement] contained no enforceable rights; that the compensation there contained was illusory (paragraph 12); that false representations had been made (paras. 15 and 16); allegations of unconstitutionality (paras.14-20); and failure to compensate secondary right holders (para. 21).» (High Court of Solomon Islands, 1997b)

Setting aside all the technical arguments pertaining to this case, the Judge made the following statements in his ruling:

«As to the rights of the plaintiffs to challenge the validity of the compensation Agreement, it is trite law that only parties to the Compensation Agreement can seek to enforce the terms of such an Agreement or to challenge its validity. It is clear that the Plaintiffs are not parties to the said Agreement. All that they have alleged in their Statement of Claim is that they have customary interests or rights over the said Land. At the most, this amounts to a mere assertion because in contrast, the Second Defendant relies on the Sub-Leases granted to it by the Commissioner of Lands on or about 12th March 1997. The Commissioner of Lands in turn had acquired leases from the registered joint owners of the 25 perpetual estates of the said Land. The Plaintiffs therefore face an uphill and formidable task to challenge the registered rights and interest of those joint owners. The mere fact that they allege they have an interest or right over the said land does not entitle them per se to challenge the validity of the Agreement. They will have to challenge the title of the joint owners of the said Land first under the provisions of the Land and Titles Act, and only if successful, can they in turn challenge the validity of the Compensation Agreement. I find with respect this claim of the Plaintiff as disclosing no reasonable cause of action and should be dismissed.» (High Court of Solomon Islands, 1997b: 2)

The critical point to learn from this court challenge is the great difficulty of reconciling modern land law and local people’s understandings of landownership and use in Solomon Islands. The written agreement and technicalities of modern laws on land safeguard private property and investment promoted by transnational corporations (TNCs) and in the process rural livelihoods and subsistence become negligible concerns. It is in such situation where the impositions of the educated and literate local population on those still clinging on to local understandings of land that brew hatred and tension in countries like

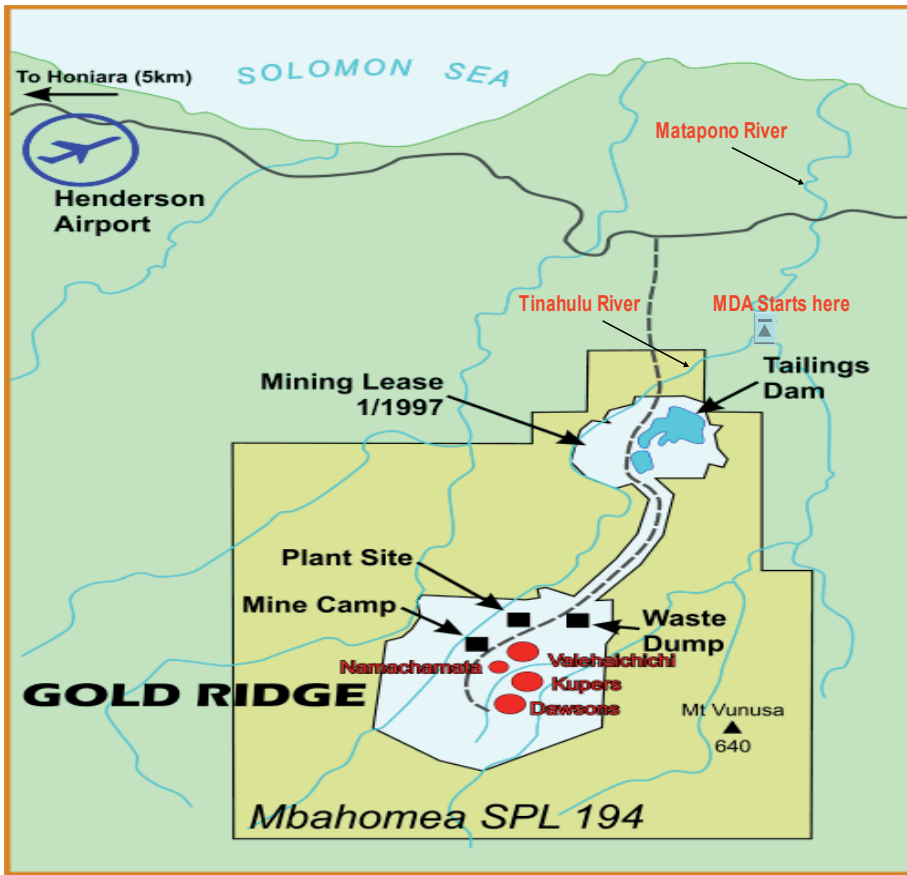


FIGURE 2. – Gold Ridge Mine on Guadalcanal (adapted from ASG Limited, 2007)

the Solomon Islands. In many instances, new property laws and institutions contradict local people's ways of seeing things and frustrations turn into violent disputes and conflicts. It is in situations where people can no longer stand up to safeguard their local understandings and rights to land and what they genuinely believe that result in tensions and conflicts. It should also be emphasized that because modern laws are written and local stories of landownership in local communities are orally kept, knowledge based on the written word always have the upper hand.

Apart from the confusions where two different sets of perceiving land converge, there are also disagreements between land owners and company on the provisions of the original mining agreement, royalty and compensation payments and on the adverse impacts of mining on the environment. Concern for environmental pollution and negative impacts on livelihoods of people living along the Matapono River and the tailings dam gave way to the formation of the Matapono Downstream Association (MDA). Membership and influence of MDA start where the two rivers meet as shown in Figure 2 below.

The MDA's stance is that GRML poses health and environmental risks to their livelihoods. According to the men of Tumorora, MDA is within the mining zone and is a legal entity looking after the concerns of Tumorora and Pituloki communities. They insisted that these communities did not receive support from the mining company despite the potential irreversible impacts the mine has on their river and food gardening areas. The Association was established to secure compensation for the damages the mine has already done to their river. They indicated that road maintenance was the only thing the mining company assisted the community with (Tumorora men, 13 May 2007). MDA was thus established as an environmental concern body monitoring the effects of the mine downstream while also acting as a lobbyist for compensation on environmental degradation and effects on livelihoods.

Apart from the above 1998 civil case, three other civil cases were brought against the mining company. These were civil case 59 in 1997 known as the «Gatu proceedings»; 60 in 1997 referenced as the «Roni/Thughuvoda proceedings»; and 169 of 1997 referenced as the «Saki proceedings». The case by Samuel Saki and

others raised among other things the threat of waste and other materials discharged from the mining operations into the Matapono River (High Court of Solomon Islands, 1997c). The case by Roni and Thughuvoda was aimed at seeking additional financial benefits and compensations from the proceeds of the mine beyond what was signed in the Gold Ridge Mine agreement of 1996 (High Court of Solomon Islands, 1997a). Gatu's case focuses more on pressuring the Gold Ridge Mining Company to obtain electricity supply from the Lunga Hydro Power Consortium (High Court of Solomon Islands, 1998), another Australian firm. As they turned out, Gatu's case was dismissed on 17th September 1998, Roni/Tghughuvoda proceedings were discontinued 3rd October 1997 as they entered into written Agreements (known as «Deed of Release») with Ross Mining (Solomon Islands) Limited and a later application to revive these proceedings were dismissed by the High Court (High Court of Solomon Islands, 1998).

The Australian Law Firm, Slater and Gordon ended up battling it out with Ross Mining (SI) Limited and Gold Ridge Mining Limited (High Court of Solomon Islands, 1998). These were two Australian companies with interests in Solomon Islands. A bigman of the major landowning group (Rausere) of the mining lease joined the opposition spearheaded by Slater and Gordon until he decided to drop the case and allow the mine to continue. The bigman withdrew his support to Slater and Gordon's case after revelations that his counterpart had used up substantial amounts of money for himself. He also withdrew the second case with allegations that the same person obtained more money from the foreign company (Nanau, 2008). The important point to make here is that interests of foreign and international companies are sometimes played out at the local level using local trustees and bigmen as exemplified here. Elements of global and local elite interests are sometimes aligned in company undertakings giving rise to vulnerability, insecurity and intra-wantok instability at the local level. I have dealt with this causality between the local/global coalitions and local people's vulnerabilities in detail elsewhere (see Nanau, 2008, 2011).

Environment and livelihood risks

The nature of mining gave rise to environmental concerns both in the area and beyond. The Saki case above was one of the legal challenges against the mining company when it started operations in 1996. The fear was that harmful discharges to the Matapono River could affect the livelihoods of the many people downstream

who depended on the river for their daily use and those along the coast as they use the sea for food on a daily basis. Dunkerley and Hallam (1997: 7) earlier draw attention to the possibility of tailings entering the large rivers through small tributary streams. The Saki case application was on the principles of 'nuisance and trespass'. They highlighted that because of their residence along and use of the Matapono River, the mine activities will discharge materials that are dangerous and harmful to them. A closer look at Figure 1 above would explain the vulnerability and insecurity sentiments as overflows from tailings and waste dams and actual mining upland could potentially find their way through tributaries and into the main Tinahulu and Matapono rivers. The High Court felt that there was no strong evidence to support this claim. In his ruling, the Judge, himself a Solomon Islander said:

«With respect, there is little that can be said in support of the allegations that waste materials from the mining operation will be discharged into Matepono River. The plaintiffs have failed to show a strong probability that the mining operations will cause imminent and substantial damage to the Plaintiffs property, business or livelihood. Whilst a fear might exist in the mind of the plaintiffs, this has not been backed up with the necessary causative link between the alleged wrongful behaviour of the defendant and the harm or damage to the Plaintiffs.» (High Court of Solomon Islands, 1997c)

The requirement by the legal system to come up with scientific evidence to support claims by ordinary people who may have concerns for health and livelihoods in such situations is remarkable. It would seem that the legal system and company work together and are on the same line of thought contrary to the precautionary principle that state institutions are to protect the rights and concerns its citizens. Tensions emerge in such situations as the anxieties of people and their livelihoods are not accommodated.

Despite these unsuccessful legal bids to seek additional benefits or redress from the legal system, evidence later showed that the mining company was not fault proof as earlier indicated. A leakage or overflow from the pipes from the tailings dam to the water reticulation pool found its way to the Tinahulu River (this joins with the Matapono River) and fish died in great numbers in the late 1990s. Indeed an earlier environmental assessment by researchers from Monash University (Dunkerley and Hallam, 1997) had indicated these dangers in their report. Their summary is that the high rainfall experienced in the Solomon Islands over recent years coupled with the mine's location in a deeply dissected, high altitude site meant that three major problems are highly likely. They are: (i) overburden run off into the river systems, (ii) Potential overflow

from the tailings dams, and (ii) Potential pollution of the river system with cyanide following heavy rains (Dunkerley and Hallam, 1997: 2).

Environmental concerns are huge for people especially those living along the Matapono river. At Tumorora, stories of hazards from the mine always emerge in village workshops, especially when discussing threats to downstream communities. A piece of evidence they pointed to was the increased sedimentation of the river. Erosions due to loosening soil by mining up at Gold Ridge, resulted in increased sedimentation and the diversion of flood waters into their food gardens and cocoa plantations. The consequence is damage especially to cocoa trees and food gardens along the river beds. As Figure 3 below show, the increased sedimentation subsequently diverged flood water into cocoa and coconut plantations and after months of water table remaining high, vast areas of cocoa trees were destroyed, affecting one of the most important sources of income for many families at Tumorora.

These were reported to the Ministries responsible for mines and environment and they did visit and carried out assessments. Evidence on the ground showed that sedimentation is a real threat and other environmental concerns raised are from people's actual experiences. If what is seen can be regarded as evidence and stories of people who experienced these changes can be accepted, then environmental concerns and threats are real and related to company activity upstream. Citi-

zens in these communities rely on the state and its agents to assist them convey to the company the disruptions to livelihood and ultimately request for compensation on their behalf.

A recent cyanide leakage from a broken pipe in late May 2011 was kept a secret by the mining company until a local newspaper reported it. The spillage was alleged to continue for more than 5 hours and the effects to humans and environment are yet to be determined by responsible authorities (Namosuaia, 2011). A former Premier of Guadalcanal Province and leader of MDA commented:

«our people demand Gold Ridge Mining Limited (GRML) an explanation as to why our communities were not informed and being consulted about the incident when it first occurred.» (Namosuaia, 2011)

Throughout 2012 and 2013, many more complaints on the company's disregard for the environment were aired. This was not helped by the rapid change of hands in company ownership as St Barbara Ltd acquired Allied Gold in September 2012. Secrecy, opacity and monopoly of information also give us an idea of the relationship between people, company and the state. The company has monopoly over information about the company activities and deficiencies.

In April 2013, St Barbara applied for a de-watering licence to release the tailings dam water into the river with the justification that the unusual

FIGURE 3. – Impact of Matapono River sedimentation on cocoa plantations (2007, picture Gordon Leua Nanau)



level of rainwater raised the level of water in the dam. The threat was already highlighted in the report by Dunkerley and Hallam in 1997 and the Saki case mentioned above. The government refused to issue the de-watering licence because waste water recycling and treatment plant was not working (SIBC, 24 April 2013). They instead asked the company to repair the system and treat the water before the application can be considered. It was later revealed in a report produced by three Solomon Islands scientists and communicated by the minister that:

«the rise in the water level of the Gold Ridge tailings dam is not due to rainwater but the company's mine wastes.» (Rakai, 2013)

The state therefore asked the company to repair the recycling and treatment plant after the report. In previous incidents, company put together scientific papers and evidence to support their cause while the ordinary people whose lives are affected remained at the mercy of the state and company enforced through a legal system operating on the bases of formal property rights and lack of a precautionary criterion as a sustainability principle.

Experiences in relocation villages

Since the mining of Gold Ridge was organisationally globalised, negotiations on compensation payments and relocating and resettling people occurred concurrently. The mining resulted in the resettlement of people away from their original homes. A total of 120 families had to be relocated to give way for the gold mine. As it turned out, 95 families were relocated to a government land (449 hectares) at Lungga while 25 families were resettled at Obo Obo, also known as Jericho village or Road Head (Obo Obo Men, 4 July 2007). These families were moved from their original localities, an environment that is typical of Solomon Islands highlands without mosquitoes to the Lunga area that is infested with malaria mosquitoes. The 95 families were so far from the river and mining area that gold panning is no longer a livelihood option. Moreover, the types of houses they now have to live in are different from those they were used to. They were moved to permanent and larger villages compared to their original lifestyle of shifting around in the same area and in the process build new homes.

Interviewees proudly told me that the people in the Obo Obo relocation village are better off. Before the mining only one person owned a permanent house but now all 25 families have permanent homes. They also claimed that:

«Lunga and Obo Obo are better off but Taotaona people accepted cash so they “ate” it all up (i.e. spent it all without building their homes). Obo Obo villagers were given SI\$20,000 each to build their own homes while Lunga villagers were built houses costing SI\$25,000 by the company.»

The houses were bigger and better equipped at Obo Obo compared to those built at Lunga. This is the usual story of people where mineral extraction and subsequent compensations and royalties are paid. Among the Ipilli people who «hosts» the Porgera mine PNG for instance, the influx of benefits also resulted in changed lifestyles but also with social disorders like increased domestic violence and drunken sprees in urban centres. Moreover, most of their money were spent on store-bought foodstuff like tinned fish and rice and on big budget items like pick-up trucks (Golub, 2006: 269). Figure 4 below gives an indication of the types of buildings built at the Obo Obo relocation village by villagers themselves with materials costs borne by the company.

Despite the modern corrugated iron homes, moving these people into permanent communities close to each other meant that there are serious health and hygiene considerations. It could be confidently argued from observation that the people of the mining area are used to living in smaller hamlets and move around frequently in the search for gold. However, their relocation to a permanent village, with permanent building posed health and hygiene concerns. The importance of pigs in status building and the local area's «Lou» feasts saw the breeding of pigs everywhere in the village which also raised concerns for health and hygiene in the community. All workshops held in the village recognised this weakness. However, they all blamed village leadership weakness as a cause of lack of village cleanliness controls without taking the initiative to tackle it.

The most notable issue in relation to migration, movement and resettlement is the tension it brought about. This is more so for the relocation village at Lunga than Obo Obo. The settlers from Gold Ridge and the people of the areas in which they were being resettled (Belaha/Malango) share the same language, kastom and most share membership in the same «line» or clan. Indeed, the original inhabitants receive cash benefits from their relatives and trustees of the Gold Ridge Mine and many young people of Belaha and Malango were employed by the mining company. Despite these commonalities and links, resettlement resulted in disagreements and conflicts with host communities. Stewart and Strathern (2005) claimed that domination or subjection within new environments is a common theme of diasporas in the Pacific islands through history. They stated that:



FIGURE 4. – Houses at Obo Obo relocation village (2007, picture Gordon Leua Nanau)

«[m]emory, history, and the emotions are all involved in the construction of cultural selves in new places.» (Stewart and Strathern, 2005: 206)

People relocating to Lunga faced similar resentments from Belaha people. This was seen through occasional brawls and arguments. This came to its peak during the country's civil uprising that forced those who resettled at Lunga to return their original homes for security reasons. The Belaha people took the opportunity to damage homes vacated by their wantoks. Chief Manegulai put it succinctly:

«They did not respect people from Belaha. Belaha people also disliked Gold Ridge people. After the tensions, they did not ask us but removed and sold our houses. Moro people⁶ did not respect other people of Guadalcanal (they associate Moro as God). Had they understood this, and we reconciled things would have improved.» (Mangulai, pers. com., 4 July 2007)

The important point to note is that, movement, settlement and migration is a critical factor for social instability in the Solomon Islands. The Gold Ridge settlers experience showed that it is more of an overarching issue and should not be based entirely on inter-wantok antagonisms and assessments. The relocation villages and experiences with host relatives and wantoks had helped us understand this issue a bit more. Intra-wantok relationships through a share of royalties cannot compensate relatives to happily accept «displaced» people. As can be seen from the historical context outlined above, mining

in the Solomon Islands is only a small part of the tensions that has a longer history before the mine was opened.

It should be noted that on resumption of operations at the mine, those who were resettled at Lunga refused to return there because of the problems explained. They instead opted for the company to build two alternative relocation villages closer to their original at Gold Ridge but outside the mine lease. A total of 287 houses were built in these two relocation settlements and people moved into them in 2011 and 2012 (Godfrey, Battista *et al.*, 2011: 591). It is still too early to assess the experiences of residents in these new villages. One thing that is eminently clear though is the difficulty of accessing water for day to day use. Currently, the company hire water tankers to deliver water to all these houses on a daily basis. It is an expensive exercise and one that needs attention.

Employment opportunities and frustrations

The lifestyle of the «displaced» villagers before and after being resettled was that of dependence on gold panning, processed food and very limited subsistence food gardening. As such, the Obo Obo people had to look for alternative jobs within the mining company or return to the panning region for occasional panning to keep up their livelihood needs. The level of formal education there is low

6. A reference to members of the «Gaena'alu Movement» that is influential in South and Central Guadalcanal. The movement promotes the idea of development that respects and safeguards their local way of life and organization (i.e. *kastom*).

and people there openly acknowledged this deficiency. Resettlements resulted in parents quickly realising the importance of formal education. Children were actually progressing to high schools since relocated to the Lunga area but the Guadalcanal tensions put an end to this slow but determined progress (Obo Obo Men, 4 July 2007). To survive in their new settlements, the locals would need formal academic qualifications and skills to compete for jobs in the mine despite the hypothetical allocation of 80% of jobs for landowners. In one of his media releases prior to the opening of the mine, GRML's chief executive, estimated that 400 to 500 jobs will be created once the company fully operates but acknowledging that 80% of these would be for Gold Ridge landowners. He reported that in early 2007, they were only employing around 205 locals at the mine site and the Head Office (Mamu, 2007: 1). Unfortunately, the mine requires technical skills gained through formal education of which the local people of Gold Ridge neglected for years. Youths at Obo Obo confirmed that employment for them is lacking due to very scarce education qualifications and skills relevant for company employment.

Consequently, local people there are only employed in areas like field service, security, environment, and manual work. Only catering was given to the community as it is included in a MOU with the company (Obo Obo Youths, 5 July 2007). Note that women were unable to do most of the jobs in the mine because of gendered demarcated roles on Guadalcanal. For instance, providing security or driving heavy mining machines are regarded a man's job, although this is slowly changing. Moreover, women of Obo Obo were previously not encouraged to attend school. The women of the surrounding community were given the opportunity to cook for workers working on the mine site but these are short term employment opportunities, where women organize themselves in groups for a period of several weeks before another group takes over. Locals, particularly women and youths were not accessing mining jobs as they lacked formal education, thus, distant mineral poor villages and provinces took advantage of office and other technical jobs.

The relocated population were dependent on food from shops. Those who still have access to gold panning outside of the lease area pride themselves with their reliance on processed food and their desire for such foodstuff compared to local diets. On the day I was interviewing one of the principal landowners at Magazine settlement, loads of trucks were unloading foodstuff for a local trade store. These included sugar, rice, noodles, salt, canned food and alcohol. I also witnessed people carrying cartons and bags of processed foodstuff in their various makeshift houses. My host explained that most of these

people deposited their gold with the store owner and as soon as food stuff from Honiara got in, they collected these from the shop based on the value of gold deposited. He further claimed that people of Gold Ridge area spent their money on beer and food as they rarely make food gardens and that the children are now more interested in processed foodstuff.

These people previously relied almost entirely on monies from alluvial gold panning to support their daily needs food supplies. The (re)establishment of the mine meant that they lose out on their means of income and would therefore look at alternative sources apart from the quarterly royalty payments received by the 16 «lines». The mining agreement realised this problem so deliberately included a provision that decorated the agreement. It says:

«GRML may, in its absolute discretion, permit the continuation of traditional gold panning outside the Mining Lease in certain circumstances and subject to legal, safety and health and environmental requirements and may provide assistance to traditional gold panners with gold smelting and the sale of panned gold. Any such assistance will be subject to negotiation between GRML and the persons concerned.» (GRML and GRCLAC, 2006: 7)

This looks good on paper but has never been permitted.

The need for formal education and employment are becoming more visible as people now have to look for alternative sources of income. As indicated elsewhere in this paper, the workshops for this research saw lack of education as negatively impacting their new lifestyle. They pointed out that landowners are only employed in areas like field labourers, security guards, environment manual workers and a bit of catering given to the Obo Obo community as part of their understanding with the company (Men's Group, 4 July 2007). The emphasis on formal education is also indicated by the establishment of a kindergarten by the villagers in a community hall built with assistance from the mining company. The community lamented that the Guadalcanal tensions put a halt to the progress made at the Lunga relocation village which saw a good number of their children attending secondary schools then. As that group of students was disturbed by the tensions and the new relocation villages have just been built, it will take time before their children are educated to a level where they can work at the mine. The point is royalties will not sustain the livelihoods of Obo Obo villagers in the long run and education for wage labour is an option that they now have to pursue.

Apart from the Gold Ridge Investment Limited (currently not operational), personal investment and savings are not visible or practiced in these

relocation villages. Royalties are shared to members of the sixteen tribes and then people wait for the next royalty payments to mature. It is from this vantage point that livelihoods are not sustainable for the relocated population. Royalties are good for the time being but with the attitude and trend in which royalties were used, it is unsustainable and could become a lost opportunity as soon as the mine stops. This is because significant portions of royalties are used on consumption with little long term investment in both wantok group and individual levels. More importantly, males are controlling royalties paid to households with females at the receiving end of the cycle.

Conclusion

The above discussions are based on the experiences of local indigenous Guadalcanal populations who are hosts of and are directly displaced by the mining operations at Gold Ridge. The account touches on people's expectations, the benefits obtained from the mine, frustrations, and fears. Being the first mine in the country, among communities that have had previous gold panning experience, their stories could assist potential mines and host communities to be more strategic in the redistribution of mineral proceeds with commitment to improve people's livelihoods. More importantly, it provides the first narrative on mine/community/state relationships in the Solomon Islands.

The research question whether royalties from company activities could be agents for improving community livelihoods and discourage vulnerability, insecurity and instability must be answered. The bold answer would be «yes». Unfortunately, this potentially powerful agent for improved livelihoods cannot be prompted because of two basic reasons. First is the basic fact that the mining agreement was skewed in favour of the company. The mine agreement prescribed only 1.5% of the gross value of gold and silver produced from the mine as the mining lease to landowning groups. In fact 20% of this is paid to the Guadalcanal Provincial Government, an agent of the state. Even with the already small percentage of the gross value earmarked for local landowning groups, the provincial government, as an entity of the state also dips into it. Ultimately, the narrative is that the mining company and the state benefitting more financially from mineral resources supposedly own by landowning tribes in the area. A study that provided a comparative analysis of the company/state/community nexus in four states is offered by Le Meur, Ballard *et al.*, (2013). Second, the non-operation of the landowners' business arm (GIL) and the lack of investment mentality on the part

of landowning groups meant that long term improvements through investments are not very promising. Communities continue to look up to the company and the state for financial benefits and services. Without proper investments for future sustainable revenues after the mine, sustainable and improved livelihoods will remain a distant dream for such communities.

On the question of the impacts of royalty payments, various licence fees, and rents from extractive industries impacted on the lives of people at Obo Obo and Tumorora, certain observations were made. With the establishment of the mine, the inhabitants of the area formalised local institutions in an effort to deal with negotiations, thus the establishment of the Gold Ridge Landowners Council, the Gold Ridge Downstream Association, the Kolobisi Downstream Association and other similar groupings. It has also resulted in the appointment of trustees as owners of lands leased; a movement away from collective ownership of customary land by tribes as explained above. The expectations and redistribution of various payments from the mine also resulted in court challenges and disputes both with local and international «interested» parties. Royalties and the mine's infrastructure also meant that the livelihood patterns and activities of resettled communities also changed. For instance, resettlement increased the importance of formal education with the hopes for locals to secure company and state employment. The mine has therefore impacted the lifestyles and outlook of landowners to the extent that in the long term, they have to look at alternative livelihoods, away from royalties and gold panning.

Finally, how does modern democratic agreements and courts impact or safeguard local social capital and environment? The state and its institutions are involved in most aspects of establishing the mine. State institutions are also expected to monitor and safeguard the interests of all stakeholders in the mining sector. However, from the perceptions of local people, state institutions and laws mostly safeguard the interests of the investors and the state agents. Police officers, for instance, have always been called upon to open roadblocks set up by disgruntled landowners, even if their concerns are genuine and life-threatening. The requirement for scientific evidence to prove a point in court and recognition of trustees as legal owners of lands leased are huge contradictions from the perspective of local landowning groups. The various court cases highlighted in the article attest to this contradiction and is an under researched area that warrants more detailed assessment in the future. Such contradictions play a fundamental role in creating vulnerability, insecurity and instability in the minds and lives of people that host the mining lease area.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ALLEN M. G., 2012. Informal formalisation in a hybrid property space: The case of smallholder oil palm production in Solomon Islands, *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 15 (3), pp. 300-313.
- ASG, 2007. Annual report for the year ended 30 June 2007, Queensland, Australian Solomon Gold.
- , 2008. Gold Ridge Gold Mine Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands Community Relations Management Action Plan 2008, Newcastle, Graham A Brown & Associates.
- ASIA MINER (THE), 2007. Gold Ridge brings shine back to Solomon Islands, *The Asia Miner* (retrieved 19 December 2007, from www.asiaminer.com).
- BANKS G., 2008. Understanding «resource» conflicts in Papua New Guinea, *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 49 (1), pp. 23-34.
- BEMUTA COMMUNITY RELOCATION COMMITTEE, 2006. Bemuta Community Relocation Committee Submission, SIG & GRM (when negotiating reopening).
- BENNETT J., 1987. *Wealth of the Solomon Islands: a history of a Pacific archipelago, 1800-1978*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press.
- CALICK R., 2005. Resource issues as a source of conflict, *Pacific Economic Bulletin* 20 (1), pp. 181-184.
- CARTER R., 2006. *In Search of the Lost: The Modern Martyrs of Melanesia*, Norwich, UK, Canterbury Press.
- DUNKERLEY D. L. and N. HALLAM, 1997. *Gold Ridge and Surroundings, Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands: An Environmental Assessment*, Monash University, Australia.
- FILER C., 1990. The Bougainville Rebellion, the Mining Industry and the Process of Social Disintegration in Papua New Guinea, *Canberra Anthropology* 13 (1), pp. 1-39.
- , 2006. Custom, Law and ideology in Papua New Guinea, *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 7 (1), pp. 65-84.
- FILER C. and M. MACINTYRE, 2006. Grass roots and deep holes: community responses to mining in Melanesia, *The Contemporary Pacific* 18 (2), pp. 215-231.
- GATU G. B., 1988 (24 March). Petition by indigenous people of Guadalcanal, P. Minister, Honiara.
- GEGEO D. W. and K. A. WATSON-GEGEO, 2002. Whose knowledge? Epistemological Collusions in Solomon Islands Community Development, *The Contemporary Pacific* 14 (2), pp. 377-409.
- GODFREY S., J. BATTISTA *et al.*, 2011. Competent Persons' Report on Gold Ridge Gold Project, Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands, London, Allied Gold Limited.
- GOLD RIDGE COMMUNITY AND LANDOWNERS ASSOCIATION COUNCIL (GRCLAC), 1996. Constitution of the Gold Ridge Community and Landowners Association Nalakasia School, Malango, Central Guadalcanal.
- , 2007 (24 April). GRCLAC submission to Solomon Islands Government, Honiara.
- GOLUB A., 2006. Who is the «Original Affluent Society»? Ipili «Predatory Expansion» and the Porgera Gold Mine, Papua New Guinea, *The Contemporary Pacific* 18 (2), pp. 265-292.
- GRML And GRCLAC, 2006 (31 May). Subsidiary Agreement: An Agreement between Gold Ridge Mining Ltd and the Gold Ridge Community and Landowners Association, Honiara.
- GUADALCANAL PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY, 1998 (17 December). Demands by the bona fide and indigenous people of Guadalcanal (to the National Government), Honiara, Guadalcanal Province.
- GUADALCANAL PROVINCIAL COUNCIL, 1978 (October). A letter submitted to the Prime Minister, Prime Minister, Honiara.
- HIGH COURT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS, 1997a (hearing 7 October, ruling 8 August). Willie Roni and Another v Ross Mining (SI) Ltd and Otrs, Civil Case No. 60 of 1997, Honiara.
- , 1997b (hearing 7 October, ruling 19 December). Maningelea v Ross Mining Ltd, Civil Case No. 168 of 1997, Honiara.
- , 1997c (hearing 7 October, ruling 19 December). Samuel Saki and Otrs v Ross Mining Ltd, Civil Case No. 60 of 1997, Honiara.
- , 1998 (hearing 1st February 1999, judgment 10 June 1999). Ross Mining (SI) Ltd v Slatter and Gordon, Civil Case 230 of 1998, Honiara.
- JOHNSON I. and M. POWLES (eds), 2012. *New Flag Flying: Pacific Leadership*, Wellington, Huia Publishers.
- LE MEUR P.-Y., C. BALLARD, G. BANKS, J.-M. SOURISSEAU, 2013. Two islands, four states: Comparing resource governance regimes in the Southwest Pacific, in J. Wiertz (ed.), *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Social Responsibility in Mining* (SRMining

- 2013, Santiago, Chile), GECAMIN-SMI, University of Queensland, pp. 191-199.
- MAENU'U L. P., 1994. Solomon Islands: Recognising Traditional Landrights and Traditional Groups, in R. Crocombe and M. Meleisea (eds), *Land Issues in the South Pacific*, Christchurch, Macmillan Brown Center for Pacific Studies & Institute of Pacific Studies, pp. 85-88.
- MALANGO HOUSE OF CHIEFS, 2004 (11 September). Malango House of Chiefs Constitution, Bubulonga village.
- MAMU M., 2007. More jobs for locals, *Solomon Star Newspaper* (retrieved 01 October 2008).
- NAMOSUALA D., 2011 (17 June). Cyanide leak, *Solomon Star*, Honiara, Solomon Star Ltd.
- , 2011 (27 June). Fear grips communities over leaks, *Solomon Star Newspaper*.
- NANAU G., 2008. Can a Theory of Insecure Globalisation explain Instability in the South Pacific? The Case of Solomon Islands, PhD School of International Development, Norwich, University of East Anglia.
- , 2011. The Wantok System as a Socio-economic and Political Network in Melanesia, *Omnes: The Journal of Multicultural Society* 12 (1), pp. 31-55.
- O'FAIRCHEALLAIGH C., 2008. Negotiating Cultural Heritage? Aboriginal-Mining Company Agreements in Australia, *Development and Change* 39 (1), pp. 25-51.
- OSIFELO E., 2013. Land issues dominate day one of PM's meet, *Solomon Star Newspaper*.
- PROCTOR J. D., 1998. The Social Construction of Nature: Relativist Accusations, Pragmatist and Critical Realist Responses, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88 (3), pp. 352-376.
- RAKAI B., 2013. It's Mining Wastes, *Solomon Star*, Honiara, Solomon Star.
- SOLOMON ISLANDS BROADCASTING CORPORATION, 2013. Premier thanked government for refusing licence to release contaminated water into river system.
- SOLOMON ISLANDS GOVERNMENT (SIG), 2011. The Mines and Minerals (Royalties) Regulations 2011, Honiara, Solomon Islands National Parliament.
- SOLOMON ISLANDS GOVERNMENT (SIG), ISATABU FREEDOM MOVEMENT (IFM) *et al.*, 2001 (15 October). Townsville Peace Agreement. Townsville Peace Conference, Townsville, Australia.
- SOLOMON ISLANDS GOVERNMENT AND THE GOLD RIDGE COMMUNITY AND LANDOWNERS ASSOCIATION, 1996 (4 October). Agreement Relating to the Development of the Gold Ridge Mine, Central Guadalcanal.
- SOLOMON TIMES ONLINE, 2013. Landowners Demand SBD\$8 Million, *Solomon Times Online*.
- ST BARBARA LIMITED, 2014. Gold Ridge, retrieved 12 January 2014 from <http://www.stbarbara.com.au/our-operations/gold-ridge/>.
- STEWART P. J. and A. STRATHERN, 2005. Body and Mind on the Move: Emplacement, Displacement, and Trans-placement in Highlands Papua New Guinea, *Asia Pacific Forum* 27 (3), pp. 205-217.
- VAIOLETTI T. M., 2006. Talanoa Research Methodology: A Developing Position in Pacific Research, *Waikato Journal of Education* 12, pp. 21-34.

The mining policy of the Philippines and «resource nationalism» towards nation-building

by

Minerva CHALOPING-MARCH*

ABSTRACT

This paper looks at the extent to which the Mining Act of 1995 responds to the aspirations of citizen constituencies such as local governments. The law provides the regulatory and institutional framework for the operation of large-scale mining in the hope that substantial foreign capital is brought into government coffers. The law also provides for mechanisms to ensure community consultation, local government empowerment, concern for the indigenous communities, and equitable benefits sharing. However, the national government – with the country's minerals industry – has focused on foreign investments at the expense of equity and benefit allocations for local communities. Several local governments have blocked the entry of large-scale mining or forbidden open pit mining. Such action, including new local legislations, manifests sub-national resource nationalism that is founded on locality and affinity to homeland, and confronts the national government in matters of resource governance.

KEYWORDS: resource nationalism, Philippines Mining Act, local governments, social imaginaries, mining policy

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article examine l'adéquation de la loi minière de 1995 aux aspirations de la représentation citoyenne, dont les gouvernements locaux. Cette loi fournit le cadre régulateur et institutionnel pour l'accueil de grands projets pour financer le budget de l'État. Elle offre aussi des mécanismes garantissant la consultation des communautés, le renforcement des pouvoirs des gouvernements locaux, le respect des communautés autochtones et un partage équitable des bénéfices. Mais le gouvernement national – avec l'industrie minière du pays – s'est concentré sur les investissements étrangers aux dépens d'une redistribution équitable. Des gouvernements locaux ont interdit le démarrage de gros projets miniers ou l'extraction à ciel ouvert. Ces actions, incluant la promulgation de lois locales, expriment un nationalisme des ressources « infranational » ancré dans la localité et le lien au territoire et opposé au gouvernement national en matière de gouvernance des ressources

MOTS-CLÉS : nationalisme des ressources, Philippines, Loi minière, gouvernement local, imaginaires sociaux, politique minière

In current literature, most discussions on resource nationalism have focused on its causes and manifestations (Clarke and Cummins, 2012) particularly its impact on industry and investment patterns on the producing country and the risks on the part of investors (Bremmer and Johnston, 2009; Emel, Huber and Makene, 2011; Ernst and Young, 2013). Resource na-

tionism is viewed as a cyclical phenomenon (Stevens, 2008) and is one in which the global and the national landscapes and their relationship with one another are «tested and refined» (Ward, 2009). In certain cases, these global-national landscapes are characterized by long-term extractive industry dependency that restricts policy options of the producing country (Kohl and

* Development Anthropologist, Senior Research Fellow, Philippines-Australia Studies Centre, La Trobe University, m.chaloping-march@latrobe.edu.au

Farthing, 2012). Resource nationalism has been investigated as a demonstration of a resource-endowed country's motivation to expand its share of resource rent.

What has remained largely unexamined includes the complex interactions in resource nationalism and the main actors involved other than the host country and the foreign investors. There is scarce understanding about whether a resource nationalist position of a state is shared or concurred, or conversely, challenged by its citizens. This paper deals with these issues by examining the case of the Philippines. The paper looks into constituent citizens confronting the centralized control of the State over mineral resources and their development and exploitation.

The paper begins with some definitions of key terms such as «resource nationalism» and «sovereignty» pertinent to mining. I then proceed to look into the economic liberalization policy embraced by the Philippine state. This brings the discussion to the enactment of a new mining policy in 1995. The passage of this law and the process of implementing it have provided a context for the collision of several perspectives on «development» and ideas of equity, locality, and sovereignty. I present the narratives which form part of social imaginaries of the key actors in mining. The paper ends by tying together the key points I earlier raised towards the conclusion: resource nationalism is not plainly an assertive posturing of a government pertinent to administering resource extraction. Rather, resource nationalism is rooted in connectedness to a homeland. Given their shared experiences and common visions of change in the status quo, key sectors of the Philippine citizenry forge actions to confront the Philippine state.

For this paper, I use some of the fieldwork data collected during my PhD research (June – Aug 2003, July 2004 to May 2005), and interviews during separate fieldworks in March-April 2010 and August 2011. I add some data generated through interviews which I carried out for a recent project¹ in December 2013-January 2014. These are supplemented by information synthesized from archival materials and critical review of published literature, government documents, and press releases.

Mining and resource nationalism

The continuity of mining as a global industry depends on the availability of minerals to ensure a stable supply of commodities. However, a reality in mining as an economic activity is the immobility of mineral resources. Considering that

minerals are in situ, mining companies have to go to the areas where the resources are found. A host country accommodates foreign companies to carry out mining within its territory. An investing company receives rights to extract minerals under conditions which are largely defined by the political, institutional, socio-economic and cultural landscape of the host country. Thus a mutually interdependent relationship develops: the host country relies on the mining company for foreign capital while the latter is granted certain rights in extracting minerals.

Over time, the form and scope of this contractual relationship undergo changes. The ensuing changes have important implications for pursuing the interests of each party. It is during this instance when resource nationalism not only manifests itself but is re-examined by the host government. Resource nationalism involves actions and motivations of a resource-endowed country to ensure primacy over the development of its mineral resources vis-à-vis the participation of foreign investors. It represents the attempts of the host country's assertion of greater control over how the mineral resources located within state territory are developed in order to maximize government revenues from production.

During the 1980s through 1990s, resource-endowed countries centred on attracting foreign investment by boosting the competitiveness of their fiscal regimes for mining. This meant that their policies established generous terms in favour of mining companies. Heeding to recommendations of international financial institutions such as the World Bank (Haselip and Hilson, 2005; WB-IFC, 2003), many developing countries revised their mining policies. This was a trend that reflected in part the stiff competition and the apparent exigency to stir and promote mining investments (Smith and Naito, 1998). During the period 1985 to 1995, there were over 90 countries that legislated new mining laws, revised substantially their prevailing mining policies, or were formulating new legislation (Otto, 1997). Policy changes made by developing countries include simplifying permitting procedures to provide flexibility in investment agreements. In addition, taxation schemes were becoming more comprehensive to both attract investors and maximize government revenues (UNCTAD Secretariat, 1997).

However, the situation has changed in the several years that followed. By 2003, commodity prices have soared. Host countries have become more concerned about obtaining a bigger cut of the mining revenue pie (Gravelle, 2012). The rise in commodity prices prompted producing countries to raise royalty and taxation in their

1. The project is on social mapping and analysis of key stakeholders in exploration and mining in Camarines Norte, a major mining province in the Philippines.

attempt to maximise their income revenues. The overall global trend is an increase in the tax burden on mining companies as host governments regard mining companies to be making ample profits in light of soaring mineral prices.

In the Philippines, the current president Benigno Simeon Aquino III issued on July 2012 Executive Order 79 (2012), which makes modifications of the Mining Act of 1995 and articulates the mining policy of his administration. The issuance of Executive Order 79 is partly due to the growing clamour of various stakeholders (i.e., local governments, communities and civil society groups) for a fair share of the value of extracted resources. In addition, these stakeholders claim that there has been lack of meaningful involvement of communities in decisions and initiatives affecting them. Resource nationalism, as this paper discusses, involves what community citizens regard as the core of managing resources for the good of communities. This refers to affinity to the place where a resource is found – and such sense of attachment exists only among local residents. Hence, the idea of «development» that appeals to local communities is that which involves their initiatives, systems, and knowledge in the utilization of natural resources and subsequently benefit them.

Sovereignty and Mineral Resources

A key notion that is closely tied to resource nationalism is «sovereignty». The modern concept of this term is traced to the French jurist and political philosopher Jean Bodin who made the earliest discussion of the theory of sovereignty. According to Bodin (1955: 24), sovereignty is that «absolute and perpetual power vested in a commonwealth». For the purpose of this paper, we take the quintessence of the term that is expressed in Bodin's definition – the power of a state. Bodin noted that this power:

«is in the first place absolute, in that it is wholly free from the restraint of law, and is held subject to no conditions or limitations» (Merriam, 2001: 7)²

In our present-day world, sovereignty of the state is associated mainly with the idea that states have the power to run their own affairs, including how mineral resources must be extracted, by whom and under what terms.

A sovereign state is an autonomous entity and no state has a right to intervene in the internal

affairs of another. Sovereignty is a principle as well as a practice (Litfin, 1997). It is not an «either or» matter. A state must not be regarded as either «having» or «not having» sovereignty. Rather, as Yasin (2010) clarifies, sovereignty is a matter of degree. James Rosenau (1995: 195) explains that the sovereignty of a state must be understood as lying within a continuum ranging from «convenience-of-state» at one end, to «states-are obliged-to-go along» at the opposite end. This means that depending on situations, the state relocates its sovereignty from one point to another along the continuum.

In a global economic system, a resource-endowed country becomes open to external economic events beyond its control. It finds itself inviting foreign investors in order to generate adequate capital to be able to fully participate in the global market. The strength of the state is tested and demonstrated in the ways by which it accommodates the demands of the global economy. It might appear that as the state fulfils the requirements of regional or transnational bodies, its power as a sovereign entity is allocated away. However, this is not so. The allocation of power «away» from the state is authorized or consented and that the consenting entity remains and is always the state (Yasin, 2010). Rosenau further clarifies that under conditions of globalization, sovereignty is both saturated by and placed within dynamic, persistently repetitive, turbulent political processes.

The two elements that are vital to the idea of sovereignty are control and authority (Nagan and Haddad, 2012: 435). Litfin (1997: 169) adds a third one which is essentially the most critical as far as the Philippines is concerned, i.e., legitimacy, which he defines as the «recognized right to make rules». The concept of legitimacy incorporates a clearly normative component and is reinforced by control and autonomy. This means that the idea of sovereignty does not apply only to a state's relationship with external bodies. Rather, a state's sovereignty in governing resources involves establishing and maintaining legitimacy before its citizens.

In the specific case of the Philippines, the 1987 Constitution (Article II Section 2) declares the following:

«The Philippines is a democratic and republican State. Sovereignty resides in the people and all government authority emanates from them.»

2. Bodin was not advocating for an absolutist state. It would be clearer to view Bodin's idea of sovereignty in the context of the political chaos of his time. According to Nagan and Haddad (2012) the public order of Europe and the idea of Christian universality were crumbling under the influence of the Reformation. The end of the Holy Roman Empire marked the weakening of Christian Universalism in Europe and in turn a legacy of religious wars. These wars seemed unending and generated social disorder and anarchy.

The Philippine national government, in cooperation with the country's mining industry – mainly through the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) – has been feverishly promoting mining as the engine of economic growth. However such action has caused factions among other key stakeholders in mining. As an economic activity and as an industry, mining has prompted debates involving views from government agencies, mining executives, academicians, economists, local government officials as well as representatives of the religious sector, indigenous organizations, and environment and conservation groups. There are several reasons why mining remains a polemical subject matter in the Philippines:

- a) an earnest goal, or desperate objective, within the national government to address fiscal difficulties,
- b) an eager anticipation of business and industry groups to seize opportunities for foreign investment in mining,
- c) a genuine concern of many citizens about the long-term adverse social and environmental consequences associated with mining activities, including the cultural and economic wellbeing of communities especially after a mine operation has long shut down,
- d) a lingering distrust of many citizens in the ability and sincerity of the national government and the minerals industry to address the concerns of communities who are adversely affected by mining operations, and
- e) a continuing doubt and skepticism among organized citizen groups that exploitation of minerals by foreign companies is the right path to national development.

In other words, the actions of the Philippine national government, which include granting foreign investors nearly monopolistic rights over mineral resources and entitling them enormous tax incentives, is not fully supported by several sectors of the Philippine citizenry. The national government's granting priority rights to those who have the foreign capital, and undermining the aspirations of local citizens, negates nationalism. The overcentrality of control by the national government in directing the exploitation, development and utilization of mineral resources repudiates local initiatives and mechanisms in addressing resource and environment concerns. In effect, enormous setbacks have dragged the full implementation of the Mining Act. Until the present, the law has continued to saunter a thorny path.

Economic Liberalization: Launching Phase and Full Realization

In the early 1990s, the 12th President of the Philippines, Fidel V. Ramos, pursued his administration's grand industrialization scheme that

aimed to rejuvenate the country's economy. Known as the «Philippines 2000», Ramos envisioned the Philippines to join the newly industrializing countries by the year 2000. The program components are outlined in the Philippine Medium-Term Development Plan for the years 1993-1998. It emphasized the need to achieve global competitiveness for the Philippines (Ramos, 1993). The Plan called for a continuation of the policy of liberalization, deregulation, and globalization (Jurado, 2003) that was started by Corazon Aquino, Ramos's predecessor.

During her term, Aquino began liberalizing the economy that involved privatization of more than 250 government-owned and controlled corporations (Gonzalez III, 2001). Aquino issued Executive Order 279 in July 1987 to foster investment in the mining industry. This law gave authority to a cabinet-level officer, the Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), to «enter into, for and in behalf of the Government», business transactions such as joint venture or production-sharing agreements that involve the exploration, development, and utilization of mineral resources «with any Filipino citizen, or corporation or association at least sixty percentum of whose capital is owned by Filipino citizens» (Executive Order 279, 1987, Section 1). This authority which was formerly a prerogative reserved only for the President of the Philippines was intended to ease, as it did, the entry of many foreign mining companies.

Succeeding Aquino as President, Ramos opened more extensively the doors to foreign investors for all industries: deregulating, liberalizing and privatizing almost all government owned corporations. The Philippines was one of many developing countries to adopt neo-liberal economic policies to attract more mining investments.

The Mining Act of 1995

Under President Ramos, Republic Act 7942, known as the Philippine Mining Act of 1995, was approved. As hoped for by the national government, the passage of this law led to the entry of foreign investors. Scarcely a few months after the law was passed, more than 50 applications for financial technical assistance agreements (FTAAs) were already filed at the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB). In 1996, 20 of the world's largest mining companies established offices in the Philippines. They filed applications for various mining tenements. Subsequently, the applications led to the approval of several exploration projects (Cabalda, Banaag, Tidalgo, and Garces, 2002) and brought euphoria within the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP), the MGB and the national government.

Under the Mining Act, there are three types of permits: an exploration permit, a mineral agreement, and a financial technical assistance agreement (FTAA). A detailed discussion of each is not permissible in this paper due to limited space. Among the three, the FTAA has been the most controversial. It is an agreement between a contractor and the Government of the Philippines and allows 100% foreign ownership. It grants the contractor rights for large-scale exploration, as well as development and utilization of minerals. An FTAA has a term of 25 years, and extendable for another 25 years. It requires a minimum committed investment of US\$ 50 million for infrastructure and mine development. The terms and conditions of the contract, including the government share, are negotiated. The Mining Act also grants mining companies to occupy an area of 81,000 hectares where the company enjoys timber rights, water rights and easement rights. The incentives granted to foreign mining companies include tax holidays and 100% repatriation of their capital and profit.

The avenue given to foreigners to fully own and control mining operations in the Philippines has become an extremely contentious issue. The situation has triggered what Rosenau describes as 'turbulent processes' that have defined the ebb and flow of the Mining Act's implementation.

Social Imaginaries

In this paper, I use the term social imaginary as elucidated by the philosopher Charles Taylor. He observes that community populations come together to envision their lives in particular and often instinctively shared ways. Taylor refers to these as «social imaginaries». Taylor explains:

«Our social imaginary at any given time is complex. It incorporates a sense of the normal expectations we have of each other, the kind of common understanding that enables us to carry out the collective practices that make up our social life. This incorporates some sense of how we all fit together in carrying out the common practice. Such understanding is both factual and normative; that is, we have a sense of how things usually go, but this is interwoven with an idea of how they ought to go, of what missteps would invalidate the practice.» (2004: 24)

Taylor asserts that a social imaginary involves «something much broader and deeper than the intellectual schemes people may entertain when they think about social reality in a disengaged mode». Taylor describes:

«I am thinking, rather, of the ways in which people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations.» (2004: 23)

In other words, a social imaginary incorporates normative ideas, i.e., how matters ought to be based on how processes or systems have been carrying on. Thus, a social imaginary blends both factual and normative dimensions of social existence. It plays an important role in understanding, orchestrating, and promoting development in a society. Key sectors of the Filipino population generally share narratives pertinent to what they consider as «development». Actions pertinent to realize desired changes in the status quo, and other initiatives which are directed at achieving betterment of economic, environmental and social conditions all embody a social imaginary, and are expressed in narratives of key players in mining, about which I now turn to.

National Government

The 1987 Philippine Constitution (1987, Article 12 Section 2) declares that the Philippine State owns

«all lands of the public domain, waters, minerals, coal, petroleum, and other mineral oils, all forces of potential energy, fisheries, forests or timber, wildlife, flora and fauna, and other natural resources.»

In addition,

«the exploration, development, and utilization of natural resources shall be under the full control and supervision of the State.»

This is a critical premise and a clear fact that is well-accepted by all sections of the Filipino population.

The narrative of key government officials pertinent to economic development is encapsulated in key phrases enunciated by former President Ramos in his state of the nation address in 1993. He presented his program that was hailed as the «Philippines 2000». Ramos stressed that the Philippines has to engage in «opening the economy» in order to be at par with competing countries, «dismantle the structure of protectionism and controls», and alleviate poverty which is the «central thrust of all our programs» (1993, emphasis supplied). These ideas have been re-echoed in the Mining Act of 1995 and reiterated in a law issued by Ramos's successor Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Executive Order 270³ (2004, emphasis supplied) states:

3. National Policy Agenda on Revitalizing Mining in the Philippines issued on 16 January 2004.

«It shall be the policy of the Government to promote responsible mineral resources operation, development and utilization, in order to enhance economic growth, in a manner that adheres to the principles of sustainable development and with due regard for justice and equity, sensitivity to the culture of the Filipino people and respect for the Philippine sovereignty.»

Executive Order 270 is impressively benevolent and democratic in its rationale and intent, and is also extensive in its coverage. Furthermore, it declares as its guiding policy the following (2004, emphasis supplied):

«Government recognizes the critical role of investments in the minerals industry for national development and poverty alleviation and shall provide support mechanisms for a sustained mineral exploration program, responsive research and development priorities and capability building for industry manpower; Clear, stable and predictable investment and regulatory policies shall be instituted to facilitate investments in mining, leading to a prosperous minerals industry; Value-adding as a measure of optimizing benefits from minerals for the Filipino people shall be pursued through the development of downstream industries to achieve greater productivity and efficiency.»

Represented mainly by the Office of the President, the MGB, the Department of Trade and Industry, the National Economic Development Authority and other agencies, the national government regards mining as a critical means to pave the country's path to industrialization by generating wealth, employment and other benefits in both rural and urban regions (Defensor, 2005). The national government acknowledges its need for strong partnership with the minerals industry. Thus, true enough, both key government agencies and the COMR have bonded themselves into a solid and busy team in marketing to foreign investors the Philippines as an investment destination.

In early 2005, representatives of the national government and top officers of the COMR had engaged in what they termed as 'mining roadshows' in various parts of the world including China, Singapore, South Africa, Canada and Australia⁴. These roadshows consisted of meetings and discussions with foreign investors on mining investment opportunities in the Philippines. Subsequently in 2006, the COMR organized an international investment mining conference in the Philippines attended by re-

presentatives of foreign mining companies. The purpose was to promote the mineral prospects of the Philippines particularly the 24 priority mining projects⁵. As earnestly hoped for by COMR, the conference resulted in the signing of many Memoranda of Understandings (MoUs) and letters of intent between foreign mining companies and local mining partners (Disini, 2006).

Local Governments

The welcoming stance of the national government towards mining projects and the enthusiasm of the COMR in promoting the Philippines as a haven for mining investments have not been shared fully by a few local governments. Across the Philippines there have been varying degrees of local government inhospitality towards potential mining projects within their specific political-geographic jurisdictions. Republic Act 7160, otherwise known as the Local Government Code of the Philippines (1991) devolved certain functions – such as environmental management – to local government units which include provincial, municipal and *barangay*⁶ («village») levels of governance.

One of the local governments that has demonstrated early unreceptiveness towards mining is the provincial government of Capiz that imposed in 1999 a 15-year moratorium on all large-scale mining (Capiz Provincial Ordinance No. 6, 1999). Similarly, the Oriental Mindoro provincial government declared in 2002 a 25-year freeze on 'large-scale mining or extraction in all forms' (Oriental Mindoro Provincial Ordinance No. 01-2002, 2002). The following provinces also have legislations disallowing large-scale mining operations within their jurisdictions:

- Albay (ordinance took effect in March 2011),
- Bukidnon (ordinance took effect in May 2011, buttressing a related legislation passed in 2009),
- Occidental Mindoro (ordinance took effect in 2009),
- and Zamboanga del Norte banning specifically open pit mining (ordinance took effect on November 2011).

The most controversial opposition to mining by local governments, supported by their constituent citizens, have been waged in Palawan (MISN, 2010), Romblon, and South Cotabato (*Minda News*, 2011a, 2011b) because the local

4. The «mining roadshows» in Australia were held in three cities namely Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. The author attended the one held in Melbourne on 10 August 2005.

5. The 24 priority mining projects include potential medium- to large-scale mining ventures many of which need capital which local mining companies lack.

6. The *barangay* is the smallest and most basic administrative political unit in the Philippines. A group of *barangay* makes up a municipality. A cluster of municipalities constitutes a province. In 2011, there are 42,027 *barangays* in the entire Philippines (DILG, 2011).

laws are being challenged by mining companies and the MGB-DENR, both arguing that national government laws have primacy over local government laws. However, in August 2013, the DENR Secretary conceded not to challenge South Cotabato's ban on open-pit mining (Business Mirror, 2013b). Meanwhile, the governor of Romblon has reaffirmed his resolve to challenge the resolution issued by a Regional Trial Court that rendered Romblon's provincial ordinance, placing a moratorium on mining, as unconstitutional (Business Mirror, 2013a). While disputations have been continuing until the present, the initiatives of some provinces in legislating ordinances to restrict mining operations, are likely to trigger other provinces to follow suit.

Under the Mining Act and its implementing rules and regulations, local governments are envisaged to realize wealth creation from mineral resources to drive growth and provide livelihood and income opportunities for their constituencies. In particular, the Mining Act provides that local governments are entitled to a 40% share from the gross collection of the national government from mining taxes, royalties and other fees. In addition, occupation fees entitle the province to 30%, and host municipalities to 70%. These provisions are strengthened by the Local Government Code. Section 292 stipulates that if a natural resource is located in the province, then the provincial government will have a share of 20%; municipality, 45%; and the *barangay*, 35% out of the 40% revenue that the national government remits to the local government.

These all seem auspicious. However, local governments receive their share of tax revenues at a much delayed time. The yearly taxes collected from mining operations accrue to the national treasury and it would take at least a couple of years for a local government to collect its fund allocation. The insight of a mayor of a mining municipality offers a picture of the situation.

«Our hometown as you know very well is a place of mining. But take a look around and tell me, have we progressed significantly through the 80-decade-long operation of that company? The company has been paying its taxes to the national government every year. We had to wait like beggars for decades before we receive our internal revenue allotment from the national government. As for our latest allotment, it is debasing that we have been prodding the national government since 2000 to remit about PhP87 mil-

lion to us as part of our share in the excise taxes paid by mining companies. We are not supposed to beg the national government but we are compelled to, lest we will never get the money that belongs to us.» (Interview on November 2004, Poblacion, Itogon, Benguet)

The misgivings of local government officials towards the national government about revenues from mining are also expressed in the views of a prominent member of the League of Provinces of the Philippines (LPP)⁷. During the 9th General Assembly of the LPP in 2012, Governor Joey Sarte Salceda described the MGB as needing to heed to the «doctrine of local preference and the philosophy of subsidiarity» in administering mining projects (*Bicol Mail*, 2012). This implies that provincial, municipal, and *barangay* levels of government must be the bodies to grant approvals for mining projects. Salceda also noted that at the same time, mining companies must pay taxes direct to the provincial and municipal governments. Salceda is the governor of Albay, the location of Rapu-rapu mine which became the first large-scale mining project that opened in the Philippines – and eventually advanced to production stage – after almost three decades during which no new mine in the country commenced operation.

The criticism against revenues from mining is not only about long delays experienced by local governments in receiving their allocated share. More important is the ratio of local government allocation relative to how much is ultimately taken by the mining companies. Salceda is a major critic of what he considers an austere «Liliputian» share of local governments from mining. In 2010, mining companies in the Bicol Region⁸ posted PhP9.2 billion⁹-worth production during the first half of the year. According to Salceda, the mammoth amount was for the mining companies, not for the people in the region. He added that mining companies paid PhP647 million¹⁰ in taxes to the national treasury and remitted a meager share of only PhP90 million¹¹ to local governments (Southern Luzon Business Review, 2011).

The concerns of local governments are not limited to the perceived miserly revenues from mining. The reasons for local governments' hindering the entry of mining projects, or restricting certain methods (e.g., open pit) of mining

7. The League of Provinces is a formal organization whose creation is mandated by the Local Government Code. Its objectives, among others, include: to foster unity and cooperation among all provinces of the country, and to serve as a forum of discussion and feedback mechanism on policies affecting local governments.

8. Albay and five other provinces (Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Masbate and Sorsogon) comprise the Bicol Region. Each of the provinces has mining operations.

9. PhP9.2 billion equates to roughly US\$206 million (PhP0.0224 = US\$1).

10. PhP647 million is about US\$14.5 million.

11. PhP90 million is approximately over US\$2 million.

within their jurisdiction, include the perceived need to protect, conserve and rehabilitate the environment; judiciously and equitably use natural resources; and consult with community members (*Business Mirror*, 2013a; *Cleanbiz Asia*, 2013; *Philstar*, 2013; South Cotabato Provincial Ordinance No. 04, 2010). The foreseen repercussions of mining operations on the environment, are expressed in the explanation of a *barangay* chairman why he and his community are opposed to mining:

«We do not want mining here in our *barangay*. Our water sources are being destroyed. We are alarmed. Any mining operation is a major disruption in nature's processes. This means mining brings a serious threat to our water sources, and an invitation to landslides and flashfloods. It is us, the people in the *barangay*, that will suffer the harmful consequences of mining. It is not those at the MGB and the executives of mining companies much less the foreigners that own the companies. They do not feel what we feel because they are not of this place. They do not understand our situation, and they cannot sympathize with us. They come here and stay only as visitors. The MGB and mining companies insist that digging our minerals is what needs to be done. That is their own idea, not ours. They do not live our lives that is why they see our coconut farms as dispensable. But this is our place; we have no other.» (Interview on 30 December 2013, Labo, Camarines Norte)

The above insight underscores the attribute of rootedness in a place – the locale. It suggests ideas of concord and affinity with the locality. According to local government officials, an understanding of local situations is a trait which is manifestly lacking among representatives of the national government and the minerals industry. The above remark also draws attention to the notions of domain and locality, which are absent in the discourse of national government officials. The claim to locality and attachment to place reechoes the viewpoint of Arthur Pingoy, the governor of South Cotabato Province whose environment code bans open pit mining. In a press release where he was asked about his reaction to Executive Order 79, the governor stated :

«Our ordinance stays unless its validity is challenged in court... We in the local government are in the best position to know what is good for our people and the environment. I will continue to implement the law (anti-open pit ordinance) unless it is declared by the court illegal.» (2004: 24)

The concerns of local governments essentially incorporate the views and aspirations of local communities that include specific sectors such

as farmers, fishermen, and in several cases, indigenous peoples. In general, local ordinances become the formal shields of communities against the probable entry of mining projects into their towns or villages. In the same manner, local officials make public declarations that the legislations they enacted are based on consultations with their constituencies. Thus far, this is the case, broadly, of South Cotabato and Romblon. Unfortunately in other places (e.g., Cantilan in Surigao del Sur, Didipio in Nueva Vizcaya), communities are divided in which members are lamentably categorized as either «pro-mining» or «anti-mining».

Civil Society

When it comes to dealing with the actions of the combined strength of the state and the minerals industry, some local governments and communities who are not convinced about the wisdom of opening their doors to mining, look for support. At both the national and village levels, some help is often found in the Roman Catholic Church. Catholic clergymen, particularly members of the politically influential Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), raise an ethical issue pertinent to mining: the land must not be «defiled», the environment protected and the disadvantaged sectors particularly the indigenous peoples must not be displaced.

The clergymen are supported by the advocacy activities carried out by nationalist groups that tend to be ideological in orientation and whose rhetoric appeals to citizens and communities desperate for support. Their discourse includes claims to stop the entry of transnational mining companies into the Philippines, and views that foreign mining companies are «imperialist plunderers». Many nationalist organizations are either directly allied with or sympathetic to bayan (Bagong Alyansa Makabayan)¹², a leftist supra-organization that coordinates mass movements. bayan takes a political position during elections and represents peasants, industrial workers, women, public transport drivers, teachers, indigenous peoples, and others. bayan organizations are overtly revolutionary and seek involvement in any constituency of resistance that they can identify.

In many ways, non-government organizations (NGOs) and peoples' organizations (POs) derive their reason for being, as well as the legitimacy and stability of their avowed causes from communities. One of these NGOs is the Alyansa Tigil Mina¹³ (ATM) which plays a significant role in

12. Bagong Alyansa Makabayan means «The New Patriotic Alliance». For related information, see <http://www.philippinerevolution.net>.

13. Alyansa Tigil Mina stands for «Alliance Against Mining». More information is available at <http://alyansatigilmina.net/>.

providing the channel through which communities have been able to articulate their apprehensions towards mining projects. ATM is an alliance of large and small organizations with the common cause of confronting «the official line of thinking about mining». The ATM (2014) is:

«[...] a coalition of organizations and groups who have decided to collectively challenge the aggressive promotion of large-scale mining in the Philippines. Composed of Non-Government Organizations, People's Organizations, Church groups and academic institutions, the ATM is both an advocacy group and a people's movement, working in solidarity to protect Filipino communities and natural resources that are threatened by large-scale mining operations.»

As an association of pro-environment activist organizations, and advocates against large-scale mining, the organization is calling for, among others, the scrapping of the Mining Act of 1995 and the passage of an Alternative People's Mining Act. ATM claims that it is not against mining. Rather, it «is against the policy regime in promoting foreign-controlled and export-oriented large-scale mining» (Alyansa Tigil Mina, 2014).

Implementing the Mining Act: an arena of social imaginaries

The Mining Act was passed in March 1995. As described earlier in this paper, the year witnessed the scores of mining companies filing applications for exploration and mining projects in the Philippines. Barely a year after however, the ecstatic momentum within the national government and the minerals industry dissipated. This was due to a combination of historical, political and economic factors. The process of implementing the Mining Act has demonstrated the clash of social imaginaries.

The disaster that stimulated mass opposition to the Mining Act

On 24 March 1996, a major tailings spillage occurred at the Marcopper mine in Marinduque Island. An estimated 1.5 to 3 million cubic meters of mine tailings flowed into the Makulapnit River, Boac River, and ultimately the ocean at the Westside of the island (Plumlee, Morton, Boyle, Medlin and Centeno, 2000). It was a catastrophe of unprecedented proportions in the Philippines: agricultural fields were inunda-

ted and fishing which was a major livelihood for more than 20,000 families in 42 communities stopped due to the flow of mine tailings burying the channels and the valley floor (SEPO, 2005)¹⁴. The tailings spillage drew calls from mainly the country's Catholic clergy, church-based organizations, civic-oriented groups, and conservation and environment activists for opposition to mining in general and the outright scrapping of the Mining Act in particular.

Mining Act petitioned as unconstitutional

Partly as an apprehensive response to «more Marcoppers in waiting», and as a circumspect reaction towards the entry of foreign mining companies to the country, a group of NGOs filed on 10 January 1997 a petition at the Philippine Supreme Court questioning the constitutionality of the Mining Act and its implementing rules and regulations. The group of NGOs was led by the Legal Rights Center-Kasama sa Kalikasan (LRC-KsK). Known as the La Bugal-B'laan Case, the petition called for the Supreme Court to nullify the Philippine Mining Act of 1995 and the FTAA entered into in 1995 by and between the Philippine Government and Tampakan Mineral Resources Corporation, Inc. This company was owned by the Australian Western Mining Corporation (WMC)¹⁵. Although WMC is the only formal private respondent in the case, the entire minerals industry had actually been handed the legal challenge.

The key issue of the appeal pertains to the unconstitutionality of the FTAA provision of the Mining Act because, as claimed by the petitioners, such provision allows 100% foreign ownership in large-scale exploration, development, utilization and exploitation of mineral resources in the Philippines by filing FTAA's. Such practice, the petitioners argued, violates the constitutional provision that the natural resources of the Philippines are a national heritage which foreign companies, through FTAA's, should not exploit.

From the time the La Bugal-B'laan case was filed in 1997, the Supreme Court had not issued a decision. In January 2004, after seven years of deliberations, the Supreme Court decided that the provision of the Mining Act allowing foreign-owned corporations to operate and manage mining activities in the country contravenes the Constitution on the grounds that it was in the nature of a «service contract» (Panganiban,

14. Inquests on the accident established that the mines' pollution problems had been occurring for many years. Previous penalties were imposed on the company for its marine disposal of over 200 million metric tons of tailings in Calancan Bay resulting in marine pollution and siltation of about 0.84 km² during 1975 to 1986 (Ramos, Cabalda and Banaag, 2000). However, permanent closure was never enforced.

15. In 2004, Western Mining Corporation (Australia) sold the project to the joint venture of Sagittarius Mining, Indo-phil Resources, Xstrata Holdings and J.P. Morgan.

2005). The Supreme Court ruled in favour of the petitioners, thereby nullifying the Mining Act's FTAA provisions that allowed the execution of service contracts with foreign firms for exploration and mining ventures. The Supreme Court also declared null and void the FTAA entered into by and between the Philippine Government and WMC.

Enactment of a law to protect indigenous peoples rights

While the Mining Act was wedged in a legal challenge, a policy to protect indigenous resource rights was enacted by the Congress of the Philippines: Republic Act 8371, otherwise known as the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA). Its final passage¹⁶ on 29 October 1997 was the result of a decade of lobbying, deliberations and consultations by concerned NGOs, peoples' organizations and indigenous peoples' representatives with the support of public interest lawyers who are themselves environmental activists.

The IPRA is a realization of the State policy on rights of indigenous peoples and cultural communities as declared in Section 22, Article II of the Philippine Constitution. The IPRA provides for formulating procedures to set right the historical injustices suffered by indigenous cultural communities/indigenous peoples (ICCs/IPs). In this way, the IPRA exalts the state «by its belated but profoundly significant acknowledgment that some laws are not rooted in the colonial past, but originate and endure in our indigenous heritage» (Leonen, 2004: 154),

The IPRA created the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) as «the primary government agency for the formulation of and implementation of policies, plans and programs to promote and protect the rights and well-being of ICCs/IPs and their ancestral domains as well as their rights thereto» (RA 8371, 1997). The IPRA gives explicit recognition to and protection of the rights of ICCs/IPs «to their ancestral domains to ensure their economic, social and cultural well-being». The ancestral domain of ICCs/IPs not only covers the physical land they occupy but the totality of resources and environment including mineral and natural resources underneath. The IPRA provides for priority rights to ICCs/IPs in the extraction, development or exploitation of any natural resources within their ancestral domain (NCIP Administrative Order 3, 2002).

A year after IPRA was enacted, two lawyers, i.e., Isagani Cruz (a retired Supreme Court Justice)

and Atty Cesar Europa challenged at the Supreme Court the constitutionality of the IPRA. The petition is perceived by observers as a countermove to the La Bugal-B'laan case. The issues in the petition pertain mainly to the ownership of minerals, property rights, priority rights and self-delineation by the ICCs/IPs. The petitioners also questioned the powers and jurisdictions of the NCIP and the applicability of customary law to the settlement of disputes involving ancestral domains and ancestral lands as violating due process of law.

With the legal challenge confronting the IPRA, the government withheld the release of the NCIP's budget in September 1998. Thus, the NCIP was precluded from performing its functions. Indigenous and other concerned sectors were asking why the government did not also suspend the implementation of the Mining Act, which was similarly facing a legal challenge before the Supreme Court. On 6 December 2000, the Supreme Court dismissed the petition against the constitutionality of the IPRA (see Supreme Court of the Philippines, 2000). Subsequently, the petitioners filed a motion for reconsideration. However on 21 September 2001, the Supreme Court resolved and declared that the IPRA is constitutional.

Reversal of earlier ruling on the Mining Act

As earlier noted in this paper, the Supreme Court ruled in January 2004 against the Mining Act. Expectedly, the High Court's decision caused a stir within the Office of President Macapagal-Arroyo, the DENR, and the mining industry. Thus, the MGB enjoined by the private respondents and the minerals industry represented by the COMP immediately appealed the High Tribunal's decision. They argued, among others, that the Philippine Constitution allowed foreign contractors to have reasonable management over mining projects and the Mining Act ensured a fair and equitable sharing of the proceeds of mining projects between the contractor and the state.

The appellants also asserted that annulling the FTAA provisions would deprive the country billions of dollars of potential investments from outside. The President of the COMP argued that the Philippines has already lost at least \$20 billion-worth of export revenues because the Mining Act was not fully implemented since its passage in 1995 (Clancy, 2005). The COMP worked closely with the Office of the Solicitor General and then filed a motion for reconsideration to the Supreme Court to plead for an oral

16. The law's passage had a considerably lengthy history in which one change built incrementally upon another. Circumstances leading to the enactment of the law can be traced to as early as 1974.

hearing of the case in order to explain better the implications of the decision. Thus, an exhaustive constitutional review and the oral hearing in the Supreme Court were held in July 2004.

In December of the same year, the Supreme Court reversed its January 2004 decision: it declared the Mining Act of 1995 as constitutional. The High Court ruled that the mining laws that were questioned earlier – the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) crafted by DENR, and the FTAA with WMC-Philippines which was executed in 1995 – do not breach the constitution. It affirmed the legality of the FTAA. In other words, there was nothing unconstitutional about the mining law's implementing rules and regulations, and foreign ownership of large-scale mining operations is legal.

Conclusion

This paper looked into the Mining Act of 1995 and the extent to which this law accommodates or responds to the aspirations of constituencies such as local governments, which are assumed to represent the aspirations and concerns of local communities.

Under the Mining Act, the exploitation, development and utilization of the country's mineral resources involve two major actors: the state that owns the resources, represented by the national government; and the mining companies bringing in the much needed foreign capital. However, a mining project is not complete with the settling of the terms and conditions of the contract between these two parties. A mining project involves the default participation of other important players that include the following: a) members of communities whose aspirations and notions of «good life» or «development» have been shaped by their relationship to their homeland and the resources that support it; b) local government officials who assume to represent the interests of their constituent communities; and c) civil society groups whose goals include directly challenging the neoliberal policies of the state.

Resource nationalism is a position that supports the goal of a state to generate revenues. However, this is not true if the particular form of resource nationalism that the state espouses is not shared or concurred by the larger number of its citizens. The case of the Philippines demonstrates the deficient legitimacy of the state – before its citizens at the local level – in mineral resources governance. The anomaly lies in the over centralized approach of the national government in decisions and actions pertinent to the exploitation, development and utilization of the country's mineral wealth. The Mining

Act and its implementing rules and regulations provide for mechanisms to ensure community consultation, local government empowerment, respect and concern for the indigenous cultural communities, and equitable sharing of benefits of natural wealth. However, the national government has not paid attention to actualizing, in full, these principles. This was due to the MGB and other government agencies having been focused on the external dimension of the state's resource nationalist posturing – the government's relationship with foreign investors. The national government, in close partnership with the minerals industry, has devoted so much resources to the prospects of generating foreign investments but serious issues of equity and allocating benefits from mining have remained unresolved in the local communities.

This article demonstrates that local-level decision-making – enshrined in the Local Government Code – brings in the participation of communities in matters of resource governance. The involvement of communities legitimizes the legislative actions of local governments. Local governments formulated relevant ordinances that have restricted or completely blocked the entry of large-scale mining or specific methods such as open pit mining in the provinces. The legislations, which incorporate the concerns of communities whose lifeways are threatened by foreseen adverse impact of mining, have created the efficiency and effectiveness in local resistance against the actions of the national government and mining companies. This resistance becomes long-run because the confrontation between national government and local government is about legislations that clinch the claims of the latter and repudiates the actions of the former. In other words, the confrontation concerns the rule of law and the autonomy of local governments.

Local governments have served as effective corporate bodies for not only articulating the concerns and interests of constituent communities vis-a-vis the distant national government but also securing the legal bases of long-term resistance. The unwelcoming initiatives of local governments towards foreign mining projects aim to conserve mineral resources and prevent foreseen environmental problems that are associated with mining operations. The organizing initiatives of other actors such as civil society groups are critical in creating venues where views and activities of local populations and community leaders are considered, coordinated, and formalized both in the formulation of ordinances as well as in ensuring their implementation. The actions of lower-level political-administrative units manifest sub-national resource nationalism that is founded on locality and affinity to homeland, and confronts the national government in matters of resource governance.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ALYANSA Tigil Mina, 2014. About Us: What is the Alyansa Tigil Mina Organization? (retrieved 13 January, 2014, from <http://alyansatigilmilmina.net/about/>).
- BICOL Mail, 2012. Salceda wants MGB chief sacked (retrieved 28 January, 2014, from <http://www.bicolmail.com/2012/?p=1859>).
- BODIN Jean, 1955. *Six Books of the Commonwealth*, abridged and translated by M.J. Tooley (retrieved from Liberty Library of Constitutional Classics <http://www.constitution.org/liberlib.htm> database Retrieved from http://www.arts.yorku.ca/politics/comminel/courses/3020pdf/six_books.pdf).
- BREMMER I. and R JOHNSTON, 2009. The rise and fall of resource nationalism, *Survival* 51(2), pp. 149-158.
- BUSINESS Mirror, 2013a (29/01). Governor vows to fight RTC ruling versus Romblon mining ban (retrieved 19 February, 2014, from <http://businessmirror.com.ph/index.php/en/news/regions/8467-governor-vows-to-fight-rtc-ruling-versus-romblon-mining-ban>).
- , 2013b (27/08). National government not challenging South Cotabato's ban on open-pit mining (retrieved 19 February, 2014, from <http://www.businessmirror.com.ph/index.php/en/news/economy/18554-national-government-not-challenging-south-cotabato-s-ban-on-open-pit-mining>).
- CABALDA M. V., M. A. BANAAG, P. N. T. TIDALGO and R.B. GARCES, 2002. Sustainable Development in the Philippine Minerals Industry: A Baseline Study, International Institute for Environment and Sustainable Development - World Business Council for Sustainable Development. Mines Minerals and Sustainable Development Project.
- CAPIZ PROVINCIAL ORDINANCE No. 6, 1999. Declaring a moratorium on all large-scale mining activities and the processing of applications for the same in the Province of Capiz for a period of fifteen years and imposing penalties for violation thereof.
- CLANCY M., 2005. The rebirth of the Philippine mining industry, Makati, Philippines, Philippine Business Leaders Forum Inc., pp. 1-9.
- CLARKE M. and T. CUMMINS, 2012. Resource Nationalism: A Gathering Storm?, *International Energy Law Review* 6, pp. 220-225.
- CLEANBIZ Asia, 2013 (18/02). Romblon Island targets miners under tough environmental regs (retrieved 19 February, 2014, from <http://www.cleanbiz.asia/news/romblon-island-targets-miners-under-tough-environmental-regs#.UwQT-mKSyZc>).
- DEFENSOR M. T., 2005 (11 August). Recent developments in the Philippine minerals sector and outlook for the future, paper presented at the Philippine Mining Roadshow, Melbourne.
- DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT (DILG), 2011 (14 July). Master List of *Barangays* As of March 31 (retrieved 10, 2014, from http://www.dilg.gov.ph/PDF_File/resources/DILG-Resources-2011714-d0ea483a21.pdf).
- DISINI A. F., 2006. Philippines - 2006, 1. January 2006 (retrieved 7 February, 2014, from http://www.mining-journal.com/reports/philippines2006?SQ_DESIGN_NAME=print_friendly).
- EMEL J., M. T. HUBER and M. H. MAKENE, 2011. Extracting sovereignty: Capital, territory, and gold mining in Tanzania, *Political Geography* 30 (2), pp. 70-79.
- ERNST And Young. 2013. Business Risks Facing Mining and Metals 2013-2014 (retrieved from [http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/Business_risks_facing_mining_and_metals_2013%E2%80%932014_ER0069/\\$FILE/Business_risks_facing_mining_and_metals_2013%E2%80%932014_ER0069.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/Business_risks_facing_mining_and_metals_2013%E2%80%932014_ER0069/$FILE/Business_risks_facing_mining_and_metals_2013%E2%80%932014_ER0069.pdf)).
- EXECUTIVE ORDER 79, 2012. Institutionalizing and Implementing Reforms in the Philippine Mining Sector Providing Policies and Guidelines to Ensure Environmental Protection and Responsible Mining in the Utilization of Mineral Resources.
- EXECUTIVE ORDER 270, 2004. National Policy Agenda on Revitalizing Mining in the Philippines (retrieved 24 January, 2014, from http://www.lawphil.net/executive/execord/eo2004/eo_270_2004.html).
- EXECUTIVE ORDER 279, 1987. Authorizing the Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources to Negotiate and Conclude Joint Venture, Co-Production, or Production-Sharing Agreements for the Exploration, Development and Utilization of Mineral Resources, and Prescribing the Guidelines for Such Agreements and Those Agreements Involving Technical or Financial Assistance by Foreign-Owned Corporations for Large-Scale Exploration, Development, and Utilization of Minerals Full Text published online by the Supreme Court E-Library (retrieved 14 March, 2007, from <http://elibrary.supremecourt.gov.ph/index10>).

- php?doctype=Executive%20Ordersanddocid=a45475a11ec72b843d74959b60fd7bd6469d525320bc3#sam).
- GONZALEZ III J. L. 2001. Philippines: Continuing People Power, in J. Funston (ed.), *Government and Politics in Southeast Asia*, Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, pp. 252-290.
- GRAVELLE J., 2012. Resource nationalism - A growing challenge for miners globally, *Canadian Mining Journal* 133 (10), p. 30.
- HASELIP J. and G. HILSON, 2005. Winners and losers from industry reforms in the developing world: experience from the electricity and mining sectors, *Resources Policy* 30 (2), pp. 87-100.
- JURADO G. M., 2003. Growth Models, Development Planning, and Implementation in the Philippines, *Philippine Journal of Development* xxx (1), pp. 1-26.
- KOHL B. and L. FARTHING, 2012. Material constraints to popular imaginaries: The extractive economy and resource nationalism in Bolivia, *Political Geography* 31 (4), pp. 225-235.
- LEONEN M. V. F., 2004. Weaving worldviews: implications of constitutional challenges to the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997, *Social Policy and the Law (Journal of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines)* 30 (1), pp. 153-184.
- LITFIN K. T., 1997. Sovereignty in World Ecopolitics, *Mershon International Studies Review* 41, pp. 167-204.
- LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE OF 1991 (Republic Act No. 7160), 1991. An Act Providing for a Local Government Code of 1991, Congress of the Philippines.
- MERRIAM C. E. J., 2001 (reprint). *History of the Theory of Sovereignty Since Rousseau* (retrieved from [http://republicofbc.pbworks.com/f/Sovereignty_20define\[1\].pdf](http://republicofbc.pbworks.com/f/Sovereignty_20define[1].pdf)).
- MINDA News, 2011a (11/06). South Cot approves environment code, bans open pit mining (retrieved 6 July, 2011, from <http://www.mindanews.com/environment/2010/06/11/south-cot-approves-environmentcode-bans-open-pit-mining/>).
- , 2011b (18/02). Tampakan project is 'catastrophe in the making,' militant group says (retrieved 23 July, 2011, from <http://www.mindanews.com/topstories/2011/02/18/tampakan-project-is-%E2%80%98catastrophe-in-the-making%E2%80%99-militant-group-says/>).
- MINING INJUSTICE SOLIDARITY NETWORK (MISN), 2010. PCSD endorsement to Macao-asia multi-billion giant deferred: an initial victory for NGOs and indigenous peoples (retrieved 2 October, 2011, from <http://www.solidarityresponse.net/palawan-unesco-man-and-biosphere-reserve-sold-out-to-mining-companies-last-government-decision-on-30-july/>).
- NAGAN W. P. and A. M. Haddad, 2012. Sovereignty in Theory and Practice, *San Diego International Law Journal* 13, pp. 430-519.
- NCIP ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER No.3, 2002. Revised Guidelines for the Issuance of Certification Precondition and the Free and Prior Informed Consent in Connection with Applications for License, Permit, Agreement or Concession to Implement and or Operate Programs/Projects/Plans/Business or Investments Including Other Similar or Analogous Activities or Undertaking that do not Involve Issuance of License, Permit, Agreement or Concession but Requires the Free and Prior Informed Consent of ICC/IP Community in Ancestral Domain Areas in Accordance with R.A. 8731.
- ORIENTAL MINDORO PROVINCIAL ORDINANCE No. 01, 2002. An Ordinance Declaring 25-Year Moratorium on Large-Scale Mining in the Province of Oriental Mindoro, Providing Exceptions and Penalties Therefor.
- OTTO J. M., 1997. *Global Mining Taxation Comparative Study*, Institute for Global Resources and Management, Colorado School of Mines.
- PANGANIBAN A. V., 2005 (3 February). Invest in the whole country, not just in the mining industry, paper presented at the *International Mining Investment Conference*, Makati City, Philippines.
- PHILIPPINE CONSTITUTION, 1987. The 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines.
- PHILSTAR, 2013 (15 February). Romblon board approves Environment Code (retrieved 19 February, 2014, from <http://www.philstar.com/nation/2013/02/15/908843/romblon-board-approves-environment-code>).
- PLUMLEE G., S., R. A. MORTON, T. P. BOYLE, J. H. MEDLIN and J. A. CENTENO, 2000 (May 12-19). An Overview of Mining-Related Environmental and Human Health Issues, Marinduque, Island, Philippines: Observations from a Joint U.S. Geological Survey - Armed Forces Institute of Pathology Reconnaissance Field Evaluation, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Science for a Changing World.

- RAMOS F. V., 1993 (26 July). "Let's Seize the Moment!" Message to Congress of His Excellency Fidel V. Ramos President of the Philippines on the State of the Nation (retrieved 31 January, 2014, from <http://www.gov.ph/1993/07/26/fidel-v-ramos-second-state-of-the-nation-address-july-26-1993/>).
- RAMOS H. C., M. V. CABALDA and M. A. BANAAAG, 2000. Tailings dam accidents and the use of chemicals in mining, issues, policy response and lessons learned from the Philippines, paper presented at the *International Workshop on Environmental Regulation for Accident Prevention in Mining*, Tailings and Chemicals Management, Perth, Australia, 25-27 October 2000.
- REPUBLIC ACT No. 8371, 1997. An Act to Recognize, Protect and Promote the Rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous People, Creating a national Commission of Indigenous People, Establishing Implementing Mechanisms, Appropriating funds Therefor, and for Other Purposes.
- ROSENAU J., 1995. Sovereignty in a Turbulent World, in G. M. Lyons and M. Mastanduno (eds), *Beyond Westphalia? State Sovereignty and International Intervention*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 191-227.
- SEPO (Senate Economic Planning Office), 2005 (Nov). Extracting growth from mining. Policy Insights (PI-06-05) (retrieved 1 July 2007, from www.senate.gov.ph/publications/).
- SMITH D. and K. NAITO, 1998. Asian mining legislation, *Resources Policy* 24 (2), pp. 125-132.
- SOUTH COTABATO PROVINCIAL ORDINANCE No. 04., 2010. An Ordinance Providing for the Environment Code of the Province of South Cotabato.
- SOUTHERN LUZON BUSINESS REVIEW, 2011 (16 December). Bicol Mines Yield Billions: But Salceda says gains artificial.
- STEVENS P., 2008. National oil companies and international oil companies in the Middle East: Under the shadow of government and the resource nationalism cycle, *Journal of World Energy Law and Business* 1 (1), pp. 5-30.
- SUNSTAR, 2013 (20 May). Open-pit ban in S. Cotabato stays (retrieved 10 February, 2014, from <http://www.sunstar.com.ph/davao/business/2013/05/20/open-pit-ban-s-cotabato-stays-283353>).
- SUPREME COURT OF THE PHILIPPINES, 2000 (6 December). En Banc [G.R. No. 135385. December 6, 2000] Cruz vs Sec. of Environment and Natural Resources (retrieved 1 April, 2006, from <http://www.supremecourt.gov.ph/jurisprudence/2000/dec2000/135385.htm>).
- TAYLOR C., 2004. *Modern Social Imaginaries*. Durham, North Carolina, Duke University Press.
- UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCTAD) SECRETARIAT, 1997. Management of Commodity Resources in the Context of Sustainable Development, Governance Issues for the Mineral Sector, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).
- WARD H., 2009. Resource nationalism and sustainable development: a primer and key issues, IIED Working Paper (retrieved 12 Nov, 2011, from <http://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/G02507.pdf>).
- WORLD BANK - INTERNATIONAL FINANCE CORPORATION (WB-IFC), 2003. Mining Reform and the World Bank (retrieved 6 February, 2014, from <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTOGMC/Resources/miningreform-andtheworldbank.pdf>).
- YASIN R., 2010 (21 January). Globalization and the Sovereign State (retrieved 6 February, 2014, from www.scribd.com/doc/25536152/Globalization-and-the-Sovereign-State).

Nauru Phosphate History and the Resource Curse Narrative¹

by

Nancy J. POLLOCK*

ABSTRACT

Nauruans' experiences of a resource curse from mining phosphate stands, as a case study of retarded development. Nauru was much adulated in the press in the early 20th century as an example of a «small island» that became «wealthy» through mining. The high grade phosphate that covered four fifths of the island was considered by outsiders as a very lucrative resource that had to be mined, particularly as fertilizer to enhance the pastures of Australia and New Zealand. The development of Nauru has been misinterpreted by attributions of wealth to Nauruans when most of the profits from mining accrued to the mining agencies. Sales of phosphate yielded far greater development to Australian agriculture than to Nauruan owners of the resource. Meanwhile the small island surface of Nauru underwent gradual destruction of its interior retarding any developments, economic or humanitarian.

KEYWORDS: Nauru, phosphate mining, resource curse, retarded development, case study

RÉSUMÉ

L'expérience nauruane des ressources maudites découlant de l'exploitation du phosphate constitue un cas emblématique de prévention du développement. Nauru a été acclamé dans la presse du début du 20^e siècle comme un exemple de « petites îles » devenue « riches » grâce à l'exploitation minière. Le minerai à haute teneur en phosphate qui couvrait les quatre cinquièmes de l'île était considéré dans le reste du monde comme une ressource lucrative à extraire, en particulier pour fertiliser les prairies australiennes et néo-zélandaises. Le développement de Nauru a mal été interprété, sur la base des richesses distribuées aux habitants, alors que l'essentiel des profits miniers revenait en réalité aux opérateurs miniers. Le commerce du phosphate a rapporté beaucoup plus à l'agriculture australienne qu'aux propriétaires nauruans de la ressource en question. Et cet enrichissement très relatif a eu pour conséquence la destruction progressive de la surface de la petite île de Nauru, empêchant tout développement, qu'il soit économique ou humain.

MOTS-CLÉS : Nauru, exploitation du phosphate, malédiction des ressources, frein au développement, étude de cas

Nauru phosphate mining is a prime example of «the natural resource curse» thesis (Auty, 1993) as applied to a small island state in the Pacific. Mining did not enhance economic development for Nauruans but rather retarded Nauruan development processes, betraying trusts and

creating reliance on outside agencies, so necessary for a small population on a single island in mid-Pacific. Mining has had a long term impact on Nauruans and their island (Pollock, 2014). This paper illustrates what Rosser (2006) terms the consensus of how «political and social variables

1. I am grateful to the Nauru Government and AusAid for support for participation in the Commission of Enquiry into Worked Out Mines on Nauru, 1986-88. I am also grateful to Professor Harry Maude for sharing his early notes on Nauru.

* Department of Anthropology and Development Studies, Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand, nancy_pollock@paradise.net.nz

mediate the relationship between natural resource wealth and development outcomes» in one small Pacific Island nation. The so-called wealth that has drawn much media attention has disrupted political relationships within and exterior to the island, and led to a loss of wealth, both financial, environmental and social. This society thus exemplifies the label «natural resource curse». Nauruans had to seek compensation from the British Phosphate Commissioners (BPC) for failure to rehabilitate environmental destruction, that led to loss of land as the main food source, and loss of administrative control of their own affairs, i.e. autonomy. They received miniscule benefits from the extraction and sales of «their» phosphate, and violation of international trusts that committed BPC to bringing development to Nauru society (Weeramantry, 1992).

We will consider the Nauruan case of mining as «retarded development» by contrasting capitalist views of economic development, i.e. cash dependency, with humanitarian views of development, i.e. of justice and well-being (Sen, 2001). Whereas minute cash returns to a few Nauruans necessitated purchases of basic foods to replace traditional foods, the additional sums deducted by Australian administrators to be placed in Trust Funds, and environmental degradation left Nauruans struggling to survive on their much reduced island space. Nauruans' humanitarian concerns were compromised by their loss of autonomy in the face of mining priorities. Nauruans' call for rehabilitation of their island and compensation for under payments for their phosphate was heard at the International Court of Justice in the Hague, with former British Phosphate Commissioners charged with remedial payments (see Weeramantry, 1992 for details).

The Commission of Enquiry into Worked Out Mines on Nauru (1986-1988), as a joint project between the Nauruan government and AusAid, sought to establish the background to Nauruans' concerns for remedying the damage to their island inflicted by phosphate mining. The Commission of Enquiry brought in a team of advisers ranging from geo-morphologists to a housing advisor and ecological remedial advisers. My role as social scientist liaised with the former President Lagi Harris to ascertain the views of Nauruans about the best steps for their future. We held meetings in the twelve districts, talked with concerned Nauruans, and I visited a Class 6 to discuss and have them illustrate their thoughts on their future. As an anthropologist I was concerned that the team capture Nauruans' views of the best remedies for their island's well-being.

The media has labelled Nauruans variously over time as:

«the wealthiest little island in the Pacific [...], most «obese population» on WHO list of BMIs, and «failed state»»

In this paper we examine how Nauruans have experienced little benefits from «wealth» from phosphate during the xxth century, but rather inherited a struggle to seek the lost income, buried in Trusts by the BPC. The small income that each Nauruan land holder received at the time her/his piece of land was mined contributed minimally to that family's welfare. And the Trust Funds have contributed little to Nauruans' future security, as discussed below. The lack of rehabilitation of the devastated four fifths of the interior of the island lingers as a humanitarian (and costly) issue that requires vast capitalist resources to render the whole island habitable again, in order to meet Nauruans' hopes for future generations. Nauruans' trust in outsiders' lack of attention to these concerns has been severely compromised.

When economic development is measured in terms of the growth of «wealth» and how that wealth is managed (e.g. Stiglitz, 2006) the Nauruan example reveals contrasting views of that concept. For Nauruans, wealth has always referred to their island, their land, in its spiritual and material entirety, deep down below any surface elements. That was the basis from which Nauruans instituted their claim for compensation from the British Phosphate Commissioners (Weeramantry, 1992; Pollock, 1986). For the Pacific Phosphate Company at the beginning of the xxth century and later the British Phosphate Commissioners, wealth was viewed as returns accumulating to their businesses from phosphate sold at cheap prices to themselves. For one party, Nauruans, their wealth has been destroyed by mining; for the other, Australia and New Zealand, wealth was created. These contrasting views of «wealth» underlie the early misrepresentations of Nauru as a wealthy nation.

By tracing the impact of mining phosphate on a small remote Pacific island, we can clarify how economic development has tended to be slower in resource rich countries than in rich nations (Auty, 1993; Sachs and Warner, 2001; Stiglitz, 2006). Most of the mining examples cited by Sachs and Warner are enclaves within larger economic entities that have been classed as developing nations, such as tin mining in Chile. They are also entities where mining has developed recently, i.e. in the last 50 years. In contrast, Nauruans have experienced the «underdevelopments» resultant from mining throughout the xxth century (Pollock, 2014). The «natural



MAP 1. – Nauru in the Pacific Ocean

resource curse» has left them with little land to live on, no local resources, limited finances, and a high level of dependency on outside agencies. They must import all necessities, including food and water, using whatever returns their resource has provided throughout the xxth century. Today they have become dependent on outside aid to replace their denuded island's wealth.

The Nauru example demonstrates the negative aspects of dependence on cash as an element of capitalism. When returns from the sale of a resource, in this case phosphate, must replace basic subsistence living sources, and when cash returns are miniscule (two pence a ton) to a land holder for a piece of land mined, new problems are presented for everyday living and well-being. In the short term few Nauruans have had cash to meet new demands. In the long term the Trust Funds, derived from money taken from those small sums to be set aside/invested by the Administrators for Nauruans' future needs, have proved to be poorly invested. The gradual destruction of the whole interior of the island has had both short term and long term impacts that Nauruans themselves have had to address. The result, in the xxist century is an island population crowded into a narrow shore-line strip totally dependent on outside sources,

including food and water, that must be transported across many thousand miles of the Pacific Ocean.

Socio-Cultural Background to Mining

When mining began in 1906, the Nauruan population was less than 1,000 people. A civil war in the 1880s, fuelled by traders, mainly German, selling guns and gin, led to the «Queen» of all Nauruan tribes approaching Germany for assistance to bring peace to what had been labelled by earlier visitors as «pleasant island». As a German colony, tribal organization was reformulated for administrative purposes (see Clark and Firth 1992), but Nauruans continued to maintain their traditional structure of leadership of tribes, districts and family mobility of allegiances. Tribal organization was further reviewed in 1927 when the British Phosphate Commissioners introduced a new Council of Chiefs through which to

administer both Nauruan social relationships and mining the land. Nauruans maintained their tribal structure alongside the new imposed political structure. In 1952, Nauruans established a less hierarchical structure for themselves in the form of the Nauru Local Government Council. Importantly, it gave them a separate voice to the United Nations Visiting Missions to whom they expressed their growing list of concerns.

The onset of mining in 1906 drew Nauruans into a transitional status. Their traditional tribal organisation, social hierarchy and supporting customs and practices provided the fundamental basis for their living and well-being. Each Nauruan belonged to the tribe of her or his mother. S/he was also born into a two-tiered social system, headed by the *Temonibe* class, with younger kinsmen belonging to the *Amengename* class. Newcomers comprised the *Itsio* class who became attached as residents and workers to a particular tribal chief who conferred on them rights to live on and work on a particular land. The Nauruan social system was clearly established; it enabled outsiders such as beachcombers and traders to be given a place in the system, albeit as outsiders (*itsio*). The Nauruan social system revolved around women as the procreators of new members of each of the twelve tribes, and some were recognised as chiefs. The tribal system has survived the turmoil of the xxth century (Pollock, 2014).

Given the scarcity of basic resources, and their strong attachment to their land, Nauruans had devised a social system that organised the best means of allocating resources among the resident population, including rights to land. Individuals inherited rights to named pieces of land through both their mothers and fathers, but shared those rights with kin. Their class system, as linked to a complex chiefly system that controlled the twelve tribes, and responsibilities to the twelve districts persisted despite the administrators attempts to apply new means of controlling Nauruans, alongside other residents.

Nauruan leadership emerged to express their concerns about injustices. Timothy Detudamo expressed their expectations for a greater share of the phosphate wealth with BPC throughout the 1920s and 1930s, and Hammer de Roburt took up his role after Nauruans returned from exile in 1946. When Nauruans decided in 1952 to update their system, they formed the Nauru Local Government Council that replaced the hierarchy of the class system, with elected representation of the people. That lasted through into the 1990s. Their submissions to the United Nations Visiting Missions built their case for independence; Hammer de Roburt became President intermittently from 1970 onwards until his death. Nauruans continued to manage their affairs according to their own principles, despite attempts to impose alternative controls. Autonomy persists as all important among those principles.

Demographic Imbalance

Nauruans were concerned that their small numbers, amounting to 1,084 in 1921, contributed to their lack of voice with the Australian administrators. They were vastly outnumbered (2:1) by the mining contract labour force and mining administrators. Reproduction of their tribal groups has been an ongoing concern for Nauruans. Given the limited resources to feed the population and fears that any one tribe may die out, they had set in place a cultural system of channelling the best food resources to a young woman at menarche (Pollock, 1995, 2012). A young woman's fertility was preciously guarded and socially supported; a fattening process ensured she had the best chance to produce a healthy offspring (Pollock, 1995). Directing scarce resources towards successful reproduction was a major cultural feature, necessary to support the desired increases to the population.

That concern to increase the Nauruan population has been retained throughout the 20th century; very few Nauruans have migrated away from their island. Population growth has

continued to be supported, whereas in other parts of the Pacific, plans to restrict population growth have been set in place. At the turn of the 19th century Nauruans had established a target of 1,500 both as a necessary feature for retaining autonomy on their island, as well as for gaining recognition by their administrators. Contract labourers brought in in large numbers from 1906 onward placed Nauruans in third place behind the administration and mining managers and an ever-growing labour force. Development was curtailed by their low numbers, as it was dispersed amongst all residents.

That target population goal of 1,500 (Kretzschmar, 1913) was finally reached in 1933. They had lost men during the civil war of the 1880s, and a flu epidemic in 1905, and the big Pacific wide flu epidemic of 1919 severely set back their population growth. Thus the birth of the 1,500th Nauruan in October 1933 was a major event that is still celebrated annually on the Nauruan calendar today. Nauruan autonomy has been based around rebuilding the numbers of Nauruans and their rights.

Retarded Development

Views of development as benefits derived from a cash economy that would «trickle down» to the wider populace have been critiqued by those who have witnessed its failures, resulting in widening gaps between poor and rich (e.g. Sachs and Warner, 2001; Stiglitz, 2006). Instead, views of development based on a «bottom up» approach stress the need to broaden the development concept to include humanitarian concerns, such as ready access to basic needs (i.e. assured food supplies), to address health and education facilities, and most importantly recognition of and respect for peoples' rights to autonomy and decision making according to their own values (Sen, 2001). Environments can be assessed from both standpoints; the Nauruan case, successfully heard before the International Court of Justice in The Hague, serves as case law that indicates that an island community's environment was more than just commercial property for others to exploit (Weeramantry, 1992). The hearings pointed out that BPC had failed to advance the development of Nauru society as entrusted to them by the League of Nations Mandate, followed by the United Nations Trusteeship.

Cash Dependency

The «wealth» that was so frequently attributed to Nauruans during the first half of the 20th century in media reports is a myth, built up

and repeated by those who were more familiar with the increased productivity that phosphate brought to Australian and New Zealand farmers, than with the realities that Nauruans were experiencing from outsiders' mining interests. If Nauruans had been receiving their rightful share of profits from the sale of their phosphate then they might have been wealthy in a capitalist sense, even though they had lost half the usable living space on their island. Dependency has become a high price to pay for their resource curse, especially for a population highly desirous to maintain their autonomy. The rentier economy that overrode Nauruans' rights became their underlying point of contention at the Commission of Enquiry into Worked out mines in 1986 (Weeramantry, 1992).

The British Phosphate Commissioners, when established under the Nauru Island Agreement in 1919, had allotted shares among themselves, so that Australia and the United Kingdom would take 42 % each of the phosphates produced, while New Zealand was allotted 16%. As one UK politician stated:

«We lay down in this Agreement the best phosphates in the world are to be held for the exclusive use of the three nations and in any case are to be sold to them at cost.» (cited in Weeramantry, 1992: 62-3)

No mention was made of any payments to Nauruans – those were for each Australian Administrator to determine later in consultation with Canberra (for terms of the Nauru Island Agreement 1919, see Weeramantry, 1992, Appendix I: 376-378).

This new management of mining replaced the structure initially set in place under German administration and the Pacific Phosphate Company when mining first began in 1906. After World War I when German possessions were redistributed under the League of Nations Mandate, responsibility for Nauru was assigned to the UK, at Australia's particular behest. The status of the mining operation was not specified as a separate entity from development of Nauruan affairs. But the Mandate specified under its provisions that the British Empire, through the Commissioners «as managers of a business concern» was responsible for ensuring:

«not only the present welfare of the natives, but also in conformity with the recommendations of the Covenant, the development of the population of the mandated area.» (cited in Weeramantry 1991, Appendix II: 381)

Similar development obligations were set in place when Nauru became a United Nations Trust Territory after World War II. Nauruans

drew attention of successive UN Visiting Missions to BPC failures to observe those obligations.

Nauruans lost use of their lands in return for a very small share of those returns. When mining began on plots of land in the south east corner of Top Side two or three land holders received a few pfennigs per ton initially, then two pence per ton of phosphate extracted from her/his land after 1922 when the British Phosphate Commissioners established control of the island and all its resources.

In contrast at that time the BP Commissioners were selling that phosphate to Australia and New Zealand at Australian 4 pounds 52 pence per ton – many hundred per cent profit. And those were mates' rates! – i.e. below open market rates. As Weeramantry has demonstrated (figure 2.1):

«it is important to note that not only was the Nauruan landowner receiving so minute a fraction of the value of the phosphate taken from his land, he was also left with the added burden of the devastation of his land which had been enjoyed by his people from time immemorial.» (Weeramantry, 1992: 23)

In the 1890s, before phosphate was discovered, German surveyors had mapped the land holdings of Nauruans to provide a record of both landholders and the boundaries of their pieces of land. The Pacific Phosphate Company, and subsequently the British Phosphate Commissioners, used that survey record as the basis by which mining was moved from land holding to adjacent land as the template for all successive mining. The mining company recorded the amount of phosphate extracted in a large folio. Against each numbered and named piece of land the tonnage of phosphate, and the amount paid was recorded. The two or three Nauruans who were acknowledged as land owners were paid their 50 pfennig a ton initially, later a half penny per ton rising to two pence per ton in 1922, together with small sums paid to the owners of any coconut trees and pandanus trees on that land that were destroyed by mining. That record, kept in a folio volume in the Lands office on Nauru, was computerized in Melbourne in the 1990s (author's fieldnotes). It provides a clear record of the very small sums that each landholder received at the time when lands were first mined.

Land holders had to replace their pandanus and coconut tree food sources with rice and cans purchased from the mining company store, a further example of BPC's total control of life on Nauru. Each of two or three land holders of each mined plot might be awarded a total of six or ten (British) pounds per ton of phosphate extracted; that money was a once-only income return from that land – nothing more would eventuate after it was mined out. Those small sums of cash paid to

Nauruans had to be used to buy foods to replace the pandanus and coconuts that the land holder's household had formerly relied on, together with whatever fish they caught as a supplement, as well as for all other means of supporting themselves, such as housing. Furthermore they were culturally bound to share such «luxuries» with kin. Rice and tinned meat were purchased from the «Company (i.e. BPC)» store at inflated prices. When Timothy Detudamo, a Nauruan leader, set up an alternative Cooperative store in the 1920s for Nauruans, he was thrown in gaol.

Their holdings were reduced to a sea of calcite pinnacles. Phosphate «dirt» was dug out (by Chinese contract labourers) from between the hard calcite pinnacles to be processed into superphosphate before being shipped and sold off shore to Australian and New Zealand farmers. The high grade fertilizer rapidly increased the productivity of their pastures. It was sold to them at below market rates.

When the question of whether Nauruans had been adequately compensated for loss of their land was raised in 1957 and 1960 at meetings with the United Nations Trusteeship Council, the BPC representative claimed that:

«there was no world price for phosphate»

and details of the commercial enterprise were confidential [to BPC] and:

«bore no relation to a Trust Territory.» (cited *in* Weeramantry, 1992: 138)

This argument was used in justification for BPC's failure to provide the Trusteeship Council with full information on their financial operations in regard to Nauru. But Trusteeship Council members continued to press for Nauru's accounts, as Nauruans believed that:

«the Commissioners were making profits at the expense of the Nauruans.» (Weeramantry, 1992: 138)

Nauruans' concerns were at last beginning to reach those considering their rights, rather than just economic returns.

Nauruans were taking note of the discrepancies in cash value, and kept a steady pressure on the Australian administrators for BPC from 1921 onwards to increase returns to land holders. But they were stymied by their small numbers and lack of «voice». Sums were increased gradually from two pence to four pence in 1927 and stayed at that rate until 1939, (but one penny per ton was deducted to be placed in a Royalty Trust Fund, as discussed below). After the mine restarted in 1948 following the devastation of World War II, Nauruan land holders received six pence per ton of phosphate from their land,

rising to three shillings and six pence just before Nauruans declared independence in 1968 (Viviani, 1970: 189). By that time two thirds of all the land holdings on Top Side had been mined, and become inaccessible. After independence, Nauruans had to consider whether to continue mining. They decided they needed the income.

Nauruans became consumers with no other choices. They had to buy the new goods including cloth as missionaries and other outsiders expected them to replace their *ridi* made from pandanus leaves by cloth garments. The Company store provided an array of goods such as Nauruans had never seen before. They were praised for «modernising» by buying items as they could afford them. Consumerism was a mark of modernisation.

The sums those first Nauruan land holders received were miniscule and hardly constituted the label «wealth» as was so oft reported. Rather the wealth was accruing to Australian and New Zealand farmers as they harvested crops grown with the new uncontaminated fertilizer.

Trust Funds

Australian administrators established a Nauru Royalty Trust Fund in 1921 in answer to Nauruans' demands for a greater share of the returns from phosphate sales. Those administrators decided that since Nauruans were unfamiliar with handling money any increases in returns should be placed out of reach of everyday spending in a Trust Fund; one penny per ton of phosphate exported was added to the 2 pence return to an individual shareholder of the named land from which the phosphate had been taken. The proportion of the sums deducted to be paid into a Trust Fund was increased over time, almost equal to the sum paid direct to landholders as discussed above. Two pence in the hand (direct payments) was matched by one or two pence in the Nauru Royalty Trust Fund on behalf of each land holder.

Subsequent Australian administrators increased the number of Trust Funds over the 47 years between 1920 and 1967. The Nauru Royalty Trust Fund, Nauruan Landowners Royalty Trust Fund, the Nauruan Community Long Term Investment Fund, and a Rehabilitation Fund were added over time. Each Fund was invested by the Australian administration to set aside income for use when the phosphate ran out. The sums invested were not apparent to the UN Visiting Missions in the 1950s and 1960s who sought access to the financial records of the BPC.

In addition Nauruans were charged a «management fee» of 10% of costs deducted from their phosphate returns (Viviani, 1970: 160). Administration costs rose from 3,829

FIGURE 1. – Phosphate in Nauru (date, picture Nancy Pollock)

Australian pounds in 1922 to 862,136 pounds in 1966 when they comprised 20% of the value of phosphate exports in 1966 as taken from sales of phosphates (Vivian, 1970). Weeramantry made a key point during the later compensation hearings (in 1988) that:

«The British Phosphate Commissioners [...] were endeavouring to purchase the phosphates available for the cheapest possible price [...] It ensured that the Nauruans would not receive the best possible price for their phosphates.» (Weeramantry, 1992: 104)

Nauruans were thus paying for administration of their island under a League of Nations Class C Mandate out of their phosphate money. The Mandate supposedly protected Nauruan interests, but any development was being paid for out of Nauruans' own small returns.

The various Trust Funds were invested by Australian accountants with little input from Nauruans. Furthermore the financial records of the various funds were so obfuscated that neither the League of Nations nor the United Nations after them was able to ascertain accurately the true position and status of the Nauru accounts. Accounts were secret (Weeramantry, 1992: 105). The Commissioners channelled money into a variety of funds, such as a Capital Assets Replacement Reserve, the Development Reserve and others but the accounts were not revealed to either protective agency nor to Nauruans themselves.

The status of their financial affairs and where money had been invested on their behalf became a major concern for the newly independent Nauru government in 1970. In 1971 they had bought the mining equipment from the Commissioners for \$A21 millions, that they distributed «to countries of their choice» exclusive of Nauru (Weeramantry, 1992: 282). The British Phosphate Commissioners were dissolved in 1987. Their records of 47 years of administering the mine and the island «were not generally available for perusal» to the Nauruan established Commission of Inquiry in the 1980s (Weeramantry, 1992: 69). The new nation was faced with a heavy debt and obscured investments on which hopes were pinned.

In 1970 the new Nauru government inherited a very murky financial picture. They began immediately to try to establish their claims for underpayments from phosphate and betrayal of trust by the British Phosphate Commissioners of their responsibilities to develop Nauruan way of life under the terms of the League of Nations



Mandate and the United Nations Trusteeship. They had to seek advice from outsiders as they had previously been totally excluded from any management roles in the phosphate industry or in administration. Their financial position has posed ongoing major difficulties for Nauruans. They were poorly equipped to uncover such a complex set of books. An irreversible situation continued after independence as the natural resource curse has persisted.

The Trust Funds were supposed to provide money for the support of future generations. Mining advisers to the new Nauru Phosphate Corporation in 1970 suggested that the remaining third of phosphate reserves would last to 1996 at the current rate of mining. The general Nauruan population expected their payouts from their calculated shares of the Royalty Trust Funds, known as Ronron, to be available on that date. Some 6,000 of them had plans in place for spending the money. When a series of governments was unable to provide answers to the people as to how much, and when the payments would commence, Nauruans staged a protest in 1993 at the time the Pacific Islands Forum meeting on Nauru. But the Government has failed to reveal what happened to the funds. In 1997 the United Nations Development Programme revised Nauru's per capita Gross National Product from \$A29,110 million to \$A3,711million (quoted in Quanchi, 2007: 253). Many such figures have been presented depending on how blame is apportioned.

The label «failed state» that has been attached to Nauru and other Pacific Islands (Brown, 2007), has been applied repeatedly by one commentator referring to Nauruan failures to safeguard their investments for more financial transparency since 1921, and more stridently in the 1950s, but to no avail. The state of their financial affairs has challenged many outsiders as well as a series of Nauruan governments.

Environmental Degradation

The costs of mining for Nauruans included environmental destruction of Top-Side, that

comprises four fifths of the interior of the island. As a raised reef, that interior stood some 200 feet above the coastal strip that marked the shoreline above a narrow encircling reef. The lands holding the «rich source of phosphate» in Australian eyes were degraded piece by piece into a sea of pinnacles which benefits no one, and raises the temperature of the island environment.

Before mining began, the island was noted for its green and pleasant appeal. The trees that covered the island were a point of remark by early visitors, such as Commander Simpson in 1843. They termed Nauru «pleasant island» and a Garden of Eden on account of its lush greenery. (They must have visited after a rainy season, as Nauru is prone to a range of climates varying from heavy downpours to droughts that last two or three years.) But the calcareous base to the island meant that water is always a precious resource. Vegetation that survives these extremes is limited in variety, yet for several hundred years Nauruans had managed their land so as to support a viable population.

After mining, the rich forest was destroyed, leading to ever increasing environmental damage. The interior became a waste-land. Each land holder watched as diggers and machinery carried the dirt, called phosphate, to a processing plant on the coast line, to be transformed into super phosphate, and thence shipped out to waiting vessels that carried the valuable cargo to Australia and New Zealand. Their land was being exported to some distant purchasers, to use as superphosphate to improve their lands, while degrading Nauruan lands.

The process of degradation of Top Side included removal of the two major hillocks that were integral to their heritage. They had had strong spiritual meaning to Nauruans as they were said to represent the landing places of the founding ancestors who arrived from the Gilbert Islands several hundred years earlier to establish a new community (see Pollock, 2014). The early Nauruans had maintained these sites with reverence and awe as part of their heritage and links to the founding ancestors. Bulldozers tore away the soil to stockpile it, regardless of Nauruan protests.

Top-Side had been a tree-covered forest that provided not only useful materials for building, clothing, food and recreation, but the pathways that linked the twelve districts that radiated from a central point on Top Side. It was a central feature of their communication system across the island. But the sea of pinnacles makes such crossings, and other uses, impassable.

The tree cover protected the island from the worst of the heat. Located just fifty miles south of the Equator, the heat takes its toll on both flora and fauna. Trees such as the giant *tomano* (*Calophyllum*) had served as the resting place

for birds migrating across the Pacific. Noddy terns circled the island, to take up their places in the trees at night. Nauruans captured these as a food source. Giant frigate birds favoured the shore-line as their roosting sites, where they became an important part of Nauruan cultural life; Nauruans regarded them as representing the ancestors, enticing them on shore with offers of fish, and thence to rest, initially in shore line trees. Each tribe maintained frigate bird stands on the shoreline to which the birds learned to return each night. The stands of birds around the island represented the strength of a tribe. As tree cover diminished men built frigate bird stands on the shoreline from scrap wood. The cult of the frigate bird has endured as a key part of Nauruan heritage (Kayser, 1935) despite mining activities. They provide the major icon of Nauruan coat of arms, and on the tails of Nauru's fleet of planes (Pollock, 2009). They represent Nauruans' ties to their island environment.

Humanitarian Concerns

Nauruans were very aware of their loss of autonomy as BPC took control of their island and began expressing it through pressure on Australian administration officials. That autonomy has been their underlying premise for establishing their rights to claim compensation for underpayments as well as welfare injustices and the right to expect BPC to rehabilitate their island. Financial losses were part of the larger concern for social justice for lost humanitarian rights. Nauruans considered a key factor to be raising their population size – above 1,500 Nauruans – if they were to gain back their rights. Autonomy had been snatched from them, and compensation was necessary. Leadership needed a strong backing. Hence after independence in 1968, Hammer de Roburt and his government began to seek international support for compensation claims and the Rehabilitation exercise.

The distribution of wealth from mining was an economic concern that included many humanitarian concerns. Nauruans brought some 30 years of arguments they had been formulating before the Commission of Enquiry for Rehabilitation of Worked out Mines in 1986 (author's fieldnotes).² As Stiglitz has noted for the natural resource curse world-wide:

«the riches that arise from grabbing hold of a nation's natural resources [...] undermines faith in the market economy – when it is suspected that the wealth is acquired “illegitimately” through underhanded deals with current or previous governments. It is not surprising that discontent seethes beneath the surfaces of these countries.» (Stiglitz, 2006: 137)

In Nauru's case that discontent was expressed by concerted efforts to gain independence in 1968. Subsequently, this led to a Commission of Enquiry for Rehabilitation of Worked out Mines in 1986. The key findings provided the basis for the case brought before the International Court of Justice in The Hague by Professor Weeramantry on Nauru's behalf (see Weeramantry, 1992 for his arguments).

Exclusion from any decision making regarding the direction of «developments», allocation of the profits from mining, compensation for destruction of land, and consideration of Nauruans' rights have been at the forefront of Nauruans' struggles for rectification of the curse of their natural resource. Loss of autonomy has been the major platform for emerging leaders, representing a growing population, and an increasing awareness of the developments denied to them.

Loss of Autonomy

The Nauru Island Agreement (1919) did not include Nauruans in any of its fifteen articles. Rather it set out the powers of the three governments, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand as the British Phosphate Commissioners to «make provision for mining of the phosphate deposits on the said Island» (Preamble), «under the direction, management and control of the Commissioners» (Article 8). The most contentious point was stated in Article 6:

«The title to the phosphate deposits on the Island of Nauru and to all land, buildings, plant and equipment on the island used in connexion with the working of the deposits shall be vested in the Commissioners.» (Article 6)

Nauruan rights to their island were totally set aside.

The Nauru Island Agreement pre-empted the terms by which the island was to be administered under the newly created 1920 League of Nations Mandate following the end of World War I. Under Article 22 of that Mandate proper discharge of mandate responsibilities required:

«there should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples [to which the Mandate applied] form a sacred trust of civilisation.»

The UK Commissioner reminded the other Commissioners from time to time that they had a development commitment, but this was set aside

by confusion of the roles of administration of island affairs and the role of mining administration, both under the aegis of Australia's Canberra government. The demands of development of mining outweighed the demands of island development. Mining greed pre-empted social developments.

Throughout three quarters of the xxth century, Nauruans lost autonomy over their people and their land firstly when the Pacific Phosphate Company established the phosphate mine on Nauru, and latterly when BPC took over responsibilities for mining and administration. Nauru had been annexed by Germany in 1888 at the request of the head chief of Nauru in order to end the civil war that was raging throughout the 1880s. Establishment of peace was achieved by German authorities working through the tribal chiefs. Nauruans still maintained their social controls, well documented in the detailed ethnographic accounts of the time (e.g. Hambruch, 1914; Kayser, 1935; Kretzschmar, 1913; Wedgwood, 1935) until their rights were abrogated by the Nauru Island Agreement (1919) that established the British Phosphate Commissioners in charge, with Australia as chief administrator of the island affairs, and of the mine.

Nauruans' pressure on Administrators from 1921 onward up to independence in 1968 expressed their views on how their rights were being set aside by BPC interests in profits from mining. A series of leaders emerged to maintain the pressure, despite the Administrator's attempts to brush them aside. In 1927 the Administrators established a Council of Chiefs, consisting of twelve selected leaders, one for each district. This violated the Nauruan tribal structure, chiefly hierarchy, and district administration, but under the leadership of Timothy Detudamo Nauruans gave lip service to administrative proposals, while maintaining their own political and class structure.

In 1952, after the disastrous reduction of their population during World War II, Nauruans established the Nauru Local Government Council in order to try to regain some control over their own affairs and their lives, and establish new less hierarchical leadership channels. Leaders emerged in the process of presenting their case for their rights to the Australian administrators, and to UN Trusteeship Visiting Missions. Several men such as Timothy Detudamo who bridged both traditional and modern state of affairs, and Pastor Jacob Aroi took on the task of confronting the administration continuously with various

2. The Commission of Enquiry into Worked out Mines was set up by President Hammer de Roburt, in conjunction with AusAid, Canberra, in 1983. The team of 17 consisted of 15 Australian experts, Lagi Harris representing the Nauru Government and myself, anthropologist, a New Zealand/British female. My role was to liaise with Lagi Harris to seek out the wishes of the Nauru people. He and I conducted consultative meetings in the twelve districts, and Lagi was formulating a video to explain the options for rehabilitation, but unfortunately he died before it was completed.

aspects of their case both for greater financial returns and for more social improvements.

Led by a number of able educated Nauruans, who were learning more about their rights under the development criteria of the League of Nations, then the United Nations, the NLGC collated their case to a series of UN Visiting Missions in 1950s and 1960s. They voiced their strong desire for assistance with clarification of the financial affairs of the administration and the mine, and to reject Australia's attempts to move them off their island in 1960s. These concerns paved the way for the concerted claim for «damages under international trusteeship» against the British Phosphate Commissioners and Australia in particular, as discussed below.

After independence under Hammer de Roburt's leadership, Nauruans formulated their plans to obtain redress for past injustices by the BPC; that was the key issue at the centre of the Report of the Commission of Enquiry on the Rehabilitation of Worked out Phosphate lands on Nauru, 1988. Nauruans had long been concerned that their land was being taken without their agreement, and the many injustices they had endured. But they had lacked support for case until members of the visiting missions of the UN Trusteeship Council assisted their case. Nauruans struggle earned them their independence in 1968.

Nauruans were outnumbered on their island by imported labour for the first half of the xxth century. Of the 1,000 Nauruans living on their island when mining began in 1906, the men chose not to work in the mines, because they did not have the skills, nor the desire for that "work". The Pacific Phosphate Company began importing labour from China and various parts of the Pacific, particularly Gilbert Islands (now Kiribati) as the main manpower that became essential to keep the mine operating (Ellis, 1935). Contract worker numbers exceeded the total number of Nauruans through to the 1950s.

Nauruan population growth suffered major setbacks during World War II when 1,200, i.e. two thirds of the Nauruan population, was exiled to Truk/Chuuk by the occupying Japanese force, resulting in many deaths; only 487 Nauruans returned home in 1946 to join those left on Nauru to work for the Japanese. They faced a major rebuilding exercise. Destruction of the island had been further exacerbated by American bombing of Japanese military installations across the island (Pollock, 1998). After the War the British Phosphate Commissioners' eagerness to restart mining operations placed strong emphasis on rebuilding their labour force, and humanitarian support for them. Housing became a contentious issue as the BPC administration built new housing for the new contract labour force, while Nauruans' own housing needs were overlooked. This dispute led to racial flare ups,

and the whole affair was brought to the attention of the first United Nations Trusteeship Visiting Mission in 1952. The outside world gradually became aware of some of the non-development that Nauruans had been experiencing.

The Nauruan population has grown to over 9,000 at the start of the XXIst century (2002 census). Until 2006 mining had continued to draw on contract workers who resided on the island during the terms of their contract. 4,000 mainly iKiribati (Gilbertese) were sent home in 2006 as mining diminished. But in 2008, and again in 2012, Australia made arrangements for their unwanted «boat people» from various parts of Asia to be established in a refugee camp on Nauru, until Australia sorted out their futures. These 4,000 outsiders have placed a heavy drain on Nauru's local resources (Pollock, 1998). Nauruans have ceded some autonomy in return for much needed government assistance from Australia.

Welfare Issues

In 1920 responsibility for Nauruan welfare was mandated to BPC in general, and Australia in particular, to be superseded later by the United Nations Trusteeship arrangements. Developments that should assist Nauru to improve their well-being were a major entailment for the three nations' commissioners. But these were largely sublimated by Australian focus on mining profits. Any developments, such as health care, education, political and administrative skills, and housing were introduced for all residents of the island. Nauruans failed to receive any specific benefits. Yet the bills for ever rising costs of Administration were paid for out of Nauruan phosphate money.

The Australian administration established a hospital for Nauruans, together with a separate hospital for non-Nauruans. Primary schools were established around the island to educate both Nauruans and the children of the contract labour force, mainly Gilbertese children. A long apartment building known as the Gilbertese settlement was erected on the south west shoreline, to house Gilbertese families, and some Ellice island workers. Later residences for Filipino and other contract staff were all paid for out of the Administration fund. Administrative staff were housed in more modern buildings, set above the shore-line.

Roads, and other amenities, as well as a police force, a gaol, and other «developments» were all paid for out of the Nauruan Administrative fund. BPC bore the costs of the new technology, including a rail system, a storage system for processed super phosphate, and the cantilever and mooring systems that enabled ships to load ships direct from shore into ships' holds.

By 1966, when Nauruans were strongly pushing for independence, Administration costs had risen to almost 100,000 Australian pounds; that represented 20% of the value of phosphate exports at that time (Viviani, 1970: Table 11, 190-191). Nauruans shares in «developments» with all other temporary residents on the island brought few advantages of modernisation. They had no say in how money was allocated, but became reliant on a consumer economy.

The health of Nauruans was reported annually, including those with leprosy, and other infectious diseases. By 1980 the numbers of Nauruans with high rates of Body Mass Index (BMI) led an epidemiologist team to declare an «obesity epidemic» which drew much media attention (e.g. Zimmet *et al.*, 1977). The medical team attributed the obesity to consumption of large amounts of junk food as a result of the so-called «wealth» from phosphate mining (Zimmet *et al.*, 1977). The Obesity label has persisted; World Health Organization placed Nauru at the top of their 2002 ranking of 170 nations worldwide according to their rates of BMI. The direct links drawn between increased wealth, poor food choices and obesity do not consider pre-cursive events. The need to preplace pandanus, coconuts and fish with store bought foods, but limited cash, was a necessary consequence of mining; choices of foods were limited. Nauruan cultural fattening of young women pre-mining may have lingering genetic implications. Obesity and high rates of BMIs provide a further example of the long-term negative impact of mining exploitation on creating a state of dependency. It is a direct outcome of the long term negative impact of mining (Pollock, 1995, 2012).

Nauruans responded strongly to Australian manoeuvres in the early 1960s to take them off their island and relocate them to share Curtis Island off the north east Australian Coast with another population. Australia could then mine the rest of the phosphate with contract labour for their own profits, without any «development» concerns for Nauruans. The Nauru Local Government Council expressed their very strong opposition to this move to Visiting Missions from the UN Trusteeship Council, winning the backing of members of those Missions. Nauruans were concerned to hold on to their island at all costs. Such suggestions only hardened their resolve to gain independence, and as soon as possible.

Rehabilitation of the Island Environment

Nauruans' concerns for the future of their island that began in the 1920s and 1930s, was expressed in poetry, as well as in representations to successive administrators. Establishment of a Rehabilitation Trust Fund, into which a small

proportion of Nauruans' funds was allocated only partially alleviated those concerns. After independence in 1970, and Nauruan purchase of mining assets for \$21 million, Hammer de Roburt and government officials began concerted efforts to address their right to compensation for loss of income from phosphate sales, and to rectify the destruction of Top Side. Upon completion of that purchase, as Weeramantry argued the Nauruan case:

«the Commissioners had a clear obligation under international law to give back to the Nauruans capital assets bought with phosphate moneys. Instead they sold the assets on the ground to the Nauruans [...] ignored the benefits they had collected in the form of capital assets overseas, and finally when the office of the British Phosphate Commissioners ceased to exist [in 1987] appropriated those assets into the treasuries of the partner governments, to be distributed from that source as largesse to other countries with no reference whatever to the Nauruans.» (Weeramantry, 192: 272)

Furthermore the Commissioners ignored Nauruans' requests to desist from distributing those assets until the situation was clarified by the work of the Commission of Enquiry.

The Commission of Enquiry into the Worked out Mines on Nauru, as proposed by the Nauru government in 1984, established a platform for their formal complaint. Since independence, Hammer de Roburt and other Nauruan leaders realised much information was missing, including all statements of financial transactions since 1921, but vital if they were to formulate a strong case for restitution of their rights. The Commission of Enquiry produced a series of recommendations from various outside experts for the future of the island (Commission for Rehabilitation of Worked Out Mines on Nauru, 1996). Funded jointly by Australian Aid and the Nauru government the Commission's work and final report has been maintained under strict control by the Nauru government.

That Commission of Enquiry drew on advice from 17 experts including a geologist, an engineer, a calcite expert, a housing advisor, botanists and post-mining assessors and a social anthropologist to liaise with a senior Nauru government representative. Recommendations included assessment of the feasibility of cutting down the pinnacles to re-construct a flat surface on Top Side, relocation of the airport and other amenities to that newly flattened area, thereby releasing considerable acreage on the flat southeast coastline for future residential developments. Women wanted new housing «Toorak style» provided along the edge of Top Side, while a class of one Primary School overwhelmingly favoured a «park» amongst trees on Top Side with trees, play equipment and

barbeque areas. Relocation of the airport, and the secondary school were strongly supported suggestions.

As a result of the hearing of Nauru's case by the International Court of Justice in The Hague, the Nauruan people were awarded compensation money amounting to \$A210 millions under the Nauru/Australia Compact of Settlement Treaty (Reyes, 1996). A further \$A12 millions each from the United Kingdom and New Zealand was to be paid to Nauru by these lesser partners in the mining gains. The Australian payment was to be spread over 5 years, with rehabilitation activated by the Nauru Rehabilitation Corporation. The question of the «extinguished» Trust Funds was left for the Nauru government to pursue.

Nauruans' dreams for their future have been formulated in terms of a «return to the Garden of Eden» as President Dowyogo expressed their future to a Sustainability Development conference in the Bahamas in 2001. They want Top Side to be a green and usable area. Their considerable concerns about how their island is likely to be affected by sea level rise of the Pacific Ocean, particularly on their fresh water supply, and acidification of the ocean around Nauru that is affecting fishing were voiced at the Majuro Agreement arising from the August 2013 Pacific Forum meeting on Climate Change in the Pacific (see Pollock, 2014, for details).

Nauru's future without phosphate and no viable means of support, other than aid money, provides a new dimension to considerations for their future. The natural resource curse that is mining has long term implications both for the economic and humanitarian wellbeing of the Nauru people.

Conclusions

The Nauru case of the impact of phosphate mining on the lives of a small island people in mid Pacific presents a striking example of the natural resource curse thesis. It underlines how mining for phosphate has minimized Nauruan rights and brought few development advantages. Nauruan autonomy was overridden by external commercial exploitation. The economics of extracting phosphate dominated while humanitarian issues arising from imposed commercial activity were sublimated. Responsibilities for «developments» called for in the League of Nations Class C Mand Hughesate, succeeded by the United Nations Trusteeship, were only peripherally activated.

Nauruans' only answer to loss of autonomy and thus control over their own lives was to coordinate their claims for independence, and then seek reparations from the British Phosphate

Commissioners. Trust in outside management/administration had been thoroughly undermined as they began to discover, post-independence, just how actively the «curse» of phosphate had diminished their chances for a future after mining. Degradation of their island environment resulted in a major loss that is proving very costly and difficult to rectify 50 years later. The Commission of Enquiry into Worked Out Mining areas provided some pointers, but all have proved very costly and impractical according to Nauruan values. Successive governments have yet to find a solution. Political instability tied to a murky financial stability is the legacy (Stiglitz, 2006: 136).

Nauru's litany of woes attributed to the natural resource curse extend beyond the early mis-representations of Nauruans as «wealthy» in financial terms to the failure of phosphate mining to advance their welfare and well-being, and a new label as a «failed state». Those woes continue to exist as successive governments are charged with finding a solution. Nauruans cling to their island as their homeland, while seeking advice that is acceptable to their own values.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- AUTY Richard, 1993. *Sustaining Development in Mineral Economies: The Resource Curse Thesis*, London, Routledge.
- BROWN Anne M. (ed.), 2007. *Security and Development in the Pacific Islands*, London, Lynne Rienner publishers.
- CLARK Dymphna and Stewart FIRTH, 1992. *Nauru 1888-1900, An Account in German and English of official records collected by Wilhelm Fabricius – records of the Colonial Section of the German administration*, Canberra, Australian National University, Division of Pacific and Asian History, RSPACS.
- COMMISSION FOR REHABILITATION OF WORKED OUT MINES ON NAURU, 1996. *Report in 6 volumes*, Nauru Government.
- DOWYOGO Bernard President, 2001. *Can we re-create the Garden of Eden that once was Nauru*, Bermuda, Proceedings of Global Conference on Sustainable Development of Small Island developing States.
- ELLIS Arthur F., 1935. *Ocean Island and Nauru*, Sydney, Angus and Robertson.
- HAMBRUCH Paul, 1914. Nauru, in G. Thilenius (ed.), *Ergebnisse der Südsee-Expedition 1908-1910*, II: *Ethnographie*, B. Mikronesien, vol. 1, part 1, Hamburg, L. Friedricksen.

- KAYSER Alois, 1935 (2005 translation). *Nauru One Hundred Years Ago*, Suva, Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific Centre on Nauru.
- KRETZSCHMAR K.E., 1913. *Nauru*, Nauru, Mission Press.
- NAURU ISLAND AGREEMENT, 1919. Reprinted in C. Weeramantry, 1992. *Nauru: Environmental Damage under International Trusteeship*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, appendix I, pp. 375-378.
- POLLOCK Nancy J., 1986. *Land Report to Nauru Commission of Enquiry*, Commission records MD7.
- , 1995. Social Fattening Patterns in the Pacific, in I. De Garine and N. J. Pollock (eds), *Social Aspects of Obesity*, Amsterdam, Gordon and Breach.
- , 1998. Decolonising, Recolonising – but never a colony, in *Emerging from Empire? Decolonisation in the Pacific*, Canberra, ANU Press, pp. 102-106.
- , 2009. The Frigate Bird Cult in Eastern Micronesia, *People and Culture in Oceania* 25, pp. 97-100.
- , 2012. Obesity on Nauru, paper for ASAO session on Obesity, Manuscript.
- , 2014. Social Impact of Mining over the xxth century on Nauru, Manuscript.
- QUANCHI Max 2007. Troubled Times: Development and Economic Crisis in Nauru, in A. Brown (ed.), *Security and Development in the Pacific Islands*, New-York, Lynn Rienner, pp. 249-264.
- REYES Raymon E. Jr., 1996. Nauru v Australia. The International Fiduciary Duty in the settlement of Nauru's claims for Rehabilitation of its Phosphate lands, *New York Law School Journal of International and Comparative Law*, special edition 16 (1 & 2), pp. 1-54.
- ROSSER Andrew, 2006. *The Political Economy of the Resource Curse. A literature survey*, Brighton, Institute of Development Studies, IDS Working Paper 268.
- SACHS Jeffrey and Andrew WARNER, 2001. The Curse of Natural Resources, *European Economic Review* 45, 4-6, pp. 827-838.
- SEN Amartya, 2001. *Development and Freedom*, New-York, Oxford University Press.
- STIGLITZ Joseph, 2006. *Making Globalization Work*, New York, WW Norton & Co.
- VIVIANI Nancy, 1970. *Nauru: Phosphate and Political Progress*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press.
- WEERAMANTRY Christopher, 1992. *Nauru: Environmental Damage under International Trusteeship*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press.
- WEDGWOOD Camilla, 1935-1936. Report on research work in Nauru, *Central Pacific, Oceania* 6, p. 7.
- ZIMMET P., P. TAFT, A. GUINEA, W. GUTHRIE and K. THOMA, 1977. The High Prevalence of Diabetes Mellitus on a Central Pacific Island, *Diabetologia* 13, pp. 111-115.

Vient de paraître

Bernard Juillerat

Le travail du mythe

La construction du héros en Mélanésie



SOCIÉTÉ DES OCÉANISTES

Paris 2014

Publications de la Société des Océanistes 51



Disponible sur le site internet de la Société des Océanistes (<http://www.oceanistes.org/oceanie/spip.php?article3891>) et à la librairie du musée du quai Branly au prix de 19 €.

Version pdf disponible sur <http://books.openedition.org/sdo/1213> au prix de 14,99 €.

Phosphate mining and the relocation of the Banabans to northern Fiji in 1945: Lessons for climate change-forced displacement

by

Julia B. EDWARDS*

ABSTRACT

At the end of the XIXth Century, Banaba was an unknown, and then 'unclaimed', island in the central Pacific; however, all was soon to change for its 450 residents. In 1900, a rock propping open a Sydney-office door of the Pacific Islands Phosphate Company was found to consist almost entirely of high-grade phosphate. It was soon traced back to the island; mining activity commenced shortly after and the operation quickly grew. The tiny island was transformed into a major phosphate-mining settlement. With continued mineral extraction it became apparent that Banaba would, in time, become uninhabitable and plans were devised by colonial authorities to relocate the island community to an alternative home. This article examines the decisions, events and processes that led to the relocation of the Banabans to Rabi Island, Fiji in 1945. Original colonial documents and correspondence are examined and key members of the elderly Banaban community, based in Suva and Rabi, consulted. Parallels with contemporary relocations, associated with climate change, are given and learnings presented that will aid future climate-induced community relocations. Lessons to take forward are the need for long-term, post-relocation planning, including the creation of livelihoods, and on-going support by external agencies for those displaced.

KEYWORDS: resettlement, colonisation, mining, identity, climate change

RÉSUMÉ

À la fin du XIX^e siècle, l'île du Pacifique central Banaba était encore inconnue et « non revendiquée ». Tout allait changer pour les 450 habitants quand en 1900, on découvrit qu'une pierre déposée au bureau de Sydney de la Compagnie des phosphates du Pacifique insulaire était quasi exclusivement composée de phosphate de haute qualité. Son origine identifiée, l'extraction commença et la croissance de l'activité fut rapide. La petite île se transforma en un site majeur d'exploitation du phosphate avec pour conséquence rapide de rendre Banaba inhabitable. Les autorités coloniales élaborèrent un plan pour reloger la communauté insulaire. Cet article analyse les décisions, les événements et les processus qui ont conduit à la réinstallation des habitants de Banaba sur l'île de Rabi, aux Fidji, en 1945. Les correspondances et documents coloniaux originaux sont examinés et les membres clés de la communauté des anciens de Banaba, basés à Suva et Rabi, consultés. Un parallèle est établi avec les réinstallations forcées dues au changement climatique actuel et des enseignements sont tirés qui pourront aider à organiser les déplacements de communautés liés au changement climatique. Parmi eux, on note la nécessité d'une planification post-réinstallation sur le long terme, incluant la création de modes et moyens de subsistance et un appui continu fourni par les agences extérieures aux groupes déplacés.

KEYWORDS: déplacements, colonisation, mines, identité, changements climatiques

Much recent attention has been given to likely future climate-induced population displacements in Oceania (EJF, 2009; Mimura *et al.*, 2007), yet

within the region, forced relocation is not a new phenomenon (Lieber, 1977). In the immediate aftermath of World War Two (wwii), at the time

* Researcher, Climate change and resettlement, Pacific Conference of Churches, Suva, Fiji, jedwards@pcc.org.fj

when millions of Europeans were on the move, one tiny island community in the central Pacific was also, reluctantly, undertaking a long-distance journey to a new island home.

At the end of 1945, 1,003 Banabans and Gilbertese from Banaba Island, formerly Ocean Island, were relocated to Fiji. Since 1900 the islanders' home had been gradually degraded by extensive phosphate mining¹. With deep, high-quality deposits still remaining in Banaba, and with postconflict peace returning to the region, the British Phosphate Commissioners (BPC) were keen to recommence their mining activities in Banaba. As a result, the Banabans were prevented from returning to their island home.

Compared with the many hundreds of thousands of Pacific islanders who face potential relocate in the future owing to climate change (Stern, 2006, Mimura *et al.*, 2007), the historic relocation of the Banabans may be small in scale; however, valuable lessons can be learned from the relocation approach.

Rarely in the past has an entire island community been forcibly displaced, the process so well documented in the historical archives, and the narrative of the relocation so readily told by the community who experienced the resettlement. The embedment of a narrative of mining exploitation, and potentially of climate, is important in synthesizing the relocation process, but it also needs to be seen as part of a broader history of mobility in the Pacific-island context (Modell, 2002). People within the Pacific have migrated through choice, circumstance or opportunity, and the migration narratives have enriched Pacific traditions and cultures. Mobility is in the blood of Pacific islanders (Hau'Ofa, 1994).

Issue and hypothesis: from an actual case of forced relocation to an hypothetical/prospective comparison

This article examines the relocation of the Banabans to northern Fiji in 1945 in terms of the decisions and processes made by the colonial authorities, and the experiences of the Banaban community.

Much of the focus of the work is on the historical process of resettlement, but a current-day perspective is also given in observations related to community reconstruction. Any relocation is an extremely complex process; affected communities are exposed to risks of severe economic, social and environmental hardship, and in the case of mining-induced displacement especially, environmental degradation may be particularly acute (Robinson, 2003).

Today there is a realisation that very careful planning is required to minimize the trauma of the upheaval for the displaced community. Past development-induced relocations have been criticised for their apparent lack of concern for the social dynamics of the displaced community (Cernea, 1997). In many cases, people were an afterthought in such schemes. Outwardly, the handling of the Banabans by colonial authorities could receive a similar judgment. Beyond forced resettlement and in broader terms of mobility and community building in the Pacific context, Pacific islanders have left the «familiar» and migrated to the «unknown», where they have been successful in creating «moral communities» (Modell, 2002). This heritage of movement, nevertheless, enables Pacific islanders to be still rooted in the ancestral homeland through oral traditions, genealogy and cultural performance (Hau'Ofa, 1994). The work here assesses both the extent to which the needs of the Banaban people were taken into consideration and the success of the community in retaining their traditions and society in the island of Rabi, their new home.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. In the next section, the approach and method is outlined, which includes a short geography of Banaba Island. Then the background to the discovery of phosphate in Banaba is given, followed by a more detailed presentation of the different stages in the relocation process.

The assessment of the relocation approach includes modern-day observations of the Banabans' situation. In the comparison section, parallels with current climate change-forced relocations are stated and recommendations presented that will aid future climate-induced community relocations. In the last section overall conclusions are drawn.

Approach and method

A historical extended case study

This paper examines the relocation of the Banabans to northern Fiji in 1945. It is a case-study approach that uses archive records and other documentation to assess the level of planning, negotiations and co-operation between colonial authorities responsible for the relocation. Much of the focus of the work is on the historical process of resettlement, though the research detailed here also incorporates observations and findings from a recent study-team visit to Rabi Island in April 2011. During the field visit, interviews with key representatives of the community were undertaken, enabling a current-day perspective to be given to the assessment.

1. Phosphate was much prized as an agricultural fertiliser during the first half of the xxth Century.

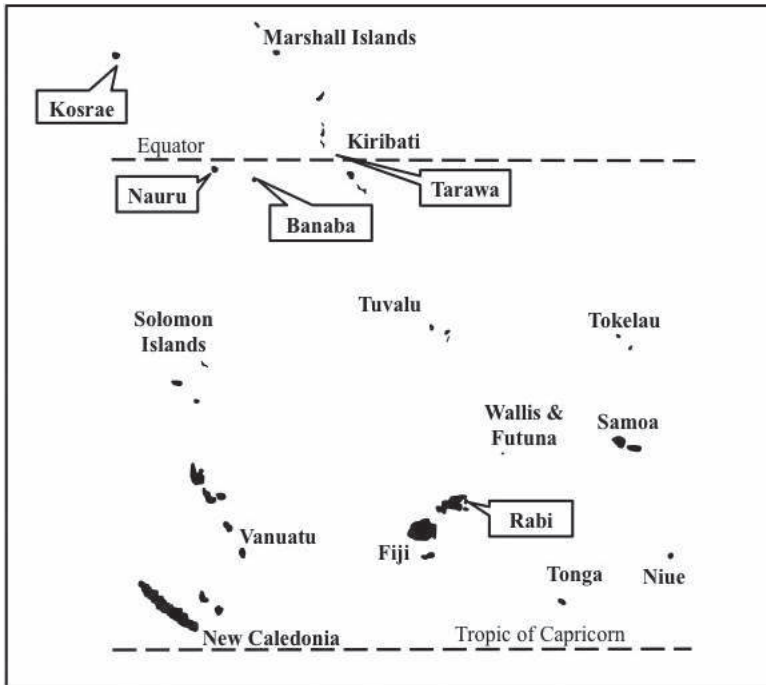


FIGURE 1. – The location of Banaba and Rabi islands

The work examines the extent to which the needs of the Banaban people were considered in the relocation, and also outlines lessons from the relocation that may be applied to future climate change-induced resettlements.

The author is indebted to the late, Mrs. Makin Corrie, a notable elder of the Banaban community in Suva, who, over a series of meetings, recalled her part in the relocation process. Her oral narrative proved invaluable in enriching the documented history of the Banabans. All the oral histories and personal reflections of the selected Banaban interlocutors are analyzed, edited, and presented here, in conjunction with the archive record. On occasion, the oral history confirms the historical data; however, often, the viewpoint, values and knowledge of an interviewee are treated as unique though not necessarily factual perspectives of the past. With the reliability of the life-history technique highly questionable (Cary, 1999), the Banaban narrative experiences are included here to offer the reader only a construction of the cultural modeling of the relocation reality.

The study team, consisting of staff from the climate-change unit of the Pacific Conference of Churches, also acknowledge the invitation to attend a meeting of the elders at Banaban House, Suva in March 2011, and are grateful to *Talatala Qase Kabong*, Divisional Superintendent of the Methodist Church in Rabi, who smoothed the Rabi Island visit and enabled the team members to meet with a wide cross-section of the Banaban community during their stay. The research outlined in this article forms part of the

on-going work of the Pacific Conference of Churches in the accompaniment of current-day Pacific islanders facing displacement because of climate change.

A geography of Banaba Island

Banaba, a small, raised island, is the emerging tip of a submarine mountain (the name «Banaba» means island of rock or «stony»). This barren outcrop is located just south of the equator in the central Pacific, and is very remote. Nauru, its nearest neighbour, is almost 200km to the west, and the administrative centre of Tarawa, the capital of Kiribati (formerly the Gilbert and Ellice Islands

Group) 400km away to the east (figure 1).

From phosphate discovery to the resettlement of the Banabans

Discovery of phosphate

Arthur Ellis, a young geologist at the Pacific Islands Phosphate Company in Sydney, traced a «doorstop» rock back to Banaba, a then «unclaimed» landmass in the central Pacific (Silverman, 1977). At that time about 450 people lived in the island (Sigrah and King, 2006). Ellis arrived in Banaba in May 1900, and immediately found high-grade phosphate among the foreshore rocks. Recalling Banaban oral history, Corrie said that Ellis quickly instructed the locals to collect all the rocks they could find, and then he purchased each heap at 4 shillings a time, before loading them onto his boat, the «Archer» (Corrie, *interview*, 2nd February 2011, Suva, Fiji).

The «Archer» returned again to Banaba just three weeks later on the return leg of her voyage (Shennan and Corrie Tekenimatang, 2005).

In 1901, to ensure continued exclusive access, the British government annexed the island, and raised the British flag (Sigrah and King, 2001). Banaba Island became part of the British Gilbert and Ellice Island Group. Mining commenced later that year under a more formal, but equally unfair arrangement, of 999 years mining rights for £50 per annum (Macdonald, 2001). The operation grew quickly, and in 1908 BPC was formed.

Over the years Banaba was gradually transformed from an island of about five hundred inhabitants into a major phosphate-mining settlement of about three thousand people (Teaiwa, 2005). This evolution brought with it apparent benefits to the local community. The Banabans became accustomed to the trappings of modern life, with its latest equipment, luxuries and services. Conversely, they also started to lose some of the structuring components of their social organisation and identity: four villages replaced the original dispersed network of hamlets; the island chiefs lost their power as the native government ruled the island; and the younger generation regarded land only as a source of income, to be sold to the BPC, rather than of cultural importance (Maude and Maude, 1932). And with the employment of migrant labourers from the Gilbert and Ellice Islands group² (Connell, 2004) and other indentured labourers, initially from Japan, and then post-1920, workers from China (Shlomowitz and Munro, 1992), the Banabans had become a minority group in their homeland (Silverman, 1977).

The BPC continued to operate a monopoly in Banaba for the next 30 years, until mining operations were brought to a halt by the invasion of Japanese forces in 1942 (Silverman, 1977).

The decision to relocate the Banabans to Rabi Island

Parallels can be drawn between the mining history of Banaban and another Pacific island, the nation of Nauru. During the xxth Century, phosphate mining brought the people of Nauru considerable wealth, yet caused the destruction of 80% of the island (Gowdy and McDaniel, 1999; Connell, 2006). Despite the physical devastation of Nauru on a scale similar to that of Banaba, the people of Nauru continued to live in their home island.

Banaban emigration, however, had been a consideration of the governing officials long before the outbreak of WWII (Silverman, 1962). The Banabans always forcefully rejected such suggestions.

With continued mining activities, it was obvious that Banaba would soon become uninhabitable, and the Banabans reluctantly accepted an alternative home needed to be found. In 1940, prior to the outbreak of WWII, they specifically requested the unpopulated Fijian island of Wakaya, located close to the main, administrative island of Viti Levu. An initial survey of the island, however, revealed insufficient cultivatable land and inadequate water supplies (Vaskess,

1945). Wakaya was rejected³ and another location sought.

At that time, the Lever Brothers' Pacific Plantations Proprietary Limited (PPPL) was selling Rabi Island in northern Fiji for £25,000 (Vaskess, 1942). Only a handful of people were already living in the island: an old man from the Solomon Islands, who had been there for many years, and a few copra plantation workers (Benaia 1991). The British authorities, therefore, thinking it an appropriate alternative, suggested the island to the Banabans. The community wanted representatives to visit Rabi to assess its suitability for themselves. However, before the selected members could leave for Fiji, Japanese troops invaded Banaba, and shipping communications with the rest of the colony ceased.

The British authorities were unperturbed in their quest. In March 1942, determined not to lose out on the buying opportunity – the option to purchase Rabi was for six months only – and fearing that recent price rises in copra might make Lever Brothers reconsider their sale, the authorities took the opportunity to purchase Rabi Island⁴ for the Banaban people by financing the acquisition with funds from the Banabans' own phosphate royalties (Vaskess, 1944). As the secretary to the High Commission earlier explained:

«The object of the purchase is to provide an island for the settlement of the natives of Ocean Island against the time when the phosphate deposits in that island will have been marked out and the island will, in consequence, have become largely uninhabitable.» (Vaskess, 1942)

The British authorities had acquired Rabi Island without contributing financially to its purchase and also ensured that Banaba Island would be uninhabited when mining recommenced post WWII.

Meanwhile, the islanders suffered greatly under the Japanese occupation of Banaba. Life was harsh and often brutal. There were severe food shortages, and the community would have probably starved to death had they remained in the island (Vaskess, 1945). Instead the Japanese decided to disperse most of the community to three separate internment camps in Nauru, Tarawa and Kosrae (Holland, 1948; Benaia, 1991).

A third of the population died during the three-year occupation, some from starvation, others were poisoned, shot, be-headed or died from electrocution. People were killed for relatively minor offences (Maude and Maude, 1994). Their war-time experiences probably left

2. With the commencement of mining, labourers from Tuvalu were so keen to work on Banaba that the British authorities had to restrict migrant numbers to preserve population numbers in their homeland (Connell, 2004).

3. Wakaya is now a top-class resort, and one of the most exclusive island destinations in Fiji.

4. The freehold purchase of Rabi included the whole island, except a government reserve of 50 acres (Vaskess, 1942).

	Men	Women	Children	Total
Banabans	185	200	318	703
Gilbertese	152	97	51	300
Total	337	297	369	1003

TABLE 1. – Profile of those relocated to Rabi Island in 1945 by gender, age and ethnicity (Source: Silverman, 1971)

the Banabans questioning themselves, as well as others around them (Colson, 2003).

At the end of the conflict only «able» Banabans had survived and they were weakened from their experience, and certainly in no shape to take up the fight against the BPC (MacDonald, 2001). They were gathered by the British government in Tarawa and told that they could not return to Banaba (Kempf, 2003). The authorities announced, untruthfully, that their island home had suffered during the War (Secretary for Fiji Affairs, 1945). The real reason for the relocation was stated in earlier correspondence:

«Many years ago it was realized within a comparatively short time the phosphate deposits in Ocean Island would be worked out, and, as all that would then be left of the island would be a forest of coral pinnacles, the Banaban (the natives of the island) would have to leave and find a home elsewhere. When this was suggested to them, however, they flatly refused to consider it and for some 25 years they stubbornly resisted the idea.» (Vaskess, 1944)

A year later, Vaskess (1945) made it clear that there was no alternative location for the Banabans in the Gilbert and Ellice Island Group. The assembled survivors had no choice other than to move the 3,200km to northern Fiji. Having already suffered greatly during the preceding years, the Banabans agreed to go to Rabi – an island that they had never seen – on a trial basis (Silverman, 1962).

The resettlement action plan and the arrival of the Banabans

Two months prior to the arrival of the Banabans in Rabi, a preliminary resettlement plan was circulated by the administrative officer, outlining various socio-economic aspects of the relocation (Kennedy, 1945a). Considerations included the living conditions, housing, camp equipment, cooking, medical care, administration and organisation and status of the Banabans in Rabi and their relation and status within the wider Fiji group. For the first six months, the movement of the Banabans was to be restricted to Rabi only; subsequently, they would be «as free as any other Fijian citizen to roam from island to island» (Cooper, undated).

The authorities were anticipating 700 arrivals in Rabi, and provisions were calculated accordingly. The awaiting supplies proved inadequate, however, as:

«about 700 people were expected, but latest advices mentioned 900 and they landed 1,003.» (Verrier, 1946)

At 6.30pm on 15th December 1945, the 1,003 passengers disembarked the «Triona», a BPC-company ship (Kennedy, 1945b). Two ethnic groups, the Banabans and the Gilbertese, were represented; the Gilbertese were linked to the community either through marriage to individual Banabans, or having previously developed close friendships with particular Banaban families (Benaia, 1991).

Children made up almost half the Banaban contingency, illustrating just how much the adult Banaban population had suffered during the War (table 1).

On arrival the Banabans found Rabi Island to be very underdeveloped, especially when compared with the structure of equipment and services in Banaba (Silverman, 1971). According to Hedstrom, the roads in Rabi were merely access tracks to copra plantations, there was no electricity and just a few substantial buildings existed (Hedstrom, *Interview*, Principal, Rabi High School, Rabi Island, 14th April 2011). When the Banabans disembarked, Corrie recounted that only tents, household supplies (mosquito nets, blankets and utensils) and basic food rations were waiting for them (Corrie, *interview*, 2nd February 2011, Suva, Fiji), a recollection that tallies well with the resettlement action plan equipment roster (Kennedy, 1945a).

Initial stage of resettlement

The initial camp of tarpaulin tents was on a flat, open field at Nuku, Tabwewa; this location was to be the community's temporary home for the first few months, as they had been requested by the authorities to remain together at one location for security purposes. Food supplies at the camp were distributed once a week rationed on an individual basis. Children received half the adult allowance (Benaia, 1991).

The British authorities on arrival made it clear that at the end of the two years, the Banabans would be free to decide either to make Rabi their permanent home or to return to Banaba if, as a community, they so wished (Windrum, 1946).

Transition stage of resettlement

The Banaban Settlement Act, passed by the Fiji colonial government at the end of 1945, set up the new administrative structure for the Banabans in Rabi (Hindmarsh, 2002), and, after agreement at a meeting of heads of families (Silverman, 1971), an island council was formed as the instrument of local government. It was they who made the key decision to disperse the community from their temporary campsite to the four villages in the island six months after they had first arrived (Silverman, 1977).

A year into the resettlement, the Banabans renamed the four Rabi villages after their post-phosphate-discovery villages in Banaba: Tabwewa, Uma⁵, Tabiang and Buakonikai. This transfer of Banaban names helped the Banabans to make a link between their old home and their new island (Kempf, 2003). It also reinforced their never-abandoned claim to Banaba Island, by stamping key Banaban landmarks into the colonial Fijian landscape – «a politics of spatial articulation» (Kempf and Hermann, 2005: 371).

In Rabi, the resettlers were encouraged to move to the village in Rabi that was their respective village in Banaba. Many people, Corrie said, wished to stay in the original settlement of Tabwewa, where they had first been located on their arrival (Corrie, *interview*, 28th February 2011, Suva, Fiji).

In 1946, during what many Banabans believed was their temporary two-year stay in Rabi, Corrie said that representatives of the community returned to Banaba, to assess, as they thought, the rebuilding process (Corrie, *interview*, 2nd February 2011, Suva, Fiji). The real purpose for the return of the 149 landowners was for them to register their land boundaries in Banaba in readiness for a pre-mining land survey (Anon, 1946). The group returned to their homeland to find that all buildings had been razed to the ground, no homes remained, and their lands had been cleared in readiness for continued mining activities. Nothing was recognisable, and Corrie noted that it was then that the Banabans realised that it was not the Japanese who had destroyed their home island, it was the undertakings of the BPC (Corrie, *interview*, 2nd February 2011, Suva, Fiji).

Mining recommenced in 1947, the year that the Banaban community elected, in a secret ballot, to remain in Rabi (British Information Ser-

vices, 1979). All was not smooth, however. The Banabans had swapped the status of landholders, workers and small-scale market producers in Banaba for copra cutters and gardeners in Rabi (Silverman, 1971). A couple of years into their resettlement, the resident governmental adviser called for police protection. In the 1960s the bitterness escalated, and the Banabans elected to dismiss their adviser (Silverman, 1977). It was at this time that the Banabans intensified their claims for financial compensation and wished to further highlight their plight within the international community.

Compensation claim

The arrival of the phosphate company had introduced the link between land and money to the Banabans (Silverman, 1971), and the community had been in receipt of monies for phosphate extraction for many years. They thought that the monies in the Phosphate Provident Fund were theirs, for their own use; the authorities thought otherwise. Rabi Island was purchased with the monies from the Fund, and the remaining balance was for:

« [...] such work and amenities as the sub-division of lands, lay-out of villages, and construction of public utilities such as water supplies, village meeting halls, cooperative store building, wharf, boats, boatsheds, etc., etc., which may be regarded as part of the settling-in obligations of the Provident Fund.» (Vaskess, 1944)

With the post-war resumption of mining operations, the newly-relocated community continued to receive royalty payments in the form of bonuses and annuities (Silverman, 1977). The Banabans still felt aggrieved. They were frustrated with constant disputes over land leases on Banaba, and the inadequacy of monies received from the BPC (King and Sigrah, 2004). In the 1960s, disheartened, yet inspired by the political independence, control of phosphate and wealth of neighbouring Nauru (MacDonald, 2001), the resentment towards the British authorities came to a head when, in 1965, the community started legal procedures for compensation in the British courts (Sigrah and King, 2001). The 221-day case was the longest in British legal history (MacDonald, 2001; King and Sigrah, 2004), and the final ruling found the British government guilty of moral negligence, but, in the strict legal sense, not liable for the injustices committed in their name (Binder, 1977).

A year later, after public and political pressure, the British government offered to set up a trust

5. According to Corrie (*interview*, 2nd February 2011, Suva, Fiji), Uma was named after the Banaban reef, Ooma, where the first phosphate-laden shipwreck occurred.



FIGURE 2. – Sailosi Ramatu, Headman of Vunidogoloa village, Vanua Levu, Fiji, examining erosion to the village (13th March, 2012, picture Julia Edwards)

fund to produce a pension for the Banaban community (Sigrah and King, 2001). In May 1977, the secretary of state for foreign and commonwealth affairs, on behalf of the BPC partner governments, offered the Banabans an ex-gratia payment of Australian \$10 million (MacDonald, 2001) – capital taken from the revenues of BPC – on the condition they dropped all further legal action (King and Sigrah, 2004). Four years later, the Banaban finally accepted the Australian \$10 million package, plus interest.

«On 13 April 1981, the Rabi council of leaders signed appropriate undertakings bringing these matters to an end. At the same time the British, Australian and New Zealand governments made available, the an ex-gratia basis, 10 million Australian dollars and a sum of a little over 4½ million Australian dollars in lieu of interest thereon for the benefit of the Banaban community as a whole.» (HC Deb, 1981)

Despite the size of the award, which was inadequate compared with the amount given to their phosphate neighbours in Nauru, the Banabans were only allowed access to the interest from the compensation payment (Hindmarsh, 2002).

From mining narrative to climate-change narrative: a tentative/prospective comparison

This section of the paper compares the relocation of the Banaban with the contemporary issue of climate change-forced displacement (CCFD). First, development-related relocations are briefly discussed, before climate change-related relocation is examined in terms of definitions, drivers, adaptation strategies and case studies. Finally, a comparison of the relocation of the Banabans with CCFD will be made.

The relocation of an entire island community for economic gain is rare. Many past forced relocations of communities have been the result of development projects, such as the construction of dams and irrigation schemes (Cernea, 1999; Fujikura *et al.*, 2009), and outcomes have been mixed. Insufficient planning, preparation and implementation result in more failures than successes (Oliver-Smith and de Sherbinin, 2011); experiences from the past suggest that climate-induced displacements risk exposing the people affected to severe economic, social and environmental hardship (Cernea, 1997); communities will be placed in a new context of vulnerability and risks (Birk, 2012).

Definitions, drivers, adaptation strategies and case studies

Climate change is expected to increase the incidence of community relocations significantly in the future, and much attention has been given to the recent emergence of the issue among policy-makers, academia and the media (Garnaut, 2009; McAdam, 2012; Park, 2011; Warner *et al.*, 2013).

«Relocation of communities will become one of the few practical options (if not the only one) for adaptation to climate change by communities and/or villages.» (Solomon Islands Government, 2008: 86)

Estimates of the number of people to be affected vary (Lonergan, 2012); mass displacement of communities, however, is likely to result from the combination of sudden-onset, extreme weather events and slow-onset environmental change that will render locations uninhabitable (Bronen, 2014).

«Sinking» small-island states constitute a particular challenge (Kälin, 2012). In the future peoples of low-lying nations, such as Kiribati, Tuvalu, and the Marshall Islands, may be rendered stateless, if present sea-level rise forecasts prove correct, and their island nations become totally submerged under rising seas (Stern, 2006). To date, international law has failed to adequately address this international dimension (Jarvis, 2010; McAdam, 2011).

Indeed, there is no accepted definition of a person who moves because of climate change. Renaud *et al.* (2007) identifies three categories of people: «environmental refugees»; «environmentally-forced migrants» and «environmentally-motivated migrants», based on whether or not a «decision» to move is made. Ferris (2012) alternatively offers a categorization of people based on the different environmental circumstances behind the relocation: sudden onset natural disasters, intensified by the effects of climate change; slow onset effects of climate change, creating unviable livelihoods; and, the destruction of part or all of a country from the effects of climate change.

Planned relocation is an adaptation strategy already being implemented in some states, and movements to date have mainly taken the form of in-country resettlements (Mimura *et al.*, 2007). The Fiji government, for instance, has recognized a national need and prepared planned-relocation guidelines to systemize the relocation process within the nation (Fiji Government, 2014; Wilson, 2014).

There is still insufficient understanding of the effects of climate changes on relocation, however. Media and environmental groups claim the handful of current community relocations are entire-

ly climate-driven (Vidal, 2005; Morton, 2009). Such uncritical promotion of a direct causal link between climate change and displacement is misplaced, and potentially, alarmist as such cases are scientifically unproven. Accompanying technical assessments of individual locales are seldom performed, and caution needs to be used when discussing the nature of relocation causality - relocation is a highly complex issue (Campbell, 2010) as indeed is the environment (Lonergan, 2012). Isolating the effects of climate change from other drivers of migration and environmental change is difficult (Dun and Gemenne, 2008; Care *et al.*, 2009). Often climate change may merely exacerbate an already perilous economic or social situation (Renaud *et al.*, 2011), and removing environmental processes from the social, economic, political and institutional structures will prove problematic - the environment is a «contextual factor» (Lonergan, 2012). Even when climate-change causality is confirmed, climate-induced migration must not be viewed in isolation from other forms of displacement, rather it needs to be considered in the context of an existing migration system (Hugo, 2010).

Environmental degradation is a contributory factor in the current «climate-related» relocations used for comparative purposes in this paper (summarized below), but the environment may not necessarily be the primary cause of the relocation. The implications for the community are the same, however - people have to move because their settlement is no longer sustainable:

Tegue Island, northern Vanuatu: Coastal community in high volcanic island, relocating because of sea-level rise, flooding and accelerated coastal erosion (Nakalevu and Phillips undated; UNEP, 2005). The area is also seismically and volcanically-active, and prone to earthquakes and tsunamis (Warrick, 2011);

The Carteret Islands, Papua New Guinea: Low-lying atoll community, relocating inter-island because of coastal inundation and loss of land (Boege, 2011; Bronen, 2014; Edwards, 2013b). Effects in part may also be linked to geological instabilities (Barnett and Campbell, 2010; Weir and Virani, 2011);

Vunidogoloa village, Vanua Levu, Fiji: Coastal community, relocating to higher ground because of coastal inundation (Wilson, 2014). Villages say conditions are exacerbated by the juxtaposition of the village between Natewa Bay and a local (unnamed) river.

Narikoso village, Ono Island, Kadavu, Fiji: Coastal community, relocating to higher ground because of coastal inundation (Fiji government, 2014). Villages say conditions are exacerbated by historical decision to block a sea channel between an islet and the village site.

Parallels between the relocation of the Banabans and climate change-forced displacement

CCFD are shown in Table 2. The Banaban case is well documented and learning opportunities are presented from the Banabans' experiences that may aid future CCFD in the Pacific and elsewhere. Like the Banaban relocation, the effects of climate change can be both narrative and material (Farbotko and Lazrus, 2012), and current-day climate-related relocations will be drawn upon in the discussion.

Populations affected and nature of the displacement

Island communities have relocated for many reasons in the past: trade, marriage, warfare,

families and cultural exchange (Hau'Ofa, 1994; Campbell *et al.*, 2007). The Banabans are in the unenviable position of being an entire island population that has been forcibly relocated from their island home in modern times by outside agents. Low-lying islands are similarly threatened – by submergence from rising sea levels (Mimura *et al.*, 2007) – and island communities across the region face uncertain futures in locations away from their current homes (Stern, 2006). Just as the Banabans were presented with no alternative to relocation, climate change-displaced communities will have little choice, ultimately, other than to leave their homes on a permanent basis.

TABLE 2. – Comparison between the relocation of the Banabans and climate-change forced displacement (CCFD) (Source: Author)

	Banaba Island	Low-lying coastal areas and islands
Population affected	Entire island population	Entire island populations and communities occupying low-lying coastal areas
Nature of displacement	Permanent and international	Likely to be permanent. Mostly internal (within national borders) or may be international.
Direct cause of relocation	Extraction of phosphate from mining activity by foreign private-sector company, leading to extreme degradation and loss of land.	Sea-level rise from human-induced climate change, leading to salination of ground-water lens, reduced agricultural productivity and loss of land.
Indirect cause of relocation	Economic development by industrial nations	Economic development by industrial nations
Geography	Raised island (300m above sea-level at highest point)	Low-lying coral atoll (usually <5m at highest point); low-lying coastal communities in high volcanic islands.
Time frame	Slow-onset event (phosphate extraction)	Slow on-set event (sea-level rise). Long-lead time
Pre-relocation planning	Colonial authorities prepared relocation plan. No community involvement, and Rabi Island purchased without any visit by community representatives to assess its suitability	Authorities will need to be proactive and prepare relocation plans. Community need to be consulted and actively participant in the formation of any plan and in site selection.
Funding	Resettlement costs initially self-funded from phosphate-mining royalties. Thirty years later, compensation from British government following legal action by the community	Resettlement costs initially self-funded or from local / national government. Ability to seek compensation from industrial nations still to be determined
Resettlement location	Alternative Pacific island, with no resident, host community	Unlikely to find an alternative 'vacant' Pacific island location
Loss of nationality	Loss of independence (Banaba Island subsumed under Kiribati)	Loss of independence (in worst-case scenario, land territory for some nations may be totally submerged)
Loss of homeland	Population able to visit 'homeland' of Banaba Island	Population unable to visit 'homeland' in worse-case scenario. Submergence of ancestral land
Post-relocation assistance	No long-term support for livelihood reconstruction	Need for on-going support for livelihood reconstruction

Most CCFD relocations will occur within countries, and cross-border relocations will not be the norm (Mimura *et al.*, 2007). A deterrent to any relocation, however, is a lack of land availability.

«Relocation is problematic when they [communities] do not own land resources on nearby islands thus land tenure and land management systems prohibit any discussion let alone relocate to nearby islands.» (Solomon Islands, 2008: 86)

During the colonial era, the relocation of the Banabans from Banaba Island to Rabi Island involved the internal movement of a population from one part of a British-ruled colony to another. Opportunities for internal resettlement between colonies, ruled by one common colonial authority, no longer exist (Tabucanon, 2012), and any such move would be reliant on the bilateral or multilateral agreements between sending and receiving countries – the move today would have an international dimension, from Kiribati to Fiji. These two nations have recently completed an agreement that has enabled the Kiribati government to purchase 2,210 hectares of land in Fiji to enhance its food security (Office of the President, Republic of Kiribati, 2014). The bilateral negotiations, that did not include any agreement to resettle people, took more than two years to complete, illustrating the need to assign sufficient time to any future relocation proposal.

Direct and indirect causes of the relocation

Neither the Banabans previously nor those currently facing CCFD will have contributed greatly to the situation that they face. Fertiliser, the end product of phosphate extraction, was of limited use to the Banabans who, with little soil, grew few crops, and today, small island-developing states account for less than 1% of global greenhouse gas emissions (Julca and Paddison, 2010). The contribution to global climate change of any one low-lying island or at-risk community will be negligible. In both the Banaban case and with CCFD, the root cause of the relocation is economic development elsewhere by people unaware (or uncaring) of the effects of their behaviour on others.

Geography and the importance of land

People and land in the Pacific have a very special, intuitive relationship (Campbell, 2010). Land to the Banabans was of such immense importance that Silverman (1971) proposed a «blood and mud hypothesis», where people (sharing a common identity) and locality (land



FIGURE 3. – Stump of coconut tree, 25-30m offshore from Han Island, the Carteret Islands, Papua New Guinea (21st November 2011, picture Julia Edwards)

rights, residence and sustenance) appear intertwined in the definition of Banaban kinship. Land in Banaba was not merely the ground on which people lived, but a right and medium of exchange between individuals (Teaiwa, 2005). Undoubtedly, the island of Banaba was one of their most powerful cultural symbols (Silverman, 1977; Teaiwa, 2005).

Mining destroyed many of the Banabans' sacred water caves (*bangabangas*) (Sigrah and King, 2001) and removed more than 20 million tons of topsoil (Williams and McDonald, 1985). The island changed beyond recognition. Low-lying islands and coastal areas will similarly lose land under rising seas, yet long before submergence, islands and shorelines will contract from encroaching waves, salt water will contaminate freshwater sources and populations will be forced to seek relocation elsewhere.

The slow-onset contamination process has already started. Some low-lying populations complain that ground-water supplies have a salty taste (Locke, 2009). Community response either involves seeking alternative water sources (Weir and Virani, 2011) or, in some atolls such as in Kiribati, it is reported, they mix coconut *toddy* (the sweet sap from the coconut flower) with fresh water in an attempt to disguise the saline taste (Anterea, *interview*, 4th October 2011, Tarawa, Kiribati). When ground-water sources become unreliable and fresh rainwater scarce, communities will be forced to consider relocation. Paradoxically, Banaba Island, the only raised island in the Kiribati group, offers i-Kiribati (the people of Kiribati) little escape from the rising seas, as Banaba records a long history of sustained periods of drought and a scarcity of fresh water (Binder, 1977). Recurring droughts were probably responsible for many people leaving Banaba in the past, that resulted in periodic population declines (Silverman, 1971).

Importance of homeland, identity and a sense of belonging

The Banabans own two islands, Banaba and Rabi. Resettled on Rabi, they have dual identity: they are Banabans from Banaba, *and* they express that they are Rabians from Rabi (Kempf and Hermann, 2005).

Many Banabans articulate a desire to visit Banaba Island during their lifetime. Such a return, though difficult to arrange, would not be impossible for individuals to make (submerged islands leave no options of return). Banabans realise, though, that a collective return to their ancestral homeland is highly unlikely. Reminders of Banaba Island live on in the village names in Rabi, however, and for communal activities, such as intravillage competitions or food production, the villages divide into geographical sections that replicate the old Banaban model (Silverman, 1971). The recently-moved Tegua community, Vanuatu, however, chose to take on the name of their new site, Lirak as their community name; in their tradition names of places or living things that sustain them are used to name settlements or children (Nakalevu and Phillips, undated). Such a focus on the present may assist the community to identify with their new location in the short term.

In most cases of relocation, however, the pull of the ancestral home remains strong. According to Corrie, a few hundred people have returned to Banaba to act as a retaining population on the island (Corrie *interview*, 2nd February 2011, Suva, Fiji), though it is believed the island could not sustain a greater population because of its very limited water supply (McAdam, 2012). The well-publicised relocation of the Carteret Islands community, Papua New Guinea also projects that half the population will remain in the islands by 2020 (Lokani, 2011), and it seems reasonable to assume that others affected by CCFD will make similar requests to retain population in the homeland. By moving some of the people exposed to climate risk away from the affected area, the capacity of the remaining population to adapt to climate change may be enhanced (Hugo, 2010).

Not only were the Banabans forcibly removed from their island home, but a sizeable portion (20 million tons) of the physical land of Banaba was also shipped elsewhere in the form of phosphate to Australia and New Zealand (Teaiwa, 2005). Teaiwa, therefore questioned, should the Banaban equally yearn after some agricultural field in Australia or New Zealand, fertilized with Banaban topsoil, as they do their island home? (Teaiwa, 2005).

The disappearance of «sinking» atolls may leave no trace of homeland and may make custody impossible in the longer term; the psychologi-

cal, social and economic effects of permanently losing one's homeland are yet to be determined for displaced-atoll islanders.

Culture, identity and integration

Relocation may result in the potential loss of language and culture (Kelman and West, 2009). The Banabans had a distinctive, rich culture in Banaba, expressed in rituals, dance, marriages, adoptions and the taming of frigate birds. Phosphate mining already threatened the traditions of the Banabans, but further erosion occurred with the relocation of the community to Rabi. On the larger island of Rabi, islanders said that they were no longer able to call out to each other from village to village as they had done on Banaba - distances were too great - and without a coastal road, horseback and sea transport were the only means of communication between settlements (Edwards, 2013a). In contrast, the two current village relocations in Fiji are each moving to higher ground within the original village boundary (Ravula, 2012; Silaitoga, 2012). The communities will remain intact, therefore, and their identity and history maintained. When communities do not have land suitable to host an entire community in one location, they are likely to be dispersed across several locations. In the case of the relocation of the Carteret islanders five different sites on the larger, main island of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea have been identified for resettlement - each given by the Roman Catholic Church - but none are adjacent to one another (Edwards, 2013b).

While distances between resettlement areas may cause dilution, conversely, isolation may strengthen culture. The Banabans were fortunate to be able to purchase a «vacant» island. The physical geography of an isolated landmass can help retain cultural identity as interactions with neighbouring (host) communities may be limited. Entire islands rarely come to market, however, and opportunities to buy an island, and even freehold land, will be limited in the future. Communities facing relocation may have to accept integration into an already-occupied area with all the associated cultural, social and political issues (Bronen, 2014). Islanders at-risk of relocation may be reliant, therefore, on the good will of others in finding them a new home.

Much of the culture of the Banabans exists only in modern-day text books, and these are written in English, a language, Corrie notes, that is foreign to the majority of the people they describe (Corrie, *interview*, 2nd February 2011, Suva, Fiji). The Banabans say that their day-to-day lives have lost the richness of their unique culture.

Cultural displays, such as dancing, are now the preserve of marriages and other special occasions (Kempf, 2003), such as the newly-intro-

duced Banaba Day, on the 15th December each year. The Banabans have feared their eventual assimilation into the Fijian cultural mainstream (Sigrah and King, 2004: 1046), and try to use the performing arts (singing, dancing and storytelling) to spatially anchor, preserve and communicate their history, traditions and culture to others (Kempf, 2003).

Post-relocation support

The Banabans had little knowledge of farming or of reef fishing, and upon arrival, only had two months of food rations. They also assumed that their stay would be temporary. When relocation is permanent, more attention can be paid to both the conditions and the process by which the resettlement will take place (Ferris, 2011). The villagers of Tegue, Vanuatu were still building houses a year after the new site had been officially opened, with assistance from the wider community and others from neighbouring islands (Nakalevu and Phillips, undated), though with less time spent on maintenance post-relocation, as their new, dryer homes did not rot, the community will have more time to focus on other development issues (Nakalevu and Phillips, undated). Livelihoods need to be restored and communities reconstructed for each future CCFD.

The Banabans did have the advantage of arriving as one cohort (atoll islanders are unlikely to experience a similar movement of people en masse), but they arrived in an island without basic infrastructure and no immediate opportunity for formal employment. Little attention was given by the authorities to the group's mental and socio-economic well-being. Of the first five Carteret Islands families to move to the new relocation site in Bougainville, three returned home within a few months unable to settle into the new environment (Edwards, 2013b).

Funding and compensation

Future climate injustice will be as much an issue for people affected by CCFD as development-induced injustice was for the Banabans. The Banabans funded their relocation with royalties from their own phosphate fund, and only sought compensation some twenty years later (Sigrah and King, 2001). Most atoll islanders, finding themselves threatened with permanent displacement, will have no means by which to fund their relocation. In Solomon Islands, the NAPA states:

«Relocation of communities and/or villages will necessarily become the responsibility of the governments at all levels (i.e. community/local, provincial and national).» (Solomon Islands, 2008: 86).

To date, the Fiji government has financed 75% of relocation projects' costs, with the community expected to fund the remainder (Pareti, 2013). In the future, however, it is questionable whether with the projected increased incidents of CCFD that national governments will be able to continue to fund similar projects, and monies will need to be sought from elsewhere (Pareti, 2013).

Conclusions

Human mobility in the Pacific characterizes the region's past and present and probably will its future. Ever-evolving culture, too, is not immune to movement and mergers (Hau'Ofa, 1994). What makes the Banabans unusual as a displaced people is that they were already displaced from their homeland by the War, prior to their move to Rabi, and they had attained wealth and comfort from the phosphate-mining activity beyond that which they could have generated themselves. Many Pacific journeys of migration are prompted by trade, exchange and opportunity - none of which applies to the Banaban case. The new environment in Rabi was to be very different in every way from their experiences in Banaba and under Japanese occupation.

The colonial authorities had devised a resettlement action plan, and attempts were made at settling the Banabans into their new home, but the timescale of a few months proved unrealistic. The Banaban people would need self-reliance to make Rabi a success.

Forced resettlement is now part of the historical narrative of the people of Banaba, one community case study within the wider narrative of mining exploitation in the Pacific; forced resettlement and mining exploitation are one part of the broader history of mobility in the Pacific-Island context, a mobility that includes climate change.

The re-establishment of a settled community is a long process and can take many years. Lessons to take forward for future CCFD are numerous. The most pressing issues are the need for the involvement of the community at the initial discussions stage, including in the assessment of an alternative home, and for long-term, post-relocation planning, which includes the creation of sustainable livelihoods. Addressing these issues will not be possible without on-going support by external agencies for those displaced, and that support needs to start now.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ANON, 1946 (1st March). Banabans who wish to proceed to Ocean Island for delineation

- of boundaries, F128/2, National Archives of Fiji, Suva, unpublished.
- BARNETT J. and J. CAMPBELL, J., 2010. *Climate Change and Small Island States: Power, Knowledge and the South Pacific*, Earthscan, London and Washington.
- BENAIA T., 1991. The History of the Protestant Church in Banaba and Rabi, Bachelor of Divinity final year dissertation, Pacific Theological College, Suva, Fiji, unpublished.
- BINDER P., 1977. *Treasure Islands: the trials of the Ocean Islanders*, London, Blond and Briggs.
- BIRK T., 2012. Relocation of reef and atoll island communities as an adaptation to climate change: learning from experience in Solomon Islands, in K. Hastrup and K. Fog Olwig (eds), *Climate change and human mobility: Global challenges to the social sciences*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press.
- BOEGE V., 2011. *Challenges and pitfalls of resettlement measures: Experiences in the Pacific region*, COMCAD, Working Paper n°102, Centre on Migration Citizenship and Development, The Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies.
- BRONEN R., 2014. Community relocations: The Arctic and South Pacific, in S.F. Martin, S. Veerasinghe and A. Taylor (eds), *Migration and humanitarian crises: Causes, consequences, and responses*, Oxford, UK, Routledge.
- BRITISH INFORMATION SERVICES, 1979 (June). Kiribati, *Factel* 4, p.3.
- CAMPBELL J., 2010. Climate-induced community relocation in the Pacific: The meaning and importance of land, in J. McAdam (ed.), *Climate Change and Displacement: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, Oxford/Portland, Hart Publishing.
- CAMPBELL J., M. GOLDSMITH and K. KOSHY, 2007. *Community relocation as an option for adaptation to the effects of climate change and climate variability in Pacific Island Countries (PICs)*, Final report for APN project 2005-14-NSY-Campbell, Asia-Pacific Network for Global Change Research.
- CARE, CIESIN, UNHCR, UNU-EHS, WORLD BANK, 2009. *In search of shelter: Mapping the effects of climate change on human migration*, Bonn, Germany.
- CARY L.J., 1999. Unexpected stories: Life history and the limits of representation, *Qualitative Inquiry* 5, 3, pp.411-427.
- CERNEA M.M., 1997. The Risks and Reconstruction Model for resettling displaced populations, *World Development* 25, 10, pp. 1569-1587.
- CERNEA M.M. (ed.), 1999. *The economics of involuntary resettlement: Questions and challenges*, Washington DC, USA, The World Bank.
- COLSON E., 2003. Forced migration and the anthropological response, *Journal of Refugee Studies* 16, 1, pp.1-18.
- CONNELL J., 2004. Environmental change, economic development and emigration in Tuvalu, Chapter 15, in V.S. Lockwood (ed), *Globalization and culture change in the Pacific Islands*, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, Exploring Cultures: A Prentice Hall Series in Anthropology, Pearson.
- , 2006. NAURU: The first failed Pacific State?, *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 95, 383, pp. 47-63.
- COOPER H., undated. Letter to the acting colonial secretary, F128/1, Suva, National Archives of Fiji, unpublished.
- EJF, 2009. *No Place Like Home - Where next for climate refugees?*, London, Environmental Justice Foundation.
- EDWARDS J., 2013a. Phosphate and forced relocation: An assessment of the resettlement of the Banabans to northern Fiji in 1945, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 41, 5, pp. 783-803.
- , 2013b. The logistics of climate-induced resettlement: lessons from the Carteret Islands, Papua New Guinea, *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 32, 3, pp. 52-78.
- FARBOTKO C. and H. LAZRUS, 2012. The first climate refugees? Contesting global narratives of climate change in Tuvalu, *Global Environmental Change* 22, pp. 382-390.
- FERRIS E., 2011 (22-26 February). Climate change and displacement: A contribution to the discussion, Brookings Institution, prepared for UNHCR Bellagio Roundtable.
- , 2012. *Protection and planned relocations in the context of climate change*, Geneva, Switzerland, UNHCR, Legal and Protection Policy Research Series PPA/2012/04.
- FIJI GOVERNMENT, 2014 (March). Helping communities assess their vulnerability to climate change, *Fiji Climate Change Newsletter* 7, Suva, Fiji, p.1.
- FUJIKURA R., M. NAKAYAMA and N. TAKESADA, 2009. Lessons from resettlement caused by

- large dam projects : case studies from Japan, Indonesia and Sri Lanka, *Water Resources Development* 25, 3, pp. 407-418.
- GARNAUT R., 2009 (11th December). Climate refugees in Australia 'inevitable', *ABC News*, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-12-11/climate-refugees-in-australia-inevitable/257228> (accessed 12th June 2014).
- GOWDY J.M. and C.N. McDANIEL, 1999. The physical destruction of Nauru: an example of weak sustainability, *Land Economics* 75, 2, pp. 333-338.
- HAU'OFA, 1994. Our sea of islands, in V. Naidu, E. Waddell and E. Hau'Ofa (eds), *A New Oceania: Rediscovering Our Sea of Islands*, The University of the South Pacific, Suva, School of Social and Economic Development.
- HC DEB 1981 (29 June). 7, Col.286W.
- HINDMARSH G., 2002. *A report on the Banaban, formerly of Banaba (Ocean Island) who were relocated to Rabi Island, Fiji*, a UNESCO-commissioned report.
- HOLLAND F., 1948 (22nd April). Letter from the administrative officer, Rabi to the chief secretary, Suva, National Archive of Fiji, Western Pacific High Commission, F128/6, unpublished.
- HUGO G., 2010. Lessons from past forced resettlement for climate change migration, in E. Piguët, A. Pécou and P. de Guchteneire (eds), *Migration and Climate Change*, UNESCO Publishing/Cambridge University Press.
- JARVIS R., 2010. Sinking nations and climate change adaptation strategies, *Seattle Journal for Social Justice*, 9, 1, pp. 447-486.
- JULCA A. and O. PADDISON, 2010. Vulnerabilities and migration in Small Island Developing in the States in the context of climate change, *Natural Hazards* 55, 3, pp. 717-728.
- KÄLIN W., 2012. Displacement caused by the effects of climate change – who will be affected and what are the gaps in the normative framework for their protection?, in S. Leckie, E. Simperingham and J. Bakker (eds), *Climate Change and Displacement Reader*, Abingdon, Oxon, UK, Earthscan.
- KELMAN I. and J. WEST, 2009. Climate change and small island developing states: A critical review, *Ecological and Environmental Anthropology* 5, 1, pp. 1-16.
- KEMPF W., 2003 (March). "Songs cannot die": Ritual composing and the politics of emplacement among the Banabans resettled on Rabi Island in Fiji, *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 112, 1, pp. 33-64.
- KEMPF W. and E. HERMANN, 2005. Reconfigurations of place and ethnicity: positionings, performances and politics of relocated Banabans in Fiji, *Oceania* 75, pp. 368-386.
- KENNEDY D.G., 1945a (8th October). Outline of scheme for the preliminary settlement of the Banaban people at Rabi, Suva, National Archives of Fiji, F37/269-1, unpublished.
- , 1945B (16th December). Telegram to the high commissioner, from Major D.G.Kennedy, on board "Kiakia", Suva, National Archives of Fiji, F37/269-1, unpublished.
- KING S. and K.R. SIGRAH, 2004 (1st -7th November). Legacy of a miner's daughter and assessment of the social changes of the Banabans after phosphate mining on Banaba, paper given to Islands of the World VIII International Conference *Changing Islands – Changing Worlds*, Kinmen Island (Quemoy), Taiwan.
- LIEBER M.D. (ed.), 1977. *Exiles and Migrants in Oceania*, Honolulu, The University Press of Hawai'i, Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania, Monograph Series 5.
- LOCKE J., 2009. Climate change-induced migration in the Pacific region: Sudden crisis and long-term developments, *Geographical Journal* 173, 3, pp. 171-180.
- LOKANI P., 2011 (3rd May). Tulele Peisa and the relocation of the Carteret Islanders, Presentation to the OHCHR Conference *Internal Displacement caused by Natural Disasters and Climate Change*, Suva, Fiji.
- LONERGAN S., 2012. The role of environmental degradation in population displacement, in S. Leckie, E. Simperingham and J. Bakker (eds), *Climate Change and Displacement Reader*, Oxon, UK, Abingdon, Earthscan.
- MACDONALD B., 2001. *Cinderellas of the Empire: Towards a History of Kiribati and Tuvalu*, Fiji, USP, Institute of Pacific Studies.
- MAUDE H.C. and H.E. MAUDE, 1932. The social organization of Banaba or Ocean Island, Central Pacific, *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 41, 164, pp. 262-301.
- MAUDE H.C. and H.E. MAUDE (eds), 1994. *The Book of the Banaba*, Suva, Fiji, University of the South Pacific, Institute of Pacific Studies.
- MCADAM J., 2011. Refusing 'refuge' in the Pacific: (De)constructing climate-induced displacement in international law, in É. Piguët, A. Pécou and P. De Guchteneire (eds), *Migration, environment and Climate change*,

- forced migration, and international law*, Paris, UNESCO.
- , 2012. *Climate Change, forced migration, and international law*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- MIMURA N., L. NURSE, R.F. MCLEAN, J. AGARD, L. BRIGUGLIO, P. LEFALE, R. PAYET and G. SEM, 2007. Small Islands, Chapter 16, in M.L. Parry *et al.* (eds), *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, pp. 687-716.
- MODELL J., 2002. Introduction, Pacific Islander Strategies for Settling in New Places, *Pacific Studies: Special issue: Constructing moral communities* 25, 1/2, pp. 1-22.
- MORTON A., 2009 (29th July). First climate refugees start to move to a new island home, The Age, <http://www.theage.com.au/national/first-climate-refugees-start-move-to-new-island-home-20090728-e06x.html> (accessed 8th November 2010).
- NAKALEVU T. and B. PHILLIPS, undated. Post Relocation Survey Report, Tegua Community, Torba Province, Vanuatu, SPREPCS, *Pacific Studies: Special issue: Constructing moral communities* 25, 1/2, pp. 1-22.
- OLIVER-SMITH A. and A. DE SHERBININ, 2014. Something old and something new: Resettlement in the twenty-first century, in S.F. Martin, S.Veerasinghe and A.Taylor (eds), *Migration and humanitarian crises: Causes, consequences, and responses*, Oxford, UK, Routledge.
- OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT, REPUBLIC OF KIRIBATI, 2014. Kiribati buys a piece of Fiji, OB – Press Release, <http://www.climate.gov.ki/2014/05/30/kiribati-buys-a-piece-of-fiji/> (accessed on 8th June 2014).
- PARK S., 2011. *Climate change and the risk of statelessness: The situation of low-lying Island States*, UNHCR, Geneva, Switzerland, Legal and Protection Policy Research Series.
- PARETI S., 2011 (May). Climate refugees?, *Island Business*, <http://www.islandsbusiness.com/2013/5/fiji-business/climate-refugees/> (accessed 17th July 2013).
- RENAUD F., J.J. BOGARDI, O. DUN and K. WARNER, 2007. *Control, adapt or flee: How to face environmental migration?*, Bonn, Germany, UNU-EHS, InterSecTions 5.
- RENAUD F.G., O. DUN, K. WARNER and J.J. BOGARDI, 2011. A decision framework for environmentally induced migration, *International Migration* 49, s1, pp. e1-e29.
- ROBINSON W.C., 2003. *Risks and Rights: The Causes, Consequences, and Challenges of Development-Induced Displacement, An occasional paper*, Washington, The Brookings Institution-SAIS, Project on Internal Displacement.
- SECRETARY FOR FIJIAN AFFAIRS, 1945 (10th December). Letter to Roko Tui Cakauorove, Subject: Settlement of Banabans on Rabi Island, Suva, National Archives of Fiji, F37/269-1, unpublished.
- SHENNAN J. and M. CORRIE TEKENIMATANG (eds), 2005. *One and a half Pacific Islands Teuana ao Teiterana n aba n Te Betebeke Stories the Banaban People tell of themselves I-banaba aika a Karakin oim Rongorongoa*, Wellington, Victoria University Press.
- SIGRAH K.R. and S. KING, 2001. *Te Rii ni Banaba*, Fiji, University of South Pacific, Institute of Pacific Studies.
- , 2004 (1st -7th November). Essentially being Banaban in today's world: The role of Banaban law 'TE RII NI BANABA' (backbone of Banaba) in a changing world, paper given to Islands of the World VIII International Conference 'Changing Islands – Changing Worlds', Kinmen Island (Quemoy), Taiwan.
- , 2006 (24-27 January). Banaba-Ocean Island Chronicles: Private collections and indigenous record keeping proving fact from fiction, paper given to *The Pacific in Australia - Australia in the Pacific conference*, QUT, Brisbane.
- SILAITOGA S, 2012 (5th March). Villagers put down roots, *The Fiji Times*, <http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=195064> (accessed 28th March 2012).
- SILVERMAN M.G., 1962. The resettled Banaban (Ocean Island) community in Fiji: A preliminary report, *Current Anthropology* 3, 4, pp. 429-431.
- , 1971. *Disconcerting Issue: Meaning and Struggle in a Resettled Pacific Community*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press.
- SILVERMAN M., 1977. Making sense: A Study of a Banaban meeting, Chapter 6, in M.D. Lieber (ed.), *Exiles and Migrants in Oceania*, Honolulu, The University Press of Hawaii, Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania, Monograph Series 5, pp. 121-160.

- SHLOMOWITZ R. and D. MUNRO, 1992. The Ocean Island (Banaba) and Nauru labour trade 1900-1940, *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 94, 1, pp. 103-117.
- SOLOMON ISLANDS GOVERNMENT, 2008. *National Adaption Programme of Action*, Honiara, Solomons Islands, Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Meteorology.
- STERN N., 2006. *The Stern Review: The Economics of Climate Change*, London, UK, HM Treasury.
- TABUCANON G., 2012. The Banaban resettlement: implications for Pacific environmental migration, *Pacific Studies* 35, 3, pp. 1-28.
- TEAIWA K.M., 2005. Our sea of phosphate: The diaspora of Ocean Island, in G. Harvey and C.D. Thompson jr. (eds), *Indigenous diasporas and dislocations*, Aldershot, UK and Burlington, USA.
- UNEP, 2005 (6th December). *Pacific island villagers first climate change "refugees"*, UN environment builds bridges between vulnerable peoples in the Arctic and small islands, press release, <http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=459&ArticleID=5066&cl=en> (accessed 10th June 2014).
- VASKESS A., 1942 (29th June). Confidential letter, Suva, National Archives of Fiji, No.C.F. 48/5, F37/269-1, unpublished.
- , 1944 (4th September). Proposed settlement of Banabans in Rambli Island, Memorandum, Suva, National Archives of Fiji, F37/269-1, unpublished.
- , 1945 (5th December). Letter to G.K.Roth, Esquire, Suva, National Archive of Fiji, F.C.128/1, unpublished.
- VERRIER L., 1946 (2nd January). Letter to the Director of Medical Services, Immigrant Banaban: Health and Sanitation, Suva, National Archives of Fiji, F37/269-1, unpublished.
- VIDAL J., 2005 (25th November). Pacific Atlantis: first climate change refugees, *The Guardian*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2005/nov/25/science.climatechange> (accessed 9th November 2010).
- WARNER K., T. AFIFI, W. KALIN, S. LECKIE, B. FERRIS, S.F. MARTIN and D. WRATHALL, 2013. *Climate change, moving people: framing migration, displacement and planned relocation*, Bonn, Germany, UNU-EHS Publication Series, Policy Brief 8.
- WEIR T. and Z. VIRANI, 2011. Three linked risks for development in the Pacific: Climate change, disasters and conflict, *Climate and Development* 3, 3, pp. 193-208.
- WARRICK O, 2011. *The adaptive capacity of the Tegue island community*, Torres Islands, Vanuatu, The Australian Government, Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, Australian Aid.
- WILSON C., 2014. Fiji leads Pacific region on climate adaptation efforts, IPS Inter Press Service News Agency, <http://www.ipsnews.net/2014/05/fiji-leads-pacific-region-climate-adaptation-efforts/> (accessed 27th May 2014).
- WINDRUM J.E., 1946 (15th June). Confidential memorandum from the district commissioner Northern to the colonial secretary, Subject: Banabans and Gilbertese on Rabi Island, Suva, National Archives of Fiji, F128/1, unpublished.
- WILLIAMS M. and B. MACDONALD, 1985. *The Phosphateers: A history of the British Phosphate Commissioners and the Christmas Island Phosphate Commission*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press.

Naissance de l'industrie du nickel en Nouvelle-Calédonie et au-delà, à l'interface des trajectoires industrielles, impériales et coloniales (1875-1914)

par

Yann BENCIVENGO*

RÉSUMÉ

Le nickel est longtemps demeuré un métal marginal utilisé pour la fabrication d'objets de luxe. L'industrie du nickel démarre avec la découverte des gisements de la Nouvelle-Calédonie en 1875. Elle se développe grâce à la mise au point des aciers au nickel qui a lieu en pleine course aux armements. Dès lors trois récits se mêlent : le récit global d'une branche industrielle qui s'établit à l'échelle mondiale durant les trente années qui précèdent la Première Guerre mondiale, celui des enjeux qu'elle représente pour les grandes firmes, les nations et leurs rivalités impériales, et enfin le récit minier calédonien qui se déploie dans le cadre de la colonisation.

MOTS-CLÉS : nickel, Nouvelle-Calédonie, activité minière, main-d'œuvre

ABSTRACT

Nickel has long remained a marginal metal used in the manufacture of luxury goods. The nickel industry starts with the discovery of deposits in New Caledonia in 1875. The industry takes advantage of the development of nickel steels which combines with arms race. Therefore, three stories are intertwined: the global story of an industrial sector that becomes established worldwide during the thirty years preceding the First World War; the challenges it represents for large firms, nations and their imperial rivalries; and finally, the Caledonian mining history, which unfolds in the context of colonization.

KEYWORDS: nickel, New Caledonia, mining, labour

La Nouvelle-Calédonie tient aujourd'hui une place conséquente dans l'économie mondiale du nickel. Cette importance est ancienne, puisque c'est à la suite de la mise en exploitation des mines calédoniennes dans les années 1870 que l'industrie du nickel a véritablement pris son essor. Comme pour un autre métal non ferreux au destin parallèle, l'aluminium, ce démarrage participe de la seconde industrialisation qui se déploie alors en Europe et en Amérique du Nord, et qui s'appuie sur de nouvelles énergies (pétrole, électricité) et sur les nouveaux secteurs moteurs que sont les industries électrique, chimique et automobile (Woronoff,

1994 : 348). Ce démarrage s'inscrit aussi dans le cadre d'un mouvement de mondialisation lié à la colonisation, à la montée en puissance de l'économie nord-américaine et aux progrès des transports et des communications à longue distance.

Le territoire calédonien a donc joué un rôle pionnier dans l'essor de cette nouvelle branche industrielle qui fonctionne à l'échelle mondiale. Très éloigné des grands pays industrialisés où se trouvent les unités de transformation des minerais et où se concentre la consommation du nickel, ce territoire offre une bonne illustration des échanges qui se mettent en place à l'échelle planétaire. Par

* Chercheur associé au CNEP (EA 4242), Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, yann.benci@wanadoo.fr.

ailleurs, la place de la Nouvelle-Calédonie dans la stratégie impériale française a longtemps été liée à son statut de colonie pénale et plus largement de colonie de peuplement. On peut se demander en quoi le développement local de l'extraction minière qui réclame de nombreux manœuvres d'une part, et celui de la métallurgie qui a besoin d'ouvriers qualifiés d'autre part, ont interféré avec ce statut. L'industrie locale a-t-elle trouvé là un contexte favorable ou défavorable en ce qui concerne les conditions d'emploi de la main-d'œuvre ? En retour, quel a été l'impact de cette industrie sur la composition de la population calédonienne ?

Nous ferons l'hypothèse que le « récit minier calédonien » se trouve à la croisée de trajectoires industrielles (la naissance du secteur nickel à l'échelon global), nationales (les rivalités nationales et impériales entre puissances) et coloniales (la Nouvelle-Calédonie comme colonie pénale et de peuplement).

Cette étude s'appuie sur le cas de la société Le Nickel, principale société minière et métallurgique en Nouvelle-Calédonie. Celle-ci a joué un rôle décisif au sein de cette nouvelle branche industrielle qui se met en place durant les trois décennies qui précèdent la Première Guerre mondiale. Nous suivrons trois récits qui se sont déployés à plusieurs échelles à la charnière du XIX^e et du XX^e siècles et qui sont indissociables : le récit global de la naissance d'une industrie, celui des enjeux qu'elle a représentés à l'échelle des entreprises, des colonies et des nations qui y participent, et enfin le récit calédonien dans le cadre de la colonisation.

Récit global : la naissance d'une industrie

Le nickel avant « Le Nickel »

C'est dans les années 1820 que le nickel trouve pour la première fois des applications. Il est utilisé pour la fabrication d'objets de luxe ou de semi-luxe (vaisselle, couverts, divers éléments de décoration, etc.) au sein d'alliages à base de cuivre et de zinc aux multiples appellations (packfong, argentan, maillechort...), sous forme de plaquage ou bien par dépôt électrolytique (nickelage). Dans tous les cas, c'est sa belle apparence blanche et son caractère inoxydable qui sont recherchés. Il peut avantageusement remplacer l'argent beaucoup plus onéreux. Au moment de la découverte des gisements calédoniens, le nickel est encore un métal semi-précieux dont l'extraction annuelle ne porte que sur quelques centaines de tonnes (à comparer aux 65 000 tonnes de cuivre produites alors). En 1875, aux États-Unis, une centaine de tonnes de métal suffit à alimenter une

industrie embryonnaire. Cinq pays européens se partagent le reste de la production mondiale, soit 300 tonnes. Les principaux gisements se trouvent en Saxe, en Hongrie, dans le nord de l'Italie, en Suède et en Norvège. Alors que les minerais sont concentrés en une série de produits semi-finis près des mines, l'affinage n'a lieu que dans un très petit nombre d'usines situées en Angleterre, en Allemagne et en Autriche-Hongrie. Bref, comme la plupart des autres métaux non ferreux (zinc, plomb...), le nickel est un « métal voyageur » (Garçon, 1998 : 1), dont les circuits traversent l'Europe. C'est la première grande caractéristique de l'industrie du nickel à ses débuts : elle fonctionne à l'échelle internationale.

La brève domination de la société « Le Nickel »

Le démarrage de l'exploitation des gisements calédoniens et l'arrivée brutale de 400 tonnes de minerais sur le marché européen en 1876, soit 40 % de la production mondiale, bouleversent la jeune industrie. Les usiniers anglo-saxons tentent de faire front, mais certains préfèrent traiter avec la société Le Nickel. Cette société, formée à Paris en 1880, contrôle alors l'essentiel de la production calédonienne. En retour, Le Nickel cherche des partenaires pour traiter ses minerais. En effet, il s'agit d'un type de minerai de nickel inconnu jusque-là, un minerai silicaté appelé « garniërite », du nom de son inventeur Jules Garnier¹. C'est sur le procédé métallurgique mis au point par Garnier que repose l'industrie de la société Le Nickel (dont la raison sociale primitive est assortie de la mention « Systèmes Garnier »). Ce procédé provoque de graves déboires au niveau de l'affinage dans l'usine de Septèmes (près de Marseille).

La société Le Nickel va absorber plusieurs sociétés afin de disposer d'une métallurgie fiable. Elle prend ainsi le contrôle de deux fonderies au Royaume-Uni, à Erdington (banlieue de Birmingham) et à Kirkintilloch près de Glasgow. Mais c'est auprès de l'Allemand Theodor Fleitmann, dont elle achète l'usine d'Iserlohn (Ruhr) et dont elle s'assure le concours technique, qu'elle trouve enfin un procédé valable à l'échelle industrielle (voir figure 5). En 1888, la société complète son dispositif en aménageant une fonderie au Havre. À la fin des années 1880, Le Nickel, qui a concentré entre ses mains la quasi-totalité de la production minière calédonienne et qui a constitué une filière métallurgique complète à travers les plus grandes régions industrielles européennes, se trouve en position dominante sur le marché du vieux continent. Le nickel calédonien représente alors plus de 70 % de la production mondiale (Schmitz, 1979 : 138). Cette

1. Au sens strict, c'est le minéral découvert par Jules Garnier en 1864 qui reçoit cette appellation. Mais, par extension, on a appelé « garniërite » l'ensemble des minerais calédoniens (même quand ils étaient dépourvus de ce minéral !). Jules Garnier est un ingénieur des mines qui a séjourné en Nouvelle-Calédonie de 1863 à 1866 pour y étudier les richesses minérales.

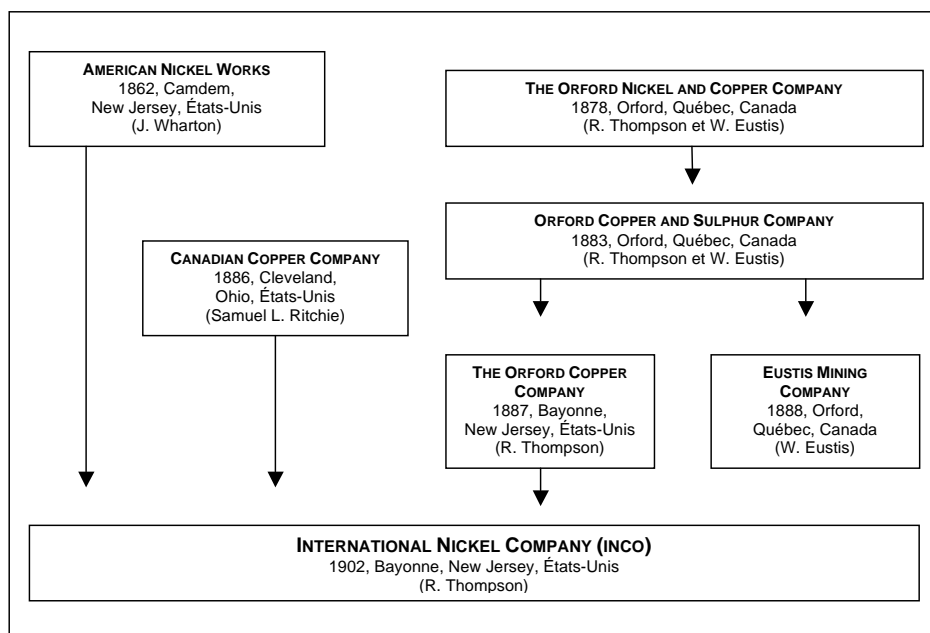


FIGURE 1. – L'évolution des principales sociétés nord-américaines jusqu'à 1902 (Bencivengo, 2010, vol. 1 : 452)

hégémonie est bientôt bousculée par l'arrivée sur le marché de nouveaux minerais.

Les minerais canadiens

C'est à la fin des années 1860 qu'ont lieu, au Canada, les premières découvertes de gisements de nickel dans la région de Sudbury (Ontario), mais ce n'est qu'à partir de 1884 que leur exploitation se développe. Comme pour les minerais silicatés calédoniens, le traitement des minerais sulfurés canadiens, dans lesquels le nickel est associé au cuivre, pose de sérieux problèmes techniques. De nombreuses compagnies disparaissent faute de procédé viable. En 1891, le dirigeant de l'Orford Copper Company, Robert Thompson, dépose un brevet pour le procédé Orford (méthode de séparation des sulfures de cuivre et de nickel dite « *tops and bottoms* ») (Howard-White, 1963 : 79, 80). Parallèlement, au Royaume-Uni, Ludwig Mond découvre un procédé révolutionnaire dès 1889. Durant les années qui suivent, ce procédé dit « nickel carbonyle » est amélioré et fait ses preuves pour une application industrielle. Ne trouvant pas de partenaire, Ludwig Mond crée sa propre société en 1900. La société britannique Mond Nickel Company traite à Swansea (Pays de Galles) les minerais en provenance des mines qu'elle possède dans la région de Sudbury.

Face à ce nouveau concurrent, une holding appelée International Nickel Company et regroupant les intérêts de sept sociétés minières et métallurgiques, est formée aux États-Unis en 1902².

Bâtie autour de l'Orford Copper Company, elle est placée sous la direction de Robert Thompson. Bientôt dénommée INCO, elle devient en 1912 une véritable société industrielle qui contrôle peu à peu toutes les étapes de la filière. Fondée aux États-Unis, INCO changera de nationalité : ses actifs sont transférés à une filiale canadienne qui deviendra la société mère en 1928 (voir figure 1).

On assiste donc, en Amérique comme en Europe, à un mouvement de concentration des entreprises. À la veille de la Première Guerre mondiale, deux sociétés, INCO et Mond, dominent largement la production de nickel s'appuyant sur l'exploitation des gisements canadiens, ce qui revient rapidement à dominer la production mondiale.

Le passage à l'échelle industrielle

De 1875 à 1913, la production mondiale de nickel a été multipliée par 60. Ce rapport s'explique par le fait que la production était très faible (environ 500 tonnes annuelles) à la veille de la mise sur le marché des minerais calédoniens. La croissance de l'industrie du nickel est marquée par une série de cycles (voir figures 2 et 3).

Après une augmentation brutale (doublement) liée au démarrage de l'exploitation des gisements calédoniens en 1874-1875, une première crise se déclare dès 1877 : 1878 et 1879 sont des années blanches pour l'exportation des minerais calédoniens. Ailleurs, la production se maintient à un niveau assez faible (300 tonnes au total). Cette crise s'explique par l'encombrement soudain du

2. Deux sociétés minières calédoniennes (la Société minière calédonienne et la Nickel Corporation Limited) se trouvent parmi les sept sociétés regroupées au sein de l'International Nickel Company.

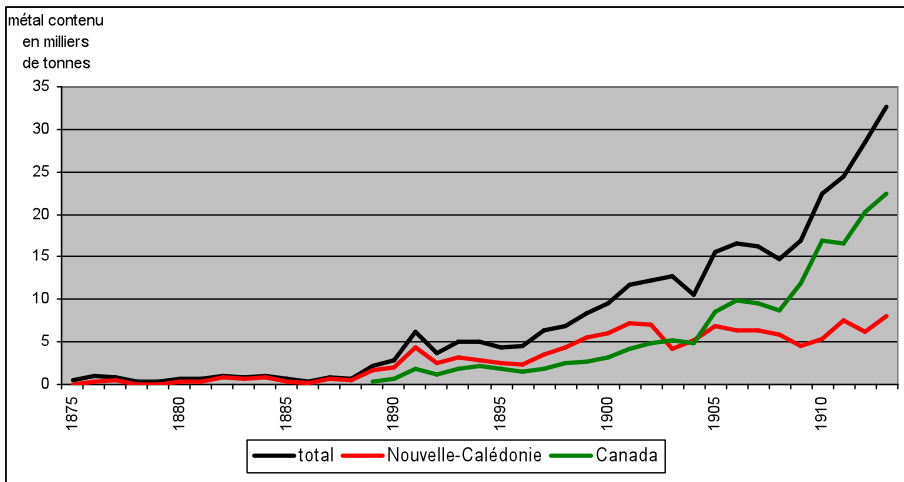


FIGURE 2. – Production mondiale de nickel de 1875 à 1913 (Schmitz, 1979 : 137, 138)

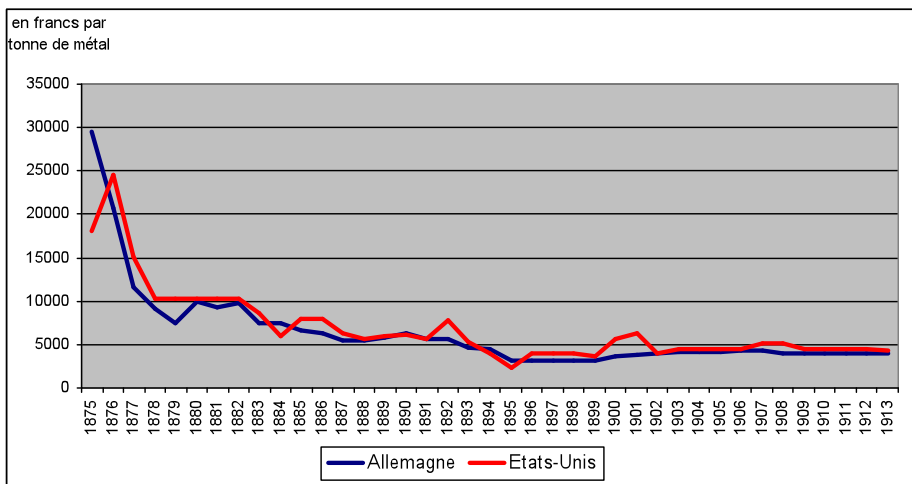


FIGURE 3. – Cours moyen annuel du nickel affiné en Allemagne et aux États-Unis de 1875 à 1913 (Schmitz, 1979 : 287)

marché conjugué aux difficultés de traitement des minerais calédoniens. À partir de 1880, l'extraction reprend quelque peu et se maintient à un niveau tournant autour de 700 tonnes annuelles.

La reprise du marché, qui s'amorce en 1889 et qui coïncide avec l'arrivée des minerais canadiens sur le marché européen, marque un nouveau palier. En trois ans, la production atteint un pic de 6 200 tonnes, soit presque neuf fois le niveau de 1888, année qui clôt la période de stagnation précédente. Cette reprise est liée au développement des applications du nickel dans un contexte de baisse des prix. De 1875 à 1889, le prix du métal affiné a été divisé par six. En outre, la mise au point des aciers au nickel pour le blindage des navires et la fabrication de diverses armes laisse espérer de beaux jours à l'industrie du nickel. Mais l'embellie est de courte durée. En 1895, les prix sont au plus bas. Le marché est saturé par les produits des opérateurs nord-américains qui se lancent dans une dure guerre des prix.

La production mondiale de nickel connaît ensuite une progression régulière. Elle est multipliée par sept entre 1895 et la veille de la guerre en 1913 (32 700 tonnes). Cette croissance est essentiellement due à l'essor des aciers au nickel. À partir de 1904, la production canadienne dépasse la production calédonienne qui stagne jusqu'à la guerre. En 1913, la quantité de nickel d'origine canadienne est presque trois fois plus importante que celle du nickel calédonien (22 500 tonnes contre 8 100 tonnes). Cette dernière période est marquée par une stabilisation des prix autour d'un peu plus de 4 000 francs la tonne de métal en Europe.

Il n'y a rien que de très classique dans cette évolution qui s'étend sur une quarantaine d'années et correspond à la période de démarrage d'une nouvelle branche industrielle.

Dans un premier temps, de 1875 à 1895, elle est marquée de violents soubresauts, autant pour les prix que pour la production. Cela s'explique par un

faisceau de facteurs : l'offre et la demande ne sont pas ajustées, les difficultés techniques du traitement des minerais ne sont pas encore pleinement résolues, l'apparition de nouveaux concurrents conduit à de rudes batailles sur les prix, et les nouvelles applications n'en sont qu'à leurs débuts.

À partir de 1895, l'industrie du nickel prend son rythme de croisière. Elle développe sa production en s'appuyant principalement sur les débouchés offerts par les aciers au nickel dans un contexte de course aux armements. Cette deuxième phase de maturité est favorisée par le retour d'une période de croissance économique mondiale qui débute en 1896. Elle sonne par ailleurs le glas de la prééminence de l'industrie minière calédonienne, largement distancée par les opérateurs nord-américains. Quant à la stabilisation des prix, elle révèle qu'après une période de lutte, le marché a été organisé.

Le partage du marché

À la suite de la guerre des prix lancée par les opérateurs américains en 1892, la société Le Nickel est en proie à de graves difficultés financières. Elle ne réchappe de cette crise que grâce au soutien indéfectible de la banque Rothschild. Par ailleurs, à partir de 1894, des pourparlers s'engagent avec Robert Thompson, le dirigeant de la puissante Orford Copper Company. D'abord informelle, l'entente qui en découle aboutit en 1901 à une convention qui organise un partage du marché entre les sociétés nord-américaines (regroupées l'année suivante au sein d'INCO), Mond et Le Nickel³. Cette dernière n'a accès qu'au marché européen. La convention prévoit aussi des accords sur les prix. Elle est renouvelée en 1910 puis reconduite d'année en année jusqu'à la Première Guerre mondiale.

Cette entente a pour principale conséquence de maintenir des cours élevés. C'est ce que veulent les Américains. Lors d'une entrevue qui s'est tenue à Paris en janvier 1901, Robert Thompson, qui a conclu des marchés importants avec des aciéries américaines à des prix élevés, annonce aux dirigeants du Nickel qu'il désire que ces prix soient imposés aux acheteurs d'Europe. Cette politique de prix élevés s'explique par le fait que le coût de traitement des minerais canadiens est plus élevé que celui des minerais calédoniens. Avec l'inversion du rapport de force qui a lieu au début du xx^e siècle, les fondeurs européens renoncent à s'engager dans une politique de baisse des prix, en raison, d'une part des engagements qu'ils ont pris, mais aussi :

« par la crainte qu'une nouvelle lutte de concurrence avec le groupe de l'International Nickel Company,

dont les moyens d'action financiers sont formidables, leur soit encore une fois funeste. » (AOM, série Travaux publics, carton 326, Rapport du chef du Service des travaux publics et des mines du 20 juin 1917)

On pourrait ajouter que les producteurs européens n'ont aucun intérêt à se livrer à une guerre des prix, étant donné que l'accord leur assure une marge importante. Cela s'applique à la société Le Nickel qui entame, après vingt années difficiles, une longue période de forts profits à l'abri des accords passés avec ses deux principaux concurrents, sans qu'il y ait besoin d'accroître fortement la production. C'est l'un des éléments d'explication de la stagnation que connaît l'extraction des minerais calédoniens au début du xx^e siècle.

Entre firmes, colonies et nations : les enjeux de la filière nickel calédonienne

L'enjeu technique : disposer d'une bonne métallurgie

Comme pour toute industrie, la maîtrise d'une technologie fiable a été décisive. En ce qui concerne Le Nickel, la situation est restée périlleuse tant que la société n'a pas été en mesure de livrer du métal de qualité à ses clients. Sa recherche d'un procédé fiable l'a conduite à devenir une société multinationale dont les activités métallurgiques s'étendent à travers les trois plus grands pays industriels d'Europe. Cette recherche impérieuse montre bien que la société Le Nickel est certes une société minière, mais qu'elle est avant tout une société métallurgique. Dès le départ, ses dirigeants ont décidé de livrer des produits plus ou moins élaborés (oxydes, fontes, mattes et métal pur) et non de vendre des minerais. Cela dans le but, d'une part, d'éliminer les fondeurs européens et, d'autre part, de barrer la route à toute concurrence en Nouvelle-Calédonie. La menace de la concurrence était réelle puisque, par exemple, l'un des plus tenaces adversaires du Nickel, la société allemande Basse et Selve, a effectivement envoyé une mission en Nouvelle-Calédonie afin d'y étudier les possibilités de traiter avec des mineurs indépendants, ou même de prendre possession de mines afin de les exploiter.

Alors que Garnier avait élaboré un procédé dérivé de la métallurgie du fer, le procédé adopté par la société Le Nickel, comme par d'autres opérateurs, est inspiré par la métallurgie du cuivre. Il revient paradoxalement à introduire du soufre lors de la première fusion avant de l'éliminer dans les opérations ultérieures. Le procédé comporte alors deux principales étapes : la première fusion consiste à fondre les minerais afin

3. Cette convention n'implique pas directement les compagnies nord-américaines et Le Nickel. Ce sont les trois agences de vente qui agissent pour leur compte qui concluent cette convention avec la Mond Nickel Company qui vient d'être créée l'année précédente.

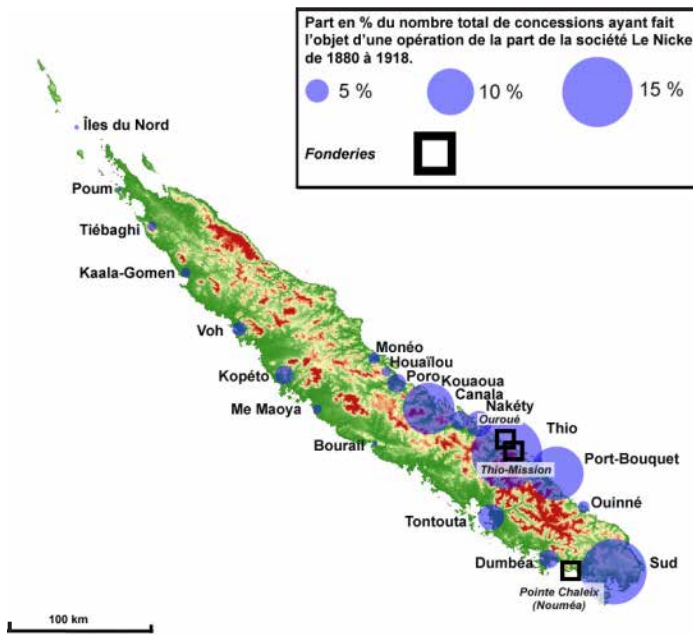


FIGURE 4. – Les fonderies et le domaine minier de la société Le Nickel en Nouvelle-Calédonie (1880-1918)

de fabriquer un produit semi-fini : les mattes qui sont constituées de sulfure de nickel. Ces mattes sont affinées en Europe lors d'une deuxième fusion afin d'obtenir des produits marchands comme des oxydes de nickel ou du nickel pur. La société Le Nickel, comme ses concurrents, élabore ses produits dans des fonderies au charbon qui ont fait leurs preuves. La voie électrique n'en est qu'au stade de l'expérimentation.

L'enjeu géographique : Un cycle de production long et multi-localisé

La première et essentielle contrainte qui s'exerce sur Le Nickel, comme sur les autres sociétés qui ont exploité des gisements calédoniens, est l'extrême étirement géographique entre les centres d'extraction et les centres de transformation européens. Une fois les minerais abattus et descendus sur le bord de mer, parfois transportés jusqu'à Nouméa, il faut compter de deux à quatre mois de mer pour atteindre un port européen. En outre, les produits arrivés de Nouvelle-Calédonie suivent ensuite un cheminement qui peut les mener d'Écosse ou d'Angleterre, où ils subissent un premier traitement, jusqu'à l'usine d'Iserlohn où a lieu l'affinage. Du carreau de la mine jusqu'au produit vendu, il peut s'écouler jusqu'à une année. Afin de répondre aux à-coups de la demande et d'anticiper tout accident (chargement perdu en mer, arrêt d'un four, etc.) qui pourrait interrompre le processus de production, la société s'efforce de trouver la combinaison la plus efficace en fonction des contraintes qui s'exercent sur l'ensemble de ses activités.

La principale césure du cycle de production est donc le long voyage en mer. Dès 1877, avant même la formation de la société Le Nickel, une première fonderie a été édifée à Nouméa, à la pointe Chaleix, afin de réduire le coût du fret. Cependant, en raison de l'encombrement du marché (fermeture de la fonderie de la pointe Chaleix en 1885), d'un changement de stratégie industrielle (choix de Thio, sur la côte sud-est, à environ 150 km de Nouméa, pour la construction de la fonderie d'Ouroué en 1889), de la fermeture forcée de cette nouvelle fonderie après seulement deux ans d'activité, les minerais vont être expédiés crus en Europe pendant une vingtaine d'années. Un nouvel accident survenu en 1909 – le naufrage d'un navire qui provoque la destruction d'un important équipement de chargement dans la baie de Thio –, amène la société Le Nickel à réinstaller durablement la fusion en

Nouvelle-Calédonie en ouvrant une fonderie à Thio-Mission en 1912 (voir figure 4).

Toutes ces péripéties de la fusion locale conduisent la société à adapter sa filière européenne. Alors que les différentes usines sont au départ très diversement équipées et tributaires les unes des autres dans le processus, la société développe deux filières indépendantes et complètes, de la première fusion au nickel pur. La première est constituée des trois usines situées au Royaume-Uni et en Allemagne. La seconde est installée au Havre, où l'unité d'affinage (1888) est peu à peu agrandie et complétée par des unités de déferration (1889) et de première fusion (1892). Si elle a pour principal but de permettre à la société de répondre aux fluctuations du marché, cette organisation tient aussi compte du caractère stratégique du nickel.

Un métal stratégique

Aujourd'hui l'expression « métal stratégique » que l'on accole souvent au nickel renvoie surtout à des paramètres économiques. À la fin du XIX^e siècle, elle était essentiellement d'ordre militaire. En janvier 1892, le président du Nickel, Ernest Denormandie, justifie l'agrandissement de l'usine du Havre auprès des actionnaires :

« La place prise par le nickel dans la préparation des projectiles de guerre faisait un devoir à la société Le Nickel de constituer en France même un large approvisionnement de minerais et de se mettre en situation de les y traiter, afin qu'en cas d'hostilités, le métal nécessaire à la défense du pays ne lui fasse pas défaut. » (Archives du groupe ERAMET, Paris, registre des pro-

cès-verbaux des assemblées générales de la société Le Nickel, vol. 1, 30 janvier 1892)

La menace d'une guerre est bien présente dans les esprits. Même si en 1892 les relations avec l'Allemagne semblent apaisées (sauf en ce qui concerne les « provinces perdues » d'Alsace et de Lorraine), le souvenir des tensions auxquelles l'épisode boulangiste a donné lieu reste frais⁴. Quant à l'Angleterre, dont les intérêts peuvent se heurter à la politique d'expansion coloniale de la France, elle peut elle aussi entrer en conflit avec la France, comme cela a déjà eu lieu dans un passé récent⁵. D'une manière générale, la course aux armements et les systèmes d'alliance militaire qui se mettent progressivement en place en Europe (renouvellement de la Triple Alliance en mai 1891, accord franco-russe en août 1891) ne laissent pas d'inquiéter quant à l'éventualité d'un conflit.

En cas de guerre en Europe, la société Le Nickel risque d'être coupée d'une partie de ses fonderies, soit parce qu'elles pourraient se trouver en territoire ennemi, soit parce que les liaisons seraient gravement perturbées. Même si la création d'une unité de première fusion au Havre en 1892 a été provoquée par la nécessité urgente d'augmenter les capacités de première fusion en Europe à la suite de la fermeture de l'usine d'Ouroué, la question stratégique a été décisive dans le choix de procéder à ces agrandissements au Havre et non dans une unité britannique (ce choix a donné lieu à de longs débats et à des revirements au sein du conseil d'administration du Nickel). Pour augmenter sa capacité de production, la société avait rationalisé ses circuits de production en créant une unité de première fusion à Thio (Ouroué) et en concentrant la première fusion en Europe à l'usine de Kirkintilloch (Écosse) où les combustibles étaient moins chers. Les mattes fabriquées à Ouroué et à Kirkintilloch devaient être affinées dans deux autres usines au Havre et à Iserlohn (Allemagne). À la suite de la fermeture de la fonderie d'Ouroué, la société doit augmenter rapidement ses capacités de première fusion. Elle décide de créer une deuxième unité de première fusion au Havre. À côté des considérations d'ordre stratégique, des considérations secondaires d'ordre fiscal, technique et économique (la fonderie de



FIGURE 5. – Les usines européennes de la société Le Nickel avant 1914

Kirkintilloch était au maximum de ses capacités à moins de procéder à de nouveaux agrandissements onéreux) sont entrées en ligne de compte (voir figure 5). Ce caractère stratégique du nickel va renforcer le pouvoir de la société Le Nickel dans une colonie dont elle domine déjà l'économie minière.

Le récit minier calédonien

« L'or vert »

La Nouvelle-Calédonie s'est révélée être une terre minière à partir des années 1860 quand de l'or et du charbon y ont été découverts. Dans la décennie suivante, des gîtes de cuivre, de plomb argentifère, d'antimoine, de cobalt et de chrome sont repérés et peu à peu exploités. Mais c'est bien le nickel qui est de loin la principale richesse minérale de la colonie. C'est à partir de 1874-1875, une dizaine d'années après la découverte de Jules Garnier, que le nickel calédonien commence à être extrait dans des gisements se trouvant dans la région du Mont d'Or près de Nouméa et sur la côte Est aux alentours de Canala, Thio et Houailou. Le nickel est alors vendu à un prix très élevé. La nouvelle de la découverte des gisements donne lieu à une véritable fièvre pour

4. Le général Boulanger a été nommé ministre de la Guerre en mars 1886. Animé d'un grand zèle républicain et patriotique, faisant montre d'un esprit belliqueux à l'égard de l'Allemagne, il devient très populaire. À la suite d'une crise (affaire Schnaebelé) qui a conduit les deux pays au bord de la guerre, il perd son ministère en mai 1887.

5. Le partage de l'Afrique a donné lieu à de nombreuses tensions entre Anglais et Français comme au Congo (1879-1884) ou en Égypte (1882-1888). L'évacuation du fortin de Fachoda par les Français face à la reconquête du Soudan par les Anglais provoqua une nouvelle crise entre les deux pays en 1898.

cet « or vert ». À côté des mineurs professionnels australiens venus dans la colonie pour chercher de l'or et restés pour diriger diverses exploitations minières, de nombreux colons s'improvisent prospecteurs dans l'espoir de faire fortune, non pas en exploitant eux-mêmes leur découverte (la plupart en sont incapables, tant sur le plan technique que sur le plan financier), mais en la revendant à prix d'or. Mais la crise de 1877 ruine leurs espérances. Ils doivent céder à bas prix leurs gisements à plus puissants qu'eux. Rares sont les petits mineurs qui s'accrochent à leurs concessions.

Un foisonnement de sociétés, quelques grandes entreprises

L'exploitation des mines calédoniennes donne lieu à la multiplication de sociétés minières et métallurgiques plus ou moins éphémères, aux raisons sociales très proches, aux activités parfois évanescentes. Dans la plupart des cas, le créateur de la société appartient à un petit groupe d'affairistes locaux dominé par la figure de John Higginson. Ce dernier, outre ses activités au sein de la société Le Nickel, a fait flèche de tout bois dans toutes les activités économiques de la jeune colonie. Il participe notamment plus ou moins directement à de très nombreuses sociétés minières (Thompson, 2000). Le plus souvent, l'opération consiste à ce qu'un propriétaire minier trouve des partenaires afin d'exploiter ses concessions. Le capital de la société formée étant essentiellement constitué des apports en titres miniers, le fonds de roulement est insuffisant pour commencer les opérations. La société est rapidement liquidée. Ses titres miniers sont cédés à une autre société tout aussi éphémère, et passent ainsi de mains en mains sans donner lieu à une réelle exploitation des concessions. Bien souvent, ces sociétés sont créées dans un but purement spéculatif et donnent lieu à des combinaisons douteuses, à la limite de la légalité. Il s'agit de tirer le meilleur parti possible des concessions sans véritable souci de leur mise en valeur. La liquidation de la société permet d'éviter le paiement des dettes accumulées. Il y a tout de même quelques exceptions. Par exemple, la société Le Nickel de la Nouvelle-Calédonie créée en 1907 (rebaptisée La Garniérite en 1910) parvient à extraire des minerais dans ses concessions de Port-Bouquet et à les envoyer à sa fonderie installée à Dieppe. Cependant, en 1912, après dix mois d'exploitation, l'usine est arrêtée et la société est mise en liquidation en raison de difficultés financières et techniques. Les minerais stockés à Dieppe sont alors revendus à la société Le Nickel qui les traitera dans son usine du Havre. Quant au domaine minier de La Garniérite, il tombe dans le giron de la maison Ballande.

C'est qu'en effet, à côté des petits mineurs et des sociétés plus ou moins fantômes se trouvent les « grandes compagnies », comme les surnommement leurs détracteurs, de grandes entreprises qui recueillent les concessions et concentrent entre leurs mains d'immenses domaines miniers. Face à la société Le Nickel se dresse la maison de commerce bordelaise Ballande, présente dans la colonie depuis 1859. C'est à partir du transport de minerais que cette maison en est venue à acquérir des mines afin de les exploiter directement. La maison Ballande peut devenir un dangereux concurrent car elle traite directement avec des fondeurs européens (Basse et Selve, Fleitmann avant que sa société soit absorbée par Le Nickel en 1884). En 1889, la société Le Nickel met à profit l'indélicatesse d'un affairiste local pour forcer la maison Ballande à lui céder son domaine minier. En outre, la transaction prévoit que Ballande s'engage à ne pas exploiter de mines pendant dix ans, ce qui laisse le champ libre à la société Le Nickel. Devenu un véritable pivot de l'industrie locale, la société Le Nickel est de loin le premier producteur de nickel de la colonie. Elle exerce une domination étroite sur les petits mineurs et les autres sociétés minières qui lui vendent leurs minerais.

Quand, au tournant du siècle, André Ballande reconstitue un domaine minier d'importance dont la production fait jeu égal avec celle du Nickel, quand il inaugure une fonderie à Doniambo (Nouméa) en 1910 avant même que Le Nickel n'ouvre la sienne à Thio-Mission, et quand il crée une filière complète dont les usines d'affinage se trouvent en Belgique et aux États-Unis, il ne représente plus une menace pour Le Nickel. Le marché est désormais suffisamment large et Le Nickel, qui a pignon sur rue, peut poursuivre ses ventes à l'abri des accords passés avec les concurrents américains et britanniques. Quels sont les facteurs qui ont permis à la société Le Nickel d'exercer une telle domination sur l'industrie locale ?

La toute-puissance de la société Le Nickel

La société Le Nickel, qui intègre toutes les étapes de la production de nickel, de la mine au métal pur, a été formée en 1880 dans un but double : surmonter la première crise du nickel qui s'est déclarée en 1877, et écraser la concurrence européenne. Au départ, la société Le Nickel est le résultat des accords entre deux groupes d'actionnaires. D'une part se trouvent John Higginson et Jean-Louis Hubert Hanckar, deux grands propriétaires miniers calédoniens. D'autre part, le groupe métropolitain est mené par trois hommes : un industriel, Henry Marbeau, et un ingénieur, Jules Garnier, qui ont formé une société métallurgique pour transfor-

mer les minerais calédoniens, et enfin, Philippe Hébert, un agent de change chargé de trouver les ressources financières sur la place de Paris. Sous l'impulsion de Higginson, la nouvelle société affronte les industriels britanniques et allemands. Pour cela, Higginson met à profit la crise de 1877 pour agrandir le domaine minier calédonien et faire barrage à toute velléité des opérateurs européens de se procurer directement des minerais en Nouvelle-Calédonie. En Europe, il trouve des partenaires industriels pour assurer à la société Le Nickel un procédé viable. Enfin, c'est encore Higginson qui approche la banque Rothschild afin de trouver un soutien financier solide.

Outre la réussite de sa métallurgie, qui constitue le pivot de sa stratégie industrielle, Le Nickel doit son succès à trois points forts. Le premier est son domaine minier. Les mines de Thio, apportées par Hanckar, en constituent le cœur. Bien regroupées, relativement accessibles, situées près de la mer le long de deux vallées qui s'ouvrent sur une plaine côtière, ces mines vont se révéler très riches. Le deuxième point fort est la banque Rothschild, qui prend le contrôle de la société en 1883. Persuadée de la valeur des gisements et du profit qu'elle peut en tirer, la banque apporte un précieux soutien financier et impose une politique prudente à long terme, exécutée par les hommes de confiance qu'elle place à la tête de la société. Le troisième atout est la main-d'œuvre, dont les conditions d'embauche ont fortement contribué à l'engagement de la banque Rothschild dans l'affaire. C'est sur la base d'un rapport sur la main-d'œuvre pénale rédigé par Louis Pelatan, un ingénieur des mines qu'elle a dépêché en Nouvelle-Calédonie en 1882, que la banque prend conscience de l'avantage décisif que confère la possibilité de recruter sur le long terme une main-d'œuvre nombreuse, docile et très bon marché, et cela dans une contrée où la main-d'œuvre est rare. En effet, la société Le Nickel a pu employer jusqu'à plus d'un millier de forçats à travers quatre contrats de louage d'une durée de dix à vingt ans : ce sont les « contrats de chair humaine ». C'est grâce au soutien du ministère que la société a pu s'assurer cette force de travail. En 1889, le gouvernement est interpellé à la Chambre des députés sur cette question. En réponse, le secrétaire d'État aux Colonies, Eugène Étienne, développe un long argumentaire exposant :

« [Les] avantages résultant pour la France, et pour le ministère de la Guerre en particulier, de l'exploitation des mines de nickel » (Archives du groupe ERAMET, Paris, registre des procès-verbaux du conseil d'administration, vol. 3, 4 novembre 1889)

Cet épisode montre bien le pouvoir d'influence que le caractère stratégique du nickel confère à la société auprès du gouvernement. Toutefois, à partir de 1892, avant même la fin des contrats de main-d'œuvre pénale (1901), la société complète ses effectifs avec des engagés japonais⁶. Au début du xx^e siècle, elle dispose d'un millier d'engagés.

Un secteur minier et industriel reflet d'une trajectoire coloniale

Au départ, les mineurs ne s'intéressaient qu'aux « filons » de garnièrite à haute teneur, facilement repérables grâce à leur couleur verte. Dans les années 1880, les exploitants prennent conscience que d'autres zones des gisements sont aussi riches en nickel. Dès lors, l'exploitation va être menée à ciel ouvert et déployée sur des gradins à flanc de coteau. Ce travail, qui s'apparente à du terrassement, ne nécessite pas une main-d'œuvre qualifiée. C'est pourquoi la société a rapidement remplacé les mineurs expérimentés par des centaines de manœuvres très bon marché. En ce sens, elle a profité du fait que la Nouvelle-Calédonie est une colonie de peuplement pénal, par le biais des contrats dont elle a bénéficié auprès de l'administration pénitentiaire. En revanche, elle n'a pas contribué au peuplement de l'archipel puisque jusqu'à la Première Guerre mondiale, elle a eu essentiellement recours d'une part à des forçats déjà présents et, d'autre part à des travailleurs japonais qui sont majoritairement retournés dans leur pays à l'expiration de leur contrat (Kobayashi, 1992). Ce n'est que dans l'entre-deux guerres qu'elle emploiera massivement des Indonésiens et des Vietnamiens, dont la présence aura un impact durable sur la population calédonienne.

Ce recours à des travailleurs venant de divers pays bordant l'océan Pacifique insère la Nouvelle-Calédonie dans un espace traversé par d'autres courants migratoires de même nature, organisés pour la mise en valeur de plantations, notamment à Fidji, à Hawaï ou dans le Queensland, espace duquel elle était relativement isolée (De Deckker, 1994, 11-26). Hormis l'approvisionnement en denrées périssables importées d'Australie ou de Nouvelle-Zélande, la colonie n'entretenait des relations suivies qu'avec la métropole et avec l'Europe. Ce besoin impérieux de main-d'œuvre (pas seulement dans la mine, mais aussi dans l'agriculture, à laquelle les immigrants javanais sont d'abord réservés (Devambeze, 1994 : 215, 216)) qui conduit à l'immigration de milliers de travailleurs constitue le premier pas de la connexion du pays avec l'espace Asie-Pacifique (Mohammed-Gaillard, 2012).

6. Les forçats puis les Japonais ont constitué les plus gros bataillons des ouvriers du Nickel avant 1914 (voir Kobayashi 1992, Palombo 2002 et Bencivengo, 2012 pour le cas des Japonais en Nouvelle-Calédonie). D'autres ethnies ont été employées en plus petit nombre : des Néo-Hébridais (Ni-Vanuatu), des Vietnamiens et des Kanak. Ces derniers étaient principalement employés au trafic.

Le point commun de tous ces travailleurs est leur condition juridique inférieure qui garantit à l'employeur leur grande docilité. C'est une évidence pour les forçats. Les travailleurs indigènes venus d'autres colonies, qu'elles soient française comme l'Indochine ou relèvent d'autres empires (Indes néerlandaises par exemple), sont soumis à un arrêté de 1874 qui les place dans une forte dépendance auprès de leur employeur. Les Japonais présentent un cas différent à partir de 1900, quand le gouvernement de Tokyo exige qu'ils soient traités sur le même pied que les Européens. Cela n'empêche pas qu'ils soient en réalité soumis à de dures conditions, notamment au niveau des pénalités auxquelles ils sont exposés en cas d'absence au travail. Les mouvements de grèves de 1901 et les nombreuses évasions en apportent la preuve. Le cas des « libérés », c'est-à-dire, des forçats soumis à la résidence à vie à l'issue de leur peine, est éloquent à ce propos. Comme le montre bien Louis-José Barbançon, l'opprobre dans lequel ils sont tenus résulte autant de leur passé criminel que de leur volonté de refuser de se soumettre à un engagement contraignant. En ce sens, ils constituent une main-d'œuvre tout à fait moderne, dans un pays où la plupart des travailleurs sont soumis à des contrats collectifs (Barbançon, 2003, 294). Ils savent jouer de l'offre et de la demande et leur instabilité reflète le nomadisme des ouvriers contre lequel les patrons s'efforcent de lutter en France (Noiriel, 1998, 354). Les sociétés minières calédoniennes n'ont recours à eux qu'en période de tension sur le marché du travail.

Dernier point qui constitue un avantage pour les employeurs : le retard de la législation du travail et de la législation sociale locales sur celles de la métropole. Le conflit qui oppose en 1895-1896 le chef du service des mines de la colonie à la société Le Nickel est révélateur à cet égard. À la suite de la mort d'un surveillant militaire, le chef du service des mines veut imposer des mesures de sécurité sur les chantiers pour abaisser le taux de mortalité des ouvriers qui est très supérieur à celui qui sévit en France⁷. La société réagit très vigoureusement à la poursuite en correctionnelle de son directeur local, Léon Vernaz. L'affaire remonte jusqu'au ministère parisien et le président du Nickel, Ernest Denormandie, n'hésite pas à instrumentaliser cette affaire dans un contexte économique très difficile. En mettant en jeu la pérennité des activités du Nickel dans la colonie, il espère obtenir en réalité un assouplissement de la mise en œuvre des contrats de chair humaine à un moment où le volant de main-d'œuvre est excédentaire et grève les comptes de la société (Bencivengo, 2010 : 125, 974-976).

Le fait qu'elle ait pu s'assurer une main-d'œuvre nombreuse à des conditions avantageuses conduit donc la société à ne guère changer ses méthodes d'extraction. Le travail sur les chantiers demeure largement manuel. Il est vrai cependant, que la situation des concessions, dans un relief montagneux assez tourmenté, la relative dispersion et le déménagement fréquent des chantiers de mines ne favorisent pas la mécanisation de l'extraction.

En revanche, la société peine à trouver une main-d'œuvre suffisamment qualifiée pour ses usines de première fusion. Voici ce qu'écrit le directeur local du Nickel en 1890 quand il annonce au conseil d'administration parisien la nécessité de fermer l'usine d'Ouroué :

« La fonderie a été encore une fois inondée, l'eau est entrée dans les carneaux et a arrêté le tirage des fours. La main-d'œuvre des transportés [c'est-à-dire des forçats] ne peut être employée à des travaux de cette nature et toute autre main-d'œuvre fait défaut. Les contremaîtres anglais ne font pas leur service ; il n'y a pas de bons fondants ; enfin, l'emplacement même de l'usine rend tout travail impossible. » (Archives du groupe eramet, Paris, registre des procès-verbaux du conseil d'administration, vol. 3, 13 janvier 1890)

Aux erreurs de conception s'ajoute l'impossibilité de disposer d'ouvriers capables et d'un encadrement suffisamment nombreux. Cet accident industriel conduit la société à expédier tous ses minerais crus en Europe. C'est donc sur le transport des minerais qu'elle va faire porter ses efforts de modernisation.

Effectivement, hormis la nécessité d'adapter l'ensemble de ses circuits de production en Europe, la société se voit confrontée à un volume de minerais à expédier plus important que prévu. Les opérations du trafic (ensemble des opérations de transport des minerais des mines vers le bord de mer et de chargement sur les minéraliers) constituent un goulot d'étranglement. Avec la reprise du marché qui s'esquisse au tournant du xx^e siècle, la société décide de doter ses deux principaux centres miniers d'équipements de transports d'une grande capacité. En 1902, elle installe deux téléphériques à Kouaoua et à Thio (mine Bornet). Elle prolonge les lignes de chemin de fer qui relient le pied des mines au rivage. Enfin, elle établit un vaste complexe de transport, de stockage, de chargement et de déchargement de ses produits dans la plaine côtière de Thio-Mission (voir figure 6). Ce complexe de marque Bleichert est alors à la pointe de la technique et représente un très lourd investissement. Il comprend notamment un transbordeur en mer contre lequel les minéraliers peuvent accoster. Les capacités de chargement qui sont alors décuplées évitent une trop longue

7. Un surveillant et un condamné trouvent la mort lors d'un éboulement survenu le 15 octobre 1895 à la mine Moulinet (Plateau de Thio).

Cette vue montre une partie des installations Bleichert en 1921. Après la catastrophe de 1909, les navires ne peuvent plus accoster le long du transbordeur en mer à cause de l'épave de la *Joliette*. Le transbordeur est alors utilisé comme troisième *wharf*⁸ pour charger les chalands. Le détail montre le transbordeur avec ses deux grues mobiles avant sa destruction.

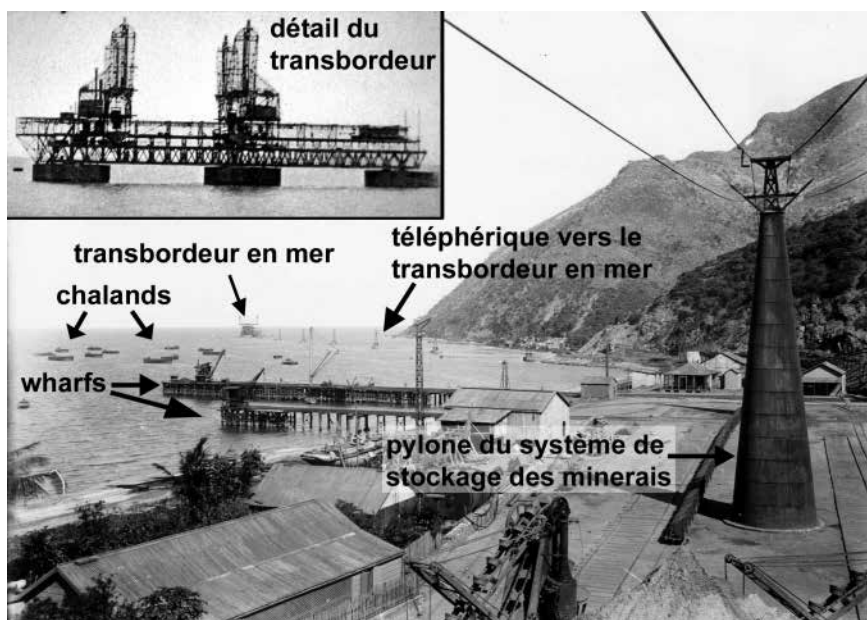


FIGURE 6. – Les installations Bleichert dans la plaine de Thio-Mission (3 décembre 1921) (photographie principale : Archives de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, album fonds Maxime Meyer 2 Ph7, 644 ; détail : carte postale Barrau, coll. F. Angleviel)

immobilisation des navires. Paradoxalement, cet équipement coûteux est le talon d'Achille de l'ensemble, car il n'a pas été assez tenu compte des dangers que représentent les brusques coups de vent auxquels la baie de Thio peut être exposée. La destruction partielle de cet équipement en 1909 conduit, on l'a vu, à l'ouverture de la fonderie de Thio-Mission qui va absorber une partie des minerais. La société trouve une solution technique de compromis pour continuer à utiliser le transbordeur sans engager des frais de réparation jugés trop lourds. C'est donc la nécessité d'alimenter régulièrement et suffisamment ses usines européennes qui conduit la société à moderniser les opérations du trafic. Il lui est impératif de répondre à la demande et à ses à-coups afin de ne pas risquer de perdre une partie de sa clientèle.

L'exploitation des mines calédoniennes présente donc à la fois des caractères « archaïques » et des aspects « modernes » qui renvoient au contexte colonial et plus spécifiquement aux particularités de l'histoire calédonienne, qu'ils contribuent en retour à façonner. D'un côté, les possibilités offertes par la présence d'une colonie pénale ont été mises à profit par l'industrie minière et tout particulièrement par la société Le Nickel. Cette dernière a trouvé dans les « contrats de chair humaine » puis dans l'importation d'une main-d'œuvre soumise à des contrats collectifs une source de force de travail bon marché,

nombreuse et docile. D'un autre côté, l'enjeu du transport, stratégique dans le cadre d'une chaîne de production multi-localisée à l'échelon global, rendait nécessaire sa modernisation technique⁹.

Conclusion

La combinaison dans l'industrie du nickel calédonien d'éléments « archaïques » (concernant le travail) et « modernes » (concernant le transport) expriment l'insertion de cette activité dans des trajectoires multiples : la trajectoire globale de la naissance d'un nouveau secteur extractif et industriel à la fin du XIX^e siècle, la trajectoire des États-nations européens et de l'exacerbation de leurs rivalités à « l'ère des empires » (Hobsbawm, 1987), la trajectoire d'un petit territoire colonial excentré. Au début du XX^e siècle, l'industrie du nickel a pris sa vitesse de croisière. La mise au point des aciers au nickel a été décisive dans son développement. Elle a été favorisée par la course aux armements qui précède la Première Guerre mondiale. Les producteurs nord-américains, INCO notamment, dominant déjà largement le secteur et ont imposé une entente à l'industrie européenne. La Nouvelle-Calédonie demeure au deuxième rang mais est distancée. Malgré l'apparition de sociétés concurrentes locales, la société Le Nickel demeure hégémonique. Elle

8. En Nouvelle-Calédonie, le terme anglais de *wharf* désigne les appontements.

9. Voir Belich (2009) pour des analyses proches dans les colonies de peuplement anglophones et Le Meur (2012) pour une comparaison avec la Nouvelle-Calédonie.

dispose d'un domaine minier important et bien exploité, d'une main-d'œuvre nombreuse et bon marché, d'une filière métallurgique complète et puissante, d'un appui politique qui s'exerce dans le cadre colonial.

Bref, certains éléments du paysage actuel, même transposés, sont déjà en place en 1914. Ils vont perdurer dans les décennies suivantes. Par exemple, aux engagés japonais vont succéder des travailleurs indonésiens et vietnamiens, puis, après 1945, des Océaniens venant de Wallis ou de Tahiti. La concentration des opérateurs se poursuit. Au niveau mondial, Mond est absorbé en 1929 par INCO, qui fait figure de géant dans le secteur jusqu'aux premières années du XXI^e siècle. En Nouvelle-Calédonie, la société Le Nickel demeure hégémonique face à Ballande, dont elle absorbe les activités minières et métallurgiques dans les années 1930, et face aux petits mineurs.

En revanche, d'autres aspects ont profondément changé. Le volume et les moyens de l'extraction ont considérablement augmenté avec la mécanisation (essentiellement l'usage de bulldozers, de pelleteuses et de camions pour le roulage des minerais) qui a commencé après 1945. La géographie des relations a été diversifiée. Uniquement tournée vers l'Europe avant 1914, l'exportation des minerais et des produits semi-finis (mattes et ferronickels) s'est orientée vers d'autres destinations, surtout l'Asie, et ce dès la Première Guerre mondiale, pendant laquelle deux chargements de minerais ont été expédiés au Japon. D'autres opérateurs apparaissent, notamment en URSS, et récemment aux Philippines et en Indonésie. Les deux plus grands opérateurs sont absorbés en 2006. INCO est racheté par la firme brésilienne Vale et Falconbridge passe sous le contrôle de Xstrata qui est à son tour absorbé par Glencore en 2013. Ces restructurations interviennent au moment même où ces opérateurs ouvrent des usines en Nouvelle-Calédonie. Au nord, à Voh, l'usine pyrométallurgique de Glencore traite les minerais de la SMSP, société minière contrôlée par les indépendantistes, dans le cadre d'une joint-venture dont 51 % des parts sont détenues par la SMSP. Au sud, Vale a construit une usine hydro-métallurgique qui transforme les minerais de son gisement de Goro. Le développement de ces unités souligne l'émergence de nouveaux enjeux : l'enjeu environnemental et l'enjeu de la maîtrise de la ressource minière. D'autres enjeux déjà présents au début du XX^e siècle sont toujours là : la question du procédé, celle du traitement local des minerais et/ou de leur exportation, la nécessité de tenir compte d'un marché qui fonctionne encore plus qu'auparavant à l'échelle mondiale et dont le centre de gravité s'est déplacé vers l'Asie.

La société Le Nickel, quant à elle, est toujours présente. Devenue filiale calédonienne du groupe français Eramet dont elle est le berceau,

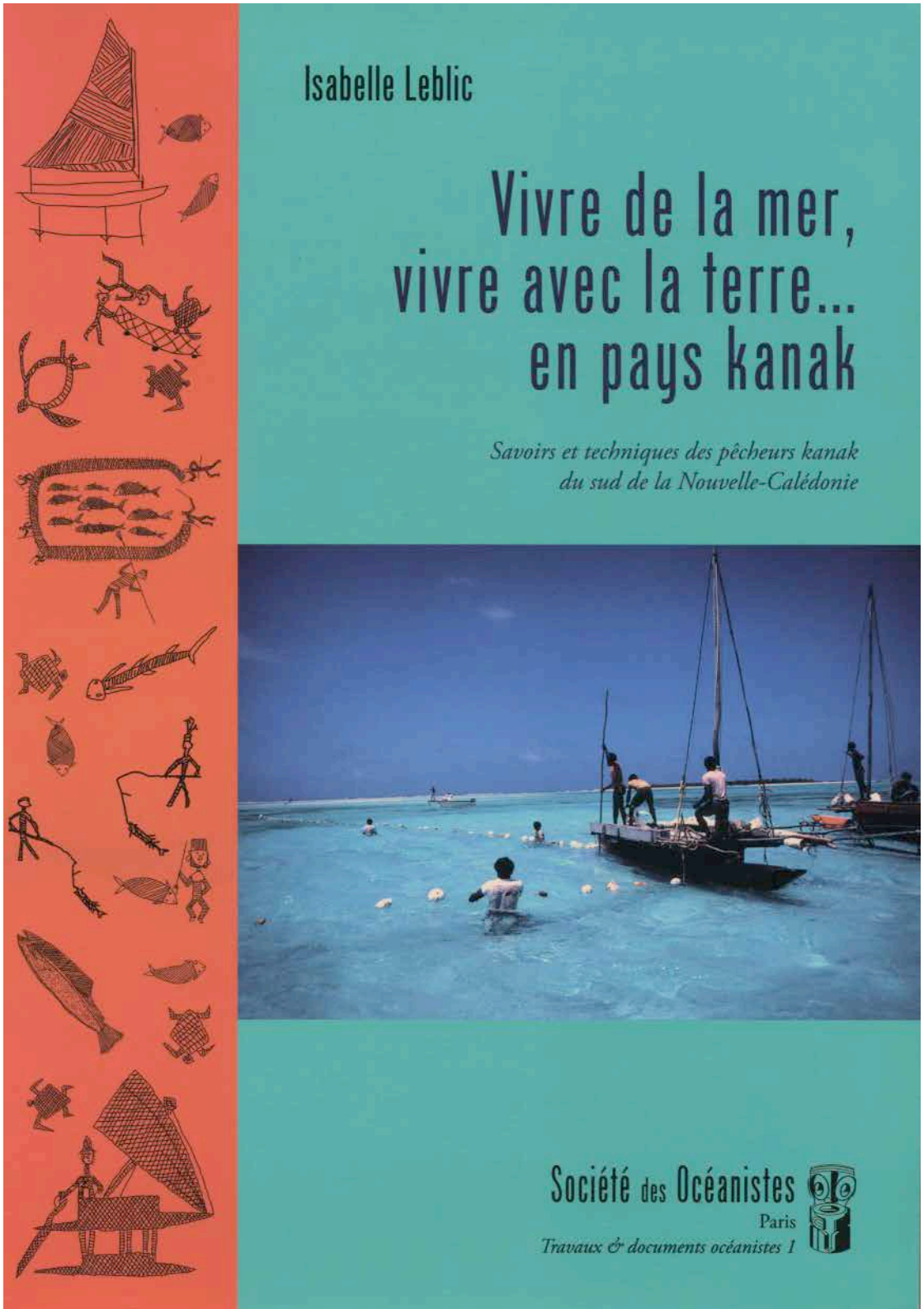
la société Le Nickel-SLN n'a pas été absorbée par l'un de ses concurrents. Son siège a été transféré en Nouvelle-Calédonie en 1999. Elle est devenue un opérateur parmi d'autres mais en 2012, elle était encore le premier employeur privé et le premier exportateur en valeur de la Nouvelle-Calédonie.

Le récit minier calédonien continue, toujours à l'interface de plusieurs trajectoires et toujours indissociable de récits à plusieurs échelles, celui des grandes firmes multi-nationales, celui des nations et celui de l'aire Pacifique.

BIBLIOGRAPHIE

- AOM, Série Travaux publics, carton 326, Rapport du chef du Service des travaux publics et des mines du 20 juin 1917.
- ARCHIVES DU GROUPE ERAMET, Paris, registre des procès-verbaux du conseil d'administration.
- BARBANÇON Louis-José, 2003. *L'archipel des forçats. Histoire du bagne de Nouvelle-Calédonie (1863-1931)*, Lille, Presses universitaires du Septentrion.
- BELICH James, 2009. *Replenishing the Earth. The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press.
- BENCIVENGO Yann, 2010. La société Le Nickel. Une entreprise au cœur de la naissance de l'industrie du nickel (1880-1914), thèse de doctorat d'histoire, Université Paris 1-Panthéon-Sorbonne.
- , 2012. L'immigration Japonaise en Nouvelle-Calédonie : une illustration de l'affirmation du Japon dans le Pacifique, *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 135, pp. 215-228.
- DE DECKKER Paul, 1994. « Colons, condamnés, convicts, coolies, chàn dang... » dans le Pacifique et en Nouvelle-Calédonie 1788-1914 : pour une introduction générale, in Paul de Deckker (éd.), *Le peuplement du Pacifique et de la Nouvelle-Calédonie au XIX^e siècle 1788-1914. Condamnés, Colons, Convicts, Coolies, Chàn Dang*, actes du colloque universitaire international, Paris, L'Harmattan, pp. 208-217.
- DEVAMBEZ Véronique, 1994. Les recrutements : chronologie de la main-d'œuvre immigrée sous contrat en Nouvelle-Calédonie (1869-1865), in Paul de Deckker (éd.), *Le peuplement du Pacifique et de la Nouvelle-Calédonie au XIX^e siècle 1788-1914. Condamnés, Colons, Convicts, Coolies, Chàn Dang*, actes

- du colloque universitaire international, Paris, L'Harmattan, pp. 208-217.
- GARÇON Anne-Françoise, 1998. *Mine et métal, 1780-1880, les non-ferreux et l'industrialisation*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes.
- HOBBSBAWM Eric J., 1987. *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914*, University of Michigan, Pantheon Books.
- HOWARD-WHITE Frank B., 1963. *Nickel. An historical review*, Methuen & Co Ltd.
- KOBAYASHI Tadao, 1992. *Les Japonais en Nouvelle-Calédonie, histoire des émigrés sous contrat*, Nouméa, Société d'études historiques de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, Publications de la SEHNC 48.
- LE MEUR Pierre-Yves 2012 (6-8 nov.). The New Caledonia/France relationship through the lens of the mine. Colonization and globalization, old and new, Pacific History Association Conference 2012 *Generations: History in the Pacific, Histories in the Future*, Panel "Revisiting the "French Pacific": connected or disconnected histories?", Wellington (Nouvelle-Zélande).
- MOHAMMED-GAILLARD Sarah, 2012. Les enjeux internationaux en Océanie : contexte historique et perspectives historiographiques, *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 135, pp. 177-184.
- NOIRIEL Gérard, 1998. Le rôle de l'industrialisation dans la formation du monde ouvrier en France, 1880-1980, in Jacques Marseille (éd.), *L'industrialisation de l'Europe occidentale (1880-1970)*, Paris, ADHE, pp. 347-360.
- PALOMBO Philippe, 2002. La présence japonaise en Nouvelle-Calédonie (1890-1960). Les relations économiques entre le Japon et la Nouvelle-Calédonie à travers l'immigration et l'industrie minière, thèse de doctorat, Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie.
- SCHMITZ Christopher J., 1979. *World Non-Ferrous Metal Production and Prices, 1700-1976*, Londres, Frank Cass.
- THOMPSON Anne-Gabrielle, 1982. John Higginson, Patriot or Profiteer?, thèse de doctorat, University of Queensland.
- , 2000. *John Higginson. Spéculateur-aventurier à l'assaut du Pacifique*, L'Harmattan, Paris.
- WORONOFF Denis, 1994. *Histoire de l'industrie en France du XVII^e siècle à nos jours*, Paris, Seuil.



2008, 288 p., bibliogr., glossaires, index, plus de 600 ill. en noir & blanc ou en couleur - 38 €.

En vente sur <http://oceanistes.org/oceanie/spip.php?rubrique29> avec paiement en ligne
et en version électronique sur <http://books.openedition.org/sdo/594> - 29,99 €.

Représentations littéraires des paysages miniers en Nouvelle-Calédonie : regards coloniaux et vécus kanak

par

Eddy BANARÉ*

RÉSUMÉ

Montagnes ravinées, minéraliers et usines sont, depuis la fin du XIX^e siècle, autant de motifs décrits pour évoquer la Nouvelle-Calédonie. Des récits ont aussi inscrit l'exploitation minière dans l'imaginaire de Nouvelle-Calédonie. L'élaboration des discours sur la mine en Nouvelle-Calédonie a relevé, dès les années 1880, d'une question de maintien de la domination coloniale. Il s'agissait alors d'améliorer l'image de la Nouvelle-Calédonie en tant que colonie française. Différents types de discours ont ainsi participé à la construction d'un imaginaire de la mine en Nouvelle-Calédonie. La singularité de ces discours littéraires est de rendre visible l'irruption de la mine dans l'imaginaire kanak dont l'interprétation est essentielle pour saisir les enjeux contemporains locaux.

MOTS-CLÉS : littérature, colonisation, mine, paysages, Kanak

ABSTRACT

Since the end of the 19th century, dramatic mountains, ore carriers and factories have been among the images that represent New Caledonia. In addition to the landscape, various narratives and stories have etched the mining industry into the imagery of New Caledonia. From the 1880s, the development of discourse on mining in New Caledonia responded to the need to preserve colonial domination. In order to maintain this domination, the image of New Caledonia as a French colony needed to be improved. Different types of discourse contributed towards constructing a picture of mining in New Caledonia. Literary discourse has a unique ability to unfold the emergence of mining in the Kanak imagination, the interpretation of which is essential to the understanding of contemporary issues in the area.

KEYWORDS: literature, colonization, mining, landscapes, Kanak

La mine entre politique et géopoétique

L'activité minière a connu des mises en récits qui, du fait des différences d'époque et d'origine de leurs auteurs, peuvent être reçues comme autant de témoins de l'élaboration d'« identités narratives » « issue(s) de la rectification sans fin d'un récit antérieur par un récit ultérieur, et de la chaîne de refigurations qui en résulte » (Ricœur, 1985 : 446). La mine est un carrefour

anthropologique, elle sollicite plusieurs de ces « identités narratives » qui constituent la Nouvelle-Calédonie contemporaine. L'exploitation minière est en effet le résultat des ambitions coloniales du Second Empire. Condamnés et colons s'y sont trouvés réunis, des clans kanak ont été déplacés de force, des champs détruits pour permettre l'extraction du minerais. Et, de de la fin du XIX^e siècle aux années 1930, des travailleurs asiatiques y ont été engagés sous contrat. Pour ces

* Docteur, membre associé au CNEP (EA 4242), Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, eddy.banare@gmail.com

derniers, on trouve déjà une production littéraire témoignant de ce vécu minier (Do, 2008) avec les romans *Chân Dâng* et *Fils de Châm Dâng* de Jean Vanmaï publiés en 1980 et 1983. Du point de vue documentaire, la biographie (Pitoiset et Wéry, 2009) d'André Dang, fils d'engagés indochinois devenu en 2000 directeur de la SMSP (Société minière du Sud Pacifique), écrite par les journalistes Anne Pitoiset et Claudine Wéri, offre un éclairage sur l'histoire politique récente. Lié à Jean-Marie Tjibaou, André Dang est en effet celui qui a permis l'entrée des Kanak dans l'économie du nickel (Pitoiset et Wéry, 2009).

La liberté de la recherche littéraire est de pouvoir se situer aux points extrêmes afin de confronter les points de vue en prenant le parti, par exemple, de considérer que la vision des paysages miniers d'une poétesse kanak comme Déwé Görödé pendant les « Événements » (situation insurrectionnelle des années 1984-1988) pourrait être une réponse donnée à un chroniqueur colonial de la fin du XIX^e siècle. Il en est de même pour la pièce du dramaturge kanak Pierre Gope, qui peut être reçue comme un témoignage sur le devenir politique. Kanak et européennes, ces identités narratives sont historiquement antagonistes en Nouvelle-Calédonie et travaillées par un legs colonial. Le devenir politique initié par l'accord de Nouméa depuis 1998 – accord politique marquant l'entrée dans une période de « décolonisation négociée » – suggère que les sciences humaines peuvent approcher l'activité minière afin de formuler des interrogations à la fois sociales, culturelles, environnementales et économiques, nécessaires au rééquilibrage géographique et socio-ethnique voulu par cet accord. Il s'agit de s'insérer dans cette « chaîne de refigurations » (*ibid.*), afin d'identifier les termes d'un dialogue autour du premier secteur économique de la Nouvelle-Calédonie et d'un processus politique au cœur duquel se trouve la reconnaissance de l'identité kanak. Avant la poésie et le théâtre, l'activité minière a été prise en charge par le monde kanak à travers le mémoire d'étude d'Apollinaire Anova, séminariste originaire de Moindou, décédé en 1966. Le document intitulé *Histoire et psychologie des Mélanésien*¹ d'abord de manière souterraine dans le milieu étudiant kanak (Chappell, 2013) avant que des extraits en soient publiés en 1969 dans le *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* sous le titre « Deux exemples de réflexions mélanésiennes » (Anova-Ataba, 1969). Au croisement de l'anthropologie, de la sociologie et de l'économie, Anova y développe une réflexion sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie de son époque et y propose des solutions intellectuelles

nécessaires à la participation des Kanak dans le tissu économique. Parmi ces solutions figure la réhabilitation du chef Ataï, à l'origine de la révolte de 1878 (Mokaddem, 2014). S'il ne s'agit pas de fiction ou de poésie, ce texte constitue le fondement du nationalisme kanak, et sa dimension littéraire réside dans la prise en charge de la figure d'Ataï, nourrie de récits oraux. Anova propose une reconfiguration de la révolte de 1878 où, selon Hamid Mokaddem, « l'écriture est une fiction historique qui fait dialoguer les parties en présence » (Mokaddem, 2014 : 7). L'influence d'Anova a également été revendiquée par Jean-Marie Tjibaou, Nidoish Naisseline ou encore Elie Poigoune (Chappell, 2013). On peut considérer que la filiation avec la création littéraire qui a accompagné le nationalisme s'établit à partir de 1985, avec la publication du recueil *Sous les cendres des conques* par Déwé Görödé. Un détour par la création littéraire pourrait aider à penser la mise en œuvre des politiques (sociales, économiques et écologiques) à partir des regards posés sur les paysages (Roe, 1994). En effet, Fredric Jameson a décrit « la littérature comme acte socialement symbolique » (Jameson, 2012), partant du principe que « l'acte littéraire ou esthétique entretient toujours un rapport actif au Réel » (Jameson, 2012 : 100) et qu'il est, en cela, porteur d'interrogations et d'idéologies élaborées en regard de la politique. Relire ce qui a été dit sur les paysages, interpréter ce qui en a été vu, c'est « ouvrir les yeux sur l'histoire », au sens où l'entend Georges Didi-Huberman, c'est-à-dire, « commencer par *temporaliser les images* qui nous en restent » (Didi-Huberman, 2010 : 27). Une partie de ces images fixées et données par la littérature nous permet de réinventer indéfiniment un passé, mais aussi une manière de distribuer des rôles dans le présent de la société pluriethnique de la Nouvelle-Calédonie. C'est en ce sens que la signature de l'accord de Nouméa en 1998 impose un passage par la politique et un rapport radicalement renouvelé à l'histoire en ce qu'elle est conçue comme, précise encore Jameson,

« ce qui fait mal, ce qui refuse le désir, ce qui impose des limites inexorables à la *praxis* individuelle comme collective, ce qui par ses "ruses", renverse, de façon horrible ou ironique, les intentions affichées » (Jameson, 2012 : 127).

Ainsi, « l'acte littéraire » doit-il être pris comme une tentative, par le langage, de dépasser ces « limites » qui, dans le cas de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, sont celles de la colonisation. Ce qui a été « renversé » avec l'exploitation minière ce sont, du point de vue kanak, des manières de

1. Le texte sera d'ailleurs réédité pendant les Événements en 1985 sous le titre *D'Ataï à l'indépendance* aux éditions Épipos à Nouméa, la même année que le recueil *Sous les cendres des conques* de Déwé Görödé. Une seconde édition établie par Bernard Gasser et Hamid Mokaddem sera publiée en 2005 sous le titre *Calédonie d'hier, Calédonie d'aujourd'hui, Calédonie de demain* aux éditions Expression.

vivre de la terre et d'y circuler. Le préambule de l'accord de Nouméa appelle également à des approches plus sensibles des lieux et des mémoires susceptibles de rejaillir sur les décisions politiques. C'est en ce sens que la recherche littéraire peut être considérée comme un des moyens de saisir la complexité des expériences du nickel propres à la Nouvelle-Calédonie. On retiendra les commentaires de François Garde qui observe que la force de ce préambule est :

« [...] qu'il propose une histoire qui n'a de vertu que si les Calédoniens se reconnaissent en elle. Il ne prétend pas au monopole de la pensée historique, mais par ses contradictions et ses silences, appelle la critique et la recherche. » (2005 : 811)

La littérature permettrait de restituer des expériences structurantes de l'activité minière en tant que lieu incontournable d'une « pensée historique ». Les manières de dire le passé déterminent le vécu du présent. Il est évident que les politiques sont différentes selon que l'on se considère descendant de pionnier ou victime du colonialisme. On n'en saisit que mieux cette autre observation de Jameson selon laquelle

« la distinction opératoire que l'on établit par commodité entre des textes culturels, sociaux et politiques et d'autres qui ne le sont pas, est pire qu'une erreur [...] elle confirme le décalage entre l'histoire ou la société et "l'individuel" [...] qui mutile notre existence de sujets individuels, paralyse notre pensée du temps et du changement autant qu'il nous aliène notre propre parole. » (Jameson, 2012 : 19)

D'où la nécessité d'une approche de la littérature comme matériau mémoriel. Le premier alinéa du préambule de l'accord de Nouméa institue l'idée d'injustices coloniales², en appelant à « faire mémoire des moments difficiles » (*JORF* 121, 27 mai 1998). Le texte insiste sur le fait que « l'identité kanak était fondée sur un rapport à la terre » (*ibid.*), et surtout sur ce que « les noms que la tradition donnait à chaque élément du paysage, les tabous marquant certains d'entre eux, les chemins coutumiers structuraient l'espace et les échanges » (*ibid.*).

Il y a, dans l'exploitation coloniale, un rapport qui s'instaure avec les paysages ; un moment où le colon se proclame pionnier et dit : « il n'y a rien ici » (Petit, 2010) et considère que les ressources sont librement accessibles ; c'est le moment de la force (force qui s'exerce aussi via des controverses juridiques ; cf. Merle, 1998 sur ce point). Vient ensuite le moment de l'appropriation et de la

célébration patriotique : les stations minières, le ballet des minéraliers et les hauts-fourneaux signalent, selon une certaine propagande, l'excellence coloniale. Enfin, le troisième moment, plus intime, plus « romantique » est celui où le paysage signifie à la fois sueur, sang et sacrifices, le moment où les paysages finissent par rentrer dans la composition même de la chair, où ils constituent la mémoire d'un passé idéalisé, voire mythifié. Pour que s'opèrent ces transformations, la mine a dû se constituer comme objet et représentation chez les colons de la Nouvelle-Calédonie. La littérature coloniale permet de saisir la nature de rapports aux lieux et aux populations kanak déplacées de force. C'est par la presse que les paysages miniers ont intégré les imaginaires à partir de 1880.

Comme l'ont montré les travaux de Yann Bencivengo et de Catherine Buttet, l'activité minière était entourée d'un voile opaque jeté tant par les banques (Buttet, 2000) que par l'administration coloniale (Bencivengo, 2008). Il faut ajouter que la presse contrôlée par le monde des affaires participait à une intense propagande afin de calmer une colonie pénale sous tension (Coquilhat, 1987). La littérature ainsi publiée n'échappait pas à ce rôle ; elle imposait un langage et une représentation du monde du nickel. Il existait néanmoins une presse de contestation, certes minoritaire, qui permet de saisir les antagonismes en jeu à la fin du XIX^e siècle en Nouvelle-Calédonie. On peut dire que l'émergence de la littérature kanak à partir de la publication du recueil de Déwé Görödé en 1985 relève d'un effort de se saisir de la complexité politique dont relève le nationalisme kanak et les enjeux économiques miniers qui, comme on le voit avec le drame de Pierre Gope, apparaissent également opaques et redoutablement complexes.

Quatre moments dans la mise en récit de la mine en Nouvelle-Calédonie

Notre choix s'est porté sur quatre textes qui témoignent de ces mémoires en jeu et symbolisent les écarts fondateurs de la Nouvelle-Calédonie. D'abord sur le plan historique : nous avons compilé la chronique que le député Francisque Ordinaire (1844-1896) rédige lors de sa visite en Nouvelle-Calédonie en 1889. Après avoir lu une critique dont cette chronique fait l'objet en 1891, nous la mettrons en lien

2. Voici l'intégralité de l'alinéa 1 du préambule de l'accord de Nouméa : « Lorsque la France prend possession de la Grande Terre, que James Cook avait dénommée "Nouvelle-Calédonie", le 24 septembre 1853, elle s'approprie un territoire selon les conditions du droit international alors reconnu par les nations d'Europe et d'Amérique, elle n'établit pas des relations de droit avec la population autochtone. Les traités passés, au cours de l'année 1854 et les années suivantes, avec les autorités coutumières, ne constituent pas des accords équilibrés mais, de fait, des actes unilatéraux. » (*JORF* 121, 27 mai 1998)

avec la nouvelle « Sauvages et Civilisés » écrite par Georges Baudoux (1870-1949) en 1915. Ordinaire pose le regard d'un visiteur – d'un homme politique en campagne – sur les colonies. Baudoux, au contraire, est un « enfant du pays » (Gasser, Sollier, 1996), self-made man respecté et admiré : son enracinement est différent. Pour l'époque contemporaine, les extraits du recueil *Sous les cendres des conques* que Déwé Görödé publie en 1985 et le drame de Pierre Gope intitulé *Le dernier crépuscule* témoignent des transformations de l'expérience kanak face aux mutations induites par l'implication dans l'exploitation minière. Nous nous intéresserons d'abord à la genèse et aux grandes transitions de cette géopoétique coloniale des paysages miniers et à leur influence dans l'élaboration de la mémoire collective, pour nous intéresser ensuite aux contenus des revendications indépendantistes kanak, incluant les motifs du rééquilibrage et de la préservation de l'environnement. Notre point de départ sera la chronique de Francisque Ordinaire, ancien député en visite en Nouvelle-Calédonie en 1889 au centre minier de Thio, sur la côte Est. Ce centre, alors amené à être l'un des plus importants de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, est encore en activité (Le Meur, 2009). C'est l'un des premiers témoignages sur les paysages après la fondation de la SLN en 1880 (Bencivengo, 1999). Ordinaire est en campagne, il est connu pour s'être engagé dans les troupes de Garibaldi en 1866. Il est socialiste et membre de l'Union républicaine, et son rapport aux paysages est marqué par une volonté de témoigner d'une connaissance de l'économie coloniale. Il mobilise longuement des chiffres, des noms, et des informations historiographiques, semblant un temps « oublier » la réalité des paysages miniers. Éloigné des affaires politiques depuis sa défaite aux législatives de 1877, Ordinaire ne semble avoir eu aucun contact préalable avec les communards emprisonnés en Nouvelle-Calédonie qui auraient pu lui livrer quelques informations de première main. Nous verrons même que son point de vue sera critiqué par deux d'entre eux.

Dans la nouvelle « Sauvages et Civilisés » écrite en 1915, Georges Baudoux montre que l'attachement la terre (à travers sa nature et ses paysages) est incompatible avec l'exploitation minière qui faisait la fierté coloniale. Continuer à exploiter le minerai, c'est perdre un paradis ; celui, intime, du pays d'enfance et des premiers émerveillements. Fils d'un fonctionnaire de l'administration pénitentiaire arrivé en 1874, Baudoux a fréquenté la plupart des lieux « stratégiques » : le bain où il a été éduqué, la brousse où il été stockman. Il a aussi fréquenté le

monde kanak. La mine est, pour lui, un paysage secondaire : il a vécu les débuts de la SLN et vu les « prospects³ » et décapages (qui consistent en des abrasements de surfaces afin de révéler l'éventuel filon). Les flancs des montagnes sont marqués de sillons rougeâtres (pareils à des balafres). La popularité qu'il connaît en tant qu'auteur est fondée sur cette expérience singulière de la colonie. Capable de retranscrire des contes kanak (écoutés lors de ses veillées en tant que *stockman* parmi ses employés kanak) et de faire fortune grâce à l'extraction du cobalt à Koné à partir de 1895 (Banaré, 2012 : 249-258), année où il entame également sa carrière d'auteur de feuilletons, il est l'archétype de la débrouillardise et de la réussite coloniale. Mais nous verrons qu'il est également porteur d'une ambivalence fondatrice.

Enfin, la dernière partie de l'article s'intéressera aux contestations et aux interrogations contenues dans la prise de parole contemporaine des auteurs kanak (Mokaddem, 2007). Les textes de Déwé Görödé et de Pierre Gope marquent une véritable césure dans notre corpus. Pour commencer, ils viennent du monde kanak qui, jusqu'aux années du « boom » du nickel (Bensa et Freyss, 1994), était fortement marginalisé et réduit au silence par l'activité minière. Et surtout, ils encadrent trois séquences historiques déterminantes : la période post-indigénat jusqu'au « boom » (1946-1972), les « Événements » (1984-1988) pour Görödé, et l'accord de Nouméa en 1998 pour Pierre Gope.

Originaire de Pwârâiriwâ (Ponérihouen), Déwé Görödé a suivi une formation universitaire en littérature en France. De retour en 1974, elle se fait connaître en tant qu'activiste au sein des mouvements *Foulards rouges* et *Groupe 1878*. Elle a également participé à la création du PALIKA (Parti de libération kanak) en 1976 qui est une des composantes du FLNKS (Front de libération kanak et socialiste) fondé en 1984. Enseignante pendant les « Événements » au sein de l'EPK (École Populaire Kanak) de sa région d'origine, elle publie le recueil poétique *Sous les cendres des conques* en 1985. Ce volume reprend également des poèmes composés pendant ses années passées militantes. Elle devient membre du gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Calédonie dès 1999, poste qu'elle occupe actuellement en tant que représentante du PALIKA (Parti de libération kanak). *Sous les cendres des conques* contient une section consacrée à l'exploitation minière intitulée « Terre Nickel ». L'association des deux termes signale ici l'antinomie fondatrice : la « Terre » évoque le sacré et la maternité, alors que le nom « Nickel » semble s'être ici substitué à l'adjectif « sacrée » pour évoquer l'industrie

3. Le terme est passé dans le français parlé en Nouvelle-Calédonie pour désigner les prospections minières (Bencivengo, 1999).

déshumanisée et la froideur du métal. On peut comprendre les poèmes qui composent cette section comme l'exploration douloureuse d'une blessure historique. Ces poèmes, composés entre 1970 et 1985, disent tous la marginalisation du monde kanak par rapport au monde minier. L'exploitation minière est perçue comme une activité coloniale.

Pierre Gope est né à Maré en 1966. Il entame une carrière d'animateur culturel en 1990, ce qui l'amène à traverser l'ensemble de la Grande-Terre pour un travail de collecte d'informations. En 1992, il met en scène sa première pièce et fonde sa troupe, Cebue. Il s'impose comme un observateur attentif et critique d'une société kanak en profonde transformation. *Le dernier crépuscule*, créé en 2000, donne à voir les difficultés qui existent encore. Surtout, l'œuvre interroge les défis à relever pour le monde kanak désormais activement impliqué dans les activités minières. Fondé sur le conflit des générations, *Le dernier crépuscule* met en scène la confrontation entre les anciens et un jeune diplômé kanak qui tente de les convaincre de céder les terres ancestrales à une compagnie minière. Ce drame interroge les modalités d'une transformation sociale et celles de l'exercice des nouveaux pouvoirs de décision acquis de haute lutte.

Ces deux textes kanak s'inscrivent dans le sillage de deux moments fondateurs : le recueil *Sous les cendres des conquêtes* est l'œuvre des « Événements » (1984-1988). À bien des égards, il est considéré comme le manifeste poétique du mouvement indépendantiste kanak et l'œuvre fondatrice de la littérature kanak moderne. *Le dernier crépuscule* de Pierre Gope est joué pour la première fois en 2000, deux ans après la signature des accords fondateurs : celui de Bercy, signé en février, qui acte l'entrée des kanak dans l'activité minière à travers la création d'une usine dans le nord de la Grande Terre, et l'accord de Nouméa, signé le 5 mai qui porte sur la mise en œuvre d'une décolonisation fondée sur le rééquilibrage (Gagné, Salaün 2013). Ces textes scandent l'activité minière : les premiers ont permis d'imaginer une prospérité à venir, d'autres ont fait naître une communauté. C'est sur ce point que l'expression littéraire est précieuse dans la mesure où, par la poétique et la fiction, un pays s'invente et s' imagine (Anderson, 2006).

De même, nous dit Jacques Rancière :

« la littérature est "sociale", elle est l'expression d'une société en ne s'occupant que d'elle-même, c'est-à-dire de la manière dont les mots contiennent un monde. » (Rancière, 2010 : 45)

Ce que la littérature rend visible en matière minière, est la nature des liens entre la politique, le monde des affaires et les communautés qui étaient déplacées et/ou amenées à travailler dans

les mines. Un processus de familiarisation et de transformation est également mis en évidence à travers le langage qui est restitué par la littérature. La mine est un nouveau lieu qui se constitue avec ses codes particuliers. Ces textes permettent d'approcher, du moins en partie, ce que les paysages miniers de la Nouvelle-Calédonie ont pu dire et permettre d'imaginer comme futurs – ceci, en parallèle des considérations économiques et des négociations politiques.

Contradictions coloniales et mémoires minières

Comment, aux débuts de l'exploitation minière en Nouvelle-Calédonie, le paysage a-t-il fondé un sentiment d'appartenance collective ? Ou plutôt, comment a-t-il inspiré et mobilisé poétique et récits ? L'activité minière laisse derrière elle désolation et stérilité : des montagnes saignées ou terrassées, des terres inexploitable. Le travail y est dangereux et humiliant, puisqu'il est rattaché à la condition pénale. Il y a donc une ambivalence dans l'évocation coloniale de ces paysages. Comment la mine peut-elle suggérer à la fois l'enfer et le rêve d'expansion coloniale ? Cette perception ambiguë gagne en intensité si l'on se place du point de vue du colonisé où cet enfer, signifie l'arrachement aux terres ancestrales (Dauphiné, 1989), aux cultures, et aux clans. Bien que fondatrices de la société calédonienne, ces manières de percevoir le paysage minier ne sont pas figées et il convient d'en comprendre les transformations.

La littérature permet de saisir les complexités de la mémoire minière en Nouvelle-Calédonie. Mise en parallèle avec le politique, elle permet aussi de parler d'autonomie, d'indépendance, et même d'innovations technologiques ou d'écologie. Pourtant, ces projections contemporaines ne sont que l'une des nombreuses variantes des imaginaires miniers que la Nouvelle-Calédonie élabore depuis plus d'un siècle. Imaginaires qui ont pris forme à mesure que l'exploitation minière prenait de l'importance en Nouvelle-Calédonie depuis les années 1870. Quelle a été la première forme de cet imaginaire minier en Nouvelle-Calédonie ? Comment a-t-elle évolué ? Il s'agit de saisir comment le paysage minier se situe dans le fantasme « colonial » (rêve ou cauchemar) et comment il devient « familier », réel et peut mettre à l'épreuve le rêve colonial (Durand, 2008). C'est par les descriptions et évocations des paysages miniers offertes par la littérature que se donnent à voir les métamorphoses d'un imaginaire, donc celles d'une partie de la société. Nous parlons d'expression littéraire dans la mesure où c'est dans les chroniques de la presse coloniale que se retrouvent les premières traces

du lyrisme minier. La première littérature, au sens de livres et d'auteurs qui exercent dans des genres (nouvelles, romans, etc.) où la mine devient un thème à part entière, apparaît avec les nouvelles que Georges Baudoux publie dans *Le Messager* à partir de 1898.

Il faut d'abord décrire ce qu'était l'idéologie coloniale en 1853, au moment de la prise de possession. L'État bonapartiste se devait d'éviter deux écueils pour faire accepter toute initiative de colonisation. En premier lieu, il s'agit d'éviter un dévoiement de l'idéologie coloniale française, fondée sur la « mission civilisatrice », et où la rencontre avec l'« Indigène » – vu comme barbare et plongé dans ses ténèbres – est également pensée comme une menace. Le second écueil était celui de la faillite économique, la colonisation s'accompagnant d'irréremédiables pertes financières dues aux coûts et aux incertitudes des expéditions et entreprises coloniales.

Napoléon III propage donc l'idée de « l'expansion outre-mer » selon laquelle travailler aux colonies enrichit la patrie et participe d'une certaine philosophie du progrès. Aussi est-ce une mission scientifique, celle de l'ingénieur Jules Garnier, qui va faire connaître la Nouvelle-Calédonie à Paris. Garnier avait pour tâche de faire l'inventaire des ressources de la jeune colonie ; l'idéal était d'y trouver de l'or. Menant sa mission de 1863 à 1866, il en tire un livre, *Voyage à la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, publié en 1868, qui sera un succès de librairie. Le texte se lit comme un récit de voyage, mais Garnier l'augmente de considérations scientifiques (géographie, géologie), de descriptions de paysages (il n'y a pas encore de mines), de tableaux de la vie des nouveaux colons français, d'observations ethnographiques et de récits d'aventure (batailles et scènes d'anthropophagie). Il s'agit de montrer que la France rayonne, que ses citoyens participent à diffuser son excellence (Seillan, 2008). Et comme dans tout rêve colonial, les paysages ne se regardent que pour ce qu'on peut en exploiter.

Cette première mise en récit de la mine, et les autres qui se propagent au moins jusqu'en 1945, sont des « discours d'appropriation de la terre » au sens où ils forment une partie de ce que Laurent Dubreuil définit comme « la phrase de possession » (Dubreuil, 2008 : 78), que l'on peut définir comme les énoncés (Foucault 2008) qui, relayés par la presse et surtout la littérature, permettent d'assurer l'expansion coloniale, de faire entendre et appliquer la loi. Ici, la description des paysages dévastés est l'affirmation d'une appropriation (Le Meur, 2010) et constitue un motif de la « phrase de possession » (Dubreuil, 2008).

Du 18 avril⁴ au 14 juin 1889, Francisque Ordinaire rédige dans *Le Colon de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* une chronique intitulée « De Paris à Nouméa », destinée à offrir un regard sur la métropole aux habitants de la colonie de Nouvelle-Calédonie⁵. Le développement de la SLN, fondée en 1880, est à l'époque la dernière grande épopée vécue par la colonie. La présence de Francisque Ordinaire dans les colonnes du *Colon* « fait entendre » la voix de la France, celle de la mère-patrie, aux colons ; et si possible sa fierté et son admiration pour sa colonie du Pacifique si longtemps discréditée par le bagne. En 1889, Ordinaire est en quête d'une nouvelle crédibilité politique. En effet, écarté de la politique depuis sa défaite aux élections législatives, il essaie de reconquérir un mandat politique. Son approche est plus stratégique qu'idéologique ; il tient à démontrer des aptitudes de gestionnaire. Avec l'essor du boulangisme (Winock, 1986 : 129-133), l'heure est à la formulation d'un nationalisme de gauche où montrer sa capacité à traiter des affaires coloniales peut constituer un argument électoral (Providence, 2005). Neuf ans après la fondation de la Société Le Nickel (SLN), Ordinaire veut donc rassurer, confirmer que l'exploitation du nickel fait la grandeur et l'utilité de la Nouvelle-Calédonie. Il associe informations historiques et informations économiques :

« Nous suivons toujours la rivière, dont nous ne cessons pas de traverser les zigzags et nous débouchons enfin vers une agglomération de quelques cases, qui forment le centre de Thio, où se trouvent les mines les plus importantes de la *Société Le Nickel*.

Le Nickel

Nous sommes dans le royaume du Nickel, de ce métal que l'industrie commence à employer pour les usages les plus divers, et pour lequel les gouvernements ont inventé la meilleure des réclames, en le mettant dans toutes les mains sous la forme de monnaie de billon.

Ce minerai fut découvert en Nouvelle-Calédonie dès 1863, par l'ingénieur des mines J. Garnier, mais les gisements ne furent déclarés qu'en 1873 sous le nom du « Mont-d'Or ». Ils produisent environ cinq cents tonnes.

Mais la véritable exploitation sérieuse ne commença qu'en 1875 sur la « Boa-Kaine », appartenant à M. Hanckar, puis en même temps se fondait la compagnie le « Bel-Air » située à Houailou. La production s'éleva à 10 000 tonnes. » (Ordinaire, chronique du 22 avril 1889)

Francisque Ordinaire compose ici une nouvelle chronologie de la colonie, chronologie qui semble véritablement débiter avec l'exploitation du nickel. Surtout, il apporte de nouveaux

4. C'est la date la plus ancienne qui nous soit parvenue. Il semble que les débuts de la chronique soient antérieurs à cette date, mais les archives n'ont pas résisté aux ravages du temps.

5. Il en proposera également une version à Paris, dans l'édition illustrée du *Figaro*.

personnages au récit de la colonisation : Jules Garnier, Hanckar et Higginson qui apparaissent comme les ingénieurs héros d'une épopée. Cette mise en récit du monde minier semble avoir pour but de « créer », de fixer une image de la Nouvelle-Calédonie. Parlant du nickel, Francisque Ordinaire souligne qu'il est l'enjeu « de l'industrie » et « [d]es gouvernements » (*ibid.*). Ici, les chiffres dissimulent les paysages et confirment l'excellence coloniale. Dans sa chronique du 24 avril 1889, c'est à travers un inventaire de nations qu'il inscrit définitivement la Nouvelle-Calédonie sur la carte géopolitique mondiale. Elles font partie de celles qui ont choisi d'utiliser le nickel dans la fabrication de leur monnaie :

« On parle beaucoup du nickel et du projet de loi en préparation, qui aura pour but de transformer la monnaie de bronze en monnaie de nickel. Ce n'est pas une nouveauté, car les Américains ont créé cette monnaie en 1860 ; les Belges l'emploient depuis 1862, l'Allemagne depuis 1875 ; la Suisse l'a adoptée également.

On vient aussi d'accomplir cette réforme monétaire au Pérou, au Chili, au Brésil, en Colombie, à Honduras, et au Venezuela. En Europe, la Serbie a suivi cet exemple. » (Ordinaire, chronique du 24 avril 1889)

Le nickel néo-calédonien serait donc un élément incontournable de la révolution mondiale des pratiques monétaires : le nickel est « la monnaie » du xx^e siècle imminent. À travers l'inventaire des « nations du nickel » (*ibid.*), Ordinaire veut montrer que, grâce à la Nouvelle-Calédonie, la France peut intégrer cette élite.

Le 30 avril, il se prépare à l'ascension du Belvédère à Thio, pour y voir l'exploitation de la mine de nickel Santa-Maria, guidé par M. Bigillion, agent de la SLN, responsable de l'exploitation de cinq autres mines⁶ dans la région :

« En novembre 1887, le personnel du plateau du Belvédère se décompose ainsi : 112 blancs, sur lesquels 106 libérés, 70 Chinois [...] La Société emploie également des Canaques qui peuvent être considérés comme personnel du plateau ; 8 Néo-Hébridais font le service du dernier grand plan incliné et le minerai expédié ou mis en stock est manipulé par un blanc, et par 7 Chinois » (Ordinaire, 30 avril 1889).

Ordinaire rassure avec un exposé méthodique : la répartition raciale des tâches (où « le minerai expédié ou mis en stock est manipulé par un blanc »), des chiffres détaillés pour chacune des exploitations, autant de données sur « le personnel et son emploi » et « le prix de revient » qui confirment la réussite. Dans la chronique suivante, datée du 8 mai 1889, il décrit une machinerie impressionnante qui rappelle à ses lecteurs les progrès de cette « fin de siècle

industrielle » auxquels la France participe grâce à ses colonies. L'auteur décrit le ballet « [...] des chalands [qui] attendent la cargaison, qu'ils portent à bord des voiliers à destination d'Europe » (Ordinaire, 8 mai 1889). Il arrive ensuite sur le lieu de stationnement des machines :

« Après une heure de montée, nous arrivons au Belvédère, où se trouvent les engins nécessaires au fonctionnement du tramway et où aboutissent les différentes lignes qui conduisent aux diverses exploitations.

Nous continuons notre excursion sur un sol rocheux, métallique, du fer dont on peut ramasser les grains roulés, qui, mis dans un fusil bien ajusté, tueraient certainement les gracieuses hirondelles qui se balancent au-dessus de nos têtes, comme pour faire honte au génie humain de n'avoir pas encore trouvé la direction des ballons.

Le paysage est triste, avec les tons gris de ses arbustes qui ressemblent à des laurier-tins et la couleur rougeâtre du sol. Il y a là une mélancolie commune à tous les lieux où manquent l'eau et les grands arbres. » (*ibid.*)

Ce « paysage triste » contraste violemment avec la plupart des clichés « exotiques » de l'empire colonial. L'abondance de chiffres avancés par Ordinaire semble pouvoir les faire oublier. Si une image de la mine doit apparaître en arrière-plan, que ce soit celle d'une Europe mécanisée en marche vers le progrès.

Placée dès 1863 sous le signe de la colonisation pénale et, dès les années 1870, sous celui de l'exploitation minière, sa colonisation fut ponctuée de déconvenues, de faillites, d'échecs agricoles, de récits des crimes commis par les évadés, et marquée par la grande révolte kanak de 1878. Un climat de peur et de tensions permanentes s'était installé, que la presse, en collaboration étroite avec l'administration coloniale, devait apaiser le plus souvent en rappelant la grande vocation française que tout colon devait respecter. Au moment de l'apparition des premières exploitations minières et surtout avec la fondation de la SLN (Société Le Nickel) en 1880, les paysages sont rapidement devenus un indispensable champ de projection et de controverses.

Ainsi, Ordinaire sera sévèrement critiqué en 1891 par Ernest Gegout (1854-1936) et Charles Malato (1857-1938), deux déportés devenus anarchistes (Granier, 2008). Dans *Prison fin de siècle*, ils fustigent le déni de réalité d'Ordinaire et assimilent sa visite en Nouvelle-Calédonie à un exercice complaisant (Banaré, 2012 : 178-190) et sa chronique, à un « compte-rendu de fonctionnaire » (Gegout et Malato, 1891 : 166) superficiel. Cette critique de la chronique d'Ordinaire permet de mettre en évidence une

6. Il s'agit des mines Sans-Culotte, Beaucourt, Rose, et Moulinet.

tension entre les regards coloniaux posés sur les paysages miniers à cette période :

« [...] Le fonctionnaire inspecteur arrive à une date connue d'avance dans un milieu qu'il ignore complètement, festoye chez ceux dont il devrait épulcher la conduite, n'entend que les personnes qui peuvent accéder jusqu'à lui et ne voit que ce qu'on veut bien lui montrer. Finalement, il s'en retourne, au bout d'un temps très court, ayant composé son rapport de bribes officielles, ne connaissant rien du pays qu'il est censé avoir inspecté, et persuadé que tout y est pour le mieux. Toutes nos colonies sont des foyers d'intrigues et de tripotages, la Nouvelle-Calédonie peut-être plus qu'aucune autre, et dans ce pays où les classes dirigeantes affectent le plus profond mépris pour les transportés et les sauvages, tenus en quelques sortes en dehors de l'humanité, il se trouve que sauvages et transportés forment encore l'élément le moins corrompu » (*ibid.*).

On saisit ici tout ce qu'il y a de biaisé dans la chronique de 1889. Elle a été écrite par un politicien en campagne Charles Malato a été déporté en Nouvelle-Calédonie (Pisier, 1971) à l'âge de 17 ans avec ses parents communards ; c'est en regardant l'organisation de la vie de la colonie qu'il développe sa sensibilité anarchiste. Il quitte la Nouvelle-Calédonie en 1880, année de la fondation de la SLN, en ayant vécu la fièvre des premières spéculations minières (« ce foyer d'intrigues et de tripotages ») menées par John Higginson (Thompson, 2000). Constituée de « bribes officielles », la chronique d'Ordinaire met en évidence un regard éloigné et un rapport aux paysages fortement travaillé par les rêves de prospérité coloniale. Ce regard a donné naissance à un des mythes fondateurs de la Nouvelle-Calédonie contemporaine : celui du pionnier, figure expiatoire qui a longtemps permis d'occulter les origines pénales (Barbançon, 2003). Dans *Prison fin de siècle*, Gegout et Malato montrent l'envers des paysages miniers mais le trait est peut-être exagéré. L'extraction du minerai et la transformation des paysages ne sont pas l'œuvre de travailleurs dévoués à la réussite coloniale, mais celle d'esclaves. « D'ailleurs, ajoutent-ils, en Nouvelle-Calédonie, l'esclavage est passé dans les mœurs et le mot « faire de la traite » est employé couramment » (Gegout et Malato, 1891 : 169).

À partir de 1898, Georges Baudoux, élabore une rhétorique de la vocation coloniale (comme devoir patriotique) ; l'intention semble être

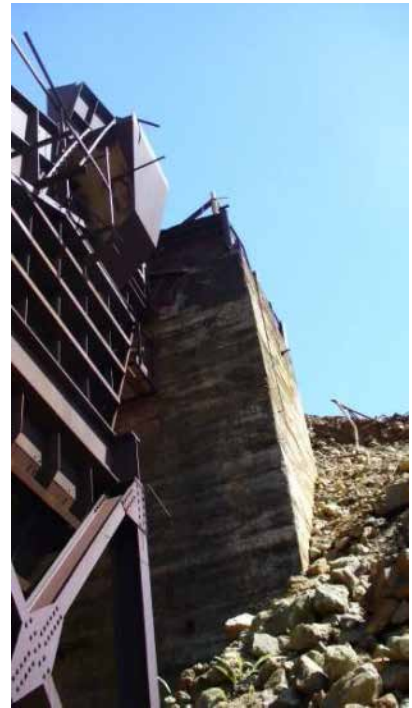
d'apporter du pittoresque à une réalité. La différence est que Baudoux s'exprime à la fois en tant que colon et enfant du pays qu'il a fini par devenir (c'est le fils d'un fonctionnaire de l'administration pénitentiaire). Ses premières évocations du monde minier ont été des peintures sociales où apparaissait une communauté coloniale française idéalisée travailleuse et unie. Le monde de Baudoux est celui des « petits mineurs » qui fonctionne à une autre échelle que celui de la SLN ; les groupes y sont plus restreint et se côtoient plus facilement (Bencivengo, 1999). La « Chanson des cobaleurs » (Baudoux, 1978) composée vers 1895 fait de la mine le lieu de création d'un peuple qui chante en cœur, Baudoux célèbre la « famille des mineurs » liée par une solidarité virile. Surtout, il y retranscrit un argot particulier à la Nouvelle-Calédonie, celui des colons. Il esquisse un portrait de la colonie en société unie alors que la réalité présente des distinctions entre colons libres, bagnards, libérés ou évadés (Barbançon, 2003) qui régissaient les relations. Dans une autre nouvelle, « Clotho » (Baudoux, 1979), des bagnards aident la femme d'un propriétaire de mine à mettre au monde un enfant. C'est la rencontre entre les deux mondes coloniaux. Les bagnards, se retrouvent dans la demeure du propriétaire pour célébrer la naissance de l'enfant. Cette naissance devient ainsi le trait d'union de ce monde colonial brutal.

La description des paysages miniers paraît relever d'une expérience ambivalente. Baudoux semble adopter cette fois un point de vue autochtone à double sens, il y introduit la complexité des imaginaires d'une société en devenir. Dans « Sauvages et Civilisés » (Baudoux, 1979), écrit en 1915, il se livre à un exercice de subversion des regards et adopte, comme le titre peut le suggérer, un point de vue « Sauvage ». Le récit est le suivant : de jeunes colons rencontrent, pendant leur exploration d'un massif montagneux, Apollinaire⁷, un Kanak aux « théories d'un socialisme près de la nature » (Baudoux, 1979 : 291). Il partage avec eux ses opinions sur la « civilisation » :

« Votre civilisation à vous est si fausse que, sans vouloir en convenir, vous la fuyez » (Baudoux, 1979 : 292).

Le narrateur entame alors une méditation sur sa position en tant que colon et devient réceptif à ces paysages. Il écoute les paroles rivales des

7. Rien n'en atteste la lecture chez Baudoux, mais il est tentant de voir dans ce personnage une évocation du surréaliste Guillaume Apollinaire. Les dates concordent et, comme l'a montré Bernard Gasser dans son étude sur Baudoux, ce dernier animait activement la vie littéraire locale ; les libraires de Nouméa étaient régulièrement informées des avant-gardes parisiennes. *Le Messenger*, journal littéraire tenu par Alain Laubreaux, servait, en effet, de relais entre Paris et Nouméa. Il est donc fort probable que des exemplaires d'*Alcools* ont été vendus en Nouvelle-Calédonie. Ayant publié son recueil *Alcools* deux ans avant la parution de « Sauvages et Civilisés », Apollinaire exprimait déjà, dans les vers du poème « Zone », un malaise européen. Il en avait « assez de vivre dans l'antiquité grecque et romaine » et évoquait un âge premier idéalisé aux antipodes parmi les « fétiches d'Océanie et de Guinée [...] Christs inférieurs des obscurs espérances » ; nous sommes ici proches du « socialisme près de la nature » du personnage de la nouvelle de 1915.



FIGURES 1-2. – Pétroglyphes et infrastructures sur le site minier abandonné de Kaa Wi Paa (Kouaoua, Nouvelle-Calédonie) illustrant la dualité mémorielle (2008, cliché Eddy Banaré)

« chaînes sombres (et des) petites montagnes » (Baudoux, 1979 : 302). Les « chaînes » qui abritent les filons sont les premières à se faire entendre :

« Elles semblaient, ces chaînes majestueuses, dire avec orgueil aux plus petites qu'elles :

Reculez-vous ! Faites-nous place ! Nous sommes les serpentines, l'épine dorsale de la Calédonie. C'est nous qui faisons la loi, nous donnons le mouvement, nous créons l'activité. Dans notre sein nous renfermons les laves infernales de Pluton, cristallisées en des richesses inépuisables.

Voyez ces plaies jaunes, béantes, qui s'ouvrent par gradins dans nos larges poitrines ; elles y sont creusées pour en extraire le nickel qui est notre chair.

Et ces entrailles profondes, sanglantes, qui bâillent dans notre derme d'argile rouge ; elles ont été incisées pour arracher nos nervures de chrome qui vont, par le monde, durcir les métaux.

Regardez ces trous noirs qui pénètrent dans nos entrailles, ainsi que des antres de cyclopes ; ce sont des tunnels obscurs et tortueux qui vont dans des gîtes pleins de mystères saigner nos veines bleuies de cobalt » (Baudoux, 1979 : 302).

« Le nickel qui est notre chair » : la « richesse et [la] puissance » que vantent ces montagnes disent également une violence faite à la terre. Extraire le minerais, c'est faire une saignée, c'est profaner et appauvrir la terre. Les montagnes avertissent : « dans notre sein nous renfermons les laves infernales de Pluton, cristallisées en des richesses inépuisables » (Baudoux, 1979 : 303). *Le stockman* éprouve les contradictions du colon

fier de la réussite annoncée par les *prospects*, mais attaché à des paysages qui sont désormais pour lui, puissamment évocateurs. La réponse des « petites montagnes » est un avertissement concernant le futur. Le verbe de Baudoux prend des accents écologiques :

« Nos allées arrosées et fertiles, nos alluvions chargés d'humus qui comblent les estuaires de nos rivières, nos collines couvertes de sillons étagés, font vivre depuis des siècles des générations d'hommes noirs. Nous sommes là, attendant la houe et la charrue. Aux plantations de café, de coton, de maïs, à toutes les cultures, nous offrons nos terrains généreux ; il suffit de savoir nous choisir. Sur notre littoral, et sur les berges de nos rivières, les cocotiers poussent avec vigueur, par leurs racines avides, ils s'imprègnent des eaux de la mer. Respectez-nous ! Nous sommes l'agriculture » (Baudoux, 1979 : 302-303).

Un dilemme insoluble apparaît dans l'esprit du colon entre sa vocation première, celle des *prospects* qui faisaient sa fierté, et une expérience intime des paysages. Déjà, en formulant la critique de la « civilisation » par la voix du « Sauvage », Baudoux reconnaît le monde colonisé qu'il présente comme porteur de vérités essentielles. Mais, en mentionnant les « générations d'hommes noirs » (*ibid.*) qui ont cultivé les flancs des montagnes, il renverse la *doxa* coloniale raciste sur l'absence de profondeur historique. Aussi, par le jeu de la *prosopopée*, il y a également la reconnaissance d'un savoir qui ne pouvait être possible qu'à partir d'un certain niveau de connivence, en bref,

d'une rencontre. L'harmonie, la connaissance de la terre et de la nature reconnue au monde kanak est une rupture dans la « phrase de possession » (Dubreuil, 2008) également fondatrice d'une mémoire. L'auteur formule les termes d'une reconnaissance nouvelle ; celle de l'autre qu'il était, selon le mot d'ordre colonial, nécessaire de « civiliser ». Surtout, celui qui apparaît en filigrane du texte de Baudoux est désormais un enfant de cette terre :

« Plus tard ! Vous, mines gonflées de minerais et d'orgueil, quand vous aurez prodigué toutes vos richesses aux spéculateurs étrangers, vous ne laisserez après vous que des ruines ; vos terres fouillées, vidées de leurs trésors, resteront éternellement stériles. Vos montagnes déchiquetées, arides comme des paysages lunaires, seront l'image de la désolation et de la mort.

Alors que nous ! Nous les petites montagnes, les dédaignées de l'heure présente, nous serons toujours là, verdoyantes, grasses, riches, fécondées par le travail, par le labeur persévérant des petits. À ceux qui auront eu confiance en nous, nous donnerons l'abondance et le bien-être, car nous sommes la terre qui nourrit, la terre à laquelle on s'enracine. Nous sommes l'agriculture, nous sommes l'avenir qui crée pour lui des œuvres durables. Et vous, mines gaspilleuses, vous êtes le présent qui butine, s'envole et ne laisse rien.

Ainsi parlaient les montagnes. Nous comprenions leur éloquent langage accompagné de démonstrations panoramiques ; mais nous ne voulions pas nous immiscer dans leurs affaires. » (Baudoux, 1979 : 303)

Sa pensée, encore imprégnée par l'idéal civilisateur, est pourtant perméable à une altérité qui joue ici le rôle d'un contradictoire tragique : « vos montagnes déchiquetées, arides comme des paysages lunaires, seront l'image de la désolation et de la mort » (*ibid.*). Baudoux sème ainsi le trouble en formulant le vœu d'une colonie tournée vers l'agriculture à rebours des rêves pionniers de la dernière moitié du XIX^e siècle. Cette nouvelle met en évidence ce que Homi K. Bhabha appelle « l'absurdité coloniale » (Bhabha, 2007 : 201) au sein de laquelle « [...] les dualités qui divisent traditionnellement l'espace colonial : nature/culture, chaos/civilité » (*ibid.*) sont remises en cause.

Le succès de Baudoux était, en effet, fondé sur la connaissance du monde kanak. En tant que *stockman*, il se vantait d'avoir pu assister aux veillées de contes autour du feu, d'avoir reçu un nom kanak, « Thiosse ». Ceci lui confère une certaine crédibilité, et la société coloniale lui reconnaît une expérience. En effet, le paradoxe de Baudoux est d'être profondément attaché à une terre ; sentiment qui ne peut être compris qu'en adoptant un regard autre, celui de ceux que la mission coloniale ordonne de dominer. Baudoux ne peut donc formuler que deux possibilités : céder aux impératifs coloniaux et industriels ou préférer « les œuvres durables » de « l'agriculture ».

Les paysages miniers de la Nouvelle-Calédonie soumettaient donc les auteurs (également idéologues de l'empire) à un impossible esthétique. La désolation, la violence des populations qui y travaillent (condamnés et ouvriers sous contrat de « chair humaine ») en faisaient un enfer où il semble impossible de chanter la grandeur coloniale. La mine ne peut donc se rêver que « de loin », en périphérie ou, comme Ordinaire en 1889, en suggérant le courage nécessaire pour y travailler à travers des descriptions paysagères. En 1915, Baudoux tente d'affronter cet impossible, mais toujours en périphérie. Du point de vue de la temporalité de « Sauvages et Civilisés », la mine n'existe pas encore puisque nous y suivons des prospecteurs. En revanche, elle est évoquée comme une catastrophe à venir. Les ravages sur les flancs des montagnes annoncent uniquement l'essor économique et les progrès techniques ; l'agriculture est, en revanche, le rêve d'une harmonie retrouvée.

Ouvertures et interrogations kanak

Il en va tout autrement pour le monde kanak, où l'activité minière suggère la variété de la domination coloniale : spoliations foncières, déportation, profanation des lieux de culture et, plus encore, des lieux tabous. Il faut, cependant, rappeler l'impact intellectuel de Jean-Marie Tjibaou, qui a participé à réinventer l'imaginaire de l'activité minière en l'intégrant à sa vision de l'indépendance et en affirmant la possibilité et la nécessité pour les Kanak d'y prendre part (Tjibaou, 1996 ; voir aussi Mokaddem, 2011). C'est sûrement dans les discours qu'il prononce en 1978 pour le Congrès de l'Union Calédonienne (UC) à Maré que l'on assiste à un changement de perspective. Dans le prolongement du mot d'ordre d'alors – « Calédonie, notre patrimoine » – Jean-Marie Tjibaou affirme que la mine est un « patrimoine » (Mokaddem, 2009) au même titre que les chants, les contes ou les pratiques de pêche et de chasse. Le défi était lancé de transformer l'industrie minière pour la faire entrer dans une réalité kanak.

Dans l'expression et l'histoire littéraires de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, l'activité minière a donc successivement été formulée comme un projet puis comme un haut fait de la conquête coloniale. Projet, dans la mesure où il s'agissait, dès 1853, de trouver la vocation économique de la colonie. Conquête, car une fois entamée à partir de la fin des années 1870, l'exploitation du nickel devenait fondatrice de la Nouvelle-Calédonie.

On peut dire que, jusqu'aux débuts des années 1970 (à la période du « boom » du nickel), la représentation proposée par Baudoux va connaître une cristallisation en même temps qu'un début de remise en question par le monde

kanak. La première interférence vient des *Foulards rouges* et du *Groupe 78*, entités politiques issues de la première génération d'étudiants kanak influencés par Mai 68 et les lectures de Fanon (Chappell, 2003/2013). Les montagnes éentrées et les plateaux miniers ne sont pour eux que les symboles d'un vieil héritage colonial, de terres confisquées et d'inégalités sociales rampantes. À défaut de faire disparaître la mine, peut-être faut-il la conquérir, la transformer en la plaçant au cœur d'un nouveau projet politique et économique.

Sur le plan littéraire, les œuvres de Déwé Görödé et Pierre Gope procèdent à un inventaire historique des douleurs, leur écriture relève de ce que Patrick Sultan nomme le « trauma », c'est-à-dire :

« [qu'elles] sont des réponses (qui peuvent être multivoques, complexes et obliques) à un passé colonial qui a laissé des traces qu'elles explorent et d'une mémoire qu'elles ravivent » (Sultan, 2011 : 28).

Ici, les paysages sont évoqués à partir d'un vécu colonial de la mine : celui des terres profanées, des clans déportés et démantelés. Aussi, lorsque Déwé Görödé publie le recueil *Sous les cendres des conquies* en 1985, on ne peut que mieux saisir ce qui a été un des points de départ d'un nouveau regard posé sur le nickel en Nouvelle-Calédonie, l'amorce d'un changement d'imaginaire. La section 3 du recueil, intitulée « Terre Nickel », réunit onze poèmes composés entre 1970 et 1985, certains alors que Déwé Görödé était incarcérée pour son activisme politique. Ces poèmes affirment ce que la mine ne doit plus être ; en montrant une réalité, ils appellent à en inventer une autre. C'est la première interférence avec le mythe colonial élaboré depuis les débuts de la prospection. Voici ce qu'en dit Déwé Görödé dans son poème « Et les prospectus » :

« Îles du nickel
profit des rapaces
mon pays pillé du Pacifique
mon peuple colonisé d'Océanie
qui s'éveille à nouveau
Et les prospectus ne parlent que de
sable chaud
soleils couchants
gens heureux
des mers du Sud » (Görödé, 1985 : 59)

Les « Îles du nickel » relèvent d'une propagande coloniale. Dans *Sous les cendres des conquies*, la mine c'est aussi « Madame Multinationale [qui] a des tentacules intercontinentales [et] ne comprend aucune langue de la terre » (Görödé, 1985 : 63-64). Dans ce poème daté de 1970, l'aventure et le labeur des stockmen et prospecteurs ont disparu, ils ont désormais leur envers, qui est associé aux mensonges touristiques des « prospectus » : ceux

qui attirent les spéculateurs « rapaces ». Et les images peuvent se faire encore plus violentes :

« Kanaky
quelque part en toi brille le nickel
qu'ils voudraient tous laper de leur museau
de tous des multinationales. » (Görödé, 1985 : 63-64)

Nommer le pays rêvé (Darot, 1997), c'est déjà en reprendre possession, l'inventer et lui donner vie. Cependant, la mine que regarde Déwé Görödé tient encore à distance le monde kanak. Les différentes séquences politiques que la Nouvelle-Calédonie connaît de 1984 à 1988 contribueront à un rapprochement. La poésie permet de s'emparer des mots « nickel », « mine » ou du sigle de la « SLN » et de réveiller une autre mémoire. En 1985, dans le poème « Nickel », ils renvoient à la désolation : « les eaux jaunâtres », « les crêtes déchirées et les pentes déchiquetées » prises d'assaut par des « tentacules de fer ». Quant à la SLN, elle représente « trois lettres incandescentes dans la chair les entrailles du pays » (*ibid.*). Le titre du poème « Fer rouge », renvoie au marquage, à l'image des corps suppliciés. Le paysage qui se dessine en négatif est celui du silence et de la mort. Surtout, son évocation permet ici de formuler un projet tout aussi poétique que politique. Le nom de « Kanaky » est en effet prononcé ; la désolation des paysages annonce ici un pays à naître et permet de proclamer une différenciation.

L'accord de Nouméa en 1998 annonce la nécessité de nouvelles symboliques où les intérêts miniers doivent être conjugués avec d'autres valeurs. Comment entrer dans la mine quand on est kanak ? Comment regarder une industrie minière qui a d'abord signifié spoliation et humiliation ? Ne court-on pas le risque d'une corruption, d'une trahison des siens ? Le monde kanak qui aborde la question minière trois ans après la signature de l'accord de Nouméa est travaillé par des dynamiques douloureuses et contradictoires. Dans *Le dernier crépuscule* (2001), ces questions mettent en tension une tribu isolée de la chaîne ; Pierre Gope met en scène les négociations qui ont préfiguré la naissance du projet Koniambo (Horowitz, 2003, 2004). La montagne est le premier paysage de la pièce – le décor – lieu de mémoire, lieu des ancêtres. La mine apparaît alors en négatif. Elle est d'abord une rumeur venue de la ville. Cette rumeur grandit :

« Parait-il que notre village sera renversé, et que nous allons vivre à l'envers » (Gope, 2001 : 17)

demande le Vieux Saké. Un jeune Kanak diplômé « Chargé de mission » (Gope, 2001 : 8), représentant de la compagnie minière, tente

de convaincre les anciens et les autres « jeunes » en brandissant des mots – « modernité », « développement », « technologie » – que Gope fait apparaître comme de véritables mirages, de nouvelles séparations entre les générations. Pour une partie des anciens, la mine est l'imminence d'une catastrophe ; pour les jeunes, elle représente un nouvel horizon : la technologie, le développement, l'occasion de participer au monde. Le constat du Vieux Wapo est plein de dépit :

« Aujourd'hui, c'est par la bouche d'un enfant du pays que l'État parle, pour nous demander de partir et d'abandonner nos terres et nos dieux » (Gope, 2001 : 32).

Mais l'« enfant du pays », après avoir obtenu l'accord des anciens, décède brutalement. Et les questions demeurent, ainsi que les spéculations les plus alarmantes. Cette mort est vécue comme une fatalité, le prix à payer d'une compromission, Pa Saké tranche : « la technologie, c'est celle qui a tué notre frère, c'est celle qui ronge nos montagnes, comme des bancoules dans les bancouliers » (Gope, 2001 : 75). La démarche initiée par le jeune Kanak diplômé est assimilée à une trahison, symboliquement, il est « mort » aux yeux des anciens en voulant livrer la terre ancestrale aux machines. Ce à quoi un « Jeune » réplique : « la technologie, c'est une nécessité aujourd'hui » (*ibid.*). Naïveté, lucidité implacable ou pire, corruption ? Ici, la mine nous confronte à un irrésolu, en remettant en question le lien à la terre qui est au cœur du monde kanak (Horowitz, 2008).

Le dernier crépuscule (2001) est publié un an après le décès tragique de Raphaël Pidjot – la référence est à peine dissimulée –, premier Kanak devenu président de la SMSP (Société minière du Sud Pacifique) en 1990, soit deux ans après la signature des accords de Matignon (Pitoiset et Wéry, 2009). Les questions soulevées par le drame de Pierre Gope dépassent l'aspect littéraire de la représentation minière. Elles mettent en évidence un clivage entre tenants de la construction économique de l'indépendance et tenants d'une préservation écologique de la nature en lien avec la société kanak. Ce débat interne au monde politique kanak se perpétue aujourd'hui par le recours par le comité Rhéébù Nùù créé en 2002 au discours de l'autochtonie sur la légitimité (Horowitz, 2008).

Conclusion

C'est l'expression d'une confrontation des imaginaires et celle du défi de l'adaptation qui se pose à travers la littérature. Un nouvel horizon de possibles a été déployé, reste à savoir comment

les investir (Bensa et Freyss, 1994) dans le cadre de l'émergence du nationalisme kanak et la signature des accords politiques (Matignon en 1988 et Nouméa en 1998). La mine est devenue une présence quotidienne dont on fabrique en permanence de nouvelles représentations, processus auquel l'expression littéraire participe activement. Elle constitue un champ de projections à partir duquel l'espace, l'histoire et les rapports sociaux peuvent être pensés et sont à même d'évoluer (Demmer, 2007). La signature de l'accord de Nouméa en 1998 a mis en lumière les enjeux déployés autour des revendications indépendantistes kanak et l'élaboration d'un imaginaire de l'exploitation minière où se superposent pragmatisme économique, désir d'indépendance, reconnaissance culturelle, souci de paix civile et écologie.

Ainsi, les expériences du nickel restituées par la littérature donnent à voir une complexité anthropologique à valoriser dans ce « faire-mémoire » que préconise l'accord de Nouméa. On peut considérer que l'écrivain puise dans un terreau particulier et que son œuvre n'est qu'un écho amplifié de rêves, de projets, d'utopies, de joies ou de haines. La littérature, lorsqu'elle s'empare de la mine, souligne la plupart des contradictions, des désirs d'invention, de contestations qui travaillent et font la Nouvelle-Calédonie contemporaine.

BIBLIOGRAPHIE

- ACCORD SUR LA NOUVELLE-CALÉDONIE SIGNÉ À NOUMÉA LE 5 MAI 1998, 1998 (27 mai). *Journal officiel de la République française (JORF)* 121, p. 8039.
- ANDERSON Benedict, 2006 (1^e éd 1983). *L'imaginaire national : Réflexions sur l'origine et l'essor du nationalisme*, Paris, La Découverte.
- ANOVA-ATABA Apollinaire, 1969. Deux exemples de réflexions mélanésiennes, *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 25, pp 201-237.
- BANARÉ Eddy, 2012. *Les récits du nickel en Nouvelle-Calédonie (1853-1960)*, Paris, Honoré Champion, Collection Francophonies.
- BARBANÇON Louis-José, 2003. *L'archipel des forçats. Histoire du bagne de Nouvelle-Calédonie (1863-1931)*, Paris, Presses universitaires du Septentrion.
- BAUDOIX Georges, 1979. *Les blancs sont venus*, t. 2, Nouméa, Société d'études historiques de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, Publications de la SEHNC 20.
- BENCIVENGO Yann, 1999. *La mine en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, Nouméa, Île de lumière.

- , 2008. La mine, conflits d'hier et d'aujourd'hui, in Sylvette Boubin-Boyer (éd.) *Conflits et Guerres mondiales en Nouvelle-Calédonie et dans sa région* (t. 1), Paris, L'Harmattan, pp 287-301.
- BENSA Alban et Jean FREYSS, 1994. La société kanak est-elle soluble dans l'argent... ?, *Terrain* 23, pp. 11-26.
- BHABHA Homi K., 2007 (1^e éd 1994). *Les lieux de la culture*, Paris, Payot.
- BUTTET Catherine, 2000. La banque de la Nouvelle-Calédonie. Existence éphémère, expérience oubliée (1874-1877), *Cahiers d'histoire* 45, 1, pp 71-105.
- CHAPPELL David, 2003. The Kanak Awakening of 1969-1976: Radicalizing Anti-Colonialism in New Caledonia, *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 117 : *Nouvelle-Calédonie. 150 ans après la prise de possession*, Isabelle Leblic (éd.), pp. 187-202 (<http://jso.revues.org/1268>).
- , 2013. *The Kanak Awakening: The Rise of Nationalism in New Caledonia*, Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, Pacific Island Monograph Series, 27.
- COLLOT Michel. 2011. Pour une géographie littéraire, *Fabula-LhT8 : Le partage des disciplines* (<http://www.fabula.org/lht/8/collot.html>).
- COQUILHAT Georges, 1987. *La Presse en Nouvelle-Calédonie au XIX^e siècle*, Nouméa, Société d'études historiques de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, Publications de la SEHNC 38.
- DAROT Mireille, 1997. Kanaky ou Caillou ? Implicites identitaires dans la désignation de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, *Mots* 53 : *La Nouvelle-Calédonie après les accords de Matignon*, pp. 8-25 (http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/mots_0243-6450_1997_num_53_1_2444).
- DAUPHINÉ Joël, 1989. *Les spoliations foncières en Nouvelle-Calédonie (1853-1913)*, Paris, L'Harmattan.
- DEMME Christine, 2007. Autochtonie, nickel et environnement : une nouvelle stratégie kanake, *Multitudes* 39, pp. 43-48 (<http://www.vacarme.org/article1306.html>).
- DIDI-HUBERMAN Georges, 2010. *Remontages du temps subi : L'œil de l'histoire* 2, Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit, Paradoxe.
- DO Tess, 2008. Exile: Rupture and Continuity in Jean Vanmaï's *Chân Dang* and *Fils de Châm Dang*, in Paul Allatson et Jo McCormack (éd.), *Exiles Cultures, Misplaced Identities*, Rodopi, pp. 151-172.
- DUBREUIL Laurent, 2008. *L'empire du langage, colonies et francophonie*, Paris, Hermann, Savoirs Lettres.
- DURAND Jean-François, 2008. Littératures coloniales, littératures d'empire ?, *Romantisme* 139, 1, pp. 47-58 (<http://www.cairn.info/revue-romantisme-2008-1-page-47.htm>).
- FOUCAULT Michel, 2008 (1^e éd. 1969). *L'archéologie du savoir*, Paris, Gallimard, Tel.
- GAGNÉ Natacha et Marie SALAÛN, 2013. Les chemins de la décolonisation aujourd'hui : perspectives du Pacifique insulaire, *Critique Internationale* 60, pp. 112-132.
- GARDE François, 2005. Le préambule de l'accord de Nouméa, prologue d'une histoire officielle ?, *Revue française de droit constitutionnel* 64, pp. 805-811.
- GARNIER Jules, 1991 (1^e éd. 1867). *Voyage à la Nouvelle-Calédonie 1863-1865*, Paris, Zulma.
- GASSER Bernard et Alain SOLLIER, 1996. *Georges Baudoux, la quête de la vérité*, Nouméa, Grain de Sable.
- GEGOUT Ernest et Charles MALATO, 1891. *Prison fin de siècle : souvenirs de Pélagie*, Paris, G. Charpentier et E. Fasquelle.
- GOPE Pierre, 2001. *Le dernier crépuscule*, Nouméa, Grain de Sable.
- GÖRÖDÉ Déwé, 1985. *Sous les cendres des conquêtes*, Nouméa, Édipop.
- GRANIER Caroline, 2008. *Les briseurs de formules. Les écrivains anarchistes en France à la fin du XIX^e siècle*, Cœuvres-et-Valsery, Ressouvenances.
- HOROWITZ Leah S., 2003. La micropolitique de la mine en Nouvelle-Calédonie : analyse des conflits autour d'un projet minier au sein d'une communauté kanak, *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 117 : *Nouvelle-Calédonie. 150 ans après la prise de possession*, Isabelle Leblic (éd.), pp. 254-271.
- , 2004. Toward a Viable Independence? The Koniambo Project and the Political Economy of Mining in New Caledonia, *The Contemporary Pacific* 16, 2, pp. 287-319.
- , 2008. Destroying God's creation or using what He provided?: Cultural models of a mining project in New Caledonia, *Human Organization* 67, 3, pp. 292-306.
- JAMESON Fredric, 2012 (1^e éd. 1981). *L'inconscient politique : le récit comme acte socialement politique*, Paris, Questions théoriques.
- LE MEUR Pierre-Yves, 2009. Opérateurs miniers, gouvernementalité et politique des ressources

- à Thio, Nouvelle-Calédonie, *Actes du Pacific Science Intercongress* (Papeete, 3-6 mars 2009) (http://webistem.com/psi2009/output_directory/cd1/Data/articles/000166.pdf).
- , 2010. La terre en Nouvelle-Calédonie : pollution, appartenance et propriété intellectuelle, *Multitudes* 41, pp. 91-98.
- MERLE Isabelle, 1995. *Expériences coloniales, la Nouvelle-Calédonie (1853-1920)*, Paris, Belin.
- , 1998. La Construction d'un droit foncier colonial. De la propriété collective à la constitution des réserves en Nouvelle-Calédonie, *Enquête* 7, pp. 97-126.
- MOKADDEM Hamid, 2007. *Œuvres et trajectoires d'écrivains de Nouvelle-Calédonie*, Nouméa, Expression - Province Nord.
- , 2009. *Pratique et théorie kanak de la souveraineté... 30 janvier 1936, Jean-Marie Tjibaou, 4 mai 1989...*, Nouvelle-Calédonie, province Nord.
- , 2011. *Le discours politique kanak. Jean-Marie Tjibaou, Rock Déo Pidjot, Éloi Machoro, Raphaël Pidjot*, Koné, Les Éditions de la province Nord.
- , 2014. *Apollinaire Anova. Une conception kanak du monde et de l'histoire (1929-1966)*, Nouméa/Marseille, Expressions, La courte échelle/Éditions transit.
- ORDINAIRE Francisque, 1889. Chroniques (22 avril 1889, 24 avril 1889, 30 avril 1889, 8 mai 1889), *Le Colon de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, archives de la Nouvelle-Calédonie.
- PETIT Michèle, 2010. « Ici, y'a rien ! » La littérature, partie intégrante de l'art d'habiter, *Communications* 87 : *Autour du lieu*, pp. 65-75.
- PISIER Georges, 1971. Les déportés de la Commune à l'île des Pins, Nouvelle-Calédonie, 1872-1880, *Journal de la Société des océanistes* 31, pp. 103-140 (http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/jso_0300-953x_1971_num_27_31_2322).
- PITOISSET Anne et Claudine WÉRY, 2009. *Mystère Dang*, Paris, Rayon Vert.
- PROVIDENCE Mathieu, 2005. Boulanger avant le boulangisme : un officier colonial tombé en République, *Politix* 72, 4, pp. 155-179.
- RANCIÈRE Jacques, 2010. *La parole muette. Essai sur les contradictions de la littérature*, Paris, Hachette Littérature, Collection Pluriel.
- RICŒUR Paul, 1985. *Temps et récit* (t. III), Paris, Seuil, Points Essais.
- ROE Emery, 1994. *Narrative Policy Analysis. Theory and Practice*, Durham-London, Duke University Press.
- SEILLAN Jean-Marie, 2008. La (para)littérature (pré)coloniale à la fin du XIX^e siècle, *Romantisme* 139, 1, pp. 33-45 (<http://www.cairn.info/revue-romantisme-2008-1-page-33.htm>).
- SULTAN Patrick, 2011. *La scène littéraire postcoloniale*, Paris, Le Manuscrit, Esprit des Lettres.
- THOMPSON Anne-Gabrielle, 2000. *John Higginson. Un spéculateur-aventurier à l'assaut du Pacifique : Nouvelle-Calédonie, Nouvelles-Hébrides*, Paris, L'Harmattan.
- TJIBAOU Jean-Marie, 1996. *Présence kanak*, Paris, Odile Jacob.
- VANMAÏ Jean, 1980. *Chân Dang: Les Tonkinois de Calédonie au temps colonial*, Nouméa, Société d'Études historiques, Publication de la SEHNC 24.
- , 1983. *Fils de Chân Dang*. Nouméa, Éditions de l'Océanie.
- WINOCK Michel, 1986. *La fièvre hexagonale : les grandes crises politiques, 1871-1968*, Paris, Seuil, Point Histoire.

La mine comme site artistique: un projet de *Land Art* en province Sud, Nouvelle-Calédonie. Témoignage et réflexion esthétique

par

Florence GIULIANI*

RÉSUMÉ

Dans le récit d'une recherche esthétique à partir de la commande d'une œuvre de type Land Art par la province Sud de Nouvelle-Calédonie, pour un terrain de mine orpheline, Florence Giuliani, artiste plasticienne travaillant depuis une vingtaine d'années en Nouvelle-Calédonie, retrace les différentes étapes d'un projet qui a vu sa réalisation inaugurée le 20 décembre 2013, sur le site du mont Goumba sur la commune du Mont-Dore.

MOTS-CLÉS : mines, *Land Art*, histoire

ABSTRACT

Sculptor and installation artist, Florence Giuliani – who has been working in New Caledonia for over 20 years – provides an account of an aesthetic investigation she undertook for a project commissioned by South Province, New Caledonia. The author discusses the different development stages of a Land Art project, launched on 20 December 2013, located on an abandoned mining site on Mount Goumba (Mount-Dore).

KEYWORDS: mines, Land Art, history

Le récit de la démarche qui m'a permis d'aboutir aux différentes phases de conceptualisation artistique pour ce projet, au fur et à mesure qu'il se précisait, se fait ici en trois points, allant de la manière de penser la mine comme un site artistique à la réalisation du projet et à la constitution de l'équipe de travail, en passant par l'étape de modélisation du projet.

Penser la mine comme site artistique

Entre nature et impact de l'action humaine sur des sites naturels, des lieux comme les mines orphelines sont tout aussi chargés d'histoire que de caractéristiques géographiques très marquées.

On parle de « mine orpheline » lorsqu'il est impossible d'identifier le propriétaire d'un site minier afin d'en reprendre l'exploitation. Le terme désigne autant un vide juridique qu'un abandon géographique ; la revégétalisation de ces sites est quasi impossible sans intervention humaine (Sarrailh, 2002). Ce vide appelle des interrogations qui sont autant de tentatives de mises à jour de récits : Pourquoi a-t-elle été abandonnée ? Qui était propriétaire de cette mine ? Qui y travaillait ? etc. Lieux d'exploitation minière ayant été abandonnés sans plus y revenir, les mines orphelines portent les stigmates, non seulement de l'exploitation minière elle-même, mais aussi de l'érosion qui s'en est suivie. Les travaux scientifiques décrivent le phénomène :

* flogiuliani@yahoo.fr

« La destruction du couvert végétal des vastes superficies soumises aux exploitations forestières, minières et aux incendies qui leur sont liés, a pour conséquence une érosion très active [...]. Les particules arrachées transitent par les cours d'eau pour sédimenter par gravité depuis les estuaires jusqu'aux pentes externes du récif où parviennent les particules les plus fines [...]. Ce processus d'hypersédimentation est à l'origine de la destruction d'habitats marins. » (Richer de Forges et Pascal, 2008 : 95-112).

Les sites de mines orphelines en Nouvelle-Calédonie sont porteurs de cet impact majeur sur la biodiversité mais aussi d'une histoire humaine riche et paradoxale qui conjugue plusieurs types d'approche de l'environnement par différentes civilisations ayant des conceptions du lien de l'humain à la nature qui l'entoure radicalement différentes.

Pour les caractériser de façon sommaire, j'appellerais ces différentes approches : « logique d'identification » et « logique d'exploitation ». Ce sont ces deux notions, avec le choix de partir de l'idée de « civilisations » plus largement que de « cultures » qui m'ont permis d'orienter ma recherche esthétique. Pointer la différence entre « logique d'exploitation » et « logique d'identification » permet de souligner la disparité des considérations et priorités selon le groupe humain auquel on appartient, ici européen ou kanak. L'histoire minière en Nouvelle-Calédonie est marquée par des hommes comme Garnier, ingénieur découvreur d'une nouvelle sorte de nickel qui porte son nom, « la garniélite », le premier à avoir déposé un brevet pour l'exploitation industrielle du nickel calédonien. Higginson, également une figure marquante, homme d'affaire peu scrupuleux qui, comme le souligne le sous-titre de l'ouvrage qui lui est consacré par Anne-Gabrielle Thompson, est un « spéculateur-aventurier à l'assaut du Pacifique » (Thompson, 2000 : sous-titre).

Elle est également caractérisée par l'emploi de mains-d'œuvre d'origines très diverses, dont les descendants forment les différentes communautés ethniques du pays et dont les conditions de travail donnent sens également au choix de parler de « logique d'exploitation », comme le souligne la description suivante :

« Pendant un siècle, des milliers d'ouvriers venus d'Asie, d'Europe et de Polynésie sont employés sur les mines. Les forçats, prêtés par l'administration pénitentiaire, puis les engagés volontaires d'Asie, permettent aux sociétés minières de se développer. La colonie comptera jusqu'à 14 535 engagés asiatiques en 1923, c'est-à-dire trois mineurs sur quatre, qui vivent dans des conditions extrêmement pénibles. » (Pitoiset, 2008 : 11)

Pour ce qui est du rapport singulier aux lieux des Kanak, je me suis rapprochée de M. Georges Mandaoué, homme politique et, surtout, an-

ancien membre du sénat coutumier (président 2001-2002), puis, en charge de l'animation des secteurs de l'identité kanak et des affaires coutumières au gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Calédonie (depuis mars 2011) :

« J'ai parlé de l'esprit de la terre parce que cette notion renvoie au plus profond de notre spiritualité. [...] Le rapport entre l'esprit et soi est toujours là, quel que soit l'endroit où l'on se trouve. Il va nous révéler des choses par rapport à cet endroit et ses connaissances vont se cumuler à celles que l'on possède déjà. Par exemple, si durant un siècle tes ancêtres ont vécu dans la chaîne, en montagne, toi, tu as appris à fonctionner avec les éléments reliés à cet environnement, pour te nourrir de la cueillette, la pêche dans les rivières, la chasse, te soigner avec les plantes médicinales qui t'ont été révélées... » (Mandaoué, 2009 : 18-19).

On saisit mieux ici l'écart entre deux conceptions de la terre. Or la gageure de la proposition qui m'était faite m'obligeait à penser possible l'intégration de ces points de vue apparemment irréconciliables. Un article de l'anthropologue Pierre-Yves Le Meur donne des éléments de réponse quant à une possibilité de sens renouvelé :

« Il s'agit plus exactement de concevoir la relation foncière sous deux angles symétriques : la terre comme ressource, potentiellement exploitable et appropriable ("la terre nous appartient"), la terre comme source de vie, principe de fertilité ("nous appartenons à la terre"). » (Le Meur, 2010 : 94).

Il s'appuie pour cela sur les travaux de Marylin Strathern sur la Papouasie Nouvelle-Guinée (Strathern, 2009) où la pression minière appelle à une urgente reformulation des termes de la propriété foncière :

« Marylin Strathern n'oppose pas ces deux points de vue sur la base de dichotomies simplistes (occidental/non occidental, capitaliste/non capitaliste) mais propose de réfléchir en termes de créativité plutôt que de productivité : "Penser la terre comme créatrice et ses produits comme des créations". Le registre de la création, de la capacité créative est exactement celui que le champ juridique subsume sous la catégorie de droit de propriété intellectuelle. Il permet de penser la terre à la fois comme ressource matérielle et immatérielle. Le versant immatériel de la terre s'exprime par sa fertilité, son potentiel reproductif et créateur, tout autant que par un récit fait de cheminements, d'alliances, de savoirs et de savoir-faire constitutifs d'un réseau liant la terre et ses possessions/possesseurs que sont les personnes passées, présentes et futures. » (*ibid.* : 94-95)

Il n'est pas un jour en Nouvelle-Calédonie qui ne soit marqué, d'une façon ou d'une autre, par l'enjeu minier, et c'est aussi de cette expérience au quotidien que je suis partie pour avancer dans une élaboration plastique. Un fait particulièrement marquant pour quelqu'un qui, comme

moi, habite à la périphérie de la ville de Nouméa : à l'entrée de la ville, la vieille usine de la SLN (Société Le Nickel) accueille, entre beauté paradoxale des sites industriels et lâchers de fumées toxiques et colorées, tous ceux qui s'aventurent dans la ville. Elle est à l'avant, en proue, comme pour dire l'importance de l'histoire minière avant toute autre histoire dans ce pays.

En m'interrogeant sur ce qui pouvait bien donner cette importance à cette activité-là précisément, en dehors du fait économique, j'en suis arrivée à la conclusion qu'une part d'inconscient lui était intensément liée.

Dans le lexique minier, c'est le terme « veine » qui s'est imposé à moi comme étant le plus approprié pour dire ce qui se joue ici d'essentiel.

Il m'a inspiré le texte d'intention du projet destiné à mes interlocuteurs de la province Sud.

En parallèle au cheminement qui a été le mien pour dégager une notion sur laquelle je pourrais élaborer une conceptualisation plastique dans le cadre particulier de l'intervention sur site de mine orpheline, je me suis familiarisée avec le travail de certains artistes du *Land Art* qui ont œuvré de façon monumentale – une des contraintes majeures du projet étant qu'il devait pouvoir se voir de loin.

Parmi les artistes du *Land Art*, ou possiblement associés à celui-ci, la démarche artistique de James Turrell et son commentaire par Georges Didi-Huberman m'attiraient, notamment, le propos sur l'artiste dans son lien à l'environnement et son geste dans celui-ci :

« L'artiste est inventeur de lieux. Il façonne, il donne chair à des espaces improbables, impossibles ou impensables : apories, fables topiques. » (Didi-Huberman, 2001 : quatrième de couverture).

Mais c'est la figure de Michael Heizer qui s'est imposée à moi comme étant la source d'inspiration, en quelque sorte tutélaire, la plus probante.

Michael Heizer, artiste actuel majeur du *Land Art*, qui a souvent œuvré dans des lieux de nature isolés dont, parfois, il a inventé des archéologies, a retenu mon attention plus particulièrement puisque, partant de l'idée de l'évocation de succession de civilisations et de leur relation à la nature, mais aussi de l'intention de dire quelque chose de cela dans le monde d'aujourd'hui, il me fallait pouvoir conjuguer des formes qui évoquent archéologie et contemporanéité dans le même temps, ce qui est le propre du travail de cet artiste.

Son œuvre intitulée *City*, « ville-sculpture » comportant des volumes de types murailles d'environ 1 mile de long dans le Comté de Lincoln dans le désert du Nevada aux États-Unis, m'a semblé pouvoir me donner la base d'un choix esthétique.

Michael Heizer dit de son œuvre *Double Négative*, deuxième référence pour moi dans sa production, qu'elle :

« [...] est la description littérale de deux incisions, mais elle a des implications métaphysiques puisqu'un double négatif est impossible. Il n'y a rien et pourtant, c'est toujours une sculpture. » (Heizer, 1970 : 4)

L'audace de cette démarche qui consiste à creuser dans un paysage me frappait : la part inversée de ce qui pourrait être monumental et visible de loin et devient monumental mais en creux et dont les traces visuelles accessibles (photos, vidéos...) laissent deviner un impact peut-être plus impressionnant encore par l'absence ou la disparition d'une forme qui a pu être gigantesque que celui de la forme « présente » elle-même.

J'estimais qu'en faisant un parallèle avec le travail de cet artiste, je pourrais inscrire la mine calédonienne dans une démarche de type « *Land art* » et je réussis à avancer dans la bonne direction. *City* et *Double negative* (Brown, 1984) de Michael Heizer me donnaient des clés pour proposer un agencement de volume en plein et en creux qui pouvaient correspondre à l'aspect sillon/veine de l'exploitation du minerai lui-même et à l'aspect de construction monumentale laissé par les traces de cette exploitation.

Modélisation du projet

En effet, ma préoccupation majeure était qu'il me fallait trouver une expression plastique qui englobe plusieurs points essentiels du projet, tels qu'ils se présentent dans le premier dossier rendu à mes interlocuteurs de la province Sud, à l'intention de la présidente de la Province, en février 2013, ici résumé :

« Pré-projet d'installation in situ sur mine orpheline :

veines métalliques
veines des mineurs qui gonflent sous l'effort
veine comme passage des ancêtres dans un grand corps
veine artistique
Que dit-on lorsqu'on parle de 'veine'
'avoir de la veine'
'trouver une veine'
'trouver la veine'?

Parler médical, infirmier, parler du chercheur de métal précieux, parler populaire...

D'une conception du monde comme grand corps traversé par des esprits qui le créent, l'animent, le visitent, à celle d'un monde dont les ressources naturelles sont exploitables, d'abord à merci et aujourd'hui avec, dans quelques cas, une conscience de la nature comme un grand corps, habité par une diversité biologique à préserver, à protéger.

Qu'est-ce qui irrigue un projet, de pays, de modèle économique, de modèle écologique ? L'histoire de la mine en Nouvelle-Calédonie est celle d'une destruction de paysage et d'une construction économique, des entrailles de la terre laissées béantes, épuisées, et d'un monde qui accède à la modernité. Une perte, un gain.

Aujourd'hui, à un moment charnière de son histoire, la Nouvelle-Calédonie continue de plus belle son histoire minière. Plus que jamais, dans ce contexte économique et politique, il est nécessaire de parler de l'humain et du paysage, d'une écologie et d'une poésie.

Trouver une nouvelle veine pour continuer l'histoire et, dans l'espoir d'un mieux-être collectif, qu'avoit de la veine ait du sens pour tous et chacun, y compris le paysage.

Une écologie pensée est porteuse d'une sève qui pourrait bien être celle d'une nouvelle veine qui nous aille, qui nous rassemble. [...]

Le projet artistique que la province Sud de la Nouvelle-Calédonie met en route aujourd'hui naît de la volonté que paysage et peuple de ce pays se rassemblent autour de l'idée de transformation/ métamorphose plutôt que de déchirure/ destruction.

Cela est possible, mais demande que soient mêlés, pour un baume sur les blessures, bien des ingrédients rares : paroles recueillies d'un vécu réel – ni magnifié, ni occulté – qui émerge et des blessures et de la construction dite pionnière de ce pays, de n'en écarter aucune et de s'inspirer des savoirs de toutes les communautés présentes en Nouvelle-Calédonie pour panser. C'est un début. Il nous faut certainement un mythe commun, tant il est vrai que les groupes humains fondent leur homogénéité d'abord ailleurs que dans la réalité matérielle, économique : il nous faut un projet qui ait sens pour tous. Un projet de civilisation plus encore qu'un projet culturel.

Dans l'histoire de l'art du xx^e siècle, le *Land Art* tient la place très particulière qu'on inventée, en précurseurs, l'art minimal, entre autres mouvements, et des personnalités comme Joseph Beuys, Alan Sonfist... Puis Robert Smithson, Christo et Jeanne-Claude, Richard Long, Andy Goldworthy [...]

Le choix d'un type d'intervention artistique inspirée du travail de Michael Heizer se fait en partant des constats, d'une part, de la grande richesse de l'histoire des mines et, d'autre part, des étonnantes structures visuelles laissées par l'exploitation des minerais.

Le paysage laissé par l'exploitation minière est d'emblée associé à une défiguration, une désolation... Or une intervention qui s'architecture en partant des caractéristiques d'un site tel qu'il est permet, par un biais, de lui donner une configuration nouvelle qui se met à évoquer tout autre chose.

On aborde, ici, l'histoire d'une construction. Celle d'un pays et celle d'un paysage. Notre époque permet un recul historique et demande une vision d'avenir. Cette intervention/construction qui reste ouverte doit pouvoir évoquer, dans le même temps, une archéologie et une contemporanéité.

Ici l'acte artistique posé ne clôt pas le sens. Il donne des indications :

- le sillon, la veine, la circulation qui est la richesse du pays, matérielle et immatérielle.

- la mise en valeur des terrasses, liée à la récurrence de ces formes dans l'histoire du pays avec l'architecture de la culture du taro puis celle de la mine. [...]

- le tressage et/ou le tissage qui vient protéger, dans certaines des propositions, le sillon creusé. Ici c'est une intervention à moyenne échelle, dont la réalisation pourrait être confiée à un groupe de femmes kanak en lien avec le site sélectionné. Elle entre dans la logique du lien intime de l'humain à son lieu. L'élément tressé aura une durée de vie éphémère. Il est aussi une référence au "panier de richesse" des grandes coutumes Kanak qui permet de connaître et de dire sa richesse puis de la partager, de la distribuer. » (Extraits du dossier remis à la présidente de la province Sud, février 2013)

Aujourd'hui, j'ajouterais, en confirmant que cette mouture du projet correspondait bien, pour moi, à l'identité des lieux et des enjeux de la mine orpheline, une description de ce que je nommerais l'« esprit de réparation » que j'associe au projet d'intervention pour lequel j'avais écrit ce dossier. Je le décrirais comme étant la volonté de stopper l'hémorragie due à l'érosion majeure des sites anciennement exploités qui semble indiquer, par analogie, qu'il existe bel et bien une conscience qu'il est nécessaire de stopper la destruction de l'esprit du pays. On peut l'espérer tout du moins. La mise à jour de certaines réalités historiques, concernant les différentes communautés présentes en Nouvelle-Calédonie, permet d'aller plus avant dans la compréhension et l'acceptation des unes par les autres. C'est à ce mouvement de reconnaissance identitaire, par les communautés elles-mêmes par rapport à leur propre histoire et entre les communautés que j'associe la réhabilitation de sites naturels défigurés avec « esprit de réparation ». J'ajouterais également une référence à Augustin Berque et à son étude sur l'art de dresser des pierres dans le jardin japonais :

« Quand on dresse des pierres, eh bien, souffle un vent-sentiment qui se joue de la frontière entre l'agissant et l'agi, le sujet et l'objet, le lieu et l'œuvre. Il y a trajection: franchissement des limites auxquelles se tient le dualisme. » (Berque, 1997 : 212)

Ce que j'avais voulu essayer de traduire en tout premier lieu dans cette proposition, c'est une résolution plastique de la dualité entre l'exploitation d'un lieu, donc sa destruction, et sa construction, dans le même mouvement. La juxtaposition de conceptions du lien de l'humain à son lieu, au départ radicalement différentes mais trouvant, par une traduction visuelle, une « possibilité » et une forme dynamique incluant le(s) passé(s) des lieux et tendue vers un avenir, était bien ma priorité.

Je prolongerais également l'idée de l'architecture en terrasses comme forme récurrente de l'architecture humaine en précisant que chaque individu, à quelque civilisation qu'il appartienne, peut y retrouver des références qui font sens pour lui et ce que l'origine de la forme soit liée à une cosmogonie, une spiritualité et/ou une nécessité matérielle.

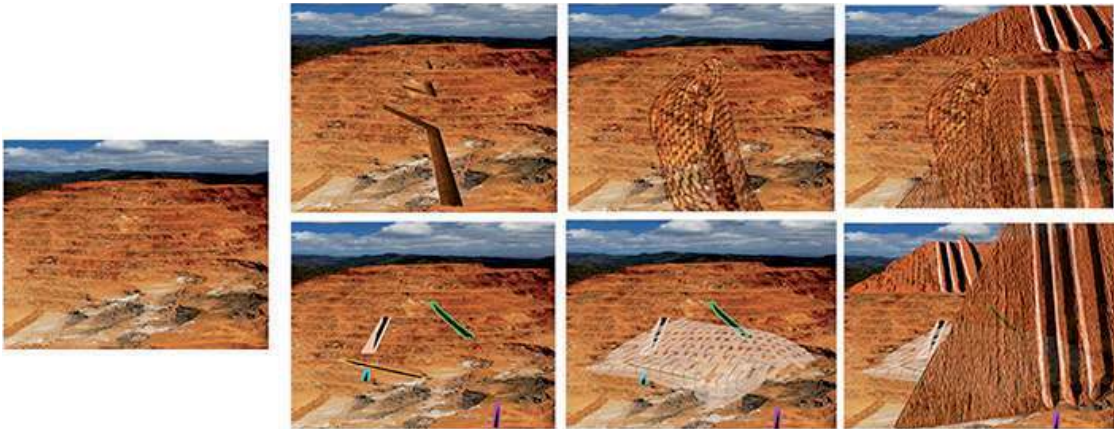


FIGURE 1. Essai visuel sur mine de Thio. Travail infographique comprenant des éléments visuels empruntés à Michael Heizer (cliché Giuliani, 2013, Nouméa, Nouvelle-Calédonie)

Un des défis du projet, sur un tel site minier en Nouvelle-Calédonie, est que le lieu est, d'une part, « chargé » spirituellement, comme tout lieu dans la conception kanak et ce, qu'il ait été habité ou pas, et, dans ce cas, le lieu a pu être un lieu de passage des esprits et/ou structuré par les chemins coutumiers ; il n'existe pas de lieu « où il n'y avait rien » en Nouvelle-Calédonie ; d'autre part, transformé matériellement, avec des effets très importants et devenues dominants.

« Or ce territoire n'était pas vide. La Grande Terre et les Îles étaient habitées par des hommes et des femmes qui ont été dénommés Kanak. Ils avaient développé une civilisation propre, avec ses traditions, ses langues, la coutume qui organisait le champ social et politique. Leur culture et leur imaginaire s'exprimaient dans diverses formes de création. L'identité kanak était fondée sur un lien particulier à la terre. Chaque individu, chaque clan se définissait par un rapport spécifique à une vallée, une colline, la mer, une embouchure de rivière et gardait la mémoire de l'accueil d'autres familles. Les noms que la tradition donnait à chaque élément du paysage, les tabous marquants certains d'entre eux, les chemins coutumiers structuraient l'espace et les échanges... » (Signataires de la déclaration solennelle du 23 août 2002..., 2002 : 12-13)

Une fois ce dossier d'intention rendu à la présidence de la province Sud, faisant une large place à la structure en terrasses d'une part et au sillon et au tressage le recouvrant, d'autre part, une deuxième phase de recherche s'est effectuée qui m'a mis en contact avec de nombreux interlocuteurs, dans des domaines liés de très près à la réhabilitation des sites miniers.

Cette phase s'est déroulée une fois le choix du site d'intervention arrêté et l'intention clairement exprimée de procéder effectivement à la mise en place d'une œuvre ayant un aspect monumental visible de loin mais aussi un aspect plus intime allant dans le sens d'une réparation, d'un soin apporté à un lieu.

Le choix du site s'est arrêté sur celui de la mine des Barbouilleurs, sur la commune de Dumbéa, limitrophe de la ville de Nouméa, qui paraissait particulièrement indiqué pour la réalisation du projet pour plusieurs raisons : le site lui-même donnait à voir déjà, dans sa configuration, comme les restes archéologiques d'une cité et il était prévu de le réhabiliter dans l'année, ce qui permettait de conjuguer la mise en forme des volumes du projet et celui de la revégétalisation de la zone.

En effet l'aspect revégétalisation faisait aussi partie du projet et il était convenu que la réalisation inspirée du *Land Art*, par nature éphémère, surtout pour sa partie « intime », serait, d'une certaine façon, pérennisée par la végétation qui la recouvrirait. Ce choix d'une œuvre qui, à terme, disparaîtrait sous la végétation, était particulièrement important dans l'esprit de mes interlocuteurs. C'est précisément cette particularité qui semblait pouvoir décider les partenaires de la province Sud en matière de réhabilitation de sites miniers à accepter et suivre le projet.

Réalisation du projet, constitution des équipes de travail

C'est donc en partant de ce qui paraît déjà évoquer les vestiges d'une ancienne cité sur ce site de la mine des Barbouilleurs que j'ai proposé une intervention en plusieurs points à la présidente de la province Sud en mars 2013. Cette description complétait le premier dossier rendu qui avait établi la conception générale du projet sur ce type de site et ses implications, je n'y revenais donc pas et me focalisais sur les nouvelles données dues aux caractéristiques du site précis.

C'est cette proposition pour le site de la mine des Barbouilleurs qui comportait les éléments les plus en lien avec l'histoire ouvrière liée à la mine



FIGURE 2. – Travail infographique comprenant des éléments visuels empruntés à Michael Heizer (cliché Giuliani, 2013, Nouméa, Nouvelle-Calédonie)

puisque j'envisageais de faire apparaître, par endroits, des éléments évoquant des baraquements de mineurs. Par contre, la dominante des terrasses avait disparu : le site, très encaissé n'en comportait pas, en tout cas pas qui soient visibles de loin. La « cité ancienne » venait là remplacer la référence archéologique aux terrasses et me semblait convenir également, surtout pour un lieu jouxtant aujourd'hui des quartiers résidentiels, comme c'est le cas dans la commune de Dumbéa à proximité de l'entrée des routes menant à la mine.

En rencontrant des techniciens de la DIMENC (Direction de l'Industrie, des Mines et de l'Énergie en Nouvelle-Calédonie) ainsi qu'un bureau d'étude indépendant préparant le projet de réhabilitation du site de la mine des Barbouilleurs, il a rapidement été évident que le choix du site avait été fait sans prendre suffisamment en compte l'extrême friabilité du terrain dans la zone, ni le fait que la réhabilitation d'un site minier nécessite que les volumes présents sur ce site soient aplanis de façon à contrôler l'impact des coulées d'eau, donc de l'érosion. Pour le projet artistique, il nous fallait rehausser les volumes ou, pour le moins, les confirmer, pour leur impact visuel à distance. Nous étions donc dans une sorte de contre-sens.

La rencontre, par la suite, d'un topographe-géomètre qui avait fait le levé topographique de la zone confirmait l'impossibilité d'une opération du type prévu. Une alternative était proposée qui permettrait d'intervenir dans la dernière partie de la réhabilitation du site, en favorisant une mise en forme de type anamorphique. L'idée était de privilégier des points d'impact visuel qui

donneraient une illusion de volume à partir d'un point particulier où seraient placés les visiteurs. Ce point pouvait être choisi au niveau d'un trou d'eau, situé sur la branche nord de la rivière Dumbéa, ayant une vue particulièrement nette sur la mine des Barbouilleurs.

Après rapport fait de ces nouvelles données à mes interlocuteurs de la province Sud, il a été finalement convenu de déplacer le lieu du projet : le projet de réhabilitation de la mine des Barbouilleurs, d'une complexité évidente en raison de la nature du terrain, pouvait tout à fait être reculé dans le temps et nuire, de ce fait aussi, à la réalisation du projet artistique.

Il a été décidé alors de déplacer le projet au mont Goumba, sur la commune du Mont-Dore, également limitrophe de la ville de Nouméa. Le mont Goumba offre l'intérêt majeur d'être situé juste derrière le complexe commercial le plus important de la commune et de permettre à un large public d'avoir un accès visuel facile à la zone d'intervention.

Par ailleurs, le mont est aménagé, depuis plusieurs années, par la commune du Mont-Dore, en lieu de randonnée et de découverte botanique. De multiples points de vue sur la zone sélectionnée pour l'intervention artistique sont possibles. Pour accompagner l'intervention, il est décidé d'organiser également une exposition mêlant œuvres d'artistes plasticiens inspirés par le mont Goumba, panneaux pédagogiques élaborés par une association spécialisée dans la revégétalisation, exemples de volumes de tressage créés par des tresseuses habitant la tribu de Saint-Louis, qui jouxte la zone du mont Goumba, ainsi que la création, par des lycéens de la commune, d'un

volume inspiré par l'œuvre majeure du *Land Art* qu'est la *Spiral Jetty* de Robert Smithson.

Le mont Goumba, lieu facile d'accès et de présentation pour une œuvre dans la nature, a induit une inversion dans la proposition artistique en donnant la primauté aux éléments de tressage et en reléguant à un second plan les possibles volumes créés en rehaussant ou architecturant les masses de terre présentes sur le site. Cette proposition convenait à mes interlocuteurs, attachés à l'idée du pansement et très favorables au fait que ce serait des femmes de la tribu de Saint-Louis qui les fabriqueraient.

Gemma Ouaka, Marie-Christine Poitchili et Simone Moentéapo ont exprimé, chacune à leur tour, lors de mes visites sur place pour voir l'avancée de leur production, leur joie de pouvoir participer à un événement qui mette en valeur la tribu et qui leur permette de transmettre quelque chose de leur savoir, ne serait-ce que par la curiosité suscitée par les éléments inédits qu'elles fabriquaient. Cet événement leur permettrait d'espérer que des jeunes filles de la tribu pourraient être amenées à essayer leurs techniques si le projet se poursuit en 2014, comme il en est question. Le fait qu'elles aient, pour cette occasion, mis au point des techniques nouvelles qui leur permettent de fabriquer des éléments très volumineux par rapport aux paniers et autres objets artisanaux qu'elles fabriquent habituellement, leur donne un élan pour l'avenir. C'est comme si, maintenant, il leur était possible de fabriquer de nouvelles formes qui correspondent mieux à ce à quoi les jeunes sont sensibilisés aujourd'hui. Ou, en tout cas, qui réussissent à susciter leur intérêt voire leur admiration malgré leur tendance à privilégier des expressions plus violentes. Ceci a d'autant plus d'importance que Saint-Louis est un lieu très particulier comme l'indiquent les témoignages qui suivent et que la tribu est régulièrement pointée comme ayant un fonctionnement problématique. L'histoire du lieu et sa géographie apportent bien des éléments d'explication à cet état de fait.

« Contrairement aux autres tribus, qui ont des racines millénaires, Saint-Louis fête tout juste ses cent cinquante ans. C'est en fait une création des Français. Pour loger les bagnards, qui, une fois libérés, se voyaient offrir des terres, l'administration coloniale a déplacé des populations kanakes un peu partout dans le pays et les a regroupées à Saint-Louis en 1859. » (Tein, 2009)

La tribu est également particulière dans son emplacement géographique, sur la route principale reliant Nouméa au Mont-Dore :

« Si ça s'enflamme aussi vite ici, c'est aussi parce que beaucoup ont la rage. Pourtant, la vie n'est pas si mauvaise ici. Il y a la famille, il y a les champs. Mais le fossé est trop voyant entre nous et tout le fric

qu'il y a Nouméa. [...] J'habite juste à côté, près du virage du pont de la Thy. Je regarde passer les Porsche Cayenne, les camions de minerai. Moi, c'est ça qui me fend le cœur. » (Témoignage de Yvéric, 23 ans, ouvrier agricole, 20/09/2009, <http://www.humanite.fr/node/16676>)

Gamma Ouaka, l'une des tresseuses du projet, a ainsi exprimé ce qu'impliquait le projet du mont Goumba pour elle et les jeunes autour d'elle :

« Les jeunes qui passent ici, ils sont étonnés de ce que l'on fait, ils n'en croient pas leurs yeux. Il y en a même qui s'approchent et nous posent des questions. J'ai ma petite-fille qui habite à côté et qui passe par ici souvent qui m'a dit : "Mamie, on dirait un soleil ce que tu fais, c'est beau, ça te ressemble". J'espère que je pourrai entraîner quelques jeunes à venir nous aider si on continue l'année prochaine. » (Gemma Ouaka, Saint-Louis, entretien 2013)

Cette nouvelle mouture du projet qui met en avant le tressage, pour sa partie réalisée en 2013, est présentée au public sur un panneau explicatif de la démarche dans l'exposition accompagnant l'intervention *in situ*. Ce panneau met l'accent sur « le lien, le tissu comme pansement sur une zone endommagée par l'activité humaine, par les humains, dans un ensemble d'éléments fabriqués avec patience et soin » (Giuliani, extrait du texte présentant l'installation).

Ainsi l'on retrouve bien, en partie du moins, l'esprit initial du projet, dans une mouture rendue plus simple et modeste par la transformation de celui-ci et l'inversion des priorités : éléments tressés placés dans une logique de pansement sur un site endommagé par l'action humaine avant revégétalisation puis, dans un second temps, volumes sculptés devenus les éléments à découvrir au cours d'une randonnée.

Le site du mont Goumba n'a pas été un lieu d'exploitation minière à grande échelle, il a été surtout un terrain de prospection. Dans une logique de sens qui est partie intrinsèque de toute élaboration artistique, cela résonne d'une façon particulière. Un lieu de prospection n'engage pas autant de paramètres humains signifiants que ne le fait un lieu d'exploitation même s'il connaît aussi une histoire géologique et botanique très particulière et peut être très gravement endommagé comme le souligne l'extrait suivant d'une étude sur la biodiversité de Nouvelle-Calédonie :

« Les terrains miniers de Nouvelle-Calédonie occupent une superficie de 5 500 km², soit près du tiers de la superficie de l'île (Lafoy *et al.*, 2003 ; Pelletier, 2007). Leur exploitation, qui s'est poursuivie sans interruption de la fin du XIX^e siècle à nos jours, débute par une prospection intensive destinée à localiser les gisements les plus riches et les plus accessibles. Cette prospection nécessite le percement de nombreuses pistes qui fragmentent l'écosystème et favorisent les départs de feu dans une végétation sèche, particuliè-

rement sensible. » (Richer de Forges et Pascal, 2008 : 95-112)

Si l'impact environnemental est majeur, l'histoire humaine d'un site de prospection est moins vertigineuse que ne l'est celle d'un site d'exploitation. C'est sans doute ce qui a permis que l'intervention artistique se fasse de façon plus simple et concertée que ne l'aurait été une intervention sur un site de mine orpheline, forcément ancien lieu d'exploitation, comme il en était question au départ du projet, et cela, me semble-t-il, au-delà des problématiques techniques.

En esprit, une intervention du type de celle prévue dans le premier dossier remis à la direction de la province Sud reste possible. Plus d'expérience du terrain minier, de la logique de la réhabilitation minière et de la revégétalisation, permettront, peut-être, à terme, de faire aboutir une intervention plus volumineuse et spectaculaire sur un site d'ancienne exploitation minière.

Sans doute faut-il aussi que l'histoire minière du pays soit envisagée avec plus de facilité dans sa complexité et sa part de violence pour pouvoir réaliser un projet d'une envergure plus importante. Il me semble, en effet, qu'on ne peut produire une forme d'art spectaculaire, visible de loin, sans que l'histoire liée à cette forme ne soit clarifiée pour ses commanditaires comme pour l'artiste sollicité(e), et aussi pour le public qui sera témoin de cette forme.

Si l'aspect « civilisationnel » était intrinsèque au projet de plus grande envergure mettant en avant une archéologie, c'est plutôt d'aspect « culturel » qu'il est question ici, engrangeant moins de questionnement éthique et moins d'impact artistique en présentant, comme éléments principaux de la réalisation, des éléments de tissage, que l'on associe avec facilité aux pratiques artisanales et culturelles des femmes kanak.

La question de savoir ce que l'on a fait, dans la réalité de l'histoire du pays actée par les traces laissées dans son paysage, reste peu abordée ici, ou ne l'est « que » par le biais environnemental. Les réalités humaines plus violentes, et de l'exploitation des ressources d'un pays, de l'utilisation d'une main d'œuvre marquée par l'histoire de la colonisation, conjuguée aujourd'hui à celle de la mondialisation, et de l'histoire ouvrière, reste en marge.

Des écueils majeurs existent qui pourraient entraver la recherche nécessaire à la conceptualisation plus précise et à l'explication des choix d'une intervention plus monumentale dans le paysage minier calédonien : le manque d'informations et de témoignages directs de personnes ayant fait partie de la main d'œuvre d'origines multiples qui a travaillé sur les mines orphelines mais aussi le rapport à l'histoire et à la mémoire. Pour ce dernier, et dans le cas de l'histoire minière en Nouvelle-Calédonie, il me semble

intéressant de juxtaposer les idées suivantes, en choisissant tout d'abord un propos général sur la relation au passé :

« [...] Paul Ricoeur nous donne, avec *La Mémoire, l'Histoire, l'Oubli*, une somme philosophique pourtant d'une cohérence exemplaire, assise sur un processus méthodique d'examen de ce qui fonde la relation de l'homme au passé, présentée assez vite comme une relation incomplète et obscure ("l'énigme d'une représentation présente du passé absent", p. 511), marquée à la fois par la séparation de fait de l'homme d'avec son passé et par l'éclatement de la terminologie permettant de penser cette séparation. » (Vigier, 2000 : chap. 1)

À cela s'ajoute une question de méthode d'appréhension de l'histoire qui fait encore très certainement défaut dans le contexte calédonien :

« Se pose dès lors un autre problème, celui de l'épistémologie de l'histoire, par laquelle se trouve posée la question des rapports de la mémoire et de l'histoire comme "discipline scientifique et littéraire" (169), envisagée dans ses trois phases définies par Michel de Certeau : la phase documentaire (des témoins oculaires aux archives), la phase explicative/compréhensive (interprétation et recherche des causes) et la phase représentative (mise en forme littéraire ou scripturaire). » (*ibid.*)

Je me référerai ensuite au travail d'Eddy Banaré qui, à partir du récit minier calédonien, a particulièrement mis en évidence la nécessité d'un imaginaire fondateur héroïque pour une communauté, quand, par ailleurs, son histoire rend difficile qu'elle ait d'elle-même une image positive :

« Les mineurs deviennent une référence, s'imposent comme une nouvelle figure d'autorité. Ils pensent, émettent leur avis et sont en mesure d'annoncer et de garantir la prospérité. [...] Il n'y a pas vraiment eu de ruée vers l'or en Nouvelle-Calédonie comparable à l'Australie ou à la Californie. [...] Au lieu du rush c'est le doute qui semble progressivement s'installer [...] Le portrait du pionnier est né de là. L'Australie et la Californie ne sont plus enviées mais désormais citées en exemples de l'imprudence que les colons de la Nouvelle-Calédonie doivent éviter. C'est un appel à la sagesse. [...] Il s'agirait de dire à chaque colon qu'il est le personnage d'une grande chanson de geste, ou d'une épopée, qu'il participe à étendre le royaume. [...] Le portrait du prospecteur en martyr et presque messie est fondateur d'un imaginaire, c'est une vision romantique. Il y a, en Nouvelle-Calédonie, une refondation identitaire qui relie au pionnier plutôt qu'au bagnard » (Banaré, 2011, document audio)

On voit bien là toute la difficulté à mettre à jour suffisamment de faits avérés et à bousculer des mythes créés par la nécessité d'envisager sa place dans un espace de façon positive pour pouvoir concevoir un avenir et prospérer. Une forme monumentale dans cet espace amènerait peut-



FIGURE 3. Intervention in situ sur le Mont Goumba (cliché JCR, 2013, Mont Goumba, Nouvelle-Calédonie)

être trop de questions à la surface d'un ensemble qui comporte, encore aujourd'hui, énormément de choses tuées, ou racontées avec la nécessité d'un imaginaire héroïque.

Le projet d'intervention sur le Mont Goumba possède, une fois cela dit, un charme et un aspect accessible très émouvant. Il est une étape qui mêlent suffisamment de paramètres artistiques, associatifs, culturels, politiques et environnementaux pour être marquée du sceau de « l'esprit de réparation » nécessaire à notre époque et à ce pays.

Conclusion

L'intervention sur site sur le mont Goumba s'inscrit dans une continuité de ma recherche de plasticienne. Elle entretient des liens forts avec une série d'interventions que j'ai pu proposer depuis quelques années, qui cherchent à restituer le lien puissant entre l'humain et son environnement. Elle s'inscrit également, pour moi, dans une réflexion au long terme, nourrie par la pensée d'Édouard Glissant, qui cherche à rendre perceptible une « créolisation », selon le terme utilisé par l'auteur :

« La créolisation est la mise en contact de plusieurs cultures ou au moins de plusieurs éléments de culture distinctes, dans un endroit du monde, avec pour résultante une donnée nouvelle, totalement imprévisible par rapport à la somme ou à la simple synthèse de ces éléments. » (Glissant, 1997 : 37)

Si un certain nombre de réalisations préalables à l'invitation faite par la province Sud de Nou-

velle-Calédonie de donner forme à une intervention de type Land Art sur un site de mine orpheline m'a donné une base de réflexion pour une conceptualisation artistique, c'est l'idée d'aboutir une forme qui puisse conjuguer une allusion au passé et une dynamique vers l'avenir qui m'a guidée. Les questions de mémorialisation et de réparation me paraissent devoir être abordées dès qu'il s'agit d'envisager un possible devenir de sites miniers abandonnés comme on en trouve en très grand nombre en Nouvelle-Calédonie mais aussi dans de nombreux autres pays du Pacifique. L'intervention sur le mont Goumba peut être une première étape de collaboration interculturelle pour une recherche de formes artistiques sensibles qui mettent en évidence la possibilité d'un avenir renouvelé de ces sites.

BIBLIOGRAPHIE

- BANARÉ Eddy, 2012. Aspects du grand récit minier en Nouvelle-Calédonie, Nouméa, Centre culturel Tjibaou, Document audio 56 mn (http://mediatheque.adck.nc/mediath/son.cfm?urlson=mms://srv-opac/conference/12_0412_Banare.mp3¬ice=31407).
- BERQUE Augustin, 1997. Dresser les pierres, ou le lieu de l'œuvre, *Communications* 64, 64, pp. 211-219 (http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/comm_0588-8018_1997_num_64_1_1980).

- BROWN Julia (ed.), 1984. *Sculpture in reverse: Michael Heizer*, Los Angeles, Museum of Contemporary Art.
- DIDI-HUBERMAN Georges, 2001. *L'homme qui marchait dans la couleur (James Turrell)*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit.
- GIULIANI Florence, 2013. Notes et documents de travail, archives personnelles.
- GLISSANT Édouard, 1997. *Traité du Tout-monde*, Paris, Gallimard.
- HEIZER Michael, 2012 (12/08). Une œuvre in situ de l'américain Michael Heizer dans les Alpes suisses, Valais, communiqué de presse, Fondation 'Air & Art' (<http://www.air-art.ch/heizer/dossierpress-fr.pdf>).
- LE MEUR Pierre-Yves, 2010. La terre en Nouvelle-Calédonie : pollution, appartenance et propriété intellectuelle, *Multitudes* 41, pp. 91-98.
- MANDAOUÉ Georges, 2009. La perception kanak de l'environnement, *Mwa Vée* 63, pp. 16-23.
- PITOISET Anne. 2008. Le nickel en Nouvelle-Calédonie, Maison de la Nouvelle-Calédonie.
- RICHER DE FORGES Bertrand et Michel PASCAL, 2008. La Nouvelle-Calédonie, un « point chaud » de la biodiversité mondiale gravement menacé par l'exploitation minière, *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 126-127 : *Environnement dans le Pacifique Sud* (J. Trichet et I. Leblic édés), pp. 95-112 (<http://jso.revues.org/4052>).
- SARRAILH Jean-Michel, 2002. La revégétalisation des exploitations minières : l'exemple de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, *Bois et forêts des tropiques* 272/2, pp. 21-31.
- SIGNATAIRES DE LA DÉCLARATION SOLENNELLE DU 23 AOÛT 2002 DU PEUPLE AUTOCHTONE KANAK AFFIRMANT SON DROIT SUR L'ESPACE ET LE PATRIMOINE NATUREL DE KANAKY, 2009. *Mwa Vée* 63 (<https://fr.groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/kanaky/conversations/topics/4369>).
- STRATHERN Marilyn, 2005. Land: Intangible or Tangible Property?, Chesters Timothy (ed.), *Land Rights: The Oxford Amnesty Lectures 2005*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 13-38.
- TEIN Christian, 2009 (20/09). Nouvelle-Calédonie. Saint-Louis, l'enfant terrible, Paris, *L'Humanité* (<http://www.humanite.fr/node/16676>).
- THOMPSON Anne-Gabrielle, 2000. *John Higinson. Un spéculateur-aventurier à l'assaut du Pacifique : Nouvelle-Calédonie, Nouvelles-Hébrides*, Paris : l'Harmattan.
- VIGIER Yves, 2000. Une refondation de la mémoire (CR de Paul Ricœur, *La Mémoire, l'Histoire, l'Oubli*, Paris, Le Seuil, L'ordre philosophique) (<http://www.fabula.org/revue/cr/76.php>).

sommaire

Dossier Les mises en récit de la mine dans le Pacifique

- 5 Eddy Banaré et Pierre-Yves Le Meur : Histoire et histoires. Politique et poétique des récits miniers
- 23 Dan Jorgensen : Mining narratives and multiple geographies in PNG: Ok Tedi, Emerald cave and lost tribes
- 37 John Burton : Agency and the "Avatar" narrative at the Porgera gold mine, PNG
- 53 James Leach : "The time of money": property and sovereignty... (Madang, PNG)
- 63 Doris Bacalzo et al. : The revival of "clans" and other changes in Wampar social imaginaries (PNG)
- 77 Gordon Leua Nanau : Local experiences with mining royalties, law and livelihoods in the Salomon
- 93 Minerva Chaloping-March : Mining policy of the Philippines & resource nationalism / nation building
- 107 Nancy Pollock : Nauru Phosphate Mining... a history of a "natural resource curse" legacy
- 121 Julia Edwards : Phosphate mining and the relocation of the Banabans to Northern Fiji en 1945
- 137 Yann Bencivengo : La naissance de l'industrie du nickel en Nouvelle-Calédonie...
- 151 Eddy Banaré : Représentations littéraires des paysages miniers en Nouvelle-Calédonie...
- 165 Florence Giuliani : La mine comme site artistique... (Province Sud, Nouvelle-Calédonie)

Hors dossier

- 175 Anais de Haas : Les métaphores de séduction dans les journaux des marins français à Tahiti...
- 183 Bruno Saura : L'humanité en gestation, figures polynésiennes d'une autochtonie inachevée.
- 197 Éric Vandendriessche : Cultural and cognitive aspects of sting figure-making (Trobriand)

Miscellanées

- 213 Gilles Bounoure : Éléments sur la collection Moriceau
- 221 Philippe Peltier : Plumes and Pearshells à l'Art Gallery of New South Wales

Comptes rendus d'ouvrages par

- 225 Marie-Noëlle Ottino-Garanger : *Twelve days at Nuku Hiva. Russian Encounters and Mutiny...* (de E. Govor)
- 227 Gilles Bounoure : *Nukuoro. Sculptures from Micronesia* (de C. Kaufmann et O. Wick eds)
- 230 Isabelle Leblie : *Hommes et plantes de Maré (îles Loyauté, Nouvelle-Calédonie ...)* (de N. Lormée et al.)
- 231 Gilles Bounoure : *Melanesia. Art and Encounter* (de L. Bolton et al.)
- 232 Gilles Bounoure : *Objets d'art et art de l'objet en Océanie* (de D. Barbe et al.)
- 234 Gilles Bounoure : *Charles Rattou. L'invention des arts « primitifs »* (de P. Dagen et M. Murphy)
- 237 Gilles Bounoure : *Chiefs and Governors. Art and Power in Fiji* (de A. Herle et L. Carreau eds)
- 238 Isabelle Leblie : *Paroles d'un autochtone* (de Serge Massau)
- 241 Gilles Bounoure : *Sociologie du cannibalisme et Les mangeurs d'autres* (de Georges Guille-Éscuret)
- 246 Benoit Carteron : *Des sociétés dans l'État...* (d'É. Wittersheim)
- 249 Gilles Bounoure : *Surréalisme et arts primitifs...* (de C. Flubacher éd.)
- 253 Denis Monnerie : *Des cocotiers, des ignames et des hommes...* (de V. Lanouguère-Bruneau)
- 255 Marc Tabani : *Buveurs des kava* (de P. Siméoni et V. Lebot)
- 257 Gilles Bounoure : *Art de l'archipel Bismarck* (de Kevin Conru éd.)
- 260 Gilles Bounoure : *Kanak. L'art est une parole* (de R. Boulay et E. Kasarhérou eds)

Actes de la Société et actualités

- 263 Assemblée générale 2014 : bilan exercice 2013
- 267 Cinéma et conférences de la SdO
- 268 Livres reçus

Société des Océanistes

Musée du quai Branly, 222, rue de l'Université, 75343 – Paris cedex 07

Téléphone : +33 1 56 61 71 16 Fax : +33 1 56 61 53 19

e-mail : sdo@quaibrantly.fr

site internet : <http://www.oceanistes.org/oceanie/> & <http://sdo.revues.org>

Cotisation et abonnement : Paiements par chèque bancaire ou postal (Paris 494-14-S)

Membres de la Société (incluant l'abonnement) : 50 € par an

Membres de la Société (sans l'abonnement) : 15 € par an

Étudiants (sur justificatif, incluant l'abonnement) : 30 € par an

Abonnement au Journal (institutions) : 90 € par an

ISBN : 978-2-85430-118-2

Avec le soutien du



9 782854 301182