Caveats

Some preliminary caveats are needed. These concern spelling, names and pseudonyms, quotations and some simplifying conventions that we have adopted.

We have striven for consistency, rather than linguistic accuracy, in spelling Kubo and Febi words. We lack the knowledge to achieve the latter, Kubo and Febi people are themselves inconsistent and conventions for transcribing these languages are still evolving. For example, a 1999 translation of The Gospel of Mark is written in ‘the Koobo (Kubo) language’. Nor have we indicated nasalisation with either an ‘n’ or an ‘m’—Febi, for example, is often written as Fembi—because, again, we lack the language skills to be consistent. And, further, although the area is relatively small and the people number less than 1,500, there are differences in pronunciation between places where population is concentrated. For example, in the west of Kubo territory we heard the local name for Cecilia River as Boiye Hoi but in the east as Baiya Hoi.

Most of the people’s names that appear in this book, including those of all exploration company field employees, are pseudonyms. Place names and ‘clan’ names are not pseudonyms. Both, however, need further comment. To comply with government expectations, people have increasingly adopted the practice of carrying a place name with them when they relocate. For example, in 1986–87 we lived at a small hamlet that all residents and immediate neighbours knew as Gwaimasi. It was named for the small waterfall (sî) on the stream Gwai. The ‘official’ name—it is recorded on the 1979 topographical map (PNG 1:100,000 Topographic Survey, Sheet 7386 [edition 1] Series T601)—is Komagato. By 1999, most
residents of Gwaimasi had relocated to Mome Hafi and, more recently, some have relocated to Dege Hafi—respectively, the junction (hafi) of the stream Mome with the stream Dege and the junction of the latter with the Strickland River—or further afield. However, all residents of these communities are said to be, and to outsiders say they are, residents of Komagato and, in this book, when we have used that name we do so in the same general sense.

The name Suabi is itself problematic. Officially, the name is often spelled as Soabi and on documents submitted to government authorities or granting bodies is the spelling usually adopted by local people. The 1979 topographical map (Sheet 7385) records Soabi 1 and Soabi 2—12 km apart and so named, presumably, because people from Soabi 1 had relocated to a new site at Soabi 2—but the present day Suabi (Soabi) is at a third location.

‘Clan’ names are spelled in multiple ways by Kubo and Febi people. We have standardised spelling of these names but do not claim that our rendering is necessarily more appropriate than some other. In the 1980s and 1990s, the Kubo word *oobi*—a mound, or gathering, of ‘men’ (here, meaning ‘people’)—connoted one or more patrifilial lineages whose members assumed, though seldom specified, genealogical connection to a common ancestor. In some cases the link to a common ancestor was supported by myth. In our earlier writing, while acknowledging instances where the actual did not match the ideal, we glossed *oobi* [obi] as ‘clan’ (Minnegal and Dwyer 2011a: 327, n. 1, n. 2). In those years people did not use the word ‘clan’. Now, however, it is the other way round. ‘Clan’ is used routinely with the connotation of a ‘bounded’ assemblage of people and *oobi* is seldom used. *Oobi* is more likely to be used in circumstances that are divorced from conforming to the imagined expectations of government or resource extraction companies.

In the following chapters we have included many quotations from documents written by government officials and local people. English is not the first language of these people and for some it is their third or fourth language. We have been careful in transcribing the quoted words but have refrained from writing *sic* (representing *sic erat scriptum*, ‘thus was it written’) where spelling or grammar do not conform to expectations of writing in English. In one quotation we have deleted some misplaced apostrophes. Chapters, other than 1 and 3, open with a framing vignette.
that concerns a discrete event. These are based on notes written in the field at the times those events occurred, but are not literal transcriptions from field notes.

We use ‘West’ and ‘Western’ as glosses for global perspectives that, nowadays, are likely to be grounded in economic rationalism and individualism, and referred to as ‘neoliberalism’. We use ‘modernity’ to refer to processes associated with ‘neoliberalism’, and ‘modern’ to refer to ‘structures’ and ‘material goods’ that are the concomitants of those processes.

Finally, Papua New Guinea currency (PGK) is based on kina and toea as analogues of, respectively, dollars and cents. In mid-1986 the exchange rate was approximately PGK1.00 for AUD1.67. Thereafter, it fell progressively to approximately PGK1.00 for AUD0.625 in late 1998 and AUD0.488 in late 2011. While it fluctuated through the next few years it remained close to 2:1 throughout this period.