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‘Restraint without Control’: Law and Order in Porgera and Enga Province, 1950–2015

Alex Golub

The clans are fighting a mile away.
They paint their faces, wear bits of grass and bark
to tell us this is happening at an earlier time.
Do not believe it, this is wishful thinking;
they wear suits and conquer the centuries
by aircraft. In capital cities
they shake each others hands, careless
of what smears them.
They are what old men fearing, feared to predict.
‘Lambchops in PNG’ (Markham 1985)

Introduction

On 6 November 1884, Commodore James Erskine hoisted the Union Jack over Port Moresby and declared British New Guinea to be a protectorate of the British empire. At the ceremony, he promised the Motu-speaking men assembled there that:

Evil disposed men will not be permitted to occupy your Country, to seize your lands, or to take away from your homes ... Your lands will be secured to you. Your wives and children will be protected. Should any injury be done to you, you will immediately inform

Her Majesty's Officers who will reside amongst you, and they will hear your complaints and do justice ... You will all keep peace among yourselves, and if you have disputes with each other you will bring them before the Queen's Officers, who will settle them for you without bloodshed. (Biskup et al. 1968: 56–7)

Wolfers describes Erskine's policy as one of 'restraint without control' (1975: 13). On the one hand, the British administration sought to make the colony 'attractive to white settlers and entrepreneurs exercising their undoubted rights' (MacWilliam 2013: 24–5) to make a profit in Papua, assuming that the 'immanent, spontaneous development led by private firms and expatriate planters' would transform British New Guinea into 'a profitable (colonial) possession' (ibid.: 17), to the presumed benefit of everyone, including Melanesians. On the other hand, as a sign of its enlightened paternalism, 'the protectorate administration ... was empowered by law only to control the entry of foreigners to the area, and to legislate only for its non-indigenous population' (Wolfers 1975: 14) and would restrain 'the depredations of the British fortune- and adventure-seekers' (ibid.: 14–15) without unduly controlling the Indigenous population.

Erskine promised, in essence, that the presence of the state would benefit the people of what is now Papua New Guinea (PNG). This chapter uses historical anthropology (Sahlins 1985) to describe the historical transformations of Erskine's promise and to analyse the role it plays in PNG today. In particular, it examines the history of 'restraint' and 'control' in Enga Province, PNG, from 1950 to 2015. Erskine's promise, although made far from Enga and decades before government would reach the highlands, is key to understanding the post-Second World War history of PNG because it was the historical precedent that grounded the state's legitimacy for both the colonial and postcolonial governments of PNG. This chapter describes how violence, policing and governance changed over time in central Enga, where Wabag, the provincial capital, is located. It then examines continuities and differences between central Enga and the Porgera valley in the western half of the province where a large gold mine operated by the Porgera Joint Venture (PJV) is located. The chapter argues that in contemporary Enga the relationship between restraint and control is the reverse of Erskine's vision. Rather than the government protecting Melanesians from global capitalism, in Porgera today the government protects global capitalism from Melanesians. Where once the government aspired to restrain foreign business without

controlling the population, today the government exercises little control over mine employees even as it seeks to restrain Papua New Guineans who act against the PJV's interests.

This chapter takes up this volume's focus on the state's absent presence by examining the role restraint and control have played in realising Erskine's promise. Erskine's vision is essentially a nineteenth-century liberal one of restrained government: that a limited government would protect lives and properties while allowing the market to create a spontaneous order which enabled prosperity and growth. Present to protect Melanesians from dangers of alcohol and indentured servitude, it would restrain itself from imposing in their customary life, but preserve their ownership of land and guarantee their personal safety. Thus the state was present in some areas of activities but absent in others.

The governments which followed sought to fulfil Erskine's promise, but used different means to achieve it. Both the postwar Australian administration and the independent state of PNG pursued a developmentalist agenda (Ferns 2020) which actively intervened in life in Enga. Theirs was an order-making project (Golub 2018) that sought to routinise and regulate life. Most obviously, 'control' meant controlling outbreaks of violence and bringing peace. But it also manifested itself in subtler ways. The construction and maintenance of schools, roads and hospitals required transformations in senses of time and labour. Protecting the rights of women meant intervening in the 'private' domain of the family. Agricultural officers would teach people new ways of farming, transforming nutrition and diet. Control, not restraint, was the means by which the government sought to fulfil Erskine's promise. As we shall see, in Enga the government has failed to achieve many of the goals it has set for itself. In this sense, it is an 'absent presence' in that its promises to be present, to control and regulate life, are too often honoured in the breach rather than the observance.

But this chapter challenges the concept of the state as an 'absent presence' as well. While broad historical narratives must necessarily involve collective actors such as 'the state' and 'society' or 'the mine' and 'the community', this chapter will argue that an accurate understanding of history cannot take these actors for granted. Using the approach I have followed elsewhere (Golub 2014), I will demonstrate how history is not really made up of these collective actors, but rather of networks of people who appear in different times and different situations as personating one

or the other of these entities. A full history of Enga requires understanding how at times ‘the government’ and ‘clans’ overlap, just as ‘the police’ and ‘mine security’ interpenetrate.

Decomposing these corporate actors contributes not only to the history of PNG, but to broader social scientific work on ‘the resource curse’ and ‘resource conflict’. It is easy to write particularistic histories of individual resource projects, just as it is easy to produce highly abstract, schematic models of resource conflicts. But it is much more difficult to produce ‘middle range’ (Tilly 2010) theories of resource conflict which engage in comparison and make generalisations about cases without losing track of the historical uniqueness of each one. This chapter aims to show how a historical anthropology which decomposes corporate actors might help make this middle range theory possible. In doing so, it attempts to answer Le Billon’s call for “thick” historical and geographical contextualisation, relating the past to the present, as well as resource locales to places of belonging and spaces of social relations’ (Le Billon 2014: 57–8).

The main body of this chapter is split into two primary sections. In the first, I describe state governance and tribal fighting in central Enga Province from 1950 to the mid-1990s. In doing so, I take issue with one common narrative of the history of Enga and of PNG more generally. I will call this a ‘degenerationist’ narrative (Golub 2014: 169–70) similar to the ‘discourse of abjection’ that Bashkow notes (Bashkow 2006: 231). This is, in essence, a narrative of successful control, a claim that Australia developed PNG and brought peace and government to the country, but that after independence the country went backwards. A good example of this narrative can be found in the comments of the YouTube video ‘Tribal Conflict in Papua New Guinea | On The Frontline’:

PNG under Australian administration, life was pretty close to normal. Tribal conflicts were extinguished quickly. Small police stations scattered throughout the highlands kept an eye out for trouble. Riot squad was stationed in the highlands and a backup unit in the capital, Port Moresby. Back up squad could be deployed at a moment’s notice to hot spots. All weapons were seized/destroyed. Those involved were sent to prison to face judgement. Police regularly visited places searching /seizing/ destroying confiscated weapons. Locals started to respect law and order, mediation was encouraged. After independence, the png government closed all regional stations, not sure what happened to the riot squad. PNG government past/present offer very little to regional areas unfortunately. (comment on ICRC 2017)

In the first section of this chapter, I will claim that key aspects of this narrative are incorrect. The Australian administration never devoted the resources necessary to police Enga adequately. It is true that there was a decrease in violence in Enga after the administration arrived, but this was due to Engans, not the administration, who 'self-pacified' for roughly a decade between 1955 and 1965 due to a temporary enthusiasm for state governance. Disillusion with the administration and other factors led to a growth in fighting *prior* to independence. In Enga, the breakdown in law and order was not something that Papua New Guineans created, it was something they inherited from the Australians. During the independence period, tribal conflict increased as different groups attempted to control the spoils system of governance that took hold in the province. Policing in Enga, before and after independence, was often both illiberal and ineffective. Restraint without control has been a hallmark of governance in Enga during both the Australian and independence period. In its unfulfilled promises, the state has been both present and absent in Enga.

Using this discussion of central Enga as context, the second section of this chapter examines the history of Porgera from the mid-1980s to 2015. This section examines the growth of violence and disorder that accompanied the creation and operation of the Porgera Gold Mine. It tests two more hypotheses that circulate in the public sphere about Porgera. The first one, which might be associated with mine management, claims that Porgera is a 'rough neighbourhood' and that violence and disorder are cultural norms for which the mine cannot be blamed. Second, there is the 'resource conflict' hypothesis, which argues that in Porgera, as in so many other resource projects, it is the presence of the mine which induces conflict. The evidence in this section shows that both hypotheses explain some of the historical evidence for Porgera, but are insufficient alone. The 'rough neighbourhood' model does not capture the way that social change—including that created by the mine—has amplified the negative aspects of Engan culture. The 'resource conflict' model, on the other hand, cannot see how police and PJV violence is a transformation of the illiberal policing tactics which have been the historical norm in the valley. Disorder in Porgera is not new: it is an amplified version of existing trends in Enga.

Finally, this chapter intentionally dwells on some of the most troubling aspects of life in Enga so as to understand them and, hopefully, form some small part of a solution to them. I want to note at the beginning of this chapter, therefore, that there are many dedicated police officers and

mine employees who do their best to act ethically, just as there are many Papua New Guineans who abhor war and seek peace. There have also been numerous attempts at conflict mediation over the decades in Enga and Porgera as well. For reasons of length and analytic focus this chapter does not focus on these people, but I want to emphasise at the outset that I recognise their existence and contributions. While I focus on the negative parts of life in the province, the reader should not develop an overly negative view of Enga and Porgera.

Enga and the ‘Pax Australiana’

Enga Province is part of the Highlands Region of PNG (Figure 3.1). This chapter focuses on two areas of the province. First I examine what I call ‘central Enga’, or the area around Wabag, the capital of the province. Second, I will focus on the Porgera Valley, which is in the far west of the province. Unusually for PNG, Engans consider themselves to be part of a single ethnolinguistic group (the largest in the country) whose boundaries are coterminous with their province—a unique political and ethnic unit. Porgerans, who speak a language called ‘Ipili’ by linguists, are often seen as a separate group. In fact, linguists and anthropologists view this area to be characterised by interconnection than clear separation. ‘Engan’ appears to be a series of closely related dialect chains which stretch across the province rather than a single language. Porgerans and their ‘Engan’ neighbours in Laiagam have more in common linguistically than people from Laiagam would have with Engan speakers on the other side of the province. Historically, the area was characterised by a complex system of migrating and intermarried social groups rather than bounded and localised ethnic groups and these connections continue to this day. In fact, the ethnonyms ‘Porgeran’ and ‘Engan’ developed in the 1950s and are not endogenous to the area. This is not to gainsay the identity claims of any particular group. On the contrary I will use terms like ‘Engan’ and ‘Porgerans’ throughout this chapter. But it is important to understand that behind this useful shorthand is a more complicated ethnolinguistic situation which will become relevant in different contexts in the chapter, especially as I tuck between the history of central Enga and Porgera.

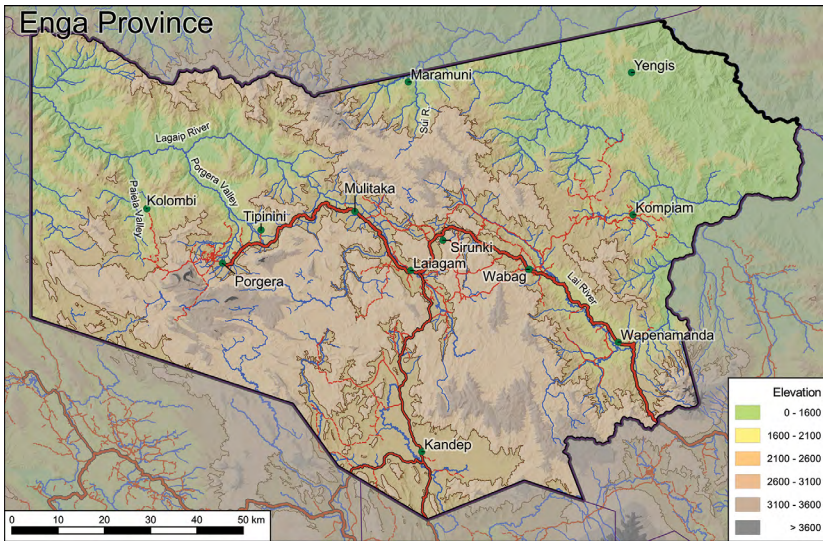


Figure 3.1 Enga Province

Source: Map by Nelson Minar with data from OpenStreetMap, Humanitarian Data Exchange, OpenDEM, and SRTM. openstreetmap.org/copyright

While a few early exploratory patrols by miners and government officers began entering Enga in the early 1930s, it was not really until after the Second World War that outside powers seriously attempted governing what is now Enga Province. In the late 1940s Enga fell within the Trust Territory of New Guinea, which was administered by the Australian government on behalf of the United Nations. The Australian territory of Papua would later merge with the Trust Territory of New Guinea to form the Independent State of Papua New Guinea in 1975, which was also governed by Australia, but under a different administration.

The nature of Erskine's promise had shifted in the postwar period. Administration policy in this period was overseen by Paul Hasluck, who sought 'uniform development' to bring the highlands region the same level of administration of government services as the coast, which had a much longer history of entanglement with the global system (Hasluck 1976; MacWilliam 2013). The administration sought to control and develop areas, not merely to restrain bad behaviour and trust in spontaneous development. The result was what some authors have seen as 'acceptable colonialism' or 'administrative colonialism' (Hawksley 2007), a form of colonialism that would lead to development. In terms of policing, this

meant pacification and the creation of law and order, a situation frequently described in the literature of this period as the 'Pax Australiana' on par with the Pax Britannica or Pax Romana of the past.

And yet, from the beginning the New Guinea administration was remarkably understaffed. In 1948–49 the territory was roughly 250,000 square kilometres and home to 1 million people (UN 1951: 8) but was policed by just 22 white officers and 1,236 New Guinean policemen (Kituai 1998: 45). This was an all-time high. In 1927–28 there were just 10 white officers and 588 police in New Guinea (*ibid.*). So, despite Erskine's promise, the Australian government never produced a police force sufficient to protect Papua New Guinean property and safety. At the same time, it could not project sufficient force to dispossess Papua New Guineans of their lands and property. The relatively benign nature of Australian colonialism in PNG was as much a result of a lack of capacity as it was of good intentions. The state was 'absent' in PNG long before independence.

Enga was originally part of the Western Highlands province and was declared 'uncontrolled' (later this category was changed to 'restricted') and off-limits to foreigners on the assumption that they could both harm and be harmed by highlanders if they ventured into the area. The government centre of this section of the Western Highlands was Wabag, an area that had first served as a staging ground for the large 'Hagen-Sepik Patrol' of 1938–39 (Gammage 1998). In 1941 it was repurposed as a patrol post with an expatriate 'kiap', or patrol officer, stationed there (Lakau 1988: 84). Land was not alienated there for a government station until 1949 (*ibid.*). Government during this period took the form of patrols from Wabag to neighbouring areas, during which government patrols would attempt to census the population, resolve disputes peacefully and administer basic healthcare. Over time the government would open additional patrol posts and derestrict the areas around the patrol posts until, segment by segment, they had the entire highlands under their control.

Conflict was a part of the situation which Australian officials encountered. All sources agree that in precolonial Enga, violence and fighting were common but not highly culturally valued by most people. Wiessner and colleagues summarise this view when they write that 'in Enga oral history, there was never a time before war' but that 'historical traditions do not glorify war, but describe it as an unfortunate last resort when problems could not be solved by other means' (Wiessner et al. 2016: 164).

A common cause of war was 'to re-establish the balance of power and respect between clans after insult or injury so that exchange could flow' (ibid.: 165). Warfare was a topic of ambivalence, in that it was destructive and inhibited the flow of wealth, but it also provided an opportunity for young men to demonstrate their bravery and for the clan to reinforce its solidarity. Confusingly, the Enga unit of customary social organisation known as *tata* is often translated into English as 'clan' even though the conflict between them is often referred to as 'tribal' fighting.

Overall, casualties were low and there was not a great deal of training for warriors, songs glorifying combat and death, and so forth. As in much of the highlands, prosperity and wealth were highly valued, not one's reputation as a warrior. It is no surprise, then, that the arrival of the government in the 1950s began a relatively speedy process of 'pacification', in which fighting declined markedly and people became fascinated with the arrival of white men and what the administration could mean for their history. In a remarkable piece of early opinion polling, Spruth found that in 1968 '97 per cent of people agreed with the statement, "I think the government should stay here always," (*katawaka katapyali lao masilya*)' (Spruth 1968: 6). Peace was a central benefit of the arrival of government. 'The Enga people feel good about and recognise the value of the peace bought by the administration. Particularly in private interviews this was seen as one of the most important things that administration had done and the door through which many other good things have come' Spruth wrote, and '99% of the people believe that fighting would break out all over if the government was to depart' (ibid.: 7). A similar poll showed that 42 per cent of people felt that the main work of the government was to 'keep peace' (the runner-up, at 21 per cent, was 'to get money') (Lutz and Rivers 1968: 6).

Most writers of this period agree that it was Engans, not kiaps, who stopped the fighting. Wormsley and Toke noted in the 1980s that 'increasing violence is the trend and the period following pacification was the anomaly' (Wormsley and Toke 1985: 63). According to them, it was a 'fiction' that 'pacification was achieved at the hands of the kiaps and that fighting ceased. Reality suggests that Enga took a step back, viewed what the government offered, and agreed to give the government an opportunity to deal with disputes' (ibid.). When it was discovered that 'what the government offered was inadequate ... the Enga ... simply reverted to their own tried and true techniques of dispute settlement' (ibid.).

Gordon and Kipalan agree: 'Law and Order [sic] was achieved, despite acts of intimidation against them, through the active cooperation and collaboration of the Engas' (1982: 332).

Why did Engans embrace the administration? Access to wealth and prosperity were key. As we have seen, Engans do not value warfare and aggression. Peace was in accordance with Engan values as an end in itself. Another central Engan value is generating wealth and prosperity through trade and exchange with wealthy external sources, such as trading partners in the large-scale exchange ceremonials known as *tee*. Peace furthered this cause. As Gordon and Kipalan point out, the most desired forms of wealth were manufactured goods, whose distribution was controlled by the administration. They quote someone (identified only as 'an old Enga') as saying:

The first 'kiaps' gave beads, salt, steel-axes—everyone wanted it so they all followed the 'kiap' and stopped fighting. They stopped fighting because the 'kiap' told them to and they obeyed because they did not want to lose the source of these things. (Gordon and Kipalan 1982: 333)

In sum, peace was in accordance with Engan values and interests, and kiaps had a near monopoly on manufactured goods.

This golden age of harmony did not last long. Spruth and Lutz's early opinion polling work was presented in 1968. And yet, 'by the early 1970s, the Australian administration believed it was facing a rapidly deteriorating law-and-order situation' (Gordon and Meggitt 1985: 27). From February 1972 to February 1973, 17 'large riots' occurred in Enga which killed 20, wounded 'hundreds' and did 'untold damage' to 'gardens, cash crops, and buildings' (MacKellar 1975: 215).¹ A sign of the seriousness of the situation was the commissioning on 20 December 1972 of a special committee to study tribal fighting in the highlands (GPNG 1973: 1). As the decade continued, Engans had adapted to the incursions of the mobile squads of police by learning to exploit the patterns of response 'including counteracting tear gas canisters by throwing them back at the police or covering them in mud' (Gordon and Meggitt 1985: 31).

¹ Throughout this chapter I use terms such as 'riots' or 'mobs' following the terminology of the authors I am quoting. These are not terms of art for me.

In 1979 the Enga provincial government declared a state of emergency after a policeman was killed in revenge after an Engan died in prison (ibid.: 34). By this time, one report noted that:

tribal fighting on a vast scale has completely paralysed the Enga ... the field service has all but disintegrated in this province, and the police there have for the best part of three years been almost powerless. They repeatedly express themselves unable to find or arrest the accused, or to bring witnesses to court. In these circumstances the Law does not run. (Gordon and Meggitt 1985: 18–19)

Given these facts, it is hard to see a decline in law and order from the 'Australian' period to independence. Self-government was achieved in PNG on 1 December 1973. Nineteen days later, the Paney Commission on tribal fighting was formed. It appears that tribal fighting was escalating even as Australia was preparing to withdraw from the country. One can hardly say, then, that Australia had Enga under control when it handed the province over to the newly independent state of PNG. Nor could one say that police in this period had a high standard of conduct from which the post-independence police force would fall. There have been numerous government attempts at various culturally appropriate grassroots projects to restore law and order throughout the province (e.g. Young 2004). However, this should not give the impression that policing as a whole in Enga has always strictly adhered to international best practices in human rights—while Edward LiPuma is doubtless right that 'there is no ... Australian Cortez' and that 'few peoples of Melanesia have felt the exercise of power in its most crushing, overt, agentic mode' (2000: 24).

The Australian administration relied on illiberal modes of justice, just as the PNG government would. Despite Erskine's promise, Native Regulation Acts were in force in both Papua and New Guinea which deprived Indigenous people of many basic human rights. The 'traditional method of stopping fighting' used by police was by 'taking pigs and women as hostages', at least until courts declared such activity unconstitutional in 1979 (Gordon and Meggitt 1985: 31). The Paney report on tribal fighting recommended group punishment (GPNG 1973: 30) and a majority of its members recommend hanging as punishment for murder to disincentivise violence (ibid.: 15). Other suggested innovations included 'reversing the onus of proof' (ibid.: 29) (that is, assuming people to be guilty of tribal fighting until proved innocent), and group punishment (making all members of a group guilty for the action of one of its members) (ibid.: 29).

These recommendations were implemented in the *Inter-Group Fighting Act 1977*, which allowed the government to declare areas ‘fight zones’, and to make any attempt to prepare for fighting or to incite fighting in such zones illegal (Gordon and Meggitt 1985: 31–2). The law was later overturned as unconstitutional.

Clans and the Government after Independence

In the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s conflict continued in Enga Province even as the province elected its first leaders and created an Indigenous provincial civil service. Daniel Kumbon writes that during the 1980s ‘there was a widespread breakdown in law and order. Tribal warfare, armed robbery, rape and other social problems reached high levels as government services deteriorated. Intense politics and deep-rooted corruption took centre stage’ (Kumbon 2017: 41). A large grant from the World Bank funded and integrated development programs in Enga which included a report on ‘law and order’. In the course of three years it ‘observed and recorded the details of eighty-five tribal fights’ and developed ‘incomplete profiles on another twenty fights’ (Wormsley and Toke 1985: 49). Enga also developed a reputation for violence, fighting and corruption in this period. The Law and Order Project reports 49 headlines appeared in the press between January 1981 and June 1985 which featured headlines such as ‘clansman axed to death’, ‘chopped to death’, ‘police harass Enga villagers’ and ‘police burn down huts in Enga’ (Wormsley and Toke 1985: 21). It should be noted that Enga was not alone in seeing a rise of crime in this period. Law and order were issues around the country, a situation reflected in the fact that a national law and order study was also commissioned and completed in this period (Clifford et al. 1984).

There were many causes of conflict in this period, only some of which were novel. Historical enmities remained. Wormsley and Toke, the authors of the Law and Order report, note that ‘one fight is estimated possibly to be as long-lived as one hundred sixty years, based on oral histories and conflicting claims to occupation’ (1985: 59). Kundapen Talyaga, an Engan scholar and public servant, argues that the presence of alcohol and the degeneration of traditional forms of control resulted in more fighting (Talyaga 1982). Wormsley and Toke point out that these incidents

always take place in the context of clan affiliations and past clan histories (1985: 61). As a result a single drunken incident can reignite pre-existing grudges and mobilise an entire clan. Indeed, given how ineffective the government has historically been at settling disputes, 'Engas conceive of fights not as problems (or crimes) but as a solution to other problems and not as threats to order but attempts to restore order' (Wormsley and Toke 1985: 61). 'Engans,' the report notes, 'recognise impotence when they see it' (ibid.).

Changing relations to wealth also shifted in this period, and this in turn shaped conflict. As Engans became integrated into the global economy the government lost its monopoly on imported goods, giving it less ability to control fighting by controlling the flow of wealth. Moreover, the greatest source of wealth was control of government funds, resources and positions, which were provided by the funding the province received directly from the national government. By the early 1990s, Harry Derkley could write that:

Provincial government ... functions as an arena where the furious contest between clans for the spoils of government—jobs, cash, houses, vehicles—continues unabated. It is often only the threat of total loss of control of the source of these goods by the ultimate sanction—suspension of provincial government—which serves to preserve a facade of legality and adherence to 'proper procedure'. (Derkley 1997: 142)

Derkley's comments are consistent with contemporary observers, who described democratic politics as a contest between the haves and have-nots, or rather 'those who eat and those who don't eat' (Lakane and Gibbs 2003; Kanaparo n.d.). In a serious sense, in post-independence PNG the government did not govern Engans, but rather the other way around. Gordon and Kipalan write that 'in Enga it appears that the state is being held at spear-point by pre-capitalist forces' (Gordon and Kipalan 1982: 334).

In 1973 Enga was established as an 'area authority', a transitional administrative structure which was governed by a white colonial official and a selected group of Engans nominated by Indigenous Local Government Counselors and approved by the administration (Scott and Pitzz 1982: 280). The next year Enga was established as a district separate from Western Highlands. This district then became a province of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea in 1975. Leadership was still

provided by the area authority figures, who in 1978 were appointed as the Interim Provincial Government until 1980, when the first elections were held (Scott and Pitzz 1982: 280).

It was in this period that concerns about ‘corruption’ increased in Enga. In 1984 PNG’s auditor-general found ‘gross financial mismanagement’ in the province’s accounting systems, and the premier of the province, Danley Tindiwi, was jailed for misappropriation (Dorney 2000: 238) and the provincial government was suspended from February 1984 to March 1986 (GPNG 1987: 25). In May 1986 a new provincial assembly was sworn in, with Ned Laina as the new premier. In retribution, supporters of the losing candidate in the election burned down the administrative headquarters along with eight motor vehicles, resulting in a half million kina worth of damages (Dorney 2000: 254). In the 1987 national election, Malipu Balakau unseated Paul Torato, only to be shot in June 1988 in what many considered a payback killing. In the rioting and looting which followed, the Bromley and Manton supermarket was burned down in Wabag, an example of the way that commercial property could be threatened by tribal rivalries (Derkley 1997: 142). In 1990 Tindiwi re-won the premiership, only to have provincial government suspended for corruption and financial mismanagement again on 12 March 1993 (GPNG 1994). On 26 March, the provincial capital—which had been rebuilt, at the cost of PGK5 million (Dorney 2000: 260)—was burned down again by Tindiwi’s supporters. In 1997 Peter Ipatas was elected governor of Enga Province, and gained sufficient control to win four more five-year terms, bringing a measure of stability to the province—in 2002 when hand grenades were used to detonate the helicopter fuel in which ballots were soaked, the provincial headquarters was merely damaged, not destroyed.

The thrust of Engan history is clearly that it is not the case that a weak state struggles to govern a strong society in Enga. Rather, the state was a prize over which a society of clans competed. Indeed, the first full elections were held in Enga in 1980, and in 1984 the government began a series of crises from which it did not fully recover. In this situation, it is hard to see ‘the state’ as an enduring, agentic institution at all.

Wormsley and Toke are clear on this point when they state ‘the government is not in control of law and order’ (1985: 69, emphasis in original). During this period police were able to restrain fighting but not control it. That is to say, they could mobilise sufficient force to disperse fighters but could not stop tribal fighting in the long run. A state of emergency

was declared in 1979 which allowed increased use of force, and this was followed up by a special police operation in 1982. Both achieved short-term success in ending immediate conflict, but did not bring lasting order in the province. Policing continued to be both illiberal and ineffective. 'Police do burn houses. Police also "confiscate" property. Police harass and physically assault people not only in tribal fights but in the streets and market place of Wabag' (ibid.: 68, emphasis in original). Enga politicians, like their colonial predecessors, did not emphasise human rights. A 'senior provincial politician' told the authors of the Law and Order study that 'were it within his power he would remove all the special police [who might be witnesses] from Enga. Then when a tribal fight erupted he would "wipe them out"' (ibid.: 69).

Violence and Policing in Porgera

Porgera's history is both similar to and different from that of central Enga. Like the Wabag area, it appears that fighting was part of pre-contact life in Porgera. In the diary of his 1939 patrol, one of the first Australian explorers in Porgera noted that 'today's journey was through a devastated tribal no-man's land, the scene of recent tribal fighting. All houses had been burnt and gardens razed to the ground. Several square miles had been devastated' (Black in Jacka 2019: 4–5). Jacka reports that prior to contact people in Porgera felt like they were "living in a fence" owing to restricted social mobility arising from inter-group conflict' (Jacka 2016: 134). This is consistent with reports I received that the arrival of government and missionaries 'opened the roads' and allowed people to move freely without fear (Golub 2001: 225). In his review of government patrol reports from the late 1940s to the 1960s, Glenn Banks concludes that 'an outstanding feature of the Ipili ... is the amount of fighting that was taking place' (Banks 1997: 93). My own review of these reports (Golub 2014: 80–7) reached a similar conclusion.

While both central Enga and Porgera experienced violence pre-contact, Porgera's experience of governance was very different. Despite the brevity of Australian administration in Wabag, formal administrative authority in Porgera was even shorter: The government established the first airstrip and government station in the valley in 1962 and independence occurred in 1975, making Porgera's entire 'colonial period' 13 years long—including two years of self-government between 1973 and 1975! It is hard to sustain degenerationist narratives about Porgera given such a short timeline.

In this regard, Porgera was similar to Kandep, Kompiam and other rural areas of the province: it took longer for the effects of the administration to be felt in remote areas of the province.

Porgera was different from other peripheral areas, however, because of the presence of gold, which attracted outsiders and provided a source of wealth. Alluvial gold was discovered in Porgera by a government exploratory patrol in 1939. After their war service ended, in 1948, a handful of expatriates moved to Porgera, creating a small but robust artisanal mining operation in which Porgerans began as workers but soon began operating their own claims. During this period the valley was patrolled occasionally by kiaps stationed at Wabag and, after 1952, at Laiagam. Thus unlike central Enga, Porgera experienced 'development' (i.e. income from mining) before it received 'government'. In this frontier zone, Porgerans learned that the government was not an all-powerful force, but rather just one factor, albeit a potent one, in valley life.

In 1962, Porgera was derestricted and an airstrip was put in. Originally, police in Porgera were stationed in a building adjoining the main government office at Yandiakale, at a strength of less than 10 men (Kelly Talia and Geoffrey Puge, personal communication, 28 April 2019). Although it is difficult to estimate the population of Porgera and Paiela, the sister valley which the Porgera government station was also responsible for, it is clear that the police must have been extremely underpowered, even given the fact that they had firearms and Porgerans did not.

During the colonial period, as in the rest of Enga, the government was viewed favourably as a source of wealth and prosperity. When the Australian flag was lowered at an independence ceremony in 1975, a man climbed up the flagpole and attempted to raise it again (Biersack, personal communication, April 1999). This was a period when alluvial gold workings were common and Porgerans earned good money as artisanal miners relative to the rest of the highlands. A permanent government presence meant that the government was willing to issue exploration leases for potential large-scale mines. This resulted in additional wealth flowing into the valley. In Wabag, hopes for quick and extreme wealth and development were disappointed as worries about government corruption and warfare became widespread. In Porgera, on the other hand, these hopes were realised, at least to a certain extent—given the sometimes millennial expectations of Porgerans, the mining economy was at best a partial success.

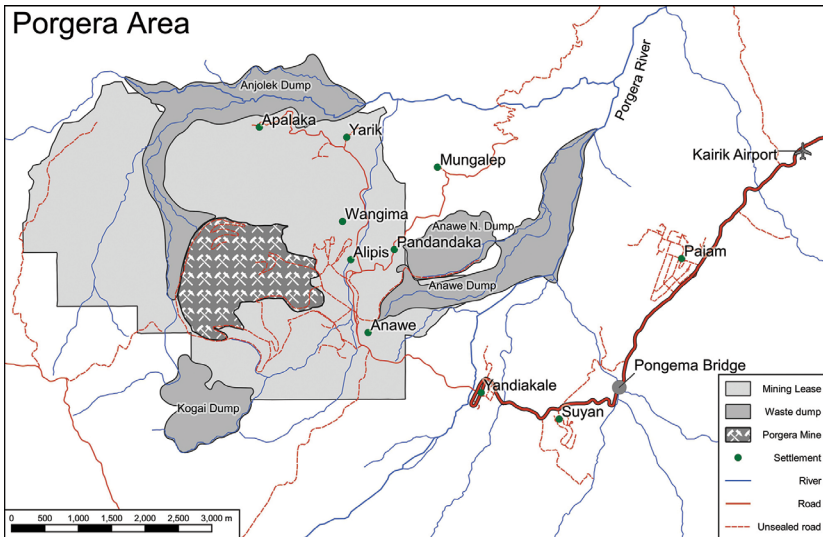


Figure 3.2 Porgera mining area

Source: Map by Nelson Minar with data from OpenStreetMap, Humanitarian Data Exchange, OpenDEM, and SRTM. openstreetmap.org/copyright

Wealth flowed into Porgera because of business interests, not the government. In fact, if anything, the reverse was true: government followed extractive industry and worked, to various degrees of success, to enable it. It is clear that Porgera was a place the government had its eye on because gold mining was happening there. However, it could not be said that it provided much initial security.

It is not really until the mid-1980s that the first historical records of the valley are available. They clearly demonstrate that the government was unable to control the valley's population. In 1987, a group of Ipili broke into the prospecting camp where Placer (the company then looking for gold) and its contractors has their base of operation. The Ipili stole the safe from Coya Constructions, an Australia-based contractor. The safe contained PGK69,000 in cash as well as the passports of expatriate Coya employees. The response of the state was to burn down houses at Alipis, an area near the prospecting camp, in the course of three days. One of the heist's leaders went to jail, while the other reappeared and was employed by the PJV just a few months later (Golub 2001: 322).

During the construction period when the mine was being built, the fighting continued. From 1989 to 1992, '100 percent of Porgera Census Division's population was affected by tribal fighting' (Bonnell 1999: 64).

In the 1980s, the Enga Law and Order Project noted only one conflict which involved a gun. In the 1990s fighters in Enga began using automatic weapons in conflicts, despite there previously having been a ban on them. Wiessner writes that this move was based on dissatisfaction with the government's ability to govern and a desire to settle scores for one's self (Wiessner and Pupu 2012: 1251). Bonnell reports that it was in 1992 that guns first began to be used in the valley in fights (Bonnell 1999: 64–5). In 1990 the Westpac bank agency was robbed and there was a 'riot' in 1990 on New Year's Day in which the IPI Supa Stoa, the most modern-looking store in the valley, was looted (*ibid.*: 66–7). There were also 'riots' connected to a union strike in May 1991 (*ibid.*: 67). Wiessner and Pupu (2012: 1251) note a skyrocketing amount of violence following the introduction of guns and record over 250 conflicts (which Wiessner calls 'wars' and which others have called 'fights') between 1991 and 2005. During this period, mean fatalities per war were 17.8, almost five times higher than the mean of 3.7 per fight which Wiessner and Tumu's ethnohistorical work uncovered. This was the context against which the Porgera mine would begin operation.

Policing in Porgera followed a similar pattern to that of the rest of the province: the illiberal and often ineffective use of force. As Glenn Banks diplomatically noted, 'the activities of the police often undermine parallel work of corporate community affairs staff' (Banks 2000: 255). Police burning of houses also occurred in this period. For instance, in 1990, 'the police reportedly burned and looted approximately 39 houses in the Mungalep area after the official opening of the Porgera mine on 20 October' (Dinnen 2001: 213). In 1993 a policeman was killed while trying to intervene in a tribal fight in Paiam. In retaliation, 'mobile squads and other police' burned down 'more than 200 homes and buildings' (Banks 2000: 260).

As the mine's presence increased in the valley, government policing was increased. In late 1986 a police station was built in Porgera with three officers and five constables (Banks 2000: 256) at Pandandaka, close to the exploration camp and the future mine site. The Pandandaka police station was moved to make way for the mine, initially to containers at the Anawe boom gate (Bonnell 1999: 60–1) and then in 1990 to an 'impressive concrete building' at the Yandiakale. The multilateral legal agreements which created the mine specified that policing should be increased in Porgera and that the police headquarters in Mulitaka, the regional hub, should be upgraded as well. Unfortunately, the new police station was

destroyed by a huge landslide in 1991 (Derkley 1997). As a result, the centre of governance was moved from geologically unstable Yandiakale to Paiam. In 1992 police stations were built in Paiam and Suyan, and Paiam increasingly became the centre for law and order infrastructure in the valley (Bonnell 1999: 60–1).

In addition, the government used special militarised police forces to (unsuccessfully) secure law and order in the valley. As a result, in the early 1990s Porgera was policed by three disciplined forces: the police, a mobile squad, and a rapid deployment unit, or 'RDU'. Mobile squads are widely used around PNG. These squads were modelled on earlier forces used in Fiji to control riots in urban areas, and were first used in PNG's islands provinces to quell anti-colonial movements such as Mataungan in East New Britain (Mapusia 1986: 65). In the highlands, they were used to intervene in tribal fights in the 1970s, and continue to be used to this day. The RDU was a special force designed by the national government of PNG, with the support and encouragement of the Papua New Guinea Chamber of Mining and Petroleum. They were stationed near each major resource development in order to secure them (Banks 2000; Dinnen 2001). Like the regular police force, whose housing and uniforms are provided by the mine, the RDU was stationed at the PJV camp in Tipinini (Bonnell 1999: 61).

The RDU was perhaps more a source of disorder than of order. On 14 October 1992, members of the RDU confronted a group of young men at Anawe, and the confrontation escalated until a man was shot and killed. The RDU then fled the scene, trying to head east back to their base camp at Tipinini. They were pursued by a large group (perhaps as many as 1,000 people) and sought shelter at Suyan camp before leaving and continuing back to Tipinini. There, the mob destroyed mine property worth PGK1 million (Banks 2000: 256–9). Bonnell notes that 'the only surprising thing about this serious attack on Suyan was that it had not happened sooner' (1999: 67), arguing that:

even with all the new security arrangements which now give Suyan the appearance and ambience of a prison, it would be hard to say that the risk of such an attack has been removed. There are plenty of Porgerans with grievances against the mine and vast numbers of idle outsiders ready to fuel these grievances or join in demonstrations. The rent-a-crowd mob have nothing to lose. (Bonnell 1999: 68)

After it sparked this violent conflict, the RDU program was cancelled.

While these forces received various amounts of PJV support, they were much smaller and more poorly equipped than the PJV's own security forces. In 1992, Porgera had eight police, and the PJV employed 210 security guards, 140 of which were on-shift at any time. This included a dog squad, as well as 'static guards, escort teams, investigators, and supervisors. These figures included a group of 40 special constables, known as the Mobile Reaction Force, trained to respond to riots and low-level armed-offender incidents' (Dinnen 2001: 213). On the surface, then, it would appear that the PJV had a large and well-resourced security program while the police are under-resourced. But the picture is more complicated than this. In 1996, for example, 56 members of PJV's Loss Control Department (the department which includes security) were police reservists (Banks and Bonnell 1997: 10). Mine security literally were the police, or at least reservists (see Bainton and Macintyre, Chapter 4, this volume).

In central Enga the major source of wealth was the government, which could be controlled by clans through elections. In Porgera, in contrast, the mine was a source of wealth but the PJV's security were capable of restraining Porgerans who sought to compromise its operations. For instance, the PJV rebuilt and refortified Suyan camp after the disturbance there, despite the fact that it cost PGK1 million to do so (Banks 2000: 256–9). Unlike the government, however, the PJV had no charge to control Porgerans or maintain public order. Restraint, rather than control, was the goal of mine management.

Porgera mine security used the same illiberal force to restrain Porgerans which the police had used throughout Enga's history. A 2005 report claimed that PJV security and police had shot 10 people to death (Akali Tange Association 2005). By 2015, the mine had indemnified 130 women for sexual violence committed against them by mine employees (Jungk et al. 2018: 24). As of September 2018, 821 additional people had filed human rights abuses claims against the mine using its Porgera Remedy Framework (Jungk et al. 2018: 28). Rosenau reports that 'local PJV security staff and contracted Reserve Police personnel were acting without due regard for six of the seven major categories specified in the VPSHR [voluntary principles on security and human rights]—the principle document that defines guidelines for extractive companies when seeking to protect their facilities' (Rosenau et al. 2009: 27). In the early 2000s, of the 65 hours of training received by Reserve Police hired by the mine, only 40 minutes focused on 'wider relations with the local community' (Rosenau et al. 2009: 29).

Call-Out Operations and States of Emergency: 2000–15

Porgera changed dramatically in the early 2000s. As 'an enclave of overdevelopment in a sea of (relative) poverty' (Banks 2005: 140), it attracted economic migrants who swelled the valley's population (Bainton and Banks 2018). While accurate figures are hard to come by, it may be that the valley's population increased from roughly 5,000 in 1980 to 40,000 in 2015 (Kemp and Owen 2015: 8). The greatest increase in population occurred after 2001 following the opening of Paiam town, a planned community built by the PJV. As a visitor to the valley myself, the change was striking. In 2001, the largest public space in Porgera was the disused airstrip at Yandiakale, which was largely empty. By 2016 it was the site of a bustling market which was thronged with people.

With this increase in population Porgera also became more violent. Jacka writes that 'in the eastern Porgera Valley ... a series of tribal fights ... raged from 2004 to 2012 ... approximately one hundred people were killed, hundreds or more displaced, and nearly every structure in eastern Porgera was burned or razed to the ground' (Jacka 2019: 2). John Burton estimates that between 2002 and 2006 annually there were 103 homicides per 100,000 people. By contrast, the number for Iraq civilian casualties in 2006 was 101 and the number for Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, in 2009 (during a huge drug war), was greater than 132 (both per 100,000; Burton 2014: 44).

The PJV's internal assessments were equally dire. Unauthorised miners, many of them migrants, were increasingly breaching mine security and working gold in the open pit, leading to violent clashes with security guards (Bainton et al. 2020). By 2005, the mine's security staff was 380 people, including 10 expatriates, 100 Papua New Guineans from other areas of the country and 180 local hires (Gray 2005). Despite this large force, 'the prevailing view among senior management was that the security status quo at Porgera was no longer viable' (Rosenau et al. 2009: 28). The PJV was losing its ability to restrain the population. For instance, in early January 2007 'Police Mobile Squads from Mt Hagen, Mendi and Laigram' were 'sent into the valley ... following reports of continuous law and order problems in the area' (Tiptip 2007). In late April and early

May 2007, work was halted for a week when roads into the mine were blockaded by disgruntled landowners who felt a relocation program was not moving fast enough (Anon. 2007).

As a result of the worsening law and order situation in the valley, the PJV made the decision to move to a strategy not only of restraint, but control—that is, becoming more directly involved in the maintenance of law and order in the valley. As a result, in 2008 Philip Kikala (the MP for Porgera), Ila Temu (a Barrick executive) and Peter Ipatas (Governor of Enga) wrote a discussion paper outlining a public–private partnership between the mine, the Enga provincial government and the national government to restore order to the valley (Kikala et al. 2008). This was part of a public–private initiative undertaken between the mine and government called the ‘restoring justice initiative’ (RJI), whose steering committee was led by Sir Barry Holloway (Safihao 2009). The organisers of the RJI did not see it as a case of corporate repression of the community—as might be familiar from resource conflict in Africa—but rather as a situation in which the PJV was aligned with the ‘community’ against ‘troublemakers’, many of whom were categorised as ‘squatters’ or ‘outsiders’.

The RJI had many components, including strengthening civil society. One of those components was a state of emergency declaration similar to those used in Enga in the past. In February 2009, Kikala petitioned PNG’s National Executive Council (NEC) to ‘take action against an increase in violent crime and lawlessness’ in Porgera (BGC 2009: 2). On 26 February 2009 the NEC responded by announcing plans for ‘the call-out of additional police resources’ to ‘re-establish law and order in Enga province, including the Porgera region’ (ibid.), and in April ‘Operation Ipili’, as the call-out was known, got underway. According to the *Post-Courier*, the operation involved 200 policemen, including a police air unit and an ‘intelligent unit’ [sic] from the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF). It was designed to last six weeks (Timb 2009).

Newspaper coverage describes broad support for the operation (Timb 2009). Nixon Mangape, a prominent landowner and future parliamentarian, said that ‘all leaders and the population of Porgera welcome the call-out’ (ibid.). The governor of Enga, Peter Ipatas, also ‘welcomed’ the call-out after initial misgiving about not being consulted, and his concern that this was a temporary solution to a long-term problem (Kepson 2009). The most widely covered aspects of the call-out were the eviction of residents and the burning of houses on 27 and 28 April

2009 on Wuangima, a piece of land at the base of the open pit where police had previously razed a settlement in 1987. Mine management believed that this area was home to unauthorised miners. Mark Ekepa, the chairman of the Porgera Landowners Association (PLA), arrived in Port Moresby on 29 April to meet with the prime minister and withdraw PLA support for the operation, because the state of emergency was targeting 'not the homes of illegal settlers' but rather houses which 'belong to the second and third generation landowners who were not thought of by the National Government and Barrick Gold in their relocation plan in 1989' (Erero 2009). Ultimately a team from Amnesty International found that 'at least 131' buildings had been destroyed by police forces during the three months of Operation Ipili (Amnesty International 2010: 3).

The RJI may at first appear to be a shift in PJV strategy from a focus on restraint to a focus on control. But it appears that once successful operations were over, the PJV returned to a focus on restraint. After the burnings, for instance, the mine built a fence around the open pit which was finished in late 2010 at the cost of USD30 million (Stirton 2010). One consultancy report noted that by 2011 the RJI 'had to a degree served its original purpose' even though 'the community had struggled to manage many of the impacts of the mine' (Robinson 2014: 7), suggesting that the original purpose was to restrain activities against the mine rather than control and order society.

Indeed, throughout this period the police were understaffed and under-resourced. From 2008 to 2012 there were 14 police in the valley to police perhaps as many as 73,000 people, 'equating to one (1) police officer to over 3529 people' (Robinson 2014: 8). In comparison, US cities with 50–100,000 people in them averaged 16.1 police officers per 10,000 of population (Anon. 2018). Police facilities at the station in Paiam were a shambles:

Prisoner numbers were often above forty (40) housed in three excessively sub standard cells ... There was an ageing fleet of three (3) police vehicles and no equipment such as firearms, computers, ammunition, basic office supplies and cleaning services ... The Police Station did not maintain an up to date 'Occurrence Books' which is one of the most basic functions of any police station. (Robinson 2014: 9)

Conflict had not abated either. ‘Tribal clashes in the Porgera District were a major contributor to a serious breakdown of law and order in the final quarter of 2011 and early 2012’, Robinson notes, ‘as violence between the Ano and Nomali clans resulted in the deaths of 15 clan members. There were violent attacks towards the mine and its employees, in particular the mine’s security guards’ (Robinson 2014: 5). She continues:

In mid to late 2012 when half the police station was burnt down and tribal fighting continued a serious breakdown in law and order resulted, culminating in the forced shut down of numerous businesses including the local bank, post office and looting of local business IPI. The highlands highway was closed and the operations of the mine were seriously impacted in various ways including industrial action by employees who refused to travel to work. During this time, several employees were injured and one killed while travelling to and from work. (Robinson 2014: 7)

As a result, the RJI was ‘re-invigorated’ (ibid.: 7). In October 2011 the PJV hired an expatriate, Julian Whayman, to manage the project, which he did until late 2014 (Whayman 2015). In 2012 the PJV built a new police barracks, a project managed and paid for through the tax credit scheme (see Bainton and Macintyre, Chapter 4, this volume). It also purchased furniture for the houses. As a result, the number of police in Porgera was increased to 50 (Robinson 2014: 6). It is hard not to notice this renewed interest in controlling Porgera came at the same time as the mine was losing the battle to restrain the valley’s inhabitants.

Disorder in the valley continued to threaten both the mine and the community. In 2013 four people were killed on 2 December, allegedly by PJV security and police mobile squads who shot them at the Pongema bridge. The next day, a mob attempted to move towards Piam but was blocked by police. It turned towards the mine site but did not enter it. As a result, work at the mine was suspended for 12 hours as the next shift of workers could not be safely transported to the site (Boyle 2013). Unauthorised miners, mostly young men who entered the open pit of the mine to work for gold, were also increasing in number. In December 2013, 1,000 illegal miners entered the mine site in a fortnight (Kepson 2013). By March and April 2014, the situation in the valley had gotten so bad that the government deployed two mobile squads and 40 members of the PNGDF, who had been made ‘Special Constables with arrest powers’, to the valley. The total force, counting the soldiers, was 140 people.

In May the *Post-Courier* reported that the total number of police in the valley was 200 (Anon. 2014). On 6 June 2014 police again burned houses in Wingima, with estimates varying from 20 to 200 (Poiya 2014).

At this point it appears that Porgera may have entered a cycle in which increasing disorder led to a state of emergency or call-out operation, followed by a period of calm before the pattern repeated itself. Although the rhetoric and perhaps the intention of the stakeholders involved in planning the call-outs was one of control and normalisation, in practice this appears to be a circular pattern of restraint and disorder, not a linear increase in control of valley life.

This may not be entirely true, however. In 2016 landslips and sinkholes challenged the mine's feasibility and caused the destruction of a large settlement in the valley. In 2017, elections created their own tensions similar to those seen in the discussion of central Enga above. The *Post-Courier* and other newspapers focused less attention on the valley, perhaps because beat reporters no longer visited there. By 2018 life in Porgera entered a new phase, as negotiations began to renew the mine's lease, which was set to expire in 2019. These negotiations continued up to the time of expiration. With these negotiations ongoing at the time of this writing, the mine has been put on care and maintenance and is not currently operating (see Afterword, this volume).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided a history of policing, violence and governance in Enga and Porgera, which reveals the shortcomings of several popular narratives about the province and the valley. Degenerationist narratives claim that government control of the country declined beginning in the independence period. This account has shown, to the contrary, that neither the Australian nor the Papua New Guinean government has controlled the population of central Enga. Rather, they have merely been able at times to restrain it. While this narrative is correct in that violence has been on the rise in the province, it incorrectly places this rise in the independence era and not in the pre-independence era. Insofar as Erskine's promise has never been realised, the government in Enga has always been an 'absent presence'. This raises the wider question of how representative Enga is of the country as whole. While PNG is a large and complex place with extremely diverse histories of governance, it may be that as historians turn

their attention to the twentieth century, they provide a different history of colonialism and policing in PNG than that produced by the 'men on the spot' who rule the country.

Claims that the mine operates in a 'rough neighbourhood' clearly have some *prima facie* validity. However, this chapter demonstrates that Enga is 'rough' not only because of pre-existing cultural norms but because of its history. Banks astutely notes, for instance, that it is not merely the case that 'large resource developments transform the nature and focus of people's lives'. Rather, 'the mine ... and the possibilities and problems it creates, become captured into the existing society, lives and ways of understanding of the local population' (Banks 2008: 30). Taking this point even further, I would emphasise the dialectic nature of this ongoing encounter: both governance and local norms are transformed in their encounter with one another, and at each further encounter they are confronted with a transformed partner whose identity and structure they are, in some part, responsible for (Sahlins 1985). The mine does not merely work in a rough neighbourhood, it has 'roughened up' the neighbourhood itself through its actions and indeed its mere presence in the valley. In particular, its strategy of restraint rather than control has had long-term consequences for both the community and the PJV itself. Banks et al. (2013) are correct to distinguish between 'immanent' and 'spontaneous' social change around Porgera, but it must be pointed out that the mine's response (or lack of response) to these changes becomes part of the causal chain which produce these unintended and unwilling events in the valley.

That said, we should not overstate the role of the PJV in the history of policing and governance in the valley. Illiberal use of force, states of emergency, house burnings and violent actions are not methods which are newly invented by the government and the company to keep Porgera secure. On the contrary, they are the historical norm in the province. Without historical perspective, it may appear that these forms of violence are a novel result of the mine's presence and thus part of a generalised 'resource curse' phenomenon which occurs across multiple resource extraction projects. This is incorrect. In fact, they are part of an ensemble of governance techniques which the PJV inherited.

The case of Porgera shows that more care must be taken in developing the concept of the 'resource curse'. There is a danger in using this term indiscriminately simply to mean anything bad that happens near

a mining or petroleum project. Porgera is very different from the cases of Bougainville and West Papua described by McKenna (2016) in that the PJV has never lost its 'social license to operate'—the question has been who should benefit from the operation and how much. Disorder in Porgera is not an insurgency against the mine. Nor is Porgera like some resource conflicts in West Africa described by Le Billon (2014), in which profits from resource extraction fuel civil war. Each of these cases are different, and adequate comparison must avoid historical particularism (which treats each case as too unique to be comparable to any other) on the one hand and a reductive analysis which cannot discriminate between cases on the other. Historical anthropology is, I believe, well-suited to this purpose because it can explain structural transformation across time and can work to build mid-level comparisons across cases (Sahlins 1985; Tilly 2010).

Finally, this discussion has implications for discussions of policing and the 'absent present' state. It is a truism to say that extractive capitalism takes on the role of the state in and around project areas. On the surface, Porgera is a clear example of this. But this more detailed historical overview also complicates this picture: in Porgera, security guards are also Reserve Police officers. Police vehicles, housing and uniforms are provided by the mine. A specialised police unit has been created at the urging of business interests. To understand these complexities it may be worthwhile to abandon the commonly used narrative that there are two collective actors called the 'mine' and the 'government'. It may be more useful to ask instead: What are the networks of individuals that lie behind these supposedly solidary corporate actors? When and why is a use of force attributed to the PJV or the state? Why call political conflict associated with elections 'tribal'? Whose interests and what moral purpose are served when the agency behind violence is disambiguated one way and not the other? Studies of corporate capitalism have demonstrated how managing blame and attribution are central in managing the fallout of environmental pollution. It may be that fine-grained analyses of resource conflict could adopt this lens when they turn their attention to policing and governance.

In closing, I would like to note that there is something tragic about the history of Enga and Porgera. In 1884 Erskine promised that Melanesians would benefit from the blessings of government. Engans believed in this promise because they value wealth and prosperity, not warrior prowess. Yet Western-style government has too often participated in the amplification of the negative things in Enga culture rather than the

positive ones. The result is a tragic situation in which structural forces encourage a situation which no one in the province wants, but which too few seem able to escape. I hope that this essay offers an understanding of this situation, and in some small way contributes to creating a better world for the province and the people in it.

Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank my editors Nick Bainton and Emilka Skrzypek for their close attention and patience, both of which greatly aided this chapter. I'd also like to thank the staff of the Pacific Collection at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa for providing me access to the historical material I draw on. Special thanks to Cristela Garcia-Spitz at the Tuzin Archive for Melanesian Studies for providing me a copy of the very scarce Enga Law and Order Project report.

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This text is taken from *The Absent Presence of the State in Large-Scale Resource Extraction Projects*, edited by Nicholas Bainton and Emilia E. Skrzypek, published 2021 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.

doi.org/10.22459/AP.2021.03