

Marijuana, Guns, Crocodiles and Submarines: Economies of Desire in the Purari Delta

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ABSTRACT

Traded down the Purari River by male youth through a network of friends, *kuku dipi*, as marijuana is known in the Purari Delta, is consumed locally, and traded for guns it is rumoured that the American Mafia bring in submarines. The movement of *kuku dipi* is part of a constellation of informal trade that has emerged alongside the large-scale logging and oil projects in the Gulf Province. These networks involve the exchange of alcohol, pornography and radios by logging ship crews for live birds, crocodile skins and other local flora and fauna. Numerous sets of speculations have arisen about the seen and unseen transactions that these exchanges are felt to entail. Focusing on aspects of *kuku dipi*'s use and movement in the Delta, I examine some of the explanations and anxieties around this illicit commodity. Doing so provides insight into *kuku dipi*'s social impact and illuminates how the Purari's engagement in this trade is an attempt to transcend and cope with the economic and political disparities caused by the current resource extraction projects.

During my first week in Baimuru, the administrative centre of the Purari Delta, in March 2001 my new acquaintance Tom asked me after dinner, 'what do Filipinos do with crocodile penises?' Perplexed and confessing my ignorance, Tom explained that for several months he had been hearing stories that if one went to any of the logging concessions in the western and central Gulf Province with a jar of crocodile penis that Filipinos at the camps would buy them for several hundred kina.¹ If you had enough, Tom added, these same men would fly you to the Philippines where you would be given anything you desired – suitcases of money, a car, outboard motors, etc. A crocodile hunter, who participated in the regulated trade of crocodile skins, Tom was curious about how to tap into this curious flow of things, and whether I could help him.²

A week later another event transpired involving a different but equally lucrative commodity circulating in the Delta. Several male adolescents had stolen a box that had been temporarily off-loaded from a plane with engine trouble at the Baimuru airstrip. The plane had been chartered by Turama Forest Industries (TFI), a logging company active in the region, and was carrying supplies. The youths stole this particular box because they had smelled its hidden contents: *kuku dipi* (lit. 'bad /evil smoke') as marijuana is locally known.³ Following the theft's report by TFI, eight heavily armed members of a mobile unit of PNG's riot police force came from Port Moresby to investigate. During the following month the mobile squad threatened surrounding communities as they searched for this box, and for caches of *kuku dipi* and illegal homemade guns.

While the box and its contents were never retrieved, several youths suspected of being associated with the theft were severely beaten, as was one adult who protested the police's rough tactics. After a tense three weeks, the mobile squad left as quickly as they had come, their departure by dinghy in the early morning punctuated by the staccato of machine gun

fire. While station life drifted back to normal, rumours persisted for months that the mobile squad would return to beat up male villagers and rape women. Within the community of Mapaio the sound of an approaching outboard motor invariably gave rise to shouts of 'Police'e! Police'e!'. The immediate result of this deception was the invariable melt down of young children whose terror amused parents and older siblings, while male adolescents sprinted into the bush to hide.

This particular event and its lingering effects made *kuku dipi* ethnographically present for me during my dissertation fieldwork (2001-02), and vividly portrayed tensions surrounding this illicit substance. Traded down the Purari River by male youth through a network of friends, *kuku dipi* is consumed locally, and traded for guns it is rumoured that the American Mafia bring in submarines. Although not grown in the Purari Delta, marijuana has become a new cash crop for disenchanted young men, who in their capacity as middlemen seek material gain in the depressed regional economy. While there can be no doubt that a significant role of the trade is to provide participating men with a means to satisfy their 'commodity hunger' (Wardlow 2006: 32), the trade also enables the forging of new social networks through which these young men confront and transcend village politics. In so doing, these men are not only redefining village social dynamics but also the ways in which masculinity is understood and performed. It is through these profound economic and social effects that this regional exchange (guns-for-marijuana) has become one of the most significant trade networks in the Delta and in the country linking the Highlands to the coastal regions, Torres Straits, Australia and beyond (Kirsch 2002: 56).⁴

The movement of *kuku dipi* into and out of the Delta is, however, not a solitary phenomenon, but rather part of a larger constellation of informal trade that has emerged alongside the large-scale logging and oil projects currently being conducted in the Gulf Province (Figure 1).⁵ These networks involve alcohol, pornography and radios being traded by logging ship crews for sexual services, and various local flora and fauna (i.e., live birds and crocodile skins). These illicit sets of exchange underlie the longstanding legally sanctioned and visible movements of processed sago, betelnut, garden produce and dried fish that people take to the urban centres of Kikori, Kerema and Port Moresby for store bought foodstuffs (i.e., sugar, tinned meats, rice) and other goods (i.e., kerosene, second-hand clothes, shot gun shells). As seen in Tom's comments about crocodile penises, and people's beliefs in submarines, these illicit transactions also involve various sets of speculations about the nature and reasons for these exchanges. These speculations feed into people's understandings of the equally mysterious processes of both development and resource extraction in the Delta, which are equally distant, and largely invisible. An examination of the Purari's speculations about these networks provides insight into communities' understandings of their place within the geopolitics of development, what it is that resource extraction entails, and how they are in turn being transformed.

In what follows, I unravel aspects of *kuku dipi* use and movement, as well as some layers of explanation and anxiety concerning *kuku dipi* within this flow of commodities and their attending speculations. Mapping out the 'speculative biographies' (Walsh 2004: 233), surrounding *kuku dipi* and other commodities, gives some insight into Purari communities attempts to transcend and cope with the economic and political disparities caused by the Delta's current resource extraction projects. In doing so, I follow Foster's call to examine 'how people in Melanesia, like and unlike people everywhere, rub their dreams and desires—their possible lives—against the exigencies of their actual lives' (1999: 153). Following a short discussion of work on the transformative effects of commodities in PNG, I turn to an outline of the Purari Delta and the current resource extraction projects under way. Doing so allows me to touch upon the host of goods exchanged around these sites before addressing aspects of marijuana's local use and perceived effects, its regional movement, and finally people's speculations about its trade.

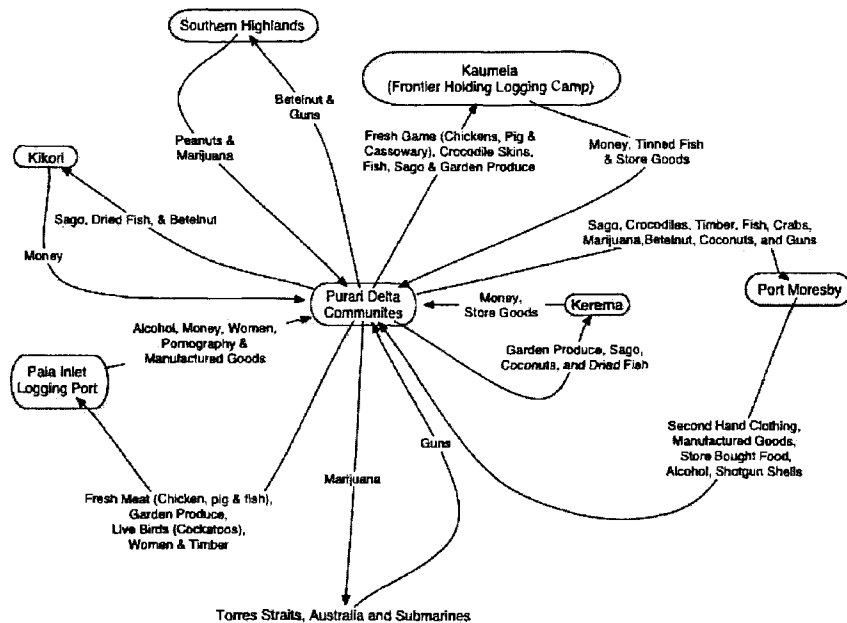


Figure 1: Partial diagram of the various flows of things in and out of the Purari Delta.

SPECULATIVE BIOGRAPHIES OF THINGS AND THEIR WAKES

In his appraisal of anthropological studies of commodities, Foster (2006) remarks on the explosion in the last two decades of studies that, following Appadurai's (1986) and Kopytoff's (1986) seminal essays in *The Social Life of Things*, trace the movement of everyday things through diverse 'local' and 'global' contexts. It is in these circuits that meanings are fashioned and shed, and the producers and consumers of these objects are alternatively connected or disconnected across geographic, cultural and political boundaries (Foster 2006: 285). Influenced by this trend several studies have emerged that focus on the movement and consumption of commodities in PNG. In his own work on print advertising in metropolitan centres Foster argues for the centrality of commodity consumption in the construction of nationhood (Foster 1995 and 2002). Gewertz and Errington (1996) have examined how discourses around soft-drinks contribute to an emerging modernity among the Chambri. Working with the Fuyuge of Central Province, Hirsch (1990) demonstrates the importance of betelnut in ritual, and how this has contributed to the formation of their understandings of what is a national culture. Similarly, Mosko (1999) documents how the North Mekeo's successful marketing of betelnut has led to a new flow of commodities into communities leading to alternating sets of transformation in villages, gender relations and notions of the person. Without wishing to detract from the nuances of these studies, collectively they show the importance of commodity consumption in PNG and various ways in which commodities transform societies and help with the enactment of new identities and modes of personhood (LiPuma 1998). Not surprisingly the identities that commodity consumption help constitute may be at odds with notions of nationhood. This is a point made clear by Dundon (2004) in her work on the Gogodala of Western Province and is one of the fascinating aspects of mar-

ijuana consumption. As noted by Halvaksz and Lipset in this collection marijuana presents an intriguing illicit commodity whose trade and consumption 'both subverts and engages the citizen with the nation-state.'

While marijuana's illicitness adds to its theoretical interest it also presents certain methodological problems (Gootenberg 2005). Within the Purari Delta the moral sanctions against its consumption and trade made its documentation particularly difficult. Men were reluctant to identify themselves as users and would rarely comment on their engagement in the trade. By contrast they openly discussed their speculations about how, why and to whom marijuana was being traded. These conversations often involved discussions about the current logging projects, and their desires for the wealth that these projects promised to bring. Within Melanesian anthropology there is a long-standing tradition of investigating desires and speculations around material things under the rubric of 'cargo-cults' (see Dalton 2000; Jebens 2004; Lattas 1992). The Purari Delta and neighbouring Vailala are historically intertwined with this genealogy (Maher 1961; Williams 1923, 1934). While not without its pitfalls (Lindstrom 1993), this research has illuminated the ways in which Melanesians continue to creatively engage with new differences in social and political power (Wagner 1981). Similar concerns have also explicitly emerged in the multi-faceted 'intercultural zones' (Sahlins 1993: 13) that resource extraction projects are creating in PNG.⁶ In conjunction with these investigations numerous studies have emerged about local understandings of new economic and political formations (see for example Butt 2005; Comaroff & Comaroff 1999; Eves 2000; Taussig 2004).

However, for the purposes of this paper I find Andrew Walsh's work among a Madagascar sapphire mining community particularly helpful.⁷ Walsh discusses the phenomenon rife within these new contexts of extraction, what he terms, "the wakes of things" – that is, the particular impressions left behind as particular commodities flow away from local outposts of global trades' (Walsh 2004: 226). An important counter-point to the theoretical concerns of materiality in motion (Appadurai 1986), Walsh argues that the analysis of people's speculations about where things go and why offers perspectives on people's sense of place within the world. Moreover, such a focus helps reveal experiences and understandings of disparities in knowledge and power by communities inhabiting the imposed peripheries of the global economy. Walsh's analysis provides an important angle by which to consider the movement of illicit commodities whose trajectories are veiled in secrecy, and are punishable by the State (Halvaksz and Lipset this collection).

A RIVER AND ITS PEOPLE

The third largest river in PNG, the Purari River empties into the Delta's 3300 square kilometre tidal estuary in the central Gulf Province on PNG's southern coast. The Delta's dense array of marine and terrestrial resources supports some 11,000 people who compose four main ethnic groups: the Pawaiian, Kaura, Ipiko, and the Purari.⁸ The Purari differentiate themselves into six groups – the Baroi, I'ai, Kaimari, Koriki, Maipua and Vaimuru – who collectively occupy 22 villages that range from 650 to 30 people in size. These villages are divided into longhouse communities (*ravi*) whose resident clans are composed of ideologically patrilineal lineages (*ava'i*). Communities belong to one of three Christian denominations in the region: Seventh Day Adventist (SDA), Pentecostal, United Church (UC). Alongside elders and hereditary chiefs, church officials, church committees, and village councillors help dictate the flow of these social entities. In contrast Baimuru is a multi-ethnic community with people from surrounding regions in the Gulf as well as other PNG provinces. It is here that the main social, economic and political services are located, and where villagers go by motorised and paddled canoes to obtain goods, and news (Bell 2006a).

The Delta's present day circumstances are critically informed by the legacy of the Tom

Kabu Movement (1946-69). Following World War II, the Movement destroyed 'traditional' material forms and encouraged business to make people like *kape urupu* ('white people') (Maher 1958, 1961, 1967 and 1984; compare with Bashkow 2006). Combining local notions about the efficacy of Europeans with the desire for 'development', the Movement moved villages, introduced architectural styles, and launched the Purari into a wider engagement with the cash economy. Hindered by the Australian colonial government the Movement ultimately failed but not before it significantly restructured the Delta and forever altered communities' perceptions of themselves and their place in the world. Under the direction of the colonial government, the Delta experienced various small-scale development projects through which villagers obtained a modest income through the sale of copra, rubber and sago, and a significant portion of the Delta's population moved to Moresby (Bell 2006a; Hitchcock and Oram 1967).

These economic gains continued through independence up until the late 1980s when the regional infrastructure began to erode. Cargo ships that came for copra have ceased, and the passenger boat that ran between Kerema (the provincial capital) and Port Moresby stopped in the late 1980s. During the same period a government sponsored fish plant in operation since the late 1970s shut due to mismanagement. In 2002 the cargo ship bringing store-goods and fuel to Baimuru arrived infrequently causing widespread petrol and kerosene shortages and price inflations. While in 2005 these shortages had been addressed by the reinstatement of a passenger and cargo shipping service, Baimuru remains in many residents' minds an under-developed place. Villagers continue to carry out a largely subsistence-based economy focused on sago, fishing, and hunting. Cash is primarily earned through the sale of sago and fish in local markets, and for some this meagre income is supplemented by assistance from employed kin in Baimuru or a logging camp. These various ebbs and flows have created desires to have what the Purari see the rest of PNG possessing, namely roads, permanent houses, and regular access to consumer goods. As these items have become increasingly remote frustrations have grown and with them various local speculations as to why this decline and absence has occurred.

AND THEN THE KOMPANI CAME

In the 1990s an answer to these dilemmas appeared to emerge when multi-national conglomerates began reinvestigating the region's potentials for logging and oil production with new technologies. Upon receiving permits, TFI and the Malaysian company Rimbunan Hijau (RH) began a series of logging concessions in the Gulf, each with a logging camp (Filer with Sekhran 1998).⁹ These camps quickly became hubs of economic activity – sources of limited local employment, sites of influx of temporary Asian and PNG workers, as well as sources of revenue for the landowners. In 2002 the Canadian company InterOil began exploratory drilling in the Purari Delta's hinterland. Despite InterOil's drilling activities remaining spatially remote in 2006, their presence on the upper Purari River continues to loom large in the imaginations of coastal villages. This is fuelled in part by glimpses of large helicopters carrying equipment inland and the company's various barges.¹⁰ While such resource extraction projects are not new to the Delta, the scale of the current logging and oil operations are novel and unfortunately have coincided with the region's economic decline.¹¹ These activities have contributed to the Purari's ongoing reevaluation of their environment, which is understood to be the product and abode of totemic ancestral spirit-beings known as *imunu*. The forest and waterways are increasingly valued for the hard currency their ownership will hopefully bring, while social relationships are being reconfigured and fetishized through the formation of Incorporated Land Groups (ILGs) (Bell 2006b).¹²

The logging camps and Paia Inlet, the port where logs are loaded onto international ships, are the Gulf's new 'commodity contexts' (Appadurai 1986:15). It is here at these sites that people of different cultural expectations and desires mingle and local things–logs,

flora, fauna and sexual interaction—are most intensely re-valued in light of their ability to gain other more desired things, such as alcohol, generators, pornography, TVs and radios. While the Purari interact with many of these logging sites, until its closure in 2004, Kaumeia was the most immediate being only 5 hours by onboard motor from the nearest village Mapaio on the Purari River. At Kaumeia entrepreneurial villagers sold garden produce, as well as fresh meat and fish to the camp's employees. Families also took their adolescent daughters while selling produce at Kaumeia in the hopes of securing them a husband through whom a decent bride-wealth payment could be obtained. While denying transactions involving sex occurred at Kaumeia, the Purari openly talked of such activity happening at other logging camps. These activities parallel comments made by Baimuru residents in April 2006 of how ships calling into Paia Inlet now had female 'crew' with whom villagers could pay to have sex with (see also Hammar forthcoming).

While providing access to goods, the presence of these resource extraction operations has also generated unease about what it is these companies are actually removing, and what the effects of these outgoing flows are having in communities. Incidents such as the *kuku dipi* found in TFI's box contribute to the rumours that company employees are involved in more than just the removal of logs. In 2001 and 2002, station residents often speculated that company pilots were involved in various smuggling operations. During the same time rumours circulated that Asian workers were smuggling out the highly valued eaglewood (*Aquilaria malaccensis* Lam.), as well as gold found in the hinterland. The Purari also remarked that HIV/AIDS was being introduced into villages by sexual interactions at these camps. Moreover, the trade in various animals, particularly birds, is understood by Purari elders as another sign of the increasing lack of concern and knowledge of relationships with *opa* ('totemic species') by the younger generations. The disregard for the various *vupu* ('taboos') around interaction with these animals is understood to play into the weakening of the current generation of men, the new dominance of women, and the increase in illnesses (asthma and tuberculosis) and the spread of new diseases (diabetes and HIV/AIDS). The consumption of *kuku dipi* and its trade plays into these concerns. *Kuku dipi* not only makes its users socially and physically uncontrollable and unpredictable within the village, but also its trade enables men to establish social networks that lie outside, and challenge, relationships established by kinship within the village. At the same time they provide men with access to money and goods and thus exacerbate pre-existing intergenerational tensions. These actions are justified by young men such as Kaiparu, a 28 year I'ai man, because 'Now is the time of money! It is money time!' (*Nau em taim bilong moni! Moni taim!*).¹³

KUKU DIPI, 'DRUG HEADS' AND GENERATIONAL DECLINE

Emerging in the early 1990s, *kuku dipi* quickly became part of a spectrum of social consumed drugs in the Delta: alcohol, betelnut, and tobacco (Figure 2). While the latter two are legal consumables with long-standing histories of use by male and female adolescents and adults (Marshall 2004), until recently alcohol was banned in the Gulf Province. During 2001 and 2002 alcohol in the Delta was limited to bottles of rum smuggled into the province by entrepreneurs and hard alcohol traded into communities by logging ship crews. Before the reinstatement of beer sales in 2005, home-brewed alcohol called 'steam' became common in Baimuru. Since its introduction by Moresby youths in 2003, steam has become a favourite complement to *kuku dipi* (see McDonald 2005). As a friend explained in Tok Pisin their consumption is 'strength to strength' (*pawa to pawa*), which is to say that the combination results in a more intense high and long lasting high. Local law enforcement officials in Baimuru have conducted an ongoing campaign to disrupt the distillation of steam in the bush and its public consumption. It was unclear during my visit in April 2006 how effective these campaigns were.¹⁴

In the Delta, *kuku dipi* became associated with male youths, and frequent con-

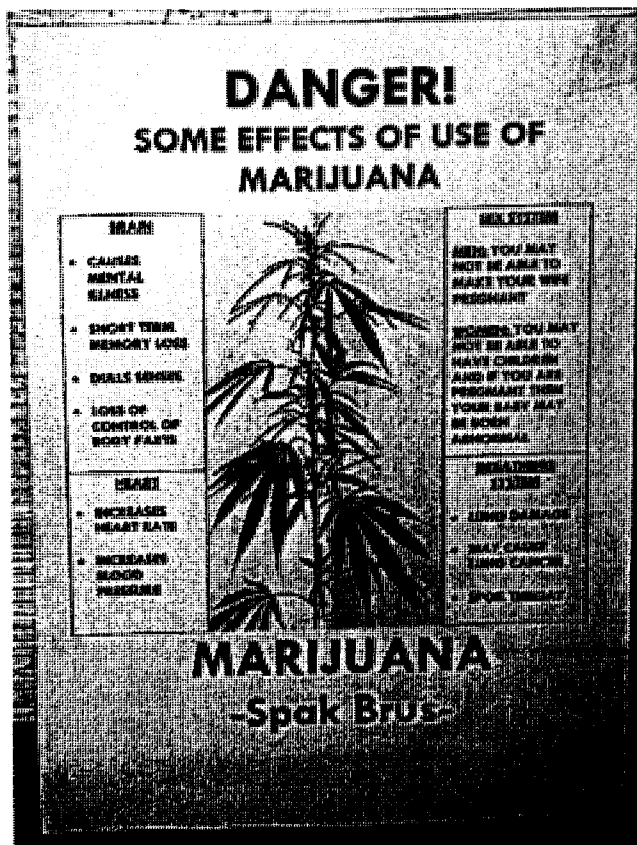


Figure 2: Poster at the Baimuru Trading, LTD, placed by local health professionals (Photograph by author 2002).

sumers became known as ‘drug heads’ (term spoken in English) (compare with Halvaksz and Lipset this collection). While in 2001-02 women were reportedly not smoking *kuku dipi*, in 2006 some women in Baimuru were now said to smoke. This activity was restricted to women who participated in sex involving multiple male partners, known in Tok Pisin as *lain* (‘line’). Such behaviour is confined to Baimuru where Purari men can find women from different ethnic groups. Within Purari villages male consumers most commonly smoke while playing guitar music late into the night or while away in fishing and hunting camps. These seemingly benign social settings in the village belie the negative connotations that elders and community leaders attribute *kuku dipi* consumption with.

The Purari identify three main types of *kuku dipi*: brown which makes you happy, green which makes you sad, and red which makes you angry (compare with Halvaksz this collection). Despite this range of possible effects, community consensus remains that regardless of the type smoked, *kuku dipi* causes men to lose their inhibitions, leading them in their hunger to steal dried fish, chickens, young pigs and other household foodstuffs. These activities clash with long-established Purari notions of sustaining sociability through the sharing of food, and are indicative of a crazed state (*abo-abo*) that ‘drug heads’ are

understood to enter (see Lipset this collection). The desire for *kuku dipi* is such that youth are also known to steal and sell objects from their own households to obtain money to buy *kuku dipi*.

More alarming than these acts of petty theft, *kuku dipi* is said to lower young men’s inhibitions, making them sexually aggressive and, as in one case that occurred in 2002, was said to be the cause behind a young man’s raping of his classificatory aunt. Equally troubling for community leaders and concerned village residents, *kuku dipi* is seen to establish bonds that threaten to supersede those of kinship. As one 35 year-old man commented in English, ‘“drug heads”, they will watch their brother be beaten if stopping the fight means going against the person who gives them *kuku dipi*.’ Such connections not only form new bonds within villages, but also crosscut ethnic boundaries and tie *kuku dipi* users into a wider regional and national networks that are outside traditional authority. These networks often entail the men’s involvement in *raskol* gangs that while concentrated in Moresby are slowly percolating into the central Gulf thus raising the threat of villages being overwhelmed with the perceived disorder of these urban centres (Goddard 2001).

These various acts fly in the face of established modes of conduct or *vupu* and play into notions of generational decline whereby succeeding generation are judged more unruly than the last (Bell 2005a: 203-12; compare with Lipset and Halvaksz this collection).¹⁵ As the father of the above mentioned rapist stated while giving compensation payment to his kin in 2002,

I won’t come and stop his being beaten. I don’t want to be involved. I come from a different generation. He is a different man. His generation is the one that came to spoil this earth. The generation after him will be worse.

It was quite common in 2001 and 2002 to hear elders and frustrated parents voice similar remarks about their children’s uncontrollable behaviour. The new modes of being and negative actions of the current generation are understood to be exacerbated by *kuku dipi* use. Like the Biangai, the Purari see the consumption of marijuana as possessing the potential to negatively transform the user’s body and thus person (Halvaksz this collection). As the elder Avae Vai’i remarked in 2002 when asked if youth were interested in learning their ancestral histories (*airu omoro*), which are now central to resource claims:

No, you can see it yourself. You can see it on their body, their skin is pale and not good. They cannot sit down and actually listen to what is happening. *Kuku dipi* has spoiled them.

In the Delta these beliefs are indicative of male elders’ sense of their loss of control in the village and their growing disconnection with youth, who are more intrigued by the array of consumable cultural forms produced in Moresby and imported from Asia and Australia (Foster 2002).

SDA and Pentecostal beliefs about the sanctity of the body, and the negative moral and physiological impact of drugs also contribute to this discourse about users and *kuku dipi*. Within Mapai, SDA sermons frequently dealt with the topic of the body and the need to regulate what substances one consumes. As one visiting pastor from Baimuru remarked in 2002, ‘Before you learn to look after your motor, house or generator you must know how to look after your body.’ These sermons are part of a longstanding effort by church leaders of the Delta’s three denominations and health officials at Kapuna, the regional hospital, to condemn *kuku dipi*. Health officials in particular are outspoken against its consumption in public forums and regional workshops. Since 2005 Kapuna has been sponsoring a series of HIV/AIDS awareness workshops, an explicit component of which has been to help community leaders establish their own rules about how drug use should be dealt with.

KUKU DIPI, GUNS AND SUBMARINES

Grown in the Southern Highlands and the interstitial region of the Upper Purari River, *kuku dipi* comes to the Delta through various routes, some of which are known and others that are suspected (compare with Lipsset this collection). It is widely believed that Highlanders present in Baimuru smuggle marijuana in peanut bags from the southern highlands on mission planes. The *kuku dipi* is then distributed to intermediaries for sale in villages, and the logging camps. In 2001-02 there was one man (30 years old) in Mapaio associated with these Highlanders, and his frequent trips to Baimuru, Kikori and Wabo (a village on the Purari River) were viewed with suspicion, as was his unexplained recent acquisition of a new dinghy. Frustrated by the Highlanders' control of this flow of goods, in 2002 it was rumoured that several Purari men hijacked a shipment of *kuku dipi* to Kikori, which they then sold themselves. This incident went unreported to the Baimuru police, and remains shrouded in secrecy.

In contrast, informants confirmed the movement of *kuku dipi* down the Purari River through networks of friends by canoe. As one man related in 2001:

[Pawaiians] bring it when they come down for logging, the hospital or the store. They sell it and use their money to purchase goods. The youth here sometimes use the barter system for things the Pawaiians want.

While men, such as the one quoted above, spoke openly in general terms about these networks, gaining insight into how these sets of exchanges worked was more difficult. Agreeing to speak with me on condition of anonymity the experiences of two men are insightful. In 2002, T, a former *raskol*, spoke of how he used friendships developed within Bomana prison in Moresby to obtain 2 kg of *kuku dipi* in Kerema, the provincial capital. This cache was transported from Goroka down the Vailala River to Kerema. Travelling alone, T went west and visited the centre of Kikori and the logging camp Omati. Since the construction of the oil pipeline from the Kutubu Petroleum Project in 1992, residents around Kikori have received royalty payments earning the region the nickname by the Purari of 'keep the change country.' Sustaining himself through fishing, T sold individual rolled smokes for 1 to 2 kina. In the process he earned 400 kina with which he purchased store goods and kerosene for his family. While T knew of the submarines, he preferred to sell the *kuku dipi* himself.

In 2001-02 it was equally common for the Purari to go up the Purari River to retrieve *kuku dipi* themselves. Indeed, as I learned later, one impetus for several young male acquaintances to accompany me on a survey trip up the Purari River to Wabo in 2002 was to make inquiries about the presence of *kuku dipi*. The story of a 26 year old man I will call S provides a more concrete example. Under the cover of night in 2000, S and a friend left Mapaio at 2am and travelled to an island just below the Pawaiian community of Subu. There they obtained 20 kg of *kuku dipi*, which Pawaiian friends had dropped at a designated spot. S had made these friends during his various hunting trips inland, and the Pawaiians had obtained the *kuku dipi* from a Goroka man. S retrieved the cache and returned to Mapaio by 5am with the marijuana hidden in two duffel bags. Storing the bags in his house, S intended to use a contact on the coast to obtain firearms, which he would then trade back to his Pawaiian friends. As S explained this man would go off the coast in his dinghy under the cover of night and signal the submarines. Echoing other men, S maintained that the American mafia operated these submarines. Unfortunately for S this transaction was delayed due to an unexpected death in the contact's family. Eager to move his *kuku dipi*, S gave it to a man from another coastal village, who promised that he would return with firearms. This never happened, and S, fearful of making a commotion, let the matter drop.

The submarines involved in this trade present an intriguing unseen and thus largely immaterial conduit through which various things are understood to flow for very material

ends in the Delta. As first noted by Wood (1998: 243-4 and 247 endnote 8), stories about submarines emerged in the national PNG press in 1997, and appear in speculations throughout PNG about commodities and their transaction (Lattas 2000).¹⁶ While the Purari acknowledged that the Western Province remains the principal locale visited by these submarines on the south coast, they also maintained that submarines periodically visited the Delta. On 30 May 2001, this position was substantiated by the report heard by men in Mapaio on the 'world news' that submarines were indeed coming to the Delta to buy *kuku dipi*. While during 2001-02 I could not locate anyone who had actually seen a submarine, there were young men who had heard submarines surfacing in the cover of the night and seen from a distance a light said to belong to a submarine's periscope. The alleged presence of submarines in the Delta places the young men who have dealings with them in important positions in relation to the flow of guns into the highlands, and *kuku dipi* out of PNG.

As discussed by Wood (1998) in the case of the Kamula, submarines represent the ultimate form of stealth, and play into local conceptions of concealing and revealing. This is also the case in the Delta, where a submarine's unseen underwater movement is understood to be akin to a mode of being attributed to *ere imunu*, who take the form of various water animals. Concealment through other forms, particularly animals, is also a mode of travel deployed by *dapu* or sorcerers who are said to use crocodiles as their canoes. The Purari's speculation about submarines is also part of the general speculation that they carry out in their daily lives about the nature of things and events. The appearance of entities – animals, objects and persons – are understood to be inherently deceptive precisely because of their permeability and the potential that they have other things within. For example, when given the name of a recently deceased family member a shotgun becomes the *ruru* or skin within which the spirit of the dead person resides. Similarly, *imunu* may reside in different animals that men may encounter while hunting, or specific sites in the environment. In the same vein alluding to sorcerers hidden powers, one saying goes that sorcerers 'possess plenty things inside' (*dae paeane*) (Bell 2006a). As noted elsewhere in PNG (O'Hanlon 1989; Strathern 1999), such beliefs mean that individuals are always looking for signs of an entity's inner and hidden nature by assessing its actions as life unfolds. As a result the meaning of events is often disclosed through later actions, and thus social life is constantly being revaluated in light of shifting circumstances.

The Delta's submarine narratives also build on long-standing regional speculations about cargo ships coming to the region with manufactured goods. Such narratives emerged in 1919 during the so-called 'Vailala Madness' (Williams 1923), as well as during the Kabu Movement in the 1950s as the Purari struggled to obtain economic self-sufficiency. In each of these cases, villagers expected vessels piloted by ancestors filled with cargo made by the deceased. Today, narratives still circulate about an invisible cargo ship that monthly brings commodities to a village of ancestral spirit-beings on the coast (Bell 2006a). Submarines are part of a set of locally beguiling narratives that emerge as part of the speculation about where marijuana goes and why. With their capacity to travel invisibly, submarines have emerged as a potent image (in Strathern's usage) by which the Purari's relationships with the outside world are reconfigured and given an unseen but material form (Strathern 1999: 11). They represent in the Purari's social imaginary the capacity of the outside world to extract and transport things into and out of the Delta. Submarines mirror the visible but still largely obscured process by which timber and now oil are being removed and converted into royalty payments. The hidden nature of these processes aligns them with the shadowy world of sorcerers and *imunu*. Moreover, as much as *kuku dipi* links male youths locally into an array of friends, access to and engagement with these unseen entities gives men the possibility to secure the material forms of the wider world that they actively desire. The submarines have become, to borrow the words of Lattas part of the 'new techniques for positioning and disclosing the terms of human relatedness' (2000: 325), which in the wake of the resource extraction projects are now perceived as being increasingly attenuated.

Not surprisingly soon after my arrival in the Delta rumours spread that I was connected to this illicit trade. A political rival of my principal research assistant insisted in 2001 that Mapaiio villagers closely examine my movements for signs of my involvement. The man insisted that in addition to my nationality, a small plane seen circling the coast soon after my arrival was a sign of my involvement. While eventually discredited these rumours persisted throughout my fieldwork. When I returned in 2006 they had thankfully vanished, and the discourse about submarines had once again shifted. While people acknowledged that submarines still came to the coast, and occasionally up the Purari River, they insisted that they were more frequent in the deep waters of Era River around the Paia Inlet. Moreover, I was told it was Russians who now operated the submarines and used several small planes that on occasion could be seen circling the sky.

CONCLUSION

In understanding the relationship between commodity and person,
we unearth anew the history of ourselves (Mintz 1985:214).

I began this essay with two separate but linked encounters. The first involved the potentials of a new commodity – crocodile penises – while the other concerned the retribution surrounding the theft, and consumption of marijuana smuggled by a TFI pilot. Both incidents are emblematic of the new networks at play within the Purari Delta and the speculations that surround the seen and unseen transactions that these networks entail. Emerging alongside the Gulf Province's various logging and oil projects, these networks have entangled the Purari in an alternating series of desires and transactions as they watch their forest flow out on logging ships, and large helicopters and barges take machinery up the Purari River to extract oil on their ancestral lands. The Purari's understanding of these emerging relationships and their lack of control over them have had profound impact on their sense of place within PNG and the efficacy of their traditional leadership and social forms.

Exchanging flora and fauna, as well as sex, the Purari have entered into these networks in their attempt to gain economic viability and obtain the material markers of living a developed life. Marijuana remains the most lucrative illicit commodity traded, and has made the Purari middlemen in the regional guns-for-marijuana trade. Following the call to examine the 'wake of things' by Walsh (2004), I have sought to combine a commentary on what the Purari see its local consumption as doing to consumers and village life, with a discussion of Purari notions of where *kuku dipi* goes and how. Doing so begins the complex process of detailing the evolving role that *kuku dipi* plays within the lives of the Purari, and how speculations about its trade have become part of their commentary on their interconnections with the wider world. In teasing out these connections, we can begin to formulate how the Purari understand their transformed world and how they themselves are transforming. Doing so gets us closer to realising Mintz's goal of 'unearthing anew the histories of ourselves', a project that has been most profoundly followed by Strathern (1988, 1998). Moreover, as I was reminded in Moresby in 2006 while speaking to a Sepik youth, these speculative narratives are increasingly part of the national discourse about the Purari Delta and the wider Gulf Province's place within PNG. They are part of the new economies of desire that are redefining relations within the country and, as I have tried to do here, need to be more fully examined. Insisting on the involvement of submarines in the marijuana trade, the Sepik youth remarked, 'this is what they do in the Gulf. It is their secret, their money maker!'

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NOTES

1. In 2002 one kina was roughly 29 US cents.
2. Tom's speculations were not completely based on hearsay. ABC science news reported that crocodile farmers in North Queensland were hoping to cash into 'Asia's growing fascination for natural aphrodisiacs. Andrew Cross of the Southern Cross Crocodile farm in Whitsundays told a reporter that 'Crocodile penis fetches about \$2,000 a kilo. ... You need a lot of penis to get the kilo up but it's a very profitable by-product.' (ABC News in Science, 1998).
3. While I have chosen to gloss the Purari term *dipi* as 'bad', it needs to be noted that the vernacular term is used to refer to a range of actions that fall within a spectrum of morally wrong deeds (see Lipset this collection).
4. Since the 1990s numerous reports have surfaced in the Australian and PNG press about the trade of arms for marijuana through the Torres Straits (see Marshall 2004: 215; Vulum 1996). While its extent is difficult to assess, both Capie (2003) and McFarlane (n.d.) note that another conduit for small arms exists in PNG whereby weapons are stolen, sold and 'borrowed' from disgruntled members of the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC), and the PNG Defence Force. A narrative I collected in 2002 confirmed that this process is a way guns are entering the Delta.
5. The Purari have long histories of enchainment connections with their neighbours and foreigners. The arrival of Europeans in the 1880s ushered in new trade networks and elaborated pre-existing ones (Bell 2006a). The most renowned of these was the *hiri* trade, which until the mid-1950s, involved an annual visit by Motuans to trade shells, clay pots and an array of items (kerosene, fish hooks, etc.) for sago (Dutton 1982). Until the 1920s, the Purari used these shells to obtain stone adzes from the highlands through intermediaries (Hughes 1977). The Purari also traded rituals and objects (tobacco among them) with the neighbouring Urama and Orokololo (Williams 1924).
6. There is a growing and substantial literature that deals with the impacts, interpretations of and negotiations surrounding resource extraction in PNG (see for example Biersack 1999; Filer with Sekhran 1998; Jacka 2001; Robbins 1995; West 2006; Wood 1998; as well as contributors to Rumsey and Weiner 2001 and West and Macintyre 2006).
7. Both Butt (2005) and Kirsch (2002) provide excellent discussions of this literature in their own studies of rumours relating to political violence and health in West Papua.
8. The Pawaiians have settlements along the upper banks of the Purari River and its hinterland (Ellis 2002), while the Kaura are dispersed along the upper reaches of the Vailala River and inhabit Evara village on the eastern branch of the Purari River. The Kaura are linguistically and culturally related to the Elema on the coast (Brown 1986). A small group on upper Pie River, the Ipiko are linguistically distinct and appear to possess some relation to the western Kerewa cultural group (Franklin 1973).
9. In 2001-2002 TFI had its central logging operation at Omati on the Omati River (west of Kikori). TFI has subsequently diversified its camps and now has logging sites at Serebi and Victory Junction. Although never substantiated it has been suggested that TFI is a subsidiary of RH. In 2001-02 Rimbunan Hijau had a logging camp at Teredau near Paia Inlet and Kaumeia on the Purari River. In 2006 Teredau was still active, while Kaumeia had closed and a new logging camp had been opened near the Kaura village of Evara on the eastern arm of the Purari River.
10. As of 2006 InterOil possesses three petroleum licences (PPL 236, 237 and 238), which cover coastal and inland areas from Port Moresby to Ivi River in the western Gulf. The upper Purari River falls within PPL 238, and the latest exploratory well, Elk-1, is in the Kereru Range south of the river. In addition to the Elk prospect the company has mapped out the Antelope and Raptor Prospect in the same range (InterOil 2006).
11. Since the 1910 discovery of gold on the upper Lakekamu River, Gulf communities have experienced the extraction of resources by foreigners. This experience directly impacted the Delta in 1912 when the Vailala Oilfields opened and became a local employer (Papua 1911: 34-5). By 1922 the Wame sawmill opened on the Wame River (Papua 1923), and throughout the 1920s, 1930s and the 1950s various Australian companies carried out geological surveys in the Gulf (Bell 2006a; Rickwood 1992).

12. Calculated on the basis of the type of timber and the cubic feet cut, the timber revenue paid to resource owners is generated from taxes imposed by the PNG state (Filer with Sekhran 1998). While amounts vary, the money distributed to Purari landowners is not large. For example, a distribution of a quarterly premium payment witnessed in September 2002 at Kararua village, amounted to 5,957.76 kina (\$1,775.41). Once distributed between the various ILGs, individual members were lucky to get between 1 to 4 kina (\$.29 -1.19), just enough to buy a can of soda and some scones or 1kg of rice. For more on ILGs and the resulting social effects of new ownership regimes see Ernst (1999), Jorgenson (1997), Kalinoe and Leach (2004), and Weiner (1998 and 2001).
13. The I'ai also use the expression *moni kaeou* ('money ground') to talk about the new era of consumption, jealousy and the ascendancy of individualism over kin relations.
14. To make 'steam' yeast is mixed with 4 kg of sugar or an equivalent amount of fruit in a half gallon of cold water. After three days of fermentation this mixture is distilled several times. Not only powerful, 'steam' is also lucrative. As a friend in April 2006 explained 1.5 litres of 'steam' cost 10 kina in Baimuru.
15. Similar discourses of entropy have been documented elsewhere in PNG, but perhaps not as pronounced as documented for the Huli (Ballard 1995), Wiru (Clark 2000) and Duna (Stürzenhofecker 1998) of the southern highlands.
16. In 2001 the Lihirians of New Ireland had for example heard of submarines elsewhere in PNG and desired one of their own. Since then this story has transformed such that 'some people...believe that the mining company has a submarine that comes into the harbour and removes dumped ore/gold to avoid declaring the true amount of gold that it is mining and so deprive local people of royalties' (Martha Macintyre *pers. comm.* 2005).

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Drug Bodies: Relations with Substance in the Wau Bulolo Valley

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ABSTRACT:

Over the past decade, marijuana has become a significant element in the lives of Papua New Guinean youth. While placing them in conflict with community leaders, young men find meaning in marijuana. Used to affect agency, differentiated according to strength and color, and compared to plants once used by their ancestors, the drug is attributed with properties that do in fact change the substance of the body. Contrary to Strathern (1987), marijuana is now seen as transforming the bodies of its users, giving the power to overcome shame, understand ancestral stories, and work without tiring. Non-users' discourses against use likewise evoke changes in substance, drying the blood of men who smoke it and oversee its circulation. Offspring of such men are characterized by their weak bones and they often die as infants. In this paper, I will examine these competing discourses of marijuana as they emerge in the communities around Wau (Morobe Province, PNG). I examine the way in which this new commodity begins to take on local meanings and emerges as a powerful substance in the lives of young men and women.

Over the past two decades, marijuana (*Cannabis sativa*) has become a significant element in the lives of many Papua New Guineans (Halvaksz 2006a, Halvaksz forthcoming; Iamo et al. 1991; Ivaraturo 2000; McDonald 2005; McDonald and Winmarang 1999 and Thomas 2000). Illegal, but lucrative, its spread throughout the nation has meant that communities must confront its economic and physiological effects, not to mention issues of criminality. Needless to say, it presents a moral dilemma for youth and leaders alike raising questions about the role of the state in defining and controlling the circulation of such substances. While placing them in conflict with community leaders, young Biangai men find marijuana to be meaningful.

Differentiated according to strength and color, and compared to plants once used by their ancestors, 'spak brus,' as it is locally called,¹ is attributed with properties that effect changes in social relations and personal efficacy. Furthermore, contrary to Strathern (1987), marijuana is now seen as a substance capable of transforming the bodies of some of its users. This is particularly true in the emerging discourses of habitual use. In this paper, I will examine these competing discourses of marijuana as they emerge in the communities around Wau (Morobe Province, PNG). I consider the way in which this new commodity is becoming locally meaningful and is emerging as a powerful substance in the lives of young men and women. Its prominence in local discourse, I conclude, is as much a product of community-state relations as it is a product of the drug's physiological and economic impact.

THE UPPER BULOLO

The Biangai reside in seven main villages along the Upper Bulolo River, just inland from the township of Wau. Villages are organized around a system of cognatic land-based