Images of development in different parts of Papua New Guinea have been constructed in remarkably divergent ways by local people, depending on their historical experiences since the time of first contact with Europeans. In many parts of the Highland region from the 1950s onwards development meant primarily agricultural change, in particular the cultivation of coffee, tea, and fresh vegetables as forms of cash crop. However, in certain areas which came under administrative control rather later and have tended to be left aside in the process of introducing new crops, this image has been displaced by that of the mining company, which will by its very presence, it is hoped, bring wealth into the area by tapping oil and mineral resources deep below the surface of the ground. An extreme case of this pattern of aspirations is found in the Lake Kopiago district in the far north-west part of the Southern Highlands Province. The example, I argue, shows a concordance between peripherality and dependence in the context of capitalist-driven change. The further implication here is that this kind of concordance should also hold elsewhere. Less peripheral areas will show a more independent ideology than those which are clearly “on the fringe”.

The Duna-speaking people of Lake Kopiago were first brought under administrative control from the late 1950s onwards, partly from Mount Hagen and partly from Koroba. Isolated patrols and explorations, however, had passed through the area since 1934, when the Fox brothers visited in search of gold, followed by James L. Taylor and John Black on the Hagen-Sepik patrol of 1938. Certain existing circumstances of the Duna predisposed them to look on these early patrols and the later incursions of the government officers and missionaries in ways which generated and later reinforced their sense of being peripheral and dependent. Chief among these circumstances were their position in regional trading networks and their experience of epidemic illnesses. In terms of trade, the area was dependent on others for its supply of stone axes, salt and shell valuables. Axes and cowrie shells came to the Duna adjacent to the Strickland river primarily from the direction of Oksapmin while salt packs came in from the east from the “Obena” people, that is, from Paiela and the Enga area. The Duna themselves thus had largely to rely on their pigs as a means of drawing in vital trade goods from elsewhere, yet these same pigs were affected, perhaps from as early as the 1940s, with new epidemics emanating from places exposed to outside contact further to the east (cf. Frankel 1986). In addition the human population was severely affected by epidemics of influenza and diarrhoea, which they attempted to combat by ritual means in a series of crisis cult performances. Their lack of success in dealing with these new perturbations probably shook their confidence in much the same way as is reported for the neighbouring Huli, and conduced both towards their acceptance of the obviously powerful whites who appeared shortly after these untoward events and at the same time to their contrapuntal belief that the arrival of the whites could presage the end of the world, an image which continues to haunt their thinking to this day.
All studies of this kind are interwoven with other elements from Duna ethnohistory, mainly traditions of volcanic ash (or in some instances frost or ice?) falls. Such falls of ash, known as *yu mò* (cf. the Huli *bingi*), are well documented for New Guinea as a whole and often associated with apocalyptic notions. In Duna tradition the ash fall is represented as a kind of world’s end, followed by world’s renewal in the form of increased fertility of crops. “World’s end” is, itself, signalised as “the ground finishing” and the theme of declining / increasing fertility comprises one important strand of concern within this multivocal symbol. One ethnohistorical tradition locates the previous ash fall at a genealogical depth of some five generations ago in the time of two ancestors Kuki Muya and Kuki Himuya, and it was thought that when their bones, kept in a special cave, turned to powder (=ash) then the ground might “finish” again. The arrival of Europeans was then by some interpreted as coinciding with just such a powdering of these bones. Since the Duna world’s end does not mean a final termination of everything but only a conversion point in a cyclical series turning on the numbers eight or fourteen in terms of genealogical depth, the arrival of white strangers would be seen not just as an end of one era but also as the beginning of a new one. When both Kiaps (government officers) and missionaries ordered or urged people to throw out various of their old customs and adopt new ones, at least a part of their seemingly obedient response to these demands was conditioned by this framework of categorisations, as though their own ideas of history predisposed them to accept an epochal turn-around in their lives at this time. (In the Huli area a further twist occurred: there the people abandoned many of their practices and took up those enjoined by the whites both because they thought the intruders were actually the original owners of sacred hoop-pines planted throughout Huli country and because they hoped that by doing what the whites said they would induce the latter eventually to go away and leave them alone (cf. Frankel 1986, Schieffelin and Crittenden 1991). The net effect here was to magnify their feeling of powerlessness in the face of the whites, and at the same time their dependency on them both for introduced shell valuables which they had brought with them, including the much valued *Kuriapa* or pearl shell, and for the steel axes which were so much more efficient than their stone tools. From being dependent on geographical trading links for axes, shells, and salt, the Duna were switched into a situation of being dependent on Kiaps and missionaries based within their own language area at Lake Kopiago station. Regional interdependence was replaced with local dependency.

These processes were accompanied from early on by exploratory patrols made in search of mineral wealth, so that the people gradually came to identify these with one of the ultimate purposes of the white people as a whole. Their very first contact occurred with the Fox brothers, who came in search of gold. The people, however, thought that these two had come to claim their own sacred objects kept in a special netbag (*auwi nu*) by a custodian who came from Yokona village close to the Strickland river. Apparently, these were in fact pieces of cloth, plastic, and metal which had found their way into the area earlier and were interpreted now as the sacred objects (*auwi*) of the outsiders. It was also thought that if the netbag were disturbed, the earth would shake and there would be slides, “finishing the ground” again. In this tradition also, then, the arrival of the whites is seen to bring with it a threat of world’s end. In such a context, any apocalyptic teachings of the missionaries could work only in a strongly synergistic way with the people’s own traditions. The later proliferation of exploration for minerals and oil has similarly been accompanied by contradictory responses from the people: both an enthusiastic desire for the “company to come” and a fear that all this may presage destruction. What has not been invented is a way of looking at possibilities of development and change which would be charted by their own planning and decision-making.

In February 1991, my wife Gabriele Stürzenhofecker and I were air-lifted into a part of the Duna area known as Aluni by a small helicopter under charter to British Petroleum at the Kobolu base camp near to Tari in the Southern Highlands. B.P. was involved in developing a large natural gas field known as the Hides gas fields (named after Jack Hides the early explorer and kiap). Another company, Mobil, was assisting a consortium known as Pacarc to explore the Muller range between Kobolu and Aluni and to make exploratory drillings there for oil. We knew little of all this at the time, and were very puzzled after we had landed and been temporarily installed in a partially completed house intended for a health orderly to learn that the people were also expecting that “the company” would arrive soon at Aluni and would set up its base camp there. The men of the village were holding regular night-time meetings in which they set up a preparatory structure of roles to handle this anticipated incursion and to secure maximum benefit for themselves from it. There were chairmen and secretaries and security men – a whole roster of positions. The company, it seemed, was expected next Friday or the following Wednesday (we had been expected on a Wednesday but actually arrived on a Friday). As the days went by, a revised rumour went out, that the Company would now be coming on the 4th day of the 4th month. Vocal in setting dates was a young man of some standing in one local group, the Yangone, within whose area an exploratory patrol had more than a decade earlier planted an iron post as a marker for a potential future rig. (When too many days had gone by, he found another matter to concern himself with, having to do with a compensation payment for an accident which had happened in the mining area of Tabubil, Ok Tedi.– and he left Aluni for the Ok area, staying away until well after the 4th of April.)
Our acquaintance with the theme of "company in Kopiago" thus began in this puzzling way. We were concerned that it might be true that a company would arrive and dramatically alter the peoples' lives before we had even documented these! As time went on our anxiety decreased but our puzzlement grew. How did such erroneous rumours arise? How were they to be explained? With what were they correlated?

Answers to these questions were gradually pieced together over the next few months. The most general, and perhaps most obvious, point is that the vision of the company operates in Kopiago as a cargoistic idea. Born of desire, rumours can thus arise and spread with fair ease. More specifically, however, companies did, and do, come to Kopiago with considerable frequency, as the files in the District Office indicate. Each time one arrives, the people appear for a while to take it for granted that this time wealth will indeed flow to them. During 1991 Mobil-Pacarc set up an oil-drilling rig in the Muller range near to Huguni, and drilled to a depth of 6,000 feet. Early in April 1991 Kennecott Mining Company also sent two geologists to make rock samples around the lake itself, and they stayed at an Apostolic Mission guesthouse run by a pastor who originally comes from Nauwa parish near to Aluni. Possibly it was the arrival of these two that had been presaged, rumour altering the locale from the actual village area where the geologists were due to stay, Hirane, to Aluni. School teachers based in Mendi were said to have sighted the files of this company and to have declared that on the 4th of April the company would come. A generalised expectation, or hope, that this would occur had in fact been implanted more than ten years previously when there was prospecting for gold in the Bogaia area (for now abandoned), and an iron post was set up as a marker for possible future drillings by another company within the territory of the Yangone people near to the Strickland river. Somewhat later, the Porgera Joint Venture set up a water metering station (known to the company as SG3) actually at the Strickland but still within Yangone territory. A helicopter was and, is, sent over once a month to take water samples and have these measured for possible polluting elements coming from the Lagaip river, since tailings from Porgera eventually enter the Lagaip and hence the Strickland itself. As late as 1991 the Yangone people, who regarded the station as belonging to "their" Company, were actually quite unclear about the purposes of the station. Most considered that it was just a prelude to the full establishment of a camp and a rig. Others thought that the water samples were sold and wanted us to ask about royalties for them; they based this idea on the response given to them by a company worker on being asked why the water was being taken: "mipela i salim dispela wara long Mosbi". While the worker presumably meant that the samples were sent to Moresby for analysis, the listeners understood him to say that the water was sold in Moresby. The Tok Pisin word "salim" can mean either of these two things. Finally, our own first arrival was by a company helicopter, and perhaps the people at first wondered if we ourselves would bring the company in later, or perhaps some misunderstood rumours of our arrival and mixed these up with those regarding the Kennecott geologists since in both cases two persons were involved and we ourselves at one stage had written to the Hirane pastor! At this level of minutiae it is possible to speculate endlessly on the exact train of rumours which might have conduced to the fervour regarding "company" which surrounded us for the first three months in Aluni.

Later, a more suspicious attitude was taken. Many people were investing sets of K5 (five kina - PNG currency) to become "shareholders" through the Duna People's Association, (a group set up to work for the advancement of the Duna people), in land-owning parishes within whose land mining explorations were taking place. They did so by making genealogical claims, in some cases very remote ones, on the resident lineages within these parishes. The Duna descent system, somewhat stretched, can permit processes of this sort to occur. Whereas at first it seemed that too many people were establishing these claims, it later appeared that the residential lineage leaders had made a move more shrewd even than they intended, since when the mining investigations failed the monies paid over were not returnable. Under these circumstances the people came back to us with rather more serious questions about how "shares" are supposed to work. After a while many turned back to their more long-standing concerns about the "ground finishing" which we may see as the pessimistic side of the coin, the optimistic side of which is the arrival of "company". Others still pinned their faith in Kennecott, and on one occasion I was standing on the verandah of a house at Kopiago Station with a Yangone man and he suddenly said: "All this will soon change, you know. The company will dig up all of that mountain on the other side of the lake and get the gold out. They will also drain the lake into a big pipe and pump it to the Strickland river, then they will blast out all the stone at the bottom of the lake and uncover the gold and copper which lies beneath it." He expressed great enthusiasm about this vision and looked puzzled when I expressed doubt regarding it (Kennecott in fact are due in 1992 to begin some test drillings). Doubtless such imaginations are also facilitated by stories told by young men who do go to work at the Ok Tedi or Porgera mines, and Ok Tedi is certainly a favourite place for such men to go when they run into accusations of becoming involved with young women and do not possess the wealth needed to pay bride price.

Overall, the prevalence of rumour and people's seeming willingness to take stories on trust, while also discarding them at a later stage, both appear to be not just transient but leading features of social life in Aluni. The ability to leap from fact to pattern is also strongly encoded in their cosmological scheme regarding the "end of the world". One very knowledgeable man, Au of Nauwa parish, spent an hour and a half detailing to us the
different kinds of grasses which are springing up in his area and in asking us if these indicated that the world is ending. Apparently long-standing ideas are also subject to continuous re-working, so that revised versions of rumours turn up over time. What is of further interest is the way in which these existing symbols co-exist, and even blend, with the new theme of development through the arrival of the company. Such an arrival would indeed mean the end of one world, geographically and economically, and the start of a new one. In seeing the company as the only desired form of development the people are essentially reflecting the paucity of other development opportunities open to them. From the 1960s onwards government patrol officers regularly put in recommendations that agricultural development on a small-holder basis be made the cornerstone for local economic progress. Yet few results have emerged over time. Coffee is grown in Aluni but not tended or often picked, largely because there is no practical way to sell it. There is a severe lack of introduced vegetables which could be used for sale. There is a chronic rate of anthrax and pneumonia in the pig population which is not counteracted by DPI injections. Further, the Christian churches do not seem to have taken the place of indigenous crisis cults to provide a means of combating ill health and environmental decline by ritual intercession with the deity. The people are thus left without much recourse against adversity and little that is tangible and material to point to by way of their own development, although almost all men below the age of 35 years have been out to other places in Papua New Guinea and are able to judge how marginal their own area is by comparison.

Given all the above, I suggest, it is not surprising that "company" has become synonymous with "development" in Kopiago and has in fact become a kind of complex symbol drawing people away from material efforts with their own ground. The (largely male) ideology that the "ground is finishing" in fact tends to produce the same result, implying that agriculture cannot be the key to the future. Instead the apocalyptic alternative is opted for. The theme of development is thus turned into a mental expectation in which the people, while still maintaining their indigenous economic activities, do not consider that these can provide a viable way to obtain money, but that this can be secured only through a kind of *deus ex machina*: the company, which in ending their world, will, they hope, create for them a new and more wealthy version.

NOTE

This belated piece is offered as a small contribution to the "work of memory" in this volume for Ralph Bulmer. I owe to Ralph a debt of gratitude for many things: for first showing me what a sweet potato plant looks like; for feeding me with hot soup after I had lived on taro for three days on a journey over from Hagen to Kaironk in order to visit him; and for encouraging me to succeed to him in his post at the UPNG. 1991 fieldwork in Lake Kopiago is being carried out under the auspices of the National Science Foundation, the Harry Frank Guggenheim and the Wenner-Gren Foundations, and the University of Pittsburgh, USA.

REFERENCES


THE GENESIS AND TRANSFORMATION OF THE WAITANGI TRIBUNAL

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The Treaty of Waitangi is a document of three simple clauses which purports to convey the sovereignty of the Maori people of New Zealand to the British Crown. The conveyance of sovereignty is made explicit in the English version of article 1 of the treaty which says that the chiefs of New Zealand "cede to her Majesty the Queen of England, absolutely and without reservation all the rights and powers of sovereignty". The Maori translation of that article of cession does not accurately accomplish the transference of sovereignty, because the indigenous word for sovereignty was replaced by a transliteration of the word governor to *kawana*, and the