

Introduction



This book aims to enhance our understanding of the complexities of the Frieda River Project in Papua New Guinea (PNG). It tells a story of local stakeholder strategies on the eve of industrial development, told largely from the perspective of the Paiyamo community of Paupe – one of the Project’s so-called ‘impact communities’. It is a story of what Pijpers and Eriksen (2018: 2) glossed as ‘mining encounters’, understood as ‘the negotiations and frictions between individuals and groups with different agendas, world views and aims within the context of mining operations’. Engaging local ideas of knowledge, belief and personhood, it explains how fifty years of encounters with exploration companies shaped the Paiyamo’s aspirations and made them revisit and re-examine the past and develop new strategies to elicit a way of moving towards a better, more prosperous future.

Although the Frieda River Copper-Gold Project has not yet even obtained a mining permit, it has already reached national acclaim as a contentious resource development project. The Project is located on the boundary between the country’s East Sepik and Sandaun Province, some 200 km inland south from the Pacific Ocean coast and 75 km east from the Indonesian border. By any contemporary standard, its location is very remote – amid tropical rainforest and in the fragile ecosystem of the upper reaches of the Sepik River. Major civic infrastructure in the Project area is almost non-existent, and the provision of government services is near absent.

Rich copper and gold deposits were first identified there in 1966/67 during a regional mapping exercise. In 1969, a Prospecting Authority (today known as Exploration Licence 58, or EL-58) was granted to an Australian mining company, Mount Isa Mines Ltd, and its subsidiary, the Carpentaria Exploration Company. Exploration activities began shortly after and have been ongoing since. They markedly intensified in the mid-1990s when, in the middle of a resource boom, Highlands Gold Pty Ltd completed the first full feasibility study for the Project. That study cast great doubt on the economic viability of the venture, placing it among a special cohort of projects worldwide known colloquially as ‘stranded resources’. In 2007, Xstrata

Frieda River Ltd (also referred to here as Xstrata or ‘the company’) bought into the venture with the aim of completing another feasibility study for what was then referred to as the Frieda River Project. Xstrata Frieda River Ltd was a PNG registered company with headquarters in the country’s capital, Port Moresby. The company was embedded within a much larger, Australia-based parent institution, Xstrata Copper, which at the time was the fourth largest copper producer in the world. The level of on-site activity at Frieda River intensified and remained high until December 2011 when the company completed the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Project.¹

The chapters in this book are based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in 2011 and 2012 – spanning the build-up of expectations ahead of the anticipated submission of the EIS by Xstrata to the PNG government and the period of uncertainty that followed the company’s subsequent decision not to file the document. Members of local ‘impact communities’ saw this decision as a sign of the company’s intention not to proceed with the Frieda River Project. Their intuition was right. In 2013, Xstrata Copper merged with another mining company, Glencore, forming Glencore Xstrata – the world’s fourth biggest mining company. In 2014, a significantly smaller Brisbane-based company, PanAust, entered the project as the main developer.²

The Frieda River area (also referred to here as Frieda) is home to one of the largest undeveloped copper and gold ore deposits in the Pacific. It is estimated that its three deposits, Horse-Ivaal-Trukai, Ekwai and Koki, contain more than 2.6 billion tonnes of copper and 0.24 grams per tonne of gold. Current predictions approximate that, once operating, the mine will produce an average of 175,000 tonnes of copper and 235,000 oz of gold a year (peaking at 290,000 tonnes and 270,000 oz respectively), with an estimated lifespan of 33 years (Coffey 2018a: 2). Recent analysis by Valenta et al. (2019) included Frieda’s mineral assets on a list of the world’s most complex copper orebodies, where this complexity extends beyond geological characteristics of the deposit and includes a range of environmental, social and governance factors. The Frieda River Project exhibits a number of characteristics used by Valenta et al. to define and identify what they call ‘complex orebodies’. The size of its copper reserves makes Frieda River a world-class deposit, but the grade of the mineral is relatively low, meaning that any future extraction will require significant input of water and energy and will likely produce high volumes of waste, resulting in a large environmental footprint project. The deposit is located in a remote and ecologically sensitive area; on land belonging to indigenous communities with limited access to basic services and very poor civic infrastructure and in a country grappling with poverty and corruption. Valenta et al. argued that although risks associated with environmental, social and governance factors may not be price-sensitive in the immediate term, rapid unlocking of these ore bodies to meet global demand

for minerals will unleash some very complex impacts and can threaten the future of individual projects as well as global supply of copper.

What Is a Mine?

Understanding what ‘a mine’ is in these contexts and what it means to different people is critical to recognising and comprehending complexities of the Frieda River Project. In her seminal work, *The Gender of the Gift*, Marilyn Strathern (1988: 13) challenged the antinomy between ‘society’ and the ‘individual’ as key social categories in Melanesia and argued that Melanesian persons are not ‘conceptually distinct from the relations that bring them together’. Instead, they ‘contain a generalised society within. Indeed, persons are frequently constructed as the plural and composite site of the relationships that produced them’ (ibid.). In the field of anthropology, many scholars engaged with this dividuality, taken as an alternative model of personhood placed in opposition to the ‘Western individual’ (see, for example, Smith 2012 and Mosko 2010a, 2010b). My reading of Strathern is that her main objective was not to provide us with a self-contained and distinctive model of a Melanesian person but to challenge us to imagine what a social theory would look like if it took something other than the ‘society’ and the ‘individual’ as basic units of analysis. In *The Gender of the Gift*, Strathern (ibid.: 309) herself explains:

I have not authored ‘a perspective’ on Melanesian society and culture; I have hoped to show the difference that perspective makes, as one might contrive an internal dissociation between the character of an author and the character of his/her characters. Consequently, I have not presented Melanesian ideas but an analysis from the point of view of Western anthropological and feminist preoccupations of what Melanesian ideas might look like if they were to appear in the form of those preoccupations.

Through her ethnographic and intellectual inquiry into dividuality, Strathern skilfully demonstrated how the change in perspective forces us to reconsider how we think about people, the world and the different elements within it. Pivoting on these ideas, in this book I want to challenge how we think about ‘a mine’ in the context of resource exploration ventures, where in the absence of mining infrastructure and industrial extraction activities planning processes are characterised by prolepsis grounded in divergent world views, knowledge systems and experiences of individuals and groups on different sides of resource relations. Schram (2015: 319) argued that the concept of a dividual person ‘was never meant to be a theory of particular cultural norms. It was always a thought experiment about what social theory would be if it started from an alternative understanding of persons’.

This book presents another thought experiment, one which explores what a mine would look like if we took something other than the physical form of a mining pit and industrial infrastructure as a starting point of analysis. My aim is to create within these pages a discursive space through which, despite the lack of physical appearance commonly associated with industrial resource extraction projects, the mine at Frieda can be brought to life and made visible. To that end, the book traces the ways in which the Paiyamo came to understand and know ‘the mine’, which, in the absence of visible physical mining infrastructure, they came to experience in terms of social relations, community and individual aspirations, and novel mechanisms for affecting an array of future opportunities.

Those opportunities formed a particular kind of imagery in Paupe, one through which community members came to associate the mine with broadly conceived ‘development’ and new kinds of livelihoods this ‘development’ would bring. This imagery was shaped by a long and varied history of encounters with corporate and state agents drawn to Frieda by the prospect of mining and is informed by a range of other factors such as communities’ knowledge of other mining projects, their visits to urban centres, gossip surrounding their reading of national newspapers and images from predominantly American movies they watched on pirated DVDs from Indonesia during rare movie nights in the village. In very general terms, they hoped that, alongside financial payouts, once operating the mine at Frieda River would bring a range of services, education, training and employment opportunities and physical as well as communication infrastructure. Reflecting the importance of relationality in Melanesian societies, the book is loosely framed around Marilyn Strathern and Roy Wagner’s ideas about relationality as a tool for transformation (see chapter 3). It follows the Paiyamo in describing the transformative potential they saw in forming relations with representatives of extractive companies arriving in the area and the strategies they developed to shape those relations to affect change and bring about much anticipated development.

Life Cycles of the Frieda River Project

There are multiple histories of resource development at Frieda. These reflect the divergent ways in which different individuals and groups ‘do knowledge’, assess evidence and understand and get to know the mine. The extractive companies tend to describe the history of the Project in terms of feasibility and scoping studies, based on the record of changes in corporate ownership of the EL-58 and activities undertaken by consecutive companies holding a stake in the Project (see chapter 1), and in relation to the different stages of various administrative exercises characterising the process of planning,

constructing and operating a large scale resource extraction project. In Papua New Guinea, those projects progress through what is referred to as a 'mineral project life cycle' (Figure 0.1.) set out by the Mineral Resources Authority – a government agency responsible for regulating mining activities in the country. Each phase of the cycle is aligned with particular licensing requirements and approvals that legally frame key relationships and obligations between the company, the state and, to an extent, local communities. Shortly after I first arrived at the Frieda River Project site in 2011, a member of the company's Community Affairs team sat me down and explained to me that despite over forty years of exploration Frieda River was not yet a mine but remained a resource extraction project at the exploration and feasibility stages of its life cycle. 'This is a project, not a mine, and we need to make sure that we are very clear about that,' he told me. In this perspective, it is only once the mineral resource project passes into the latter stages of its life cycle when the completion of a series of legally binding approvals opens up space for construction of infrastructure and extraction of the mineral resource that a project becomes a mine. To a large extent, in corporate and legal terms, it is this progression from a project to a mine that deems the resource extraction venture viable and the relations it entails binding.

At the time of my fieldwork, the fact that the decision regarding the future of the Frieda River Project (also referred to here as the Project) had not yet been made had a strong impact on the company's activities and ways in which it engaged with the Papua New Guinean and provincial governments, and local communities. Although often described by the company in terms of 'maturing stakeholder relations', these engagements were framed in a way that reflected the logistical and, crucially, financial uncertainties regarding the future of the Frieda River Project, viewing the mine as a possible but tentative end result of a complex geological, technological, legal, political and financial exercise. At the time of research, the company's payouts to the local communities were limited to periodic compensation payments for the disturbance of land used for either drilling or company infrastructure and



Figure 0.1. Mineral Project Life Cycle Licensing Phases adapted from Mineral Resources Authority Licensing Information available online at <http://mra.gov.pg/Portals/0/Mining%20Info/licensing%20phase.pdf>. Public domain.

irregular payments generated by often ad-hoc and short-term employment opportunities. However, not discouraged by these limited financial rewards, and driven by the opportunities they envisaged in future mineral development at Frieda, the Paiyamo actively engaged with the company representatives and regularly demonstrated their support for the Project. The way in which they spoke about ‘the mine’ differed significantly from the corporate view of the mine as a physical demonstration of a sort of maturity of geological and economic factors that placed the Project at a particular point of the mineral project life cycle. Rather, they saw the mine as a demonstration of relationships they developed and maintained over time with the company developing the project, other impact communities, the national and provincial governments and a number of supernatural agents that resided in the local landscape – volitions that may not be visible, but that can alter the physical reality and the world (see chapter 3).

For the Paiyamo, uncovering the history of Frieda’s mineral wealth and the uncovering of Frieda’s rich copper and gold deposits were, in many ways, mutually constitutive processes, framed around particular kinds of knowledge and relations made visible. In the local universe of constantly negotiated terms and relations, and in the context of the absence of mining infrastructure and industrialised mineral extraction activities, establishing the meaning of the term ‘mine’ became, as the following chapters will show, an ontological undertaking. While in official records the history of the Frieda River Project begins in 1966/67 when the area’s copper mineralisation was first formally identified, the Paiyamo traced its origins to a much earlier event. In an attempt to explain to me the history of the Project, the Paiyamo told me the following story:

The company is working to find gold and copper at Frieda. But what they are really looking for is a stone we and the Telefols call *bangri*.³ This story belongs to the Telefols, but it is our story, too.⁴ Before she left Telefolip, the old woman Afek⁵ sent four spirits with four stones to the different parts of her area. She asked the spirits to hide the stones – and to hide them well. One of the spirits went to the Western Province; another one to the Highlands. The third stone was a woman dressed in traditional clothes, with grease on her skin. She too was sent to the Highlands. The fourth spirit came to Frieda and decided to hide his stone here. Now we know that the four stones were mineral deposits. The one which was hidden in the Western Province is now the Ok Tedi mine. The one in the Highlands is the Porgera mine. The third stone, the lady, is the oil deposit which is being explored in the Highlands. The fourth one is Frieda. The stone is hidden by spirits called the Norenmin. Sometimes, during night shifts, people working on the exploration sites can see them. If you are hunting in the bush around that area and hear a cracking sound, it’s them. They carry special *bilums*,⁶ decorated with feathers, pig tails and traditional money. If you can kill one, and take their

bilum, the *bilum* will provide you with many special powers. But in the past, all people who have heard the sound of Norenmin came back home and died. It is an ancestral story, but now things are happening and the story is becoming true. It is an old story but it is true now. The spirit was hiding the stone from many companies. This is why they did not extract the copper and gold here. But it does not hide it from Xstrata. Before we did not want the mine, but now we know how important development is, so we asked the spirits to stop hiding the stone.⁷

The myth of Afek and *bangri* is just one example from an elaborate repertoire of stories that the Paiyamo used to explain the Frieda River Project to themselves, the government representatives and the company's on-site personnel. In these myths, stories of the ancestors intertwined with stories of corporate and state agents, biblical narratives and local genealogies. They were deeply embedded in the local aesthetic of revelation in which events are never fully knowable at the time of happening – their significance and effect are revealed over time.

Anthropological literature about mining in Papua New Guinea is vast. For the most part, it discusses resource extraction projects through a prism of conflict and conflicting ontologies (see, for example, Filer 1990; Connell 1991; Kirsch 1997; Wardlow 2004; Reilly 2008) as mineral projects by their very nature tend to bring together various people and groups with some inherently different ways of experiencing the world. Most often, the accounts focus on cultural misunderstandings and their consequences as they unfold in the advanced stages of the mineral project life cycle, when and after a particular mine has reached its 'operational maturity' (e.g. Golub 2014 and Jacka 2015 on Porgera; Kirsch 2014a on Ok Tedi). But there has been very little ethnographic research that has focused explicitly on the anticipation of possible but uncertain future resource development. Exploration projects at greenfield sites, such as the Frieda River Project, stand out against already operating mines. They embody the raw uncertainties of resource extraction, where exploration activities raise expectations of mineral development whilst only a fraction of known deposits become operating mines. They tend to be capital intensive while bringing in no income, and they require development of an extensive body of knowledge about their geological but also environmental, social and governance setting (see chapter 1) before they can proceed. The footprint of exploration activities on the natural environment tends to be limited to the impact of scoping and testing exercises required for assessment of a project's feasibility and, in more advanced stages, the most appropriate project design. The impact on the social environment, however, tends to be significant.

The positioning of the Frieda River Project at an early stage of the mineral project life cycle creates an important and unique research space,

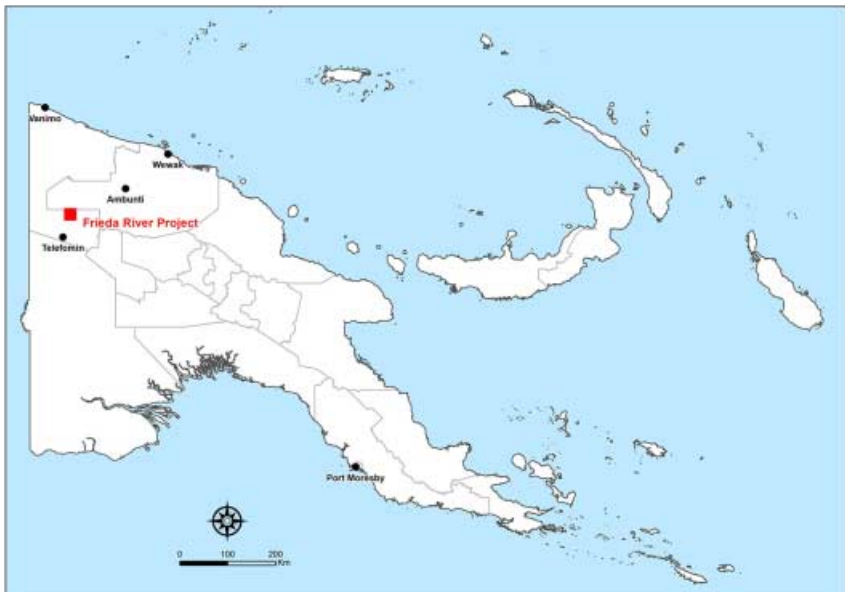
located somewhere between experiences of a present reality and anticipation of an imagined future. Encounters between exploration companies and local communities introduce new visions of what this future might look like and, through complex systems of relations and administrative processes, create new pathways of how to actuate that future. One of the most detailed studies of this process in the Papua New Guinean context comes from Monica Minnegal and Peter Dwyer.⁸ In their recent book *Navigating the Future: An Ethnography of Change in Papua New Guinea*, they (2017: 270) describe how the Kubo people in the country's Western Province navigate what the authors refer to as 'the ever-shifting landscape that lies between present circumstance and present desire' to affect and effect an uncertain future, informed by the proximity of the large liquefied natural gas project (the PNG LNG project operated by ExxonMobil PNG). Minnegal and Dwyer describe how 'outsiders', including exploration company personnel, enhanced the desire and expectations of the Kubo, presenting them with new models of what could be possible. Their book paints a picture of the Kubo as agents actively involved in shaping their imagined future but who have not yet mastered the mechanism of how to get there. A version of this process unfolds in Paupe, where decades of encounters with extractive companies have shaped the community's ideas about the future and how it can be brought about. These are embedded in local ideas about relations, personhoods, knowledge and change – all of which will be discussed in the chapters that follow.

Local Context

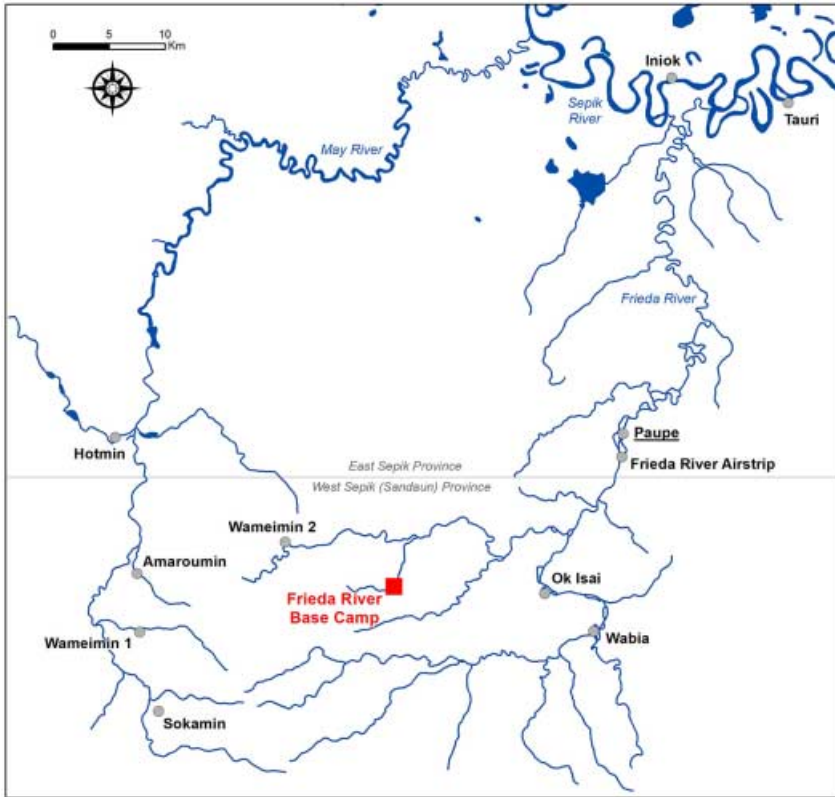
The Frieda River Project is located in a mountainous area on the Northern slopes of the Thurnwald Range in north-western Papua New Guinea. The altitude varies between 50 and 1,700 meters. The Project area is covered almost entirely by tropical rainforest, with few signs of disturbance to the vegetation either by local communities or the successive exploration companies, and it is characterised by higher than average diversity of terrestrial fauna (Coffey 2009: 15) – living up to its status as a greenfield site development. In general terms, the climate there can be described as wet and tropical, with frequent storms and high year-round humidity. The area is very remote, and transport infrastructure connecting local communities to larger urban centres such as Wewak or Vanimo is scarce. Recent plans for the venture describe the Frieda River Project as 'a core component of a transformative nation-building opportunity – the Sepik Development Project', that promises to deliver broad socio-economic uplift, 'improve transport and connectivity, facilitate the delivery of services to remote communities, and boost domestic and international trade and investment' (PanAust 2018: 1). The

Project's current operator has included in their plans, alongside the Frieda River Copper-Gold Project, the Frieda River Hydroelectric Project, which encompasses an artificial reservoir and a 600 MW hydroelectric facility; the Sepik Infrastructure Project involving construction of a road connection between the Project site and Sandaun's provincial capital Vanimo as well as an upgraded Vanimo Ocean Port and Green River Airport; and the Sepik Power Grid Project, comprising a 370 km long transmission line providing power to Project facilities in Green River and Vanimo (with the possibility of excess power being distributed to customers in Papua New Guinea and Indonesia) (Green and Crouch 2018: 1). For the time being, however, the Project's footprint has been condensed to impact a relatively small population with recognised land ownership claims in the Project area (see Map 0.1 below). In 2009, the total population of those communities was estimated at just under 1,500 people living in 218 households. By the 2017 Project census, this population had increased to just over 2,000 people, and the number of households reached 310 (Coffey 2018b: 11).

The history of the area is long and complex, characterised by genocidal war and conquest, which began in the late 1800s. This period of local warfare lasted until the 1950s and 1960s when the first colonial patrols and missionaries reached this corner of New Guinea. As described by lawyer-anthropologist Jim Fingleton in a report he produced for Xstrata:



Map 0.1. Location of the Frieda River Project. Map created by Kamila Svobodova.



Map 0.2. Frieda River Project Area. Map created by Kamila Svobodova.

Both geographically and culturally, the project area lies in a ‘transition zone’, between the larger populations inhabiting the high peaks of the New Guinea cordillera to the south and the extensive plains of the Sepik basin to the north . . . Over the centuries, the project area has seen dramatic shifts of population, as Mountain Ok groups from the south expanded into the area, wiping out previous occupants. The invaders raided and killed, capturing women and children, who were adopted and incorporated into their communities as they progressively settled the area. Groups were hungry not for land but for people. Their incorporation of captives has led over time to the extraordinary complexity of the groups presently living in the project area. (2010b: iv, quoted in Green and Crouch 2018: 27)

In his report, Fingleton estimated that in the past the Project area was occupied by representatives of some twenty different cultural groups. By the mid-1950s, however, most of those had been either extinguished or incorporated into others. This history of warfare has an impact on landowner

identification processes for the Frieda River Project (see chapter 4) and continues to influence local and regional politics, with stories of conquest used in landowner identification exercises alongside ancestral connection to land as evidence of claims over land and its resources.

Currently, inhabitants of the planned mine area include representatives of three distinctive language groups: the highland groups of Miyanmin and Telefomin, and the Paiyamo who live in the transition zone on the foothills and plains along the Frieda River. The Miyanmin and the Telefomin belong to the Mountain Ok family of languages and share a common mythical ancestress, Afek (see Craig and Hyndman 1990). Historically, they both have made successful claims to the ownership of land covered by the Special Mining Lease for the Frieda River Project (see chapter 4). This means that if the Project proceeds to operations and becomes profitable they stand to receive royalties as well as compensation payments and other forms of financial benefits. The Telefomin are considered one of the most numerous and politically powerful language groups in the region, famed for their warfare skills and extensive conquests. The Paiyamo, on the other hand, is the least numerous group, having been hugely reduced during the period of warfare (see chapter 2). Linguistically, the Paiyamo are related to the Wario and Leonard Schultze groups to the east, and the Duranmin to the south, rather than the Mountain Ok communities to the north-west. Through intermarriage, they are further connected to Eliptamin, Duranmin, Telefomin, Wario as well as groups living in the May River area, and historically trade ties placed them within even wider regional networks. In 2011/12, they were considered landowners not in the Special Mining Lease area, but in the area designated under the Lease for Mining Purposes. This meant that while they were not considered owners of the land immediately above the deposit, their land was of crucial importance for the Project infrastructure. Their position as an impact community was well grounded, and their level of involvement with the Project was consistently high.

At the time of research, seven villages held the impact community status and were actively involved in the processes taking place under the umbrella of local stakeholder engagement (see chapter 1): Miyanmin (henceforth Miyan or Miyans) communities of Wameimin 1 and 2, Sokamin and Amaroumin; Telefomin (henceforth Telefol or Telefols) communities of Ok Isai and Wabia; and a Paiyamo community of Paupe. In the field of anthropology, the Miyans have been studied extensively by George Morren, whose work focused on human ecology and environmental change (1979, 1981, 1986), and Don Gardner, who produced detailed accounts of the Miyan settlement and residential patterns (1980), social organisation (1981) and ritual technology (1983), as well as belief systems and conceptions of agency (1987). Alongside two other anthropologists working in the area, Dan Jorgensen

(with the Telefols) and Rune Paulsen (with the Iwam people of May River), Morren and Gardner were involved in a social study of the Project impact area commissioned in the mid-1990s by Highlands Gold – a company managing the Project at the time. Results of the study were used in a landowner identification exercise, discussed in more detail in chapter 4. As recognised landowners in the Project area, the Miyan communities play an important role in the process of planning for a mine at Frieda, and this role needs to be acknowledged here. However, the Miyan communities are not discussed in detail in this book. Instead, the research presented here is focused predominantly on Paupe and the Paiyamo, the smallest and least researched group of the Frieda River Project,⁹ with some supplementary material gathered in Ok Isai and Wabia – the Project’s two Telefol communities.

Paupe, Ok Isai and Wabia are all located on the banks of the Frieda River, and my informants sometimes referred to them collectively as ‘the Frieda community’. Family links built through intermarriage meant that the interactions between the three were common and frequent, and my research in Paupe inevitably led to numerous visits to Ok Isai and a few visits to Wabia. Since the start of mineral exploration at Frieda, all three settlements have moved from their previous sites, some more than once, relocating closer to the river in search of better access to transport routes and services. Anticipation of benefits from the Frieda River Project played a major part in those moves, as community members sought access to ad-hoc employment opportunities, services either provided or facilitated by the project developer, and recognition as stakeholders of the Project and the future mine. In their current locations, the three villages are within easy access of one of the company’s main residential camps, the Airstrip Camp, located a short walk south from Paupe, and a motorised canoe ride north from Wabia and Ok Isai.

Travelling between Paupe and the two Telefol communities, canoes cross a provincial border. Six out of the seven impact communities of the Frieda River Project (Ok Isai, Wabia, Wameimin 1 and 2, Sokamin and Amaroumin) belong to Sandaun Province (Telefomin Rural LLG) – the north-western-most province of Papua New Guinea with a provincial capital in Vanimo. The location of the mineral deposits falls within Sandaun’s administrative borders, which has led many (including representatives of provincial administration interviewed for this study) to view the Frieda River Project as an exclusively Sandaun project. Paupe, on the other hand, belongs to the East Sepik Province (Tunap-Hunstein LLG) located to the east of Sandaun, with a provincial capital in Wewak. Numerous changes to the design of the Project have meant that the East Sepik Province’s importance in terms of hosting Project infrastructure has varied significantly over time. However, the Project’s location in the tributary of the Sepik River means that, whatever the final design, while the benefits will accrue in Sandaun, the risk is shoul-

dered by the East Sepik Province. In case of an industrial incident leading to contamination of the river system, it is the East Sepik and not Sandaun Province that will be most affected.

The levels of opposition to the Project are significantly higher in communities living in the Sepik River basin downstream from the Frieda River than in the Project's immediate locality, with some politicians as well as community groups and members publicly calling for the Frieda River Project to be halted, often comparing the project's natural setting to that of Fly River in Western Province, made infamous by the environmental disaster caused by a series of industrial accidents and environmental law breaches at the Ok Tedi mine (see Kirsch 2014a). The 2019 report prepared by the Australian-based Jubilee Australia Research Centre in collaboration with the Papua New Guinea-based Project Sepik painted a picture of the Sepik communities as being largely left out of the conversations with the Project developer. It outlined some of the risks associated with the Frieda River Project and concluded that 'the potential for this project to lead to damaging social conflict and unrest is real and must be taken seriously' (Fletcher and Peni 2019: 5). In other narratives and considering the very limited infrastructure and government service delivery, the Project is described as a much-needed pathway to bring development and services to the province. As an East Sepik provincial government representative explained to me: 'we are very remote here, we don't have development. [The national] government does not help us. With the mine, the company will bring the money for development. We understand the problems associated with mining projects. . . . But if we don't get major development in the province, where do we get the money to help people?' This statement reflects a common sentiment in Papua New Guinea – one that continues to see the resource extraction industry as a pathway to fulfilling national and regional development aspirations. This is despite the impact of the country's infamous mining projects such as the aforementioned Ok Tedi and Panguna mines.¹⁰

National Context

The role of the mining industry in Papua New Guinea's political and economic strategies post-independence provides important context for the Frieda River Project and the primary research material presented in this book. Following almost seventy years of Australian colonial administration, the country gained independence in 1975. Papua New Guinea emerged with no particular sense of national identity apart from an unevenly shared colonial history (Jorgensen 2007a) and external symbols of nationalism that bore little actual meaning for most of its people (Power 1997: 84; see also Hirsch 1990). However, as noted by Jorgensen, 'what Papua New Guinea lacked by

way of common tradition at independence was more than made up by an enthusiasm for development in all regions of the country, and many of the new state's claims to legitimacy were based on the promises that all Papua New Guineans could expect development to come their way' (2007a: 58; see also Hirsch 1999). As it withdrew, the colonial administration left a void in the provision of services and in the maintenance and development of infrastructure that the newly formed government of Papua New Guinea found difficult to fill. In the years and decades following independence, the country's public services were functional yet limited in their capacity to respond to the needs of the country's growing population (Gelu 2010), meaning that in large parts of the country the civic infrastructure fell into disrepair and access to government services diminished.

At independence, the new government's ideas about development were based around a largely egalitarian rhetoric as outlined in the country's Eight Point Plan (1975). By the 1980s, tensions arose between the goals of 'development for all' and the realisation that development, by its very nature, produces inequality (see, e.g., May 1998; Rivers 1999; Hirsch 2001b; Stead 2017). These tensions intensified further when the country turned its hopes for development towards large-scale mining projects, creating new boundaries of influence and emphasising 'the new priority of economic over social goals and political relations' (Hirsch 2006: 154). The government embraced the promise of resource-driven development and, utilising the resource boom of the late 1970s, actively worked to strengthen the country's position as a 'mining resource frontier' (Hyndman 2001). Over the decades that followed, mining became a central feature of Papua New Guinea's growing economy, capitalising on what Ballard and Banks (2003) referred to as the 'mining exploration bonanza' of the 1980s and early 1990s, which saw intensification of exploration activities in many parts of the country, including the copper and gold prospects at Frieda. By the end of the twentieth century, 156 Mining Exploration Licences had either already been awarded or were awaiting grants, and four major mines (Ok Tedi, Lihir, Misima and Porgera) and one medium-sized mine (Tolokuma) were in operation (Hirsch 2001c).

In line with the prevailing development paradigm of the time, the mining industry seemed to offer an ideal opportunity to bring revenue to the national economy and the desperately needed development into the local areas (Gilberthorpe and Banks 2012). Over time, 'in the minds of most Papua New Guinean "grassroot" or village people, mining has become the way to gain wealth rapidly and to ensure that dreams of "development" and "modernity" come true' (Filer and Macintyre 2006: 216). This subsequently created 'unparalleled expectations of mine developers to provide services where there is a lack of government presence' (Imbun 2007: 188). Literature

on the subject has made links between mining prospects and what has been referred to as a ‘cargo cult mentality’ (see Lattas 1998; Stewart and Strathern 2000b; Jorgensen 2005; see also chapter 3 here) and argued that the vast majority of people in PNG ‘now seem to subscribe to the belief that their land does contain some valuable resources – whether gold, oil, diamonds, or the truly visible logs – and that their only chance of development lies in their share of the rent to be collected from the extraction of these resources by some multinational company’ (Filer 1997b: 113; see also Leach 2004). Evidence shows, however, that ‘indigenous peoples have historically gained little from large scale resource development on their traditional lands and have suffered from its negative impacts on their cultures, economies and societies’ (O’Faircheallaigh 2008: 1). Mining has become ‘central to the evolution of the notion that resources can be a curse that gives rise to a lack of development, internal tensions, human rights abuses, and conflict at the national level’ (Ballard and Banks 2003: 295). Despite these negative impacts, which are well publicised in PNG, the local enthusiasm for the Frieda River Project is high.

The resource curse has been linked to a governmental (bureaucratic and administrative) incapacity to distribute benefits to its people (Jackson 1991); a disconnect between decision makers and the society (Collier 2008); a pre-occupation with distant, international opportunities rather than locally defined social, economic and cultural goals (Connell and Howitt 1991); and the growing evidence that mining projects tend to limit, not expand, economic alternatives both at the local and national scale (Gerritsen and Macintyre 1991). In Papua New Guinea, the resource curse has been associated with a phenomena described by Filer et al. (2008: 175) as a responsibility vacuum, which ‘makes partnerships between the corporation, local community and the government difficult, dangerous, or downright impossible’ as none of the agents involved are prepared to take full responsibility for their own actions. Although the empirical evidence for the existence of the resource curse is difficult to pin down, what evidence is available clearly points to the dangers of resource-based, monopoly economies (Sachs and Warner 2001) in which ‘dependence on natural resource rents impedes the development and proper functioning of state institutions’ (Genasci and Pray 2008: 38). This is amid increased realisation that the negative force of the resource curse is not a purely economic problematic, but it can ‘also be portrayed in political, cultural, or environmental terms, which means that the resource curse may have several dimensions in the same country or region’ (Filer and Macintyre 2006: 217). The multifaceted nature of the role of extractive industries in national and local development is reflected in Valenta et al. (2019) modelling of complex orebodies. In this model, environmental, social and governance factors need to be considered alongside geological and technical charac-

teristics in assessment of project feasibility and impacts and, ultimately, in making the decision on whether or not the given project should go ahead.

The Beginning

The first time I came across the Frieda River Project was in a letter exchange published in *The National*, one of Papua New Guinea's two main daily papers, between Andrew Moutu, an anthropologist and activist from Port Moresby, currently the director of Papua New Guinea's National Museum; Greg Anderson, then Executive Director of Papua New Guinea's Chamber of Mines and Petroleum; and Dugi Wilson, the then General Manager of the Xstrata Frieda River Project. Dr Moutu's letter warned against the possibility of the Frieda River Mine turning into an ecological disaster of great proportions, threatening ecosystems as well as livelihoods of people living in communities on the Sepik River, downstream from the proposed site of mining activities. Mr Anderson and Mr Wilson's replies sought to promote a positive image of the mining industry in Papua New Guinea and to reassure the public that appropriate legal and technological mechanisms were in place to ensure that the environmental damage of the type described by Mr Moutu would not happen. The exchange took place in 2008, shortly after Xstrata Copper took control of the Frieda River Project, bringing it into a full feasibility study. The takeover, completed in 2007, was received with optimism by the industry, the government of Papua New Guinea and the two provincial governments, who hoped that, once operational, the mine would provide much needed income, employment and services in what are some of the most remote areas in the country. The expectation was that, under Xstrata's management, the mine at Frieda River would go into full operation in 2012, with a projected life span of twenty-three years (Moutu 2008).

In a country with a rich and extensive history of hosting a variety of mining projects, planning for a mine at Frieda River proved to be a heated and highly contested issue. While the company embarked on a study aimed at assessing the technical and economic viability of the Project, the exchange of letters in *The National* and a broader debate that followed raised many issues and uncertainties regarding its social and ecological feasibility. The Project's location in the tributary of the Sepik River forced all parties involved to consider many potential perils and limitations associated with operating a large-scale, open-pit resource extraction project in that area. Topography of the terrain meant that the risks associated with its environmental impact were high, and the country's previous experience with large-scale foreign mining investments caused uncertainties about the feasibility of the claim that the mine, once operating, would deliver development to the people of Frieda and to the two provinces. Many of the social and environmental issues expe-

rienced around disastrous mines such as Panguna (May and Spriggs 1990), Ok Tedi (Banks and Ballard 1997; Kirsch 2006) and Porgera (Golub 2014) informed the ongoing debate over the Frieda River Project and were being negotiated in the pre-production, agreement-making phase of its development. The letter exchange in *The National* in 2008 reached a consensus that the long-term legacy of the early, pre-construction stages of planning for a mine at Frieda River would be crucial (Moutu 2008; Wilson 2008).

I arrived at Frieda in August 2011 – three years after the letter exchange in *The National* and forty-five years after the official recording of the area's rich gold and copper deposits paved the way for the resource extraction companies, attracted to the region by the promise of its great mineral wealth. By then it was clear that the mine's operations would not start in 2012, as global commodity prices meant that the company developing the Project decided to look into more economically viable infrastructural solutions for constructing a mine in this remote and humid corner of Papua New Guinea. The company's presence in the area was strong, however, and although its on-site exploration activities were largely limited to a series of sampling exercises, the Community Affairs department continued to actively engage with the Project's impact communities in the hope of securing and maintaining their consent for the Frieda River Project. I came to my field site on a company fixed-wing charter from Wewak. For someone with no knowledge of the terrain and with no local connections, this was and still remains the only way to get there. Ahead of my arrival, members of the company's Community Affairs team sent out a message through a local CB radio network to Paupe, Ok Isai and Wabia. The message said that a female researcher from the UK will be coming to Frieda and was hoping to stay in one of the local villages and learn about local communities and custom. When I disembarked at the company's Airstrip Camp, and once I had a chance to freshen up and eat something in the camp's canteen, I was told that one of the local leaders, pastor Jacob Aiyapanai, had invited me to spend a few nights at his house in Paupe with his daughter, Dinah, and her baby girl, Mawi. 'When the message came, we were in the garden house in Seligeme' – Dinah told me a few months after I first walked into the house in Paupe. 'That day dad came into the house and told me that a white girl will be coming to the village and that I am to go back to Paupe to look after her. So I took Mawi and we came back. We didn't know what to expect and I was nervous.' I too was nervous. My knowledge of Tok Pisin was limited to the basic words of greeting, and I did not know what to expect from the next few days.

I walked to Paupe on the evening of my second day at Frieda. With my field bag on my back, I tried not to slip as I navigated the narrow path leading from the airstrip to the village and Dinah's house. I was accompanied by Rondah – Dinah's aunt, who lived in a house nearby. She worked as a laundry

assistant in the company camp and was heading back home at the end of her shift. Dinah and Mawi were waiting for me. We sat down on a wooden floor in a corridor of Dinah's house¹¹ – me against one wall, them against the other. I did not know then that I would spend almost a year sharing my life with Dinah, Mawi and the Paupe community. Over time, I came to think of her house nested in the southernmost corner of Paupe as home. Dinah's father's role as a local pastor and a spokesperson for the Paiyamo meant that I had easy access to community meetings, which often took place in a clearing between Dinah's house and kitchen building, right outside my bedroom window. As I became fluent in Tok Pisin, I could talk to the pastor and other members of the community more freely and was able to gradually explain to them my interest in the Frieda area and the Frieda River Project. I learned a great deal from the people of Paupe and owe them a debt of gratitude for the care they extended to me and the patience with which they helped me understand their world and their role as an impact community of the Frieda River Project.

A Note on Methodology

I was drawn to Frieda by my personal as well as professional curiosity. With a background in sustainable development and social anthropology, and a strong interest in social and environmental business accountability, I was intrigued by the ways in which different people and cultures came together, made sense of each other and tried to negotiate shared terms of reference to then use those terms in a process of planning for and managing a large-scale resource extraction project. I was by no means the first or the only anthropologist drawn to this world of ontological juxtapositions. In Papua New Guinea alone, many researchers have turned their analytical gazes to this interplay between indigenous cosmologies and corporate and governmental worlds. They took advantage of their associations with people with whom they worked to offer great and informative insights into indigenous perspectives on mining. Unsurprisingly, considering the nature of the industry, many of those analytical engagements focused on indigenous ways of experiencing land, presenting it as constitutive of personhoods and in doing so challenging a whole array of the industry's ideas about land and its resources as tradable market commodities.¹² A large number of ethnographic accounts put to the test the rigid forms and prescriptions associated with the ideology of land ownership, which provides foundations for many indigenous groups' involvement with the mining industry,¹³ while others offer insights into the role of kinship and knowledge practices in resource extraction contexts.¹⁴

In the last decade, anthropology has turned considerable attention to the resource projects' state and corporate stakeholders. Companies and governments emerged from this exercise in anthropological scrutiny as products of

relations that created them, animated by a complex and ongoing negotiation of roles and responsibilities, underpinned by the asymmetry of power and influence as demonstrated, for example, in Stuart Kirsch's *Mining Capitalism* (2014a). Alex Golub (2014) brought back to life the biblical leviathan and used it to investigate the turbulent and opportunistic relationship between the Porgera gold mine in the country's Enga Province ('the mine'), 'the state' of PNG and 'the Ipili', Porgera mine's recognised landowners. This analytical approach allowed him to begin to unravel the seemingly rigid boundaries between the different stakeholder groups and question the constitution of different stakeholder categories (see chapter 1). Elsewhere, two detailed ethnographic studies, produced in the last decade offer valuable insights into the inner workings of mining corporations: Welker (2014) drew on her extensive field research at the American headquarters of a mining corporation and its mining project in Indonesia to analyse ways in which the company was constituted and enacted in and beyond the mining locality; while Rajak (2011) used the findings of her research inside a mining corporation to reflect on the global corporate social responsibility movement. Both authors painted a picture of mining corporations as multilayered, multifaceted entities, with Welker describing them as 'inherently unstable and indeterminate, multiply authored, always in flux and comprising of material and immaterial parts' (2014: 4). By approaching the corporation as enacted, Welker was able 'to bring together the "idea" of the corporation as an actor endowed with particular goals and rationalities with the corresponding "system" of material relations and practices' (ibid.).

The results of these studies reaffirmed the positioning of mining projects in a chain of increasingly anonymous interactions ultimately reaching all the way through to stock markets and market-oriented shareholders, and it is in the context of these broad, contemporary spheres of interrelations and influence that the ethnographic material presented in this book must be read. However, the book itself focuses on processes taking place on the ground, in the Project location – away from company boardrooms and consumer markets – in a place largely hidden from view by the mountainous terrain and a thick rainforest overlay. The book is based on research conducted in the Project area over a period of eleven months in 2011 and 2012 and a follow up visit in February and March 2018. The research activities consisted of participant observation, informal conversations, focus groups as well as semi-structured interviews. To capture the diversity of perspectives and the meanings and histories of 'a mine' at the Frieda River, findings of a traditional village-based ethnography in Paupe were supplemented with data gathered through research engagements with Xstrata's on-site community affairs personnel as well as individuals representing national and provincial governments.

I was in touch with Xstrata before I arrived in Papua New Guinea. Although the company agreed to offer me transport assistance and to host me at the Airstrip Camp for a couple of nights at the start of my fieldwork, I got a distinct impression that they did not feel comfortable with my interest in the Project. In all early communication, they were careful not to commit to participating in my research. There is no natural position for anthropology in the contested field of resource relations.¹⁵ Back in 2003, Ballard and Banks (2003: 290) spoke of the ‘enduring opacity of mining corporations’ and their ‘notorious reluctance to expose themselves directly to ethnographic scrutiny’. The ideology of corporate social responsibility, which continued to increase in influence in the global industry in the first decade of the twenty-first century meant that by the time Kemp and Owen (2013: 534) revisited this claim ten years later it was clear that:

many social scientists have for some time had direct access to the internal domain of the mining corporation through consulting, research and auditing/assurance work. Today the suggestion that companies are reluctant to expose themselves to external scrutiny is no longer valid in the way described by Banks and Ballard although caveats may still apply in terms of the release and disclosure of findings and results.

Formally, I never had any affiliation with Xstrata and maintained my position as an independent researcher throughout the duration of this study. Once at Frieda, I was able to develop positive personal relations with the company’s ground personnel. The process took time, but eventually I was able to secure the management’s permission to conduct research among the company’s on-site employees, in particular – members of the Community Affairs team, whose role by definition positioned them at a difficult intersection between company structures and procedures and interpersonal relations they developed with members of the local communities. With the team’s help, I was able to further expand the scope of my research and interview members of the provincial and national governments, who represented state interests at the negotiating tables at Frieda. These research encounters allowed me to develop a much deeper understanding of the process of planning for large-scale mineral development at Frieda and introduced auxiliary detail and nuance into the way in which I began to perceive and understand local communities’ strategies in relation to the Frieda River Project. In the chapters that follow, I draw from the material collected among the company personnel to offer insights into the ways in which the company was enacted in the Project location and demonstrate how conflicting epistemologies came together in a highly contested network of social relations.

Throughout my time in the field, I was very aware of the sensitivities associated with my chosen research position and my decision to involve com-

pany personnel and government representatives in my work. I was alert to the power inequalities at play and the fact that the different actors involved in the process of planning for a mine at Frieda often held conflicting interests and made differing demands of the Project and its other stakeholders. Although my core research focus was the Paiyamo, my approach was driven by the recognition of the divergent world views and perspectives at play in the process of engagement between the company and local communities. I cannot claim here that I remained a fully neutral observer throughout my fieldwork – although my dual training in social anthropology and sustainable development helped me greatly to be empathetic towards people representing different positions at the Project and to see the same situation from a number of perspectives. In my work, I was guided by the principles akin to what Thomas Kirsch (2007: 98) described in terms of ‘principled symmetry’, which ‘stresses the researcher’s moral responsibility and sociopolitical accountability’ towards all interlocutors. I strived at all times to maintain personal as well as professional integrity – that is, earn and return the trust I was given and to tell to the best of my ability the story of the Paiyamo and their history of the Frieda River Project.

Chapter Outline

This book tells a story of the Frieda River Project from the perspective of the Paiyamo – one of the Project’s impact communities. Retracing local histories of the Project, the book confronts a set of assumptions about the constitution and appearance of ‘a mine’ to highlight and unpack some of the inherent environmental, social and governance complexities of the Frieda River Project. It builds on local ideas about knowledge, relations and ways of affecting change to explore ways in which the Paiyamo came to experience and understand the mine at the Frieda River and the strategies they used to engage with other stakeholders of the Frieda River Project and work towards that vision. To that end, the book offers an insight into contested processes of preparing for a large-scale resource extraction project as they were actually taking place, in the Project locality. Demonstrating the difference that perspective makes, the book explores what a mine would look like if we took something other than its physical industrial form as a starting point of analysis. This question is of particular importance for resource exploration projects such as the Frieda River Project, where the mine does not yet have a physical form but – as I aim to show here – from the perspective of the Paiyamo is already happening.

Chapter 1, ‘Role Play’, begins to unpack the history of the Frieda River Project. Following the timeline drawn from the Project’s official documentation, it describes the first encounters between the Paiyamo and resource exploration companies, dating back to 1969 when the Carpentaria Exploration

Company began exploring the area's copper and gold mineralisation with the aim of assessing its feasibility for a large-scale mining development. A year later, construction of the Frieda River Airstrip began, exposing the Paiyamo to divergent ways of thinking about land as a tradeable commodity. Consequences of early misunderstandings between the company, the government and the community continue to unravel and inform the processes of agreement-making at the project and will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4. Those initial encounters formed the basis of what has since become known as stakeholder engagement activities at the Frieda River Project. The chapter introduces key actors in those activities, grouped under the headings of the company, the government and the impact communities, and raises important questions of ownership, power and control over the future of the Project. Using Strathern's theorising about categorical and interpersonal relations, it problematises stakeholder categories, presenting stakeholders as products of complex and dynamic relations, emergent from an intricate interplay between prescribed roles, expectations and relations through which those roles and categories are brought to life and awarded consequence.

The title of the second chapter, 'Making up the Paiyamo' is borrowed from Ian Hacking (1986) and his description of a process through which the nineteenth-century preoccupation with the proliferation of labels in the language of social control enabled the process of making up what he referred to as new 'kinds of people'. In a version of this process, and in the context of the Frieda River Project, the Paiyamo came to realise that in order to assert a claim to benefits from the Project they were expected to become of 'a kind' and become known to the company as the Project's landowners. They were not passively altered into landowners but actively transformed themselves in the hope of affecting a range of current and future opportunities. Continuing to unpack the history of the Project, the chapter shifts perspective to focus on Paiyamo narratives and the stories they tell about the ways they were, the ways they are and what kinds of processes led from one state of being to another. It describes how groups of Paiyamo speakers, dispersed over large stretches of land on the banks of the Frieda River, came together to form a single community in Paupe. The story serves here as an entry point into an exploration of the Paiyamo past, reaching back to the days of ancestors, mythical beings, magic and *kastom*¹⁶ and their first encounters with colonial administration and resource exploration companies. Focusing on local experiences of time, the chapter challenges ways in which anthropology has theorised about temporalities in Melanesia in terms of epochs separated by dramatic, near complete transformation set in opposition to evolutionary ideas about progress, advancement and development. It shows that in local understandings of time, the present and future complete the past, and the

meaning of the past can be altered to direct present and future events and opportunities. The chapter uses Paiyamo narratives to describe how the Frieda River Project opened a discursive space that revealed new capacities, meanings and power in events and stories of old. For the Paiyamo, no event is immediately knowable; its true meaning and effect can only ever become known over time – like when they told me that the story of Afek is an ‘old story’ but that now things are happening, and the story is ‘becoming true’. This is critical to understanding divergent perspectives on ‘a mine’ at Frieda River. While at the time of my research the company and the government approached the mine as a future project, for the Paiyamo, the mine began in the time of Afek and the ancestors and it was already happening – it had just not yet revealed itself.

Chapter 3, ‘Make-Believe’, describes ways in which the Paiyamo engaged with supernatural forces within their world. It follows Lohmann (2003: 183) in modelling the supernatural as ‘a volition that makes things happen, but is not always visible’ and explains how this etic category could be used to describe *masalai* (land spirits), the Christian God as well as the mine at Frieda River. In doing so, the chapter reveals a form of engagement, made possible by Paiyamo ideas about personhoods, knowledge and social relations as tools for transformation. Exploring the religious lives of the Paiyamo, it describes ways in which they enacted a series of beliefs in the hope of making them happen. Addressing the tensions in anthropological debates about dividual and individual models of personhood, the chapter follows LiPuma (1998: 61) in focusing on uncovering the conditions ‘under which dividual and individual aspects of personhood emerge and are hidden’. It describes elements of traditional religious doctrine, based on a welfare cult performed by men, to expose a complex and deeply relational system of careful management and strategic disclosure of important knowledge about the world, embedded in the local aesthetic of revelation – which plays an important part in the way in which the Paiyamo thought about and got to know the Frieda River Project. The chapter continues with the story of the arrival of Christianity in Paupe. Christianity held a particular appeal for the Paiyamo, granting them membership in a transnational and transracial system and allowing them, to paraphrase Robbins (1998b), to partake in a future promise extending beyond their current capacities. Elaborating on the theme of the importance of perspective, the chapter describes how while I struggled to understand the interplay between what I saw as two distinctive religious domains, the Paupe community experienced their religious lives in a way in which new religious elements dramatically expanded the limits of what could be believed and, therefore, of what might happen.

Chapter 4 exposes the changing politics of land and group affiliation in the context of commodification of land, which, although not fully realised,

is already occurring, driven by anticipation of the mine at Frieda River. Continuing to explore the themes of knowledge and making the knowledge effective, the chapter uses a metanarrative of a document called 'The Book of Paiyamo' to discuss ways in which the encounters with the company developing the Project exposed the Paiyamo to new ways of 'doing knowledge' and making it visible. The chapter shows how, in response to the company and, to an extent, the government's demand for specific kinds of evidence, the Paiyamo embarked on a project of making their knowledge of relationships with the land, and with each other, appear in a particular form. The chapter pulls together themes of knowledge and its forms and the role they play in the politics surrounding the Frieda River Project. It uses 'The Book of Paiyamo' as an entry point to a broader analysis of Paiyamo ideas of knowledge and personhoods, which judge knowledge and relations against the transformative effects these have on the world. The chapter provides insights into the ways in which the Paupe community interpreted and responded to the company's epistemologies and developed new strategies in an effort to become known to the Xstrata and compete for recognition with the Project's other impact communities. It further problematises labels used by the company and the government in an effort to get to know the Project's local communities, and signals issues that have already emerged as a result of historical attempts to fit traditionally open and changeable social structures into a rigid category of 'landowning clans'.

The changing politics of land and new ways of 'doing knowledge' and evidencing claims are just some of the ways in which, seen from the perspective of the Paiyamo, the mine at Frieda has already started showing effect. Chapter 5, 'Precipitating the Mine', further unpacks the ways in which the Paiyamo experience the effects of the mine, which have already started to show in people and places. Although they voiced concerns about some negative changes they have noticed in their community, they continued to talk about the mine at Frieda in aspirational terms, describing the Project as a pathway to better livelihoods and development, and the levels of support for the Project in Paupe remained high. The chapter discusses how, in the absence of government services, civic infrastructure and access to education and employment opportunities, the Paiyamo looked to the company for what traditionally would have been considered responsibilities of the state. Informed by over forty years of interactions with successive resource companies, they held high expectations of the kinds of support and benefits the company should provide and formed relationships with Xstrata's community relations and development personnel to maximise the chances of bringing those benefits about. The chapter talks about how, with the government largely absent and the company's focus on finances and preference for rigid knowledge practices, the Community Affairs officers at the Frieda

River Project were left to bridge the relational gap between the company and the increasingly impatient and disillusioned local communities. This discussion is embedded in discourses of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainable development (SD) and how these were interpreted and enacted by the company operating the Project. The chapter describes ways in which the company used the rhetoric of CSR and SD to at once acknowledge and limit its local obligations and development assistance, made possible by its understanding of ‘a mine’ and insistence that, while it may be there one day, there is currently no mine at Frieda River.

I am not in a position to judge whether the company was unable or unwilling to recognise that the Project’s local stakeholders in Paupe had their own vision of what constitutes ‘a mine’ and that they spoke to that vision during stakeholder engagement activities, adding further complexity to an already difficult mineral development venture. As the material presented in this book shows, this vision was deeply embedded in local cosmology and the Paiyamo ideas of knowledge, transformation and personhoods, which shaped how they saw, experienced and interpreted the Frieda River Project. Through eliciting those ideas and focusing on the perspective of the Paiyamo, this book seeks to create a discursive space in which, despite the absence of the mining pit and industrial mineral extraction infrastructure, the mine at Frieda River can be brought to life and made visible.

Notes

1. EIS is an evaluation of the project’s feasibility in its natural and social environment settings, based on comprehensive social and environmental scoping studies. All resource extraction companies operating in the country are legally required to produce an EIS for a proposed project and submit it to PNG authorities for approval as part of the permitting process prior to commencing construction.
2. In 2019, PanAust submitted an EIS for the Frieda River Project to the government. At the time of writing, the Project has not yet been developed, and its future remains uncertain.
3. *Telefols* is a local word used for *Telefomin*, a language group inhabiting areas to the north-west of Paupe (see Jorgensen 1981). Two *Telefomin* communities, *Ok Isai* and *Wabia*, are among groups formally recognised as landowners in the Frieda River Project area. In the *Telefomin* language, the word *bangri* was used to describe a stone adze, which used to serve as a popular tool in the area.
4. In 2011 and 2012 the story of *Afek* and *bangri* was commonly told in Paupe. When I returned to the community for a period of supplementary fieldwork in 2018, the relationship between the Paiyamo and the *Telefomin* communities was strained, as conflict emerged over a land boundary between the *Telefomin*

and the Melefa during a supplementary land boundary demarcation exercise in the Project area. Some of the Paiyamo, pastor Jacob included, no longer claimed that the Telefol story of *bangri* was also their story and placed more emphasis on other narratives asserting their own rights over land in the Project area.

5. The mythical ancestress of Telefomin (see Craig and Hyndman 1990).
6. String bags (see MacKenzie 1991).
7. Three versions of this story were previously recorded in the Frieda area by Dan Jorgensen. See Jorgensen (1997).
8. See also West's (2006) work on how Gimi speakers in the Eastern Highlands of PNG imagined their future and development in light of mining prospects in their area.
9. Aside from a couple of field reports written by Dan Jorgensen, based on his short visit to Paupe in 1984, there were to date no detailed ethnographic accounts of this greatly dynamic and innovative community that has over the years become a stakeholder to one of the biggest prospective mining projects in the Pacific region. This book fills an important gap in the anthropological topography of this part of the world, placing the Paiyamo between the well-researched Telefomin communities to the south-east (Jorgensen 1981, 1990a, 1990b, 1997, 2006, 2014) and the Miyanmin groups to the west (Morren 1979, 1986, 1981; Gardner 1980, 1983, 1987, 2004), Duranmin to the south (Lohmann 2000, 2001, 2003, 2007) and further on the fringes of what anthropologists came to know as the Min region of Papua New Guinea (Barth 1975, 1987, 1990; Brumbaugh 1990; Craig and Hyndman 1990; MacKenzie 1991; Polier 1992; Robbins 1998a, 1998b, 2001, 2007; Crook 1999, 2004a, 2004b, 2007a, 2007b; Brutti 2000, 2001, 2007 among many others). In this book, I do not seek to establish whether or not the Paiyamo are 'Min'. However, ethnographic accounts from the Min region have guided me through my initial engagement with the cultural interface that is the Frieda River Project.
10. For more information about Panguna, see May and Spriggs (1990); Connell (1991); Filer (1997b); Filer and Macintyre (2006) and Filer and Imbun (2009). See also Banks and Ballard (1997) and Kirsch (2007) for more detail about Ok Tedi.
11. Dinah's household consisted of a *haus slip*, a raised structure with weathered timber flooring and a tin roof with doors leading to three bedrooms from the central corridor; and a *haus kuk* – a kitchen, built out of bush materials, with an open fire pit where all meals were prepared and consumed.
12. For example, Weiner (1991, 1998b); Strathern and Stewart (1998a, 1998b); Rumsey and Weiner (2001); Leach (2003, 2014); Kirsch (2004); Strathern (2004); Anderson (2011); Stead (2017).
13. For example, Jorgensen (1997, 2007a); Power (1997); Kalinoe (2004); Leach (2004); Rumsey and Weiner (2004); Filer (2006).

14. For example, Crook (2007a); Gilberthorpe (2007); Macintyre and Foale (2013).
15. One of the best-known exchanges on the positionality of anthropologists on resource projects in PNG comes from Stuart Kirsch and Colin Filer. Kirsch (1996: 15) argued that anthropologists should actively advocate for local communities in resource conflicts even if this 'may compromise our status as impartial social scientists' (see also Kirsch 2002). Filer (1996: 26), on the other hand, held a strong belief that 'anthropologists may do more for the indigenous people of Papua New Guinea in their capacity as honest brokers in the negotiation of development or compensation deals between mining companies and local communities, than in their capacity as advocates for the anti-corporate alliance.'
16. *Kastom* (from the English 'custom') is a highly politicised concept in Melanesia (see chapter 3). This book follows the Paiyamo in their use of the term *kastom* to explain the local ways of world-making and being in the world and a range of contemporary practices 'which draw on tradition insofar as tradition is part of the present' (Strathern 2004: 2).



Illustration 1.1. A boy from Paupe watching the company's activities at the airstrip. Photograph by the author.