

6. Personal Viability and the Lihir Destiny Plan

One of the things they talked about when I went to Lihir, and I heard it, I didn't know whether to laugh or what, they said they are going to make Lihir another New York! (Ambrose Kiapsani, Catholic Bishop of Kavieng Diocese, March 2004).

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

After seven long years, Lihirian leaders, the company and the State finally reached an agreement on the revised Integrated Benefits Package. Several times negotiations reached a stalemate. By 2007, there was considerable pressure from all sides to finalise the review. The company was offering the most attractive benefits package in the history of Papua New Guinean landowner compensation. They were committed to spending K100 million over five years until the date of the next review. This included the entire range of compensation payments and the development of infrastructure and service provision. Lihirian leaders accepted this offer when the company lent their support for the strategic development plans which these leaders had devised throughout the review in response to the changes taking place in Lihir. On 2 April 2007, Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare was flown into Lihir for the signing of the revised IBP that was re-named the Lihir Sustainable Development Plan (LSDP). The Lihir Destiny Plan was finally in place.

The LSDP, or the Lihir Destiny Plan, is more than just a tri-partite compensation agreement between Lihirians, the company and the State. The size of the package might be considered a victory for landowners. But beneath the large sum of money lies a complex and evolving vision of the future. The aspirations and strategies embedded within this agreement represent a significant departure from the ways in which most landowning communities in PNG have approached mining as their road to development and modernity. The myth-dreams and fantasies of a golden city built by the mining company — or at least the provision of lasting services, employment and wealth that the government has failed to deliver — still remain, but they have been turned on their head.

The LSDP has furthered the growing trend towards larger and more detailed compensation packages (Banks 1998; Filer et al. 2000), and it will no doubt ensure that future governments and prospective companies spend even more time at the negotiating table. If it is acknowledged that the Forum process (such as the Lihir Development Forum described in Chapter 2) has helped to develop adversarial relationships between local communities and government agencies as they struggle over the distribution of royalties, equity, special support grant expenditure, and a range of other benefits which can be debited to project revenues (Filer 1997b: 253), then we must consider the review process as a complex extension of this. In much the same way as the original Development Forum, the review process can equally inspire other landowning communities to negotiate new terms and conditions which immediately threaten the deals done to facilitate the development of all existing projects. The irony of both the forum and the review process is that, while they secure greater local participation in negotiating the conditions of resource development, they also undermine the capacity of the government to exercise its legitimate role as an agency of effective development planning in mining project areas.

However, the LSDP is not just about money in the pocket or company-sponsored development. It is the roadmap for the Lihir Destiny, which imagines a new self-sustaining future *enabled* by the mine, but not *dependent* upon a foreign company. It simultaneously pushes for greater immediate participation in the mining process, but pursues a long-term post-mining vision. It is the culmination of past desires, enduring concerns over the social changes from industrial development, the unique circumstances of the IBP review, and an unfolding image of a reconstructed Lihirian society. This was not the first time that Lihirian leaders have tried to transform Lihirian society. In this chapter, I shall trace the historical analogues that informed this process, the ways in which the new political elite reinvented and adapted their own ideas to deal with the prospective and actual social impacts of the mine, and how they have wholeheartedly embraced a perceived modernity which imagines a rather different sort of development.

Society Reform (or Conform?)

The Destiny Plan emerged from the more comprehensive approach to compensation adopted in the IBP, but more specifically its roots lay in the Society Reform Program. First launched in 1993, Society Reform was principally engineered to redirect the social change both realised and anticipated from the mining project. Initial plans for the program were couched in terms of 'rescuing and reviving Lihirian culture' and developing 'fellowship and relationship principles as regards to interactions among fellow Lihirians based on the

Christian principles of love and basic wisdom of the Lihir customary ways' (LMALA 1994: 6). The program's threefold objective aimed to reinvigorate customary activities and relations with Christian moral values, stimulate the local economy through the involvement of all Lihirians in an abstract notion of development, and create social, political, economic and industrial stability. By 1996, the impacts of social change were already being felt throughout the affected areas, and Lihirian leaders — particularly those associated with the landowner association (LMALA) — pushed for the total implementation of the Society Reform Program. This rarely extended beyond rampant preaching by Society Reform leaders with the expectation that people would then reform themselves into customarily grounded moral businessmen.

In light of the Bougainville crisis, Lihirian leaders sought ways to avoid the social conflict occurring at the same time only a few islands away. This was also the first serious attempt to regulate social change, and an early expression of the xenophobia and exclusivity that has characterised Lihirian political ideologies since the formation of the Tuk Kuvul Aisok (TKA). Society Reform resembled an early 'capacity building' exercise. It was proposed in the pre-construction phase that the major political institutions in Lihir would be reorganised according to local concepts of modern bureaucratic hierarchy. These institutions included the Nimamar Development Authority (NDA), a Council of Chiefs, the Lihir Human Development Authority, and the Lihir 'umbrella company' that would stimulate broader economic development. Flow diagrams and images were drawn up to illustrate how these various bodies would work together to execute the 'Lihir Village Development System' and the 'Lihir Master Development Plan' (Glaglas and Soipang 1993). The NDA would generate social and community development with a particular emphasis on law and order, employment and localisation, and community infrastructure.

The Council of Chiefs, which was apparently based on a 'Fiji model' despite a lack of hereditary chieftainship in Lihir (Filer 1997a: 177), would provide a representative body for Lihirian clans, act as the monitoring agency for development, and provide a channel for the dissemination of information throughout the villages. The Lihir Human Development Agency would implement the overall program, promoting and inspiring 'integral human development' and moral regeneration. This would cover areas of religion and worship, customary activities, education and training for leadership, youth, women, family life and health care. Finally, the 'umbrella company' would create a 'business and investment environment' to promote economic development and participation for all Lihirians. This body would work with the NDA to ensure the provision of major infrastructural services. Additionally, Lihir was to be divided into 'zones' that would enable program administration, with

traditional leaders or ‘chiefs’ to represent the clans in these areas. The LMALA leaders believed that this would form the basis for ‘orderly administration and operation’ across the entire community during and after mining development.

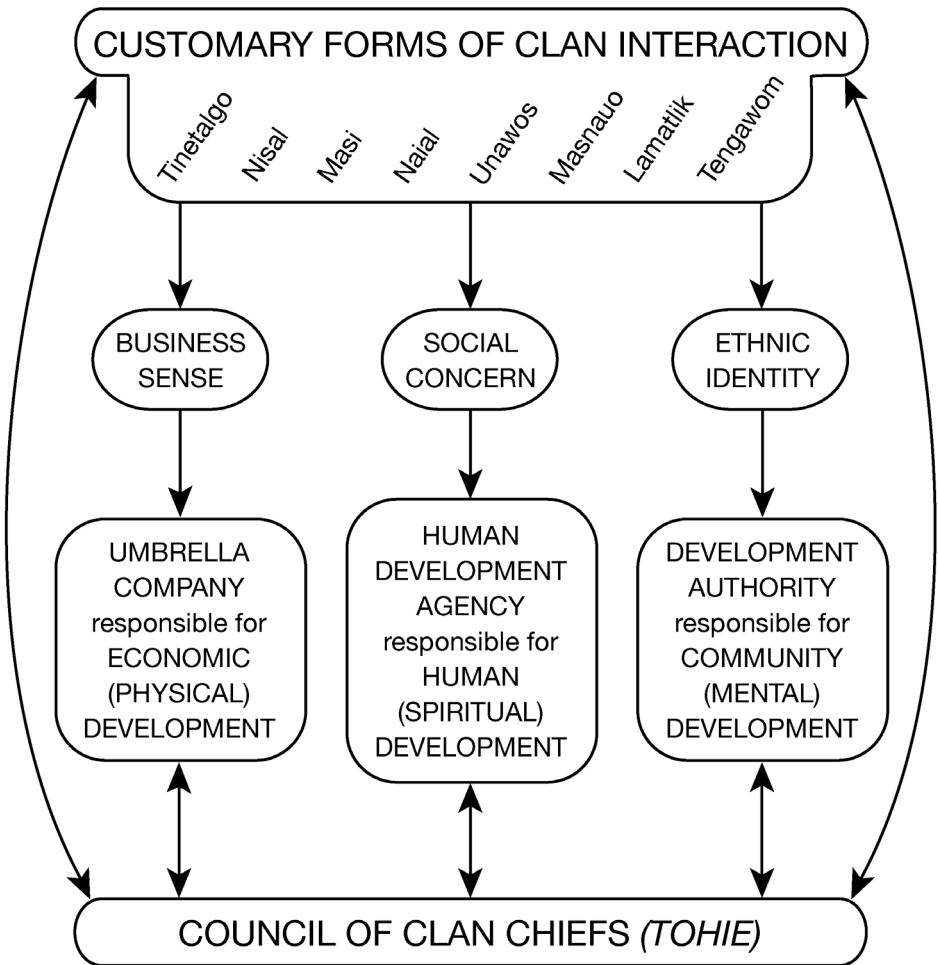


Figure 6-1: Indigenous model of Lihirian society.

Source: Glaglas and Soipang 1993.

Written into these plans was the involvement of Ray Weber, the mining company’s first expatriate manager of community relations, specifically for the purpose of providing ‘Westerner input’ (Glaglas and Soipang 1993: 3). The Society Reform Program was an attempt to escape the cargo cult label that has been applied by outsiders, government authorities and even Lihirians themselves in a process Lindstrom (1995) would refer to as ‘auto-cargoism’.¹

¹ In addition to previous admonishment from administration patrol officers, Noel Levi from the New Ireland Provincial Government visited Londolovit village in 1980 and told Lihirians to abandon any ‘cargo cult-

With its various institutions, Society Reform would show the government that Lihirians could manage the social, economic and political effects of the mine, and that they were no longer cultists but modern bureaucratic leaders able to transform 'traditional Lihir society' into a 'modern Lihir society'.

This was an early attempt to conceptualise institutional regulation of Lihirian life and the rudimentary concept of integration between economics, society and politics, where individual development promotes social development and vice versa. Supposedly, as each person experiences greater personal autonomy and development, coupled with an increased living standard and incorporation into the market, they concurrently support and are supported by traditional kinship and political structures. The early intentions of Society Reform were greater than the rhetoric of 'cultural survival'. Given that the mining project has long been considered as the Lihirian economic millennium — regardless of whether it is viewed through a religious or secular lens — it is obvious that these leaders were not merely concerned with moral decay. What Society Reform envisioned was not just the creation of control mechanisms to shore up Lihirian *kastom* and Christian morals, but a new regulated society, albeit in elementary form, where Western economic institutions are married to traditional social structures to form a distinctly Lihirian modernity. It represented the embryonic stage of Lihirian political and social bureaucratisation and an ongoing attempt to find the right formula for 'balanced' economic development.

Although the program was eventually abandoned in the late 1990s because of its limited results and mismanagement of the company grant, it was certainly not forgotten by Lihirian leaders. It was the genesis of the Destiny Plan. However, it would take the unique series of events that emerged during the review of the IBP to open up a new road for these old ideas.

Reviewing the Future

Once the dust had settled after the initial boom period of mine construction, it was soon obvious that not everyone was going to benefit equally from the project. Society was being 'reformed' but it resembled nothing like what people had imagined. The dense thicket of bureaucracy, chiefs and development agencies built up around the Society Reform Program had completely failed to stem the tide of social decay that was quickly corroding the future viability of Lihirian society.

type beliefs'. He also advised them that 'achievement comes only from hard work and co-operation between yourselves' (*Post-Courier*, 27 May 1980, cited in Lindstrom 1995: 43).

After five years of mining, Lihir was suffering heavily from the so-called 'resource curse' and new socio-economic divisions were firmly entrenched. When the IBP review began in 2000, it was primarily seen as an opportunity to reflect upon the first five years of mining, to assess the failures and successes, and to find solutions to new issues and concerns that had arisen. This review process saw the formation of the Lihir Joint Negotiating Committee (LJNC), which included representatives from the LMALA and the Nimamar Rural Local-Level Government, along with a selection of other educated men who formed the new local political elite. As president of the LMALA, Mark Soipang assumed leadership of the LJNC to promote the landowner interests which lay at the heart of the agreement. Together this group was responsible for representing the wider Lihirian community throughout the renegotiation.

It was anticipated that this would be a relatively simple affair to be completed within a year. Members of the LJNC initially saw this as an opportunity to secure more concessions that would supposedly benefit all Lihirians. Their major concern was to redress economic inequality. They had not yet devised plans for post-mining scenarios, particularly for continued service delivery and the maintenance of vital infrastructure and the standard of living associated with industrial employment and higher per capita incomes. Initially, they aimed for increased compensation in the most inclusive sense of the term (see Burton 1997) rather than economic autonomy.

By 2003, the LJNC members admitted they were 'lost' and searching for ways to conclude the review and reach a mutually satisfactory agreement. When they were introduced to the Personal Viability course (often described simply as 'PV') this totally revolutionised their approach to the IBP. As we shall see, the sentiments of PV reflect a mixture of bottom-up development, self-sufficiency, Christian morality, a neo-Protestant work ethic, Western individualism and faith in neo-classical economics. It is a jumble of nationalist and entrepreneurial rhetoric, designed to compel individuals to play their economic role for themselves and their country. Personal Viability soon became the new bible of economic progress and completely transformed the way in which the LJNC approached the future of Lihir. Like fervent missionaries, the LJNC urged Lihirians to abandon their old ways and become 'PV literate'. Personal Viability received mixed reactions throughout Lihir. Some completely rejected it, pitting this road to development against a reified *kastom*. Others embraced the new modernist philosophies and moved from *winmoni* mania to a sure belief that PV would deliver the goods. Before long, PV provided the LJNC with the necessary inspiration for their original Lihir Strategic Development Concept (the precursor to the LSDP, or the Destiny Plan), which for the first time genuinely shifted the emphasis to the long-term post-mine era.

Personally Viable Melanesians

The Personal Viability course was created in the late 1990s by Samuel Tam, a PNG-born Chinese businessman, who argued that PNG needed to become a 'viable' nation.² For the past ten years, Tam has been taking active steps to reverse negative trends in PNG with a view to transforming the country from the 'grassroots' up. Where politicians, planners and consultants have searched for policy reform and the right formula for distributing wealth, services and infrastructure, Tam has prescribed strategies that put the onus back on the individual. According to Tam, the apparent development 'failures' over the past 30 years and the palpable decline in national living standards can be attributed to the lack of entrepreneurialism — or 'personal viability'. Thus PV is defined very much in financial terms as part of a broader framework of capitalist economic development to be embraced by each Papua New Guinean.

The PV course is intended to deliver the kind of education that will unleash Papua New Guineans from the constraints that impede economic progress and the improvement of living standards. Tam's vision is that PNG might achieve self-reliance and financial independence by transforming its citizens from grassroots subsistence farmers, bound by a world of *kastom* and parochial economies, into self-sufficient entrepreneurial capitalists, active in a national if not global market.

Born of Chinese parentage in Rabaul, Tam is a reserved man, somewhat suspicious of expatriates, and highly determined to witness change throughout Melanesia. He is tertiary educated, experienced in corporate business and state politics, and affectionately known to PV followers as 'Papa Sam'. His Chinese heritage elicits mixed responses from different groups. For some he represents the new wave of successful Asian entrepreneurs in the Pacific, without the racial baggage carried by former colonial officials, NGO advisers, volunteers, missionaries and emissaries of the Australian government deployed to keep a watchful eye on foreign aid. For many others, however, feelings of ambivalence and hostility towards Asians have coloured their response to PV.³

2 PV has been endorsed by the national government and various religious organisations that promote it as *the* new answer for Papua New Guineans. The government has regularly used the course for 'capacity building exercises', and there has been a growing interest among community groups looking to advance their own grassroots economic activities (Nalu 2006; Unage 2006). In 2007, Tam took PV to the Solomon Islands, where the Government Caucus reportedly endorsed it as the model for future economic development, and awarded Tam the Cross of the Solomon Islands in recognition of his assistance.

3 To be sure, the growing Asian presence throughout PNG has come under increased local scrutiny, especially for its connections to the logging industry (Crocombe 2007: 64, 134). Asian influence has shifted from small businesses among the 'older Chinese' to corporate investment in the extractive industries, hotels and other areas of commerce, which also seems to be accompanied by greater levels of corruption and organised crime.

Course participants are told various renditions of Tam's rags-to-riches experience, beginning with the death of his father in World War Two, followed by his education in Australia, his early entrepreneurial activities in Port Moresby, his leading involvement in the *Stret Pasin Stoa* scheme, and eventual financial demise that inspired him to develop PV.⁴ The story of a businessman of migrant origins, with few familial ties, values wholly derived from modern society, and no customary obligations, has been held up for Melanesians of all classes, educational backgrounds and cultural origins to admire and aspire to. His story has entered what Errington and Gewertz (2004: 15) describe as the 'intersection between different narratives of the desirable and the feasible'; it is presented as the apex of achievement and the new definition of reasonable expectation and accomplishment.⁵

The PV course is part of Tam's wider program for national development to be driven and administered by his Entrepreneurial Development Training Centre (EDTC). So far this program exists in an embryonic form and national implementation has not yet been achieved. The courses are taught by 'trained teachers' certified by Tam's EDTC and working as faithful disciples to spread the good news of his modernist doctrine. Within the EDTC there are various PV courses, ranging from entry or 'village level' to more advanced business courses for the 'PV literate'. His plans also include the establishment of a national *Grasruts Benk* (Grassroots Bank) to act as a microfinance institution for PV members, and the *Grasruts Yuniversiti* (Grassroots University) which will have centres around the country, teaching PV and other related courses, and will act as bureaucratic hubs for the administration of PV programs. These institutions and his administrative system are designed to apply the total PV package throughout the nation and eventually the South Pacific region.

His plans hinge upon a complex grading system for PV followers, whereby 'PV grades' or ranks are achieved by completing various levels of the PV course and measures are made of individual achievement in entrepreneurial endeavours and other facets of people's lives, such as church leadership or 'family management', or the ability to meet customary obligations. The attainment of a bronze, silver or gold ranking objectifies social and economic status and determines how much money PV followers can borrow from the Grassroots Bank. According to Tam, course completion and entrepreneurial achievements will officially determine an individual's 'social class', supposedly motivating further individual economic and political ascension.

4 Details of his life history can also be found at the EDTC website (Tam 2010).

5 There are evident correlations between Tam's messages and the prosperity theology found in some of the more charismatic churches throughout PNG.

Two-Week Transformation

I was first introduced to PV in early 2003 when I accompanied a group of men from Kinami to a public forum at which the LJNC was going to explain the progress of the IBP review and its intended development plans. The event was merged with a PV graduation ceremony, designed to demonstrate the new philosophies that would underpin the transformation of Lihir. When we arrived, we found the open-air LMALA community hall in Londolovit townsite bedecked with banners promoting the new road to 'holistic human development'. Some of the banners read:

Lihir Destiny — Self Reliance and Financial Independence

Personal Viability Training Course, Entrepreneurial Development Training Centre Presents: Are You Viable? Holistic Human Development

Lihir Grsruts Benk (Lihir Grassroots Bank), *Benk Bilong Yumi ol Grsruts* (the Bank for the Grassroots People), A Step Towards Financial Independence [this was complete with the image of a pyramid divided into three levels of bronze, silver and gold to represent the various PV rankings that people could achieve with the Grassroots Bank]

Niu Millenuim Gutnius, Grsruts Pawa Mekim Kamap, Universiti PNG, Niupela Rot — Gutpela Sindaun (New Millennium Good News, Developing the Grassroots, University of PNG, New Road — Good Lifestyle)

In Search of a New Direction for PNG — PV Mental power + mental skills + physical power + relevant knowledge + resources = sustainable development (self reliance and financial independence)

Throughout the graduation ceremony, participants shuffled forward to collect their certificates in Holism that certified them as Personally Viable, and then presented testimonies about the amazing personal transformation that they had just undergone. Speaking with excited tones of moral superiority, they attested to the 'truths' of PV and the need to convert from sinful 'handout mentality ways' and step into the bright light of individualism and economic rationalist freedom: '*Yupela yet mas wokim, yupela mas kisim save!*' ('You must do it yourself, you must get the knowledge and skills!'). People were told that 'PV is the Bible in action' and that 'only PV can help our place to develop'. After the forum, which appeared to cause some level of disquiet among the crowd of people anticipating the immediate delivery of benefits and wealth, I spoke to Tam, hoping to learn more about PV. He told me that it was 'just a self-

development and personal development course', but it would take at least two weeks to explain everything. I read between the lines and enrolled in the next course.⁶

Personal Viability courses are usually held in village community halls or church buildings to emphasise 'grassroots accessibility'. In 2003, it cost K200 to participate in a basic two-week course. The courses are open to all adults, regardless of their education or work experience, and it is anticipated that children will begin learning PV through the PV Home School Program. Communities can apply to the EDTC for PV trainers to come to their area if there is not already an established EDTC program in the vicinity.

Courses typically begin with a short lecture on the personally viable modern Melanesian based on the following definition:

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

Each day begins with prayers and the recital of the PV and national anthems, designed to foster national pride and individual obligation. The course is structured around an ideology of entrepreneurialism (or *bisnis*), and after ten days participants are expected to be familiar with the Entrepreneur's Doctrine (taken from the official creed of the Entrepreneurs Association of America).

Grounded in quasi world systems theory and neoliberal rhetoric, PV aims to create successful entrepreneurs who can reverse the economic trends of the past millennium. Using terms such as core and periphery, marginal and centre, and first and third world, people are encouraged to think of the ways in which Western countries have progressively created conditions of dependence for countries like PNG. Borrowing heavily from Wallerstein's (1974) imagery found in neo-Marxist critiques of the Papua New Guinean post-Independence economy (Amarshi et al. 1979), the idea is to illustrate the global exploitation that keeps countries with people of predominately darker skin on the margins and under the control of the countries in the centre with predominately white skin who are in positions of authority and relative luxury and wealth. Papua New Guineans are presented as cheap labour and nameless peripheral villages are the sites of necessary labour power reproduction for capital intensive centres

6 Throughout my fieldwork and subsequent work in Lihir, I have attended five courses, ten graduations, and interviewed over 50 participants.

(Fitzpatrick 1980; Meillassoux 1981). Many participants immediately make the link with the mine and recounted their experiences as ‘cargo boys’ and ‘work boys’. Much of this conversation echoes a more general dissatisfaction with employment opportunities that appear to privilege expatriates over Lihirians.

Personal Viability Anthem

Skul bilong grasrut, universiti
Pawa bilong yumi mekim kamap
Kamapim pawa bilong manmeri
Yumi sindaun gut olgeta taim
Strong bilong pipel stretim kantri
Famili wok bung amamas tru
Gaden bilong God niu paradais
Papua Niugini ples bilong yumi
Sapos mi givim yu pis tete
Bel pulap liklik tete tasol
Nau yumi save pulim pis tu
Olgeta taim na bel i pulap
Lo bilong mekim kamap woksmat
Lo bilong mani na bisnis tu
Lo bilong kamapim gutpela sindaun
Stretpela pasin stretim yumi
Nau yumi ai op rot i klia
Rausim ol banis long kalabus
Yumi mas bosim planti risos
Papua Niugini gaden bilong God
Yu ouinim yu yet pawa bilong yu
Yu kepten bilong sip long famili
Arapela man no inap bosim yu
Skul bilong grasrut, universiti
Skul bilong grasrut, universiti

Grassroots school, university
 Our strength will sustain us
 Sustain the power of the people
 We will be secure for life
 People power will fix this country
 Families that cooperate will rejoice
 God’s garden is the new paradise
 Papua New Guinea is our place
 If I give you fish today
 You will only be satisfied today
 Now if we know how to catch fish too
 We are well-fed all the time
 The laws that guide efficiency
 The laws of money and business too
 The laws that promote wellbeing
 These ways will set us straight
 Now we are aware, the way is clear
 [We can] remove the prison fences
 We must control lots of resources
 Papua New Guinea is God’s garden
 You yourselves own your own power
 You are captains of the family ships
 No one else can control you
 Grassroots school, university
 Grassroots school, university

Inadvertently demonstrating the internal contradictions of PV ideology, the next stage of the course emphasises that personal failure, poverty and inequality are not the result of a world system that reproduces injustices, but a lack of Personal Viability. On the one hand people are told that their plight can be understood through a structural analysis of global capital flows, and on the other hand the onus is put back on the individual; no longer can people blame the government, isolation or colonial history. This is reinforced through the repetition of popular NGO slogans, such as ‘give a man a fish and you feed him today, teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime’. Ultimately participants are taught important lessons in the rhetoric of possessive individualism, particularly as it shadows liberal democracy and promotes the individual as proprietor of the

self, who owes nothing to society and is free to act on their own individual conscience. What Tam seeks to foster in Papua New Guineans and the nation as a whole reflects Hobbes' 'self-moving, appetitive possessive individual, and the model of society as a series of market relations between these individuals' (Macpherson 1962: 265).

Practical Lessons in Self-Mastery

For PV apprentices, it is not all pithy self-empowering aphorisms. Students are assessed and expected to meet deadlines for small assignments and group tasks. There are daily exercises in 'grassroots maths' that teach basic requirements for running trade stores and other small businesses. Compared to the time devoted to reciting and rote learning anthems and mantras, a remarkably small proportion of the course is actually dedicated to these pragmatic and useful skills. As a marker of grassroots authenticity, participants are told to do away with ideas of 'laptops and supercomputers', and to start using their own 'neck-top computer'. Drawing upon Papua New Guinean agricultural capacities, Tam encourages people to plant 'money gardens', a PV term that not only refers to cash crops and market produce, but any small entrepreneurial endeavour that 'grows' money. There is a strong emphasis on harvesting 'nature's abundance that is given to Papua New Guineans from God', shifting people's focus from being custodians or stewards of God's creation to exploiters and successful managers.⁷

Within the rubric of personal transformation, participants are taught how to efficiently manage their daily finances and how to say no to the demands and requests of their relatives. For the PV-minded person, it is important to always ask how much money can be made from a particular activity and how personal performance can be improved. Participants are urged to compare their daily routines with the following time chart for the 'average village person':

Productive — gardening, ploughing, weeding, planting; feeding livestock; fishing; building; selling produce; putting the [nuclear] family first.

Unproductive — gossiping; waiting for opportunities or handouts; visiting relatives (*wantok*); sleeping during the day; sitting idle around the village; giving *dinau* [loans].

Participants are warned not to waste their time, their most valuable asset: 'If you cannot control the time you have left in your life you will find it very difficult

7 For similar discussions on the ways Melanesians engage with environmental discourse see especially: Van Helden 1998; Kirsch 2004; Macintyre and Foale 2004; West 2006.

to control anything else. ... Time is running out quicker than you think!' (Tam 1997: 28–9). In this new order, time is privatised and individuals are responsible for its effective use. These lessons also seek to transform generic notions of village relations by positing the individual (and the nuclear family) as a paramount value. In practice, this tests the moral grounds for relationships, revealing the deep connection between different forms of wealth transaction and individual moral identities. Learning to favour personal ambition over collective stability means that economic imperatives must outweigh social necessities. Thus the highest priority of PV is to quicken the move from develop*man* to development.

Self-Discipline

Personal Viability is divided into 'four growth disciplines': productivity discipline, law of success discipline, economy discipline, and integrity discipline. These disciplines, which can be measured, form the basis of the PV grading system. This is an array of measurements designed to gauge people's individual viability and quantify their ability to 'add value to themselves and commodities' (Tam 1997: 36). By measuring the quantity sold, or the profit achieved, and the rate of expansion and personal progression, 'viable people' can prove that they are constantly 'adding value'. These disciplines specifically target economic output (the productivity discipline), savings and investments (the economy discipline), the ability to meet projected business targets and maintain satisfied customers (the law of success discipline), and finally the ability to fulfil obligations in all areas of life, such as business, family, *kastom*, or church (the integrity discipline). The grading system assumes a lack of motivation: the various ranks are supposed to persuade people to achieve a higher grade that reflects individual earning capacity, credit ratings and supposedly a greater contribution to society. Grading is to be conducted annually by EDTC-accredited grading supervisors. In 2004, PV followers could purchase an official 'EDTC Are You Viable?' badge with the name of the recipient embossed, to be proudly worn to display one's rank and encourage others.

Grading essentially involves verifying the claims of the PV follower: What activities have been completed? What are the annual profit margins? Have expenses, surpluses and savings been recorded, and where are they held? Have sales and productivity reports been produced? And what is the quality of the goods and services being sold? Inspectors should report on the morale of 'The Team' (family or staff who work underneath the graded individual), which means assessing whether younger family members only contribute because they fear retribution, or whether they fully appreciate all the benefits that PV can bring into their lives.

The entire process from reflection to conversion (and public testimony during graduation ceremonies) is significantly theological in tenor. Amidst all of the modernist talk of cultural rupture surrounding PV, these conversion narratives emphasise a clear redemptive strain and an impulse to become clear of past debts and entanglements (the analogues of 'sin'). Personal Viability is presented as the guiding light on the road to development (or re-birth) that will reveal dependency upon the mine and the 'cult of custom' as false gods. However, PV does not demand a total abandonment of *kastom*; rather it calls for regulation and compartmentalisation to curb the ritual proclivities of the developman process.



Plate 6-1: Personal Viability graduation, Lihir, 2007.

Photograph by the author.

The rationalist philosophies in PV resonate with the richly embodied practices of Pentecostals.⁸ What emerges from this constant assessment and self-reflection is an extension of the Christian moral ethos of self-examination so that it becomes a natural part of the modernising process for the aspiring subject. Regular

⁸ Contemporary research on Pentecostalism in post-colonial Africa provides a useful point of comparison. In that instance, severing the encumbering ties is seen as a prerequisite for the freedom and new life that salvation offers (see Meyer 1998, 2004; Gifford 2004).

grading increases people's openness to the people and institutions identified with the power and success of the larger world. As Foucault (1984) observed in his review of Baudelaire's (1863) essay, *The Painter of Modern Life*, one of the distinctive features of being a modern subject is the mandate to explore the potential for self-improvement and the ways in which one might become a different person in the future. Modernity is thus characterised by a deliberate mode of relationship to oneself: the intentional attitude of modernity is linked to an indispensable asceticism (Foucault 1984: 41). Personal Viability encourages a heightened self-consciousness and intensifies self-derision in the name of personal development.

Sailing towards Destiny's Island

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

The ideology of PV soon got a firm grip on the LJNC. Its message contests a history of cargo discourse and activity and the lottery or lucky-strike mentality fostered through mining and the millions of kina that have been devoured through conspicuous consumption with little thought for the future.

Ray Weber's 'Westerner input' into the Society Reform Program had been replaced by Samuel Tam's home-grown input. Tam's disassociation from the mining company, his PNG citizenship, and his Chinese heritage — his non-white non-expatriate non-miner identity — gave him kudos among the LJNC members who wanted to show the company and the State that they had their own (and in their eyes superior) expertise in the matter of business and development. The LJNC members described their early formulations of the Lihir Strategic Development Concept as their version of the Marshall Plan. It was their 'road map' for achieving the Lihir Destiny, which they described as 'financial independence and self reliance that will promote and maintain sustainable development and enable a progressive Christian Lihirian society with a highly educated, healthy and wealthy people' (LJNC 2004a: 16). Although it grew in complexity to encompass personal, social and national development, the focus has always been on some form of *Lihirian* economic progress.

The main elements of the early Destiny Plan can be summarised as follows: the establishment of the Lihir Grasruts Pawa Mekim Kamap Ltd (LGPMKL), the local franchise of Tam's Grasruts Pawa Mekim Kamap (whose title refers

to the idea of 'empowering the grassroots'); the total implementation of the PV program, including the PV grading system; the establishment of the Lihir Grasruts Yuniversiti; the establishment of economic projects to create revenue on Lihir (poultry, fishing, timber, garden produce and cash crops); the Lihir Grasruts Benk; land purchases on and off Lihir for future development; business development; and the establishment of a Lihir FM radio station to provide a voice for Lihirians. It was imagined that over a period of years this environment would produce a (micro) 'nation of entrepreneurs'. Similar to Society Reform, the Destiny Plan proposed a total restructuring of Lihirian society to fit a new version of economic development. In both instances, bureaucratisation and increased surveillance were considered crucial components of modernity. However, the fundamental difference was that, for the LJNC, achieving this new state was contingent upon everybody becoming 'PV literate'. According to the popular LJNC adage, PV had to become 'second nature' or the new 'Lihirian psyche'. The underlying assumption was that total commitment to ritualistic performance of PV would somehow affect the overall outcome.

The LGPMKL was the governing body designated to install the Destiny Plan. The name connotes ideas of 'bottom-up' development and implies that local initiatives are more sustainable and capable of reaching better results than 'top-down' planning imposed by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, Western NGOs, consultants, the State or the mining company. Yet despite the intentions, the approach was inherently contradictory. The management bias of a small group demonstrates the sort of corporate hierarchy which its members ideologically eschewed. Ultimately the plan was to fuse the LMALA and the local-level government together under this organisational structure to centralise execution and administration of the various projects that fell within the scope of the Destiny Plan.

Political restructuring would bring clan leaders into the development process, with greater connection between the local-level government and the village, and with a focus on strengthening Lihirian *kastom*. Central to this program was the codification and restructuring of customary activity and leadership. The LJNC intended to have these codified 'rules' passed as legislation by the local-level government, and those not practicing *kastom tru* (true custom) were liable to financial penalties. The separation of *kastom* from entrepreneurial activities, 'family needs' and general politics was central to the LJNC's concept of modernity. There would be separate departments in the new governance structure that dealt with different aspects of Lihirian life: health, education, the economy, women, children, youth and the environment. Although many of these offices already existed, either within the local-level government or the mining company, presumably the idea was to consolidate them under centralised LJNC control. Religion, *kalsa* (culture) and sports were lumped together and

assigned as one package for monitoring and developing, as activities supposedly extraneous to the economy. If Society Reform lacked direction on how to develop people and society, as individuals and as a collective, PV stipulated a recipe that covered all dimensions — ‘physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and economic’ — on the basis of a belief that:

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

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

Writing *Kalsa*

In the last 15 years, Lihirians have attended more customary events, eaten more pork, exchanged more *mis*, kina and pigs, and performed more traditional dances than ever before. Yet Lihirians often speak as if *kastom* is in peril, which can leave the outside observer completely flummoxed. Despite the efflorescence of *kastom*, people often commented that ‘*kastom bilong mipela i bagarap pinis*’

(‘our custom is totally ruined’), or ‘*nau mipela no save long mekim kastom trutru*’ (‘now we don’t make true custom’). More *kastom* is not necessarily better, and does not always translate into a feeling that *kastom* is being preserved or strengthened, let alone practiced ‘correctly’.

The LJNC was highly attuned to these changes, which it regarded as signs of cultural decadence and decay — symptomatic of ‘irrational’ economic sensibilities. Central to the Society Reform Program was the need to ‘*strongim kalsa*’ (‘strengthen culture’). Given the close association between land tenure and customary exchange, the program would build upon earlier attempts at codifying land rules. No formal cultural preservation program ever emerged, largely reflecting the highly ambivalent attitude towards traditional culture, which local political leaders have often regarded as an impediment to development. However, the PV course seemed to provide the LJNC with a way to place *kastom* within the new economic and political order. The codification of *kastom* was back on the agenda, but this time as a way to preserve the purity of mortuary rituals as well as that of the modern cash economy. The conceptual separation of different daily domains was seen as the basis for cultural continuity and economic development.

Peter Toelinkanut, a former Air Niugini engineer and a member of the LJNC, headed a new Working Cultural Committee to begin this work. The committee carried out its research between 2002 and 2004, spending time in at least one men’s house in every ward, discussing and interviewing the men whom they regarded as a reliable source of knowledge. From the outset this was a selective process, designed to produce an even more selective account. Differences between the wards were taken into account, but the intention was to standardise practice across the islands to preserve a particular rendition of Lihirian *kastom*. The booklet produced by the committee begins with the following inscription:

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

Here is a summary of all Major/Minor customs and Customary laws practiced on Lihir Island. From sleepless nights in all fifteen (15) Wards discussing with elders on Lihirian customs and laws practiced in the past we were able to put this together for review by Tumbawin Lam Assembly — Nimamar Rural Local Level Government. The aim of the project is to standardize customary practices and laws on the Island hence preserving and reviving it for use by future generations. Reviving and preserving these customs and laws means reviving and preserving

unity and identity of Lihir which is fast disappearing because of mining operations on the island. When reviewed by Tumbawin Lam Assembly, the project will go before the Legislative Committee who will then draft it as legislation to be effective for all Lihirians to follow (LWCC 2004: 1).

The collection was written in Tok Pisin and laid out like an instruction book for each major feast. It was divided into two sections: 'Major Customs practiced by a majority on the island'; and 'Minor Customs practiced by a minority on the island'.⁹ There were limited details on the feasting stages and accompanying land laws, which, if they were followed, were probably more likely to increase disputes. The legalistic approach to *kastom* and penalties for deviation lends itself to analogies with other movements throughout Melanesia that were designed to regulate people's bodily experiences, their orderings of time and space, and their unified and cooperative social relationships (see Schwartz 1962). The codification of *kastom* was more than an indigenous attempt at salvage anthropology; it was also connected to the definition of Lihirian identity, which was in turn driven by concerns over the distribution of mine-related benefits. *Kastom* must therefore be considered as a particular aspect of social change and as an instrument in political and ideological struggles that Lihirians waged against their neighbours, the nation, and the mining company, and also amongst themselves.

Towards the end of 2004, the LJNC included a Kastom Lidas Komiti (KLK) in their IBP proposal and claimed that the entire 'Destiny Plan' now depended upon the implementation of this new political structure. The KLK would represent all Lihirians. A leader would be selected from every clan in each ward, which theoretically meant that everyone would be represented by a customary leader. One of the main functions of the KLK was the dissemination of information from the LGPMKL to the men's house, supposedly linking everyone to the developmental process. These leaders would revive customary teaching and strengthen respect for men's house ethos. Ideally they would become agents of modernity who taught PV by day and *kastom* by night in men's houses that were converted into multi-disciplinary learning centres.

Unrest

The proposed Destiny Plan was quickly generating a great deal of heat, which arose from the growing social isolation and political dominance of the LJNC, confusion surrounding their plans, and emerging frustrations with the PV movement. The LJNC referred to itself as a 'master-mind organisation' — PV

9 In some instances Lihirians refer to the entire group of islands as simply 'Lihir Island'.

jargon that reflected the status which the members believed was conferred upon them by the diversity, educational background, and experience of its members. They were a self-styled group of elite Lihirian men who considered themselves to be the vanguards of social change. LJNC members purposely chose not to work for the company. This was partly due to their oppositional stance towards the company, but also because wage labour was seen as a sign of dependency and contradictory to the entrepreneurial emphasis.

Their elaborate plans, which centred upon the institutionalisation of PV, were largely being devised in isolation from other representative groups. They often stated that they would only talk with people who were 'PV literate' and equipped to understand their plans. Relations with the local-level government deteriorated, so by 2004 the LJNC existed as a separate political entity. Not surprisingly, Lihirian women were completely excluded from this process, which eventually prompted the women's association to launch a protest march through Londolovit townsite to present a petition to the government and the company to demand a greater level of inclusion.

The Destiny Plan was not a community movement, nor did it have full community, government or company support. This meant that people who were not directly involved with the LJNC often found it very difficult to understand its plans and vision. The LJNC supposedly represented community interests, but it was in constant tension with other organisations and the broader community. Although Mark Soipang gained his authority from his position in the LMALA, which was fundamental to the LJNC's control over the revision of the IBP, Soipang had an ambiguous and strained relationship with the landowning community. Not everyone supported his leadership, and as long as they were living off mining benefits, many struggled to find PV relevant. They were more concerned with the compensation details in this agreement than with ideologies of cultural conversion.

When Bill Gates Comes to a *Hausboi* Near You

In order to address rising discontent, the LJNC embarked on a community awareness campaign. People were told they could get on board the boat sailing to the new Lihirian future, or else sit on the shore waiting for the 'white ships full of cargo that will never arrive'. Through the national implementation of the PV course, with Lihir at the head of it, the LJNC depicted itself as the captain at the helm ready to sail PNG through its financial tempest. These meetings were normally held on Sunday mornings after church in public areas in a village. On one occasion, the LJNC held a special meeting in Lataul, in the men's house

belonging to the father of one of the LJNC members. This area had remained a stronghold of the Nimamar Association and developed a particular antagonism towards the LJNC and the PV movement.

That evening, when I arrived at the men's house, I wasn't surprised to hear a portable generator whining away to provide power to illuminate the setting. What I did not expect to find was a PowerPoint presentation of the Destiny Plan being beamed onto the inside wall of the men's house. It seemed a slight contradiction to present the future for 'neck-top computer' specialists on a brand new laptop computer. Through a thick fog of smoke the apocalyptic words 'Lihir Destiny' magically hovered above the heads of the older men; I waited for trumpets and horsemen. The presentation began with pre 9/11 pictures of New York with the twin towers still standing as proud monuments to man's achievement. These were followed by more images of Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Sydney, beamed through the haze onto the dirty inside wall. Gasps of amazement were directed at both the images and the technology. If the LJNC couldn't convince the audience of the rationality and necessity of its plan, then it could dazzle them with bright lights, or impress them through detailed descriptions and complex flow charts which explained how this city would function and the role that each individual would play. These education programs had a similar format to Society Reform presentations and many of the public awareness campaigns by the company on issues such as health and environmental impacts, which usually involved complicated technical and scientific explanations that were rarely understood, but were presumed to be sufficient motivation for people to adjust their lifestyles.

The idea of Lihir becoming a *siti* (city), a generic pie in the sky that promises greater purchasing power and an inverted world order, is a recurrent theme in Lihirian history. This *driman* (dream) has evolved from the deceptively simple *kago* (cargo) to images of a thriving metropolis. Lihirian urban dreams were previously based on their knowledge of Kavieng, a small and sleepy provincial centre on the northwestern tip of New Ireland. Access to media and the opportunity to travel overseas has increased local awareness. However, as the Bishop's mocking remark indicates, the problem was not to imagine how a Lihirian city might look. People had been doing that for at least the past 30 years, and most people already imagined that their urban role would be characterised by consumption, not labour or production. Instead, people were concerned about the overriding emphasis on PV as the means for constituting this Arcadia. Not only did it appear to contradict earlier prophecies, which promised that the ancestors would deliver the desired change, but people were becoming rather wary of the new sociality encouraged by PV.

Personal Viability in Practice

Many Lihirians, especially those without access to royalties and compensation payments, initially thought that PV was the key to wealth accumulation. Large numbers eagerly enrolled in their nearest course, believing that they could achieve their dreams through this 'home-grown' approach. Indeed, this is why it was appropriated by the LJNC — to demonstrate to the company and the government that LJNC members understood the 'White man's secret' and had their own (alter)native answers to the development riddle. Yet large sections of the community were growing disillusioned with PV, which strongly influenced the way in which they interpreted the LJNC and its Destiny Plan. The skewed mining economy and inflated community expectations deterred many people from seriously committing themselves to entrepreneurial endeavours. The LJNC and some company managers were inclined to regard this as a simple extension of the so-called 'cargo cult mentality', which would explain why they failed to recognise that the heightened sense of traditionalism was the greater barrier.

In response to the sense of cultural rupture, many Lihirians have reified their cultural values in a form of hyper-traditionalism which has developed in tandem with the expansion of feasting and exchange through access to new forms of wealth. In the next chapter I shall examine this phenomenon in more detail, but for the moment it is sufficient to note that, for many Lihirians, *kastom* denotes a form of sociality that supposedly differs from that associated with the cash economy. More often than not, people find that their attempts to conduct business within the village setting, or their strategies to 'get ahead', are constantly compromised by these competing values. The followers of PV like to imagine that their economic activities are set apart from the petty market sales of the average villager, not least of all because they aim to advance beyond ad hoc sales to a regular income supported by a growing 'clientele base'. More importantly, they often state that there will be no bartering, exchange, credit or favours, regardless of kinship and *kastom* obligations. PV projects are ultimately supposed to operate separately from the gift economy. Although the integrity discipline purports to measure individual performance in *kastom* to the extent that such transactions reflect a form of economic commitment, PV implicitly encourages less — or at least more rationalised — involvement in *kastom*, which appears to sustain the sharp ideological division between notions of *kastom* and *bisnis*.

One of the ways in which people are encouraged to perform their viability is by organising their family according to a corporate structure in which each member continually proves his or her productivity by contributing income towards the family's living expenses. Weekly meetings should be held and records must be kept to ensure that productivity levels increase. It is the nuclear family, not

the matriline, which is the base model for micro-collective enterprise. This will supposedly instil the PV mentality at the household level, eventually reinforced by a community of like-minded families.

The next level is the formation of village-based PV clubs, or collectives that pool resources, finances and labour for individual and group projects. Some function as a micro-finance resource, providing small interest-free loans to members (anything up to K200) to start another 'money garden' project, pay school fees, or deal with emergencies. From Tam's perspective, Papua New Guineans left to their own devices inevitably fall by the wayside of PV. The clubs provide support and encouragement for floundering entrepreneurs. Modelled on corporate organisations, clubs elect a president and various office holders, with committees established for different projects. Ideally, there should be a club in each village and a club representative in each local government ward. The latter's duty is to make sure that clubs function effectively, help to recruit new followers, and guard against declining enthusiasm. But in Lihir it has often proven difficult to enact these ideal strategies.

PV clubs cut across clan and family ties, and exclude anyone that has not taken the course and proven their 'PV literacy', which in the village context has increasingly come to mean the ability to converse using PV idioms, rather than demonstrate any recognisable form of entrepreneurial initiative. The use of commonly understood terms and phrases exclusive to PV followers generates a sense of ethos among club members. This is important because their petty market sales are sometimes hardly distinguishable, in practice, from those of non-PV followers.

PV urges people to compartmentalise their daily life in terms of a perceived distinction between socio-economic spheres. In reality, it often proves impossible to pry apart the tangled relationship between *kastom* and *bisnis* through ritual adherence to PV, even though it promises some level of financial autonomy from local webs of kinship and exchange. It is this tension that causes people to reject PV, claiming that '*PV em i no olsem kastom bilong yumi*' ('PV is not like our custom'), or '*em i no pasin bilong Lihir*' ('this is not the Lihirian way'). This new resistance is couched in the discourse of *kastom*, but it also comes from a realisation that any 'secrets' which people are learning from PV are difficult to perform, and usually contradict cultural dispositions, values and expectations. Many try to establish their 'money garden' only to find their efforts strangled by tangled kinship roots. Some people might consider themselves as potential businessmen, but they are often the same people who disparage those who are successful at the expense of social relations. Such reactions capture the contradictions and paradoxes in the Destiny Plan and broader Lihirian desire: Lihirians want to learn how to produce money for themselves and gain financial autonomy, but not necessarily at the cost of sociality.

State of Exclusion

It was imagined that PV would help Lihirians to create their own 'nation of shopkeepers and managers'. The LJNC members were in a unique situation. Their access to resources through the mining project, their commitment to PV, and their involvement in Tam's nationwide program converted earlier micro-nationalist sentiments into actual plans for *micro-nation making*. The LJNC had not merely expressed a typical micro-nationalist desire for greater autonomy (not necessarily full-scale secession), but went to great lengths to create a blueprint for a micro-nation with its own laws, economy and leaders, that would not only show the way, but might eventually fulfil prophecies of becoming the *las kantri* (last country). The committee's outlook was ultimately insular, and its members relied on Tam for instruction, inspiration and engagement with the nation through his program. There was an intrinsic tension between wanting 'bottom-up' development and having an inherently 'top-down' approach. The plan was classically neoliberal, based on a reverse trickledown effect through which the rest of the nation would develop as Lihir led the way, after first transforming Lihirian leaders through a process which the LJNC called 'mind conditioning'. The proposal was for more than a mere agreement between the various stakeholders in the mining project, or a prescription for economic prosperity that would secure the future of Lihir well after the last mining manager had packed his bags. The Destiny Plan was a political manifesto and economic strategy *for Lihir*, effectively based on the total implementation of the PV course and its philosophies throughout Lihir and eventually the nation.

When Filer and Jackson first advised Kennecott on the potential risks to the project, they suggested that resentment (towards the State, authorities, business, Europeans, or simply economic inequality) prevalent within the Nimamar Association and earlier movements could dissipate under the impact of mining, but that these same feelings might also resurface and find expression later on in a more 'rational' (yet potentially violent) disguise (Filer and Jackson 1989: 177). Feelings of resentment throughout Lihir may not have surfaced in the type of violence witnessed on Bougainville, but they have certainly been expressed within a more 'rational' manoeuvre headed by the LJNC. Those aspects of micro-nationalism that stress some form of loosely defined 'ethnic cohesion' or community membership based on common goals were familiar traits of Nimamar. As we saw in the previous chapter, mining operations did amplify these sentiments, but they have not been channelled into direct political activity, instead finding expression in daily relations between Lihirians and non-Lihirians. However, where Nimamar tapped into a feeling of discontent, the LJNC tried to raise these feelings to fruition, from a micro-nationalist attitude, to an actual attempt at micro-nation making.

Finalising the Review

In mid-2004, the LJNC visited Kairiru Island near Wewak for an intensive retreat with Samuel Tam. During this time the LJNC members consolidated many of their ideas and signed the 'Kairiru Accord' in which they expressed their commitment to the Lihir Destiny. The LJNC returned and recommenced negotiations with renewed vigour. The Lihir Destiny would be a 20-year process that would fulfil the National Goals. The LJNC would lay the foundations, and then move to 'import replacement', 'industrialisation', and finally the 'information and technology and services era'. Yet it still struggled to get the support of the company and the State. While there was generally agreement over the actual compensation agreements, there was little accord over the expenditure of funds for PV, the new governance structures, or the neat models for social and economic development. The company refused to allocate funding for plans that appeared unstable and vague, as well as being poorly received by the wider community, while the State wavered between applauding the LJNC's plans for self-reliance and dismissing its members as 'cargo cultists'.

The company had made an unprecedented offer. They were committed to spending K100 million over five years until the following review. This included the entire range of compensation payments and development of infrastructure and service provision. The LJNC rejected this offer, claiming that it would take at least K4 billion to develop Lihirians and to 'balance' the disturbance from mining. With their new awareness of 'holistic human development' from PV, the LJNC wanted the new IBP to meet *all* the needs of *all* individuals.

Both of these figures were equally arbitrary. There was little basis to the company's offer other than its impressive ring. The LJNC's ambit claim wasn't just a copycat performance of Francis Ona's infamous demand for K10 billion for damages caused by the Panguna mine, but it was a bargaining device. The LJNC members realised that demand was unrealistic, but they wanted to express their commitment to PV and their Destiny Plan. They argued that, if the company could not meet their demand, then the only way forward was to support their vision:

The answer for the huge differences is not the mentality of LMC dishing out cash to the community to satisfy their needs nor in the mentality of depending on LMC giving us K20 million per year to satisfy our needs.

We believe that the answer to this problem is with the people themselves. They must make their own money to satisfy their own needs (Physical, Spiritual, Financial, & Emotional Needs). We believe this is the reality of life to follow God's Order to Adam and Eve (LJNC 2004b).

Recourse to the Fall, as justification for the hardships that people must endure along the road to prosperity, rationalises and converges the morality of capitalism and personal transformation as it is set out within PV. What we can also see from these contrasting offers and counter-demands is the extent to which both parties were approaching compensation from different angles. For the company, compensation is proportional to the level of destruction, and once payment is made, all on-going obligations are negated; for the LJNC, compensation is aimed at developing novel and on-going economic relationships (Jackson 1997: 106–8). The company argued it was already exceeding its obligations to provide for community development and service provision, while the LJNC appears to have interpreted the *Mining Act* to mean that the company should fund anything regardless of its scope or nature.

In effect, the LJNC members were stating that they would develop Lihir in isolation, and it was the company's responsibility to help facilitate their plans. In their words, 'the mining company was the stepping stone for the Lihir Destiny'. The company was concerned about what appeared like a politico-economic manifesto with serious implications for the community and the potential to bring the company into conflict with the government. But the LJNC members were resolute: they were convinced that they had finally discovered the key to economic prosperity and refused to adjust their plans.

In many ways, the LJNC members conflated management issues with their desire for ownership. Despite their endless production of complicated flow charts and economic projections, they had not come to grips with the problem of managing a multinational operation, or an 'independent island nation', assuming that operations would be unproblematic once they were in a position of control. Like so many of the issues which arise in the context of mining, such as compensation for environmental, social and political impacts, the Destiny Plan should be viewed as a local response to conflict over the control of resources (Banks 2002). Controlling their own lives, the mine, access to wealth and benefits, and the direction and type of economic development generated through this process, was central to their vision of the future.

The negotiations frequently required an independent third party arbitrator, and some senior company managers admitted that they simply wanted to complete the review and move on. Eventually, a settlement was reached and a new agreement was signed in 2007 (see Plate 6-2), partly because it was difficult for the company and the State not to support a local commitment to economic self-reliance — effectively an indigenous model of development. While there were doubts about the details and the means to reach the new destination, it was assumed by all parties that, once an agreement was made, planning and implementation would be worked out along the way.



Plate 6-2: Mark Soipang signing the Revised Integrated Benefits Package (the Lihir Sustainable Development Plan), Potzlaka, 2007.

Photograph courtesy of the LGL Archives.

Lihirian leaders made some headway in fulfilling earlier desires for minimal State involvement. Lihirians maintained their 50 per cent share of the 2 per cent mining royalty collected by the State, with SML landowners receiving 20 per cent in cash payments, the Nimamar Rural Local-Level Government and the Nimamar Special Purposes Authority receiving 20 per cent and 10 per cent respectively, while the other 50 per cent went to the New Ireland Provincial Government. The provincial government would receive 70 per cent of the Special Support Grant, while the remaining 30 per cent went to the local-level government. The LSDP builds on the format of the broad definition of compensation in the original IBP, with five chapters that address specific issues, projects and phases of mine life — The Lihir Destiny, Destruction, Development, Security, and Rehabilitation. The budget was later increased to K107 million to be portioned out between the various chapters according to priorities.

These chapters are set in context by a mission statement that outlines the time frame for achieving the Lihir Destiny over the next 20 years, beginning with holistic human development, economic development for communities, entrepreneurial class development, and self-reliance and financial independence. Underscoring this is the definition of the Lihir Dream and the spirit of the IBP which is based on the following objectives listed in the Executive Summary:

- a) Parallel Development: To ensure that development in all villages in Lihir will happen in parallel to the development of the Lihir Gold Project.
- b) Balanced Development: To ensure that development in Lihir is balanced in all villages and wards in Lihir.
- c) Sustainable Development: To ensure that development in Lihir is sustainable. That is, that development in Lihir must be able to sustain itself without being dependent on the Lihir Gold Project.
- d) Stable Development: To ensure that development in Lihir is stable. This must happen in harmony with the Lihir Society and not destroy and erode the order and culture that existed in the society prior to the operation of the Lihir Gold Project (LSDP 2007).

Chapter 1 is supposed to facilitate projects that build the foundation for achieving the Lihir Destiny of a 'healthy, wealthy and wise society' — such as health, education, and law and order programs. This includes institutional capacity building with the local-level government and its various agencies, revamping health and education services, and the further development of community infrastructure such as roads and reticulated water and electricity. The generation of local media outlets, such as newspapers and radio, is also given priority. Chapter 2 is concerned with support for the LMALA and those

agreements specific to the loss of land for mining activities, and the continued delivery of benefits and compensation to those who own land in the SML area.¹⁰ Chapter 3 outlines proposals for alternative economic development, such as livestock and agricultural projects, aimed at reducing reliance on an industrial economy. This chapter also contains details about contracts around the airport, the mining pit and stockpile, the plant site, and the (continuing) relocation of Kapit village. Chapter 4 is primarily devoted to ‘Holistic Human Development’ to be delivered through the PV course and the PV Home School Program, and Chapter 5 lays out initial plans for mine closure as required by national government legislation.

Miming the Mine

To fully understand these plans for achieving a desired state of modernity, we must appreciate the centrality of mimesis. The repetitive rote learning of PV laws, mantras, anthems, disciplines and entrepreneurial business techniques was aimed at guaranteeing access to a certain kind of life and status. For PV followers these ‘rules’ were commonly seen as ends in themselves. Following correct PV procedure often seemed more important than devising ways to achieve desired entrepreneurial goals that might actually draw upon useful skills learnt in the PV course. This partially accounts for the gap between theory and practice. For the LJNC, this was manifest in a Destiny Plan that was completely committed to the exact performance of Tam’s teaching. Tam had become the unwitting or reluctant charismatic leader of a post-modern cult.

Tam’s educational system, with its ranked hierarchies, reproduced the effects of graded societies that are intended to give people access to new forms of knowledge or ‘secrets’ as they are initiated into higher levels. The LJNC members spoke as if ‘sitting down’ in the highest level PV course (the Entrepreneurial Business Development course) would somehow reveal the answers. Undoubtedly, this was compounded by the fact that Tam literally said that he was letting them in on a ‘secret’ — his knowledge gained from years of business achievements that LJNC members had not experienced. When one of the LJNC members triumphantly exclaimed that they had ‘unlocked the White man’s secret’, I momentarily tried to believe that it meant a deeper insight into the self-contradictory and exploitative ideology of modern bourgeois illusions that would actually locate me in the ‘savage slot’. This was mere academic fancy; this LJNC member’s newly discovered knowledge of tax evasion and investment strategies was probably of more immediate use.

¹⁰ Separate from this agreement is the funding of LMALA, which in 2009 received approximately K5.2 million from LGL for all operational expenses.

‘Cracking the code’ is a familiar aspect of cargo discourse (Worsley 1968: 247). The PV course appeared to provide the answers and knowledge seemingly withheld by the company and the State. Tam’s entrepreneurial instructions focused on many of the basic managerial elements of business, such as conducting feasibility studies, drawing conceptual flow charts, and regularly producing budgets, report sheets and sales projections. These and other unstated and implicit aspects of business, which underpin the operational success of the mining company, were initially treated by the LJNC members as a form of hidden knowledge which they could make explicit through the routines of naming and designation, and through ritual enactment of the procedures of business and the tacit ‘rules’ that govern Western personhood.

In his work on millenarian movements in New Britain, Andrew Lattas argues that humans constitute themselves by internalising and reacting to the gaze of others. In cargo cults, this assimilation of the other is manifest in the ‘theatrical self-identification in which people’s corporeal gestures become identified with those of Europeans’ (Lattas 1998: 268). To this end, the LJNC’s plans for economic, social and political advancement represented the appropriation and internalisation of the ‘moral technology of self improvement’ (ibid.: 234) consistently presented by kiaps, missionaries and miners. Personal Viability and its application in the Destiny Plan were attempts to overcome the alienating structure of modern economic and political relations. Yet these strategies seem to simultaneously reproduce the very structures and organising principles they sought to reform (see Comaroff 1985).

The LJNC members were not mistaken in seeing the regimented bodily routines and gestures, disciplined business techniques, and quests for personal augmentation — all taught by PV — as the ‘secret’ or essence of economically successful modern Western lifestyles. Indeed, even cargo cults often consist of perfectly rational economic and political action (Dalton 2004: 203). Their emotional connection to PV and their Destiny Plan stemmed from their attempt to grasp the transformative powers of discipline. It should come as no surprise that the militaristic character of PV and the Destiny Plan reflect the same pedagogic regimes used by administrators, missionaries and teachers to create disciplined moral subjects — more civilised Melanesians (Foucault 1975). We can detect a certain element of ‘rigorism’ in the LJNC’s plans for total imposition: the tendency among millenarianists who believe that they now hold the key or have grasped the secret and feel compelled to force it upon others (Burridge 1971: 135). For the LJNC, economic prosperity was dependent upon all-encompassing behavioural regulation.

The overwhelmingly bureaucratic and autocratic character of the Destiny Plan could not have developed without the daily influence of the company’s regimented constitution and infrastructure. Mining companies invariably fit the

Weberian ideal type model of the bureaucratic enterprise, with their integrated management systems (Weber 1978: 956–7). It is this conflation of modern structures with economic success that caught the LJNC eye. As Lihirians have been progressively drawn into greater contact with the outside world, they have familiarised themselves with new things, movements and concepts which they incorporated into their way of operating. However, their knowledge of the outside world and global capitalism remained partial. In earlier years, Arau was the main external conduit: he was the chief source of information on life outside Lihir, political developments occurring throughout the province, and visions of a possible future. The mine has provided access to a range of external sources of information through media, telecommunications, and the constant movement of people on and off the island. Over time, Lihirians have filtered more information in a different sort of mimetic behaviour.

The TKA envisioned its economic future as lying in plantation agriculture that was no longer managed by their colonial *masta*. These plantations would be collectively controlled and worked by groups of Lihirians. This vision incorporated idealised notions of tradition and current ideas about cooperatives. At the time, cooperatives were seen as the only option for economic advancement that also allowed for the incorporation of an egalitarian ethos. In the context of mining, many Lihirians see their economic future in the management of the mine and in small-scale businesses that capitalise on mineral wealth. Lihirians are again seeking to displace those whom they see as dominating them — white mining managers and businessmen from other parts of PNG with lucrative contracts. The egalitarian ethos once again appeals to tradition, but the model no longer incorporates ideas about collectivism. It is appropriate that many Lihirians imagine themselves operating within a post-colonial economy as individual businessmen and managers.

Making Myth-Dreams Come True

Without ignoring or denying the Lihirian passion for moral equivalence — a fundamental aspect of their desire to manage their own lives and the mining project at the same time — we should not miscalculate the material dimension of the *Lihir a ninambal* (Lihir dream). People retrospectively interpreted this dream in different ways. Some recognised the mining project as the logical fulfilment of local prophecies, but for most Lihirians who were not in receipt of mining royalties, compensation payments or relocation houses, new inequalities testified to the falsehood of recent reckoning. Some assumed that the arrival of the company, and especially its early supply ships, was the realisation of predictions that ships and planes full of cargo would arrive from America, but it was the greedy and selfish actions of a few (such as the Putput landowners

or the government) that spoiled this for everyone. This echoes Bah Arom's comments at the beginning of Chapter 3 about Kennecott's arrival and other nostalgic recollections of the Ladolam mining camp. This romantic period in the relationship between Lihirians and the company played a strong role in encouraging the belief that Lihirians 'called' the company to their shores, partly explaining the common conviction that they own mine.

Underscoring the Lihir Destiny charter myth is the term *a peketon*, which gained metaphorical significance in the TKA movement. It became the leitmotif of the Destiny Plan: national change will emanate from Lihir, providing moral justification, connecting modern means with traditional dreams of influence and change. On the one hand, the LJNC rejected all forms of thinking which supported these earlier prophecies or myth-dreams, claiming that these hold Lihirians back from 'real development', fostering a handout mentality. On the other hand, the LJNC gave credence to these dreams, intellectualising them as Burridge would, recasting them as aspirations, and through the PV lens as the Lihir Destiny. The LJNC members seized upon prophecy fulfilment to muster political support throughout Lihir, historically contextualising their plan to the extent that they too came to believe that becoming a city (the outward manifestation of independence and self-reliance) was truly their destiny.



Plate 6-3: Signboard outside the Personal Viability Training Centre where Sam Tam resides in Marahun townsite, 2010.

Photograph by the author.

Myth-dreams in the TKA promised that ancestors would return bearing cargo and money and give houses to the faithful. Some of these beliefs have continued to circulate throughout Lihir, finding greater currency among the disenfranchised. BurrIDGE's solution for these myth-dreams or esoteric aspirations is a staunch commitment to modernity, to be delivered by the better behaved European, or in the Lihir case, the moral mining manager. But the LJNC members were simultaneously modern myth-dreamers and enlightened moral Europeans. They had (re)created their own myth-dreams in the form of the Lihir Destiny, while simultaneously rejecting the original myth-dreams as they became the moral agent of change. While the colonial administration may not have been successful in its endeavours, the LJNC proudly bore the White Man's Burden, 'out of love for the people', in its effort to save Lihir from financial — and moral, customary, spiritual, emotional, physical and mental — destitution. As one LJNC member proudly explained to me: 'I will act like Jesus did, he died on the cross, to redeem everybody, mi, mi laik halvim yupela olgeta [I want to help all of you]'.

The Road Ahead

If the original IBP was once heralded as a new industry benchmark, then the Destiny Plan (the LSDP agreement) could well be the new yardstick for such agreements — if not for the scale of the package, then for its ideological and practical complexity that is so perplexing to company managers, the State and Lihirians alike. After the signing of the agreement, the LJNC was dissolved and a new LSDP Planning Monitoring and Implementation Committee was formed under Soipang's leadership. This was supposed to be a roundtable affair with representatives from the LMALA, the local-level government, the women's association, the Church and LGL. In theory, this governance arrangement represented a shift towards greater local participation and responsibility, with less emphasis on corporate service delivery. Money committed under the LSDP is to be used on a range of projects, guided by the vision of economic independence for the entire Lihirian community.

In reality, implementation has been consistently stymied by institutional incapacity within the committee itself and legal battles over the LSDP agreement between the local-level government and Soipang, who has continued to leverage authority vis-a-vis his role in the LMALA. Part of this struggle stems from ideological differences concerning how future visions will be achieved, surrounded by questions over who actually holds the legal mandate to assume leadership and representation — the democratically elected leader or the self-appointed visionary? Not all of the governance structures outlined in the early conceptual plans — such as the Lihir Grassroots Pawa Mekim Kamap or the Kastom Lidas Komiti — have been put in place, and for the time being the

codification of *kastom* has been abandoned. However, the emphasis on PV has remained and the new committee has continued to institutionalise it. The plans within the LSDP have evolved, but there has been a determined concentration on business development, town planning, and health and education services.

The social risks and hazards systematically produced as a result of mining activities, which consequently threaten operations, obviously need to be minimised and prevented, or at least channelled. The LSDP is a progressive response, but it has also generated a complicated and confusing corporate social responsibility legacy. Aside from the seemingly impressive financial commitments, the LSDP is best characterised as a work in progress, or an evolving strategy for sustainable economic development. In its current manifestation, LGL and Lihirian leaders are no longer just dealing with traditional questions over the legitimately unequal distribution of wealth, but with the challenge of implementing and sustaining techno-economic development. To be sure, the LSDP has not defused any of those ticking time bombs once predicted by Sir Julius Chan; it may have actually generated an entirely new set of grievances that are yet to surface. But in the corporate environment, it is a sufficiently thick anti-flack jacket to guard against claims of non-compliance with international standards of corporate social responsibility. Of course, if the LSDP proves unworkable and Lihirian frustrations boil over, then the current version of the LSDP will be a pretty flimsy defence of mining operations, and the government may well find itself faced with a more sophisticated version of past events on Bougainville. While the company and the new LSDP Committee have struggled to implement the LSDP agreement, my concern has been with how this agreement came to represent a very specific cultural response to mining which captures the changes, tensions and contradictions in Lihirian engagements with modernity and local people's desire for social and economic advancement.