

**THE PATTERN CHANGES CHANGES : GAMBLING VALUE IN
HIGHLAND PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

Anthony J. Pickles

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
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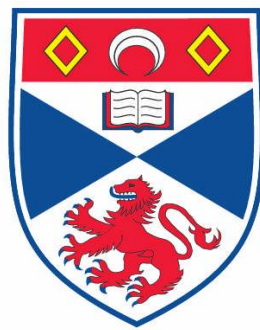
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The Pattern Changes Changes: Gambling Value in Highland Papua New Guinea

Anthony J. Pickles



This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of
Doctorate in Philosophy
at the
University of St Andrews

Date of Submission

14th September 2012

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This thesis explores the part gambling plays in an urban setting in Highland Papua New Guinea. Gambling did not exist in (what is now) Goroka Town before European contact, nor Papua New Guinea more broadly, but when I conducted fieldwork in 2009-2010 it was an inescapable part of everyday life. One card game proliferated into a multitude of games for different situations and participants, and was supplemented with slot machines, sports betting, darts, and bingo and lottery games.

One could well imagine gambling becoming popular in societies new to it, especially coming on the back of money, wage-work and towns. Yet the popularity of gambling in the region is surprising to social scientists because the peoples now so enamoured by gambling are famous for their love of competitively giving things away, not competing for them. Gambling spread while gifting remained a central part of the way people did transactions. This thesis resists juxtaposing gifting and selfish acquisition. It shows how their opposition is false; that gambling is instead a new analytic technique for manipulating the value of gifts and acquisitions alike, through the medium of money.

Too often gambling takes a familiar form in analyses: as the sharp end of capitalism, or the benign, chance-led redistributor of wealth in egalitarian societies. The thesis builds an ethnographic understanding of gambling, and uses it to interrogate theories of gambling, money, and Melanesian anthropology. In so doing, the thesis speaks to a trend in Melanesian anthropology to debate whether monetisation and urbanisation has brought about a radical split in peoples' understandings of the world. Dealing with some of the most starkly 'modern' material I find a process of inclusive indigenous materialism that consumes the old and the new alike, turning them into a model for action in a dynamic money-led world.

Acknowledgements

Theses are “written” by one person; they are made by many. There are the people who read it, proofread it, comment, criticise, support, love, nourish, pay; and in social anthropology there are the people whose generosity crafted its subject matter. With so many different kinds of debt, ordering them feels like prioritising breath over bread. I have therefore organised my thanks in roughly sequential order, and I dedicate my thesis to them all.

My family is fractious, that more than anything else probably led me here; but their support was always unconditional. As each year passes, each defining shift; or struggle; or loss; or addition; each alienation and re-affirmation, family means more to me. My mother’s love has always been unique. In this work I have come to know that my father and I share very much.

A lust for anthropology began immediately during undergraduate studies at University College London, and took the well-trodden path from biological to social. I had the audacity to claim I was an anthropologist during my first term; I am still fantasising today. It was not until my final year, and Martin Holbraad’s course, that I knew what kind of anthropologist I wanted to be. As my M.Res and M.Phil supervisor, Martin guided me towards gambling from an interest in number. Choosing Papua New Guinea was entirely down to reading Jadran Mimica’s *Intimations of Infinity* (1988); it has had an enduring impact on my anthropology. From then Susanne Küchler (my second supervisor at UCL) and Allen Abramson schooled me in Melanesia. Martin went beyond the bounds of supervision, putting in long hours as Susanne, Martin and I put together grant proposals for larger projects based upon my idea; sadly they were in vain.

I was awarded the Emslie Horniman Prize for Anthropological Fieldwork by the Royal Anthropological Institute, which paid for a computer for my fieldwork, and more importantly gave me hope of finding funding when the outlook was bleak. After a number of setbacks, it became clear I could not get the funding I needed to complete my studies at UCL, and it was Martin who suggested I get in touch with Dr. Adam Reed at St Andrews. I consider it the highest praise to say that was his best piece of advice.

In large part the financial means to conduct my research came about through the resolution and commitment of the members of the University of St Andrews' Centre for Pacific Studies. CPS were excited by my project and offered me a studentship waving my fees. Even before Adam Reed, Tony Crook and Christina Toren gave their all to help me secure a studentship, I had determined to move to St Andrews, such was their overwhelming commitment. My research was financially supported by the Economic and Social Research Council of Great Britain and Northern Ireland through a +3 Studentship won with the help of CPS. I arrived in St Andrews with everything going for me, and Adam has worked tirelessly to help me build on that position, pushing me to publish, to apply, to meet and to discuss at every opportunity. I could not wish for a more dedicated, rigorous, or inspiring supervisor. When PhD's talk of their supervisors (as they frequently do!), I find myself boasting. I used to quote the time I sent a chapter at 9.30am and received comments at 4.45 that day; in the run up to submission he beat his own record, which now stands at 7 hours and 1 minute. I think that says it all.

To the people of Goroka and Papua New Guinea I owe the greatest debt. The National Research Institute, and especially Georgie Kaupu, aided me in gaining a research visa. Rex Matang of the University of Goroka helped with the process, met me at the airport, found me my place to stay and electrified me with his passion for ethnomathematics. His loss is great, but his legacy will be felt for a long time. In Goroka I had many friends, and an adopted family whom I could never repay. They must remain anonymous here, but they are not forgotten. Loui Ipatu (whom I employed to carry out survey work on my behalf) was a source of camaraderie at times of loneliness. Particular thanks are due to Idris, Evelyn, Osama, Michael, Peter, Alfons, Simon, Nigel, Charlie, Kripel, Pastor Simon, Jeffrey, Alfred, Anna, Richard, John, Paps Keis, Helen, Blacky, David, Boski, Pamela, Franziska, Johntu, Kenox, Bob, Roni, Julie, Rocky, Christine, and Peter Purari. Chris Little, who did his fieldwork immediately after I left, stayed in my room, inherited my pots and spatula, and was adopted by my own adopted father. I feel tied to him. Franziska Herbst was a source of support during my stay. The nature of my fieldwork also meant that Gorokan strangers gave me much, often without knowing it: for many of them it was enough that I was there. I thank them. Those who have experienced this will know how wonderful it is. The majority immediately identified with my research and opened up to tell me all they could. I hope that my exposition here lays a foundation so that I

may answer their desires in the future. To the gamblers: *Yupela stap gut, sindaun, hamamas, o bom bai bomim yu!*

Help has come from many corners while I wrote. I have wonderful colleagues at St Andrews, particularly Chris, Fiona, Simon, and Victor. Chris Gregory has helped me in various guises since we met in Cambridge in 2011. Upon Adam's advice, in 2011 I contacted Joel Robbins of University of California San Diego and introduced myself, asking if he would sponsor me for an application to the ESRC for an Overseas Institutional Visit. From that time Joel did everything he could to assist me, finding office space while on sabbatical, putting in a word for me to present at the University of Virginia and University of Toronto, and finding a place on a panel at the American Anthropological Association of that year. Rupert Stasch was equally generous with his time and support, most notably organising a special Pacific-Amazon discussion day. Julien Clement was a great interlocutor, friend, and surf-buddy while I was there. Kathy Creely of UCSD's Melanesian Archive was instrumental in helping me to track down information from every conceivable source; it was her help that largely led to the form of my Prologue. I supplemented that research at the Cambridge University Library and Haddon Library. For similar services I would like to thank participants of the Association of Social Anthropologists of Oceania's email list (ASAONET).

I had even more good fortune when I met Steffen Dalsgaard in Manchester. He suggested I come to Aarhus as a visiting Ph.D. and secured funding for my three month visit from the Aarhus University Research Foundation, to whom I am most grateful. It was there that the first half of my thesis and a publication now under review were redrafted and infinitely improved. And in Steffen and the rest of the Aarhus posse I found great warmth and intellectual stimulation.

Versions of these chapters were presented at University of California San Diego, the University of Virginia, the University of Toronto, Cambridge University Social Anthropology Seminar series, University of St Andrews (both Departmental Senior Seminar and Centre for Amerindian Studies), and the Centre de Recherche et de Documentation sur l'Océanie (Université de Provence). These immeasurably strengthened the chapters. Three anonymous reviewers and the editor of the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute also helped tighten up a version of chapter six when it was submitted as an article. For reading and proofreading chapters in

the final days, I thank (in chapter order) Simon Pickles, Christopher Hewlett, Bronwyn Johnston, Alistair Rankin, and Chloe Nahum-Claudel.

When I was writing up I fell in love with Chloe. We share so much, and have worked to share even more. We wrote up together; she shared my lows, my application woes, and battled my language problems with me. Together we talk through our theses, ideas, politics, futures, and the best way to do spaghetti carbonara. She puts up with my unrelenting silliness, and my ever-present work-guilt. My thesis did not begin with her, but it ends as we find new frontiers.

With all this assistance, any remaining shortcomings are very much my own.

Contents

PROLOGUE	Cardography	1
	<i>Gambling: Contemporary of the Gift</i>	6
	<i>Goroka (Plus One) Gambling</i>	16
ONE	False Questions and Ethnographic Theory: Michael Makes a Bet	24
	<i>False Questions</i>	26
	<i>Michael and the Tyranny of Denomination</i>	32
	<i>Scenario One</i>	35
	<i>Scenario Two</i>	42
	<i>A 'Look' at Money and Value</i>	48
	<i>Chapter Outlines</i>	57
TWO	The Pattern Changes Changes, or How to Win at Cards	61
	<i>Thought vs. Speed: The Games</i>	67
	<i>How to Play...</i>	74
	1. Kwin – Cornering	75
	2. Bom – Think Fast	90
	<i>How to Win at Cards</i>	99
	<i>Conclusion</i>	104
THREE	Challenge: The Fastest Money in Goroka	106
	<i>Chalinj ('Challenge')</i>	110
	<i>Street Marketing as 'Logic'</i>	118
	<i>Marketing and Card Gambling, Kindred Modes of Attraction</i>	123
	<i>Produce Markets in Passing</i>	127
	<i>Kakaruk and Chuave Markets</i>	130
	<i>Chalinj Revisited</i>	136
	<i>Conclusion</i>	140

FOUR	To be a Big-Shot: ‘Big-Men’, Pokies and Money	143
	<i>‘Big-men’ and “Finance”</i>	146
	<i>A Night at the Pokies</i>	152
	<i>Big-Men & “Lesser Men”</i>	157
	<i>How to Play... Pokies</i>	162
	<i>“Financial” Winnings</i>	169
	<i>Conclusion</i>	174
FIVE	The Origin of Pooling	176
	<i>Pooling – Some Familiar Scenes</i>	179
	<i>Origins of Origin</i>	189
	<i>Pooling – State of Origin Bets</i>	193
	1. <i>Collective Bets</i>	195
	2. <i>Big Bets and Satellites</i>	202
	<i>Conclusion</i>	207
SIX	Pocket Calculator	210
	<i>A Pocketful</i>	216
	<i>Simon’s Skills</i>	224
	<i>In Each Other’s Pockets</i>	232
	<i>Conclusion: Pocketing the Difference</i>	234
APPENDIX		237
REFERENCES		243

List of Figures

0.1	Map of Goroka Town by Land Ownership	4
0.2	Instances of gambling in the ethnographic literature on Papua New Guinea	9
0.3	Instances of gambling in the ethnographic literature on the Highlands region	10
0.4	Instances of gambling in the ethnographic literature on north Eastern Highlands Province and north-east Simbu Province	11
0.5	Aerial Photograph of Goroka Town with major gambling sites	19
0.6	The brand of cards dominating the card gaming landscape of Goroka	21
1.1	A group of card gamblers and spectators in <i>Kaunsil Kem</i> settlement	34
1.2	Round 1 of betting scenario One	35
1.3	The winnings and pot after player B has won round one	36
1.4	The winnings and the pot after C has won round two	38
1.5	The winnings and the pot after player B has won round three	39
1.6	B wins round four of betting scenario one	41
1.7	Round one of betting scenario Two	42
1.8	The situation before round two of betting scenario Two	44
1.9	A <i>luk</i> where Michael does not contribute to the pot	48
2.1	Card game genealogy by Kila	71
2.2	Card game genealogy by Bosu	72
2.3	A deal of <i>kwin</i> before play begins	77
2.4	How ‘marketed’ cards are made visible to all players during play (1)	78
2.5	How ‘marketed’ cards are made visible to all players during play (2)	78
2.6	Player B’s winning hand in <i>kwin</i>	81
2.7	Diagram from M. Strathern (1988: 270)	83
2.8	A player’s <i>kona</i> in a game of <i>kwin</i> displayed as a circle of pivot relationships	84
2.9	A game of <i>bom</i> represented in the abstract	93

3.1	A typical scene in <i>Kakaruk Maket</i>	108
3.2	A game of <i>chalinj</i> at <i>Chuave Maket</i>	112
3.3	A typical arrangement of money between rounds of <i>chalinj</i>	113
3.4	Incumbent and challenger making their bets	114
3.5	Two spectators join in the betting	115
3.6	The incumbent wins the round	116
3.7	The challenger wins the round	117
3.8	A painting of <i>Kakaruk Maket</i> by local artist Simon Gende, 2009	131
3.9	A painting of <i>Kakaruk Maket</i> by local artist Tatus T. Mohupa, 2010	132
3.10	A betel nut seller displays his takings and different betel nuts he offers	134
4.1	Newspaper clipping from <i>Papua New Guinea Post-Courier</i>	143
4.2	Tom Liam relaxes in the bar area of the Bird of Paradise Pokie Lounge	153
4.3	The Bird of Paradise Pokies Lounge at opening time	154
4.4	Past/village distribution patterns according to Alwin	155
4.5	A contemporary gambling big-man's distribution at pokies according to Alwin	156
4.6	Diagram explaining basic pokie-gameplay	164
5.1	Participants at a brideprice ceremony	181
5.2	Participants discuss how to arrange gifts	183
5.3	An attempted collective bet made by a group of teenage boys	196
5.4	Bettors attempting to set up a pooled bet and coming to different totals	198
5.5	The imagined successful conclusion of the <i>TV Haus</i> collective bet	200
5.6	Two leaders involved in a large bet for a car	206
6.1	Hariet, an astute gambler	215
6.2	A formal representation of the logic of gifting with money and pockets	228

List of Tables

0.1	Gambling convictions in New Guinea for the period 1929-1940	7
0.2	Gambling convictions in New Guinea for the period 1946-1968	7
2.1	Cards with special properties and their values in <i>bom</i>	91
3.1	Activities that fell under the remit of 'work' and 'not work'	122
3.2	Breakdown of marketing practices	135
4.1	Pokie players and their status at the Lahanis Pokies Lounge	158
5.1	Pasde's Excel spread sheet of his brideprice	185

A Note on Orthography

Tok Pisin is the lingua franca of the Highlands region of Papua New Guinea. In this thesis Tok Pisin words are written in roman script and italicised. Spelling is phonetic, following convention and *The Jacaranda Dictionary and Grammar of Melanesian Pidgin* (Mihalic 1971). Translations are given in single inverted commas. For a full description see Mihalic (1971); for the purposes of this thesis one should know the following:

i is pronounced as in 'kit'; *e* as in 'met'; *u* as in 'put'; *a* as in 'fat'; *o* as in 'tot'.

There is no letter 'c' in Tok Pisin, it is replaced by *k*, which is pronounced as in the 'c' in 'cat'.

Cardography

One day mid-2009 I ambled South-westwards, away from the Town area of Goroka with my friend and later field assistant Loui, bachelor string bags slung from shoulders. We were leaving the pre-planned core of the town, whose buildings have remained largely unchanged since Papua New Guinea achieved independence in 1975. Wide roads separated double and triple story buildings: trade stores, the electricity company, food bars, banks, a bookie, and a bowling club. Those living inside enjoyed the remnants of Australian-built Public Housing, now almost all privately owned. As we made the short walk from administrative and commercial centre through a grid of permanent residences into the settlement where Loui lived, the ground under foot broke into finer and finer components, from sealed tarmac to potholed loose shingle to dusty-brown or viscous dirt. Increasingly composite roadways intermingled with refuse that had swiftly composted, leaving rich soil and little archaeology. House replaced office, street vendor displaced shop; three stories became two, two became one. The steeper slopes within the Town boundary were home to illegal and legal (both planned and unplanned) settlements, while customary and parcelled freehold land just beyond the boundary supported an assortment of local landowners, rented plots and properties as well as individual plots bought freehold. In practice it was hard to spot differences between these areas and the Town's official settlements; and I can therefore only estimate that above two thirds of residents live outside of Public Housing but within the immediate vicinity of Goroka Town.

I was well aware of another correspondence: as you took this route you saw more and more playing cards strewn over the ground, mixing as best they could into the matter. First the odd card sat in a gutter, battered, deformed, half buried with last week's mud or washed down and caught on the lips of drainage ducts. At a few houses or in some of the markets, there were pockets of card abundance, oases of gambling activity in a tarmac desert. These havens were major sites for my enquiries. Further out, large collections of playing cards were found spanning street corners or gathered around street-sellers' stalls: fifteen, thirty; smeared with

dried betel nut spittle and parched mud from the last few days; more research. Finally, in the settlements where I spent most time, amid gelatinous camel humps above the more liquid sludge, cards added a continual pictorial or patterned tinge, teaming with betel nut husks, plastic bottles and lone flip flops to hold the ground steady like a half-hearted mosaic. Some were ripped in half, acting as a relic of some past frustration; others fragmented further, shredded to cover bingo numbers and left holding the secret of their user's fortunes. I soon understood that the fast fermenting throwaways in their various concentrations told much about where we trod.

We were in Goroka, the capital of Eastern Highlands Province, the seventh largest of twenty provincial capitals in Papua New Guinea and second to Hagen in the Highlands region. Amongst other things Highlanders were known nationwide for their propensity to gamble (see maps 0.1, 0.2 and 0.3 below), outsiders citing their lust for money, rich resources, and love of giving things away (paradoxically, it seemed to me at the time), and that was why I was there. Money matters; the primary source has been coffee ever since the indigenously-led planting boom of the 1950's and 1960's, when Gorokans stunned the Australian colonisers with their ready grasp of the value of money, their industry and 'materialism'¹. At 1,573m above sea level, with maximum temperature 26°C, minimum 15°C, and little seasonal variation, the Gorokan climate is ideal for growing premium coffee. The soil profiles for this altitude tell of deep organic topsoils overlaying yellowish-brown clay, excellent physical properties and a high potential for cultivation of subsistence crops as well (Purari 2010). Fifty years or so since the planting boom, Gorokans were disappointed with their income. They coveted the promise and pain of large-scale resource extraction and the accompanying explosion of capital investment seen elsewhere. The soil was yet to yield great mineral wealth and consequently the Goroka valley that cups the town was promising without being super-productive. By contrast their coffee trees produced drudgingly, flourishing once a year sometime between March and July (at the start of the dry season), depending on the altitude. The 2000 census put urban unemployment for the Eastern Highlands at 17%². In Goroka the most frequent occupations

¹ Colonial Report by E.R. Johnson 1958 of Kamanuntina/Gafutina Census Division (on money); Colonial Report by R.D.M. Cleland 1956 of Watabung Census Division (on materialism); see also Finney 1973.

² The labour force was defined as those over ten years of age, with employment including subsistence activities (Papua New Guinea National Statistics Office 2002).

were agricultural, animal and fisheries workers (19%) and elementary occupations (23%)³. According to a survey I conducted in 2009-2010⁴ mean income was K41 a week (approximately £11 at the time), with an average of 1 wage-earner per household of 6. 70% of households marketed to supplement their income. Without the advantage of mineral wealth, it is little wonder Gorokans thought that people further up the Highlands Highway (that neglected lifeline to the region) – with their mines and forestry – could gamble for bigger money, a (morally questionable) index of carefree success.

With such a fertile base, it is perhaps unsurprising that Goroka the town (as opposed to the valley or the district) makes up a measly 19,523 (5%) of the 432,972 people in Eastern Highlands Province⁵. The rural Highlands remained for a long time a paradox of overcrowding as small-scale societies with stone-age technology go (see Sahlins 1972), yet net urban migration to Highlands towns has been modest given this latent ‘population pressure’. Good local road and aviation infrastructure by Papua New Guinean standards meant Goroka was always awash with visitors from the surrounding districts and its westerly neighbour Simbu Province. Built around an airstrip from 1941 as the first town in the Highlands, it was designated regional capital in 1945, a title now lost; during my fieldwork it was more of a stopping point between Hagen and Lae.

Colonial intervention and the establishment of a town had to contend with and alienate land from an extremely diverse population: localised groups at high density who were constantly at war with certain neighbours (see Read 1965). The fortified, palisaded and nucleated villages that predate Goroka Town were home to highly corporate groups of (principally but not exclusively) agnatically connected men, their wives, children, and men who for one reason or another decided to live uxori-locally, as well as displaced peoples from other groups who had been given leave to reside with them or had been fully incorporated⁶. They practised pig

³ Defined as simple and routine tasks which mainly require the use of hand-held tools and often some physical effort (International Labour Organisation 2012).

⁴ All statistics were collated from a series of surveys of different groups based on residential location or employment, totalling 563 households, by the aforementioned Loui Ipatu and I in 2009-2010.

⁵ Papua New Guinea National Statistics Office 2002.

⁶ Such fluid notions of corporation in the region at large led to a long debate in Melanesian anthropology (see Wagner 1974) and the rise of the term ‘cognatic’ as a mode of description. I use ‘local groups’ as a shorthand in dealing with a number of different peoples as a means to express that people self-identify

exchange, but not of the bombastic incremental kind made further up the Highlands, usually killing the pigs prior to giving⁷, and setting more store on initiation and warfare (see Read 1965; Newman 1962), contributing further to their fracturing identities.

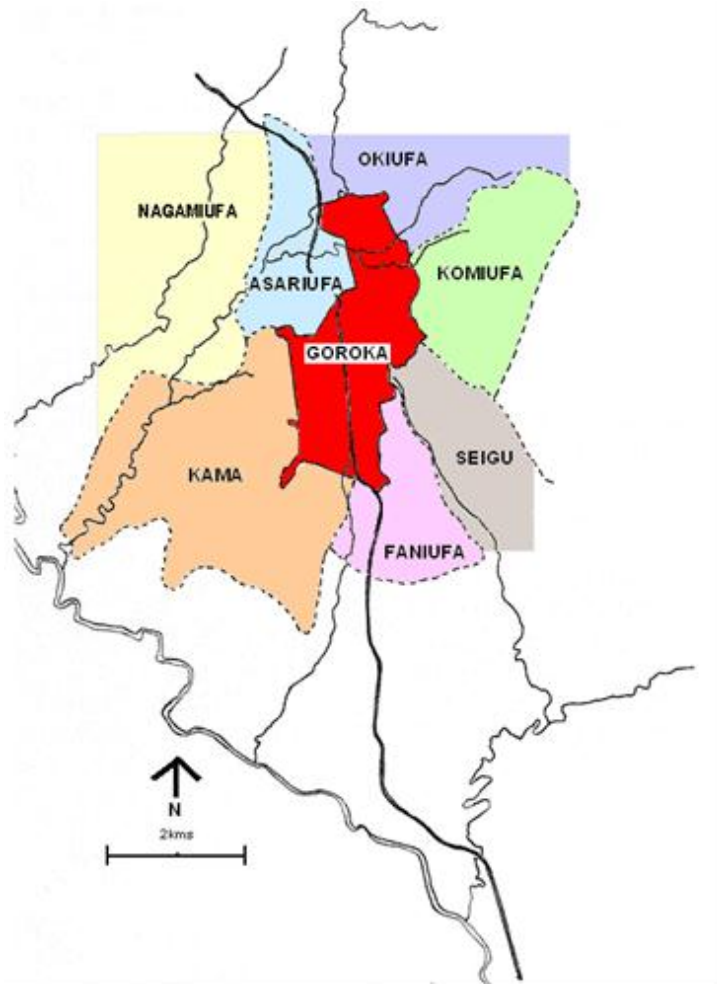


Figure 0.1: Map of Goroka Town and surrounding local ‘groups’ land ownership. The Goroka area in red was alienated from these ‘groups’ before and after World War II. The thick black line running north to south and bisecting the town represents the Okuk or Highlands Highway, the only road connecting the Highlands to the Coast and its ports, completed in the 1950’s. Source: Purari 2010.

Local people whose labour helped to make Goroka a reality, and who had previously lived primarily on ridges surrounding the valley floor, abandoned warfare and moved closer, making their claims for ancestral ownership of the tall grasslands below. The extraordinarily dense yet

with and distinguish between others at various scales, though I am conscious of the term’s shortcomings (See Wagner 1991).

⁷ See chapter five.

fractured – almost already metropolitan – population standards of the Highlands meant that even in this relatively small town diversity was intense. In a sense one could say the Highlands have always been somewhat urban. Goroka has been a meeting and unification point for social others of varying degrees of distance since its inception. Eastern Highlands urban areas⁸ are dominated by migrants (70% of all males, 67% of females), 58% of whom come from outside the province (Papua New Guinea National Statistics Office 2000). In my own survey of a range of households and employers one of the questions was to identify where respondents' households were from (allowing two locations if they identified them): 347 (62%) said Eastern Highlands (78 (14%) of whom claimed to be local land owners), 114 (20%) held they were from neighbouring Simbu Province, and other provinces together totalled 98 households (17%). Towns present a problem for some anthropologists because of their scale and the origin of their occupants (see Hannerz 1980; Amin and Thrift 2002), and Goroka is a good example of urban diversity. I have responded in this thesis by looking at gambling, an activity that belongs to Goroka and actively creates relations among participants from various locations (e.g. settlement visitors, mobile betel nut traders, coffee and fresh produce sellers). I discuss my strategy in detail below.

With activities like gambling spurring them on, patterns of group formation flourished in Goroka Town. A great many migrants assumed local landowning and proprietorship rights as they became related to one another, while alienated state land was recolonised by illegal or planned settlements creating complex webs of relatedness and more or less new social forms. Newfound mobility on the back of roads, aeroplanes, pacification and wage labour meant that residents of Goroka came from far and wide, but particularly from Simbu. For an example of innovative relation-making I was adopted by a prominent local leader who, like many, refers to himself as *Simbu blo Goroka* (lit. 'Simbu belonging to Goroka'). That people can be both from Simbu and recognise the deep obligations of belonging to Goroka, is testimony to the novel social forms developing in Twenty-first Century Highlands life⁹. My father was a big time gambler, and the history of gambling is an account of bridging transactions.

⁸ Comprised of Goroka and Eastern Highlands' second town Kainantu.

⁹ The *-blo* formation is extensible to anthropologists and mirrors the object of ethnographic study; people were concerned to make me aware of my growing England *-blo Goroka* and/or *-blo Simbu* status.

Gambling: Contemporary of the Gift

There is no evidence that gambling existed in Papua New Guinea before colonisation. The Commonwealth administration of Papua (the southern half of the country) became stridently against gambling and alcohol consumption by locals, because “neither card-playing nor drinking were native customs” (Murray 1925: 71). Penalties were sometimes severe; Section 78 of the Native Regulations stated:

Any native who plays cards for money or money’s worth, or who gambles in any way may be punished. Punishments. The first time he is caught he may be fined up to two pounds, or may be put in gaol for four months... If a man is caught gambling a second time he will get a heavier punishment. He will certainly be fined one pound or put in gaol for one month; and he may be fined as much as five pound or put in gaol for six months. (Papuan Villager 2 [March 1930]: 2-3; see Kituai 1998: 252-253)

Lieutenant Governor and Chief Judicial Officer of Papua Sir Hubert Murray’s attitude was that those who were accustomed to European ways were more inculcated than those whose crimes were consistent with customary beliefs (Dinnen 2001: 21). Their first prosecution occurred near Port Moresby in 1907¹⁰. Countermanding prohibitory action, colonial plantations, police barracks, and wage work actually acted like incubators, gambling returning with labourers and policemen to far-flung sites. Convictions in Papua rose to 104 in 1911-2¹¹, at which point war curtailed statistics gathering.

Figures began to emerge from the area that includes Goroka after Australia wrested control of New Guinea from Germany during the Great War, beginning 1929-30:

¹⁰ Commonwealth of Australia Annual Report of the Territory of Papua 1906-7.

¹¹ Commonwealth of Australia Annual Report of the Territory of Papua 1911-2.

Year	1929-30	1930-1	1931-2	1932-3	1933-4	1934-5	1935-6	1936-7	1937-8	1939-40
Convictions	2	22	11	27	19	9	5	79	256	846

Table 0.1: Gambling convictions in New Guinea for the period 1929-1940¹².

This period coincided with a progressive colonisation of New Guinea's interior. WWII interrupted the statistics once more from 1940 to 1946, after which gambling convictions continued rising:

Year	1946-7	1947-8	1948-9	1949-50	1950-1	1951-2	1953-4	1955-6	1956-7
Convictions	49	197	226	274	334	422	629	401	989
1957-8	1959-60	1960-1	1961-2	1962-3	1963-4	1964-5	1965-6	1966-7	1967-8
614	1166	1858	2018	1352	2080	2124	2216	1597	1427

Table 0.2: Gambling convictions in New Guinea for the period 1946-1968¹³.

¹² Commonwealth of Australia Report to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of the Territory of New Guinea, 1929-30; 1930-1; 1931-2; 1932-3; 1932-3; 1933-4; 1934-5; 1935-6; 1936-7; 1937-8; 1939-40.

¹³ Commonwealth of Australia Report to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of the Territory of New Guinea, 1946-7; 1947-8; 1948-9; 1949-50; 1950-1; 1951-2; 1953-4; 1955-6; 1956-7; 1957-8; 1959-60; 1960-1; 1961-2; 1962-3; 1963-4; 1964-5; 1965-6; 1966-7; 1967-8.

Maps 0.2, 0.3 and 0.4 below show first academic mention of gambling in different locations¹⁴, and in map 0.2 (in accordance with local perceptions), the reader will note the concentration of references in a central belt: the Papua New Guinea Highlands. The following maps are progressive magnifications toward Goroka, firstly of the Highlands region and then north Eastern Highlands and west Simbu provinces together.

¹⁴ For the sake of clarity, the references are confined to literary sources, and do not include colonial reports, in which references to gambling are very numerous. In addition my investigation of colonial reports largely centred on the Eastern Highlands, and would serve to over-distort the pattern that emerges from literary sources.



Figure 0.2: Instances of gambling that appear in the ethnographic literature on Papua New Guinea. Dates are for fieldwork, not publication; see Appendix for references related to these instances.

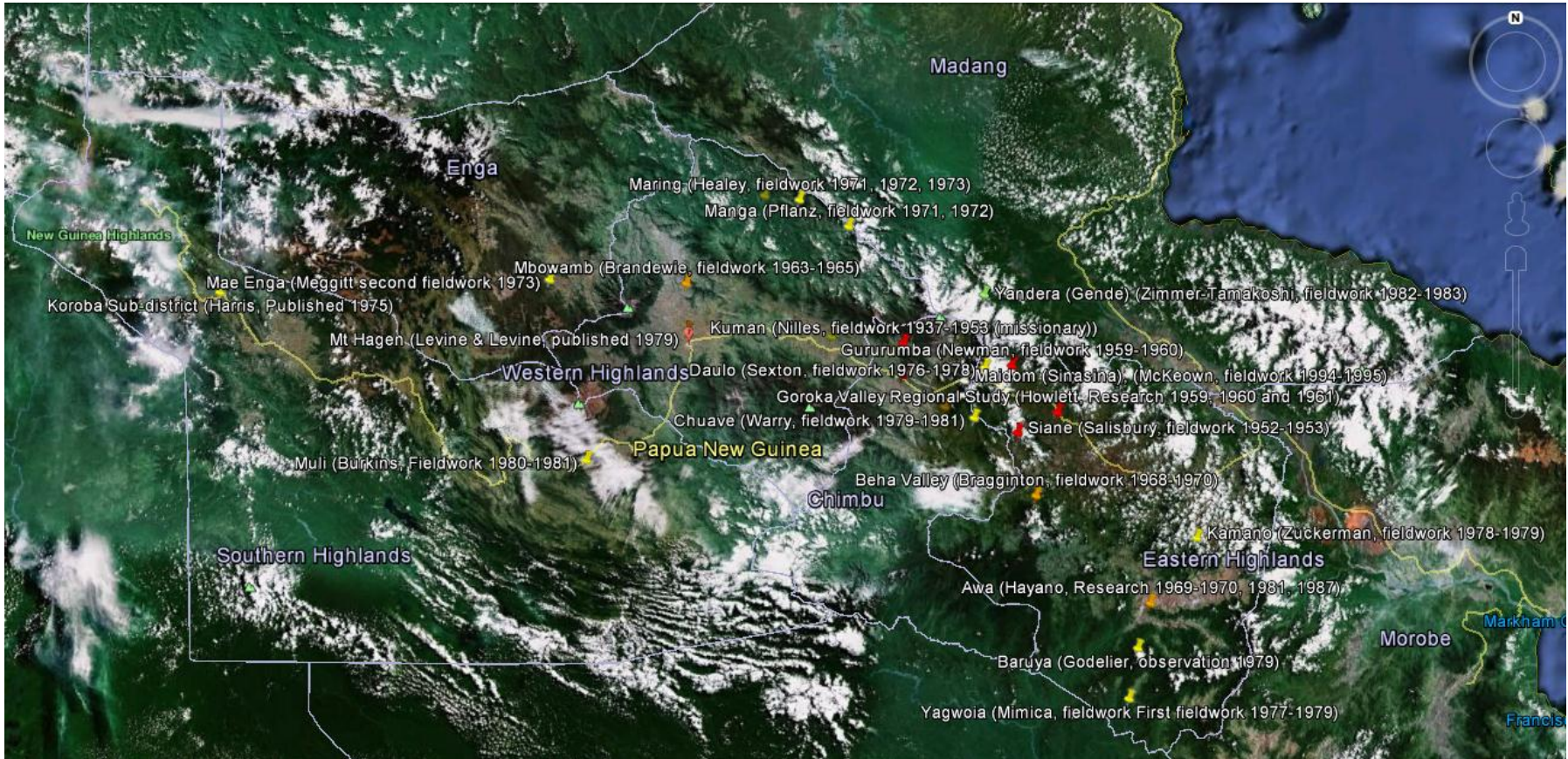


Figure 0.3: Instances of gambling that appear in the ethnographic literature on the Highlands region of Papua New Guinea. Dates are for fieldwork, not publication; see Appendix for references related to these instances.



Figure 0.4: Instances of gambling that appear in the ethnographic literature on the north Eastern Highlands Province and north-east Simbu Province. Dates are for fieldwork, not publication; see Appendix for references related to these instances.

What is remarkable given these data is that gambling was spreading at the same time as the 'efflorescence' of gift exchange (A. Strathern 1979a: 532) that helped make Melanesia a prominent region anthropologically. Such famously gift-centred peoples as the Melpa (A. Strathern 1984), Mae Enga (Meggitt 1979) and Siane (Salisbury 1962), who were experiencing extreme inflation of their 'gift-economies', also simultaneously allowed gambling to infiltrate transaction practices. This appears to present something of a paradox, where ethnographers keen on emphasising the gift-centeredness of Highland people and their resistance to 'commodification' also saw people simultaneously taking up competitive acquisition minus gifting. My informants on the other hand often cited their love of giving as a reason for profuse gambling, so the paradox only seems to exist at the level of anthropological analysis. As I shall now describe, the historical record likewise shows no evidence of qualms from Highlanders when incorporating gambling into their transactional repertoires.

The initial spread of gambling was predominantly through cards (along with dice), and for the first seventy years of gambling in Papua New Guinea, the card game called *laki* (lit. 'lucky') ruled. It infiltrated Highland life after the region was opened up as a labour frontier by the Australian colonial regime following WWII. Donald Laycock postulated that the game became nationally popular when people learnt what they called *laki* from American and/or Australian G.I.s based in Papua New Guinea during WWII, who were partial to Baccarat and/or Chemin de Fer (but their game of choice was Three Card Brag (Lepper pers. comm.), which resembles *laki* more closely than the others). Laycock floated this idea (1972: p476), probably on the assumption that the true origins of the game could never be known. Goroka had its own military presence and saw heavy bombing in 1943, suggesting that it served as a nodal point in this transmission from G.I.s to locals; yet I found no evidence to support the hypothesis because gambling makes no appearance in colonial reports of the Highlands until considerably after the military left. There is also hard evidence that coastal New Guineans were gambling with cards long before the War (see above; also Kituai 1998: 252-253).

Actually Goroka district has the most complete records for the transmission of gambling anywhere in New Guinea, partly thanks to pioneering anthropologists Kenneth Read and Richard Salisbury, both of whom worked nearby Goroka at the time of cards' invasion. Kenneth Read's first fieldwork was in 1950-52 among the Guhuku Gama, who occupy Nagamiufa and Asariufa portions of map 0.1, and own parts of what is now Goroka, including some notorious

gambling dens (see below). These peoples were among the very first to volunteer as indentured labourers, and their proximity to the emerging Town meant ready access to cards. Read recalled his exasperation in 1952 with his “boys” (those young men employed to take care of his domestic duties) playing “interminable games of cards” whenever he went out (Read 1965: 21). Gambling took only slightly longer to catch on elsewhere.

Richard Salisbury’s fieldwork on social and economic change was among Siane people of the Upper Asaro area (just a few miles North of Goroka) in 1952-53. He encountered the return of only the second crop of Siane indentured labourers from the coast. Salisbury reported that these young men had watched “more sophisticated natives playing guitars and harmonicas, gambling with cards at *laki*” (1962: 127), but makes no mention of these adventurers bringing the cards back home with them. Salisbury therefore likely captured the historical moment of transmission of new knowledge by migrant workers’ who nevertheless still lacked the materials (card, ink and sufficient money) to replicate gaming in their home communities. Responding to that lack, in 1977 (fieldwork 1967) Salisbury & Salisbury note that some Siane migrants made a living in Port Moresby by daring to illegally smuggle in cards from passing ships (1977: 227). Still, it seems unlikely that cards found their way to outlying areas by this method in the early 1950’s. Besides, gambling was illegal and cards were banned outright in August 1966, extending the bar on New Guineans possessing cards; colonial officers also had to smuggle decks of cards in their socks to avoid detection (Wilkinson pers. comm.). Very few decks were likely to have leaked out to locals outside of the Town itself - at least at first.

In my time in Goroka (2009-10) older people described how, some years after gambling became popular, they found cardboard boxes, cut them into squares and drew playing card symbols on them if they couldn’t get their hands on manufactured cards¹⁵. Homemade cards are inevitably more susceptible to manipulation, so they were a last resort. Nevertheless, these are the lengths that newly avid players went to for a game. On top of lacking the necessary materials, it seems gambling was further hampered by newly-introduced money, which had triggered an initial rampage of saving. The Trust Territory’s Treasury Department is reported to have regularly asked: “Where does all the money go in the Eastern Highlands?” (Cleland 1955: 3)¹⁶ Such was the hoarding of cash. Patrol reports from the Goroka Sub District

¹⁵ This also occurred north east of Goroka in Gende territory (Tamakoshi pers. comm.)

¹⁶ Cadet Patrol Officer R.D.M. Cleland; see also Howlett 1962.

for the following four years moan about locals sitting on their money, refusing to spend it, while petitioning for better marketing opportunities with which to obtain more (see also Howlett 1962).

After four years of familiarisation and accumulation, money surfaced when gambling was first officially documented in the Goroka sub-district on 7th February 1958. Patrol Officer Allan Cottle convicted nine Korfena people for playing, each getting two months with hard labour (Cottle 1958)¹⁷. Korfena is the name given to the grouping who owned the northwest portion of land that was alienated to build Goroka Town. One subgroup, the Asariufa (who were among Kenneth Read's informants¹⁸) own and run the three largest gambling dens in Goroka today. The ethnographic record of Gorokan gambling flowers beyond mere mention in early 1959 with Phillip Newman's work, conducted about 5 years after the return of Salisbury's gambling-frustrated labourers. When Newman conducted his doctoral research a few miles northwest of Korfena among the Gururumba, he was impressed by the "young sophisticates who have learned a card game called "Lucky" while away at work" (1962: 238; see also Howlett 1962). Newman describes vividly the zeal of young players, some of whom had become "full-time gamblers. They travel from one place to another devoting their full time to this occupation" (1962: 239). Newman observed the seed of gambling's rapid spread through the Eastern Highlands and with it new transactive possibilities. Korfena and Gururumba young men were both among the first and keenest to work on the coast, where they enjoyed novel transactions as they were paid in money for the first time, and had their first flutter. Their enthusiasm was writ large in the myriad forms and prodigious scale that gambling later took among their descendants back home.

By the early 1960's patrol officers in the region were making convictions for gambling practically every patrol, and among those indigenous groups, playing cards seemed unproblematic except when they got caught¹⁹. This seems to correlate with the second spike in

¹⁷ Ironically prisons were and are one of the major sites of gambling (see Reed 2003: 92, 105).

¹⁸ There was some fluidity in names and boundaries ascribed to 'social groups' by colonisers and anthropologists at this time, as one would expect from the group-formation practices described above and the colonial desire for rigidity.

¹⁹ E.g. Report by M.A. Lynch 1960 of Watabung Census Division; Report by P.V. Dwyer 1961 of Upper Asaro Census Division; Report by R. Allmark 1962 of Tairora Census Division.

gambling convictions beginning 1959 and levelling out from 1964 (see table 0.2). Convictions for gambling spread up through the Highlands in a westerly direction from the late 1950's through the early 1960's along the 'labour frontier', becoming common in Kundiawa in Simbu Province in 1964²⁰. Andrew Strathern found gambling a common past time in 1964 Mt Hagen (further West still), and terms like "gambling win" were in daily use by 1971 (A. Strathern 1979b: 98; see also 1979c; 1979d; 1984: 102-3). Around each government post and growing town (where indentured labourers were recruited in greater numbers), gambling appeared and then radiated swiftly. Patrol officers commonly thought that their Native Constables and interpreters played cards whenever they rested and some even trained their 'masters' (Wilkinson, pers. comm.), providing a good model for the 'full-time gamblers' to emulate. Indigenous police officers sometimes stopped gambling themselves to arrest a civilian who was playing nearby, and then simply returned to their own game after the culprit had been fined or locked up (Kituai 1998: 252; see also A. Strathern 1984: 103). In the face of an overwhelming demand to play and thus for manufactured cards which reduced the risk of cheating, later patrol and police officers turned a blind eye to their sale in retail outlets²¹.

It is an extraordinary story. Card gaming crossed deep historical divides in a short period of time, coming fast on the back of money, and spreading in the face of condemnation by colonial officials. Yet more extraordinary is the fact that widespread gambling commanded so little attention when it happened under the noses of outstanding ethnographers, their gift-centred manuscripts capturing the imagination of wider anthropology. In part this thesis is an examination of why gambling pulls off such feats. It is also an account of why gambling became an important activity for Highland peoples, while being largely unremarked upon by gift-centred ethnographies. It is clear from the many short references littering the ethnographic record²² that anthropologists generally assumed they knew what gambling was; it was a small-scale symptom of creeping commodification, usually overshadowed in their ethnographies by large scale gifting, for example:

Coffee planting has been enthusiastically adopted, and the trees are now beginning to bear. This brings in a partial money economy. The money is used for purchases from

²⁰ Report by P.H. Hardy of Kundiawa Area Study.

²¹ Peter Salmon, ex-patrol officer, pers. comm.

²² See maps 0.2, 0.3 and 0.4.

other natives and from trade stores, for gambling, occasionally to hire labour for a month or two, and, most importantly, in exchanges. (Brown & Brookfield 1959: 3)

One of these games, called “Lucky” may develop into real gambling. The game remains harmless as long as the boys, as they often do, play with sticks only. (Nilles 1953: 12)

An unestimated amount of money changes hands through gambling, and a similarly incalculable amount is simply hoarded by individuals who have no immediate use for it. Progress towards the establishment of a commercial economy cannot be achieved without fairly full and continuous circulation of money, and there is scope for greater education in this respect. (Howlett 1962: 268)

In order to tease out a more nuanced appreciation than these short references, I need to ask: what calculations and ideas cross these landscapes exactly? Does gambling remain a monolithic act when it is taken up or is it transformed? After outlining my fieldwork, I give an example of the complex forms that appropriation of gambling throws up, as an introduction to why the role of gambling cannot be taken for granted. It comes in the form of the continued and intensified preference for certain manufactured cards, and shows that gambling is one of the activities that unify Goroka, making it understandable as a single place by residents, and as a unit of analysis for anthropology.

Goroka (Plus One) Gambling

Today Goroka is Papua New Guinea’s self-confessed gambling capital: 73% of over-sixteen’s gamble; 45% play cards in their local residential area, 25% go further afield; 11% play in the vibrant but volatile betel nut markets; 4.6% play when they are in residential areas other than their own; 3.1% prefer local markets to the central betel nut markets, and 1% admit to playing secretly at work; 3.5% confess to regularly playing at the five high stakes slot machine joints

dotted around the centre of Town; 3.8% frequent the horse-racing bookies²³. There are a further four large-scale gambling events per year: the three-game State of Origin rugby league series and the Melbourne Cup horserace; all happen in Australia but excite prodigious interest in Goroka and Papua New Guinea at large. About half the townsfolk have a bet on at least one of these occasions, and luxury cars are among the prestige items rumoured to change hands. I arrived only a few months after a crackdown excised an extremely popular numbers game called *hi-lo* on the back of intense public pressure from local church groups and police. So while gambling may, or may not, involve higher stakes further up the Highlands, residents of Goroka are seen as particularly ardent players.

From April 2009 to June 2010 I lived at the National Sports Institute, on land once owned by *Kama* people, interrupted by two months renting a room from Loui's family in *Kaunsil Kem* (lit. 'Council Camp') settlement (on Faniufa land) when my work there became more intense (see figure 0.1). From there I set out daily and/or nightly to get involved in gambling activities and other aspects of town life. Gambling is still illegal in Papua New Guinea outside of betting shops and pokie joints, so I am unable to give the exact location of some gambling sites. I shall keep to the rule of only relaying publicly available information on sites and people involved in gambling. If one residential area could be called my field-site it would be *Banana Blok* (lit. 'Banana Block') settlement, a subdivision of *Kaunsil Kem*; I knew the people there best. Nonetheless gambling took me all over Goroka (see figure 0.5): there were four regular card gambling sites outside or underneath houses in the formal residential areas where they would remember me, three in West Goroka, and one high stakes card site in a more central location. I spent time with one group of colleagues who played cards in secret at their workplace. It is an open secret that gambling is rife in the two betel nut markets: *Kakaruk* (lit. 'Chicken', because it used to sell them) and *Chuave* (named after a district in Simbu Province whose inhabitants dominate sales), so there is no point in hiding it, and I enjoyed dipping in and out of these hotbeds with increasing regularity. A small amount of time was spent at or around the bookies, but the proprietors (Chinese origin professional bookmakers) were hostile to my research so I shall not report on them directly. Other people were almost always happy to talk to me and found my topic readily understandable and interesting, treating my own gambling education as an imperative that would benefit them in the future. Gambling is an emotive issue, and so

²³ All statistics here are from the aforementioned survey of households and employees. Given gambling's morally ambiguous status these figures are likely underestimates.

during my fieldwork and in the thesis I have chosen not to give my personal opinions on the moral status of gambling and to report only how Gorokans thought about gaming as vice or otherwise.

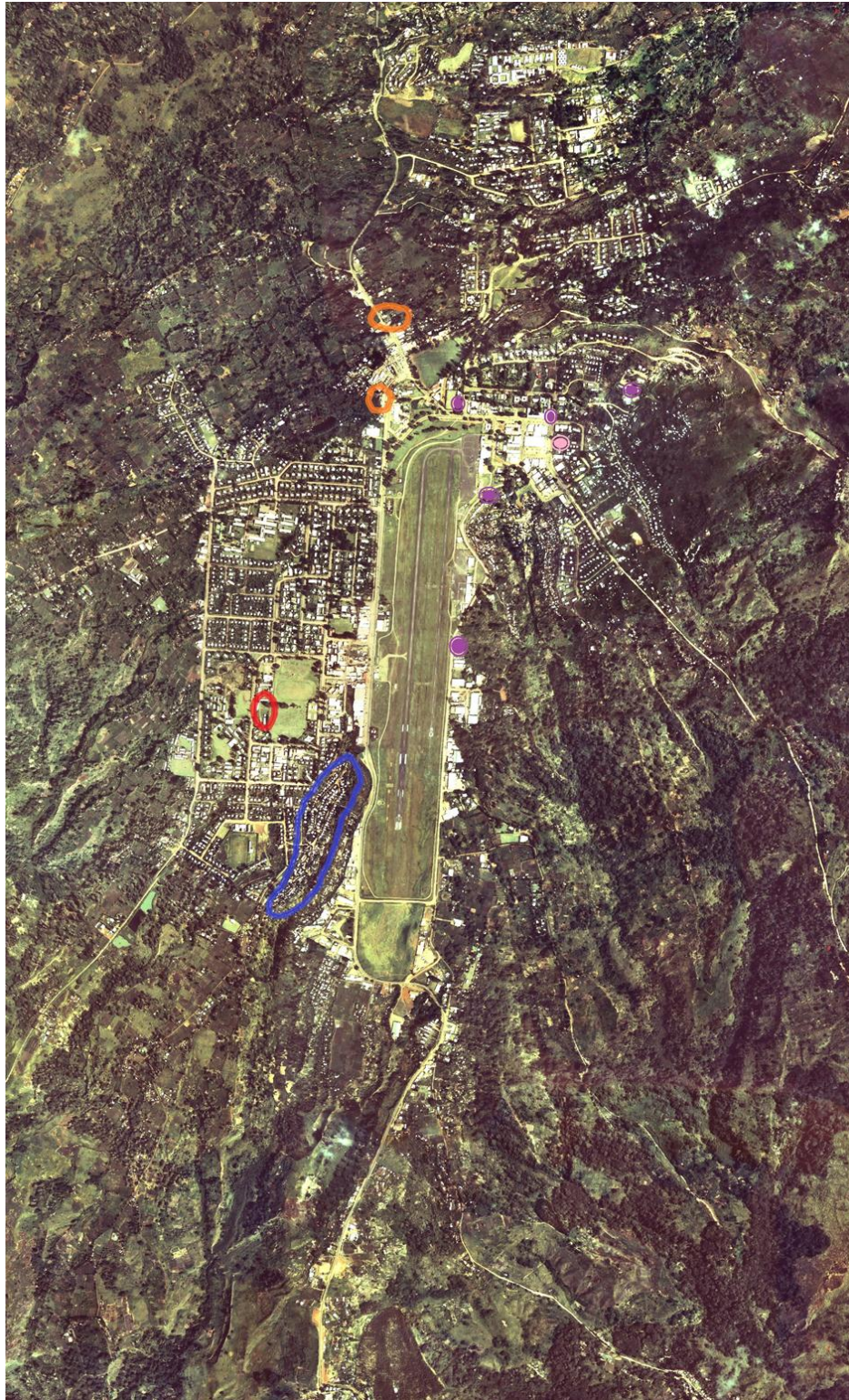


Figure 0.5: Aerial Photograph of Goroka Town (date unknown, source: Papua New Guinea National Mapping Bureau). Where I lived at the National Sports Institute is circled red. Banana Blok Settlement is bordered blue. The two betel nut markets I conducted fieldwork in are outlined in orange, Kakaruk to the south, Chuave further north. The five slot machine joints in Goroka are marked purple, and the bookies is in pink.

I gambled often and with intent to win (but a secret commitment to redistribute any winnings among losers), and found this form of pure participant observation gave me a more complete understanding of gameplay. I consumed many hours participating in night and daytime trips to various slot machine joints known locally as ‘pokies’, especially with my adopted *Simbu blo Goroka* father Tom Liam²⁴, a prominent local leader and a personality associated with pokies. I covered one full three game series of State of Origin gambling events in various locations around Goroka, and a further two games of the following series. The Melbourne Cup horse race fell only once during my time. Of course counterpoints and adjuncts to the gambling narrative were equally important, and I spent three months concentrating my attentions upon a Pentecostal church in West Goroka known as Sunrise Four-Square, and conducted forty-eight in-depth interviews with a range of people around themes much wider than gambling participation.

As a topic tailored to a particular site, my fieldwork on gambling in Goroka had the advantage of reflecting, transgressing and embodying various scales of sociality: communities of gamblers, players in a single game, an object of moral discussion, and as cause, embodiment and reflection of phenomenon. Gambling provides a frame in which people that may or may not know each other meet, compete, interact and transact. It led me to explore different geographical areas and people of diverse linguistic origins, treating gambling as a motif for relating. Like the ‘full-time gamblers’ who were driven by the prospects gambling held out for travel beyond their previous confines, I felt it propitious to relinquish the classic concern in Melanesian anthropology with the problem of bounding groups. This thesis explores what one can learn from gambling across locales that are united by their purpose, taking its cue from Roy Wagner’s (1974) ethnographically informed foregrounding of groups as a contingent product of relations. In that Goroka is a gambling capital, they are Gorokan spaces, and for the purpose of gambling the people of Goroka enforce a certain code of uniformity to enable this fluidity, a point of confluence that is perhaps comparable to the universal valuation of pigs.

Gambling as a field of relating is most apparent in my opening metaphor of strewn debris and with Loui and I as flâneurs. There was one never-changing topographic trait in the confetti of cards: the colour of their flip sides. No matter where you ambled or how many cards lay about,

²⁴ Tom Liam is a pseudonym, as are all names in the thesis that could lead to a person’s identification.

there was only one brand of cards in your hands or under your feet. They were paper cards lightly waxed; standard symbols affront, patterned blue backs centred by a silhouetted mermaid. The alien symbols on the packets revealed an origin in China, but for all intents and purposes, they could have been any cards; bought in sets of ten for around 3 Papua New Guinea Kina and 90 Toea (about £1 at the time of fieldwork) either in the markets or shops, they were sold on the street for upwards of K2 a pack. Yet a look in large shops revealed that they were not just any cards: it was possible to buy many kinds of cards – different colours, textures, materials, boxes and distinguishing features, similar prices – but no other cards made it onto the street. The roads only wore the one brand, and the ground shimmered exclusively with tiny mermaids.



Figure 0.6: The brand of cards dominating the card gaming landscape of Goroka at the time of fieldwork.

The mermaid within the spade on the packaging sits in miniature in the centre of the cards' flipsides.

Photograph taken by the author on 30/9/2009.

This brand of cards, which translates from Chinese as 'Equal Fish High Quality', was one of the cheapest available in bulk; but speculation persisted over why these cards had come to dominate the landscape. Apparently there used to be many types of card, but consensus was reached that these ones were the best, not just the cheapest. Many people professed that this brand was the best because wins go to everyone equally (*win save stap lo olgeta man*. lit. 'wins

habitually stop at every man'), whereas with other cards' wins go to only one player. Many cited the inferior material properties of other cards: some were not as glossy and thus perishable and easily marked, others were too thick. Substandard printing on the backs and fronts of yet other cards gave the savvy an advantage. The upshot for each of these properties is that people could devise tricks using them. Even worse, locally produced cards undermined people's confidence because local manufacture implied they were susceptible to control by local magic. Cards with failings like these used to be the only ones available, and could be influenced by a person with a *skin diwai* (lit. 'skin of a tree', meaning efficacious tree bark) or another magical object, who could win everyone else's money. Such negative traits made a virtue of the existing monopoly²⁵: one person said that with the current cards, "if two people like each other, these new cards will increase this as both will win, not just one".

Tricks, magic, low quality and localness were all considered together; they fell under the idea of influence-ability. As such, to be uniformly made by a distant hand gave confidence to the gamblers that their own efficacies would play out unhindered and that the materials mediating between them were equally resistant to every player. An illustrative reversal happened when I as a *wait-man* (lit. 'white-man') wanted a game. There was sometimes trepidation – despite my evident lack of skill – that if I played I would take all their money because the cards were foreign too and would consequently like me²⁶. If cards that passed through local hands were susceptible, it is no surprise there were so many cards strewn on the streets of Goroka, for fresh decks were constantly replacing those only slightly blemished in an effort to quash the possibility of interference. And little wonder they were all the same brand, for if they were different then you could not know the cards were equally trustworthy. Variable brands of cards would betray a dangerous lack of trust and mutual cooperation in a Town already packed with suspicions of the many kin and non-kin you saw around you. A uniform outsider brand suppressed the assumed differences in the efficacies of different peoples and levelled suspicions of an uneven field, therefore encouraging relations between otherwise untrustworthy others (cf. A. Strathern 1984: 102-3). In effect, gambling is a mode by which we

²⁵ The only comparable example I could find was offered in the abstract to a photograph found in Roger Keesing's field notes from one of his fieldworks in Kwaio (Solomon Islands) in the early 1960's, where he notes a deliberate indigenisation of dice in order to prevent them from being susceptible to tricks like shaving the di.

²⁶ See chapter two; also A. Strathern 1984: 103.

can understand New Guinean-ness across social groups in 2009-10 because it was a concern live in people's thoughts, forcing particular types of uniformity.

Gorokan gambling was set among great diversity but united by a Melanesian propensity to find or make relations with even the most distant stranger. Ideas of efficacy and fecundity influenced gaming and had a profound effect on who played, when, to what end, and even enforced a town-wide consensus on the appropriate material culture of gaming. As a 'unit' of analysis and a motif for relating, what other effects does gambling engender and illuminate? This thesis will explore how certain established anthropological problematics such as money and its economic value, perceptions of contingency, incommensurability of different 'cultures', social boundaries, gift/commodity distinctions and uniform calculative logics may be interrogated through an analysis of this novel motif for relating. In the process, gambling, in its flexibility, becomes a contingent game of relating that quells any ideas of potential paradox between it and gifting.

False Questions and Ethnographic Theory: Michael Makes a Bet

My ethnography begins in earnest with typical betting practices in typical card games. They may be mundane to Gorokans, but I argue that engaging with everyday transactions challenges and builds upon certain tenets of anthropological description. Three literatures stand out: first, gambling in anthropology and across disciplines; second, theories of economics, value and money; and third, Melanesian anthropology. This opening chapter breaks with convention by engaging the two topical literatures, rather than starting with an ethnographic literature review, having introduced Gorokan gambling in the prologue. I shall refer to Melanesian anthropology when necessary but deliberately avoid direct engagement until the following chapter. Pegging the thesis back to continuing Melanesianist debates on for instance the gift/commodity, or 'big-men' vs. 'great-men', would cloud the argument at this stage. The paradigm-defining theories emanating from previous ethnographies of the region demand attention, but to my mind this end would be better served by setting out the problem that gambling poses to existing trans-regional theory and afterwards seeing how it reflects and builds upon Melanesian anthropology's staple concerns. I believe the thesis' contribution to the anthropology of Melanesia will be ultimately enhanced by a certain distancing at this point in favour of using the ethnography on wider anthropological literature.

I begin with a discussion of the pertinent theories and ethnographies of gambling as a form of intellectual scene-setting. I find that a largely unquestioned reliance on probability leads anthropologists down a blind alley. In the analysis gambling theory and ethnography is revealed as a last remaining bastion of functionalism in anthropology. Without interrogating the calculations that people make, the mathematics of probability becomes a black box that sits in place of indigenous ideas, in turn affecting the types of analyses that anthropologists of gambling produce. I hope to open a theoretical space for later, more ethnographic chapters unhindered by the residual functionalism of anthropological analyses of gambling.

From identifying this imperative, I look closely at the calculations that occur in Goroka when people make bets during five player card games. These forms of calculation require an appreciation of the material properties of money because they emphasise moneys' conceptual divisibility and material indivisibility as elements in conscious redistributive strategies. I isolate two 'scenarios' for dealing with large notes during low stakes games, both of which have implications for the likelihood of success, and form part of conscious efforts to mitigate or accentuate large notes' redistributive capacities. This brings the chapter to a second literature on money and its mathematics or 'number principle' (Spengler 1926). I see Gorokan understandings of money as a play on the value of wealth items using their material properties, in part generated through gambling. Using the phenomenon of free games given to people who lose large moneys, I draw out the principles of money in Goroka further and go on to set out how my data informs or subverts the assumptions contained in areas of the money literature. Later chapters dialogue freely with the field of money as I characterise it in this chapter.

Gorokan gambling and Gorokan understandings of money force me to focus on building Gorokan principles of value rather than relying on conventional understandings of money as the supremely fungible and commensurable medium of exchange. In so doing the data brings this thesis into a relationship with what has been called the 'ontological turn', or more positively 'ethnographic theory', a movement that has gained momentum recently around the idea of using indigenous concepts as transformative devices to cross-examine not only Euro-American hegemony but anthropological categories and concepts (Henare, Holbraad & Wastell 2007; see Viveiros de Castro 2012). This sub-discipline draws significantly from ethnographies of Highland Papua New Guinea peoples (see Wagner 1974; 1986; M. Strathern 1988). Following these earlier examples, I leave aside the now popular terms 'ontology' and 'alterity', which are quickly expanding into new iterations of an all-encompassing 'culture concept'. Yet I remain broadly in favour of interrogating anthropological knowledge practices using concepts and/or practices that seem to subvert anthropology's tenets (see M. Strathern 1999: 11). I deploy Gorokan gambling *practices* (in my opinion a more plural and fitting description than 'concepts') in dialogue with both Euro-American categories of gambling, money and value, and those that occupy the Melanesian anthropological centre ground.

False Questions

Gambling in social science is often subject to statistical analyses; it is theorised in terms of 'chances', 'luck', 'probability' and the 'rational choice', which sit at least one level of abstraction removed from gameplay (e.g. Gray 2004). I argue that this approach reproduces a Levi-Straussian overemphasis on the power of mathematics to explain the true nature of social reality to the point where the people no longer seem to be needed (Mimica 1988: 155-61). The study of gambling is a stronghold of formalist theories in anthropology, where game and life are separated and forms of analysis that social anthropologists would not think appropriate to the latter are deemed fitting to the former (cf. Rizzo 2004). Actual punters and interested parties often think about their numerical chances in an entirely different way to a mathematical model of the game in question, and are seen to utilise a hybrid conception of rationality and luck during play, often as a rollercoaster of emotions that belie 'rational' decision-making (see Oldman 1974). When players are confronted with social scientific analyses in the media, they see abstracted interpretations of their behaviour and rationalised strategies for success but, under the rubric of free choice, are otherwise left to understand their likelihood of success in whatever way they see fit (cf. Schaffer, Stanton & Nelson 2006). Gamblers are in turn divided into 'fish' and 'pros' along the lines of their comprehension of abstract and mathematical knowledge about the games they play.

The pertinence of Euro-American mathematics to understanding how games operate has its own history that is intimately tied to ideas of progress. The usual historiography of mathematics is one of increasing complexity and refinement over time, in many ways the sharpest corollary to the myth of Civilisation. This is no less the case in the world of gambling. In fact mathematics and particularly probability have had an interdependent relationship with gambling which holds a mirror up to the idea of evolutionary progression (Hacking 1990). Scholarly investigation of likelihood can be traced back to ancient Greek, Chinese and Indian 'civilisations', among others, and perhaps extends beyond recorded history. It is in Europe, however, that we have seen the flowering of probability into a separate scholarly discipline

from its various applications and contexts¹. Probability stems from a mathematical approach to the (supposedly) inherent sense that in gambling the likelihood of particular outcomes is intersubjectively perceived at some point or constantly during periods of play (see Goffman 2006 [1969]). The essential tenet of probability as a theory is that at one level of mathematical abstraction, the likelihood of particular events can be calculated based upon a mathematical model (usually the law of averages if dealing with a replicable event like gambling) and therefore actions based on obtaining maximum returns or averting risk can be extracted from these likelihoods and prioritised into outcomes which are hence understood as more rational. In spirit it is not a model of causality, but a model for action based upon rules taken in lieu of a total understanding of an event's causation. For instance, it assumes a random distribution of cards because of the near impossibility of adjudging how one particular shuffle by one particular pair of hands will order the deck, and advises action based upon this assumption.

Probability Theory², first conceived to address tactical questions relating to gambling for the wealthy patrons of leading mathematicians like Cardano, Galileo and Pascal, has grown beyond its disciplinary boundaries and come to significantly influence the day-to-day lives of Euro-American people. Gambling games gave us the Laws of Probability, now applied to spheres as diverse as stock trading (see Maurer 2005) and artificial insemination (see M. Strathern 1996). Once formulated, these laws fed back again into gambling, providing the mathematical surety necessary for the sound financial underpinning of modern casinos, as well as providing the basis for risk (mis)management in the current banking system. It also made its way into our comprehension of what gambling actually is, and is taken as a model for how people apprehend the world in a risk-society (M. Douglas 1992).

Some histories of gambling, like their mathematical counterparts, unreflectively concentrate on the growth and progressive sophistication of gambling against a background of 'innate' human risk-taking in a dangerous 'winners and losers' world (see Schwartz 2006). They seem perfectly oblivious to the fact that these histories are analytically premised on the pre-existence of the very probabilistic ideas of which they are documenting the emergence. The

¹ Due to a list of imported mathematical ideas too long to be thoroughly considered here (cf. Schwartz 2006; Hacking 1990; Reith 1999).

² Taken here as a collective term including Decision Theory, Game Theory, Rational Choice Theory, among others.

foundation of such approaches, linked to the rationalist mathematical analyses that are the current vogue in gambling analysis, is that opportunity-cost decisions are taken rationally by actors in accordance with a game theory model, unless pathological gambling takes hold and distorts this rationality. Rizzo reminds us that however separated, important, institutionalised and powerful Probability Theory has become in Western daily life, these models are rationalised and enumerated versions of reality which ascribe game-like characteristics to life (Rizzo 2004). It need hardly be stated to an anthropologist that rationality, the result of Western scholasticism, is a poor guide even to the societies from which it was spawned. Indeed, case studies of gambling activities have shown that they can hold vastly different meanings for different actors (Cassidy 2002; Oldman 1974; Henslin 1967), and in different societies (Malaby 2003; Woodburn 1982). These may or may not correspond to even a part of what some see as individuals' subjective consciousness, and there is no reason to suppose they will do so in a relatively un-Westernised numerical context. After all, money and basic mathematical education pre-date a probabilistic understanding of the world by some time.

Nevertheless, probability has also underpinned anthropological understandings of gambling in what were called 'pre-' and 'proto-capitalist' societies like Papua New Guinea. Unable to break free of this particular brand of rationality in their analyses, many anthropologists persistently used statements about other societies' gambling games being 'basically chance' (In Papua New Guinea see the otherwise excellent Zimmer 1986; Hayano 1989; Goodale 1987; Maclean 1984; Levine & Levine 1979; and Laycock 1967). Just like theories of probability, these are attributes given to the games by the anthropologist and often bear no relation to the opinions which their informants have about either the game or the calculations involved (but see Mimica 2006, discussed in depth in chapter two). Since at least Malinowski's *Coral Gardens and their Magic* (1935), anthropologists of Melanesian societies have been well aware of other models of causality, but in considering gambling they still regularly refuse the possibility that their informants' considerations actually produce non-probabilistic forms of gambling. Gambling usually falls into the crack of the already known. It is particularly prone to being taken for granted because chance is thought of as, in fact, the lack of a model of causality, so social scientists do not see their own imposition. Linked to hard numbers, chance is seen as a higher, abstract form of knowledge, providing a ready-made model for intellectual understanding³.

³ See also chapter two.

The use of such statements about things being ‘basically chance’ gives the anthropologist free reign to put forth any particular theory of the workings of a larger system beyond the frame of their subjects’ own ideas, inevitably in a functionalist way. Thus the ‘magical’ abilities of players or objects is often dismissed, and games are in some instances rationalised as ‘redistributive’ (see Hayano 1989; Binde 2005), a way of evening out the unequal distribution of goods or introduced money into the traditional community, despite informants understanding of gameplay as individualistic. Laycock (1966, 1967), Mitchell (1988) and Zimmer (1986) all analysed a particular card gambling game in Papua New Guinea on the basis of it being ‘pure chance’⁴. While Mitchell and Zimmer profitably explore how players take winning and losing as an instantiation of their ability to beat each other by summoning a winning hand from their inner quality, they nevertheless hold fast to models for card gambling as redistributive systems based on the chanciness of the game⁵. Such models can be traced back to Woodburn’s (1982) classic analysis of a Hadza (African) gambling game used to distribute goods equally among persons and communities in the context of a fiercely egalitarian society. In effect, the players are mere dupes of the game. Such analyses separate gambling’s role from the perceptions of those playing, thereby denying a truly interactive relationship with gambling or an equitable engagement with any models that informants may have. This embodies the fact that probability disclaims a model of causality to the extent of denying it as a social reality, and so probability becomes the only model that truly explains, because it reveals that no explanation is sufficient.

It is precisely these interpretations that make gambling appear a paradox in a Melanesian gift-centred context, since acquisition without return sits uncomfortably beside gifts as obligation. This is a problem that Zimmer takes on with some success by focussing on the transactions surrounding gameplay (1986: 249-53; see also Zimmer 1987). Yet I find the contradiction

⁴ This game, *laki*, is no longer played in Goroka in the form described in these accounts, i.e. by large groups of players competing all at once. However *laki* has taken a new one-on-one form in certain places in Goroka, described in detail in chapter three. My later analysis could further contribute to a critique of redistributive analyses, but by this point in chapter three the alternative mode of calculation I am putting forward makes returning to this point redundant.

⁵ Assertions about redistributive benefit have been used by unscrupulous gaming companies in neighbouring Australia as justification for putting their gaming machines and casinos into Aboriginal settlements, though they are certainly very far from redistributive, taking revenue out of the community. This has become a significant policy issue (see Brady 2004).

misleading: gambling only becomes an issue because of the inescapably functionalist conclusions which result from perceiving ideas about gameplay as subservient to the laws of gaming. Couching the question in terms of mitigating gambling's effects through surrounding transactions begs the question: why use gambling in the first place, why not stick to more familiar kinds of transactions? I contend that this paradox is false because peoples' mathematic of transactions infiltrates games to the point of disrupting chance-based explanations. More attention must be given to indigenous calculations as they relate to gambling activities, and how they might have affected ideas about likelihood and value of outcomes in gambling. The meeting of different forms of enumeration in Papua New Guinean gambling activities, a space where indigenous numerical practices meet a Western inspired currency regime, together with the international material culture of gaming forms, affords an opportunity to get to grips with how one might think differently about gambling everywhere.

I observed that people were doing the work of redistribution consciously, though framed in another way. Another conception not burdened with the same ideological baggage as redistribution was at play, resulting in flows of wealth which look superficially egalitarian but are in reality highly complex articulations between persons, kin and their social others. If it is as I describe then, gambling ceases to be paradox and emerges as a Melanesian analytic using games specific to them. In this thesis I excavate the logic that goes into gambling transactions and investigate if and where Gorokans perceive any 'conflict' between gambling and what anthropologists call gifting.

It is obvious once stated that I will be better armed to comprehend Gorokan understandings of gambling via the local mathematics it uses. 'Ethnomathematic' ideas were on display constantly in the course of gambling and so it was simple to deploy an anthropological strategy that I developed during previous study: enumeration (see Pickles 2009). Enumeration, in brief, is to remain open to indigenous reckonings of calculation at all levels, taking them seriously as mathematical models for comprehension at the broadest scale possible (see Mimica 1988). Here is the starting point for an ethnographic theory of gambling in Goroka. It will only be possible to explicate this mathematic through careful ethnography, but an outline is necessary here to orient the reader. I see Gorokan enumeration as a repertoire of strategies concerned with manipulating the value of otherwise numerically commensurable wealth items for the purpose of conveying their perspectives to those they are transacting with: a "science of the

concrete” as Biersack puts it (1982: 813) in response to Levi-Strauss (1966). In order to build this ethnographic theory, I proceed by examining in detail the transactions and mathematical operations involved in gameplay and bring them into conjunction with those areas of anthropological theory they can be made to dialogue with.

Textual sequencing has prevented me from discussing the use of money, ideas about efficacy, and rules together. In actual gameplay these subtly play on one another to reveal calculative potentialities for action which are summed up succinctly in the Tok Pisin translation of my thesis title: *paten senis senis* (lit. ‘pattern changes changes’, i.e. the pattern changes and then changes the pattern). Verb reduplication is a common linguistic form in the Papua New Guinean lingua franca Tok Pisin, and to my mind it usually means that the verb turns in on itself, so it would be more accurate but less concise to translate *senis senis* as change that is subject to change, just as *luk*, ‘to look’, is duplicated in *lukluk*, which I would translate as ‘looking at’, i.e. picking out from ones field of vision⁶. This reflective idea is developed in chapter two, where the ‘pattern’ of the two dominant games is described and the process of change excavated. Building on this chapter, the phrase *paten senis senis* evokes the process by which Gorokan gambling changes itself in response to the actions of others in ways that are then recognisable and subject to interception. It incorporates betting, rules, and notions of efficacy within an evolving mathematic or pattern.

In an attempt to mitigate the problem of textual description, the next section on a single betting practice should be understood as a convenient but not exhaustive heuristic set of evidence people use to understand their likelihood of success and how to act upon it. Notions of efficacy are given full space to develop in the following chapter, as they are themselves contingent upon an understanding of the valuables in play (the bets) which must be established prior to that discussion. In fact, the way the description below is set out, it will become clear that Gorokans do not consider betting and gameplay as discrete in any way, and this description should expose the misleading nature of the tendency to separate bets from game in previous ethnographies of gambling. The practices resolve and then lead away from

⁶ For a list of reduplication of verbs in Tok Pisin see Mihalic (1971: 22-23); for a general discussion of the use of reduplication in creole languages see Kouwenberg (2003). Damon sees reduplication in the Muyuw (Milne Bay) language expressing the idea of continuous, intensified action, such that a duplicated form of the verb “see” means “knowing” or “seeing” (2002: 121).

the initial, narrow problematic I set out thus far and into another literature on the theory of money and value, which then becomes a primary point of engagement for the thesis.

Michael and the Tyranny of Denomination

I shall shortly describe, using diagrams, a characteristic situation that arises in all card games in Goroka involving more than two players. I introduce Michael, a security guard in his mid-thirties working at the National Sports Institute where I lived. Michael was my first informant and determined my early research to a great degree. While I was there, Michael received his pay every other Friday after his shift finished at nightfall, and then walked ten minutes from work to *Blak-out Siti* (lit. 'Blackout City') where he lived, a subsection of *Kaunsil Kem* (lit. 'Council Camp') settlement⁷ with his envelope full of notes. The pay packet of K180 (which was about average for a security guard) was usually given in two K50 notes, and the rest in four K20's. His money would generally run out after only a week or so, so each payday was always cause for excitement. For descriptive purposes I switch to the ethnographic present.

As an unmarried man, Michael supports the relatives he lives with. But he also likes to gamble, and on his way home Michael passes numerous groups of people playing cards in the gathering dusk. This is sometimes more than he can resist, and he is not alone; with alternate pay fortnights for state and private employees, every Friday sees people getting embroiled in card gambling. With other newly paid people milling about, the size of bets in settlements peak on Fridays at K2, K5, or sometimes K10 a round⁸.

Michael might join a game of *kwin* ('queen') or *bom* ('bomb'), each of which can have as few as three players but ideally and usually have five. The rules for these games are the province of the following chapter and the bets within them are the same. In the multiplayer games found in settlements the stake is always equal for all players⁹, so with a bet size of K2 you would

⁷ And a few houses down from Loui, see prologue.

⁸ One Pound Sterling fluctuated around 3.6 to 3.8 Papua New Guinea Kina at the time (2009-2010).

⁹ Side bets were also allowed, but do not affect the general pot. A side bet is a private bet outside of the main pot; it is set up by players or spectators on the outcome of games. Each player making a side bet must contribute the same amount, creating a second pot that excludes other players. Alternatively, some

normally have a central pot of K10 (we will see why this is only *normally* the case below). Michael's pay packet lacks the change to play K2. There is no substituting his K20 note for chips or matches; players invariably play with the real thing¹⁰, saying that they wish to *filim fos/pawa blo mani* (lit. 'feel the force/power of money'). Both these facts will be crucial to understanding what gambling is all about in Goroka. As I discuss below, Michael might prefer to play with a large note or with change in different circumstances, but change is not easily attained in the settlement in any case. This is because people are loath to reveal their money as they will then feel pressure to distribute it to those who see it¹¹; to do so while seeking change makes distribution of part of that money even harder to avoid. Michael must use a larger denomination to bet the agreed stake during this game (though perhaps he would rather not).

players participate in the side betting while others are bet on by bystanders, creating a partial reflection of the main pot including all the players except with bystanders standing in their betting place. Bystanders who bet on winners collect the profits themselves but recognise their inculcation in the play of another with compensatory acts like buying the player a cigarette or buying alcohol and then drinking it together with them. The logic involved in the following analysis applies equally to side bets.

¹⁰ I am not the only one to have observed this practice; it was noted in the Highlands as early as 1963 (Brandewie 1967).

¹¹ See chapter six.



Figure 1.1: A group of card gamblers and spectators in *Kaunsil Kem* settlement, 14.01.2010, photograph by Loui Ipatu.

There is a free place in the game; Michael crouches and puts down his K20, and the other four players know he is only betting K2 of it. Without words they acknowledge and accept Michael's bet, at which point one of two scenarios begins. Both scenarios involve quick arithmetic, showcasing Gorokan capacities for rapid calculation; it was some time before I could keep up, let alone join in the games. I devote much space to explicating the arithmetic here; using only the simplest version of what can get very complicated. When I was still struggling I remember walking with and talking to a middle aged lady called Anne one evening on her way home. I asked about gambling and she wryly said that Papua New Guinean people did not go to school, but at mathematics they are clever. That they prefer these complicated calculations to using counters testifies to their desire to play for real cash, lending shape to the maxim 'feeling the force of money', which shall become apparent as we explore the scenarios. The way in which Gorokan people reveal the power of secretions of value (denominations of money) to change the field of play, will force me to look carefully at value and money. I will show that this game is a mathematical field of flows that rely heavily on the materiality of money for their calculus.

SCENARIO ONE

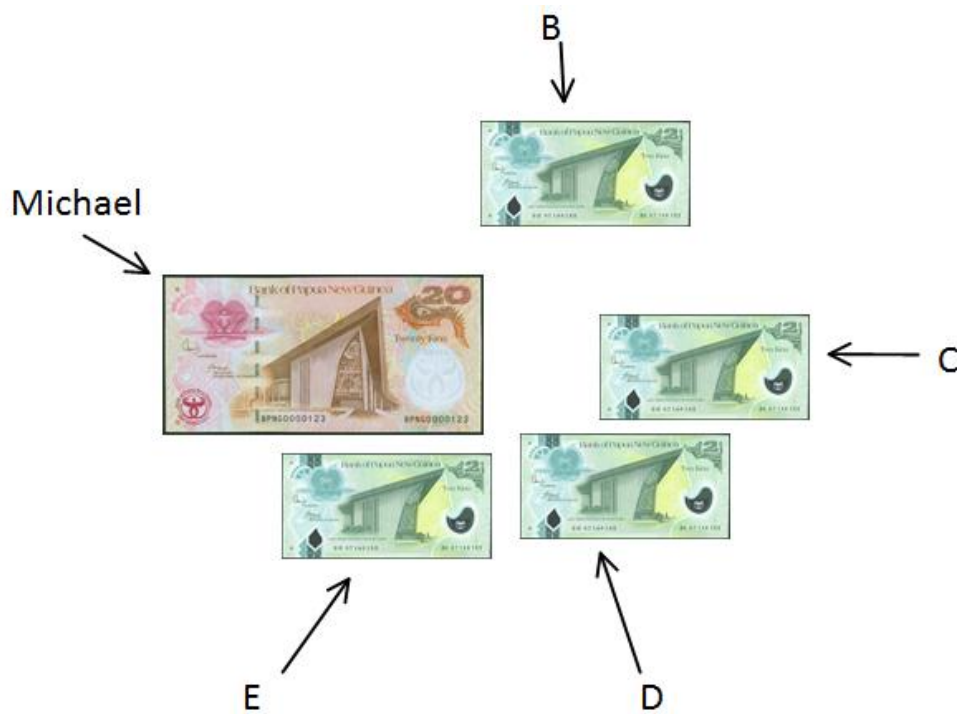


Figure 1.2: Round 1 of betting scenario One in which a K20 note is used where the agreed stake is K2 during a five player game. Michael's K20 note is in orange/pink, the green notes of other players are all K2 notes for simplicity's sake.

In scenario One (figures 1.2-1.6), Michael's bet of K2 will *stap insait* (lit. 'stop inside') the K20, K18 of which remains out of play. The bet creates a state of *lok* (lit. 'lock', to be locked in): the K20 note is stuck in the middle because the K2 inside it is 'locked' into the game, i.e. nobody owns the note completely until it is bought out. This is a means of getting beyond the classic problem that while a K20 note is substitutable for a K10 and 2xK5, or whatever, the note itself cannot be changed.

While part of it is in play, the fact remains that a K20 is not physically divided. Marilyn Strathern (1999: 96) observed that for Melpa people the ability to divide money is a particular preoccupation; they see its divisibility as an opportunity to hold something back. As we shall see, divisibility is a concern for Gorokans too, and I flag it now to say that I shall discuss divisibility with reference to M. Strathern's work in chapter two. Yet the material properties of notes were equally important. Gorokans were highly sensitive to the state of particular notes,

often refusing only partially ripped notes and even crinkled old ones (see also Stewart & A. Strathern 2002; Healey 1985; Nihill 1989; Foster 1998). People maintain a strong sense of not only the divisibility of money in terms of its numerical worth, but also the indivisibility money possesses in its sedimented forms: t10, K1, K5, K20 etc¹². When they bet Gorokans take potential divisibility but practical indivisibility as essential parameters of their mathematics of money, and as I am about to detail, act upon their interplay as a means of getting money. Playing with a K20 note is therefore more than a mathematical problem, it is a statement made in mathematical terms. All the other players acknowledge Michaels intent and put their K2 notes into the middle. B then wins the round, not only collecting K8 in K2 notes, but also taking over K2 of Michael's K20 note.

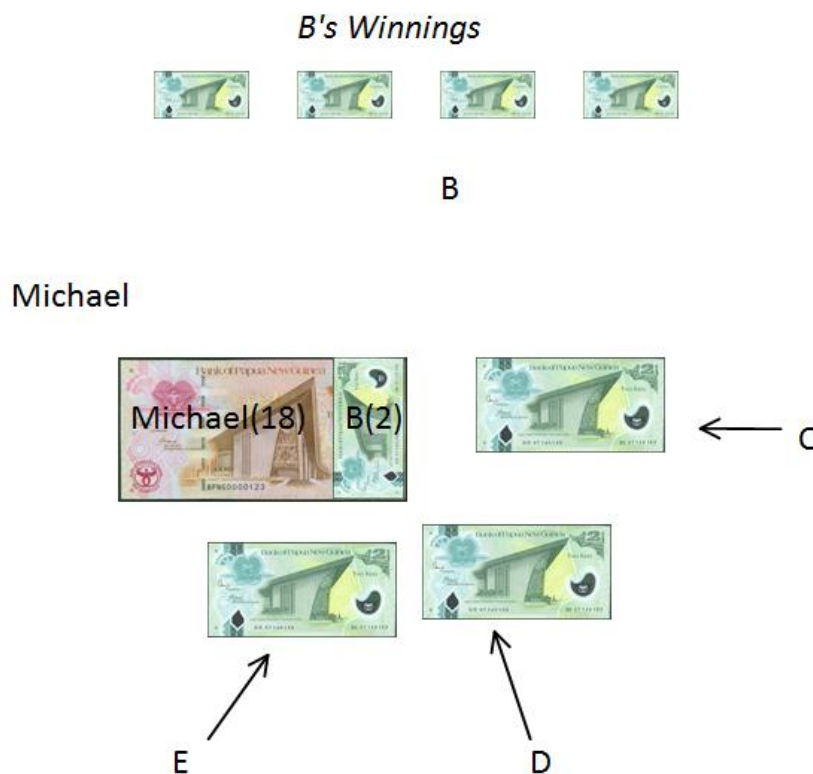


Figure 1.3: The winnings and pot after player B has won round one of the first betting scenario.

¹² To draw the contrast, in Britain the divisibility of money is heavily foregrounded in an e-banking and credit card dominated financial landscape. Money can be transferred to two decimal points of the primary currency in any quantity numerically required, and the indivisibility of denominations is usually noticed more in terms of needing correct change for machines, understood as a nuisance rather than a cause of currency fluctuation.

In figure 1.3 the next round is starting. Most of B's winnings from the last round (aside from her K2 stuck inside the K20) sit with her¹³. B uses the K2 portion of the K20 note she won as her stake in the upcoming round because it is the easiest thing to do, giving her a way out should she wish to leave after losing the round. C, D, and E draw money from their reserves, and Michael plays another K2 from within his K20 note. In effect K4 of the K20 note is now in play. Within the game players begin to feel the pull of the K20 note as it starts to swallow up the pot (see below). This, as we shall see, is one of the capacities that a large note has in a game: it pulls in others' monies every round. Player B is happy to take control over a portion of the note's capacity. Players want to gain control over large monies rather than small notes and coins, which hold far less force and are highly subject to the give and take of daily life; people dismiss these low denominations as money to give without thought¹⁴. Individual denominations are thus characterised as having different uses and capacities. The usual attitude, phrased negatively, is that big monies should go to supporting one's family, or for making statements such as showing off at slot machines (detailed in chapter four). Larger notes are less subject to being broken up, and can legitimately be refused to others because of their disproportionate value¹⁵. You could reach into your pocket and give K2 to your cigarette starved associate, but only a fool or a rich person would pull out a K20¹⁶. Phrased positively, to play with large notes is to act with the kind of brazen attitude to wealth which in turn attracts further wealth and generosity.

¹³ For the sake of clarity, players' reserve money is not shown in any of the diagrams except when it has already changed hands during the rounds described.

¹⁴ A common term for a K1 coin (which has a hole in its centre) is a 'washer'. This is a joking dismissal because it equates the highest value coin with a practically valueless piece of metal used to distribute the pressure of a nut or bolt. See also chapter six.

¹⁵ For an intriguingly comparable situation using indigenous money, see Armstrong (1924) on Rossel Island (Massim) money.

¹⁶ Acts of daily distribution and concealment through pockets is the major focus for chapter six, while the figure of the careless wealthy man is explored in chapter four.

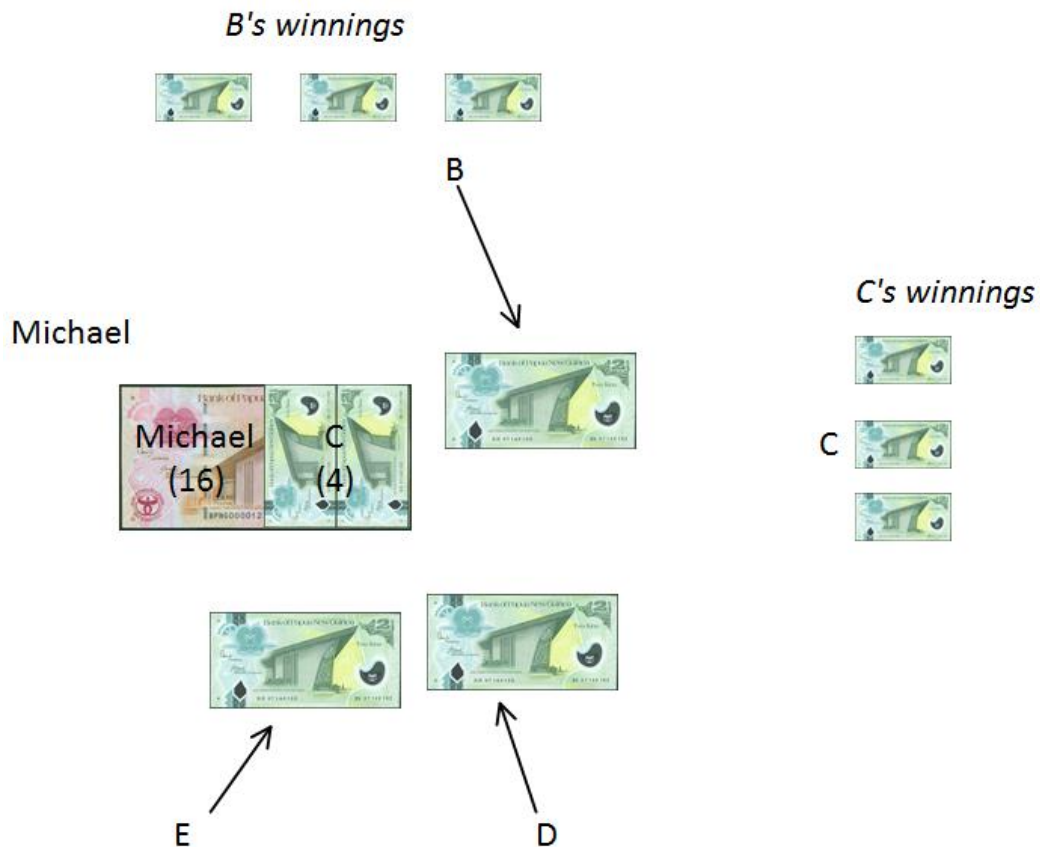


Figure 1.4: The winnings and the pot after C has won round two.

There is a different winner next round (figure 1.4): Player C claims K6 in K2 notes from the pot (his own stake, D's and E's), as well as taking control of K4 (Michael and B's stakes) from the K20 note. To begin the following round C will release K2 of the K4 he has 'locked' in the K20 note while K2 remains inside. C now owns part of the note outside the game, just like Michael, and the conflict means both parties are fused together, drawn in by this note, they are 'locked' along with their money. Meanwhile B is back to playing with some of her winnings from the previous round, and hence one of the K2 notes from her reserves in the diagram has now moved into the pot. D and E are still pumping their own money into the game. Michael is losing control of the K20 note slowly and continues to stake K2's from *hap blo em* ('his part')¹⁷.

¹⁷ The word *hap* (lit. 'half') can be used to mean any fraction, so that a player may own a *bikpela hap* (lit. 'big half') of a K20 note, say K14, or a *liklik hap* (lit. 'little half') like Michael's K2. *Hap* may also mean 'there', as in long hap (lit. 'over there', but also 'that other part of this place'). It is interesting to note that the only word used for fractions has this flexible capability.

A K20, with its capacity to make people sit up and take notice, draws players in; because of Michael's note, B, C, D and E played on when otherwise they may have left the game. But Michael will not be worried just yet. In Goroka a person who plays a large note is thought to desire a long game, as it takes time to lose this note. Neither would he want to ask other players for change, firstly because his large note is of potentially greater value and secondly for the same reason he would not ask for change before the game: he would feel pressurised to distribute it. Players with smaller reserves of money will tend to run out of money in the attempt to win the K20 note, because Michael can play on for a long time waiting for his opportunity to win the rest of his note back. This is why the player with a K20 invites a certain kind of regard, arouses certain demands and expectations. Playing your high denominations should not be done lightly; it has an irreducible impact upon the game. The other players' response to Michael is therefore also a response to his provocation. Instead of refusing the note, which they sometimes do (see below), they played for it; they took on the challenge.

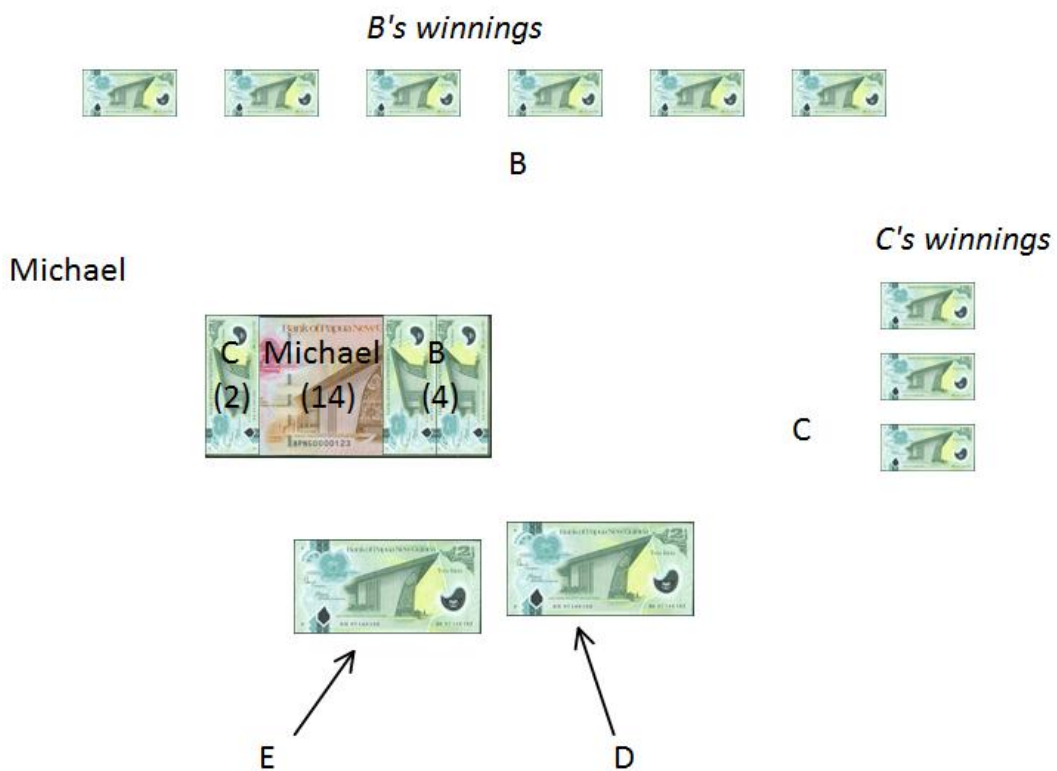


Figure 1.5: The winnings and the pot after player B has won round three of scenario one.

In round three B wins for a second time. Her winnings are mounting up, she has K4 of the K20 note along with K6 from the rest of the pot, which is added to the K6 remaining from her

previous winnings. Meanwhile C retains a K2 stake in the K20 note, and Michael has K14 in there. In the next round C will stake his remaining K2 of the note, while B does what C did last time, betting K2 of her K4 from inside the K20, while unfortunate Michael stakes yet another K2 from the K14 he still commands. This time K6 of the K20 note is in play.

B and C perhaps make a living off such games; some do so without great skill by utilising their staying power and the pulling power of denominations. While a long-time player might be statistically equally likely to lose a great deal (following the logic of a 'chance' model of gaming), in fact this possibility is mitigated by players whose reserves are small and who therefore only play for a short time, losing a couple of rounds and then leaving. Their money remains in the field of circulation for those who are still around to pick up the leavings. This works because while anthropologists usually assume that the law of averages states that in a 'pure chance' game money will be evened out across a community (e.g. Woodburn 1982), it actually implies that each player would end up with the same amount they started with, which is hardly a good model for egalitarian redistribution! Laws of probability applied to gambling in New Guinea likewise fail to take account of the capacities of denominations that I have illustrated and the comings and goings of people, which all act upon the game to confound simplistic models of chance. These matters are central for Gorokan players. As one informant from the same settlement put it, "if we do not gamble, we don't see the face of money". I take this statement to mean that gambling brings out the character of money, its capacities to pull in and act upon people¹⁸.

¹⁸ 'Face' also seems to imply the literal surface of denominations of kina, for a discussion of which see Foster (1998; 1999). The face is often seen as a display of capacities in Highland Papua New Guinea (see O'Hanlon 1989), and I therefore see no duality of meaning in this expression.

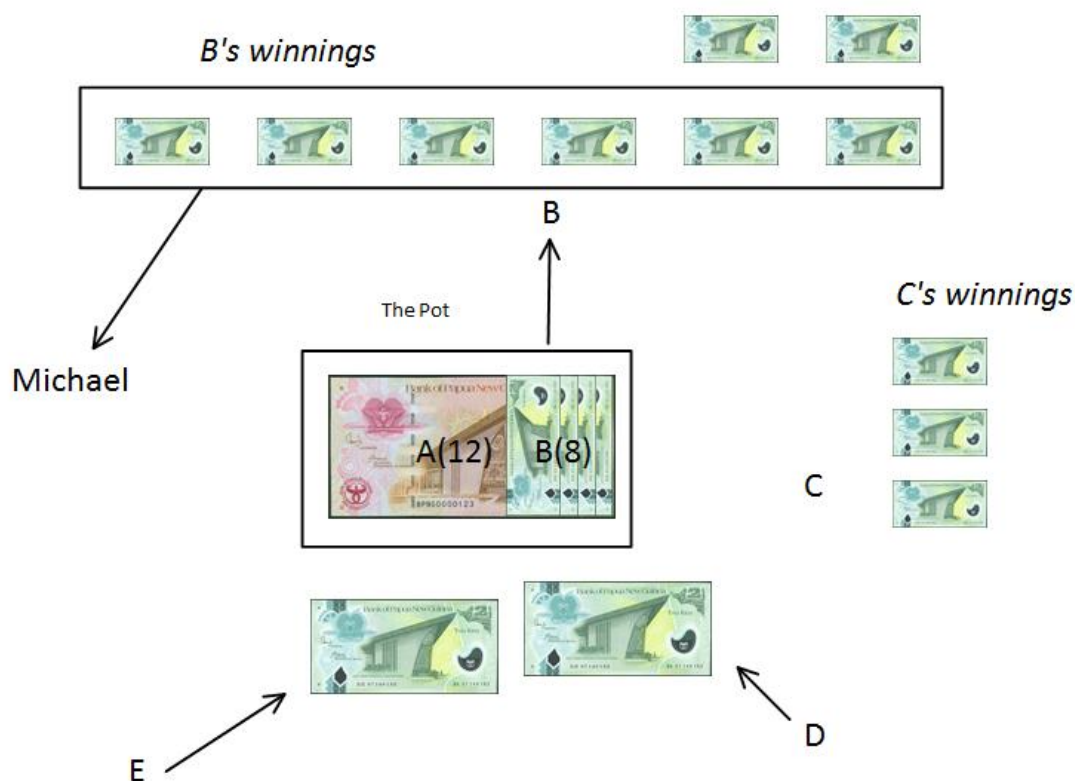


Figure 1.6: B wins round four of betting scenario one, and buys out Michael's stake in the K20 note.

After winning once again in round four, B takes C's K2 share in the K20, and another of Michael's K2 stakes, bringing her total possession of the K20 note to K8. B also takes K2 notes from both D and E. With a further K16 in K2 notes in her reserves she buys Michael out of the K20 altogether, leaving Michael with K12 in K2 notes¹⁹. He need not have accepted this buy-out, but in practice players who have lost so much of their note are unlikely to refuse because having change gives them a way out. B is sitting pretty with a K20 note which is now fully her own and K4 in K2 notes. Having only spent her original stake of K2, she has made a profit of K22. C has K6, but has spent K4 to get it, and so is only K2 up. Along with Michael, D and E each fed K8 into the game with no return; they allowed the note to change hands quickly, because they fed small sized monies into the pot. B can now use the force of this K20 note in the game, or take it elsewhere. Before considering this further I must first show how a second method for dealing with Michael's K20 note works, and what it means for there to be two options.

¹⁹ B may have preferred to keep playing without changing up the money if she decided that keeping her winnings in small change was preferable, say for instance she wanted to distribute her winnings among others, see chapters Four and Six.

SCENARIO TWO

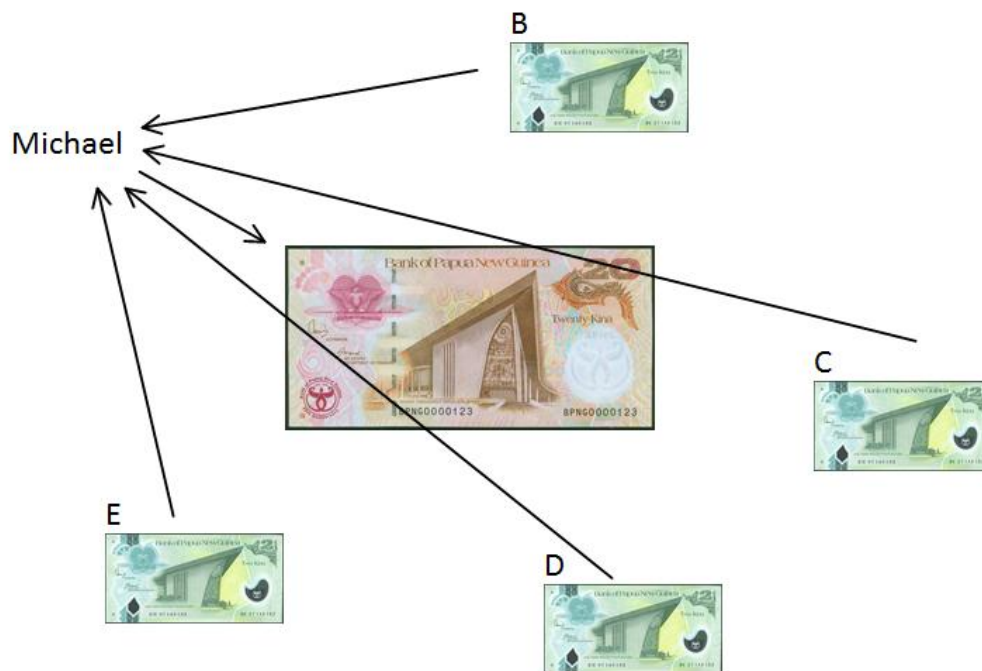


Figure 1.7: Round one of betting scenario Two in which one large K20 note is being used for the entire pot, each player giving their K2 to the K20 holder.

In simplified 'scenario Two', Michael puts his K20 into the middle, but in this case the other four players immediately give Michael their K2 stakes before playing, the full K10 pot being contained within the K20. This time when player B wins the first round, she gains control of K10 in a state of *lok* inside the K20 note, Michael has the other K10.

It is worth noting at this stage that the two 'scenarios' often come into play at different times in the one game and may even coincide. In fact the following situation could well occur soon after the previous one is resolved, because if B continues to play, she may well be required to stake the K20 note once again. I remember vividly a game where no one seemed to have the correct change, and three out of five of us in a K1 game were using larger notes: a K5, a K10 and a K20. Bets were made inside different notes at different times, and they became verbal transactions without money changing hands. After each round people were careful to clarify where everyone's money was just then. This brought up a host of everyday gambling utterances like *mi autim tu kina blo yu* (lit. 'I have ousted K2 of yours', meaning I have taken over K2 of your K5 note), *mi dinau lo yu, no ken bet* (lit. 'I have lent to you, don't bet' meaning

you are borrowing part of my note to bet, so don't put in your note (it is too large)), and *tupla blo em lus, em betim tripla nau*, (lit. 'two of this is lost, he/she bets the third now', meaning K2 from that K5 note has already left it, this is his/her third kina from it). The reader will note in the last statement that money is removed from a note and placed into the hands of another person. I have teased out two 'scenarios' which I see as building blocks for the contestation of value within money when gambling.

It appears (to us) that both scenarios One and Two refer to an identical situation, so the choice between them must be based on preferences that Gorokans have but which are not immediately apparent to us. As all the bets appear equal, and one's winnings or losses should not in theory be affected, what could be the matter of decision? What is the problem? Why is it preferable to centralise the large note in some circumstances and bet portions of it in others? Why does it not make sense for players' to keep their monies apart so each player knows what they have at any time and can better keep track of their wins and losses? Why make things more complicated? The reader will note that if we take money to be equally fungible and denominations as unimportant then this is a non-decision, but as I have thus far suggested, it becomes pertinent in a place where different denominations have non-fungible capacities.

Michael's change

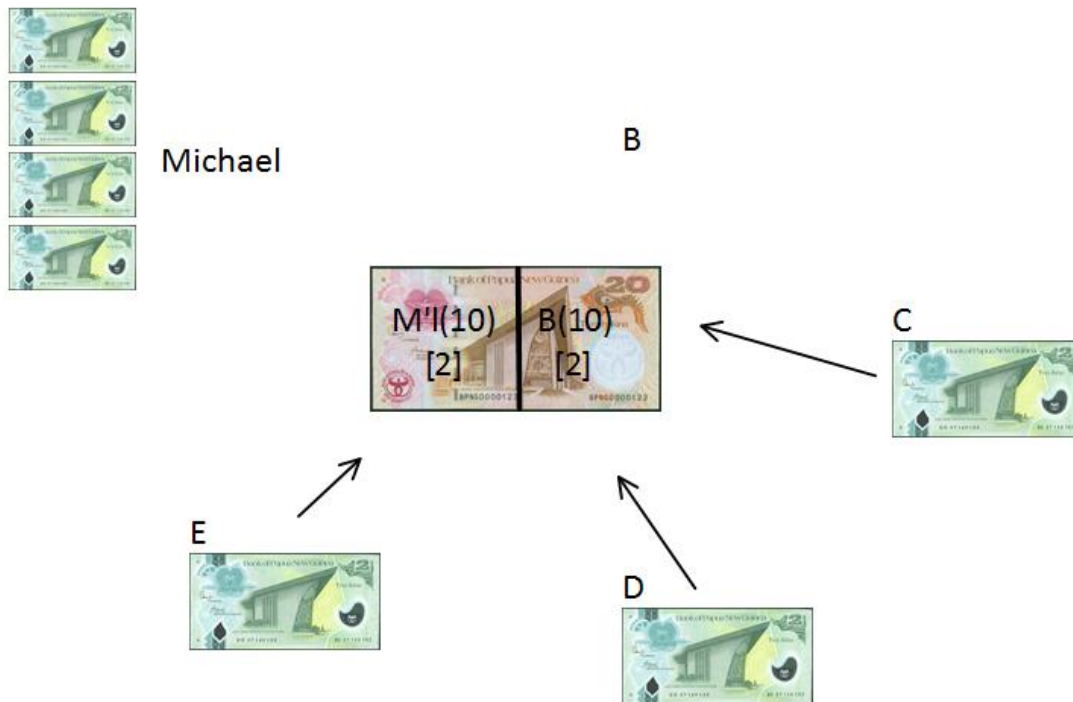


Figure 1.8: The situation before round 2 of betting scenario Two. The total amount in kina belonging to players A and B are represented in brackets; their stake in the upcoming round is represented in square brackets.

Following round one, Michael stakes another K2 from inside the K20, and K2 is also staked by B, (shown in square brackets in figure 1.8). The K20 now has K4 in the pot and K8 belonging to each of two different players but not in play. Once again the players have reached a position where they are playing for portions of a note, though this time Michael's K20 note has been collectively consumed much faster than in the first scenario. As scenario Two will play out by the same logic as scenario One from here on, with one player eventually taking over the whole of the K20 note, there is no need to take it any further. The important thing is that there is a qualitative difference for Gorokans between allowing the K20 note to be progressively incorporated into gameplay (One) and assimilating the note fully into the game as soon as possible (Two).

The size of the note and thus the discrepancy between high conceptual divisibility and low material divisibility changes the game in a very real sense, and therefore the same amount of money comprised of a single denomination on the one hand or of a few smaller denominations

on the other is both of equivalent and different value²⁰. The *weit* (lit. 'weight') of larger monies force players to adjust their strategies and goals (cf. Munn 1986: 10-11), and this allows for certain strategies, or 'scenarios'. This is not to imply that Gorokans do not recognise that two K10 notes are of equivalent monetary value to a K20 note, but the material indivisibility of that note allows different, more powerful, impressive, imperative and reciprocally attractive transactions to occur in even ostensibly identical situations. As I described in scenario One Gorokans recognise that with a large note to play for, the target for each player has effectively been hijacked by that player, so as to attract in more small monies, to up everyone's commitment. This is not necessarily desirable or undesirable, it can be phrased both positively and negatively, but it is a simple Gorokan fact: wealth attracts more wealth and competition. The difference between the scenarios represents ways of engaging with the capacities of different notes, so what do these strategies do to those capacities?

The advantage of scenario Two (where all players give their stake to the player with the large note) is that it can be used at any time in order to turn a large note which appears to imbalance the game into a single prize, rather than a complex mixture of small wins and portions of the note. Scenario Two usually happens when players want to get the play going, to heighten interest without using the K20 to attract wealth to one person in particular. As some of the note can be shared by the participants prior to play, the force of the money is less strongly associated with the player who introduces it: Michael is blame-free. This method is usually preferred if possible to scenario One among people known to one another, as the money becomes predominantly a central pot that players can attempt to attract equally, without one player having an imbalanced control or influence over it. It is more prevalent in places like settlements (where people know each other and many of them are poor) because players will feel the impact of differential wealth more acutely than elsewhere. In short, Scenario Two is a more magnanimous strategy, while scenario One is overtly aggressive, and is thus associated with public spaces and strangers. Scenario One is a strategy for players who do not entirely trust each other, and do not feel the compunction to mitigate the attractive power of their note. The two strategies are enumerative explications of mutual cooperation or

²⁰ A partial analogy would be the fetishism of displaying 'platinum' credit cards in Wall Street and the City of London in the 1980's and 1990's (see American Psycho 2000), though platinum cards cannot be taken over in the same way as K20 notes can.

antagonism using concrete wealth items, each with their own results that back up and perpetuate the presence or absence of that affection.

Michael (like many people) gets a thrill from gambling with big money, and he often wants to feel the attractive power and the buzz of his money without the associated accusations of irresponsibility. Hence larger denominations tend to be played in public places among strangers who are not able to exert pressure on players like Michael. If he had little money in low denominations Michael might prefer to gamble close to home, but he deliberately goes elsewhere on his paydays to gamble, where people don't know him and he can spend his money freely without being subject to all the demands of being known to have money. Michael is not alone in this: 25% of over 16 year olds I surveyed went outside of their local area to gamble, some but not all of whom were among the 45% who gamble in their local area. The most popular destinations for these adventurers were the central betel nut markets, taking 43% of those who go outside their communities to gamble²¹.

This time Michael joined a gambling game where he knew some of the players but not all of them, at the main entrance to the settlement and still some way from his house. Both scenarios were therefore possible, or alternatively, his denomination could have been refused altogether. Quite often I saw someone who introduced a K20 in a low-key settlement game told to go away and not to be a *bikhet* (lit. 'big head', meaning 'too big for your boots'). This would not happen in the betel nut markets. When people refuse large denominations, it is not usually because they feel lazy to do the mathematics; people complain instead that even though the bets would remain the same, if they allowed the large note then the game would become too serious.

These complications show that my simplified 'scenarios' are momentary expressions and instantiations of a constantly negotiated language of money and betting. Another instance touched on above is when two players in the game have K20 notes. At this time people usually give change to one player, as in scenario Two, and this player's note becomes the primary object of play. The other K20 note is played from progressively as in scenario One, until a solution can be found where there is only one large note in the centre. The player whose K20

²¹ See chapter three.

note becomes the pot is the insider, and the one who plays progressively from their K20 is the outsider, and adopts an overtly antagonistic style that plays up to their role.

From an analysis of betting we can see that gambling is not simply an activity in which one spends or wins money, gambling is *of* money, and money is *of* gambling in turn. Gambling is a play on the powers of moneys to extend peoples influence (cf. Munn 1986). Gambling and money form a single complex arena for a play of efficacies emanating from many sources, and subject to the control of those able to recognise and manipulate the concrete forms that these efficacies take.

In sum, gambling can be seen as an instantiation of how the attractive powers of different monies are able to work for/against people. In this case it worked against Michael, who tied up the other gamblers in his note, until their persistence wrested it from his grasp. This brings us back to the oft-given response to my asking why people gamble: 'to feel the force of money', or even 'to see the face of money'. Players get a real buzz seeing all the money going around, knowing how they or others are doing in terms of hard currency and manifesting the capacity for attraction that money brings forth when it is made visible. The logic of the bet is not just representative of, but also generative of the logic of money in Goroka. This logic becomes the paradigm that then operates when, for instance, they leave the game and put their money back in their pockets (see chapter six). It is to this logic of money that we now turn. Whereas we started by examining the inadequacies of gambling based theory and ethnography, it is necessary after seeing what gambling does in Goroka to explore theories of money and value, the new primary literature that this material speaks to. This being an introduction, I do not offer any conclusions, preferring to set out the aspects of the literature which the ethnography should inform. I do so through the free turn that follows the betting practices described heretofore. Free turns further develop the notion that gambling and the transactions of everyday life fit within a single spectrum of transaction, thereby broadening the scope of the logics I am uncovering and providing a bridge to money in its everydayness. Gambling becomes part of the everyday play of value in transaction, which allows the thesis to draw upon other areas of transaction to uncover gambling (in chapter three marketing, four leadership, and five ceremonial exchange) and vice versa.

A 'Look' at Money and Value

When Michael runs out of money, more often than not he (or anybody else for that matter) is given a *luk* (lit. 'look', a free turn) as a form of compensation²², even when playing among strangers. B, C, D, and E tacitly agree that all five players will play for the stakes of the four of them for a round, while Michael is dealt a hand without having to contribute to the pot (hence the above qualification that the pot is only *normally* K10). A player either asks for a *luk* directly, or states they have run out of money and asks implicitly. The other players merely nod to each other or the dealer²³ simply deals to all of them without saying a word. For players with only small denominations like D and E, this will occur when they have lost all their money. But a *luk* may also be given as compensation for the loss of a big note.

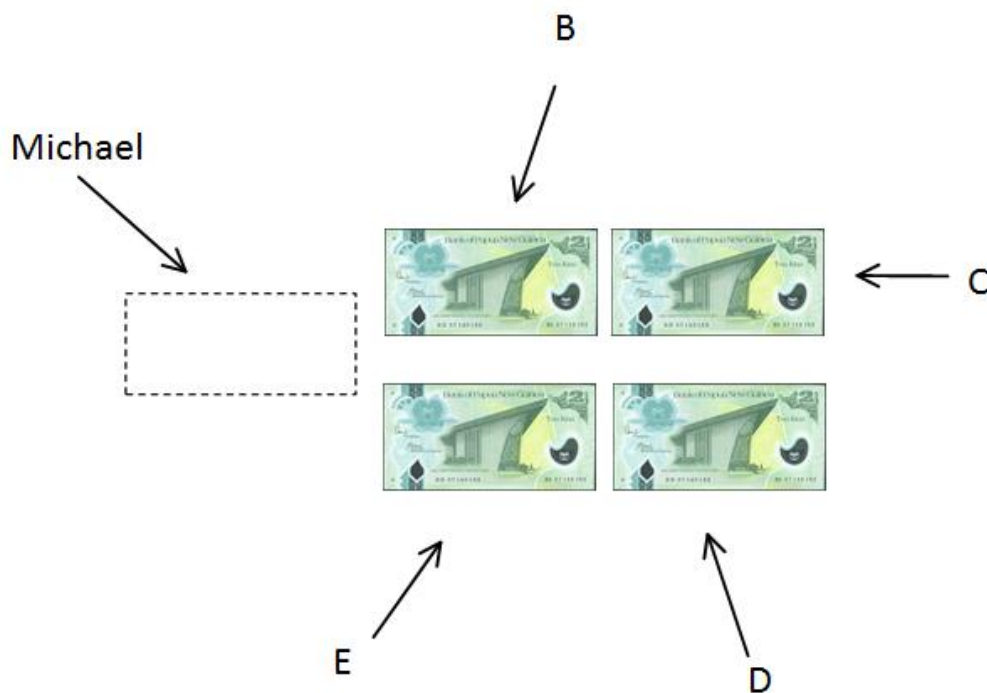


Figure 1.9: A *luk* where Michael does not contribute to the pot as compensation for losing his K20 note.

I naturally thought it must be an affront to take advantage by accepting a *luk* only to reveal you had more money all along, but after his *luk* Michael simply pulls out another note from his

²² Those making side bets on players' behalfs are not offered a *luk* because their betting is not directly involved in the central pot.

²³ In these games the dealer is always a player, see chapter two.

pocket to play the next round, and no one feels deceived or duped²⁴. The compensatory actions of others therefore add up to a literal increase in a large note's value vis-à-vis the equivalent in smaller denominations when gambling.

The compensation is manifested consciously in the game, not just in compensatory gifts outside or as a consequence of 'chance' as the existing literature on gambling in Melanesia points to. The pot changes magnitude as a result of the need to do socially well by others, while guarding against ill feeling which might lead to one's own downfall²⁵. The game becomes compensation, while the *modus operandi* for these compensatory acts is in money and an attempt to render the effect of individual monies more or less valuable. Together with the previous 'scenarios', we see one's chances of success depend on the way that people react to the money one puts into circulation as part of gambling. Having money is not just a prerequisite for playing in a given round, at which point the laws of chance take over, and then after chance has had its say then people compensate those who have lost out. Instead money interacts with the game, lending itself toward compensatory or aggressive acts which affect whether one is successful and the direction of compensation. In opposition to existing studies of gambling, Gorokans made no distinction between these acts and any formal rules. This standardised gift is only a shift in emphasis away from being a rule itself, one we must accept if we are to take games on Gorokan terms. Gambling 'rules' are responsive to social mediation; they are in dialogue with its players over their redistributive potential.

The upshot of all these transactions is that Michael's K20 note prefigures the consumption of other moneys' in compensating for its loss and anticipates its own consumption in the response the (new) owner feels obliged to make to those who have participated in its circulation. The force that money exerts in Gorokan eyes is equally visible in related forms at other locations like slot machine joints or on market stalls, at brideprice ceremonies or by the meat section in supermarkets; all settings that I shall visit during the thesis. Though not exclusive to gambling situations, gambling does have a central location in substantiating the

²⁴ A pertinent analogy here is the giving of freebies to high rollers in casino's worldwide, making for a complex relationship between profitability and amity. The contrast between them lies in casino's granting of freebies based upon abstract amounts of expenditure, whereas in Goroka this is tied to physical denomination as a form of surety that one has spent significantly.

²⁵ The repercussions of negative thoughts or ill feeling are explored in the following chapter.

capacities of individual monies: it is one of the most consistent and pervasive ways that the attractive force of money is made apparent and transparent, as my informant said, it is *the* place to see the face of money²⁶. Gambling is therefore a major analytical starting point for looking at how transactions involving money operate in Goroka, including all the kinds of relations and spheres of interaction that money touches, such as success (chapter two), marketing (chapter three), leadership (chapter four), kinship and social organisation (chapter five) and distribution (chapter six).

From my analysis of gambling transactions, I would like to suggest that for Gorokans money is fundamentally understood as a set of marked paper and metal shapes whose numerical value is set as commensurable and fungible but whose actual value is set by the situations in which moneys are separated from each other at different times and places. At these times people are able to manipulate the impact and therefore effective value of the money they encounter. Gorokans take this reality, where value is dependent on various contextual and physical attributes, as a baseline for their understanding of money (cf. Zelizer 1997). Gorokans have taken on the word 'value' (*valyu*) and recognise and manipulate shifts in 'value', involving intriguing modes of quantification that seem to actively resist a standardised value for individual moneys resulting from the control of an 'invisible hand'. Money becomes both commensurable and incommensurable. Each variation in price cannot be summed up in a mean average price. This would be a deceit. Money's value is continually distorted consciously and with a preoccupation with (in)commensurability. Gorokan people quantify in a moment of valuation. These themes shall return in different guises throughout the thesis, so it is only proper that I lay out the literature on money and value that I have been implicitly battling against, in order to state Gorokan originality in broader terms. Without suggesting hard and fast conclusions I open up areas for investigation through the course of the thesis.

Firstly, I do not feel the need to dwell too much on the introduction of money in Papua New Guinea, partly because it has been well rehearsed elsewhere (see M. Strathern 1975; Foster 1995a; 2002), and partly because in Goroka money is now the primary *modus operandi* for all transactions, gift and commodity alike. This argument was already made by Akin and J. Robbins (1999); they take money seriously as a complex arena for understanding and

²⁶ See Foster 1995a on the materiality of Papua New Guinea money. See chapter two for the relevance of the face as an index of efficaciousness.

competing in the contemporary worlds of Melanesians. However, none of the contributions to that volume come from an urban perspective, and so my standpoint differs from theirs²⁷. Furthermore, Gorokans use their own understandings of words familiar to the economist: 'profit', 'market', 'gambling', 'chance' and 'luck'. My fieldwork was thus conducted in languages (primarily Tok Pisin, a Neo-Melanesian Creole, but also in English) which use much of the vocabulary of formal economics. I must understand money as a pre-existing part of urban life for my informants. Gudeman (1986) calls for indigenously understood models of livelihood, and I recognise this *by* taking into account that Goroka's formation owes much to money and theories of formal economics. To treat indigenous livelihoods in a Papua New Guinea town seriously is to understand money as a prerequisite for urban life (cf. M. Strathern 1975). If, as the evidence seems to suggest, money has become another medium for Melanesian people to be inventively different, and it is an imaginative vehicle of inventiveness with its own forms and constraints, what then can this contribute to the burgeoning field of money-theory without assuming that money confuses an Other because it is new?

I begin a narrative of money theory with the philosopher Georg Simmel (1964 [1921]), who thought that money creates "a matter-of-fact attitude in dealing with men and with things... [as] it reduces all quality and individuality to the question: How much? All intimate emotional relations between persons are founded in their individuality, whereas in rational relations man is reckoned with like a number, like an element which is in itself indifferent" (Simmel 1964 [1921]: 411). Once in place this "automatic mechanism", as he put it, constantly gains power to the detriment of the person, alienating the self and fostering a blasé attitude. For Simmel the social forms characterising a rise of money were ones of distance, strangers, blasé and cold-hearted calculation: the "[m]odern mind has become more and more calculating. The calculative exactness of practical life which the money economy has brought about corresponds to the ideal of natural science: to transform the world into an arithmetic problem, to fix every part of the world by mathematical formulas" (ibid: 412). According to Simmel, this process of abstraction is total and inevitable; his represents the earliest iteration of the 'money as acid' point of view, in which money dissolves all social relations to numbers.

Zelizer says that to classical theorists the "mathematical character" of money filled social life with "measuring and weighting", with an "ideal of numerical calculability", which necessarily

²⁷ For an excellent national level analysis, see Foster 2002.

“blunted personal, social, and moral distinctiveness” (1997: 200, quoting Simmel 1990 [1907]: 444-445). Running counter to this tendency, Zelizer asked when “monetary transactions multiply, do they render social life cold, distant, and calculating?” (1997: 2). This straightforward question epitomises an anthropological response to economic theory. Zelizer, and other allied theorists (see Weatherford 1998; Granovetter 1985), represent a counter trend in anthropology that has as its foundational text *The Great Transformation*, by Karl Polanyi (1957) (see Gregory 1997). Polanyi was concerned with embedding the rise of economics within societal shifts, as opposed to seeing money as an agent in itself; his book became a rallying call for anthropologists. Zelizer, for example, points out that even in the economies of developed countries money is continually being reclaimed from its starting point as abstract and distant (see also Hart 2000). Yet in dealing with my material I find within these attempts at re-entanglement or re-embedding an artificial juxtaposition that reinforces Simmel’s original opposition between the ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ of money. Neither coldness nor distance is necessarily or even straightforwardly relatable to calculation. Neither is there anything necessarily abstract in calculation, or in the use of money, that then requires embedding. Images of the unemotional killer, or the taxman, or perhaps the ruthless politician are immediately brought to mind by such words as calculation, but why is it so? While authors like Shell (1995), Zelizer (1997) and Hacking (1990) are to be applauded for their re-entangling of money and mathematics with meaningful context, the initial disentanglement reinforces Simmel’s position and prevents understanding of social life from really penetrating this bastion of money-theory. Their disentanglement is not a Gorokan problem, and so what is needed is an ethnographic theory that does away with the initial dualism. The *luk* for instance is a mode of calculation with money that communicates through a play on the mathematical character of money, but at no point does money emerge from or come near the cold. My material suggests that the use of money is every bit as calculating here as among budget-slashing accountants, at the same time it is based upon a system of valuation and calculation which is not distanced and unemotional, but engaged and emotive. Indeed what is more emotionally charged, thoughtful and immediate than calculation in Goroka, and seemingly in Papua New Guinea more broadly (see for example Young 1971; Reed 2007; Munn 1986)?

To my mind these writings always seem to rest on an assumption that abstraction is the same everywhere. Abstraction in Euro-America is seen as emotional distancing or objectivity, and decisions which are based upon a desire for money prioritise an abstract mode of thought

(because money is an 'abstraction') that is by definition separated from the emotional of everyday life. The person is thought of as cold and distant, looking past the virtuous and moral at the numbers (cf. Spengler 1926; Hacking 1990; Zelizer 1997; Shell 1995). Chapter two is devoted primarily to the question of what 'abstraction' actually looks like for Gorokans, but for now it shall be enough to demonstrate that calculations with money need not be devoid of morality, emotion or whatever. Dealing with Gorokan mathematics of monetary transactions leads me to question the straightforwardness of money as a mathematical trick involving abstraction.

Bill Maurer has been exemplary in explicating these issues, his book *Mutual Life, Limited* demonstrates the morality and values imbued in certain conventional mathematical practices with money from within a subset of a modern Euro-American economy by looking at Islamic banking practices and alternative currency movements (2005). Maurer recognises the abstraction of economic thought and the perceived imperative to re-entangle it into the social as a peculiarly Euro-American phenomenon. He sees it as no surprise therefore that Simmel and many others since have been tied up in getting to the bottom of a 'truth' about real economics (Maurer 2005: 113). Whereas Simmel and Zelizer attempt to 'reveal' money and social life as in reality connected, Maurer joins Žižek (1995) and D. Nelson (1999) in confronting and further elucidating the illusion that "consists in overlooking the illusion which is structuring our real, effective [and affective] relationship to reality" (Žižek 1995: 316). Maurer draws on Nelson's point that "[p]laying detective and getting down to how the fetish 'really' works completely misses the magic act" (1999: 77). As such, Maurer opens a space for looking at indigenous meanings of money, whilst holding to the notion that there is always some kind of 'magic act' going on wherever money is in play, and that this 'magic act' is the essence of money.

Maurer's insight comes from his attention to "mathematics: not whether and how the mathematics are used, not the meanings attached to it, not its metaphorical functions - but the mathematical form... itself" (2005: 104), which he understands to be of a moral character. The ratios and calculative activities in his ethnographic material are morally charged rather than being seen as ethically empty mathematics. Maurer demonstrates that the act of calculation with numbers and over money may be a moral and virtuous act *a priori*. Maurer's compelling argument brings to the fore the morality which can infuse economic reason,

revealing different possibilities within a single system, when other analysts reproduce a fruitless dichotomy between abstract versus immanent money. Yet alternative enumerations with money remain absent from the literature, and therein lies the potential for the material I am presenting (but see Walsh 2003; Kwon 2007). Neither the *luk* nor the two scenarios offered appear to have much to do with abstraction or immanence, their enumeration relies upon a logic that conveys amity or antagonism through denomination, and it shall require an exploration of the meanings that are instantiated in these calculative choices to bring out the character of money in Goroka.

To my mind the only classical theorist of money to truly recognise its alternative potentials was the visionary Oswald Spengler, who bemoaned the lack of records of actual data on the money of other civilisations in the early Twentieth Century (1926). Spengler, whose concern was the rise and fall of great civilisations, recognised that "every Culture has its own mode of thinking in money, so also it has its proper money-symbol through which it brings to visible expression its principle of valuation in the economic field. This something, a sense-actualizing of the thought, is in importance fully the equal of the spoken, written, or drawn figures and other symbols of the mathematic" (1926: 486). While classical theorists like Simmel basically adopted Adam Smith's understanding of money as abstract mathematical marker, and later thinkers disputed how abstracted or disentangled actual dealings with money are, the mathematical precept that money is abstraction (as the x in the equation of specific values), or that abstraction is uniform, has never been wholly interrogated, with Spengler hinting at the problem. As Maurer puts it, all the questions posed by Simmel, Giddens, and others "assume that quantification necessarily involves standardization, homogenization, and universal commodification" (2005: 103). Those critical of seeing 'money as acid' like Zelizer (1997), Parry and Bloch (1989), Akin and J. Robbins (1999) among others, while making important points in their own rights, nevertheless assume "monetization goes hand in hand with calculation" (Maurer 2005: 103; see also Maurer 2006; Hart 2000), and that this calculation is of a similar character the world over. Spengler pre-empts the work of Maurer, Shell, Zelizer and Hacking, and opens possibilities for more ethnographic theories of money. I wish to show how currency can engender different thought processes without having to deny the subjects' calculative propensities. In this respect my aim takes further inspiration from Keith Hart (2000), who aims to rethink money for the twenty-first century in opposition to inequality-producing machine capitalism by tying it more closely to people (see also Gregory 1997); I see this thesis as an

attempt to document (however partially) one existent approach to money that is already people-oriented.

What if (in the spirit of Henare, Holbraad and Wastel's (2007) *Thinking Through Things*), then, we were to take seriously the immanence of valuation in money (see also Holbraad 2005; cf. Reed 2007)? What if the calculations that people make to 'distort' the value of money are the primary mathematic within Gorokan money-thought? What then would the mathematic do as opposed to generating abstract calculations and moral quandaries? What if the value of money was a variable within a logic of transaction that conveyed comparative valuations of people instead of reducing people to abstract numbers? What if the emphasis on transactions makes the logic an inharmonious, inconsistent vehicle for eliciting differences between people? People say, and I believe gambling demonstrates, that in Goroka money has the capacity to attract people as well as money to it – other capacities shall be revealed during the course of the thesis. What if we did not attribute these capacities to a world of market capitalism that causes people to get confused and mistakenly ascribe agency to money (Hart 2001), but instead saw it as a part of the character of monies themselves, as people in Goroka seem to see money's 'face'?

One of the alternative possibilities is given here within the decision to play scenario One or Two above, one being more antagonistically effective, the other generously self-effacing. The possibility of alternative paradigms depends upon foregrounding certain attributes of the relation between money's material form and enumeration (see also Holbraad 2005). In Goroka I found situational changes in value were a matter of conscious manipulation, and thus expanding on notions of value as a transformative potentiality is an overall aim for the thesis.

I use 'value' as my term for the change in relative efficacies of money because it is a word that Gorokan people often use (*valyu*) and speculate upon, asserting that this or that is of lesser/higher *valyu*, or gains/loses *valyu* at specific times and places. Statements like *i nogat valyu blo em* (lit. '[this item] has no value belonging to it'), or *insait long pokies valyu blo mani i go taunblo* (lit. 'in the slot machine [joint, the] value belonging to money goes down below') can be heard daily around Town. With such an ambiguous and potentially expansive word in English that has taken many routes in academic discourse, it is necessary lastly to define exactly what I refer to when I speak of 'value'. Is economic value just one of the multiple

values that exist in each 'culture' within its own system of reckoning? When some anthropologists talk of values (Dumont 1986; J. Robbins 2004, Sahlins 1985), they put their informants' idiosyncratic ideas into a single meta-category 'values', converting them into commensurable and equitable individual 'values' that can be ranked on a single scale. Whether this kind of thinking is useful in given contexts is open to opinion, but this semiotic approach is not relevant to my analysis of Gorokan ideas. Instead I deal solely with what people in Goroka see as value, i.e. transactable items which are (not unproblematically) comparable on a single scale and thus of a single system of valuation.

Following the Gorokan usage, this thesis takes a simple position; I treat value as a single scale of measurement where people rank items in terms of their effectiveness as against other items. For my purpose value is the comparison of one item against others which are considered comparable under the same system of valuation or scale. In order to clarify I shall lastly compare my own definition of value to Marx's labour theory of value. Marx thought that the labour – that is the proportion of the sum-total of creative energy that is for sale on a market as labour – put into any given material product is its value. Marx argued that the kind of quantification that led to an appreciation of value (conceived through the false lens of commodity fetishism) was only possible because of the emergence of a market for labour. Nevertheless, for Marx this value is not related to how people actually priced objects; it reflects a hidden but nevertheless objectifiable 'true' quantification outside of action. Graeber (2001) traces back an obsession with value as object rather than process and action to an argument between Parmenides and Heraclitus, the former arguing that there is a uniformity in the essence of existence which allows objects to be comprehensible. Heraclitus famously argued that one can never jump in the same river twice, i.e. the only enduring existence is the pattern of flow. Heraclitus lost the argument, despite coming closer to current understandings of the physical world than he could possibly have anticipated, while Parmenides won and his philosophical descendants were (ironically) responsible for the tools that made Heraclitus' position observably more accurate. Graeber argues that Marx's appreciation of creative energies in a material world as the source of value is a continuation of the Heraclitan position (Graeber 2001: 52-56), but he does not convince, I find the act of creating an abstract position from which to gain a grasp of 'true' value does not fully reflect value as creative exercise, which I argue better represents Gorokan valuation.

Returning to the ethnography in this light, I understand Michael's betting as bringing forth the fact that gameplay is not divorced from transactions in Goroka, and outcomes of games rest upon knowledge of this interplay. I argue that rather than sitting outside of statistical probabilities and the laws of chance that force their own types of analyses on the anthropology of gambling these transactions mingle with likelihood of success in a way that reaches out to ideas of money and value while influencing probabilities. These transactions are therefore better represented as spatio-temporal statements that manipulate value in order to transmit good will and contribute to the socially enhancing activities of gamblers; or signal overt acquisitive desires in a forum that recognises the transactive nature of everyday life (cf. Munn 1986). This shift in emphasis evokes the literature on transactions, efficacy and value in Melanesian anthropology.

Combining an exploration of value as spatio-temporal transformation (see Munn 1986) with M. Strathern's observations on and theory of the separation of cause and effect (1988), I hope to create a better framework for Goroka, where value is seen as an extension of agents' acts rather than the result of abstract forces collectivised into an invisible hand. If we are to take seriously a Gorokan money-thought then our points of reference in the literature should now be those of Melanesian anthropology and especially what they have to say about transactions, viewed through contemporary Gorokan gambling. It is in Melanesian anthropology and in Gorokan ideas of agency that we are likely to begin building an understanding of Gorokan methods of money-thought through gambling, and it is to this that the thesis now turns. Perhaps this regional literature would in turn benefit from the inflection of a gambling perspective.

Chapter Outlines

In this chapter I began by showing that existing literature on gambling in anthropology is largely inadequate because it relies on a Euro-American separation between games and the likelihood of success. By over relying on probability anthropologists of gambling helped to set up a false paradox between gambling and gifting when in fact shades of cooperation and overt acquisition can be seen within what would otherwise be understood as competitive gameplay without obligation. I then explored how betting practices in Goroka support a complex

language made through money by utilising the conceptual divisibility but material indivisibility inherent in denominations. This led into a discussion of theories of money and the contradiction that emerges from my material between money as a mode of immanent calculation and the assumption that money is by default abstract in character. I have argued that while calculations with money are everywhere in Goroka this does not make transactions impersonal but quite the opposite. Lastly I suggested that the proper idiom to explore the use of money in Gorokan gambling is the contingent way that Gorokan people manipulate *valyu* ('value') (cf. Gregory 1997; Munn 1986).

Many claims were made in this chapter, and I am well aware that I have bought the big picture on higher purchase. I have found this necessary to orient the reader toward the literature that the ethnography engages, and so the chapters will be organised as instalments to repay the debt of suspended disbelief, and to generate interest for the patient reader via various calculations and accounts. Chapter two begins by deploying Melanesian ethnography and analytic tropes to situate the previous analysis within a broad tradition of rendering indigenous categories analytic. By looking closely at the separation between cause and effect in Melanesian ethnography the chapter opens a space to take the reader into the heart of the most prevalent forms of gambling in Goroka, working through the rules and social settings of the two card games that dominate the scene. Looking at the idioms of gameplay and how to win, the chapter aims to dissolve the division between game and life, and to postulate a model of thought about situations of effective action which do not rely on the dichotomy of chance and skill, replaced instead by thought and speed. Notions associated with effective play like to control one's 'corner' and having effective 'ideas' are brought into dialogue with another arena for tactics: Kula exchange. Via analogy with this well documented field of competition I aim to bring out a Gorokan model of flows of wealth in life that are reproduced in a card game: the Gorokan 'invisible hand' if you will.

From this base understanding of efficacy and gaming, chapter three elaborates on the relation between street selling (*maketim*) and gambling, by looking at the more exceptional, archetypal antagonistic fast game known as *Chalinj* (lit. 'challenge'). As the apotheosis of fast games, located in the place of fastest and most impersonal transactions, the market, *Chalinj* is understood as a reproduction of Goroka's most extreme market 'logic'. The subtext to the chapter is the attribute of speed given to money across Goroka, and how this impacts upon the

value of money. More overtly, the chapter explores the minutiae of three different types of transactions in the marketing sphere in order to counter the 'barter model of value' that results from economic models (M. Strathern 1992a), instead investigating the structural relations between the three types through ethnographic accounts of what transactions are. By way of explanation, the chapter engages with Gorokan conceptions of what constitutes work, and what does not; this sets up an opposition between production (in Gorokan terms 'work'), and finance (which covers many other types of transaction, see A. Strathern 1969) that sets a foundation for the discussion of leadership in the following chapter.

Having concentrated thus far on card gambling, as the most simple, widespread and reproducible form of gambling, I open the analysis up to high stakes machine gaming in chapter four, which has a highly contrasting character. The discussion centres around this highly prevalent form of gambling, and the actions of local big-men who display vast sums compared to that available to the followers who help them travel through the dangerous and drunken town centre at night. Contrasting to the fields of efficacy at play during card games, the lack of control players have over slot machines is a crucial factor in their popularity, and contributes to the marked destruction of the value of money in these places. The chapter is concerned with the multiple sources of money available to big-men who play pokies, and their gifts between each other and followers. I argue that while "finance" and "production" may have been limiting factors in the control that big-men exerted across the Highlands (A. Strathern 1969), today many big-men all over the Highlands have access to novel forms of finance that allow them to transcend their local emphases and play the part of 'generic Highlands big-man'.

From an exploration of leaders in terms of their "finance", I move to the collection of items of value into singular entities in chapter five. I begin with a current manifestation of a classic topic in the anthropology of Melanesia – bridewealth payments, focussing narrowly on how pooling wealth is organised prior to payment. I spend the rest of the chapter inflecting this material through the collection of bets for two opposing sides during the annual State of Origin series of rugby league games. The festival atmosphere of State of Origin gives people the opportunity to collect together and oppose one another on spurious grounds (supporting Blues or Maroons), crossing kin and affinal relations. The aim is to reveal their common aesthetic as large agglomerations of money, reimagining exchanges from the perspective of pooling itself rather

than the necessities of reciprocity. I argue that the value of money is thought to be higher when it contains the efforts of many people to bring it together, exposing the simple joy of collective transaction and the value it generates. I then reflect back on previous material from the thesis and examine how other forms of gambling can be seen as variations on the theme of pooling.

Chapter six concludes the thesis while drawing on new material. I first summarise the points made during the course of previous chapters, and then draw out two areas for elaboration and synthesis. These are 1) indigenous formalisms using money and games, along with 2) the changes that seem built into these formalisms. I suggest that by looking at how people hide money – the trope that gambling battles against – we can see how a focus on formalisms built up through gambling can help us unlock other areas of Gorokan life. I focus particularly on how people display and conceal wealth upon their bodies through pockets, and how this has its own 'logic' which, like gambling, is subject to eclipse. The 'logic' of concealment and revelation engendered in pockets reiterates many of the themes of previous chapters and feeds directly back into a discussion of the materiality of money. I return to the literature on money and Melanesia, summing up how money and value are manipulated through Gorokan gambling, and how this informs our understanding of change from an indigenous perspective.

The Pattern Changes Changes, or How to Win at Cards

One of the most stimulating observations made about money in Papua New Guinea is the interest people have in its divisibility. Marilyn Strathern's informant Manga famously dwelt on how money's divisibility promoted Hagen peoples' new concern with holding part of their money back, something that seemed impossible before with indivisible live pigs or shells (1999: 96-7; see also Akin & J. Robbins 1999). Rather than shells or pigs aiding in the configuration of people into a single unit because all the interests in a shell or pig are subsumed when it is given whole, money encouraged people to think of many transactions at once. Manga thought this happened because money is much more useful than other exchange objects. That usefulness and divisibility stimulated people to think about the price of everything, and so Hageners sold what they once gave. For Manga this excess of thinking meant that money divided the mind, a familiar notion for Melanesianists (see Akin & J. Robbins 1999). M. Strathern takes this indigenous theorisation and uses it to characterise what inflation might look like within a "gift economy". Instead of price inflation, she said, in Papua New Guinea the number of exchangeables increase relative to the relations capable of absorbing them, leading to an expansion of relationships through either intensified transactions with existing relations or (by implication) increasing the number of relationships one has by spreading exchangeables broadly (M. Strathern 1999: 105-6). In either case, she says, 'relationality' (the primacy of relations) gets accelerated (ibid: 106).

Gorokan people's use of money for gambling could be one context in which people have both increased transaction and thus intensified existing relationships and (in an urban context) created an opportunity to transact with new people in a relatively safe format. In that case scenario One from chapter one being done with strangers and scenario Two with existing relations would seem to express both forms of 'relational' inflation respectively (see M. Strathern 1999; cf. 1975; 1992a). Nevertheless, this straightforward interpretation does not explain why people started to gamble in the first place, rather than use other, more familiar

modes of transaction to expand their field of relations. We thus return to the question of how gambling became popular. I intend to show that gambling reveals how 'relationality' feeds on numerically organised forms of transaction because cards have a numerical character similar to but different from money. Cards' numerical character leads the movement of money, and excites players. The relationships between cards and their movement enables a process of configuration (i.e. building a set of winning cards) that will lead one player to have control over the divisibility of money, and so gambling provides models and implications for perceiving the 'relationality' M. Strathern found transformed by money.

This chapter sets out to show that relationships are a focal point for cards, but what is meant by 'relationality' as the primacy of relationships? If gambling is part of the acceleration of how people negotiate and understand one another, then it should help us uncover how people do what M. Strathern models as 'relationality'. First I must characterise what people see as the premises for their relatedness. I begin with a simple observation: I learnt early on in my fieldwork that when walking around, the often asked 'where are you going?' (*yu go we?*), should not be answered in any definite terms, lest the enquirer be able to infer one's wealth and intentions, and thus to intercept or thwart one's aims and desires. My initial frankness was apt to make people suspicious. I was quickly advised to give statements like *mi raun tasol* (lit. 'I round that-is-all', I am just wandering about), or to say that I was carrying out the wishes of another. To my surprise, my revised utterances were not followed up with more questions about my purpose or destination. In fact, with those who hitherto had been privy to (but suspicious of) my intentions, such statements usually elicited a knowing look to the effect that I was learning. This will be very familiar to ethnographers of New Guinea, a point which J. Robbins and Rumsey (2008) bring to the fore in a recent edited collection on the 'opacity of other's minds'. In this collection, Rupert Stasch argues that "Melanesian sensitivity about not presuming to know other's minds is intertwined with sensitivity about not presuming to impinge on other's self-determination" (2008: 443). When Gorokans say that they cannot conclusively know what others are thinking, they often state that the only real knowledge lies in what people do, and the many people who escorted me eagerly to find out what I was doing certainly support this claim¹. A great positive stereotype Gorokans like to make about Highlanders is that they are *aksin lain* (lit. 'action line'), meaning they are doers, they will not

¹ Reed (2011) rightly points out that being attuned to actions rather than speech entails a retrospective orientation or judgement of events.

say one thing and do another, so their intentions are overt. A countervailing critique was that people *tok tasol* (lit. 'talk is-all'). Action is paradigmatically associated with gifts and transactions, because these are solid gestures that (whatever people's motives) can be responded to as such. When they are not ready to act, the Gorokan subject finds themselves muddled (feeling *fifti-fifti* (lit. '50:50') or *tu bel* (lit. 'two stomachs')), until they resolve upon an action². Such a muddle can be caused by another, because inaccessible thoughts are wont to travel, and they can infiltrate the mind of the subject (see below). When people do act, they assume that action to have resulted from collapsing the multiple thoughts going on within them (their own and others) into a single course of action (cf. Reed 2011).

In *Gender of the Gift* Marilyn Strathern makes much of a related observation: in Melanesia people tend not to understand themselves as the cause of their own actions. According to her model, each person can only know his/her actions in reference to another person who coerced them into these acts. At the same time the relation between them and the other which they are acting in reference to is of a given kind (say husband and wife) because of other relations that position the two as such (in this case affines). In M. Strathern's example the wife who grows food for the man because she is married to him does so by virtue of her relations to her natal kin, which made her a marriageable other for the husband. This, she argues, is the assumed basis for all social action. Participants are only able to make themselves apparent through the web of relations that define them³, and are therefore 'relational'. M. Strathern puts it thus:

"The agent's position is thus a multiple one, constituted in the different directions in which he or she is faced, but his or her consequent acts are singular. Each act is 'one' act. This last perception is *the single* most significant metaphysical basis for the understanding of Melanesian relations" (1988: 274, emphasis added).

Imagine an occurrence as perceived by a participant in which they have acted. They have assumed that another or others have caused them to act, and whether they resolved to do so with the person/people in mind or the person/people coerced them without their conscious

² See chapter six.

³ There is another form of collectivity, the unity of groups, which is an achieved state for M. Strathern, but this shall be a major focus for chapter five. It shall cause no harm if left until this time.

knowledge, an effect has occurred. This for M. Strathern is the fundamental or ontological state of being for a person, and the source of wonder for Melanesians is over which single course of action occurred and which other(s) inculcated them to perform that action. This is also the point at which the actor can exercise agency. Their agency lies in *how* they chose to make a single event occur in reference to particular others when multiple relations could have acted as the starting point. Meanwhile the person/people who emerged as the starting point are attributed with the initiating agency, because they won out over other potential starting points.

Evidence for this radical re-evaluation of causality, essentially splitting it in two, should be visible in an activity like gambling, if only because gambling is a theatre for effects (wins and losses) whose causes are deliberately contingent on others. If M. Strathern's influential ideas rest upon an understanding of the relationship between cause and effect in Melanesia, then how people think they win should be of interest to Melanesian anthropology just as it is to gamblers. The inverse should also hold true, that what gamblers have to say about cause and effect should give food for thought to Melanesian anthropology. Hence *how* people perceive winnings and losses coming about is the focal point of the chapter.

Although, as M. Strathern emphasises, in a given exchange one may foreground a given relation, the receiver and observers are never wholly sure that it was this relation that was truly evinced and what exactly that gift is truly intended to act as cause to in the future. In fact a close inspection quickly destroys any notion of objective truth in any guise. If all one knows of the other is speculative, and only possible through acts of transaction, then it makes a good deal of sense to increase those transactions if you want to know people better (cf. Minnegal 2009). In other words the lack of knowledge of others' minds and their intentions is a prerequisite for playing cards. Playing cards is a vehicle for the knowledge of both self and other, founded upon the basic assumed un-knowability of minds outside of concrete action and evidence. Gambling seems to offer empirical data of concrete action involving wealth items⁵. In a game of cards, as we shall see, people are concerned with this visibility, bringing interpretations of relations out systemically. Gambling is useful in this regard as it is a set of changing patterns with unreliable signs leading to definite gains which are nevertheless not entirely reducible to a given intention.

Mimica (2006), briefly mentioned in chapter one, dealt with Yagwoia (in the Highlands Fringe south of Goroka) gambling in a manner particularly sensitive to local understandings of causality. It will be useful to consider this article now. Mimica notes that winning at the card game *laki* (lit. 'lucky') is often associated with acting upon dreams. These dreams offer the possibility of success in a variety of fields, whose interpretation is the responsibility of the dreamer (see also J. Weiner 1991). Dreams of unending fertility symbolise an opportunity to succeed in hunting, gambling, prospecting or sexual liaison, which must be correctly interpreted in order to become potent. The force behind these dreams comes from spirits or ancestors, but their correct reading is a mark of the actor's abilities. Therefore the content of dreams are kept secret except amongst a small group in order to maintain their potency and guard the reputation of their interpreter should he/she make the wrong choice (cf. Reed 1997). Mimica's article can be read as a process of interpreting relations with supernatural others as a standardised entry point for assessing the efficacy of the self. As an important exception to the main thread in gambling literature, the article posits a nexus of possibilities that negate luck or odds as an explanatory framework, suggesting a more complex understanding than the nullification of responsibility espoused in probabilistic understandings of gambling (see also Trompf 1994: 387-388; chapter one).

Yet Mimica's interpretation remains divorced from what I consider crucial: the mechanics of gaming. Instead he concentrates on a single aspect of the efficacy-divining process, that of dreams. The games remain one-dimensional testing grounds for evidencing their action. In fact one could have substituted the incredibly simple card game *laki* they play (see chapter 3) with the internationally acclaimed brain-busting game chess, or math-centric Blackjack, or steady-handed pool, and it would not change the ethnography. Clearly there is something missing here. In Goroka dreams were only one of the possible portents of success for gambling, and relations with human others played a much larger part in gaming than Mimica relayed. Crucially, as we shall see below, in Goroka gambling was its own portent: success breeds success, you might say.

Among Gorokans, like the Yagwoia, luck (*laki*) is part of daily conversation. It will be a useful segue into efficacy as they see it. The word does not only denote a card game, its use also covers fortuitous occurrences, as in English. Lest the reader assume it is a direct translation of

the English term, I must describe it before proceeding. Gorokans use *laki* in a conceptual sense (see also Mosko 2012, forthcoming), usually defined thus:

“Luck comes up when you use your mind, when your brain is right, then you will be lucky, if your brain is wrong, you will lose.” (Richard, 35, brought up in Goroka and tracing ancestry from Simbu).

As Mimica reported, *laki* left possible cause open, not dismissing happenings to probabilistic likelihood. ‘Luck’ the word had little meaning beyond things going right, and this had nothing to do with how those events came about; asking people what *laki* meant did not prompt them to think causally. I then started asking gamblers to divulge tactics instead, and people talked causally of their own, extremely personal *aidia* (lit. ‘idea’), which they utilise during play (see Pickles forthcoming).

In what follows people’s *aidia*, which they emphatically attribute to themselves, can be seen as the *how* that M. Strathern sees as the locus of agency. It is so *because* Gorokans think that their relationships with others must be in a reasonable state to avoid others mentally interfering with their play. People often articulated to me that the thoughts of others, especially negative thoughts (whether or not one knows about them), can enter your body and ruin your own thinking, effectively sabotaging your chances at cards. And yet, all being well with these relationships, players may make use of their *aidia* to configure relationships between cards and other players and achieve victory. As they do so they innovate upon the base of ‘relationality’ and aspire to an understanding of the *paten* (lit. ‘pattern’⁴) of relationships through which they effect a new outcome (a win).

The below description and characterisation of how people choose to make relationships appear provides scope for uncovering a Melanesian process of self-conscious social change. How relationships are interpreted and made apparent seems to offer people opportunities to think through and theorise new configurations for relationships that precludes arguments about the encroachment of individualism or money as social acid critiqued in the previous chapter (see also chapter three). Likewise M. Strathern’s *how* crucially allows for social change

⁴ The word *paten* has to my knowledge completely replaced the work *makmak* (lit. ‘mark-mark’) to mean pattern in Goroka.

in a way which has been overlooked among those who draw clear divides between proponents of a strict ethnographic continuity of M. Strathern's (e.g. 1988; 1999) theories (usually paired with Roy Wagner's (e.g. 1978; 1986) theories) on the one hand and the 'reality' of contemporary and historical Melanesia post European encroachment (see Josephides 1991; Foster 1995b).

Two social forms are exposed during the course of uncovering the *how* of gambling. One is the *kona man*, the person who is able to dominate others by appreciating the flow of cards in a game. Second is the *paten* (lit. 'pattern'): the mode by which evidence to build one's *aidia* (ideas) are made pertinent. I find that far from a functionalist appreciation of gambling that makes the abstract impersonal and the province of Us as analysts, we can see a Gorokan vision of patterning as a kind of abstraction, allowing both constructs of abstraction (Gorokan pattern and Our deliberately impersonal modelling) to illuminate each other.

In looking at how people perceive routes to success in gambling, I find a running analogy not with gambling games elsewhere but with another great Melanesian competition, the Kula⁵. I am not so much interested in revealing gambling as somehow Kula-like⁶, but rather to reveal that both encourage people to think in terms of patterns and tactics (see Munn 1986; A. Weiner 1992; Damon 2002; Campbell 2002). In the process we will see that gambling is an indigenous analytic device that is good to think with. The point shall be to see how far the social forms of gambling can be said to direct other social forms. In other words, how much of life in Goroka is game-like? Much of this strategy has its origins in the theoretical leaps made by Melanesianist anthropology in the 1970's, 80's and 90's (Wagner 1974; 1991; M. Strathern 1988; 1992a) in its attempt to render indigenous categories analytic (see Toren 1999; Josephides 1991; chapter one). The chapter attempts to follow the spirit of this anthropology.

Thought vs. Speed: The Games

⁵ The analogy was first brought to my attention by Roy Wagner and Frederick Damon after I gave a shortened, early version of this chapter as a paper at the University of Virginia in November 2011.

⁶ Or indeed gambling as kin-like, exchange-like, relational, ritualistic, or an iteration of myth; which is not to say that those comparisons do not hold a grain of truth.

Two card games dominated the residential landscape of Goroka in 2009-10: *kwin* ('queen') and *bom* ('bomb'). All of the habitual gamblers across Goroka (1.9 per household according to my survey) were familiar with both games, but the innovation of new games is continuous and rapid, so it would be wrong to characterise both together as representing a holistic model for Gorokan sociality. *Kwin* is sometimes believed to have come from a merging of two games called *blok* (lit. 'block') and *kala* (lit. 'colour'), in the 1970's, while *bom* has swept the scene in the last few years and is a recent elaboration on the longstanding game *las kat* ('last card'). *Bom* superseded a myriad of other games which are now very rare, excepting *kwin*. In keeping with my overall argument for gambling as indigenous analytic, I now argue that their changeability is a more powerful metaphoric model for characterising Gorokan life, helping the reader to appreciate games as agents. *Kwin* and *bom* are thought to be of different characters, and appeal to different moods and temperaments that I am about to describe, and this in turn affects how quickly they will be outmoded.

Kwin and *bom* represent points on either side of a dialectic applying to all games: that of speediness and thoughtfulness. In the absence of an explanatory framework based upon a balance between skill and contingency (see chapter one), Gorokans consider games in terms of the speed of their *paten* ('pattern'). A pattern may be too fast to allow a person to impose or discern the game's future direction, or if slower, one's *aidia* ('ideas') make their impact felt upon it. Both of these concepts will be elaborated later, but here I outline the broader picture. Those games which to me might involve a large element of chance/luck are typically mechanical in their gameplay, and so tend to occur more speedily. It is this speed (versus thoughtfulness) that people identify with games that are beyond one's control, rather than lingering on the chanciness of moments within a game. There are a series of points at which a person might act within a game, whose turnaround is objectified into a game which is either speedy, with many moments requiring immediate action, or slower, with more considered choices (cf. Goffman 2006 [1969]).

In Goroka *bom* is the major fast game, *kwin* is the chief slow one. People's preferences are couched in terms of one being too fast or slow for them, and these penchants are correlated with peoples' life stages. The young (*ol yangpela*) are thought to be metabolically speedy and thus attracted inexorably toward faster forms of gaming (*ol fas gem*, lit. 'all fast games'). Older

people (*ol lapun*) are slower and more considered, and therefore keener on *kwin*⁷ and other *tingting gem* (lit. 'thinking games'). Married (*ol marit man/meri*) but not yet old people express different preferences at different times but show a tendency toward *kwin* as they get older. Furthermore, one's speed/thoughtfulness at different stages in life are thought to make one more likely to succeed in the corresponding game, because one's thought processes synchronise more easily to the pace of that game⁸. The different types of game act to cultivate their particular speed of thought too: fast games *hotim* (li. 'heat') people up, getting their thoughts going, and testing them out, while thinking games clear people's heads and allow them to focus (cf. Mosko 1999)⁹. Thus thought and speed are cultivable attributes of people that are fed by the speed of the game, altering peoples' mental states toward either speediness or thoughtfulness.

Taking the games together with the age grades of players generates stimulating parallels with Frederick Damon's work on Muyuw Island in the northeast of the Kula ring. Damon has written on Kula valuable categories' analogical relationship with age grades and the behaviour appropriate to people in these grades (2002). High rank and thus high value Kula arm shells and necklaces are said to "[o]nly move when [the] path [is] well laid out" as do the elderly; middle rank valuables move "[f]ast, but with intentionality" corresponding to those who are "[m]arried but still very active"; low rank Kula items move "[w]ithout reason", as do the young who are accused of "running around without reason", their acts create only "[i]mpermanent relations" that do not lead to fame; both the young and low rank kula valuables thus have no "names" (ibid: 126; see also A. Weiner 1992: 134-5). On Muyuw, temporality is literally measured by Kula participation, the marks of time on the body evidence the effort put into Kula (ibid: 116). What is more, people aspire to handle high rank valuables "so they can be like them" (ibid: 127), a kind of transmission that I found literalised in Goroka when people play

⁷ The very old are partial to an old and slow game called *faiv lip* (lit. 'Five Leaves'), a mixture of the first game *laki* (also known as *tri lip* ('three leaves')) and *kwin*, but they played only rarely, so I shall not take this any further.

⁸ It is interesting to note that this type of synchronicity is not generally available to Western gambling discourse. While players may be 'in the zone', their selfhood is not combined with the game, they are simply 'well suited' for blackjack, horse-racing or whatever (cf. Cassidy 2002). Skill at individual gambling games is usually thought of as the product of experience and a personalised proclivity that is often thought genetic, like having a 'pokerface' (cf. Kusyszyn 1984).

⁹ Money may also be either fast or slow, and this is the major focus of chapter three.

games that instil them with the speed of thought they desire, marking and cultivating the speed that defines them. Yet there is a scale shift in Goroka, players find games as a whole, rather than individual cards (the equivalent of shells) embody speed, and cards are the same whichever game is played. Kula valuables are also gendered, and Munn reported that gender affects their speed of movement (Munn 1986: 158-60); I found no parallels on this front, with both games involving men and women together in roughly equal numbers, there being no gendering of either card games or cards themselves.

As evidenced in the below diagrams, each game lies within an elaborate and growing inventory of possible games, adding further complexity to an analogy with the Kula. Neither card diagram is my own, but rather came out of a process of consultation with prodigious playing friends. I drew diagrams together with people about when games became known to them, as well as where and/or what they came from, and how they lost popularity. Many resulted in something half-way between genealogical diagrams and Kula valuable's 'paths' that Annette Weiner thought so important to keep in mind that she compares participants to master chess-players (1992: 141).

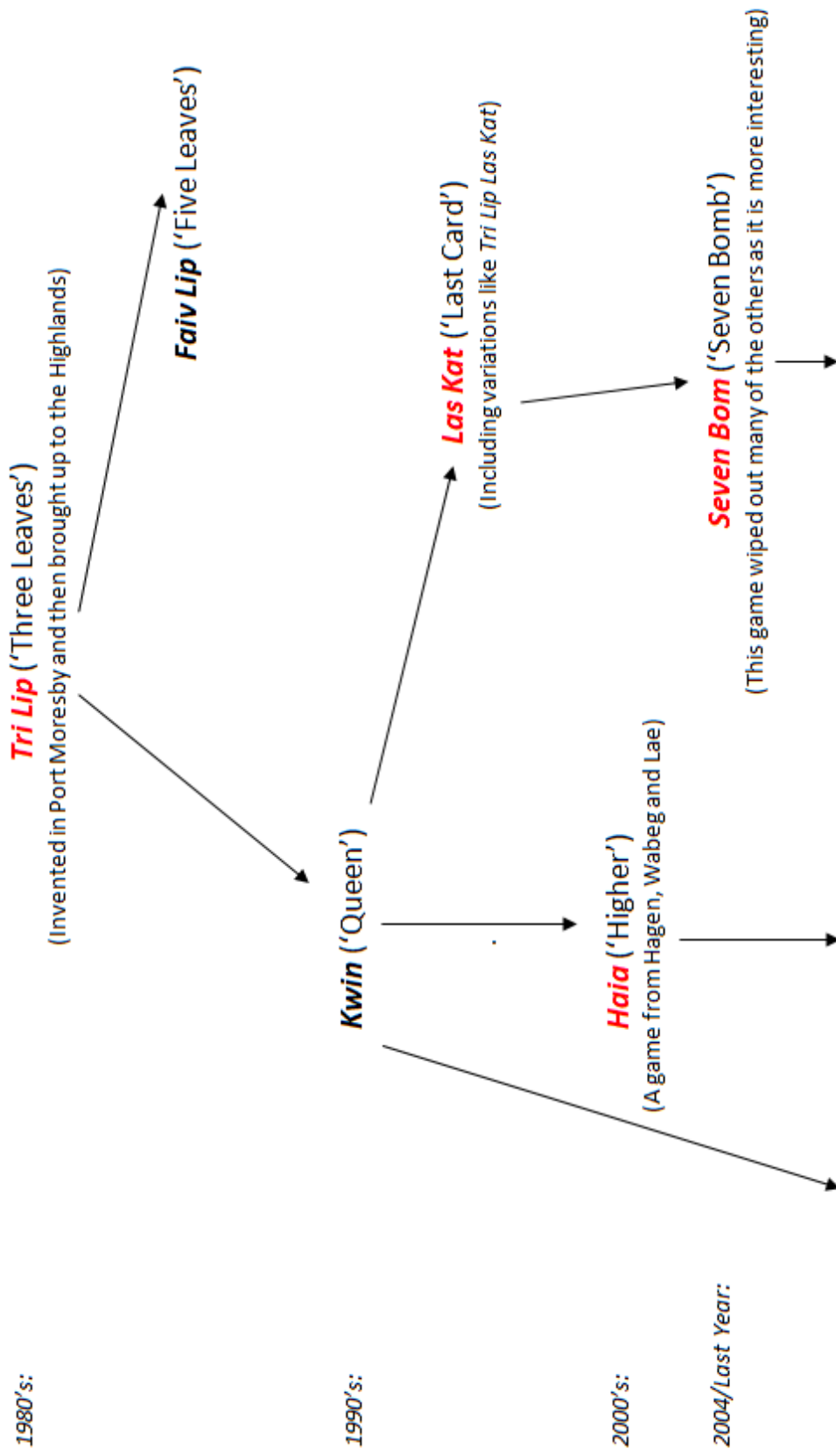


Figure 2.1: Card game genealogy by Kila, a man in his early thirties, living in Banana Blok settlement. Fast games are in red, slow in blue.

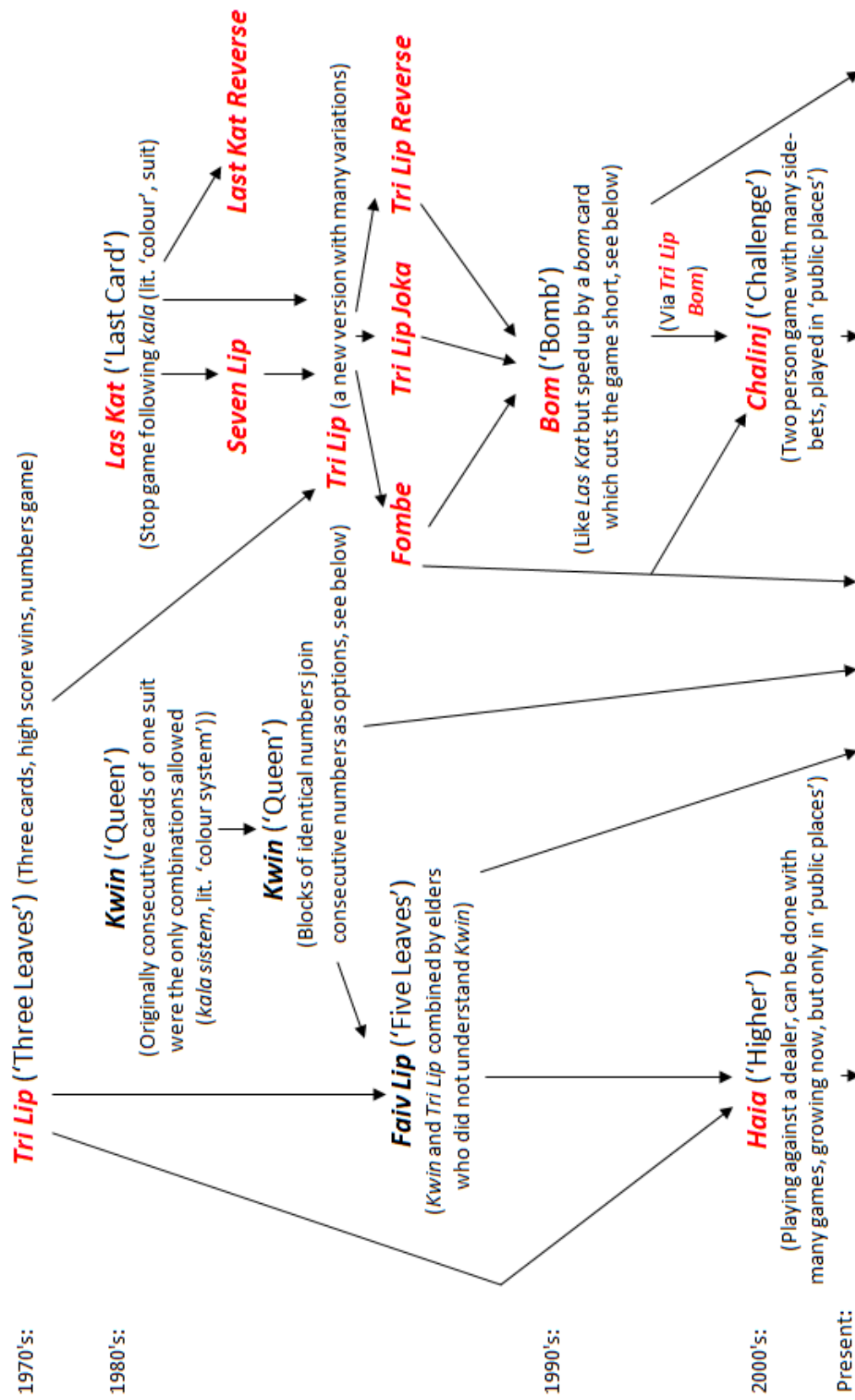


Figure 2.2: Card game genealogy by Bosu, a mid-forties man, avid card gambler and a acknowledged authority on cards, from *Banana Blok* settlement. Fast games are in red, slow in blue.

The genealogical analogy gives some sense of the nature of card games and should help the reader visualise the characteristics of the games I am about to describe. In both diagrams, games began with the introduction of *laki* (see prologue), also known as *tri lip*, and it is from there that things get more complicated. The second diagram demonstrates one recurrent feature particularly well. Two channels of games parallel each other through the years, one containing more thinking games and the other fast games. *Kwin* is the main or most popular game on the slow side of the kinship divide. Among the blood-line of fast games with fast thoughts, the game *bom* is now king. Despite illustrating this point well, the genealogical analogy breaks down now because speed is related to age grade rather than consanguinity or other kinship ties, and in this respect the diagrams begin to look much more like Kula 'paths', with games following along from each other within the age grade that dominates the faster or slower sides of the spectrum.

Just as fast games have fast patterns that constantly change, so too the character and lifespan of interest in games themselves. Gorokans expect that *kwin*, the more thoughtful, mature, stable and considered game will outlive *bom*. *Kwin* has lasted since the 1970's, and *bom* is but a few years old, replacing games that themselves had only a fleeting period in the sun. With a Gorokan average age of just twenty-four, it is no surprise to residents that a game like *bom* is the most popular right now, and that fast games keep emerging and sweeping to success. Note how many more games and how short the interval between them on the faster right side of the diagram compared to the slower left. One slow game gives rise to other slow games on the left, slowly; fast games lead to fast ones on the right, and more quickly. A fast game's popularity does not last as long as a slow game because the fast-minded players quickly move onto new games. Innovation in new games seems to be built in to the logic of the kind of games people want to play, so fast begets fast quickly, and slow changes little gradually. Card games' longevities are themselves the imprint of their action, and will recede or endure in synch with the thoughts they promote, arising and falling as fractal agents of their times. *Bom* is therefore to be understood as a craze, generating huge interest during my time in the field, but fully expected to be superseded by yet another manifestation of speed, which will of course come along quickly and spread like wildfire.

Another way of looking at this is that *kwin* produces thought which is designed to last in the long term, while *bom* would never try to (see below). Those who think fast invent new things, and those who play *bom* encourage this inventiveness. Below I describe how the slower kinds of thought promoted by *kwin* are considered more Melanesian, and thus act like the high rank Kula valuables that are the measure of proper activity on Muyuw. The games are similar in that the low rank, fast valuables and games are lost track of and are replaced easily by others, while more valuable, slower games or valuables are less subject to change and retain their worth. Annette Weiner sees a fundamental contrast between Kula where objects of exchange are individuated according to rank, and the Melpa of M. Strathern's fieldwork, who do not individuate shells (A. Weiner 1992: 135), but perhaps a more productive similitude lies in comparing the ranking of games/spheres within which exchangeables can move to the individuated Kula valuables. The two are not entirely similar of course, unlike kula valuables, the games are not considered stable; they morph into new versions as times change. Kula shells ideally remain circulating, and are not supposed to lead people to accumulate shells of their same category, with lower ranked shells ideally propagating the acquisition of higher grade shells. Card games in Goroka, on the other hand, do not seem to mature into slower, more valuable card games; each speed of game is replaced by another of the same order. Across time I see each game's pasts and futures as expanded versions of the games themselves, adding temporality to the analogy. I now go on to look at the dynamics of the games themselves, hoping to excavate how these games engender the traits people attribute to them, and, what amounts to the same thing, looking at the skills one needs to become successful in each.

How to Play...

The first thing one learns when approaching a game is the size of the bet and the name of the game, so this seems a good point to begin. In both *kwin* and *bom* bets are standardised by consent of all players, so if you were to ask what people were playing, they say for instance *fifti toea bom* (lit. '50 toea bomb'). This is a significant adjunction, as the game and its bet size are

only together considered sufficient information to characterise the game¹⁰. In *kwin* the range of bets begins around K1; but while *bom* tends to peak at K2, *kwin* can range up to K50 in some high profile gambling locations. These same places tend to discourage or ban *bom* outright, as it is thought to be a game for the excitable, and therefore would disturb the ambience of serious gaming establishments. *Bom* is associated with more dangerous environments (see below). High stakes gambling dens are unique to *kwin*.

As with all bets in Goroka, they are placed prior to play, and may not be added to or subtracted from during each game. As we saw in chapter one, the bet size marks the commitment of players and seriousness of each game, and as we shall see, *kwin* is marked out for higher bets because it lends itself to a more serious attitude. I shall now explore the games individually; their rules and tactics, bearing in mind the lessons of the last chapter: that betting and money are intrinsic to our understanding of both player and game. Continuing the characterisation from chapter one, I concentrate on the first hand, when Michael lost K2 of his K20 note to Player B. For simplicity's sake, the bets are excluded from the explanation at this stage, returning toward the end of the chapter.

1. *Kwin* – Cornering

In *kwin* there are not more than five players, and rarely fewer than four, but five is considered ideal. The aim of each player is to collect combinations of consecutive cards of the same suit (for instance 6♥, 7♥, 8♥, 9♥)¹¹, or identical cards of different suits (say 2♣, 2♦, 2♥, 2♠) in order to rid themselves of all their seven cards¹². After shuffling, the dealer offers the cards to

¹⁰ See chapter one for more information on how the divisible units of money are vitally tied to gameplay in Goroka.

¹¹ A set can span from the highest card to the lowest (e.g. K♥, A♥, 2♥ and 3♥ could comprise a set).

¹² *Kwin* is therefore similar in form to the international game of rummy, though it appears to have a history independent of that game. As I mentioned above, in Goroka some think that two indigenous games were amalgamated to make *kwin*. These games were sometimes called *blok gem* (lit. 'block game': identical value cards of different suits game), and *kala gem* (lit. 'colour game': consecutive numbers of the same suit, i.e. following colour game), where the aim of each was to achieve just one of the two possible forms of card combinations.

the player on their right, who cuts the cards and places the card at the bottom of the deck face up in the middle (in the case of Figure 2.3 below, this is the Q♥). Players are then dealt seven cards each by the dealer, face-down¹³. The winner will use all seven cards to make one set of three cards, and another set of four cards (say 6♥, 7♥, 8♥, 9♥ along with 2♣, 2♦, 2♥). This would be very unlikely to occur from the deal, and so play revolves around achieving sets through the acquiring and giving away of cards. The remaining cards are placed face down in the middle. Play rotates to the right and so begins with the cutter.

¹³ It is interesting to note that the system of shuffling and dealing for all games in Goroka is of a different order to that used in Euro-America: the style of shuffling (*miksim kas*) is completely uniform, everyone simply holding the cards lengthways in one hand facing downward and taking a proportion of those cards from the bottom of the deck (if they are not cheating, in which case they try to control which cards end up at the top or bottom of the deck) with the thumb and forefinger of the other hand, bringing them to the front of the deck, sometimes with a dramatic slapping show of force. At this point the fingers of the stationary hand pinch some of the cards from the top of the cards in the slapping hand, and the process is repeated with the remaining cards. This is done very quickly, and the whole method is repeated two or three times. Despite repeated demonstrations of alternative shuffling methods on my part, my ways were roundly dismissed as not mixing the cards properly and allowing people to do tricks. Dealing (*dilim*) on the other hand is completely individualised. Each dealer hands out cards in various directions, orders, and amounts of cards to each player at a time, as long as they always end up with the same number of cards for each player. Methods of dealing come under the rubric of personal ‘style’, and are not, as I first suspected, an alternative way of showing that the cards have been properly shuffled. Though the dealing of cards is known to mix the cards too, this is not their expressed purpose; rather people enjoy the chance to showcase their creativity while enforcing the sense of fairness by sending cards of unknown values in all different directions.

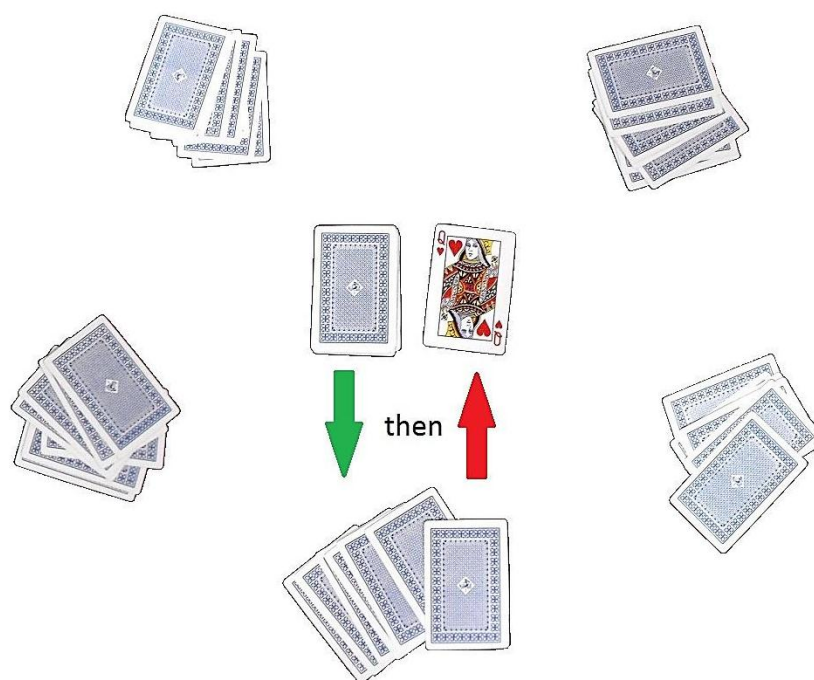


Figure 2.3: A deal of *kwin* before play begins. The green arrow indicates the usual course of picking up of a card at the beginning of one's turn; the red arrow represent laying down of one of the player's cards, which occurs at the end of a turn.

As illustrated by the arrows in Figure 2.3, each player picks up a card at the beginning of their turn, so players actually have use of eight cards rather than seven, one of which is discarded/offered face up into the middle to conclude the turn. This practice is often playfully termed *maketim kat* (lit. 'marketing a card', meaning to offer the card for sale on the street)¹⁴. As the game goes on, the pile of face down cards quickly diminishes, while the face up 'marketed' cards build up. These cards are not placed in a single orderly pile, as this would prevent people from knowing which cards have been discarded, and thus working out the *paten* (lit. 'pattern') of play (see below). As shown in figure 2.4, in low stakes games 'marketed' cards are spread haphazardly, the priority being visibility. Players often sift through the cards with their hands if they cannot see them sufficiently well. Seeing all the cards allows players to make decisions on which of the cards in one's hands can be combined with those which will be in the deck after a reshuffle, and which cards and combinations of cards are being held or sought by other players. At the high stakes dens (figure 2.5), cards are placed in smaller piles in

¹⁴ The importance of marketing in relation to gambling is explored in chapter three.

front of the player who discarded them, so they also keep a record of who put which cards down. The aim is to aid players in discerning a more complete pattern¹⁵.

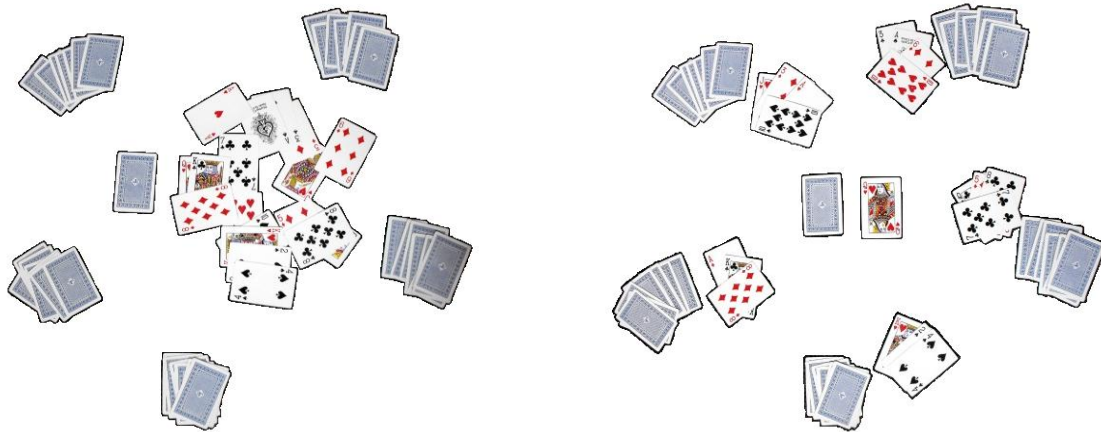


Figure 2.4 and 2.5: How ‘marketed’ cards are made visible to all players during play. Figure 2.4 (left) is typical of low stakes games in informal settings, with cards spread haphazardly so long as all are visible. Figure 2.5 (right) is typical of high stakes, serious and formal games, all cards being made visible in front of the player who ‘marketed’ the cards to allow for maximum deductive potential.

After all the face-down cards are finished, the last player to pick up gathers and shuffles the face-up cards and places them face-down to replenish the deck, play then continues in what is now considered another *raun* (lit. ‘round’, used here to mean both ‘to go around’ as in to circulate or perambulate, and as a discrete but replicable interaction between two or more people, as in a boxing ‘round’). Each player should now have an improved understanding of which cards are in the deck and which cards people are choosing to hold onto. Because stalemates are not infrequent the game may be re-dealt if the cards have been reshuffled four times (at the discretion of players).

Players are not beholden to the way the deck was shuffled, they could choose to use the card ‘marketed’ by the player before them instead. They may do so if they can complete a set with that card (say it is a 6♥ to add to your 7♥ and 8♥), bringing that card toward them and placing the two corresponding cards on top for all the players to see (See Michael and player D in

¹⁵ The ordering or otherwise of ‘marketed’ cards is also related to different styles of marketing discussed in the following chapter. There we shall see that the arrangement and offering of objects, no matter how chaotic, have an aesthetic quality that invites participants to search for patterns in order to choose a course of action for the future.

Figure 2.6 below). If one could make a set of four cards from another player's 'marketed' card, they should only put down two of their cards and keep one hidden because (as I will shortly explain) they will need it later on. Putting down a set is known as a *kik* ('kick'). There is considerable emphasis on not giving away a card which might be valuable to the player to your right, and that player is poised to pounce, often forcefully saying *kikim* (lit. 'kick it', an analogy to football and rugby) to induce a favourable outcome, and I will come back to this expression later. These are moments of great anticipation for players, as they think hard about the card they want to see put down.

Supposing first that the player to one's left has not given them a *kik*, and they have thus picked up a card from the deck, they now have the opportunity not only to help their own hand but also to hinder the success of others. The former is achieved by assessing which cards do not seem to be reappearing among the discarded cards – these will be the cards desired by others – and trying to concentrate on building a set of cards which avoids those cards. They will accomplish the latter by putting down a card that others do not desire. Players are essentially trying to prevent a conflict of interests for themselves with others, while encouraging it for others with them. It is only possible to directly affect the play of the person immediately to one's right (by either giving them an opportunity to make a set or preventing it). One's own action is in turn partially determined by the player before you. The choice of which cards to hold onto and which to discard can prevent other players from winning more indirectly, though this is not what people highlight when they speak of skill at *kwin*.

Assuming instead that the player to one's left has lain down a card that gives them a chance to *kik*, the player must take into consideration the following: When a player has 'kicked' a set of three cards, these cards are effectively open to other players, who may add a card to it to make a set of four. Revealing a set of four should be a winning move, so a player with a set of four cards would rather keep their fourth back as this allows them a degree of flexibility in assembling a second set of three. Equally, putting all four cards down would increase the opportunities for other players to make their own set of four upon those cards. This is because if you had for instance 9♥, 8♥, 7♥, and 6♥, and you played them all, then another player could add a 10♥ and complete a set on either the high or low end of the *kik*, but if you held back the 9♥ then they could only do so on the lower end.

There are still risks in a three card *kik*, as in figure 2.6 below where Michael's 10♠, J♠ and Q♠ are joined by player B's K♠. As long as their other cards are in two sets of three (player B), any player who can add a card to a *kik* made by another player (either Michael or player D) may do so. Whether or not this final card is played on your own *kik* or another player's *kik*, the card which makes a set of four is known as their *brek* (break), and should be held onto until the moment of victory. To avoid the possibility of others making a *brek* on their *kik*, ideally a player will not *kik*, but instead put down both their sets at once and their *brek* card, as did player B. Nevertheless, being offered a card that can complete a set is often too tempting, and thus people often feel they were induced to *kik*. For example, Michael's susceptibility to making a *kik* on player E's 'marketed' card means that player B is the happy recipient of a tidy sum (including K2 of Michael's K20 note, the reader will recall). With all this tactical manoeuvring *Kwin* is a strategic game, involving a lot of careful consideration, and therefore takes longer than other card games, up to twenty minutes or so per game, so it is quite naturally considered slow.

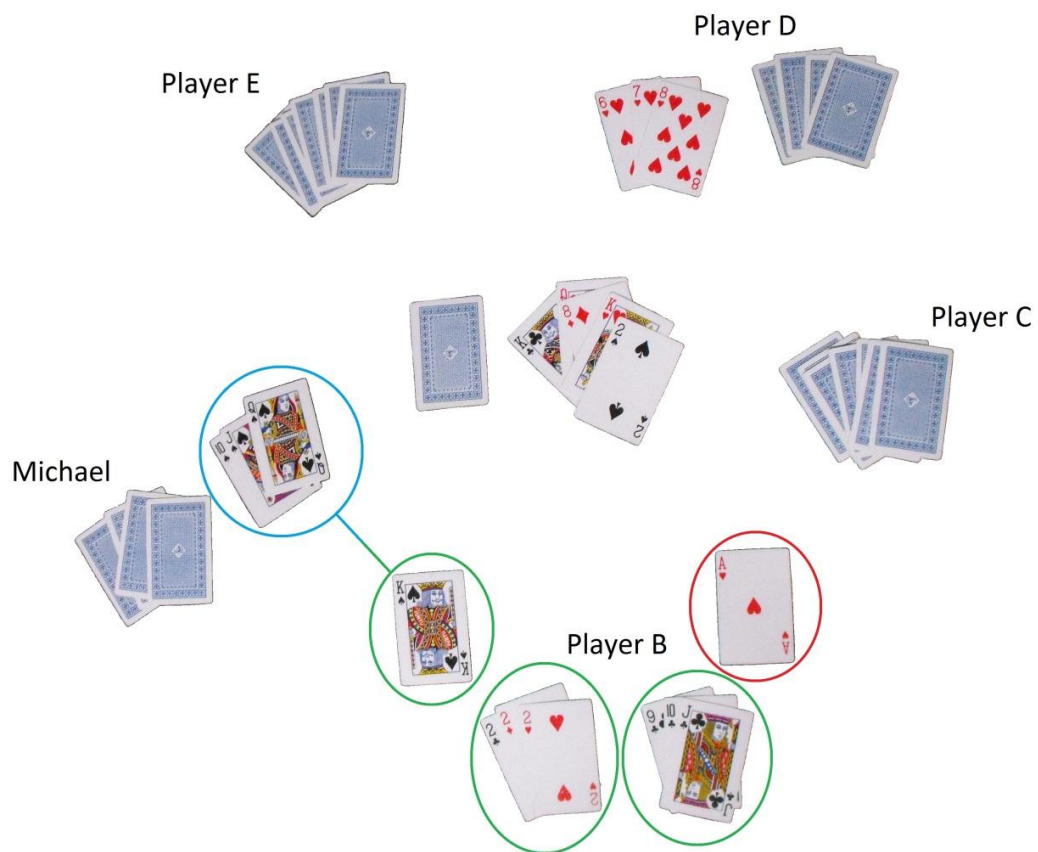


Figure 2.6: Player B's winning hand in *kwin*. B discards the A♥, circled red, lays down two sets of three cards (2♣, 2♦, 2♥, and 9♣, 10♣, J♣, circled green), and the K♠ acts as the player's *brek* card (circled green), making a set of four with the player to the left's *kik* (10♠, J♠, Q♠, circled blue).

When B won, as a matter of course each player then revealed to each other what they were holding in their hand and by imputation what sets they were aiming to achieve. One often finds that you were never likely to receive the desired cards because they were being hoarded by another player. In an inversion of the anticipation of a *kik*, this is a moment of great retrospection and revelation for players, who are unfailingly absorbed in learning the preventive capacities of their competitors¹⁶. During the game people anticipate knowing what cards are in others hands, and when it is over they indulge in retrospective examination of their deductions. It is worth drawing the analogy with Kula activities, where competitors anticipate the flow of valued objects across the islands and act upon those deductions. Once the necklace or arm shell has made its way, people reflect on one another's strategies and

¹⁶ In friendly, low stakes games a re-deal also occurs if four people have made a *kik*, as people think the competition is too close and there should therefore be no winner, i.e. no one is sufficiently preventative.

their ability to hoard and direct these valuables in long remembered histories of those items' movements (Damon 2002: 130; A. Weiner 1992; cf. Reed 1999). So it is with a game of *kwin*.

In the game Michael has been influenced to *kik* by player E and this has then been acted upon by player B's winning *brek*. Michael is complicit in the win of player B, because he chose to make that *kik*. Michael is therefore thought to be either a poor player or worse, to have conspired. If the collusion is obvious, then gamers are thought to be playing *kompani* (lit. 'company', i.e. together), and may be confronted by the other players. If two players cover each other's bets when either runs out of money then they will become immediately suspect; compensation for loss should be done via the group, with the *luk* (lit. 'look') discussed in the previous chapter, not as a team against the collective of individuals in a game. Michael with his K20 is therefore safe from accusation. How much a player is aware of what cards another player might have depends greatly upon deductive powers and the recognition and delineation of complex patterns of play, and so suspicion is only rarely voiced in public. This is part of the attraction of *kwin*: because cheating is a difficult accusation to make, the game is thought to be relatively peaceful. This is one of the attributes that make it a socially good, 'Melanesian' game. Instead skill is displayed when preventing others from winning by controlling what cards they can use.

As I outlined above, to play well is to have many an effective *aidia* (lit. 'idea'/'ideas') guiding your gameplay. Particularly in *kwin*, having good *aidia* means being a *kona man/meri* (lit. 'corner man/woman'¹⁷). Each player in a five player game is their own *kona*, and it is a mark of some distinction to be a standout *kona man* among a group of experienced players¹⁸. Players feel the presence of a *kona man* in the lack of opportunities they receive to win, and when they compare their cards at the end of a game it is to see who the best *kona man* was.

Returning now to the theoretical introduction in the light of *kwin*, the reader will note that a *kona* can be broken down into a simple pivot relationship, where a player is constrained by their own circumstances and the card offered by the previous player, causing them to think carefully and act accordingly. When they do act, they must be aware that they are having an equal effect upon the player that follows them. So each player acts with two others in mind,

¹⁷ The male form is usually used by all to cover both sexes, a convention I follow hereafter.

¹⁸ See chapter three on the wider significance of the *kona* in Goroka.

one of which is the direct cause of their action, the other will be directly affected by it. Hence the imagistic term ‘corner’¹⁹. Players anticipate the causative actions of those before them when they say *kikim!*, which attempts to induce a usable card for themselves. It is instructive to note the imperative transitive form of the verb here: the player about to be offered a card and hoping it will be favourable says *kikim!*, meaning ‘kick!’, even though the kick would belong to themselves, rather than saying something like *kik i kam!* which would mean ‘bring a kick here’. This shows attribution of cause to the player before them, who unleashes a card combination which literally causes the *kik* then completed by the receiving player jumping on the opportunity. This fits the Strathernian separation between cause and effect I outlined above, and a comparison between a *kona* and M. Strathern’s use of Deborah Battaglia’s (1983: 296-297) diagram (figure 2.7) will be profitable here. It also maintains the running analogy with the Kula, as Battaglia’s fieldwork was conducted on Sabarl Island, in the southeast of the Kula region. In this famous example, Battaglia’s informant describes the Sabarl axe or the elbow as the image of flows of wealth, in this case the *segaiya* payment that goes from mother’s brother’s child to ego’s child, but is thought to be induced by ego. For M. Strathern this is the ideal illustration of the pivot relationship that she sees as the location of agency in Melanesia, where the past relationship between two people causes an effect on a third but the person who acts on that third attributes the cause of their action to the first, who would seem uninvolved to our eyes.

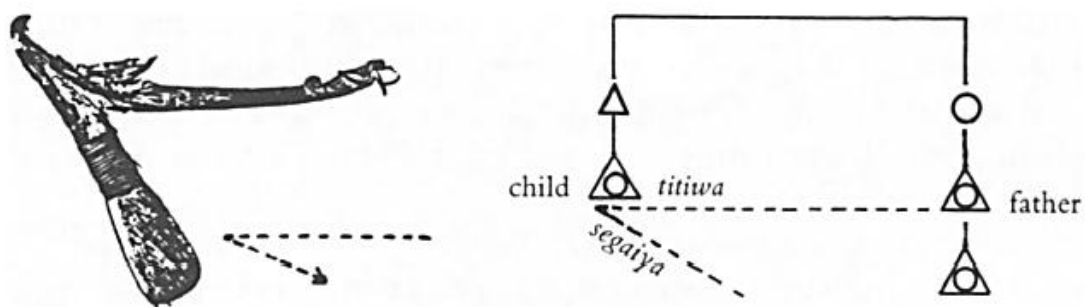


Figure 2.7: Diagram from M. Strathern (1988: 270), adapted from Battaglia (1983: 296-297), showing the person and the axe as figures of motion in a pivot that always involves two relationships.

¹⁹ The ‘corner’ has strong resonances with street corners, which I explore in chapter three with reference to marketing.

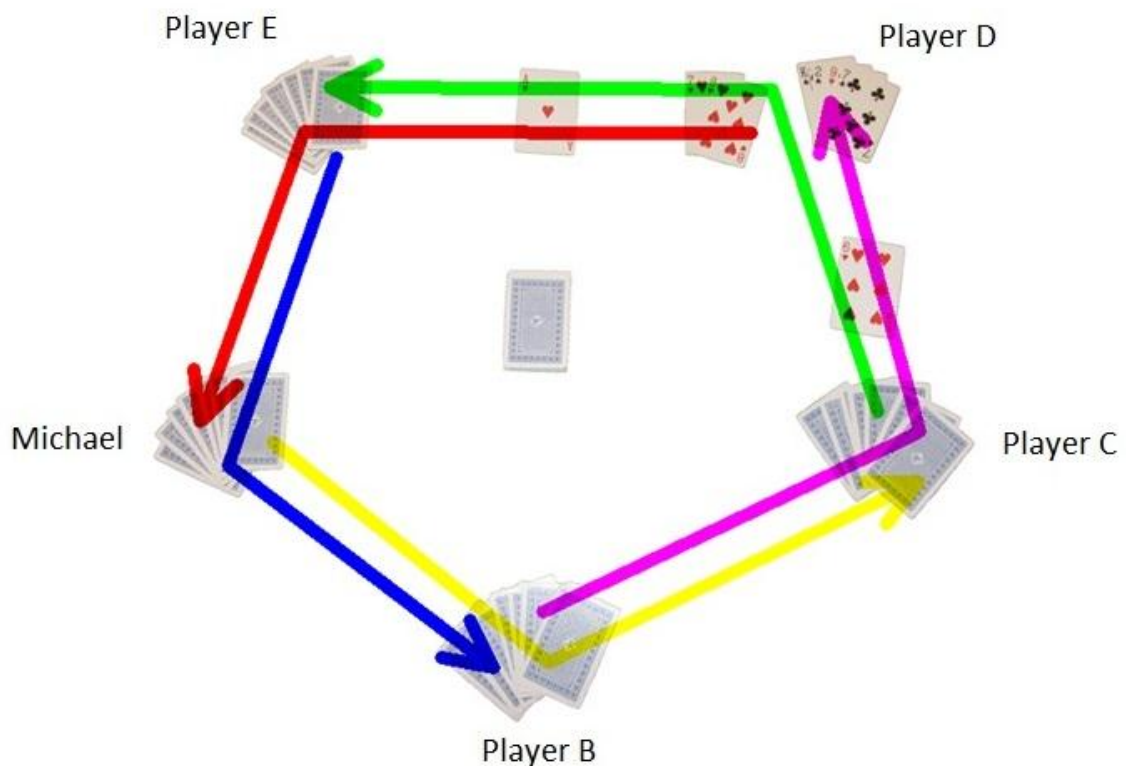


Figure 2.8: A player's *kona* in a game of *kwin* displayed as a circle of pivot relationships. In this diagram we see player D making a *kik*, in response to the 6♥ 'marketed' by C. D's hand is exposed to the camera so that one can get a sense of the decision process D makes.

In figure 2.8 each player's *kona* or pivot is highlighted with different colours; I focus on player D as a *kona* (in green); exposing their cards to see what happens more clearly. For D, the player before them (as an active (purple) *kona* themselves) 'markets' a card which is the direct cause of his/her action (in this case making a *kik* by adding the 6♥ to D's 7♥ and 8♥). The same (red) pivot relationship is true of the player following D, and so on. Each player attempts to manipulate the action of the player before to allow them to act unfavourably to the following player. A less consequential example would be if the player before you 'marketed' a 5♦, and you had a number of cards you could 'market' which are of no use to you, one of which is the 5♣, you may decide to play your 5♣ simply because the next player will be unlikely to have both the other 5's, and so the likelihood of helping the following player make a *kik* is reduced. A *kona man* makes calculations like this but often at far greater complexity; based on which cards they have seen circulating around amid the players.

Going back to the game, we see player D making their initial *kik*, caused by the 6♥ that C ‘marketed’. In turn D offers the A♥ to player E because he or she no longer needs it and perhaps suspects that that E does not want this card, sparking the red *kona* into action. Likewise in figure 2.7, player B’s success is only achievable through the ‘support’ (wittingly or otherwise) of Michael: his agency is made manifest in his ‘marketing’ and converted into success by canny player B. In light of Battaglia’s diagrams as explored by M. Strathern, we see a game formed by overlapping pivot relationships; Battaglia’s elbow is expanded and formalised anew. The *kona* acts always with two relations in mind, one which causes their own actions, and one which will be affected, and a *kona man* is able to exercise some skill in turning this pivot relationship to their advantage. This brings us back to the question of *how* people choose to render the causes of their actions and apply those actions to others. In *kwin* the *kona man* is able to convert the agency of another to their own advantage by eliciting an action that is configurable with their own desires. The *kona man* configures that relation into an act which hinders others and helps themselves. It is the configuration of relationships that bring about wins.

The third subject of the pivot relationship is the centre-point of the next pivot in the game (see figure 2.8), and so they stand for the structure and circularity of the game as a whole. The third player in fact defines the front element of the pivot as causative. This is tantamount to M. Strathern’s observation that people’s relationships are defined by other relationships, like the wife who is married because of a relationship between the spouses’ clans. This is a classic M. Strathernian perspective: a *kona* can only affect your play in the context of the multiple perspectives which have defined the situation as a game of *kwin* and thus a set of five corners. It is acting with others in mind that defines Melanesian personhood as at base ‘relational’, and a conclusion to a game defines a winner as someone whole: one who encompasses the *kona* (relational) position becomes a *kona man* with winnings as their quantitative measure. The meaning of the term ‘market’ becomes clear in this context: Michael offered a card for B to take up, and when he did then B is considered to have elicited the correct offering from Michael, who produces the card as a favourable unit. Marketer-buyer (as I discuss in chapter three) is a potentially on-going and mutually supportive relationship, and so not only has B shown herself a good *kona meri*, but also become subject to accusations of playing *kompani* (lit. ‘company’) because they both might not be playing as singular actors with minds impervious to each other. Winning temporarily raises the name of the following player while

diminishing the 'marketer' and thus leads, Kula-like, to gambling fame. Yet unlike Kula, fame does not travel with an object, which instantiates the famed person. Instead it travels in card players' memories and in the money which they may use in different circumstances from gambling, limiting the scope of their fame. Still, as in Kula, players should not ignore the demands of others, at least not blatantly, or they will be found to be playing *kompani* and this shall lead to exclusion and the diminishment of their names.

Despite the worry of being caught playing *kompani*, a *kona man* is not an implacable saboteur either. In fact some people stressed that a good *kona man* will give sometimes too. Players like Michael will give away favourable cards intentionally (especially if they have impinged on the game with a high denomination) to ensure the harmonious continuation of the game. So tactics reach out beyond the immediate desire to win the next round. The medium of currency allows people to make sympathetic and antagonistic gestures more easily when it is deliberately separated from players in a pot rather than a direct transaction between people (see chapter one). We can see this clearly when contrasted to the dramatic and tense Kula transactions where giver and receiver put on disinterested airs when they are forced to transact one-on-one (Damon 2002: 118; Munn 1986: 52; A. Weiner 1992: 145-6). Their methods for deflecting the tension include making accomplices handle the valuables when they are tossed by the giver. In gambling, the elicitation of wealth is made simple and on the whole pleasurable within a structured game that does not involve direct reciprocation.

Returning again to the game, we also notice that a 'marketed' card acts upon player B as one card only in the context of seven. This is analogous to the Kula valuables one holds at any time, and the choices people must make to retain or dispatch them in order to get their hands on yet greater Kula items. Players are agents in the game inasmuch as they understand *their own* position within a set of relationships and turn the standardised gifting of cards into an enhancing rather than meaningless circulation²⁰, just as those who choose to participate in Kula enter into a system of rule-bound gifting that may or may not come off well. To render the gifting complementary, player B will not be looking at Michael alone, her focus is more on the other cards that are down, which is to say the circumstances that prefigure her relationship with Michael. Players are primarily abstracting out a pattern from sources other

²⁰ See chapter three for an analysis of how marketing on the street and marketing cards is perceived to be on a continuum with gifting.

than their specific *kona* relationship, in the discarded cards as a whole. In Kula “good players must carry in their heads reckoning of all their debts and obligations and also the past histories of former paths and debts while conceptualising all the future moves that they plan to make, much like the complex knowledge necessary for a chess champion” (A. Weiner 1992: 141). Card players similarly hold the paths and movements of cards as well as the past patterns of previous games with others in their heads, but they focus on the short-term memory of cards in the game, rather than a deep history of Kula valuables’ paths and owners. It is the pattern of all the *kona* relationships and their manifestation in cards that allow people to see their particular *kona* effectively.

Damon’s informants on Muyuw had a clear vision of the wider world of Kula trade, which they characterised as an up and down movement that turns on its axis at each end (Damon 2002: 122)²¹. Both Kula participants and card gamblers acted by looking for patterns within a totalised system, adding a further level of interpretation for players. I learnt this as I was repeatedly told to stop looking at my cards, or at other players, because their bodies do not give off reliable knowledge. Instead, they said, look only at the cards that are down, because this is where the patterns are, that is where you win or lose. In other words the specific *kona* or pivot relationship one is in does not determine the frame of thought for a person, which is ideally more an outward-looking pattern-finder. It is important to note however that the scope of movement is far shorter-term and far more limited than that of Kula, and that the actions and even existence of many of the ‘players’ in Kula are obscured to any given player. In card games the participation of five players is tightly controlled and immediately evident, whether or not a player knows which cards each player is holding. The scaling down of Kula-like thought in Gorokan gambling therefore concentrates players’ imaginations on the cards being held, rather than the activity or not of unknown agents.

Nevertheless, people see patterns in the cards themselves, just like the Kula ring is a set of geographic points measured by their possession of different valuables and conceptualised by these ‘paths’. This logic is extended beyond how cards circulate, all the way to the propensities of cards as themselves ‘relational’. The clearest demonstration of this is in the card that players are allowed to keep between rounds. Some players feel that certain cards are more effective at enticing their own kind to gather together, and people allow each player to hold

²¹ Curiously Malinowski never talked about Kula paths (A. Weiner 1992: 140)

onto one card between games, which they call a *laki kat* (lit. 'lucky card', a card for which cards come together). For some people the qualities of the card 7♦, for instance, may draw out (cause) the card 6♦ or 8♦ from another player's hand, or if their cards are more suited the 7♥ or 7♣. Suited-ness and seriality appear to have their own agencies; they attempt to assemble into their preferred configuration (contra Baudrillard 1994: 13). People would often give me assistance in the early days of my gaming, and they sometimes vehemently insisted that I reorder my cards into combinations between turns, which I now understand as an attempt to suggest configurations to the cards. Other players chose to avoid bringing these cards together, preferring not to second guess their cards' preferences (*laik blo kas*). Likewise in Kula some high rank arm shells are paired with particular necklaces and can only be used against each other, and so they tend toward each other (A. Weiner 1992). While Kula items lack any sacred powers (ibid: 133), like cards they have the capacity to configure other shells into paths that lead to success. Annette Weiner goes so far as to compare some shells to "wild cards in poker, enabling a player to multiply the possibilities for success by negotiating simultaneously with several partners on different paths over the same sought-after shell" (ibid: 135). She calls participants 'players' and this chapter reverses the analogy to see how 'playing' – or rather competition – in Melanesia takes forms such as cards and Kula.

I will discuss the use of magic once I have dealt with both card games, and again in chapter three, but it is worth noting at this point that magic used for card games is directed at the cards themselves, not the opponents. I alluded to this in the prologue, where I divulged that the uniformity of card brands prevents people from using magic that is allied with certain kinds of cards known only to the magic user. Magic charms act medicinally upon the player by drawing dirty blood away from the fingers and face, pulling clean blood into these areas, but the explicit target is not other players. Instead the clean blood is designed to attract cards. With the right magic in hand, they say *kas bai laikim yu* (lit. 'cards will like you'). It took me some time to decipher this statement through questioning, after all, if cards like you, shouldn't your hands be full of them, which is hardly a recipe for success. After a few confused exchanges it became clear to me that 'cards liking you' is an act of configuration. Kula remains a useful analogy in that while innumerable spells were cast over different parts of canoes, configuring the canoe as a whole into lightness and swiftness – as a means of collecting valuables – magic for influencing the minds of Kula partners was far less emphasised (Malinowski 1961 [1922]; 102, 415-418; Campbell 2002: 99). In this case canoes are means to

wealth, like cards, and it is means that require magic to gain potency. I remind the reader that making a choice as a person is also an act of configuration in M. Strathern's formulation, so it seems logical to extend this to cards. In Goroka people are *tu bel* (lit. 'two stomachs', i.e. caught in two minds) until they choose a path of action. Transactions are usually required to make someone *wan bel* (lit. 'one stomach') which is to say both singular in intention and content.

Acting in a singular way is to properly configure thoughts. I suggest that with the cards too, the same rule applies. Cards are in a state of multiplicity until they act. Cards express their preferences by coming into proper alignment as sets of cards in your hand. At the same time, there is a sense that the cards have to have liked me because they have come into alignment under my persuasive powers. The patterns existing between cards are not related to players directly but as a collective they can be coerced into acting in relation to players. Cards' relations exist out there, between each other, and are knowable from the point of view of a person who is open, ready to comprehend them as an abstracted set of relations which can be brought into alignment. As such they are abstractions of relations, which are grasped relationally, and thus we see a Gorokan form of 'abstraction' taking the form of a 'pattern' (see Pickles 2009). This is what makes *kwin* in particular a *gem blo yumi* (lit. 'game belonging to us'); it is a 'Melanesian' thing to think through.

The capacity for individuals to act with reference to a world not explicitly related to them, in the form of patterns of empirical occurrences, is a crucial and underrepresented aspect of Melanesian decision-making, which is all too often subsumed under the idea of being directly acted upon. I see games in Goroka as a modelling of larger relational fields that act upon a person without one knowing all the interconnections of relationships, and thus see gambling as a mode of analytic for comprehending the wider world. The *kona* is like the Sabarl axe/elbow, and the Kula like the card game; they are indigenous categories for characterising and analysing actual transactions, not ethnographically inspired analytics. After a fine-grained explication they become useful idioms that do more work than Mimica's testing ground use of *laki* (2006). Yet as we have already learnt from the description of the gaming spectrum, neither the *kona* nor *kwin* (unlike Kula, perhaps) are worth considering as total social facts. I shall have to pit them against complimentary and antagonistic ideas. This is because while the *kona* is the dominant idiom at play in a game of *kwin*, *bom* has a different set of dynamics which in

combination with the above bring us closer to the full spectrum of efficacious possibility in a variously speedy gaming world. It will also show how some games can be more properly ‘Melanesian’, while others are less so.

2. *Bom* – Think Fast

Like *kwin*, a game of *bom* has no more than five players, so Michael could just as easily have joined this game. *Bom* is the game of choice to *pasim taim* (lit. ‘tie/close-up the time’, to pass time, see Reed 2003: 88-91; Pickles forthcoming), with stakes starting at T10, and usually peaking at K2, though K5 games sometimes occur. If Michael would be joining players who have been there all day, ‘passing the time’. Such people will often be unemployed and may use gambling as both entertainment and means of income. Young men in particular find it difficult to gain work, and they lack opportunities in the political sphere (see chapter four); they therefore say their speedy thoughts need an outlet, so many gamble at *bom*, and some try more audacious means of making money through theft (see Sykes 1999; Reed 2003; cf. M. Strathern 1975). As I mentioned in chapter one, the bets will have built up during the day as ‘passing the time’ gives way to more serious, exciting gaming. Even when killing time, *bom* is far from a peaceful game; the pace is often frenetic, as the rules will show. Terminologically it is a Stops Game²².

The dealer shuffles and then offers the cards to the person on their right, who cuts them, turns over the bottom card from the cut, places that card face up in the centre and lays the rest of the cards face down. If the cutter cuts the 7♥ (the *bom* card), they automatically win. The dealer then deals seven cards to each player²³, and if he/she fails to do so properly, she/he picks up two cards, because a two card penalisation is given for any mistake during the game. Providing this does not happen, to the casual observer *kwin* and *bom* look identical just before play begins. The face up card is the lead card, but from here the similarity ends: each player in turn has to put down a card from their hand of the same *kala* (lit. ‘colour’, in this context used

²² *Bom* was originally derived from another longstanding “stops game” called *las kat* (see above genealogies).

²³ The deal is invalid if a player holds three two’s, but if one player has four two’s, they automatically win.

to mean ‘suit’²⁴) as the previous player (say 6 ♦ to follow a 3 ♦), or a card with the equivalent symbol belonging to a different suit (say 6 ♠ to follow the 6 ♦), upon which the suit required by the next player changes accordingly (from ♦ to ♠). The stream of cards is therefore a chain of transformations in De Coppet’s sense (1981; 1995). If one cannot follow suit or symbol, or prefers to keep one’s remaining cards for a better opportunity, then one has to pick up a card. Hence the number of cards in Michael’s hand will rise and (hopefully) fall during play. The object of the game is to rid oneself of cards, especially those of a high numerical value, because if play stops then you have to count the total value of your cards up and the player with the lowest score wins. Some cards have special properties during gameplay, and, correspondingly, often have different numerical values at the end of the game. Queen is valued at two points, King at four, and Ace at one. The only other way of winning is to rid yourself of all of your cards.

Card	Special Properties During Play	Point Value after Play
Jack (called the J)	Known as a <i>res kat</i> (lit. ‘rest card’), the Jack can be joined by another card of the same suit in the one turn, allowing a player to get rid of two cards at once. If one cannot do so then the player who put down the Jack must pick up a card from the deck.	45
2	Makes the player following you have to pick up two cards from the deck if they cannot respond with another 2. If the following player can respond with a 2 then they cancel out the penalty, and the next player may play as normal. If a player is forced to pick up two cards, the next player plays as normal.	20
4	Reverses the direction of play towards the previous player, after which the direction returns to normal, beginning again with the person who played the four.	20

²⁴ In other parts of the Highlands colour terms have shown themselves to range more broadly than our own, often taking into account glossiness and brightness (see O’Hanlon 1989). In this case it seems the Tok Pisin word *kala* has likewise been extended to include the suit it is denoting. Note that *kala* is a defining feature of games in the above genealogies.

8	Another 'rest card', it acts exactly like the Jack, but without such a large point value.	8
7♥	The <i>bom kat</i> ('bomb card') ends play when laid, forcing players to compare the total point value of the cards remaining in their hands. The player with the lowest points is the winner.	Not Applicable

Table 2.1: Cards with special properties and their values

The cutter on the right of the dealer plays first; if the lead card has special properties they apply. The 7♥ or *bom* card is the most important card to have as it has the power to end play, giving its possessor a superior chance of winning because they hold the *bom* card back until they have only a low total point value. A short but otherwise typical game is represented in Figure 2.9 below, depicting all of the special properties of the cards in action²⁵.

²⁵ I have chosen to represent the game in this form rather than how it would appear in actual play (as I did with *kwin*), because I believe this rendering represents the diachronic unfolding of possibilities better without wasting space with too many diagrams of little content. My ability to do so is made possible by the form of the game, which has to unfold in a linear fashion card after card, and without necessarily picking up each round as in *kwin*. Because one's hand is not usually added to, the cards and thus decisions of a player can be easily deduced from previous play, and not confused by a continuing renewal of one's hand.

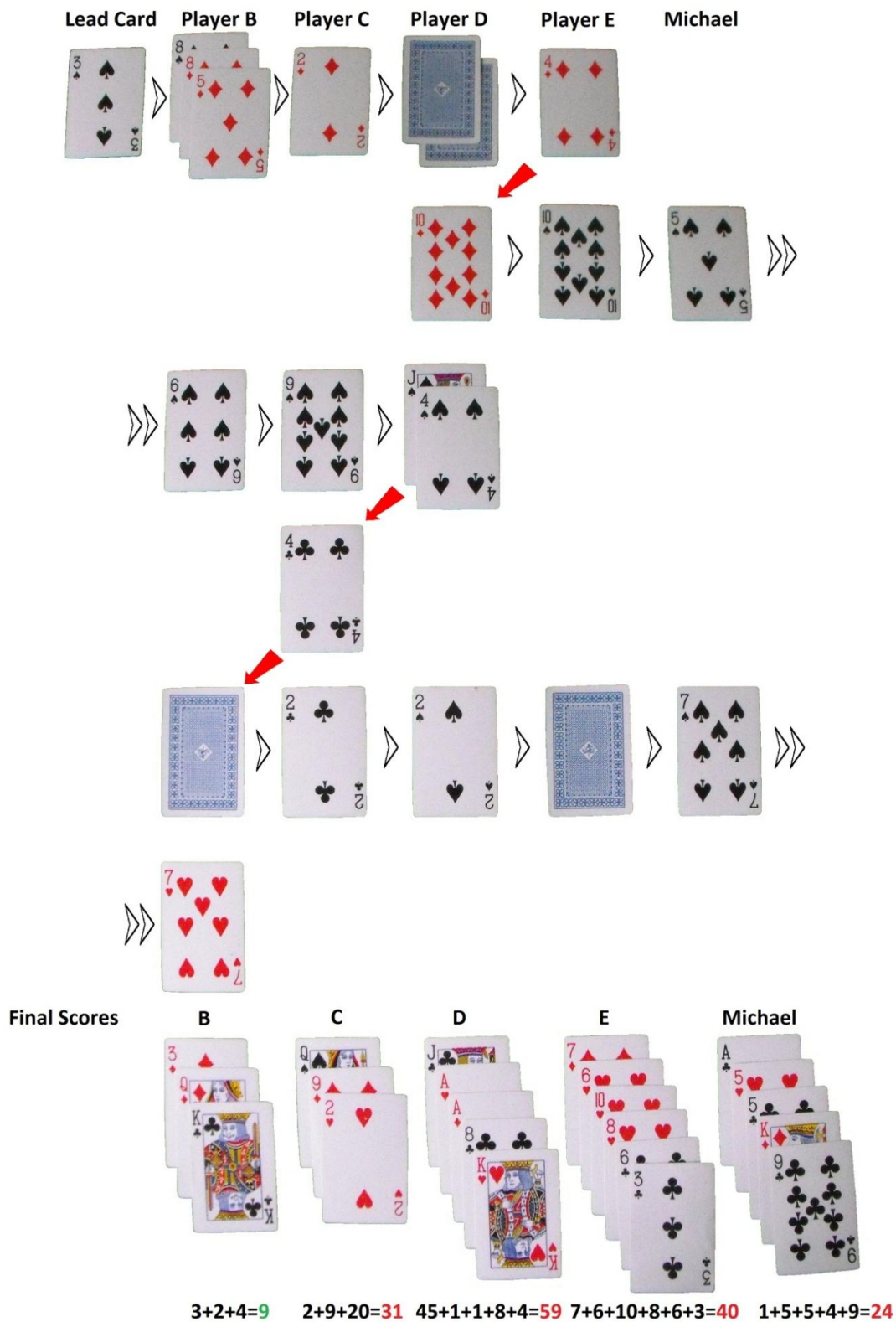


Figure 2.9: A game of *bom* represented in the abstract. The black arrows indicate the succession of play, except when a 4 disrupts the order of play, at which point a red arrow brings the play back to the previous player. Face-down cards signify when a player is forced to pick up a card. Each column represents the actions of one particular player. After the game is ended by the *bom* card (7♥), the cards remaining in

each player's hand are shown below, along with the total value of those cards. The winner is Player B with a score of 9.

Despite a strong deterministic element in gameplay, many tactical decisions are made by Michael and the others, a few of which I will expound here with the aid of the model game above. *Mastamindim* (lit. 'masterminding', to understand and recognise patterns) in *bom* is the equivalent to becoming a *kona man* in *kwin*, and a matter of noticing the amount of any particular suit or symbol which have been played by one and all players, and thus the chances of others having cards to respond to the ones you play, and vice versa.

As in *kwin*, play is dependent upon all the cards lain down, but not to the same extent or in such complexity. In the model game, it will be noted that ♠s have been somewhat overused. Player D therefore decided to play the 4♠, forcing player C to play again, having anticipated that player C might have run out of ♠s. As it turned out player C was able to respond with a 4♣ (a tactical move as he/she had a Q♠ in reserve), but if C had not then D was ready to play the 2♠, dispensing with another high value card and bringing this to bear on player E. Instead it was B who could not play and was impelled to pick up a card, and C was given the opportunity to play again. Out of choice, a player would not play a 4 unless they had another card of the same suit to use when play returned to them next turn. Player C tried (more successfully) to use the same tactic (4♣ followed by a 2♣) as player D, but D is able to counter with their 2♠, and they go back to playing ♠s. In the process players C and D have both dispatched two high value cards, worth 20 points x 2 = 40 to each of them.

Also seen in figure 2.9, laying a 7 or ♥ is risky should other players have only a few cards remaining and you are not holding the *bom* card (7♥) yourself. This is because the next player would be able to use the 7♥ if they had it, as in the unwise actions of Michael. Nevertheless, the 7♠ was Michael's only option other than to pick up a card, there being a shortage of ♠s, so Michael decided to take a risk in hoping player B did not have the *bom* card, which backfired. Skill is attributed to a player who provokes another to play their *bom* card and then beats them with a low score, but this could hardly be said for someone with Michael's cards.

There are many possible cards which can be played in response to any given suit. Correspondingly people say that *bom* has many more chances to win than *kwin*, and they

come thick and fast. These include opportunities to rid yourself of cards, like with the 4s and 2s used by players C and D above, but there are also opportunities to lay a combination of cards or to change the suit playing to favour your hand, as with player B's first turn. With a ♠ as the lead card B uses her 8♠, a 'rest card', in combination with her 8♦ (a second 'rest card'), to change the suit to ♦s. Looking at B's cards at the end of the game it is clear she had many ♦s²⁶. It did not quite work for B, the opportunity to change the suit to diamonds was wasted, and it does not come round again during play.

Most of the time you only have one or two options, in which case players simply play the highest value card they can, which makes much of the play automatic and very speedy indeed, and quite unlike the ruminations sparked by *kwin*. This catches out inattentive or inexperienced players (i.e. me) and forces them to pick up two cards. The game is characterised by rapid opening and curtailing of opportunities to pull the game towards you, but while opportunities to manipulate play come thick and fast, they are nevertheless only glimpses of victory, which require quick thinking to take advantage of. These situations have been restricted in my depiction for brevities sake, but they make up a large portion of play. *Bom* is ideal to tie up the time in an electrifying way while keeping losses at a minimum with low stakes. Furthermore, when the game ends with the *Bom* card and players are forced to count the value of their cards, it is astounding how fast this is done, in a manner more akin to pattern recognition than addition (cf. Pickles 2009). The many rounds, one after another, and the speed by which decisions are made and turns taken, make it the most popular *fas gem* (lit. 'fast game'). *Bom* is thus considered extremely exciting.

Speed manifests itself in the idiom of the *paten*, which I outlined in connection with *kwin*. The term comes into its own in *bom*, where the *paten* is the dominant term used to characterise tactics rather than the *kona*, and where a good player will have *mastamindim paten blo bom* (lit. 'masterminded the pattern of bomb'). Again this idiom is directed toward the cards themselves and their patterns, not to the mastery of others' tactics and thoughts. Once more the pattern is visible in the accumulating face-up cards, but it demands even more direct attention from players of *bom*. The need to control the actions of the next person is more direct and unmediated, less thoughtful, and so less *kona*-like. *Paten* as I understood it is

²⁶ Especially as the reader will be able to deduce that the card B was forced to pick up was the K♣, because otherwise she would have played this card rather than picked up when he did.

conceived as a diachronic unfolding: revealing itself over time and then extrapolated into the future (see also Ingold 2000; Küchler & Were 2005; Pickles 2009). Because play is faster in *bom*, the pattern unfolds faster. The pattern also changes constantly, as players take opportunities to change suit or symbol. Each phase of play where ♦ follows ♦, for instance, is seen as a discrete pattern that is redirected into another pattern when ♦ becomes ♣. In *kwin* the pattern remains locked in people's hands and the general relationship between cards on the ground, whereas the pattern in *bom* is visible, immediate, and changeable. Of course when a player changes the pattern from ♦s into ♣s, they are controlling the pattern, and so pattern in *bom* visibly changes all the time (*paten senis senis*) as the result of one's actions. Another player can piggyback this change to victory, or change it once more, because there are many possible cards that can follow on. The *paten* and its change become a place where a person can calibrate themselves in the knowledge that it is moving too fast to be controlled by another for long. This is where the analogy between low-rank Kula valuables and *bom* comes to fruition: *bom* seems to act like the unnamed low-value Kula artefacts that are said to go every which way, neither retaining a coherent flow nor making a significant difference to the order of things in and of themselves. *Bom* likewise is a place where those who would graduate to *kwin* learn to hone their pattern-discerning skills, but the thoughts which work for *bom* are importantly not sufficiently *kona*-like (relational) to be considered properly 'Melanesian'. People say that *kwin* is part of the "Melanesian Way", while *bom* is not, because the pattern of *bom* is oriented towards fast money rather than sharing, and the pattern appears between cards without sufficient reference to people.

The hierarchical and age-grade relationship between the patterns of *bom* and *kwin* can be seen more clearly if we break down the rules of the games into their syntactical elements and those elements' relationships with each other, which is of two orders. As we shall see, while cards are not divisible like money (see chapter one), they are connected in novel mathematical relationships that allow play to occur and variation to be expressed. Things like numbers (say 3 and 6) are terms that have meaning inasmuch as they are related to each other, as part of a code. The same can be said of cards within a suit, which are related in an ordinal fashion as numbers, but with the addition of four other symbols, the A, J, Q and K, that are also arranged ordinally. In turn all cards are given cardinal numerical values which (as in *bom*) may be tallied when the game is over to count people's points score. This is complicated by the four suits,

which replicate the cardinal and ordinal values four times over in four different sets²⁷. Various other arbitrary rules may be added for any particular game, and there may even be different stages of play where different types of ordinal or cardinal values take precedence.

Bom is one such game, acting on two levels of signification: cardinal numerical value in the counting up period, and also the ordinality between cards in play. *Bom* demands that one adds a single card ordinally by following one of the possible rules of sign-relation (following suit or symbol, using a rest card, reversing the play with a 4, etc.). *Kwin* on the other hand demands combinations of three and four cards related to each other by a single rule of sign-relation, of which it only allows two (ordinal similitude and suit difference (5♥, 5♣, 5♦, 5♠) or ordinal seriality and suit similitude (5♥, 6♥, 7♥, 8♥)). *Kwin* works by using a single level of signification but with a heightened demand for sign conjunctions. With *bom* the single serial ordering of cards laid down means that one can clearly see what types of cards will have what impact on the game and which cards are most valuable in your hand or otherwise. As such the *paten* of *bom* is stronger, more unfolding, more subject to change than the more intuition-based understanding that comes out in *kwin*. The result is that in *bom*, even though cause is even more strongly associated with the front end of a player's pivot (the lead card), and the effect more direct, it is the change of pattern in the cards that are emphasised in talk about tactics. One's agency is even more directly concentrated into *how* to control the empirical signifiers of relations as they unfold in a changeable pattern.

As I mentioned above, one of the main attractions of *bom* for the young is the fact that the *paten* is constantly changing. A close informant Alfons, who worked security at the National Sports Institute alongside Michael and was particularly partial to *bom*, echoed this argument, he said: the reason *bom* is speedy is the change in patterns, they drive the speed. He thought that opportunities open and close more quickly, and you have to be aware and keep your mind open to new patterns or you will not be able to win. Allowing one's thoughts to speed up carries its own risk, because *bom* is so fast it gets you excited, and this can quickly turn into anger; vigilance is therefore essential. While *kwin* might be understood to be a game for friends, a thinking game where older players are typically respectful of each other, *bom*, with its fast changing pattern, is often derided as too fast, not involving enough interactions. Older

²⁷ In some games suits may be ranked in an ordinal fashion too, for example in a game of trumps where hearts are of higher value than spades.

people complain that *bom*, despite its low stakes, involves only a lust for money, not sitting down well with people. In fact people say the low stakes in *bom* are a response to the fact people win and lose very quickly. The game could be regarded as more money-oriented because the focus on the changing pattern means players are not engaged with other people, an accusation often levelled at the young who enjoy it so much. If we relate this back to the argument made about *kwin* and the *kona man*, who is a successful but socially responsible (relational) being, then the changing *paten* of *bom* may be understood as directed to a more abstracted set of relations between cards, and a corresponding lack of regard for other people. *Bom* is accused of skipping past people for material success. Nevertheless, for the purposes of analysis the two games must be understood together, and within the lifecycle of a person, for it is assumed that young minds will slow as they age and their tastes will change correspondingly. It is clear from my card-genealogical material that fast games have long been a concern for Gorokans, and it seems likely that similar derisions were levelled at previous games.

Whether good or bad, patterns remain pertinent to both *kwin* and *bom*, so how does the Gorokan use of the term *paten* inform our understanding of pattern? *Paten* emerge diachronically as a result of Gorokan people's *aidia*, which are idiosyncratic theoretical extensions of what they take as given about the seriality, ordinality, and configurative proclivities of cards. When one's *aidia* prove successful, one is able to adapt one's understandings of the workings of cards with what one knows already in the context of the game. *Bom* is a formidable obstacle in this regard as the pattern is constantly changing and so one requires *aidia* that include linkages between patterns to overcome this changeability. The young whose minds are changeable are particularly well-suited for such tasks (see Sykes 1999), and thus relish the prospect of a game whose *paten senis senis*.

I see an analogy between the way in which pattern is elaborated and how Pickering describes the construction of new theories in science. For Pickering, scientific 'discoveries' are intuitions which are freely extended; when they produce results then scientists attempt to emplace their intuitions into existing knowledge by retrofitting theories that seem appropriate to the results/ideas, what he calls a 'disciplinary force' (Pickering 1997). In the process, existing knowledge is transformed. *Aidia* also represent attempts to surpass existing knowledge by freely extending themselves. These theorisations are then examined in terms of how they

affect what is already known (the *paten*), and a 'disciplinary force' fills in the gaps with what is already known, placing the *aidia* within the confines of tactical norms. What Pickering mostly calls a mangle, sometimes a pattern (ibid: 66), is his attempt to theorise the method that brings about scientific discovery, in much the same way as *paten* covers an understanding of the flow of cards in a game. *Paten*, which I introduced as the *how* that M. Strathern emphasised, seems to me to be a highly intellectual and yet materialistic endeavour that projects forward into the future using *aidia*, and then conventionalised within tactical norms. If indigenous number systems can be seen as a "science of the concrete" (Biersack 1982; see also Wassman & Dasen 1994; Mimica 1988; Ascher 1991; 2002), then searching for *paten* would be a crucible for concrete scientific discovery through inductive and deductive theorisation. That people recognise that the *paten senis senis* is indicative of Gorokan understandings of the consequences of their own and others' *aidia* in the material world. Pattern can therefore be understood as a diachronic unfolding that requires human agency to retain or redirect its course (see also Kuchler & Were 2005a).

Having set out some differences between *kwin* and *bom*, I finally move on to card gambling in its entirety. For all their different foci, and despite being rendered into either positive and negative forms, the methods by which players discern patterns and affect the course of flows of cards to win money require an attention that is similar at the most fundamental level.

How to Win at Cards

With an emphasis on patterns of play and the opening and closing of opportunities, people think of games as fields of motion and circulation that are beyond their individual capacity to totally determine, but may be redirected in players' favour given foresight, *nous*, and synchronicity (cf. Mimica 2006). From their *kona* people can become agents acting upon others at the instigation of yet others and then (hopefully) take control of those multiple flows to effect a singular outcome: a win. To do so they must crucially keep their eyes on the bigger picture, to abstract the 'pattern' out of play, which they attempt to manipulate.

Even as a player skilfully manipulates the pattern within a game, they are liable to be disrupted by others outside of the game. This is not to say they are pestered by onlookers but rather, as I

mentioned above, there are unseen forces that can work for or against them. It is common knowledge in Goroka that if those around you are not happy with you, if they think that you have been miserly or uncaring toward them, their unpleasant thoughts may go inside the game, causing you to lose (cf. Reed 1999). This is known as *jelas pasin* (lit. 'jealous passion') and it can be very serious. For instance when a player wins a significant amount of money it is imperative that they placate any losers as those losers may use sorcery or witchcraft to hurt them (see chapter one). Sorcery and witchcraft are the most concrete manifestations of *jelas pasin*, but negative thoughts do not require a spell to take effect, just thinking badly of another is enough to disrupt their thoughts and cause them to lose. Gorokans found it difficult to articulate how thoughts travel between people, but it seems their minds are connected and that others' thoughts are inseparable from one's own (see above). This multiplicity is resolved when one makes a decision and thus acts as a single person, but the thoughts of others contribute to the decision and can thus meddle with one's powers to enact relationships.

It is thus necessary to straighten out one's relationships and make people happy before one plays cards, not only to give one the requisite peace of mind, but because the thoughts of others, so extended, also may affect the cards themselves. Negative thoughts travel from the mind by dirtying the blood, which then circulates around the body, polluting the skin, which is in turn felt by the cards. If one is muddled with the negative thoughts of others, then cards will not like you, which is to say they will not configure correctly in response to you. Michael O'Hanlon (1989) makes the same point in reference to dancing among the Waghi westward of Goroka, whose skin manifests moral transgressions, causing a dancer to appear ugly and unattractive. The same is true of all kinds of acquisitive activity in Goroka: it does not necessarily matter which kind of transaction you are performing, if you are being blocked, all desirable things will be less drawn towards you²⁸.

²⁸ In chapter three I discuss the power of attraction with reference to marketing and wider transactional spheres. Kula magic known as *mwasila*, which Malinowski discusses at length (1961 [1922]: 334-349), imparts powers of attraction upon people, which affect a variety of objects but also go directly into the minds of potential Kula partners and soften their will to resist. Campbell found that the magic that Malinowski called *mwasila* was known to her informants as *kaimwasila* because it affects the minds of others directly, as opposed to *mwasila*, which is concerned only with making the individual beautiful and attractive (Campbell 2002: 157-8). No such division seems operative in Goroka, where card/marketing magic simply makes a person attractive to all people and things capable of configuration.

On the other hand, if you are able to procure a substance known to attract things of value towards you, then this may be utilised in gambling when held close to the skin, where it acts through the body to clean and purify the blood and thereby skin, which will attract the cards toward you, regardless of others attempts to disrupt you. Many people do have magical charms that they think will aid winning in this way, but these are not legitimate things to mention that one possesses (see also Pflanz 1977: 175), and people deny as much when they are in public. These items were various and secret, but generic descriptions included the bark of a particular tree, a seed, stone, and even ash from the Rabaul volcano in New Britain. Clean or new blood is also associated with pregnant women, young children who play, or those who have cleaned their blood by ritual purging and bathing or using oils (see O'Hanlon 1989; Read 1965; Hogbin 1970; cf. Gell 1979).

Anthropological convention heaps significance on the specificities of this type of material while citing gambling as one of a number of fields where these actions are efficacious (see Pflanz 1977: 175; Mimica 2006). Yet in Goroka *majik* ('magic') is an additional possibility, not a necessary means to victory. This is in keeping with the running Kula analogy, for in the Trobriand Islands Malinowski notes that "the effects of magic are something superadded to all the other effects produced by human effort and by natural qualities" (1961 [1922]: 421; see also Campbell 2002: 54-56), and the same applies to magic used for gambling in Goroka, which adds to the openness that one needs to cultivate. For this reason magic is an addendum to this study, as my aim is to explicate the shape that human effort must take for gambling success with or without magic. In the case of Goroka, a town, people assumed that others had their own, idiosyncratic magic for gambling, and they thought about the games as far more concrete ways of finding out what success was and how to get it. As discussed in the prologue, this state has been deliberately cultivated by policing the kind of cards that can be used to mitigate the effects of magic.

The games provide a model for achieving success with or without magic, and I therefore focus on this mode of knowing how one's magic or home relationships are getting on through one's *aidia*. 'Ideas' are used to attract cards and money towards oneself, but they may as likely be interrupted by the thoughts of others within and outside the game, for the thoughts of others, while unknowable, are still in discourse with one's own mind, so people often resort to magic after a run of losses that tell them their *aidia* are underperforming. There is a lot of

retrospective analysis of individual games, and these are being refined on the back of the games that follow. As discussed in chapter one, the Gorokan concentration on flows of thoughts and objects precludes chance as a framework for the unknowable. Instead people assume that flows cannot be totally understood, connected as they are with the minds and distortive attractions/repulsions of others.

The lack of knowledge of others' minds and their intentions is a prerequisite for playing cards (cf. Minnegal 2009). Playing cards is a vehicle for the knowledge of both self and other, but which is founded upon the basic assumed un-knowability of minds outside of concrete action and evidence. Knowledge is aspirational, one's theorising of patterns are literally ideas of what is happening, unverifiable until the end of the game. All the more so for the fact that Goroka is a large community; one cannot know everyone and so the full scale of flows and thoughts are far beyond humans' capacity for knowing. Again this goes back to the 'opacity of others minds' (J. Robbins & Rumsey 2008), adding a temporal dimension, where concrete signs of intentions and action are made manifest in cards but do not reveal themselves fully until the end of a game. Yet Gorokans are not ones to give up. Skilful deployment of *aidia* ('ideas') can still generate success if masterfully deployed at the right time with the proper force. As Mimica observed in a Highlands-fringe area nearby: "the world-body continuously demands from humans a relentless corporeal self-application in every endeavour" (2006: 122). Cards offer a great opportunity to do just that. People test themselves at things like cards in order to know not only whether they will be successful (see also A. Strathern 1984: 102-103), but who they are, as this is constituted in one's relations to others.

The most prized asset of a player for any game is consequently mental openness, their ability to recognise the total flow of cards laid down, the positions and motivations of other players, and openness to signs which might otherwise be thought to have nothing to do with gambling. Likewise in the North of the Kula ring, Campbell found that a prerequisite for initiates' attempts to own magical knowledge is clearing their mind, which predisposes them toward successful use of the magic they are taught (2002: 55). The same applies to gamblers in Goroka, and this asset sits above clean blood, efficacious objects and trickery in importance, as it is the possibility of detecting and directing all these things through the recognition of patterns. Master carvers in the Kula ring have clear minds and their magic consequently transforms canoes into beautiful, light and swift agents of Kula acquisition. These people feel

compelled to carve, “allowing the designs, patterning and form to ‘flow’ from his mind through his hand and eye”, and this seems exactly the kind of thought that gamblers in Goroka strive for (ibid: 132).

In their strivings, a player who participates in a game of cards often finds it necessary to focus their consciousness in some way in order to open their mind. Some options include: concentrating on a recent dream portending victory; how much one desires to win; which cards one aims to win by; or even employing reverse psychology by trying to forget ones desire to win or renounce attachment to how much one is up or down in a game (see also Mimica 2006; Reed 2011). The game one is playing again determines how one synchronises with it and the level of openness required, be it thinking deeply or quickly. Successful players are constantly thinking about the movement of their cards and the cards of others, looking for opportunities to once again have a hand in their direction, as successful Kula practitioners on Muyuw think about the movement of shell valuables (Damon 2002: 130). The truly skilled gambler will gain the status of a *kona-man* or one who has *mastamindim kas*, and as with masters of the shell paths, known as ‘men of Kula’, they will have many friends through gambling that acknowledge their skill rather than assuming trickery or magic. It is worth reminding the reader that Kula fame travels within the ‘game’, with objects, whereas gambling fame may, or may not, move outside of each game’s temporary circulation of cards, so there is no systematic means by which gamblers gain universal renown. Within a town, gambling fame is particularly unlikely to travel (but see chapters four and five). There is thus no consensus on who is a great *kona-man* in Goroka, unlike the self-evident fame that occurs within the single ‘game’ of Kula.

Despite their being no consensus on who is the best *kona-man*, without activities like gambling it is difficult to gauge intentions and efficacies, just as people along the Kula ring use their transactions to gauge their fame. By playing cards, in Goroka people benefit not only by winning, but also by finding out that it will not be their day, that it might be better to stay home with the door locked. Portents of material success bring me back to the issue of money, which has been largely kept out of the descriptive sections of the chapter. If you recall, Michael has been losing his money and with it control over a large note. At the same time Michael will be feeling out how his pattern-discerning skills are working today, with some knowledge of his history of transaction with the other players within the game and

relationships outside, and whether his blood is likely to be somewhat clean/dirty. The inherent dilemma is that one has to engage in an activity which might lose you money in order to discern whether you are likely to lose money at it. It is only by attempting to attract things to you by doing things like playing cards or Kula, that one can gauge the efficacy of one's tactics and the present state of one's relations with others. Gambling and Kula offer thorough empirical data of concrete action involving wealth items. While people do find other ways to gauge their own efficacy such as sport, health, or their transactions with others, I was unable to find anything which appraised people's current efficacy as precisely as gambling (see also A. Strathern 1984: 102-103). The demand for evidence of intention is in turn reflected in the type of games played in Goroka, and Michael will have joined whichever best fit his mental state.

To reiterate, we might say that a player will have to control the flow of cards in the game, take control of their relationships within and without the game, attempt to tame and counteract the flows and attraction and agencies inherent in other objects like charms, cards and money, and at the same time abstract oneself from relations between people so that they can search for patterns, strengths and weaknesses which determine their course of action at every level. This is what it means to have an open mind. In one final likeness between the tactical outlook shared between Kula and Gorokan gambling, I note how well Annette Weiner's characterisation fits my own ethnography. She states that "[t]he perceptions that surround Kula combine fact and possibility, success and failure, with loss as much a part of the system as gain" (A. Weiner 1992: 144). It seems then that despite their many differences, people need gambling to test out relations, similar to the pursuit of Kula in its famous ring.

Conclusion

Both *kwin* and *bom* are similar in the sense that they are a collection of persons in which one and only one can best all others²⁹. I have argued that *kona* ('corner'), *aidia* ('idea'), *paten* ('pattern'), and *mastamindim* ('masterminding') suggest a social world where selected abstractions play a key role in the self-determination of Gorokan people. Using the model of relationality and the analogy of Kula within my fieldsite, I identified how gambling allows

²⁹ The few that are not will be discussed in the following chapter.

people the opportunity to theorise about what kinds of thought are efficacious and to project those ideas into the future. The analogy was not exact, and I was at pains to point out differences where I saw them, most notably in the fact gambling's many discrete events do not allow for universal fame on the same scale as Kula. Even so, *Kwin* and *bom*, slow and fast, consistent pattern and changeable, relationships between people and cards; all are held together on a continuum that relates to different scales for understanding the world and testing ones understanding (see A. Strathern 1984: 102-103). There are various vantage points for comprehending them while you occupy a *kona*, from which a player can observe an overall *paten*, leading to some *aidia* which can be used to *mastamindim* the game, so that one will be known as an outstanding *kona man* and hopefully a winner, and a leading part of the process by which the *paten senis senis*. It is within this that I saw a great talent for abstraction, for taking a version of the big picture and turning it to one's advantage. If one imagined that Gorokans did relationality, one could see this as an abstraction of a relational reality, a deliberately detached and objectivised creation of solid ground on which to act relationally.

In the chapter that follows, I elaborate upon the issue of speed within card gambling, and draw a more concrete ethnographic link between cards and money through the medium of marketing. Marketing takes a number of forms which play on the process of creating units of value out of possessions. I emphasise the enumerative qualities of these transactions and explore what it means in transactional terms for a Gorokan to be surrounded by strangers. My focus shifts to the relational 'logic' which is applied to transactions and their potential for reproducing and cultivating relationships over time. As a means to grasp this 'logic', I bring out one remarkable gambling game that is only found in small pockets around Goroka, in the thick and dense atmosphere of speedy transactions. The search for patterns and the testing of ideas are all pillars of the manipulation of value that I discussed in chapter one, and together with this chapter they form the basis from which I proceed to talk about the various transactions in the following chapters. Now that I have described normal gaming, I am able to tackle the more unusual games in which value manipulation becomes increasingly rapid and intense. I return to the issue of value in each of the following chapters, bearing in mind that the search for efficacy described in this chapter underpins all attempts to manipulate value.

Challenge: The Fastest Money in Goroka

This chapter is dedicated to marketing and a card game format paradigmatically associated with certain markets; called *chalinj* ('challenge'). The style of gaming is rare but well-known for its frenetic speed and high stakes, much like the markets which host it. Like cards, markets are exogenous: they were first introduced into Goroka and the Highlands in 1955 by Australian colonisers exasperated by what they saw as incessant door to door hawking. Quickly though the colonisers saw an opportunity to distribute exotic fruit and vegetable seeds they could later buy back, stimulating development, their taste buds, and adding commodification to subsistence (Jackson 1976: 175; see also Meggitt 1989). The idea caught on, and soon markets became almost exclusively Papua New Guinean social spaces; they fulfilled the urban need for comestibles and provided subsistence agriculturalists hungry for imported products with cash to buy them (Jackson 1976: 175). Once set into motion, markets emerged as important meeting and trading places, and the category of activity known as *maket* (lit. 'to market') an inescapable part of everyday life in urban areas (cf. *ibid*).

Chalinj occurs in wholesale betel nut markets, and betel nut is the most marketed item in Goroka¹; a seed from the areca plant, it is combined in the mouth with lime powder and piper betle. A reaction begins as they are chewed, producing a vivid red mash in the mouth, and inducing a pleasant, energising, sometimes heady sensation that also acts as an appetite suppressant. As betel nut does not bear fruit locally, it is brought from the coast and sold in markets all over the Highlands. Originally betel nut selling was banned from the markets of Goroka due to the colonisers' distaste for bright red spittle discolouring their town. Yet with demand exploding and other markets proving so successful, markets specifically for wholesale betel nut and its corollaries sprung up on customary land as near to the centre of Town and the Main (produce) Market as possible. The ban was unique among Highland towns, and

¹ The betel nut trade began after World War Two when Mekeo people of Central Province started supplying betel to Port Moresby; in the 1980's Highlanders began to take over the retail trade within the city (see Mosko 1999; Hirsch 1990).

effectively allowed the differentiation of two types of marketing occupying separate locations. Fed by growing consumption and without state regulation, the betel nut markets metamorphosed into places that I see as radically differentiated from their legal counterparts, and which I think helps sustain this particular form of gaming.

There are currently two large central markets for betel nut wholesale in Goroka, called *Kakaruk Maket* (lit. 'Chicken Market', so called because it began by selling chickens before moving into betel nut) and *Chuave Maket* (named after a district in Simbu province). *Kakaruk* and *Chuave* are dank, crowded, sludgy places where the ground – no matter how dry it has been – is soft, moist and trampled into shifting peaks and troughs. The older of the two, *Kakaruk*, is built on a dip in ground level, and the husks of betel nut, beer bottle caps, plastic bags and discarded cards form the ground upon which you walk. The site resembles a composting heap, the spongy ground yielding oily black ooze under foot. *Chuave* is flatter, wetter, bigger and newer, but otherwise much the same. The betel nut markets are so packed with marketers they spill out onto the streets like a colonial headquarters setting up outposts all over Town. At the roadside, on street corners and outside houses, 32% of street marketing vendors in Goroka sell products supplied by the betel nut markets². Much of my time was spent hanging around those who marketed, as gambling melded with marketing in my understanding (see also chapter one). Anticipating their coterminacy, betel nut markets went so far as to designate card game areas: *Chuave* has four, *Kakaruk* one large one, sometimes two; other gambling forms have their places: darts and pool are played for beer or money, while bingo and a spinning wheel deal only in cash. They were gambling's central locations, and when I first mentioned my topic on arrival, people invariably told me to head to *Kakaruk Maket*.

² All statistics used in this chapter, unless otherwise stated, were collected by my field assistant Loui Ipatu in 2009-2010 via a series of surveys (see prologue).



Figure 3.1: A typical scene in *Kakaruk Market* as street sellers move between wholesale stalls searching for a good deal, taken by the author on 24/3/2010.

With the intensification of marketing and gambling activities at these markets, this chapter has at its core an idea of geographical centrality, of a fixed spatial location whose fame is retained over time. I use the term centrality here to refer to any enduring spatial prominence associated with transactions. Enduring spatial prominence is widely acknowledged as an introduced phenomenon in Papua New Guinea (cf. Hirsch 1994). Barter was conducted by travelling to other communities with your wares, exchange ceremonies shifted location often, while tribal warfare made known meeting points hazardous, and hence centrality was a moveable state rather than a fixed place (see Godelier 1986). Centrality may have once been an achieved and ephemeral state enacted by specific persons as fractal encompassments of their component relations (see Hirsch 1994). Yet today markets are thriving in Goroka and in Papua New Guinea more widely, and marketing in a fixed place is one of the most reliable ways of gaining an income today.

For Gorokans betel nut markets, money and gambling went hand in hand, and this was thought to happen because of the speed that money changed hands in these locales. Among

the many strangers I met in *Kakaruk Maket*, one explained to me that while White people say 'time is money', this does not apply here; here money can come at any time. He meant that with money moving fast, constantly being given by one person to another for all kinds of reasons, one might be the recipient of money at an unexpected hour. In places of concentrated marketing, the speed of money's flow increased, and with it time became denser, so time was no longer money. Two idiomatic aspects of the betel nut markets were particularly emphasised, the extreme speed of money and the many kinds of *pasin* (lit. 'passion', habits or preferences, cf. Mihalic 1971) that emerged. They were causally connected: fast moving money brought out all kinds of *pasin*, some good, some bad (see also chapter two). I concentrate solely here on *pasin blo kas* (lit. 'passion belonging to cards'³), though other kinds of *pasin* were equally evident, especially drinking. Fast money and flaring *pasin* produced an ideal – and the only – setting for *chalinj* ('Challenge'), the fastest form of card gambling in Goroka, and the one that elicited the most violent *pasin*. Only places like *Kakaruk* and *Chuave* (where money moved so fast as to generate any number of moral problems) could contain this kind of gambling: the fastest game, the fastest money.

Betel nut and its corollaries were sold for money and so this chapter is also concerned with what we see as commodities (Appadurai 1986; cf. Gell 1992, 144; Gregory 1982). According to Appadurai commodities are objects which have been alienated in exchange during at least one 'phase' of their existence (1986). Yet those participating in Gorokan betel nut marketing, wherever they did so, were not 'quits' after each transaction. As I will show, while one was in principle free to call it quits, the act of transaction was deliberately implanted in the memory of transactors so as to impart a sense of enduring obligation. Bound up with persistent transactions was the generalisation of a world of debt and credit and a town saturated with indigenous accountancy. My intention is not to destabilise the notion of commodities, a point as routine in Melanesian anthropology these days as to be mundane, but to articulate a mode of thought, a 'logic' (cf. Holbraad 2005), which bore only passing resemblance to our world of commodities. Marketing and gambling iterate this 'logic' in different intensities based upon the notion of speed explored in chapter two, and so after describing *chalinj*, I make a pilgrimage from the slowest to the fastest forms of marketing 'logic', taking in their different

³ *Pasin* is here translated as 'passion', but it also encompasses the terms habit and behaviour. In this circumstance passion seems the most accurate translation.

forms. The slower forms of marketing sat alongside games I explained in chapter two, so I leave them unarticulated here.

My portrayal may evoke in the reader's mind Clifford Geertz's description of a Balinese cockfight (1973), where a central place of gambling enacts a 'culture' in its most concentrated form. While Geertz aimed to show a culture enacting itself as text, my ambition is to illuminate new social practices that emerge from particularly Melanesian logical forms⁴. I will attempt to demonstrate that marketing, and its twin card gambling, contained a mode of money-thought or 'logic' peculiar to the Melanesian context instead of either a static cultural enactment or an instance of universal commoditisation of a formerly gift-based system. Yet to my mind Geertz' description was enlivened by its structure, working like a murder mystery by beginning with a description of the game and then elucidating its context. I travel the same path, and therefore this chapter breaks my convention by making the journey in the past tense.

***Chalinj* ('Challenge')**

Not strictly speaking a game, *chalinj* was a type of gaming: a direct contest between two persons or parties. It was said to have arrived in Goroka at various times from 1999 to 2009. *Chalinj* was believed to be prevalent further up the Highlands in Hagen and Wabeg, from where it was supposed to have come⁵. The typical game adapted for *chalinj* was *tri-lip* (literally 'three leaves'), also known as *laki*⁶. Other games like *fombe*, *bom* and *las-kat* could have been used in theory, though I never observed them, and the only game which was excluded by virtue of its rules was *Kwin* (see chapter two for a history of these games). In Goroka *tri-lip* (or *laki*) and its frenetic speed were associated with times when the Kina had a higher purchasing power, but its group form was long gone from Goroka⁷. During 2009-10 *tri-lip* or *laki*, in its

⁴ Bear in mind that Geertz does not problematize the money changing hands around his cockfight, itself a non-indigenous exchange form, and thus I hope by example to demonstrate the scope of 'interpretation' left open by Geertz omission.

⁵ I was not able to verify this claim.

⁶ See prologue; chapter two.

⁷ Gorokans say that in villages, people still play *laki* because money holds no value there. A form of *laki* persists in other rural settings in Papua New Guinea (see Mosko 2012).

chalinj form, was confined to the margins of special events like the Goroka Cultural Show, or deep within the betel nut markets, or to drunken culminating times of wealth and abandon (cf. Mosko 1999). This was so markedly the case that people described places where *chalinj* games go on as ones which were *mani pulap* ('money filled') or where *mani kapsait* ('money overflows/falls down'). Osama, an informant who knew the markets more intimately than anyone (he collected rent from betel nut sellers at *Kakaruk Maket* and ran a successful bingo operation), explained *chalinj* as a game where:

Money flows, it will take the money from inside your pocket⁸; money goes fast. ...that is why many people try to stop this game from happening because they want to keep more money, that is why it is now only in *Chuave Maket* and not in *Kakaruk Maket*. Challenge is like cock-fighting, where two people battle in the middle and other people bet on the two playing⁹. It is like State of Origin, with Blues and Maroons¹⁰.

⁸ See chapter six.

⁹ Despite further shades of Clifford Geertz, this is actually the only reference to cock-fighting that anybody in Goroka made during my fieldwork, I have never heard of a cock-fight occurring in Town. Osama was always on the lookout for curious vents, particularly if he thought they could be used to make money, but I do not know where or when he experienced or heard about cock-fighting.

¹⁰ State of Origin is an Australian rugby league competition discussed in chapters four and five. Here the reader may note that in both *chalinj* and State of Origin, two sides challenge each other openly and in public view.



Figure 3.2: A game of *chalinj* at *Chuave Market*, while in the background a tarpaulin shelters more sedentary games of *kwin* (see chapter two). I am at the back of the crowd watching the game, the photograph was taken by Alfred Gotaha on 22/4/2010.

Chalinj was a fast game, in fact the archetypal fast game, with extremely, almost anarchically simple rules: after shuffling, three cards were dealt to each player, and the numerical value of each set of three cards was compared. A winning hand was the closest to a score of 10, with the cumulative value of the cards recursively returning to zero upon reaching multiples of 10, as in baccarat. Face cards held a value of 10, such that if one had a king, a ten and a four, one's total would be four: an unfavourable hand. Combinations of face cards beat other totals of 10, but which combinations of face cards beat which others varied, and the most common solution was to re-deal. Each hand lasted from a few seconds to a minute or two, most of which was taken up organising the bets.

Despite decisive simplicity with the cards, the betting system was intricate and key to understanding what the game was about. To illustrate I will take the reader with me as I approached a game already in motion, as all but two players would have done throughout the day. Inching our way through a throng of curious bystanders and potential players, I saw a

man¹¹ perched on an empty cooking oil drum; he was our ‘referee’, dealing the cards and mediating the betting on a mat floating atop the muddy ground. A queue of varying amounts of money sat by the referee’s side on the mat and a more beguiling large heap of money was closer to him¹², between his legs (see figure 3.3). Near the centre of the ring of bystanders was my friend Kripel, he wore a comical jester’s hat and sold betel nut at the Town bus stop during the day, returning to his settlement *Genoka* at night. Kripel came to *Chuave Maket* to buy his betel nut, and must have stopped for a game. He smiled, sunk his teeth into a ripe tomato, and pointed to the K1 coin at the front of the queue; I was just in time.

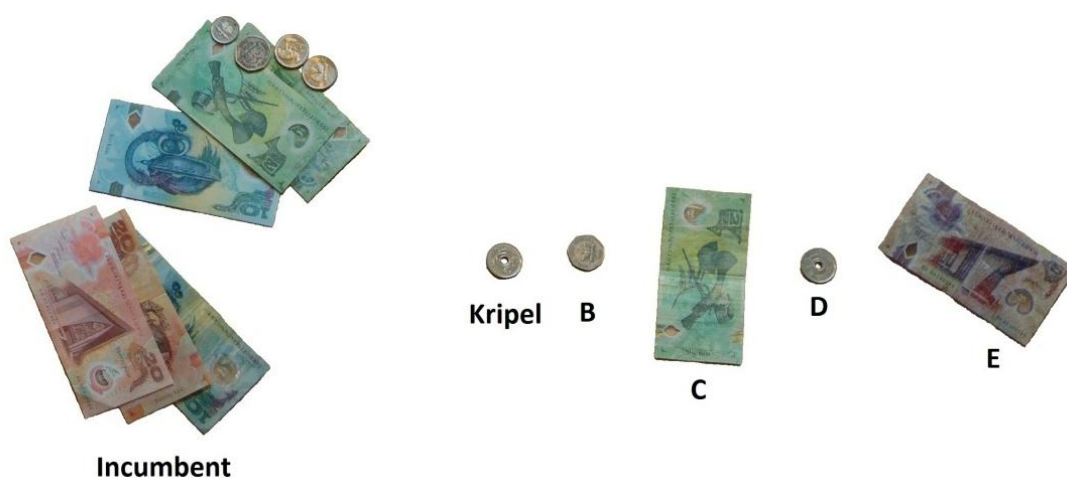


Figure 3.3: A typical arrangement of money between rounds of *chalinj*.

Two people were about to be dealt their three cards: Kripel, the challenger from the front of the queue of money, and the incumbent, who won the last round. Figure 3.3 shows the incumbent had K65 and the challenger only K1, but the amounts of money queuing or standing in the middle did not dictate how much players bet. Our incumbent said he wanted to bet K15 from his winnings (see figure 3.4), while Kripel declared he would bet K4, handing K3 to the referee who added it to the K1 that was holding his place.

¹¹ Theoretically this could have been a woman, but the physical presence and social standing of men was such that they stood a greater chance of controlling the mayhem, and in practice I never saw a woman in charge of one of these games.

¹² Making money visible or invisible was an important choice for Gorokans, I discuss it in depth in chapter six.

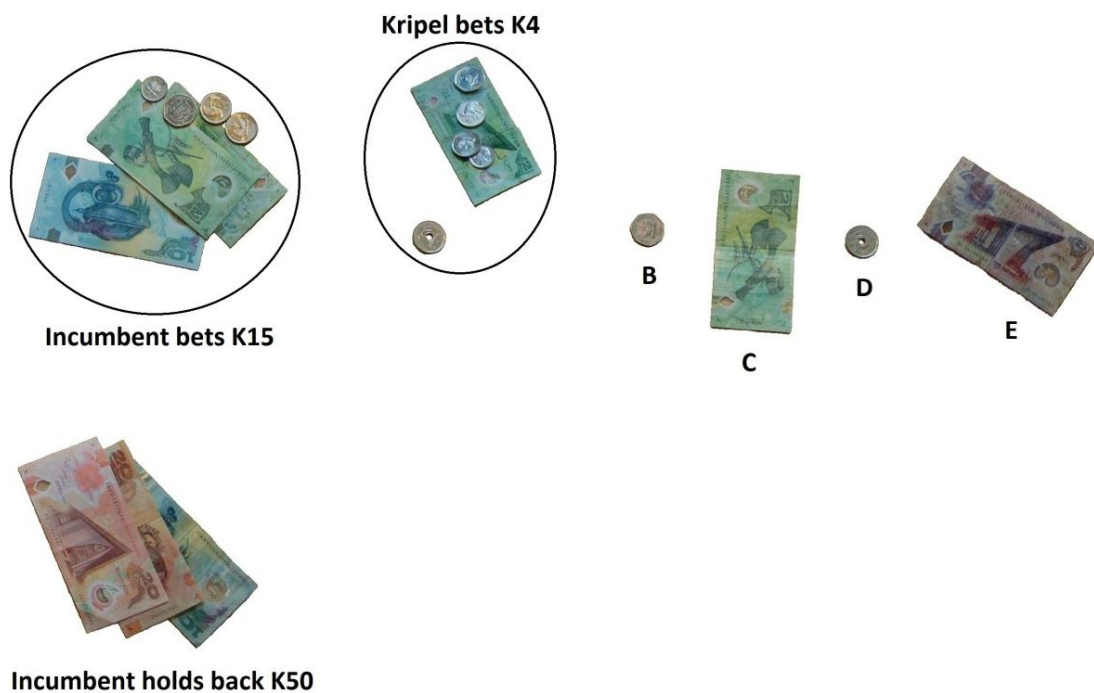


Figure 3.4: Incumbent and challenger making their bets in a round of *chalinj*.

The two bets did not match, and this was where the crowd came in to play. Some of these people, if they fancied, were able to join in the betting on either side and thus build up the pot. Several of them knew one of the bettors, others just thought they would win, and no one ever felt pressured to bet (contra Geertz 1973). It was up to our referee, sometimes aided by an assistant, to make sure that the overall sums matched, refusing or negotiating bet sizes from the supporting bettors or one of the two central players until they did. In this case two spectators come forward immediately, one for each side (figure 3.5), but their motives were never made clear. One spectator bet K4 on the incumbent; he wanted to bet K5, but there was no one willing to match that total for the other side, so the referee said he could only bet K4.

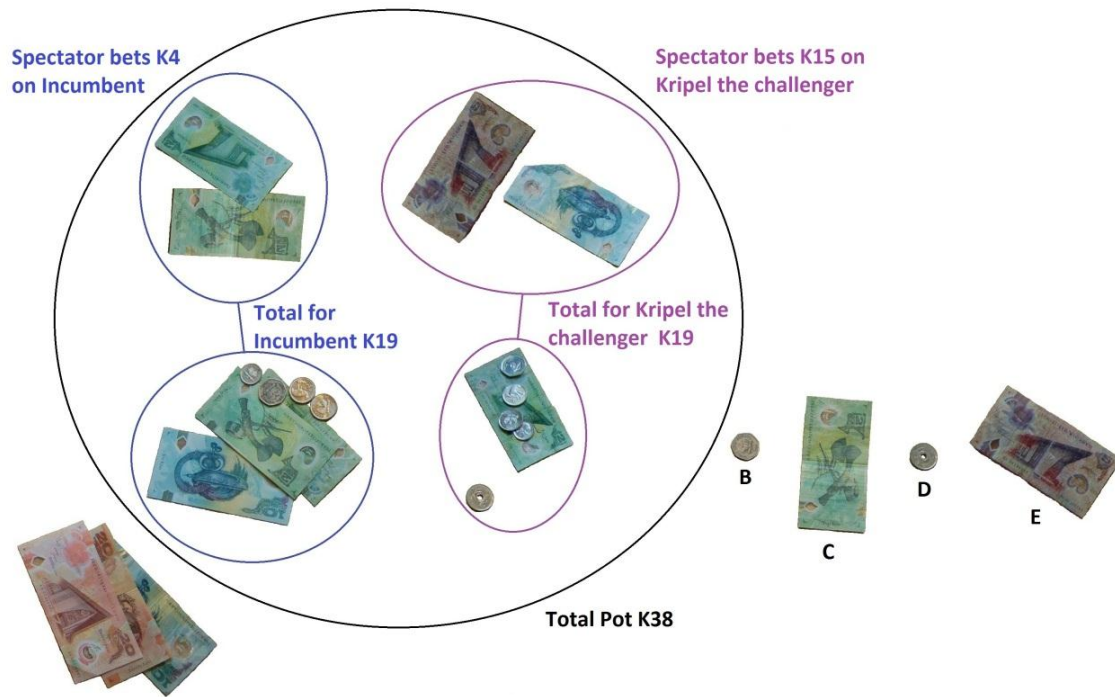


Figure 3.5: Two spectators join in the betting in a game of *chalinj*, making the pot balanced.

Now that the bets were equal, cards were dealt, and after anxiously revealing the cards to themselves and then the crowd, an incumbent was quickly ousted or a challenger bested. At this point our referee gave out the winnings to all but the (new) incumbent, whose money remained in the heap and joined their winnings from the previous rounds, or started a new pile if there was a new incumbent (figures 3.6 and 3.7). In either case B was the next to make a *chalinj*. The referee took a small cut from the incumbent's pot every three rounds; T50 if the bets were modest, K1 and upwards as they increased, but not this round. In figure 3.6 Kripel lost and the incumbent remained in the centre with an extra K15 added to their hoard, and the spectator who bet on the incumbent doubled his K4.

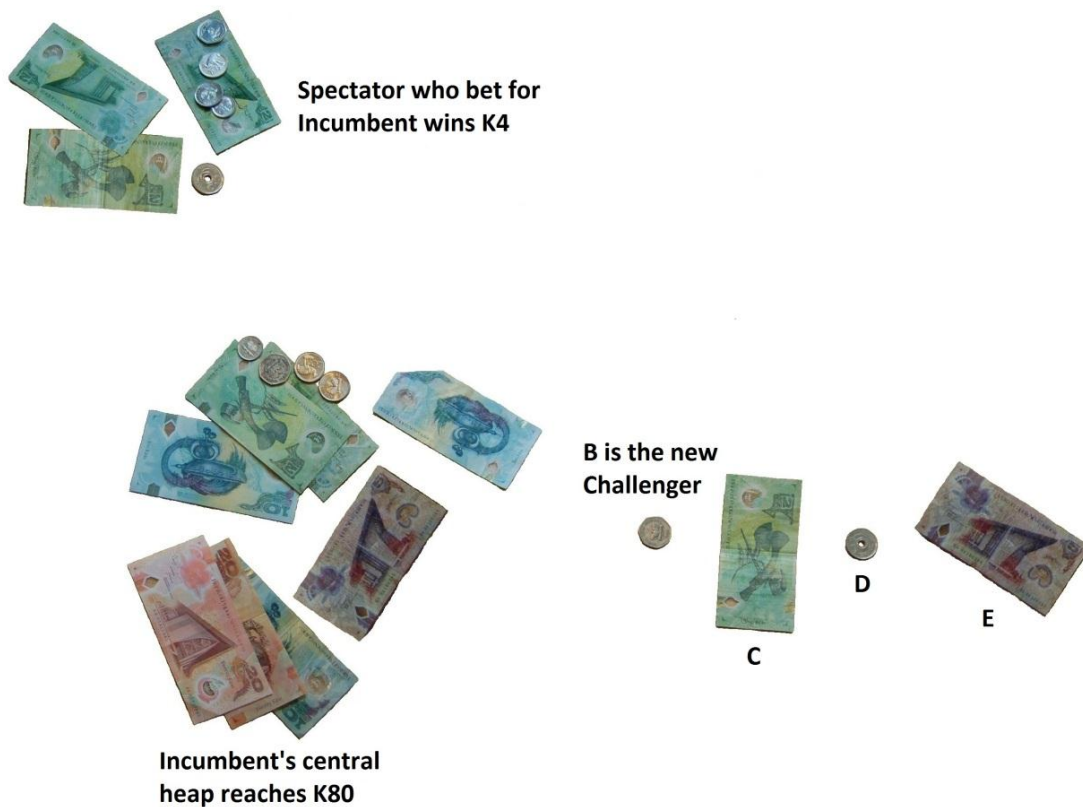


Figure 3.6: The incumbent wins the round of *chalinj*.

In figure 3.7 Kripel won instead, the incumbent was expelled and the spectator who believed in Kripel doubled his K15. Figure 3.7 shows how the betting structure in *chalinj* allowed the incumbent to lose a particular round and be ejected without losing all their money, some of which, in this case K50, was still in the heap between our referee's legs, leaving with the outgoing incumbent. This prevented a zero-sum situation from applying to those on a roll, and was crucial to the building of sizeable winnings. People talked of 'working' to make the bets get bigger, and this was demonstrably and intriguingly the case. Those who did well from their time in the centre were likely to play again, while those who lost out often became agitated and played once more until a few were much better off and others very short of money. In this sense also the game was a challenge for supremacy. In figure 3.7 the ousted incumbent headed straight to the back of the queue with his remaining K50, and so their money would soon feed into the central heap once more.

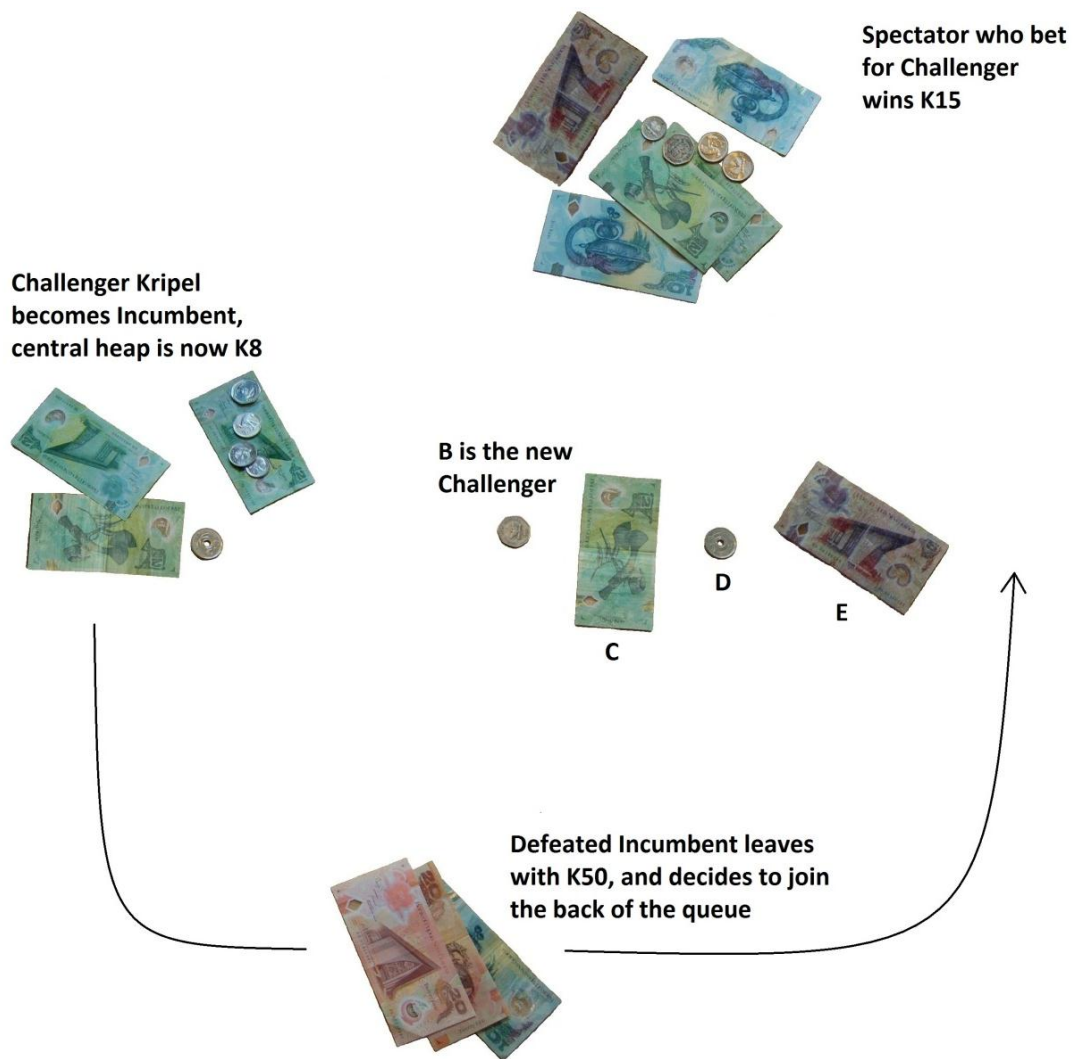


Figure 3.7: The challenger wins the round at *chalinj*.

Winners and losers ebbed and flowed, with winnings slowly agglomerating into the hands of a few or eventually even one winner. The central heap of money visibly grew as the day went on, which we shall see was an important aspect of play. The tendency to build bets and the wish to do so is important, as it demonstrates a desire to cooperate and intensify monetary transactions. People really enjoyed seeing this happen, whether they were part of the winning side or not. They pushed money into a concentrated central point so that one person (hopefully them) could surmount it, and direct this wealth at will. There was nothing in the structure of the game which guarantees that this would occur¹³, and the build-up was

¹³ See also chapter one.

repeatedly curtailed by a winner's departure, stuttering and then intensifying again, swelling and subsiding.

Bets regularly rose above the 100 Kina mark (£25), and safety concerns prevented me from seeing the K600-800 (£150-200) games that came up around payday afternoons¹⁴. To build up the pot, the game was reliant on the nature of its market, its big-money flows and the short-termism prevalent there. Many of the players were betel nut sellers like Kripel and more often wholesale traders, who had access to large amounts of money in short time frames. Traders could lose and then return with money only a few short minutes later¹⁵, it may have taken street sellers like Kripel much longer.

The reader will notice that this style of gaming is quite distinctive, it lacked the deflected responsibility that was enshrined in the games described in chapter two, and players went head to head often and for high stakes, which regularly led to anger and confrontation. So why here in the betel nut markets could a game be so different in its betting structure to the other games I have described? Why such a fast turnaround? Why this odd and unique betting structure? Why an emphasis on 'challenge' between two individuals, who were constantly replaced? Why this desire to cooperate in building up the pot? Why was building bets equated with 'work'? And what does it reveal about how people thought about money in Goroka? In order to answer these questions we need to understand more about the rhythms of money flows, and the best way to do this is to look at marketing and its symbiotic relationship with cards. It is no accident that cards and marketing were contexts for each other.

Street Marketing as 'Logic'

¹⁴ Fridays and weekends at these markets could be very difficult because of the many drunk and often aggressive men around. When drunk some people were attracted to the prospect of intimidating an outsider and partially absolved from responsibility by their intoxication (cf. M. Strathern 1975).

¹⁵ Purely conjecturally, one could see this as a reason *chalinj* games were no longer present at *Kakaruk Maket*. When *Chuave* was set up as an alternative betel nut market, concerns about violence and drunkenness meant that most betel nut traders switched sites, and hence there may no longer have been enough betel nut traders in *Kakaruk Maket* to sustain a Challenge game.

While much has been made of the continuing existence and indeed 'efflorescence' (A. Strathern 1979a) of traditional exchange since colonisation and the introduction of money (cf. Gregory 1982), comparatively little attention has been given to marketing (but see Modjeska 1985, Epstein 1982 Benediktsson 1998; 2002), which has enjoyed a boom in many ways outstripping its more famous economic sister. To *maket* ('market') has become a huge part of money-getting and self-sustenance activities in Papua New Guinea. From my survey of Gorokan households I found that 70% habitually marketed, still more would market to take advantage of nearby social events, or in anticipation of an upcoming marriage or school fee payment. Very few households derived their entire regular income from marketing; more often it supplemented wages, subsistence, rent collection, remittances or retirement funds. Average employed people per household were 1 (out of 6 residents)¹⁶, while 69% of households had at least one garden used for subsistence. A household was almost as likely to be involved in marketing (70%) as to have a wage earner among them (71% of households)¹⁷. For street marketers *buai* (betel nut) and *smuk* (tobacco products) were by far the main comestibles sold. Those who sold other things like sweets, deep fried flour-based hand-food or fruit, deliberately sold them near a *buai-smuk* table; if they were sold together, people said these other things only *kalaim* (lit. 'colour', decorate) the main trade in betel nut and tobacco.

With 32% of all households marketing betel nut alone, the casual observer would wonder how anyone could possibly make money. Still, people told stories of some earning huge amounts while many others made a loss, even with tables next to each other selling ostensibly identical products. Kripel was one such prosperous marketer. Success in this field relied on a well-defined and yet open-ended set of tactics. For instance, Kripel often called out to people in the street and offered them a free betel nut, either as a way of initiating a new patron-client relationship or to further convince a known customer of his good nature, a gesture often timed for maximum effectiveness in generating rapport and memorability. Kripel asked customers about some aspect of their life, their day, the weather, and often initiated running jokes

¹⁶ This figure was taken from a reduced sample of 412 households; two of the sample groups (security guard company employees and National Sports Institute employees) were removed because their selection was based on their employment, which would have biased the results.

¹⁷ The employment figure was also taken from the reduced sample. Many of those working at the security company and the National Sports Institute live in accommodation supplied by the employer, but as this does not affect marketing participation, the former figure is taken from the full sample of 563 households.

between him and the customer. Another friend and supplier to my betel nut habit, Charlie, explained his method:

Charlie: My way of marketing is this... I sing out to you, give you betel nut, I want to be your friend. I am not bothered about money, I know that money will still come, so when I give to you, it has a blessing¹⁸ from it which will come to me. I don't have food to give so I give another food... I am a giving man, and I try to get many customers by this. Before I was only one person doing sales here, now many tables have surrounded me and coins go every which way and I need to get customers, so I give some away without thinking, and later it is up to them, they want to buy from me, or they want to buy from another, your *save* [lit. 'savvy', knowledge/understanding] is your own. So the important thing is to make friends with you, if you come along with your mouth dry¹⁹ others won't know your needs but I know them, and I will give to you.

AP: Many people do this, so do you have your own way?

Charlie: I am a man who is very good at *skelim* [lit. 'scale' as a transitive verb, measuring/deciphering²⁰] all people. I look and I see people and I can see if someone needs betel nut or cigarettes; if they are desperate for it, I will shout out to them and give them it then... My brain is open, I can *skelim* you, and so I can give you something through the right channel... If you walk past and you haven't chewed betel nut, your face will look different, it will show that you are hungry for betel nut, so you will come, I know that you smoke or chew; I will see that your face looks hungry. People are often surprised and ask me "how do you know my needs?" I just say "I know that's all", and I give to them. I don't tell them I worked it out, I just say I am supporting them and I give to them. I don't tell them because

¹⁸ Charlie's use of the term 'blessing' is a deliberate allusion to his Christianity, most marketers would use the term *laki* ('lucky', see chapter two), or *profit* ('profit'), or simply say *em bai kam bek* (lit. 'it will come back'). For a discussion of ancestral blessings and the re-couching of language to take advantage of new opportunities, see Crook 2007a.

¹⁹ A dry mouth is a sign that one wants to chew a betel nut.

²⁰ *Skelim* is sometimes associated with dream interpretation (see Read 2011).

I don't want to, this knowledge stays with me. I don't want to let this thinking of mine get out to customers.

Charlie, like Kripel, understood his marketing technique as a process of *prenim* (lit. 'befriending'); he was particularly well suited for this because he was a clever reader of people. Despite the assumption that one could never really know what others are thinking (see chapter two), Charlie thought that his deciphering skills were better than most. Just as in gambling, Charlie put his success down to his open mind, that ability to look at the big picture and notice the pattern of people (again see chapter two). Yet he did not want them to know that he was thinking of reciprocation down the road, as this would have been too explicitly a self-interested transaction, or in Our language, too commodity-like. Neither did he wish others to know he was reading them, as this implied that he was interfering with their sovereign thoughts. It was not so much that marketing was a way of getting money but rather a way of making friendly relations with persons through valuable and desirable objects without impinging on their sovereignty. That money was derived from this was nevertheless crucial, not only to survive but as friendship was manifested in transactions, so Charlie had to turn a profit to be a friend through generosity.

Marketers were well aware that their income fluctuated wildly as a result of 'free' betel nut giveaways, spoilt betel nuts and their customers' varying incomes and inclinations. Good marketers were able to ride the flows or channels of money in and out, making the good times more persistent than the bad. My observations of marketing and gambling resonate with J. Robbins and Akin's understanding that "Melanesian anxieties about money are grounded in the important role that controlling the flows of objects has traditionally had in the societies of the region" (1999, p7). In marketing, like gambling, the control and redirection of flows of money allowed people to generate short term kin/alliance-like relations and exert status differences²¹. Some focused on exploiting this system for monetary gain and others concentrated on the relations, so marketing brought forth what were seen as positive or negative personality-traits. Marketing was not an elaborate ruse for money, the emphasis was on flows, or as Charlie put it 'channels' of reciprocity (just as gambling went beyond selfish acquisition in chapters one and two). For career marketers, the goal was a mixture of personal or familial regard, long term profitability and immediate material needs (cf. Gell 1992, p160).

²¹ For a comparative example in Madagascar, see Walsh 2003: 293.

Blesin ('blessings'), as Charlie put it, that came from marketers' unselfish acts went beyond loyal customers and high sales, some were given money, alcohol, and/or a contribution when they had a wedding or death among relatives. In this sense marketing was differentiated from working. The latter was conceptualised as ideally a more or less standalone economic activity divorced from community relations, despite people knowing that kin and language groups tended to favour each other at work. Employment was accompanied by a wage and work-related duties were explicitly differentiated from outside duties (cf. Sillitoe 2010: 352). Employment, in as much as it was not controlled by the employee, fell within the sphere of production, while street sales were in the sphere of social reproduction²². Instead of thinking of a profit ratio per betel nut or trip to the wholesalers, and therefore marketing as a version of work, marketers subsumed their selling into the whole of their lives, which was to say a world of transactions. They sat and traded, using their networks to derive money, and so they were thought to be lazy or at least not working (cf. Sykes 1999).

Furthering this dichotomy, it is instructive to note that tending ones garden was also work, as both employment and gardening were antecedent to the transactional sphere (people were not allowed to collect produce from others' gardens without asking) while marketing was not. Interestingly, work was also separated from *bisnis* ('business'), where a person was seen as in control of operations and therefore able to channel wealth whatever way they wished²³, so *bisnis* was closer to, but higher prestige than marketing. If, in marketing, one's labour was used to reproduce social relations then making money was a necessity for sociality, while in employment labour was expended for money which was later used for social relations²⁴. Employment was thus seen as a precursor to social activity. It is worth reminding the reader that building a pot in *chalinj* was work, and as I shall later discuss, gambling itself was categorically not (cf. Sykes 1999; Sexton 1982).

Work	Not work
Production	Transaction

²² For other definitions of work in Melanesia, see Sykes (1999).

²³ See chapter four for an account of *bisnis* leaders.

²⁴ Gang mates called stealing their 'work', which fits this model because afterwards the money was used to distribute between themselves and with others.

Gardening	Marketing
Employment	Business
Building a pot	Gambling

Table 3.1: Activities that fell under the remit of ‘work’ and ‘not work’.

A sharp distinction was thus made between two economic activities which we might equate. Gorokan residents resisted the notion that all money-oriented activities distanced people from each other and should be classed as work; in so doing they once again complexified the adage addressed in chapter one: that money makes people distant and abstracted. Having made a critique of this notion previously, and set out the bifurcation of work and not work in Goroka, I will now introduce an important confluence within the sphere of not-work: card gambling and marketing were the same form of attraction. I am now attempting to flesh out a model of gambling and marketing and its relation to money in Gorokan terms.

Marketing and Card Gambling, Kindred Modes of Attraction

The symbiosis of markets and gambling was immediately apparent on the streets each day. Where it was safe for card gambling (i.e. away from the eyes of police, under houses or on the street corners of settlements), a market table was almost always beside a game. ‘Career’ marketers said that when people play cards they get excited, they shake, their thoughts are elsewhere, and so they want to chew and smoke more often. Furthermore, both betel nut chewing (cf. Mosko 1985) and smoking (cf. Reed 2007) were said to make the skin hot and thereby efficacious, and to make the mind think clearly. Both these attributes were thought to increase one’s concentration and skill at card playing (see chapter two). Money also made people both hot (cf. Mosko 1999) and efficacious (cf. Hirsch 1994: 698), and so the communion of gambling with the market table nearby created an intense and enjoyable space of exertion.

Often the marketer would be playing themselves, and my survey indicated that 87% of betel nut marketing households also gambled locally. In fact just under half of all local gamblers (511 of the 1064 found in my survey) came from the 32% of households who marketed betel nut, so marketers and their co-residents were the paradigmatic gamblers. Marketers habitually combined the playing of the game with gestures of generosity, donating betel nut and

cigarettes to losing players from their own table. They said that this was important in order to make those who lost *bel ese* (lit. 'stomach calm', i.e. at ease), and described their presence in terms of a service to players²⁵.

As I discussed in chapter two, playing cards was synonymous with the *kona* (lit. 'corner'), which meant both a player within a game and the meeting of streets, as in a street corner. Street corners were vital intersections; many people spent a large portion of their days on street corners, particularly those who used *maket* (lit. 'market') as a source of income. Street corners could even define a town: a *fo kona taun* (lit. 'four corner town') was a common idiom belittling smaller urban centres, implying they had few meeting places. On almost every one of the many corners in Goroka, marketers sat behind mats or small purposely constructed wooden tables all day long, selling their wares, interrupting flows of people with their money and deriving benefit from them. They were the model of a *kona man* ('corner man', see chapter two), and were often known as skilful at cards because they knew the craft of being a corner better than anyone. Card gamblers followed their example when they aimed to be a *kona man*, a person able to deduce the cards another person requires, to withhold them, deny the win, and give themselves a greater likelihood of success.

The coterminacy of card gambling and marketing was not simply one of practical proximity or apprenticeship; they were also responsive to the same forms of magic. As discussed in chapter two, magic was an additive to one's skills, but it is instructive that certain additives covered marketing and gambling as one. Alex, an elderly man, sold magic a stone's throw away from *Kakaruk Maket*. One day as we were talking he sifted through the paraphernalia used to attract young girls, heal broken bones and the like, and dug up a pair of artefacts (a bright red seed unknown to me and a piece of bark from an undisclosed tree (the 'active ingredient', so to speak)) which promoted success in both marketing and card gambling. When I asked why they were both affected by the same magic when other things required different substances he explained with this story:

²⁵ A marketer who was losing sometimes dug into their market takings to win their money back. However people usually preferred to acknowledge the separation of marketing money from card money, and would give a marketer a *luk* ('look', meaning free round, see chapter one) when they ran out of their playing money, leaving their takings intact.

You find a tree in which birds who are normally only seen alone gather in, the tree in which it perches, the power of this tree will be nice. Many of this bird who are normally scattered will flock here and eat and eat and eat. Get something from this tree, some bark or a leaf or whatever. You need to rub it then put it in the sun to dry. Then you rub it on your skin and keep it by your skin and try playing cards or try marketing²⁶ ...

Here we see that marketing and card playing could be influenced by a tree that was attractive in itself, bringing birds that are normally loners into social conjunction. The material could be directly transposed onto one's own attractive potential. Alex continues:

...If you see this bird then you know that they [cards or people or money] will like you, and you will win. The tree has the power to *kisim* ['get'/'receive'] generally, not just to *kisim* this bird. So whatever you want to *kisim*, it can *kisim* it for you. They work with market and cards because these are both things for *kisim*. They are the same kind of thing...

Seeing the bird somewhere nearby suggested that the piece of the tree you were holding was working, and its attractiveness could be used in any activity that involved acquisition. Alex explained how it worked:

...The flower of this tree makes these birds from all over come to it. As a person if you hold this, then cards and people and money will like you. With marketing you will sit down and all the people will like you and then they will buy things from you quickly. With cards too, your blood will be clean. You lick your finger, then rub the thing between your thumb and index finger, and it will go inside your finger and move the dirty blood and pull in clean blood. Once the clean blood is there, these things will like you²⁷. This thing is power²⁸. The tree is a pull-power man, it has *kisim* already. Your face will then light up, and all people will like you because your

²⁶ The importance of skin is discussed in chapter six.

²⁷ See chapter two.

²⁸ The Tok Pisin word *pawa* was used widely in Goroka and, as here, referred generally to agents who exerted control over others (cf. Mihalic 1971).

blood is clean. And so with marketing all the people will continue to come. It is good for cards as your blood travels in your arm in many ways and then it meets in your fingers... This cleans your blood, and makes it light up.

Held close to the body or in one's wallet, the object would make your skin glisten, face become bright, and clean the blood in your fingers, so people, cards and money would be attracted to you. Note that money was not separated as an ultimate end; it was just one of those things enticed by a person's inflated power of attraction. Just as Charlie asserted, neither people nor magic geared themselves toward money and profit in individual transactions, preferring a more comprehensive attraction rewarded over time.

Efficacy and agency in gambling was discussed in chapter two; here the quote from Alex is used to demonstrate the interconnectedness, or better, the indistinction of marketing and cards as methods of getting/receiving. As reported for other areas of Papua New Guinea, money related activity and especially trade "resulted in the emergence of spheres that are at once separate but merged through the sharing of a uniform scheme of practical logic" (Mosko 1999: 43). Unsurprisingly then, terms that were used in gambling reflected those of marketing and vice versa. Just as the *kona* informed people's conceptions of players within a card game, to *maket* ('market') was applied to the offering of cards to another in the course of gambling (see chapter two). Marketing a card was to offer what one had for others to use as they could. It was also to project future dispensation toward oneself.

Now that card gambling and marketing are revealed as having been somehow equivalent in the eyes of Gorokans, it is necessary to develop further the way in which the transactions involved in marketing played out a market-'logic'. To do so I divert the reader's attention to the produce markets, where marketing took an intermediate form between street marketing and wholesale betel nut marketing. Here the giving of freebies was curtailed by a competitive atmosphere, but one in which product differences were visible, unlike in wholesale betel nut markets. By so doing I hope to create a more coherent theory of marketing as 'not work' but a process of elicitation that was essential to sociality. I can then take this understanding to the uniquely Gorokan betel nut markets, where they were again metamorphosed, creating space for *chalinj*.

Produce Markets in Passing

At the game I caught Kripel (our street seller and *chalinj* competitor with the distinctive jester's hat) just as he bit into a ripe tomato. He bought a couple from the Main Market as a snack on his way to *Chuave Maket*. When Kripel purchased them he had to contend with a style of marketing that was somewhat different from his own. Fresh produce markets in Papua New Guinea have been the topic of some explanatory modelling (see Modjeska 1985; Strathern 1992a), and my findings will be familiar to those versed in the debates. The *market*-'logic' of produce markets is a necessary background to their illegal cousins.

As against Kripel and his fellow street marketers, who were confronted with obligations to give free comestibles, sellers remained quietly by their produce. Vendors never bargained with buyers over price, and competition among sellers appeared absent. Prices were remarkably uniform and inflexible. Instead of weighing what the buyer chose to purchase and then fixing a price, as is standard in the UK, sellers divided their produce into units containing anything from a single discrete fruit or vegetable, a pair or few together, or a pile or bundle of a given foodstuff, always of a single species (see Modjeska 1985; Epstein 1982)²⁹. Street betel nut marketers on the other hand sold single betel nuts for a single price. Likewise produce marketers' groupings were made to conform to a single price: ten toea, or sixty toea, for instance, and marked with this price. Prices were uniform throughout the market so Kripel could not have hunted for a good price. Rather than concentrating on the ratio of quantity for quantity, sellers foregrounded the quality per unit offered at a standardised price, and this was what Kripel will have had his eyes open for.

Comparative advantage was gained by sellers discerning the usual rate for tomatoes, and arranging their tomato groupings in such a way as to give the smallest or worst quality single or group of tomatoes for the eighty toea (perhaps) they asked for. Unsurprisingly then a juicy, ripe, unbroken tomato was often paired with an unripe, overripe, bruised or split tomato under a single price. Kripel therefore appraised the overall value of the tomatoes together for

²⁹ See Mackenzie 1991: 129 for an example of conflict arising from the same system of measurement when confronted with those of employees at the nearby mining company.

the given price, something he did not demand from his customers. Once groupings were fixed, Kripel could not negotiate, only buy or pass by. The sellers together set the terms of trade while the buyer gauged the value of particular vendor's tomato combinations.

Forty three years after Epstein's original observation in Goroka's Main Market, it remained the case that "almost all of these vendors give the impression as if they were completely lethargic and could not care less whether or not they made a sale" (Epstein 1982: 188, fieldwork 1967-9). Sellers would also rather take their produce home or throw it away than reduce their prices at the end of the day. This is not to say that sellers held a superior status to buyers as Modjeska adjudges (1985: 158), instead marketers stressed the agency of customers like Kripel to buy or not buy from them or anyone else. Sellers sometimes gave an extra small item to the buyer on top of what they had bought after its purchase, such as a pair of carrots to go with Kripel's tomatoes, imparting a sense of generosity and relationship making, and this continued particularly when one repeat bought from a specific seller, Kripel knew this well as a marketer himself. But sellers avoided giving things for nothing like street betel nut marketers, and seemed far less interested in giving people a deal. Other sellers complained to Kripel that he buys from only another person all the time to elicit a sense of obligation towards them. Past, current and future relations are always ready to break through the veneer of uniform commodity transactions. This is because while prices were fixed, customers were always under pressure to oblige to the people who created the units of produce and did their best to make those units seem like they advantaged the buyer.

Unlike street betel nut sellers, who could be male or female, women made up the majority of vendors in produce markets; they were the primary cultivators of marketable produce like tomatoes, various spinaches, sweet potatoes and fresh fruit. Since the introduction of coffee and its higher returns, male interest in fresh produce marketing dwindled (Jackson 1976: 180; Benediktsson 1998: 164). At such a crowded location, marketers and especially women marketers feared conflicting relationships with each other; therefore a coordinated price strategy was seen as required for sellers in order to allay allegations of unsociability and fix a minimum level of monetary payment. So, in taking their produce to a big open market, sellers recognised the power of obligations to known persons and attempted to avoid being held hostage to them by selling their products in a relatively anonymous setting. Safely conceived to be submitting to the general will of others to fix a fair price, sellers could not be blamed for

giving ‘freebies’ to customers like Kripel. Within this veneer of standardisation they could then generate esteem through the quality, size and number of products offered within a given price band and direct them to particular persons through generous acts. So we must, I think, understand the price-per-unit strategy in terms of the pressure exerted by the collective of sellers on individual sellers rather than as one that was oriented to swindling potential buyers.

Marilyn Strathern reimagines a counterpoint to what she calls the ‘barter model of value’ (1992a), which sits very comfortably with what I saw in Goroka. A ‘barter model of value’, she says, assumes an *a priori* unitness to objects of trade, and thus substitutable and comparable relations between sellers and buyers. In her formulation, people are composite collections of other peoples’ actions, so in order to act they must be elicited into giving a part of themselves by a social other and thereby come to define their own being as singular along with the item³⁰. I see this evidenced in the bundling of produce with a unit price. The collection was offered as a unit (say K1), but was always rearrangeable into different units by making different combinations. Importantly though, this was not done in consultation with the potential buyer but prior to or between interactions with them, and always hidden or downplayed³¹.

The unitisation of collections of objects was offered to the customer as an evaluation of the overall value of mass along with quality, which remained to be confirmed by Kripel. Two tomatoes were only a potential unit until it was realised by Kripel who elicited its unitisation. Otherwise the objects would have shifted into other arrangements for a given unit price and remained composite possible combinations. As such they may have returned to the seller’s house with them at the end of the day as a composite part of household production and been consumed within the composite household rather than suffering the indignity of having had the agency of one’s own attempts to evaluate or enumerate interfered with³². Strathern’s theory also allows for the gifting of ‘freebies’ by sellers, as an extra incentive to overvalue their

³⁰ See chapter two.

³¹ See Holbraad 2005 for a comparable encoding of relations within a price.

³² This stance on the side of sellers seems widespread: Epstein’s Tolai (East New Britain) researcher ToKalaman even came to blows with a Chinese buyer who repeatedly attempted to bargain with different sellers at Rabaul market (1982: 200). I see the Chinese buyer as violating the sovereign power of people to set forth the valuation they desire, which led ToKalaman into an empathetic rage. Epstein then found that the whole research team were incensed by the idea of bargaining or haggling, each contributing to the fine that was given ToKalaman in solidarity.

produce-units in the future and to ensnare them into relations of obligation rather than as separated pre-unitised transactors who are 'quits'.

This analysis conflicts with certain assumptions about the development of market economies, where comparable and substitutable relations are supposedly set up through money. This is because Kripel was not simply comparing products, but unitisations, and sellers tried to influence Kripel's perceptions of them and their unitisations by showing generosity. In the process the flows of exchangeable objects that Charlie was so erudite about took on particular values at the moment when a transaction was achieved. Buying things with money was in Goroka an act of confirming and accepting unitisations, creating value for the money and leaving a residual value in the obligations of that buyer-seller relationship.

Buyer-seller oppositions were fragile and constantly in danger of collapse, for example Kripel the neighbour who was at once the tomato buying customer: Kripel appealed to the obligations of neighbourliness and thereby undermined the 'customer' relation that the marketers collectively worked hard to achieve, in which the seller would have appeared generous for giving Kripel free things³³. As a marketer himself, Kripel was well aware that appealing too much to these obligations could hurt his sales later as they in turn called upon their neighbourliness for free betel nut, so everyone trod a fine line. Without the good will that came with a transaction that was thought to favour one party, transactions lacked value. There is thus a sense in which even seemingly one-off transactions projected obligations into the past and future as they created value, and as we shall see later, truly individual transactions were only really apparent in the betel nut markets, leading to a completely different set of marketing tactics, and, in turn, the challenge game.

Kakaruk and Chuave Markets

Betel nut, the deep red energiser and animator of street life, was a trade in which one could potentially make a lot of money, and hence the central locations of betel nut trade in Town were places where money was said to 'flow' most strongly. Bringing together the analyses

³³ See also chapter six.

from the previous two chapters, I have focused on the manipulation of flows of persons, money and cards to elicit value; yet flow involves a temporal element I have barely touched upon. For street marketers, local card gamblers, and produce marketers there was a familiar, leisurely rhythm and flow such that Charlie and Kripel could feel sure of their generosity being repaid in good time. As they moved to the places of concentrated marketing, the speed of flow increased. The intensity of the betel nut markets often invoked highly energetic descriptions of flowing money and the need for the same kind of vigilant opportunism Kripel and Charlie exhibited, but even more acutely (see above quotation). The money in *Kakaruk Maket* moved so fast that when the Twin Towers (centre of world capital trade) collapsed in 2001, *Kakaruk* became ironically known as the new World Trade Centre (see figures 3.8 and 3.9).



Figure 3.8: A painting of *Kakaruk Maket* by local artist Simon Gende, 2009. Simon emphasised the busyness of the market, and packed in as many morally admonishable activities as he could, including: adultery (top right), young women dyeing their hair (to attract wealthy men), marijuana smoking and selling (middle and bottom right), card gambling (bottom middle), inter-gender beer drinking (middle

the betel nut markets acted as central places in the money-thoughts of Gorokan residents³⁴. The market was more than just a centre of trade in betel nut; it was a powerful imaginary space which stood for the illicit, bad thinking and immoral.

As if to pierce this alcoholic haze the most flamboyant selling tactics of all occurred in *Kakaruk* and *Chuave* markets, where only the very best at selling operated. In an inversion of the regular street practice of downplaying their success in order to demonstrate their generosity, most of the sellers in the markets sat above their mats with a huge pile of money between their legs, either neatly arranged or impressively disorganised. Within a crowded marketplace, where Kripel and the others went specifically to get a good price and good quality betel nut, the money demonstrated the quality of the betel nut they had to offer. Money evidenced the quantity of past transactions while the betel nut continued to flow out of their bag and onto the mat, leaving no visible sign of success. It was the money that indexed the value of betel nuts.

³⁴ In so doing I foster their analogy to the equally central imaginary and ideological World Trade Centre in New York with its former complex abstraction of transaction and subsequent place as both symbol of sin and aspiration for combatants in the 'War on Terror'.



Figure 3.10: A betel nut seller displays his takings and different betel nuts he offers on his mat in *Kakaruk Maket*. He will have offered more betel nuts per K2 from the pile on the left because their quality was lower. The opened ones were *piksa* (lit. 'picture') betel nut used to demonstrate their quality.

Unlike produce, betel nut was not grouped into bundles in *Kakaruk* or *Chuave*, they were arranged in a pile, designed to demonstrate the attractiveness of the betel nut in its abundance. A year or so of judging betel nuts taught me that while there were certain traits telling you they will not be good (like being too tumescent), it was by no means easy to judge quality, so money performs this function. Each great pile was marked with a price, usually K1 or K2, but you did not get the whole pile for this amount. The thin veneer of a standard charge was exposed as sellers shouted out how many more they would offer you for the price, which immediately struck one as very different to produce marketers. A potential customer had perhaps tried the product, gained a rapport, and a fee for a number of betel nuts from a given pile for a given price has been offered by the seller. The buyer was then able to pick their own from the pile, though suggestions of sometimes dubious quality were often given by the salesman. This arrangement allowed for sellers to compete amongst each other, offering ever higher numbers of betel nut while keeping the price fixed.

The showiness of the traders was quite a distinguishing feature. Other marketers were at pains to hide their money, to emphasise their lack of it and their generosity in spite of their poverty. Wholesale betel nut marketers' willingness to show off came along with the wide scope of their trade. Many village and street corner marketers of betel nut from the surrounding province travelled long distances to obtain this valuable object of trade. As such there was more acute uncertainty of seeing customers regularly. In a parallel inversion of the practices in the produce markets, sellers therefore called out to people and gave them free betel nut *before* they bought. They were forced to show friendship even when they fully expected not to see the person again. The betel nut markets, as places of accelerated monetary flow, highly undifferentiated products, and customers of disparate origins, required a single transaction based strategy, and it was the presence of money piles which indexed this to customers while exaggerated generosity ensnared strangers used to transactions with a future. In so doing vendors quickly cultivated a relationship where customers could see value created in sellers' unitisations (see table 3.2 for a full breakdown of differences between the three forms of marketing).

For repeat customers like Kripel and Charlie, relationships played a serious role in getting and keeping their trade. Kripel explained to me how he had many acquaintances in the market, who gave him a good deal, but equally even if they did not have good betel nut he still had to exercise judiciousness in his buying habits to avoid ill feeling. Betel nut sellers in the markets were good salespeople precisely because of this ability to manipulate people; they were the ultimate speculators on the intentions of others, and generators of instantaneous value.

Practices	Street betel nut sellers	Produce marketers	Betel nut wholesale vendors
Freebies?	On-going	After buying	Before buying
Displaying wealth?	No	No	Yes
Pre-unitised goods?	Yes	Yes	No
Units sold	One betel nut per unit	Set bundles per unit	Variable bundles per unit
Frequency of	Frequent	Infrequent	Very infrequent

transactions with known customers			
Attitude to customers	Friendly	Disinterested	Aggressively friendly
Nearby competitors?	Few	Many	Very many
Differentiated products?	No	Yes	No

Table 3.2: Breakdown of marketing practices across the three forms discussed.

One might be tempted to consider wholesale betel nut marketers more individualistic, and their rapport as less genuine; after all they were not oriented toward repeat transactions. J. Robbins and Akin for instance impress the need to contextualise "the perhaps universal process whereby money gives rise to individualism in terms that are particularly Melanesian. ... [M]oney creates Melanesian forms of individualism by bolstering already existing kinds of individualist power at the expense of other, more socially constructive kinds of agency. Individualist forms of agency are not entirely novel, then, but money strengthens them and allows them a wider sphere of influence" (1999: 31). While individualism would be a clumsy explanation for the selfish or flamboyant acts of betel nut market sellers, perhaps an emphasis on individual transactions in Goroka has some analytical potential as a contrast. Concentrating on individual transactions certainly allowed for a level of freedom and boisterousness in people's interactions with each other in this setting. As I will presently argue, individual transactions were foregrounded in the Challenge game associated with the betel nut markets, but with cooperation in building bets it seems individualism cannot cover the full story.

***Chalinj* Revisited**

Having set up a particular Gorokan marketing/card playing 'logic' of money based on principles of flow, attraction and generosity, and varying due to likelihood of repeat transaction, I am now in a position to try to demonstrate that an extreme manifestation of this market 'logic' can be apprehended in *chalinj* games through a discussion of four of their attributes. The

reader will recall that a *chalinj* game was very fast and involved queuing up money to bet one-on-one with an incumbent while bystanders joined in to make the pot even. Because incumbents did not usually lose all their money, they returned to the game with what remained and the pot builds up over time as money is concentrated into a few hands.

The first aspect to consider in the light of *market*-‘logic’ is that the pot was deliberately built up. To do so the game was reliant on the nature of its market, its big-money flows and the short-termism prevalent there. Many of the players were betel nut sellers and traders, who had access to large amounts of money in short time frames. Traders could lose and then return with more cash only a few short minutes later. Building bets and the desire to do so indexed a willingness to cooperate and intensify monetary transactions. This was considered work, while the game itself was not. Building the pot could be conceptualised as ‘work’ as it involved effort and yet was antecedent to social reproduction, to winning and losing, friendliness and animosity. The ability to leave with your winnings and not feel pressured to distribute to others was a central ideological attribute, it turned making the bets rise into an exertion and thus ‘work’ as opposed to an inevitable consequence of people’s desire to win money back.

Second, while the pots built, both wholesale betel nut marketing and *chalinj* games placed an emphasis on individual transactions. People liked *chalinj* for this reason, citing the ability to slip into the crowd as a reason for hosting the game in the market. *Chalinj* contrasts with continual attritional gameplay and mutual support that was seen in street marketing or group gambling games outside the betel nut markets, which were not work (cf. Maclean 1984). Flamboyant and intense but above all short-termist marketing was matched by concentrated short-termist gambling. Anticipating this short-termism a big pile of money sat in the centre, enticing and beguiling. Just as the piles of money at betel nut sellers’ feet indexed the fecundity of their produce and sales, generating value by demonstrating their reliability, so did the pile of money for the game. The money in the centre at a *chalinj* game indexed the value created by people’s work in concentrating money. Though nobody said so explicitly, one could thereby understand a challenge game as replicating the marketer-customer relation, in speeded up form: the incumbent is the marketer with all the money, the challenger is the customer who by a turn of fate could be the one in the chair with all the money, using it to attract customers just as they were once attracted. The game remained constant while people could interact with it with short term transactions. It aped the betel nut market’s version of market ‘logic’. The only

difference was that the money pile could have been yours; its destination was not predetermined³⁵. It was the ultimate iteration of the ideology of possibility and vigilance which the markets embodied.

Third, *chalinj* placed numerous partners in play against each other in succession, one remaining, and the other discarded. This is very much like the act of wholesale betel nut marketing in its relentless pace of individual transaction, where the only moment to best an opponent was the immediate one. Speed, in the form of individual transactions, was the variable which changed from the street to the betel nut market, and corresponded to the increasing anonymity of transactions and the impulse to replicate a sense of continuation. It is appropriate that a place where the anonymity of social others, or rather the lack of obligations toward them, allowed for the social acceptability of a game which was so utterly, antagonistically, one on one. In a place where one did not know their neighbour, and where money was moving so fast anyway that one lost attachment to it, such an unsocially provocative game could be sufficiently de-fused. As I mentioned above, the building of pots was crucial to generating continued one-off interest.

Fourth and finally, there was the faculty to join in the betting of other persons, to make collaborative bets. I would suggest that this activity represented the latent collaborative element of everyday marketing and life in Goroka. Supporting another person through mutual betting is a version of the transactional empathy forming the baseline upon which challenge games elaborated. It allowed challenge games to be antagonistic as there were enough players supporting each side to prevent conflict. This was a common motif in certain forms of gambling which I shall explore in chapter five.

Through the four aspects I have just discussed, it is thus possible to understand this game as a manifestation of a particular form of calculative logic with money which was in a complex relation with its social surroundings, and as continuous with the 'logic' of marketing and card playing throughout Goroka. Through it I would suggest that the attainment of money and its persistent and constant use did not remove the empathy from social life in favour of cold hearted calculation. Instead the empathetic or emotional was fore fronted and specialised in the figure of the marketer whose ability to adjudge persons and their capacities to reciprocate

³⁵ See chapter five.

was done through the medium of money, and the *chalinj* gambler who fed off marketing as an activity. So while the urban betel nut markets of Goroka were for many the ultimate source of money – where money overflowed - it failed to have total control over persons, and in fact performed another, Melanesian elaboration. Instead of betel nut markets becoming impersonal places of capitalist commodification, they instead became centres of radical social engagement of the generally attractive kind.

In completing this section, I would like to suggest that the restriction of this game to a single site says something about Gorokan residents, immigrants from other provinces and the character of Eastern Highlanders. Those involved in the markets would often tell me pointedly that “there are no coastal people here, they do not support one another and they are greedy. We like to support others and help lift a man up and increase his name, while coastal people will be jealous of their own brother”. Or they would say that “we in the Highlands are not bothered about money, we can gamble because our kin are all around, we know that money will still come from them; coastal people get money from maybe one corner, but we know that money comes from many corners, so we just play without thinking”³⁶. It would be easy to understand Challenge games as representing a gambling equivalent to incremental competitive exchange famous further up the Highlands, with a growing pot and one-on-one contestation. Yet this was not what my informants emphasised. It is true people in Goroka believed games like Challenge were played with much higher frequency and bet sizes further up the Highlands Highway, but they did not see themselves as different from other Highlanders. Instead those further up were believed to play this game more often because their lands are filled with gold, oil and minerals, which caused money to overflow all the time. Goroka’s economy meanwhile was based on coffee, which did not yield the same riches³⁷. As such we can understand Challenge as a game of short term abandon associated with Highland people’s love of showing generosity with money, which was paradoxically a form of work. At the same time these people were stimulated by the quantity and speed of money’s flow to engage in outlandish betting practices.

³⁶ The word ‘corner’ (*kona*) has one of its most interesting inflections in this statement, taken to mean sources of wealth, persons known to the receiver, and can recursively show the source of money as itself a manipulator of transactions. In other words, it is a fractal or composite signifier.

³⁷ See prologue.

Conclusion

In this chapter the reader has been on a journey which Kripel, Charlie, and I made on many occasions: from the street corner to the betel nut markets, passing by the produce markets on the way. I moved through the everyday rhythms of reciprocity and transaction, always gathering pace. I left the firm knowledge of the settlements and streets, mingled with strangers, and encountered one off transactions. I tried to demonstrate that a certain perpetuity persists across this transect while making room for obvious differences. Gorokan market-‘logic’ takes numerous forms in my discussion, but none of them are reducible to nascent commodification. Money and town life stimulated a central place of short-termist concerns which took a peculiarly Melanesian character. While transactions and reciprocation may multiply in Town, thoughts with money were still understood as intimately connected to its sources and prospective uses.

I conclude by meditating on how the Town and the ‘stranger’ (*man/meri yu no save lo em*, lit. ‘man/woman you do not know of them’, see chapters four and six) figure in theories of money. It is somewhat orthodox to see the Town is the initiator and co-combatant with money for the alienation of self from other persons and objects. The advent of the Town and the stranger is often seen as “a form of limit-defining, [they are] abstracted from the visible objects of economics just as mathematical thought abstracts something from the mechanistically conceived environment” (Spengler 1926: 481). Spengler continues to elaborate on the Town and money’s relation to mathematical thought (and what I characterise as market-‘logic’):

“money corresponds exactly to abstract number. Both are entirely inorganic. The economic picture is reduced exclusively to quantities, whereas the important point about “goods” had been their quality. ...“This style of thought soon gets hold of the waking-consciousness of the entire urban population and, therefore, of everyone who plays any serious part in the conduct of economic history” (ibid: 482-484; see also Simmel 1990 [1907] and below).

And yet, as we have seen, there is nothing inevitable about money and Town reducing economic thought to a matter of simple quantity, at least in Goroka.

The indigenous distinctions between categories of work and marketing further destabilise the abstraction of people from their labour. Work as the prerequisite for social efficacy (be it gardening, employment, or building a pot) was opposed to the 'career' transacting of marketers, gamblers and those involved in business. Therefore the attainment of money and its persistent and constant use did not remove the social from social life in favour of calculation. Instead the social was fore fronted and specialised in the figure of the marketer; their ability to adjudge persons and their capacities to reciprocate through the marketing medium created value in the process of eliciting intersubjectivity with customers. The reader will recall that I have defined value for the purposes of this thesis as a single scale of measurement where people rank items in terms of their effectiveness as against other items, and that that value can be increased if the perceived effectiveness of the item is also increased by carrying with it a sense of obligation.

Simmel said that "[w]e are rarely aware of the fact that our whole life, from the point of view of consciousness, consists in experiencing and judging values, and that it acquires meaning and significance only from the fact that the mechanically unfolding elements of reality possess an infinite variety of values beyond their objective substance." (1990 [1907]: 60). I argue that such awareness was actually intrinsic to the daily thoughts of Gorokans. In Goroka monetary value was considered relative to the situation of each individual exchange, including the assumed valuation of others and their goals and responsibilities, and thus value itself was expanded in definition and released from its mooring to objects. I find that my material in both chapters one and the present chapter stress the need to reincorporate the caveat qualifying Simmel's model: the imperfect market. What is happening in Goroka was imperfection assumed rather than a general acceptance of broad applicability with limited distortions. A Gorokan market was fleshed out from the beginning with all the other agencies of persons and things: magic, attractiveness, kinship, jealousy, purity of thought, singularity of intention, projection of the future. Price and quantity were only a part of this, where motivations to maximise these aspects above others constantly shifted from transaction to transaction, dependent upon perspective and priorities.

From here on in, as we leave card gambling for the more expensive and more collective forms that gambling takes, I build on the attribute of speed by examining just how the value of

money is driven up or down through the efforts of powerful individuals and collectives interacting with slot machines and sporting events. In the next chapter I develop the sphere of transactions that I describe here as 'not work', by focussing in on A. Strathern's notion of "finance". By looking at successful 'big-men' and their gambling habits as "finance", the role of transaction as a mode of creating good will is developed into a technique for developing existing forms of social inequality.

Figure 4.1: Newspaper clipping from *Papua New Guinea Post-Courier*, Friday February 12 2010,

Call for NA H'lands MPs to be intact

BY MAL TAIME

NATIONAL Alliance supporters in the Highlands region have called on the National Alliance Members of Parliament from Highlands to be intact.

They made the call following the proposed cabinet reshuffle announced by Prime Minister Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare early this week.

The reshuffle may take place when Sir Michael is ready and likely to announce the changes.

Speaking on their behalf prominent leader ██████ said in Goroka, Eastern Highlands Province yesterday.

He also supported the call made by former two times provincial member for Kudjip constituency in the Western Highlands Province Kip Wamil in yesterday's *Post-Courier* for urging Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare not to make changes to ministers held by National Alliance members from the Highlands region.

Mr Wamil said in yesterday's article that Sir Michael should not change ministers from deputy party leader Don Polye (Works, Transport and Civil Aviation), James Marabe (education), Sani Rambai (internal security) and Sam Abal (Foreign Affairs).

To be a Big-Shot: 'Big-Men', Pokies and Money

This article is on a jarringly different scale to the material of the previous chapter; it calls for unity among Highlands ministers in an effort to retain Highlanders' control over key ministerial positions. Following a reported fracture in the then ruling National Alliance party, and a possible reshuffle of the cabinet, Highlands ministers put pressure on then Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare not to underrepresent their region. The regionalism of Papua New Guinea politics comes through, as well as the fragility of political parties, where political orientation is far less important than the opportunities that parties present to members. The article is typical of political reporting in the national newspapers, where readers detect the voice of a prominent person barely between the lines. Calls for unity are also familiar in the highly competitive world of Highlands leadership. This time the opinion was voiced by my adopted father: local 'big-shot' and "prominent leader" Tom Liam; I know him as Daddy Tom. His story is intimately linked with gambling, but in forms that seem far removed from the contexts I have discussed in the previous chapters.

This chapter moves away from everyday card gambling, where you will not see Goroka's political elite, who argued that pokies (slot machines) better fit their status and their wallets. I argue that pokie joints were places where novel forms of leadership emerge in the context of conspicuous consumption and the

process of denuding money's value. Leaders like my adopted father coalesced in rhetoric and in transaction at the pokie joints they frequented. I see pokies as part of a growing list of "finance" sources that allow contemporary big-men across the Highlands to transact with each other in a manner that brings variant strains of big-manship into relation. In the context of the thesis I am moving away from everyday statements and efficacy-testing through cards to describe some of the inequalities that were readily apparent in Goroka but have remained unvoiced thus far. In the last chapter I described an exceptional game that was open to all, and its relationship to fast money; I now draw the reader's attention to another high stakes game, one which was as unexceptional as *kwin* and *bom* (see chapters one and two) but which was restricted in its clientele, marking some Gorokans apart from others on the basis of 'big money' and 'big-manship'.

At the time of my fieldwork there were five pokie joints dotted around the centre of the Town area (see figure 0.5 in the prologue), close to government buildings, banks, shops, nightclubs, the airstrip and houses of wealthy residents; places where wealthy people are likely to be. With an estimated average of 20 machines in each joint, around 100 pokie machines serviced an official population of 26,311 (Papua New Guinea National Statistics Office 2002). On a busy day the largest joint banked K16-17,000 in revenue¹. Nor was Goroka alone, in Papua New Guinea as a whole there were 130 pokie sites and almost 2000 machines in total (National Gaming Control Board pers. comm. 2010)². Annual revenue from pokies was K250 million and rising.

¹ At the time of my fieldwork, One British Pound was worth approximately 3.7 Papua New Guinea Kina.

² The pokies themselves are owned by companies of 'White' or 'Asian' origin and placed in the care of establishments often run by Papua New Guineans, but nevertheless the companies retain a large amount of control over the opening times and the running of the establishments. Following the Gaming Control Act of 2007, each day all the revenue from pokies goes into a trust account held by the National Gaming Control Board, from which 46% of gross profits are submitted to the national government as betting tax; 14% goes to a 'Community Benefit Fund Account'; 5% goes to the National Gaming Control Board for running costs; 10% goes to the owners of the machines (known as the 'operator') and the final 25% goes to the owner of the premises (the permit holder). The intersection of different types of business creates tensions, as the more fluid cash flow of Papua New Guinean businesses (see below) meet a rigorous accounting procedure and international gaming machine operators used to exacting numerical accounting and centralised control. Such frictions are laid stark by the computer operated system: its inflexible accounting procedure tells the central office in Port Moresby knows exactly how much money should be

In Papua New Guinea pokies date back to 1994; speaking in the ethnographic present, many of the machines in Goroka have not changed since their arrival. Television screens display symbols that spin and stop each turn; for a player to win the symbols must align in certain combinations. Unlike card games, a player is not faced with groups of competitors and piles of money, only a silent machine and a numerical display of their score, winnings, and bet sizes. Pokie machines do not take money directly, this is given to an operator in a separate booth, and then the player chooses a machine parked against a wall. Players face only their machine, cutting out direct competition with people. Machines are not understood to have their own wills; instead they are thought to be “controlled in Port Moresby” (the capital). As they see it, Moresby sets the time and place for wins and losses, but not the person who will be playing at the time, and decisions made on-screen can outwit a machine’s “programme”. Pokies’ immunity from local influence and connection with Port Moresby makes them highly attractive³. One part of the attraction is the national scale of the gambling: players can imagine themselves as equivalent to high-flyers in the capital, and with equal opportunities for success. Another part of the attraction is that the singular nature of gameplay precludes expressions of amity/antagonism within the game⁴; instead pokies highlight inequalities between those who can afford to interact with the machines and those who cannot. A high price tag makes pokies unaffordable to many, and pokie joints are most often frequented by either people who have just come across some money or the comparatively wealthy, most notably ‘big-men’.

As we shall see during the course of this chapter, the internal logic of pokie gambling is both similar and in crucial respects different to card gambling. I have argued that the internal logic of all gambling games (including the size of bets) models the types of sociality that surround them; pokies are notable for modelling existing inequalities. Machines set up situations that play into the hands of ‘big-men’, because they absorb their attention and allow them to act nonchalantly toward money. While winnings and losses play out on-screen, the action occurs

in the account, requiring that amount to be banked. The Papua New Guinean management of one pokie joint kept two sets of bookkeeping ledgers so that they could mobilise money for other business ventures like entertaining, or to compensate those who lose large amounts of money, and made up the rest from their personal funds.

³ See prologue for a discussion of the same attributes for cards.

⁴ See chapter one for a discussion of why this is desirable in the case of card games.

between 'big-men' and 'followers' and 'big-men' and 'big-men' while they face their respective machines. Pokie machines allow this to happen, and so their internal logic is crucial even though it seems peripheral to the socially-significant transactions between people. I concentrate on the mode in which 'big-men' make use of the pokie machines' internal logic for their own ends; the chapter therefore appears to shift scale slightly from the chapters that characterise cards. People's differential access to money and support outside of the pokies – and the fact that pokies make profits from players rather than recirculating money – mean that inequalities that exist outside pokies are marked within pokie joints. I therefore proceed with a description of 'big-manship' in Goroka as a means of marking "financial" inequalities before moving into the way this plays out within pokies.

'Big-men' and "Finance"

It is fair to say that Melanesian 'big-men' hold a special place in anthropology (see Sahlins 1963; Lindstrom 1981). They have contributed much to kinship studies, theories of social organisation, political/economic anthropology, and theories of the gift (see Godelier 1986; Godelier & M. Strathern 1991). Big-manship ethnography was a novel and radical challenge to unilineal and state-ist ideas of power borne out of anthropology's African boom. The term has travelled beyond its Melanesian roots, and 'big-men' are today found in the neolithic and iron ages, among the Inuit, the Spanish, and inside the boardrooms of multinationals (Brown 1990 citing van Bakel, Hagesteijn, and van de Velde 1986).

The term sprang up following indigenous usage: some early ethnographers of Melanesia described the leaders they encountered as 'big-men' because it chimed better than 'chief', with its hereditary associations (see Chowning 1979: 66-67; Read 1950: 216). It gained anthropological prominence when Marshall Sahlins published his productive if sweeping article *Poor Man, Rich Man, Big-man, Chief* (1963). Sahlins evolutionary model posited a west-east political progression from small Melanesian meritocratic polities led by 'big-men' to large Polynesian hierarchical polities led by hereditary 'chiefs'. Qualifications and critiques of Sahlins' characterisation soon followed, as new ethnographic material showed a wealth of political systems in both "regions" (see B. Douglas 1979; Lindstrom 1978; cf. Hays et al. 1993).

A sense of how 'big-manship' developed within Highlands ethnography will give the reader a clear background to the pokies context I describe afterward.

Highland Papua New Guinea ethnography was emergent at the time Sahlins' article was published; its influence fed back upon the field, and a number of ethnographers found Highlanders the archetype of Sahlins' big-man systems (see Feil 1987), while others strenuously denied it (see Sillitoe 1979:48; 2010). Through their debates a more careful gradation of Melanesian and Highlands leadership patterns began to emerge. Some preferred a distinction between big-men and great men (Godelier 1986; Godelier & M. Strathern 1991⁵); others favoured a sliding scale of big-manship based upon polity size and use of resources (A. Strathern 1969; Lederman 1990). All agreed that 'big-manship', insofar as it did exist, was most pronounced in the Western Highlands among Melpa and Enga speaking peoples. These peoples practiced the most elaborate of ceremonial exchanges with live pigs and in so doing their 'big-men' appeared most distinctively and yet meritocratically in control of their group. East and southward of this epicentre, 'big-manship' progressively diminished in line with the decreased scope of ceremonial exchange. Meanwhile increasing use of Tok Pisin and English in Papua New Guinea meant indigenous use of the term 'big-man' was joined or replaced by a plethora of other names of distinction (in Goroka these include 'leader-man', 'boss', 'big-shot' and 'chief', see also Martin 2010), while anthropological critique actually entrenched the 'big-man' as either ideal type or straw man (Lindstrom 1981).

The claims I make about novel forms of 'big-manship' build upon the work of Rena Lederman (1990: 3), herself elaborating on the lead taken by Andrew Strathern (1969), and I begin with the framework he provided. A. Strathern's comparative approach took speakers of Siane (Eastern Highlands), Simbu (Simbu District), Maring (Madang District), Mendi (Southern Highlands), and Enga (Western Highlands), and looked at the different forms of ceremonial exchange they practiced. This he compared to the emphasis they placed on home production or "financial" partnerships between 'big-men' and outsiders. "Finance" meant men strategically extending credit to each other (especially outside their kin groups) in the form of pigs and shells that they called upon at a later time. Among Melpa and Enga-speaking peoples,

⁵ Godelier's model of big versus great men based upon the payment of bridewealth versus sister exchange respectively, would put Gorokans firmly in the big-man category. I therefore do not concern myself with this argument here.

these financial arrangements created long interwoven paths of obligations⁶. 'Big-men', who were the most credit-worthy, effectively guaranteed the transactions of others and gained status as a result (ibid: 57), becoming "nodes" of "redistributive exchange systems" (Rubel and Rosman 1978:290). A. Strathern suggests that with greater scope for "finance", comes "greater scope for men to establish pre-eminence in exchanges" (A. Strathern 1969: 45), garnering supporting contributions from clan members who gain eminence synecdochally through them. In the Eastern part of the Highlands, A. Strathern says, killing pigs before distribution barred the pigs from financing further transactions, and this in turn prevented the chains of exchange seen among Melpa and Enga-speaking peoples⁷. Without this, he implies, 'big-men' could not become preeminent.

Rena Lederman (1990) draws on A. Strathern's contrast between Eastern and Western Highlands, picking on the fact that in the Southern Highlands (further west still from Eastern Highlands) large prestations of pigs do not link together in chains, as in Enga *tee* and Melpa *moka*, and are not identified with particular 'big-men' but rather situationally organised factions of men. At the same time the 'big-man' complex is less apparent in the societies of the Southern Highlands (Sillitoe 2010), leading one to suspect (following A. Strathern's argument) that they lacked the requisite forms of "finance". In contrast to A. Strathern's hypothesis, Lederman observes that among the Mendi where she worked and more broadly in the Southern Highlands, people actually had even more developed systems of "finance". She points to the fact Southern Highlanders use "finance" extensively to bring together pigs for prestations, and doing so is not limited to nor dominated by 'big-men' (see also Lederman 1986: 204-5). As opposed to "finance" simply growing proportionally to 'big-manship', 'big-men' are constrained by widespread "finance" that compromises clan solidarity and limits the supporting contributions of clansmen to 'big-men', who depend upon these contributions to build their 'names' (Lederman 1990: 8-9). She argues that therefore it is culturally circumscribed forms of "finance" and 'big-men's' dominance over it, that allows them to

⁶ The increased use of shells as wealth in this part of the Highlands was also given as a reason for a greater emphasis on "finance" (A. Strathern 1985:103 following Feil 1984). However, since money had replaced shells throughout the Highlands by the time of my fieldwork, I do not concern myself with this contrast.

⁷ For a discussion of how Leadership has changed in among Melpa speakers, see Stewart & A. Strathern 2005.

become particularly big; “pushed to an extreme so that everyone is doing it, “finance” is no longer simply a means by which big-men break loose from the production constraints of their local groups” (ibid: 11).

Eastern Highlands ‘big-manship’ and ceremonial exchanges were also distinctive from their westerly counterparts: they did not organise competitive gifts of live pigs, and their ‘big-men’ seemed more consensus oriented. Pig exchanges were expected not to impoverish one’s competitors: givers negotiated the size of festivals with opponents to ensure pay back was possible (S. Robbins 1982; Salisbury 1962; see chapter five). There was also an ethic of group solidarity where intra-group transactions should not be monitored for exacting reciprocity (Salisbury 1962); some said limiting the capacity of ‘big-men’ to build up a following through personal debt (A. Strathern 1969: 50). Without incremental exchange, Eastern Highlands leadership was gained through accomplishment in warfare, through oratory and the ability to show respect while bending others to one’s will (Read 1959; Newman 1965; Salisbury 1962).

In Goroka and the Eastern Highlands (and unlike among Melpa and Enga to the West) older people were and are given the title ‘big-man’ out of respect (see Hawkes 1978). There is a sense in which all senior men are *de facto* big-men, whether they have achieved prominence or not. Read (1959) and Salisbury (1964) are nevertheless careful to demonstrate that people perceive a difference between seniors and ‘true big-men’, whose personalities are distinguishable. Salisbury also differentiates between aspiring big-men which he terms “executives”, and the really big-men, whom he refers to as “directors” (1964: 236; likewise A. Strathern 1966). In this chapter I primarily refer to “directors”, or “truly big-men”, as Hawkes describes them (1978: 163).

Investigating what it takes to be a ‘big-man’ among the Gahuku-Gama, Kenneth Read (1959) points out that “such qualities as aggressiveness, the possession of special skills, knowledge or wealth which we usually cite as prerequisites for achieving authority in the traditional social systems” are not necessarily those which produce a leader. Instead in these “essentially equalitarian, consensus-oriented societies” successful leadership is achieved by men who are able to convey an air of autonomy (1959: 425; see also Salisbury 1964). The Gahuku-Gama leader attracts influence and followers because of his ability to be admirable, balancing their two most important values: strength and equivalence. According to Read “[l]eadership

requires a man endowed with a considerable measure of self-confidence, a person who is yielding or assertive as the occasion demands... able to judge and to wait for the appropriate moment to act, who can... manipulate public opinion and if necessary defer to it without relinquishing either his control or his individuality... Such men... are essentially the more 'autonomous', individuals" in a society oriented toward group solidarity (Read 1959: 427). Essentially, in the context of constant kinship demands and relational obligations, to be autonomous is to encompass the wills and demands of others and make them seem your own. Their ability and awareness that they bent the rules and others' wills meant that leaders Read spoke to described themselves as "bad men" (ibid: 434).

My adopted father Tom Liam (of Simbu origin⁸ but having lived his life in Goroka) fitted this profile well: his voice was loud; his body broad and tall, with a reputation for great strength. Tom's attitude to all things and people was of friendly gestures but studied indifference to others' agency, either agreeing with or ignoring your words; confrontational if pressed. It was as if he could suck up all you had to give with a few words. This strength lay alongside his ability to respect your wishes, and to do so in such a way as to exceed your expectations. Tom Liam always described himself to me as a 'bad man', exactly as Kenneth Read heard all those years ago. He was strong, aware of the necessity for the pretence of equality and he broke the rules skilfully toward his own ends. He was also a great transactor, managing debts and controlling others through his "financial" prowess.

'Big-men' like Tom Liam have new skills: a generation of Gorokans have grown up with the theatrics of an urbanised form of leadership that requires urbane skills. Town dwelling, in all its complexity, breaks with anthropologists received notions of "finance" (or the lack of it) defining forms that leadership takes. Today 'big-men', or as they like to be variously called: 'boss', 'leader-man', or 'big-shot', are business men, official political leaders, civil servants,

⁸ Using material by Brown & Brookfield (1959), Brookfield & Brown (1963), and Criper (1967), A. Strathern thought that Chimbu (Simbu) exchange patterns were more highly organised than their Eastern Highlands neighbours (1969: 51). They practiced some extra-clan "financial" arrangements, but these were usually in the use of land for home production of pigs rather than direct access to pigs themselves. Simbu also held periodical pig killings rather than the exchange of live pigs, preventing the large-scale build-up of "finance" in interconnected chains. This contrast is historically important, but I argue that with pokies the proclivity of finance masks any detection of different "financial" arrangements and allows 'big-men' to dialogue across such boundaries.

coffee plantation owners and sporting celebrities (cf. Martin 2010). Tom owned a slot machine joint, two clubs and had large coffee holdings. New opportunities for income, “finance”, and consumption (including gambling at pokie joints), I argue, makes Gorokan ‘big-men’ comparable with other styles of ‘big-man’ in the Highlands and allows ‘big-men’ from different areas to talk the same language: money. They receive money from many ‘corners’ (see chapters two and three), and use it to interact with followers and other ‘big-men’ in novel transactions that create a network of personal followers outside of their kin groups. Gorokans now make a distinction between ‘big-man’, which is applied to both seniors and “directors”, and ‘boss’, ‘chief’ or ‘big-shot’, which apply to the “directors” alone, giving a sense of the financial weight they ascribe to contemporary leaders⁹.

Lederman frames her argument by suggesting that variations among Highlands societies’ approaches to “finance” give us a key to grasping socioeconomic change:

“[O]ur expectation concerning regional cultural variation ought to be the same as that with respect to socio-cultural change: understanding either requires close attention to how people make (a) difference. Both variation and change are occasioned by culturally specific kinds of creativity, transformative extensions of historically given modes of acting in and on the world to unfamiliar circumstances (Wagner 1981; Sahlins 1985).” (ibid: 12; see also Sexton 1982; Gordon and Meggitt 1985).

Following this lead it is the forms of, and access to, “finance” that concern me in this chapter; especially with respect to pokie players and the shifting leadership patterns engendered among them. I argue that Gorokan (and possibly wider) use of terms like ‘big-shot’ show a shift in “finance” arrangements (see also Martin 2007; 2010). The above newspaper article, for instance, expresses an emergent regional solidarity among big-men with respect to sources of “finance”. Increased scope for “finance”, I contend, enables local leaders to play the part of ‘generic Highlands big-man’, mixing elements that appear categorical in earlier ethnographies

⁹ The self-application of the term ‘big-shot’, and its positive connotations, distinguishes its usage in Goroka from that seen in Rabaul (East New Britain) by Martin (2007; 2010). There is a consensus among these Tolai peoples that ‘big-men’ no longer exist, and that ‘big-shots’ ignore customary obligations in the pursuit of money. In Goroka however, ‘big-shots’ are thought to be contemporary iterations of the ‘big-men’ of the past precisely because of their innovative success in a number of different fields.

of Eastern, Western and Southern Highlands, cementing distinctions between themselves and those who are described simply as “normal”. The ‘big-shots’ that I interacted with during my fieldwork often either grew up or trace origin to other areas of the Highlands, or at least transacted with Highlanders who would otherwise be considered different types of ‘big-man’. I therefore take the ‘big-man’ category as a (convenient) given (dropping the quotation marks). In looking into the forms of inequality that are prescient to Gorokans this chapter develops my previous analyses by investigating the connection between unequal access to “finance” and its perpetuation through pokie playing. In what follows I frame my material by describing a single evening in which my adopted father met me inside the pokies.

A Night at the Pokies

As Tom Liam arrived at the Bird of Paradise Pokies Lounge in the centre of Town, word rippled across the two rooms. It was 6.30pm on Friday 26th November 2009, outside twilight had given way to dark and the bustling streets were all but empty, the final stragglers making their way home. Pokies were the dominant form of night time ‘entertainment’ during my stay, despite an unofficial night-time curfew imposed on Goroka by fear of rape and theft. It left many indoors, and those who stayed out either braved the streets and walked (the strong), or had the use of a car. Night-time travellers were stereotypically male, with some exceptions. Tom Liam often walked; his name preceded him, few would dare cross him, and the six of us together were the largest entourage that night¹⁰. Safe in their company, I spent many a night walking or catching a lift between joints.

¹⁰ Before European colonisation it seems the ability to roam without being harmed was still a sign of pre-eminence (Salisbury 1962: 101).



Figure 4.2: Tom Liam (front) relaxes in the bar area of the Bird of Paradise Pokie Lounge, his bodyguard John looks on. In the background two big-men shake hands.

When pokies came to Papua New Guinea in 1994, the National Gaming Control Board decided to price out those on low incomes to avoid the exploitation they saw in Australia, starting at K20, rising to K30, and finally K50. Low earners still play, but there is a consensus that pokies are the province of the well-to-do. The K50's and K100 notes (worth approximately £13.90 and £27.80 respectively in 2009) that circulate in pokie joints gave the impression of success, and made pokie joints into dazzling, heady places to be. This is not to say that pokie joints were luxurious palaces of consumption, they were often shabby breeze-block structures barred by welded steel and patinated with peeling paint. Bare, strip-lit rooms full of battered machines beckoned with the shifting lights of their television screens. The electric atmosphere which bedazzled occasional participants like me accompanied the personalities as they swaggered in, out and around, rather than residing in the site itself. So, as the betel nut markets were places of fast games and fast money (see chapter three), pokie joints were places of *bikpela man* (lit. 'big-men') and *bikpela mani* (lit. 'big money'), such was their entwinement.



Figure 4.3: The Bird of Paradise Pokies Lounge at opening time.

That night, while Tom watched Australian rugby league on the television (his team, the Rabbitons, were playing), I hung around a broken pool table in the bar area, talking with a middle aged man called Alwin – a schoolteacher I met only once¹¹ - about the people who come to pokies. It was 7.30pm. I had observed people giving when they won, so I decided to follow this line of questioning. After struggling to get his point across, Alwin promptly snatched a pen from his friend's shirt pocket and the notebook out of my hand. He scribbled two diagrams down, which I have tidied up below¹². Figure 4.4 shows the distribution of goods 'in the past and in villages' and figure 4.5 shows how big-men distribute slot machine wins in Goroka today. I think they neatly outline the problematic of this chapter. Alwin explained that in the past wealth items would come into a community and go to the leader. It happened in public, and the leader would distribute in public too. The leader in the village or 'before' (as Alwin put it) had to give or he would lose 'honour' (Alwin's word). He therefore distributed in public to emphasise his fairness.

¹¹ Strangers often approached me in my fieldwork, incongruous as I was with notebook, betel nut and pale skin.

¹² The diagrams are not exactly as they were in my notebook; the segmented circle was added for clarity while retaining the spirit of the diagrams and description.

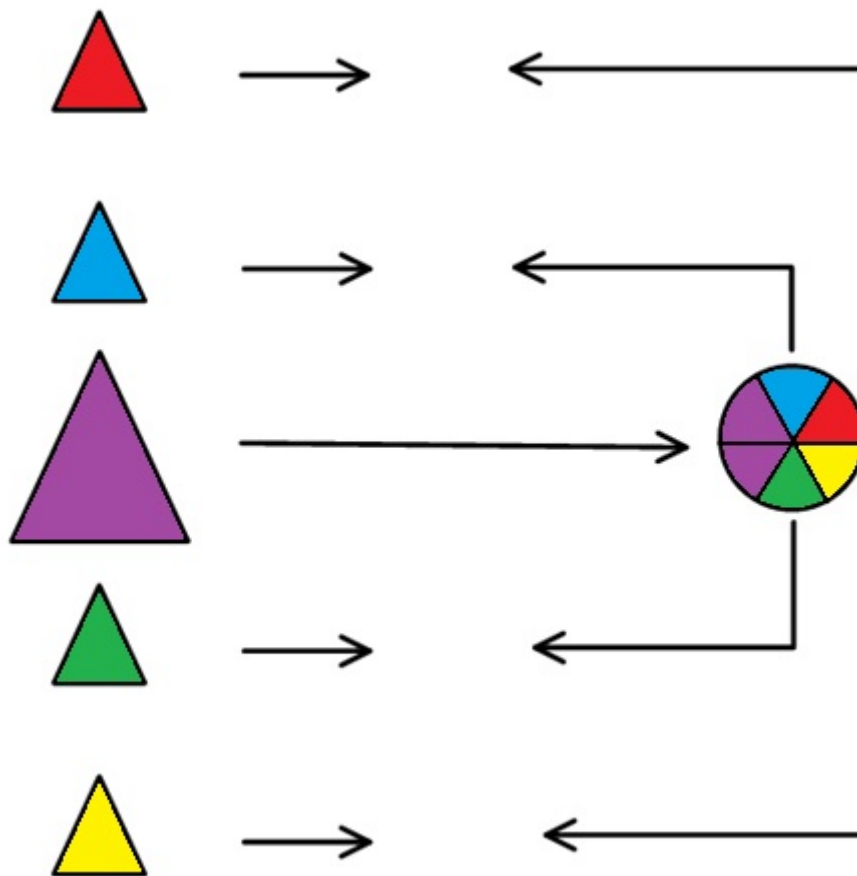


Figure 4.4: Past/village distribution patterns. People are represented by triangles; the larger triangle represents the big-man who was the recipient of the wealth. The segmented circle is the wealth brought into a community, it is out in the open and therefore public. This is why the wealth is equitably distributed among all present.

In retrospect this model fits exactly with both the descriptions of Eastern Highlands pig killing festivals by earlier ethnographers and the model put forth by A. Strathern (1969): the big-man of each group acts as spokesperson and distributor for their group, each of whom feel entitled to a return based on their own, home, production (see Salisbury 1962; S. Robbins 1982).

According to Alwin, the gambling winner (figure 4.5) is instead surrounded by friends, language mates, colleagues and helpers (what I have called the entourage, i.e. a mixture of kin and non-kin), and may choose whether to give to them or not. Pokies offer different circumstances and distribution decisions to big-men. In my notebook Alwin wrote in English: “the difference between a village leader and a modern gambling leader is a gambling leader has the honour to say 'yes I give' or to keep. The village leader has the obligation to give with any reason or

circumstances". Alwin's gambling situation is still considered public, but links between people are ambiguous and not purely kinship-based, and the hold that winners have on the money they won is strong. Those around a winner are associates rather than intimates until the winner chooses to make an associate into an intimate by donating to them. Doing so, Alwin said, confers 'honour' on those receiving at the expense of others who receive nothing.

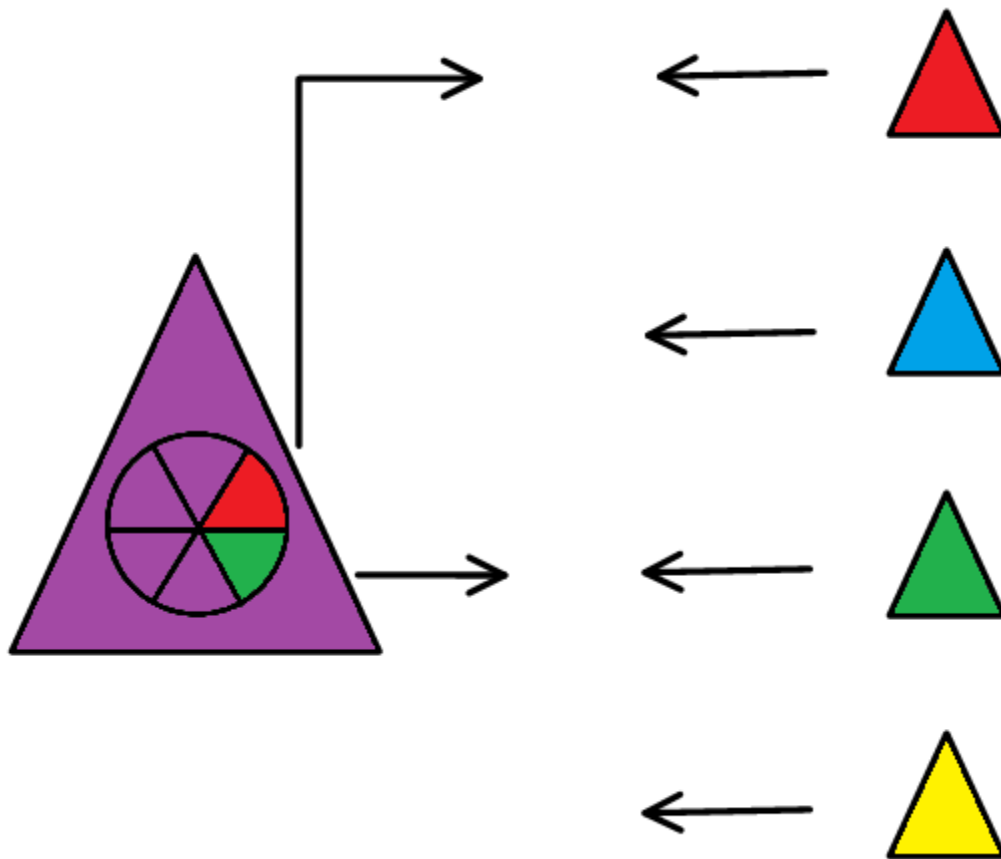


Figure 4.5: A contemporary gambling big-man's distribution at pokies. The triangle surrounding the segmented wealth object represents the modern gambling big-man, who has control over the wealth. He is therefore able to refuse some of the people coming forward to receive gifts.

What makes this description pertinent is that choice, Alwin thought, has led to three types of public gamblers, defined by what they do when they win: one type puts their winnings in their pocket and goes; the others give it to their helpers, friends, language-mates and colleagues when they win. Of those who choose to distribute, one buys people soft drinks, and they do not give too much. This person will be a big-man, doing good by distributing while exercising judgement. The other will buy beer, two cartons of it, and give it to all the people. This person

is a “true man”, but ultimately doomed to lose out. Alwin’s ideal types show that shifts in the way wealth comes to big-men at pokies allow them to set up relations that extend beyond their clan networks. It is an opportunity for what A. Strathern called “finance”. People may choose who to invest in at a broader level than before, and may receive at that broader level. Crucially the truly generous man, who might previously have been a leader in the Eastern Highlands, would be the loser in these circumstances. Nowadays big-men must exercise greater judgement. Having identified a qualitative difference people see between gambling big-men and their predecessors, I now discuss in what sense some punters at pokies are ‘big-men’ and where their wealth comes from, before returning to distribution practices’ role in distinguishing contemporary big-men.

Big-Men & “Lesser Men”

According to my survey, the average fortnightly income per household in Goroka was K510; pokie playing households earned K717. As one would expect, high income people tend to live in higher income areas. Amongst settlement dwellers (who have a lower average income) surveyed, only 1% of residents over 16 years old admitted regular pokie playing. In a high income part of West Goroka, 8% of over 16 year olds (women and men) regularly play pokies. In West Goroka 48% of those who leave their community to gamble go to pokies (only 4% of the corresponding settlement gamblers go to pokies). So pokie players living in Goroka tend to be those who live in the higher income residential areas. Focussing in on the 52 households in this sample who played pokies, we see that 15 (29%) also contained a high level professional, or a public servant (19 or 37%), a high level manager (7 or 13%), ran a successful business (7 or 13%), or have large interests in the coffee industry (3 or 6%); only two households had none of the above.

Yet the relationship between financial success and leadership is more complex than these statistics show, as is leaders’ relationship to pokies. After speaking to Alwin at the bar I stepped inside the pokie room of the Bird of Paradise Pokies Lounge and joined John¹³, a

¹³ John was a settlement dweller in *Piswara* (lit. ‘fish-water’), he grew up in Goroka and was a regular member of Tom Liam’s entourage. John was down on his luck, having been a councillor but now without

member of Tom Liam’s entourage. I asked John to go through the people playing at that moment and tell me what everyone was known for, and who the big-men were¹⁴. This always revealed a great knowledge of other people’s affairs:

Income	Status
Landowner upon whose land a natural gas project is taking place	‘Big-man’
Supervisor at a coffee processing company	‘Normal’
Businessman who owns a pokie joint in Kundiawa, Simbu Province	‘Normal’
Former Health Extension Officer now working with a large development bank	‘Big-man’
Public servant	‘Big-man’
Former magistrate	‘Big-man’
Quality controller for a coffee exporter	‘Normal’
Headmaster of a large high school	‘Big-man’
Real estate consultant	‘Big-man’
Coffee exporter	‘Normal’
Four people were not identifiable for John, but were not local big-men according to him.	

Table 4.1: Pokie players and their status at the Lahanis Pokies Lounge, 8.30pm on 26th November 2009. John used the word ‘normal’ for those who were not a ‘big-man’, it simply meant that they were equal to the others, but not special (see below).

For John, some financially successful business persons, such as the pokie joint owner, were considered lesser leaders than for instance a former magistrate. It is not so much that wealth equals leadership these days, because being wealthy, while alluring, is not admirable unless that wealth is mobilised in particular ways. Both Alwin and John indicated that big-men are still defined by the way they manipulate wealth. A good illustration of this is the use of the term *maniman* (‘money-man’). In Goroka *maniman* means men who have become very wealthy and are able to contribute to whatever they want without having to consider it. Untroubled by the need to prioritise their gifts to some events over others, these individuals cut an ambiguous figure as good people to know but not necessarily to emulate. In a perverse way, the *maniman* has had his capability for autonomous decision removed by having too much money: giving to

work for a number of years. Ben and John had campaigned together, John for district councillor, Ben for member of parliament.

¹⁴ As I asked a member of the entourage at different points in the night every time we went out to pokies.

an event displays no skill because money is of so little value to them. They do not participate in financial arrangements because they do not need assistance¹⁵.

Nevertheless, John's assessment shows that big-men usually have a high profile job in public service or in well-known businesses. They also invariably own one or many businesses such as a pig-rearing enterprise, beer shops or pool table manufacturing. The separation of waged and business enterprises is key, as most use their wages to support their families, and their 'businesses' (often lacking comprehensive accounting procedures) are used to make all sorts of other ventures. In chapter three I described how employment is 'work' while *bisnis* (lit. 'business') is not; this is because the freedom of business allows the businessman to manoeuvre their money in a flexible way, utilising kin and other forms of relationship.

Business ownership is highly regarded in Goroka, but cannot be understood in the standard sense. Most are makeshift trading companies set up on the basis of a favour, giving a person preferential access to goods or customers. Typical examples are security businesses, which often begin when a person gains a contract to provide security for a business/government premises by a known associate, starting a business to provide the service. Once up and running, the business as property is owned both collectively and individually. Individually through use and development, collectively in that its success and ultimate end belongs to the whole clan (cf. Wagner 1974; Finney 1973). Successful big-men can rely upon their kin and supporters to help their business flourish, setting up further deals with associates and other companies and guaranteeing their custom. At the same time demands will be made upon the business 'owner', and involve participating in unprofitable activities or donating money to various activities. The person and their ability to contribute are not separated from their business dealings and therefore business is a mode by which people do "finance". For this reason many Gorokans reflect that short term success in businesses is easy, but sustaining or growing them is hard because their success is dependent upon the obligation-balancing skill of one big-shot (see Finney 1968; 1973).

Part of the issue was that money which came from businesses, like winnings from gambling, was said to be *fri mani* (lit. 'free money'). It was not owed directly to another and was

¹⁵ The *maniman* closely resembles Tolai use of the term *big-shot* (Martin 2007; 2010), which in Goroka seems to have kept the positive associations of its predecessor, *big-man*.

therefore free in the sense that it may then be used as a form of “finance” by businessmen in their search for renown. Businesses conform to the ‘market-logic’ described in chapter three (though I take that point no further here). In accordance with the need to bridge networks of people beyond orthodox business arrangements¹⁶, money was often given to existing and potential supporters (as well as other big-shots, see below) during daily gifting or at the pokies. The hope was both that the recipients will frequent their businesses and ultimately come to the big-man when they have a life crisis, enchaining them securely in their web of reciprocal support.

The success of one’s business, participation in traditional exchanges and contributions to others are intimately bound up together in the creating of one’s ‘name’. The reverse is also true: the power of one’s name attracts customers to one’s business. Tom, who owned a pokie joint himself, used his name to bring customers in, and that, he thought, depended on his own presence at other pokie joints. Fame, garnered in part by lavish spending at pokies, feeds back into its own system. Often the strain of such demands and the uncertainty of business meant aspiring big-men could not sustain their success, and found themselves brought down by the demands of others and/or a lack of frugality, including over-indulgence at the pokies. Being a ‘truly big-man’ is to tread the fine line of popularity and social distance by employing innovative and traditional transactional methods. In other words, deploying “finance” judiciously through whatever means are available.

At pokies, while big-men fixated on their machines, men of lower standing – those people whom John described as ‘normal’ – bobbed between them. Big-men are thought generous just for coming to pokies, for fraternising with those of a lower ‘level’ and for meeting them as equals. ‘Normal’ men accompanied leaders as *bodigard* (‘bodyguard’), *eskot* (‘escort’) or in order to *halpim em* (‘help them’), rarely playing themselves. I shall characterise them as followers and, as they described themselves, “lesser men” (*liklik mangi*, lit. ‘small boy-children’). These “lesser men” took positions standing by a player, encouraging them, watching intently or taking orders from their player for beer, cigarettes, betel nut, to put another K50 on the machine or take the winnings out for them. Big-men say followers protect them from

¹⁶ This is not to say that corruption, as we term it, is not rife in the so-called mature economies, but it is precisely because we maintain a distinction between proper business activity and corruption that does not apply neatly to the Gorokan context.

thieves, jealous people, poisoned drinks, and allow them to concentrate entirely on the game¹⁷. Sometimes it seemed they expressed emotion on their behalf as well.

While player's attention remains on the game, followers come and hover, flitting between leaders they feel they can approach or remaining loyal to the one. When people characterise pokies as a game, it is this singular attention they focus upon. People liked it because you play *wan-man wan-man* (lit. 'one-man one-man', i.e. separated from other gamblers and making one's own decisions), or they did not like the *wan wan* (lit. 'one one', same meaning) unsociability of the game. Acting alone is typically associated with *ol waitman* ('white people'), and contrasts with acting *wan-taim* (lit. 'one-time', with others), which is stereotypically Papua New Guinean. Acting on one's own is to act without assuming that one's actions are based upon relations with others, and doing so is seen as a critique of traditional Papua New Guinean sensibilities (Reed 2003; see J. Robbins 2004; M. Strathern 1999; below). While 'gamblers' eyes remained fixed to their screens, they still played to an audience reflected through the gossip of "lesser men", and would often change location if they thought there were not enough fellow big-men around. The importance of playing *wan wan* shall become increasingly significant in the final analysis.

Keeping your concentration means money passes to followers who go buy beer, betel nut or cigarettes on big-shots' behalves; the follower will receive some in turn. If they hand over small monies, big-men rarely ask for change. Small winnings are also given to followers to keep them satisfied. It is thus possible for "lesser men" to benefit monetarily from pokies without playing themselves. In their immobile singularity, big-men are a magnet for "lesser men" who do not care about the big-man, only the money, and close followers have the job of guarding big-men from these chancers. It is thought that some very shrewd people make their entire living from being sponsored to play or by being around the pokie joints ready to benefit from other people's payouts, but they are looked down upon because they have no loyalties. To prevent pokie joints from being swamped by these beneficiaries, access is strictly controlled by iron gates and security personnel.

Despite obvious status disparities between big-men and others at the pokie joints, there was a strong rhetoric of equality. Big-men perpetually said that they are all equal here, big and small

¹⁷ When we were alone leaders often bemoaned these same people and characterise them as beggars.

associate freely. Like many parts of Papua New Guinea, in Goroka “hierarchy and equality [are]... coexisting modalities of a single system” (Flanagan 1989: 261). Equality in Goroka is an achieved state. One is nurtured during ones early years, and this is seen as a debt incurred on one’s behalf by the nurturers, particularly the mother (see also M. Strathern 1988). Boys also incur significant debt to their clan when they contribute to bridewealth. When boys have repaid the debts sustained while growing up and finding a wife, then they are men, and notionally equal. Only then is one able to gain a name for oneself (see Read 1959). Pokies, frequented by adults and particularly men, are primarily a place for those who have already come to equality, giving them the freedom to invest their income as they choose (though not without obligations). Stressing equality in pokie joints is saying that ‘we are equal in our potential’: amongst us anyone can excel by their qualities. This is in keeping with previous accounts that stress the “equalitarian” nature of Eastern Highlands societies (see Read 1959; Salisbury 1962). In the past literature on exchange, it was those men who had made good their debts who could participate in “finance” without being scorned by their own kin (A. Strathern 1971), and at pokies people seemed to suggest, often too emphatically, that they were all equally able to do so.

How to Play... Pokies

After the rugby league game, aware of the necessity to play and display wealth, Tom Liam made his way beyond the partition, scanned the room and found a machine he fancied. He pulled out his wallet and thumbed through a wad of notes wedged inside. People would often delineate big-men from those who ‘came with only K50 to spend’¹⁸. Men who go to pokies are thought to do so with amounts and denominations of money corresponding to their size, and Tom was well aware of this when he flashed his cash¹⁹. He handed one of his K50 notes to John, who sauntered over to a booth in the far corner of the room. Inside a young man was hunched in his chair.

¹⁸ Size of notes and size of men is in turn reflected in the iconography of notes themselves. The typical large value note of K50 being the only one which carries a picture, that of current and founding prime minister Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare, the archetypical national level leader (cf. Foster 1995a; 1998).

¹⁹ In chapter six I discuss how hiding money is important in everyday life, making Tom’s display a particularly potent statement.

Over at the counter John slid the note through the letter-box sized hole in the plexi-glass, and said "12"; the machine that Tom chose. Behind the translucent wall, the operator, 'Tax' placed the K50 in his till and glanced at his computer screen, where he clicked an icon, then punched 50 into the keypad and pressed return. 1000 credits immediately appeared on screen over at Tom's machine, the series of buttons below the television screen began flashing, and he wasted no time making his first bet. The screen displayed three rows of five card-like symbols carrying either numbers or pictures on them. Each turn the 'cards' appeared to spin irregularly downward, slowing to a halt from left to right, aping slot machines with moving parts. Figure 4.6 decodes the information on display.

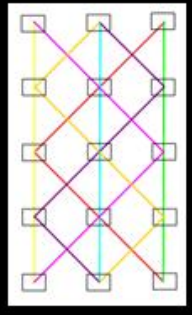
This number represents the amount won after each spin in credits.



Total credits remaining. Fifty kina buys 1000 credits. The highest possible win is 200,000 credits, K10,000.

In order to win a player must connect symbols carrying the same value. In this image the player has won 100 credits by connecting symbols on the red line seen here (the first two are flashing and therefore not visible). The red line is more clearly visible in the diagram on the right.

Total credits bet across each of the seven paths in the diagram. In this case 50 represents a bet of 10 credits on five paths (yellow, green, orange, white and red). Maximum bet per path is 10, minimum is 1.



This image demonstrates the bet paths' trajectories through the card symbols. Every 'spin' the card symbols change while the connecting lines remain in place. One can win on any combination of these paths on a single spin. Matching card symbols must be linked left to right to win.

The card symbols are from the most popular pokie game in Papua New Guinea, State of Origin, though most other games vary only slightly on the State of Origin theme of seven paths and fifteen card symbols. Certain symbols such as the State of Origin' board, the player, the boots, and the balls seen above have special properties such as triggering a side game or acting as substitutes for other symbols.

Figure 4.6: Diagram explaining basic pokie-gam eplay

Being a 'big-shot' Tom Liam tapped the buttons that committed him to the highest bet in credits: 70 (K3.50), giving him a chance of winning the maximum on a single spin: K10,000. After several spins (his bets yielding no returns) Tom switched to staking 50 credits. A number of lines immediately yielded returns, doubling his credits. Realising his tactics were working, Tom took a gnarled toothpick from the corner of his mouth and jammed it between button and its border, forcing the machine to play on automatically. He stood four feet back, folded his arms and looked on without expression.

Tom Liam, playing 70/50 credits with a toothpick, was considered a real 'gambler'; but two machines apart was a man playing 3 credits, and he was thought to *pilai laki* (lit. 'play luck'). As I discussed in chapters one and two, luck means good fortune without implying any cause. People who 'play luck' hope that the little money they brought will be enough to see them make a win. Stereotypically these players only attend pokies during daytime; with less money to lose they play slowly and timidly, betting small amounts on many lines often, all the time trying to 'mastermind' the game (see chapter two). Their limbs are said to shake from nerves, but their defining characteristic is that they play alone without help, often deliberately in secret. This was borne out by my records: on average nine machines would be playing during the day, with only eleven people present, so there were very few people accompanying those playing. They had a set budget as a result of their solitary play and were characterised as 'working class'²⁰ people who come in during their lunch break, played for an hour, and sometimes return after work. 'Gamblers' like Tom Liam were said to play at any time they want; they were business men and thus not tied to working hours. Usually this meant they came at night and particularly on the weekends. The average number of people in the pokies area during a night while I was present was 39, while the number of machines playing was 13, and many more were big-men than during the day.

The 'gamblers' that dominated my nights also bet differently to *pilai laki* pokie players, for instance ostentatiously putting K150 on a machine at one time just to save them walking back to the operator. They played more than one machine simultaneously: by this point in the evening Tom had started playing the machine between him and the 'working class' man, and

²⁰ Note that working class is usually a statement of high praise, and these people who have employment are considered to be on a higher 'level' than the unemployed majority (see chapter three for an analysis of work and employment in Goroka).

was tapping rhythmically on its buttons, having left the toothpick to play for him on the first machine. I once saw four machines played at once. Followers said ‘gamblers’ play fast (i.e. run through their money quickly by betting big) because they have more money, and are assured that lose or not, money will still come to them through their networks and their businesses²¹. They only rarely resorted to the cautious tactics of working people. Both types of player wanted to win, but many believed that big-shot ‘gamblers’ don’t particularly care if they lose, an image they were careful to propagate. In contrast to their working counterparts, these players usually acted insulted at the suggestion that they had a budget, which is to say an absolute limit. ‘Luck’ (*laki*) is ideally an irrelevance to the real ‘gambler’ because he believes he has enough money to wait out the next win. Some thought that these business men’s skins were covered with money (*mani pulap lo skin blo em*, lit. ‘money full on their skin’, see chapter six) so they play without concern, just to relax. Big-men in particular say they feel relaxed playing pokies precisely because they play *wan wan*, against a machine that has no connection to the obligations that lead their actions outside of the pokie joint. As successful members of their ‘groups’, these leaders are constantly confronted with requests and demands, while the machine is disinterested and acts without any pre-existent relationship to the player.

Despite ‘gamblers’ apparent nonchalance, both sets of players played to win, and to do so they had to interact with the machines. Having explored efficaciousness in gambling during chapter two, here I discuss only what is particular about playing Pokies. Choosing paths connecting symbols was important because during a spin with bets on multiple paths, the player may have won credits on one (or more) paths but lost credits on all the other routes (again see figure 4.6). Sometimes players lost more than they won on a given spin, and this made players ponder whether they should have bet lower on that spin or on fewer lines. Players adjusted their strategy to avoid wastefulness, just like Tom, who switched from 10 credits on all seven lines (70 credits) to 10 on five lines (50 credits). All the choices the machines present gave players the appearance of effective decision-making, so many thought that you could outwit the machine.

²¹ See also chapter three on betel nut wholesale marketers’ propensity to play because of their ‘fast’ incomes and many ‘corners’.

By coming to understand the 'pattern' between card symbols on the screen, over time the players get closer to *mastamindim* ('masterminding' see chapter two) the machines²². With pokies this means correctly judging fortuitous or forbidding signs amid the symbols, noticing combinations that have appeared before. More idiosyncratic knowledge of these patterns makes up a player's individual *aidia* ('ideas', see chapter two). This information was kept secret from other players in order to secure wins for oneself and prevent the machine from adjusting to one's style of play. Such ways of playing were sometimes thought to be intrinsically unique to individual players and would not have had an impact on another's chances of winning²³. Deciding when to come to pokies also came under one's *aidia*, and depended on a wide array of factors from recent wins and losses at certain joints, machines and times, to whether one

²² Adding to the complexity, some configurations led to bonus rounds. There a player was asked to choose between two options and given information on the past pattern of results. Choosing heads or tails for a televised coin flip and being told the last four results (e.g. heads, heads, tails, heads) is a typical example.

²³ When they did describe tactics, they often said that those tactics only apply to them, and so were of no value to me. A few people did divulge their tactics and I give a few examples now from the most popular type of machine (bearing in mind that they are not intended as guides to anyone but themselves):

1. If three or four 'J' symbols come up then it means that goalpost symbols will soon come in force and lead to a bonus round.
2. If you make bets of 35 credits, this will induce goalposts to come.
3. If during this bonus round the player kicks an animated ball past the first of a series of lines indicating successively larger wins, this portends sizeable winnings.
4. If the shoe or whistle symbols are spread around and on their own then it means that many people have been playing the machine and therefore the machine has adjusted itself and will not pay out, but if the symbols come along in clusters of two such symbols then it will pay.
5. If you see a shoe and a 'J' on the same screen, it is a good sign and you should bet heavy to try to win big.
6. The same is true if you see a lot of 8's.
7. If he sees two or more A's then he should bet low as he will not win.
8. All machines, he said, will tend to pay out at the end of each month.

These few examples demonstrate people's intellectualist approach to pokies, as things that can be learnt, but which are ambiguous enough to allow people to theorise upon them (see chapter two). Again as in chapter two, the secrecy involved in working out your very own strategy meant that people's activities were often mysterious to me.

was in the correct frame of mind and financial position to play²⁴. One factor I did not mention in chapter two is that people's *aidia* together made up their *stail* (lit. 'style'). Tax, the operator who sat in the booth when John came over, had thought a lot on the subject of tactics and *stail*:

Despite the machines being in control of payouts, the thinking of a man can overcome the machines and make them pay-out, they can overpower them with their style, by masterminding them. To do this they have to be good at doubling up [during bonus rounds], and they collect 400 or so each time. Different styles are required to beat different machines though. I want to find out how the machines work, but I don't know; the technicians do though. Sometimes I come in early and just look hard at the screens and machines to find a pattern. But we [the staff] are still unclear.

Tax was talking from an everyday person's, or *pilai laki* perspective, but 'gamblers' tactics often went further; they encompassed these strategies and took other persons agency and pattern into consideration, something never brought up by those who *pilai laki*. Tom said that if you play heavy like everyone does, with bets of fifty or seventy credits all of the time, the machine will not pay out as it just acts as if it is normal, taking the money from these leaders as it does all the time. Instead he changes his betting pattern so that it is enticed to give to you. Tom used his sensitivity to others as a framework for understanding how a machine might work. He seamlessly added that he does this kind of thing on all other occasions as well; that this 'style' of his is in his blood, he was born a leader²⁵, and he cannot change it. He said that if you are a *man blo givim* (lit. 'man belonging to giving', a generous man), then you will just give. He said that if he has money, all the people will know and it will *flo raun* ('flow around'). Tom melds his understanding of people, and how to transact with them, with those of the machines. I think this demonstrates the focus that big-men have on the social context of pokies, despite their insistence that they relax in front of machines and do not worry about others.

When money comes back out of pokies, then the focus on others becomes obvious for all to see. As long as there is a residual 1000 credits on the machine (equivalent to the original K50)

²⁴ All the above points are explored in detail in chapter two.

²⁵ Here Tom Liam is referring to his heredity; his father was a big-man before him.

then the player can take out any multiple of K10 (200 credits) at any time by returning to the operator and asking for the money. Tom and other big-men used this feature to keep the flow of money coming. For the last two hours or so Tom had been putting money in the machine, and despite losing much, he did not miss an opportunity to buy beer for his followers when his score crept up. In chapter one I described how gambling brings money into the open, decouples it from obligations and frees it up to distribution, and this is the case for big-men even when they are losing. The way big-men think about interacting with the machines and followers appear as a type of “financial” game, and even more so with other big-men.

“Financial” Winnings

At 9.45pm, on a single spin, Tom won K1,500, and remained stony faced. Reaction among ‘gamblers’ is often understated. Just like big-men preparing their distributions and displaying their wealth in its abundance (see Read 1965; Salisbury 1966: 124; Burns, Cooper & Wild 1972: 107; chapter five), they show their potency in their disregard. Followers, other big-shots, and unknowns went and congratulated Tom Liam with a hand on his back and a quiet quip in his ear. Now began the most potent language of “finance” at pokies: the distribution of winnings. Tom chose to collect his own loot from the operator. At the booth he asked Tax to give him K100 in K20’s, K400 in K100’s, and the rest in K50’s. He immediately gave the five K20’s to John and the four other followers who helped him while he played; I was given K100 in two K50 notes, as a visitor and a relative. Tom gave Richard, another of the followers, a further K50 to buy two jugs of beer for us while Tom drank from a bottle of red wine.

We all left the pokie room together and sat down in the bar. Then Tom sauntered back, and I raced to the viewing window to see what was happening. He put his head round the pokie room entrance and handed K50 to his friend and fellow big-man, which he called his *pokies met* (lit. ‘pokies mate’). Ahead of most kin and affinal relationships, and above all other relationships thrown up in Town life, a *pokies met* received more money than any other person when someone won. I sometimes asked people what they would do if they won and it was completely up to them who to meet and who to give money to; I was surprised to find that most informants filter out all but their immediate family *and* the *pokies met*. I learnt later that a family unit will accept much smaller amounts relative to big-men because they consider

themselves to be 'acting as one' during the moment of distribution, and wish their collective name to travel with the outsider. People indicated that their distribution stands as a metonym for their kinship network as a whole, their individual actions will give them all prestige if done well. It was not necessarily the big-man who had to give away and stand for the group, anyone could, and their generosity reflected well on the kin-group as a whole without singling out an individual, paralleling Lederman's (1990) material. Yet there is a general acceptance that big-men should take the responsibility for such distribution, and so they retain the collective emphasis that characterises Eastern Highlands distribution events.

When I asked why Tom gave to this man separately, he said he received money when this big-man won in the past. Giving money at the same time as us as would cause all the other people to be jealous and they would 'beg' for money, he said. This statement demarcates the *pokies met* from those ephemeral followers who are simply 'fed' by Tom Liam's money, and who are thought to be categorically below Tom's 'level'.

This *pokies met* relationship begins by mutual acknowledgement of each other's presence within the pokies. An initiatory gift of money or beer acted as a test of either equality or inferiority. Able to sustain reciprocation over time, they became a *pokies met*. Tom might have given money to this man in front of his dedicated followers (and I saw him do so on other occasions) because a *pokies met* should be made to feel above (and thus categorically different to) others because of their previous gifts. Doing so in the presence of others also lets him know that the money was attained by gambling. People said that then the two will become linked in others eyes and will figure more prominently in others thinking of them. Participants said that because the money's origin was gambling, a *pokies met* has a greater hold on it, as their relationship is based upon the same class of relation as the one that the winner has to their winnings. They are socio-spatiotemporally linked (cf. Munn 1986). The more politically minded the man, the more they tended to prioritise the *pokies met*, and hence political elites seem to be more prolific 'gamblers'.

Two socio-spatiotemporal limits affected the size of gifts between a pair of *pokies met*. First of all, some 'gamblers' thought their obligation to a *pokies met* was restricted to pokie joints alone, and when they are not playing nothing exchanges hands. Within an evening though, news of winners travels quickly, not only inside the Bird of Paradise Pokie Lounge, but one day

to the next and from one pokie joint to the next. That night when we moved to the next joint, called Lahanis, Tom gave away money to each *pokies met* he encountered. There is always a time-depreciation to one's gifts because winnings soon become other kinds of money. If the *pokies met* were met early on, before others, then a winner should tell them that they won and give money to them; if the win was not fresh, Tom could avoid giving the *pokies met* money and revealing his win. Their status quickly diminished as other competing valuations came to prominence. The money ceases to be winnings and subsides into other monetary forms, severing the potential links it can make through space-time.

Secondly, the *pokies met* relationship is intensified by the Pokie joint. Its heady atmosphere of big-men, for whom money (supposedly) flows so easily, makes the value of money go down and the gifts rise. Pokies represent one extreme of the value spectrum because all the transactions involve big money. Money is said to have no value inside the pokies, as Richard (who had been sent for beer), made concrete to me:

Inside the pokie joint, K20 is normal in there, it is like 10t or 20t. Outside the pokie joint K20 is too big, too much to give to a person without thought, you must give it for a good reason; inside they give K20 without thought. Outside, people don't deal with money alone, inside we play and we deal with money, so a man will win and he will be happy and he will give without thought. Money has no value at pokies.

Pokies are places where people feel happy to *shirim natin natin* (lit. 'sharing nothing nothing', to share prolifically without concern²⁶) because of the relatively low value of money. While Tom was quite frugal with his distribution, those whose experience of windfalls is limited often joyfully give away all their money. I saw Alwin's description of a 'true man' come true many times, big-men happily taking the money and referring to the giver as foolish behind their back.

With money freed up for distribution by the act of gambling, even big-men are not above asking for money from other big-men when they hear the news. In Lahanis Tom asked another for money when this *pokies met* won K480; he received K20. The devaluation of money was apparent in the mock argument that followed. Tom said "this money is not for food, you

²⁶ See chapter one for a brief discussion of word reduplication.

should give more". Tom played in veiled antagonism with the grammar of monetary denominations: K20 is a lot of money for a meal, and would only be given to a big-man for such a purpose, whose appetite is thought proportionate to his standing (see Read 1959: 422). Tom played on the fact that they were inside the pokie joint, where the need to consume and circulate money is of a higher order. Tom Liam argued that showing regard to him at pokies, considering his size and power, requires a larger denomination. K50 is the minimum because it is enough for a game of pokies. Really big-men like Tom say they only deal with each other in K50 notes and above. "Lesser men" can give big-men lower notes, down to say K20, but they say receiving below K10 could be taken as an insult. From among the bravado emerges a language of regard complete with styles of oratory. The syntax is provided by the notes which set the terms of gifts. Amounts given then evaluate the size of donor and recipient. Above the threshold set by location and interlocutor, people indicated that the size of a return gift of *winmani* ('winnings') is *not* dictated by the original donation in absolute terms but by the proportion of their win the other gave.

A *pokies met* is desirable not least for the large amounts of money it could lead to and the stabilisation of one's monetary fortunes in an unpredictable sphere. In fact some informants likened it to insurance: if the partner is more fortunate than oneself, then one will benefit from them; yet if one is more fortunate than the partner, then it is a pleasurable thing to give and a marker of status that insures oneself. The money given is by no means free or disinterested, it is considered to be like an unofficial loan, invoking bad feelings if it is not returned if and when the recipient wins later. The reader will notice that unlike with followers, this form of reciprocity is far more exacting. The *pokies met* is an expression of leaders' autonomy from each other, as equals who might create pokie friendships rather than members of a corporate group who are obligated to each other by default. As a form of "finance" it is analogous to that found in the Western and Southern Highlands (A. Strathern 1969; Lederman 1990).

I suggest that it is the lack of direct competition between big-men on the gambling front that allows alliance-making gifts to flourish. Unlike the card games discussed in previous chapters, pokie machines are thought to be beyond local people's control. Those who prefer cards emphasise that you play against people, and the money flows between them, but with pokies you play against a computer that you have no control over. Big-men tended not to play cards,

instead betting on pokies or horses, and they usually lauded the fact that in both cases you play individually (*wan-man wan-man* or *wan wan*), and that no one can interfere with you. As I discussed in chapter two, Gorokan notions of efficacy are wide ranging, including negative thoughts of others directly affecting the dispensation of cards and money towards a person. Big-men feel they are the subject of much jealousy, and the inability of jealousy to affect pokies is a strong reason to favour them²⁷. Not only does one play individually against a machine, but they are also not obliged to compensate losers when they win, so they feel they have more freedom to spend the money as they wish. In Goroka, as elsewhere, acting *wan wan* is to act without the assumption that a relation is leading one's actions, and doing so is seen as a critique of the constraints of kinship (see Reed 2003; J. Robbins 2004). In pokies playing *wan wan* against the machine serves as a critical starting point from which to extend relationships with the money that gambling brings out. In this sense acting alone is a pretext to another, more self-controlled form of relationality. The pokie machines act as a kind of laundering process for relation-making.

Another factor aiding the mobilisation of more elaborate forms of "finance" is that a big-man remains with the machine where they may appear perfectly indifferent. More often than giving money to other big-men directly, followers are given money by a winner and told to buy drinks for or give money to particular big-men. Followers allow big-men to look both ways, at the machine and their relational obligations to *pokies met*. Desiring to gift each other but preferring not to engage each other directly, big-men launder their money through an outside agency into a state which makes gifting acceptable and not overtly antagonistic. Big-men often likened pokies to a golf club (there is a golf club in Port Moresby where big-men and politicians famously play²⁸), where big deals are made as the result of 'small' gifts between associates, and while big-men's concentration appears to be elsewhere. They see themselves as laying the foundations for national level politics by building up "financial" relationships with important personages. In reaching out to this broader scale of politics, big-men in Goroka create novel "financial" arrangements that intersect with the machinations of big-men from other areas,

²⁷ Machines are thought to be set in the capital Port Moresby. People recognise that the machines are exploitative, but the distance and clandestine nature of the machine's setting means that the machines are not thought to be set against individual players; this makes pokies distinctive from cards which may be manipulated by other players using certain forms of magic (see chapter two).

²⁸ There is also a golf club outside of Goroka; a relic of colonial times.

establishing themselves as big-men or big-shots through an inventively generic capacity to transact through business while mobilising kinship relations. Big-men in Goroka have broken through the 'traditional' constraints upon the use of "finance" by utilising new potentials for income and laundering their money through consumption at pokies. They aspire to national politics as they reinforce business interests through consumption, which itself demonstrates the strength of their kinship network, comprehensively moving the terrain of big-manship into new territory. They say that whereas before they fought, now they drink beer together and play pokies, and suggest this is a good thing. As they do so they become a tighter mesh which aims to protect and expand their collective regional interests. Therefore I see the newspaper clipping with which I began the chapter as in part a result of a communicative language of "finance" which is made evident at pokie joints.

Conclusion

Whether or not Gorokan 'big-men' used financial methods in the past, I argue they certainly do now. I excavated where and how big-men in Goroka got money from innovative sources: government projects; business services; coffee production; wages and rental collection. These sources of money are then used to "finance" their transactions with followers and other big-men, and in the case of businesses, how they balance on the same system. Not only do Gorokan big-men do "finance", but every aspiring big-man recognises that "finance" is the key to their success. I argued that pokies provide a place where big-men can meet and transact with each other, displaying the extent of their resources and providing a jovial atmosphere in which to compete and ally. Pokies are good for this because they are not susceptible to jealousy and they allow big-men to act distracted and diffuse otherwise overly competitive exchanges.

My exploration discloses analogies with Lederman's material in the Southern Highlands, where everybody seemed to be doing "finance". According to her model, this should put a brake on big-manship as individuals do "finance" for themselves at the expense of clan leaders. Yet in Goroka it seems that multiple sources of "finance" and the skill required to manage them effectively mean that some men are able to rise above their competitors. Men who realise they lack the sources of "finance" to compete prefer to benefit as a follower than break their

own bank. In this they resemble Melpa and Enga-speaking people's method of synechdochally identifying themselves with the success of their leaders (A. Strathern 1969). Pokies, a costly enterprise, acts to weed out those whose sources of funding are not secure, as well as those who cannot exercise the requisite degree of judgement in when to quit and how much to distribute.

Two tiers emerged. On the lower tier followers are dealt with in a manner that is in keeping with Eastern Highlands attitudes to dealing with insiders without exacting reciprocity. On the higher tier reciprocity is exacting but set down by the particular type of "finance" that is offered to pokie players as they consume their money on machines. Thus it seems that elements of each 'form' of big-manship come into play at pokies. Gambling in the Gorokan setting automatically creates a certain set of potential relationships that accentuate Gorokan concerns; in this case pokies drawing out the inequalities that people attempt to build between themselves and others. People are potentially in relation to other gamblers as a result of the shifting fortunes that make up gambling, and gambling therefore potentialises exchange relationships because it creates and makes visible differences between people. One could say that the value of money is corrupted within this space and in this process, being devalued from its normal state of absolute value. But as I attempt to show throughout the thesis, this state of fluctuation is in fact the status quo in Goroka.

In the following chapter I investigate a parallel process, the bringing of monies together, which develops further the links between "traditional" collective and leadership action with the aesthetics of money as they appear through gambling. This time I concentrate upon the State of Origin competition and the large communal bets that people make upon them, and how they relate to contemporary iterations of that more famous example of bringing wealth together: the paying of bridewealth.

The Origin of Pooling

In the last chapter I suggested that distribution relationships between big-men and their fellows and supporters at pokies, revealed an emergent realm of finance management. Here I continue the theme by examining the aesthetic involved in pooling wealth objects; looking at how collective transactions come about in contemporary Goroka. Big-men play a role, but even when they are not included, the pooling 'logic' persists in their absence. I first describe a brideprice I witnessed in 2009 as a contemporary exemplar of 'traditional'-style pooling. Yet the chapter is not about brideprice, at least not explicitly. Rather I use my experiences of brideprice as a foil for looking at how wealth items are typically brought together. The real focus is on collective bets. Pooled bets arise when the State of Origin rugby league competition happens in neighbouring Australia. I analyse the instances of pooling around both 'traditional' events and bets in a search for what unites them. I argue that what underlies both is the added value that accrues to wealth when it is united from multiple sources. I aim to add this to the compendium of indigenous transactional formalisms compiled in the thesis. Through their comparison I hope to draw out how gambling can inform our conceptions of brideprice and of other instances where wealth is brought together for exchange.

As with pokies in chapter four, it is no coincidence that the State of Origin competition is played elsewhere. Its externality again means the result is beyond local influence. The lack of preordained givers and takers during betting (*contra* brideprice), allows the piece to shift focus onto what seems important to people in both circumstances: the aesthetics of accumulation and opposition. It is precisely because people seem to enjoy nothing more than when affiliation is as contingent as the difference between liking one team or another, that I can examine pooling as an end in itself. It shows once again that formerly exogenous gambling appealed to Gorokans, and was incorporated by them, because it allowed them to do imaginative things that elaborated upon indigenous priorities.

In the course of the chapter I avoid debating whether underlying similarities mean that pooling bets are “traditional”; or whether their differences make them “modern” (see Foster 1995b). Instead I focus on an aesthetic of accumulation and opposition, trying to show it as trope that transcends historical positioning. Pooling is seen as a pragmatic model for action. I maintain a running analogy with Lorraine Sexton’s (1982) account of *Wok Meri* (lit. ‘Women’s Work’¹) groups in the Goroka District and eastern Simbu Province (see also Dickerson-Putman 1994). In the 1970’s new transactional forms like *Wok Meri* appeared to subvert men’s traditional control over wealth². Along kinship links acquired through marriage, women pooled their meagre savings and loaned parts of the total to other groups, encouraging them by example. New groups became their instigator’s “daughters”, and the transfer of wealth between “mother” and “daughter” was stylised as the giving of money (symbolised as a girl and often accompanied by a doll) in marriage to the “daughter” group, who gave bridewealth in return. Having pooled sufficient funds, *Wok Meri* groups held “washing hands” ceremonies where they gave a second bride and acquired more bridewealth from “daughters”; they also received loans from neighbouring groups. Money was then distributed among the “mother” group’s participants who often pooled their money again to make large purchases like trucks. I maintain an analogy with *Wok Meri* because this then-novel practice helped Lorraine Sexton to think about the ‘logics’ of pooling from a fresh perspective. Now, thirty years on, *Wok Meri* provides a background to the kind of transformations that Gorokan people have experimented with over the years and which can now be seen in pooled bets and brideprice ceremonies. When Gorokan people routinely collect and act, they fashion a social reality which is of its moment, consuming the old and new in the only time that is relevant to action: the present. To deal with the material presented here I found it necessary to employ a set of shifting principles and preferences guiding the accumulation and redistribution of wealth and persons, and in this approach I take inspiration from Roy Wagner’s work (1974; 1991³). Yet perhaps owing to its seeming naivety, why people pool the way they pool, and whether pooling itself could be thought of as more important than the event that brings people together, remains

¹ For an analysis of “work” as antecedent to transaction in Goroka, see chapters two and three. Below I also analyse *Wok Meri* in these terms.

² I was unaware of *Wok Meri* groups at the time of fieldwork, and so I am unable to say conclusively that they are no longer present in the Goroka area. They were never mentioned to me during fieldwork, and other fieldworkers have been unable to find people aware of their continuing presence (Busse Pers. Comm.).

³ See prologue and conclusion.

largely unexplored. Instead of employing a top-down approach, in my account the outward form of exchange is imagined as if through the back end of a kaleidoscope, where the fluctuating pieces conjoin over time to produce the patterned form that is so often seen when you understand exchanges from the top down. There are analogies in my approach with the work of Eric Hirsch, who has been concerned with the enactment of centrality among the Fuyuge (Central Province, Papua New Guinea):

“The Fuyuge ... create the need for a centre through the indigenous concepts of 'branches' and 'base': the branches create the need for a base (a person of excellent qualities who is perceived to have 'holding together' capacities) even as a base must be the support for branches (other men, women and children). Centredness, therefore, is related directly to the perception of branches (as analogous to roads), and the need for it is continuously re-created in every expansive, extending-out activity. At the same time, the base is made visible by the number of branches it supports. Fuyuge sociality and personhood ... is a continual process of re-creating the contexts (performances) where these concepts are made concrete and visible, and where efficacy can be achieved. (Hirsch 1994: 692).

I explore the aesthetic involved in the oscillation between (exchange) event as unifier and people as otherwise separated, and in this respect the approach has its roots in a M. Strathernian approach to sociality (M. Strathern 1988).

My analysis (employed throughout the thesis) abstracts 'logics' from concrete situations to give a players eye view, rather than completing an abstracted model of transactions. In this I took inspiration from Erving Goffman, Jean Piaget and David Graeber. Goffman's (2002 [1959]; 2006 [1969]) formalist analyses investigate very fine-grained decision processes among situated actors within a Western social context (though Goffman remained elusive about his model's wider applicability). It is his attention to the decision in context that is stimulating, though I understand my ethnography to reveal a different 'logic' borne out of dissimilar logical frames. In this I follow the work of Piaget (1952), who understood each logical system of reference as unexplainable without a more encompassing regime of thought, a process which stretches *ad infinitum*, each logic exhaustible and incoherent without reference to the level

above it. In this he cites the importance of Kurt Gödel's (1986 [1931]) proof of mathematical un-provability, a text which is of particular importance to my work on indigenous mathematics (Pickles 2009). I understand bets as a working logical field of Gorokan action, containing elements which are only understandable with reference to more encompassing ideas. The analogy between the aesthetics of collectivising brideprice payments and bets is an attempt to expose this more encompassing idea and explore its limitations. In other words I am looking for the limits of the logically prior idea of *pooling* bets/gifts and why, despite their apparent differences, they may be subject to the same 'logic'. At the end of the chapter I therefore revisit some of my previous material in the light of pooling. It is at this level that I take inspiration from Graeber (2001), who employs the same technique to uncover a cross cultural anthropological theory of value. I am also seeking a model that can comprehend attitudes to money as variable and universal. I differ in that I seek only a Gorokan model, recognising that subject and object are complexly implicated in Gorokan thought and that this thought is more revealing as anthropological critique than as a node within a universal understanding of value. I do however regard action as the primary vehicle for understanding how value is created in Goroka, which is the great strength of Graeber's theory, and the work of Nancy Munn (1986) who inspired its direction. In chapter two I considered action, in the form of transaction, as the primary vehicle for knowledge in Goroka, and I follow this approach here (see also Gell 1988).

First then I briefly describe the aesthetic of collectivisation and redistribution at a brideprice ceremony, and then introduce the State of Origin as a good event to bet with. I use this as a starting point to analyse the bringing together of bets during the State of Origin Series. I make no excuses for the fact that betting, in all its forms, is the visual idiom that inspired and informs all my descriptions of Gorokan life, including those that look like traditional exchange forms like brideprice. The analysis might equally work the other way around, I simply chose the method I found most revealing (cf. M. Strathern 1999).

Pooling – Some Familiar Scenes

Eight weeks after I arrived in Goroka I had seen little that reflected the books I read. No initiations, no men's houses, no large exchanges of any kind. I had met only one pig, holed up in a small wooden cage behind a house in *Banana Blok* settlement. Instead I saw extravagant

displays of wealth at pokies, learnt a couple of card games and some Tok Pisin, and ignited a lust for markets. My Melanesian “fieldwork experience” was already somewhat unusual.

On the day in question I emerged from my room at the National Sports Institute (NSI) at nine-thirty, after a night at the pokies with its inevitable hangover. I sat on the veranda drinking coffee and smoking my first cigarette of the day. From the path leading outside my door Amy, a passing employee, warned me that something was happening in the employees’ compound and that there I would see some “real culture”⁴. Caffeine and nicotine dispensed, I lurched into action, notebook in hand, clunky camera swinging my right combat pocket grotesquely; arriving at the first house in the compound just in time to help an unwilling, surprisingly pink sow backwards off a tractor trailer. The pig had been bought for K700 from a piggery whose stock and trade is such occasions⁵. I was instantly named official photographer:

⁴ Amy was always keen for me to leave Goroka and see the “real” Papua New Guinea, and this type of suggestion was entirely unremarkable throughout my time. As such my experience of people’s ideas of what authentic “culture” is fits broadly into existing ethnographic descriptions (see Foster 1992, Otto1992).

⁵ At the time one Papua New Guinea Kina was worth £3.70.



Figure 5.1: An ‘Official Photographer’s’ eye view of some clan members and one porcine participant at a brideprice ceremony. Immediately behind them an earth oven was being prepared.

Engulfing the few familiar faces were others my eyes recognised as rural relatives to one another. I approached Pasde, Head of Kitchen at NSI, in charge of supplies and catering for those using the Institute’s sporting and conference facilities. Pasde was from Lufa District, south of Goroka, and evidently central to proceedings. It was the major instalment of the brideprice for his third wife⁶. The bride-to-be was from a neighbouring hamlet only a few minutes’ walk from Pasde’s own. In preparation for the arrival of his betrothed’s kin, an earth oven behind his house was prepared in which lamb flaps, sweet potatoes and edible leaves were steam-cooked. It was presided over by men while women killed, prepared and boiled

⁶ Though most Highland groups accept polygamy, this was in fact Pasde’s third consecutive wife after two previous marriages had failed. Correspondingly the price expected was lowered, though this is not always the case (see S. Robbins 1982). I was unable to ascertain exactly why the price was lowered, possibly because the two are from very nearby one another and have many overlapping ties.

chickens. The kin group's culinary contribution was to be augmented by NSI's kitchen, where staff prepared among other things a delicious fried rice dish with tinned pork.

Meanwhile Pasde, a couple of his male clan-mates, and an old friend and colleague from the NSI, were pondering the arrangement of gifts to the bride's clan, trying to make the pile seem full and lavish. Their concentration was absolute. Massive uncooked sweet potatoes provided height; bunches of special-occasion bananas on the perimeter accentuated stature with abundance; a bundle of sugarcane, one of taro and the two or three unmistakably phallic red pandanus fruits were artfully organised about them and a bemused chicken lay with bound legs at the very front. Finally four boxes of rapidly defrosting lamb flaps augmented the stack on one side. The arrangement was made all the more critical because as a third marriage, this was supposed to be a relatively cheap affair, and so the desired abundance was all the more difficult to portray.



Figure 5.2: Two of Pasde's brothers (left and centre) and an elder of Pasde's clan (right) discuss how to arrange their gifts to produce the appearance of abundance. Behind them is an earth oven, some female clan members, chickens and their heads.

When NSI staff, spouses and family arrived, further gifts were added to the pile, whence it was reordered into three different groupings. Two were aimed at the two mothers of the bride (Lauren's father had two wives), one was given a larger pile because Pasde said this mother visited less often and therefore received less from him, so he had to show her a lot of respect at this time. The third pile was for general collection; all were beautifully arranged, and looked suitably plentiful, at least to my eyes.

Lauren had been living with Pasde for a couple of years as a trial marriage, but that day she arrived anew with her kin on the back of a truck. Her head was adorned with costly Princess Stephanie black bird of paradise plumes, but it was only their hypnotic swaying that could be seen behind a throng of men and women. At the front of the train a stretcher bore another large pig, but this time it had been slaughtered, splayed and cooked, and laid in front of the

visitors as a gift to their hosts. The visitors seemed hostile and unimpressed by the culinary bounty awaiting them, as they should before hard bargaining begins (see also Read 1965). Behind his gifts, behind his clan that was its backdrop, Pasde was leaning against a wire fence trying not to look nervous. According to his local custom neither groom nor bride should play an active part in negotiations. NSI staff sat or stood on the side, toward the groom, as interested gift-giving parties but side players and relative outsiders to proceedings. I judged my place was with them.

In the negotiations over price that followed (speeches went back and forth six times before agreement) all the food was but icing on the cake, the real item of interest was in a pocket out of sight⁷. Of course it was money, which has long been the principle vehicle for brideprice payments in Goroka. The debate was entirely over money, and contributions to the event were measured by their relative value in Kina. Pasde had taken written notes of all the contributions of food and money, and compiled a spread sheet the following day as *aide memoir*. When I heard about it he kindly allowed me to copy it onto my computer:

⁷ See chapter six.

BRIDE PRICE CEREMONY CONTRIBUTION LIST					
NATIONAL SPORTS STAFF & FAMILIES					
NAME		CASH	FOOD	VALUE IN KINA	TOTAL
Mrs L.		200			
N.S.		180	1/2 carton lamb flaps	76	
Mrs B			1 banana, 1 chicken	50	
Mrs N.		20			
V.			2 chickens, yams & sweet potato	100	
E.			1 chicken, 1 pandanus fruit, 1 banana	60	
N.O.		50	Taro	10	
Ms O.			Absent		
Ms N.K.			1 chicken		
K.M.			2 chickens, 1 banana	70	
O. K.			1 chicken, 1 banana	50	
U.K.		20			
T. E.		10	1 banana	30	
P.L.			1 banana, 1 chicken	50	
N.B.			1 banana, 1 chicken	50	
U T.		6			
L.M.		100			
P.			1 chicken, taro	40	
K.M.		10			
K.H.		50			
Total		646		586	1232
FAMILY AND OUTSIDE HELP					
N.			1 carton lamb flaps	140	
L.			1 carton lamb flaps	140	
O.				140	
B.			1 carton lamb flaps	140	
K.		20	yam, taro, pandanus fruit	70	
E.			1 carton lamb flaps	140	
C.		100			
Uncle J.			2 bananas, 1 bundle sugarcane	60	
Papa E.		20	Taro	20	
N.			1 chicken, 1 banana, sweet potato	50	
M.'s mother			1 carton lamb flaps	140	
Z.			1 banana	30	
T.D.			1 banana	30	
B.,E.,L.		200			
K.		120			
S.		20			
Pasde		2000	1 pig	700	
Sub total		2480		1800	4280
Grand Total					5512

Table 5.1: Pasde's Excel spread sheet of his brideprice. It is basically unchanged: names were changed and abbreviated by the author; in a few cases Tok Pisin terms were translated and obvious typos corrected.

The reader will note the columns: "Name", "Cash", "Food", "Value in Kina", and "Total". "Value in Kina" converted food into its equivalent in cash, which was added to the cash contributions to make the "Total". The "Grand Total" was K5,512, divided into cash contribution (K3,126) and food items (K2,386). Items of "Food" were understood to have a cash value that transcended their circumstances, and cash value was the primary mode that Pasde chose to understand his gifts (see also M. Strathern 1975; 1999). In this respect the spread sheet resembles the accounting procedures of "bookkeepers" for *Wok Meri* groups; Sexton describes how the "bookkeeper" took note of cash contributions, not as a mode of exacting reciprocity between the individual and outsiders, but as a method of delineating and marking precisely the stake which contributors made to the total collected, and thus what they should receive when their own group distributes their receipts (Sexton 1982: 187-8). Much of *Wok Meri* procedure took the form and rhetoric of a marriage, while today accounting for money at brideprice ceremonies resembles *Wok Meri* practices. For instance in talking about his future efforts to return the generosity shown him, Pasde stressed that he would base any future donations upon the cash value of the gifts received, irrespective of their original nature as porcine, special foods, or cash, though this may guide the form his gift takes. He was far more assertive on this front with NSI members than with kin. With kin Pasde had many overlapping obligations, so the brideprice was a less reliable guide to his future contributions; he expected he would give appropriately to each future event instead.

It had been a struggle for Pasde to gather money together because it was his third brideprice. He himself raised K2,000 in cash and bought a K700 pig, almost precisely half the value of the full brideprice, and was anticipating a regime of street selling and earth-oven cooking (which is cheaper than cooking on a stove) to recoup costs over the next months⁸. Pasde's close kin or 'pooling unit' (see S. Robbins 1982: 92) only contributed a fraction of what the cost would have been upon Pasde's first marriage. A 'pooling unit' for S. Robbins is partly defined by pooling wealth to give to people outside of their own unit (ibid: 86). Pasde's 'pooling unit' had this time given only K480 in cash, K1,100 in food items. Their cash contribution was beaten by Pasde's colleagues (K646)⁹, who had acted as if they belonged to the 'pooling unit' by raising K1,232 in bride wealth (including cash and food), even though many of them were only there

⁸ See chapter three.

⁹ Not so in the case of food items (K586 against K1,100).

because, as Pasde put it, it would be “rude not to invite them”. Pasde would now be expected to contribute to other events at NSI though he was not close to the individuals involved. This suggests the need to act as a ‘pooling unit’ was facilitated by proximity and the moral imperative to pool rather than any pre-existing kinship relation, even though Pasde separated them in his notation. Indeed the definition of a ‘pooling unit’ seems less important than the principle of inclusion, unless one counts NSI itself as a member of the ‘pooling unit’, which Pasde clearly did not.

During the brideprice ceremony most of the money was pooled in one pocket. I say most because the groom’s party were usually expected to increase their offer, and they had a wad ready in another pocket that was “reluctantly” handed over along with the initial offering. Likewise “bookkeepers” at *Wok Meri* meetings suspected of fiddling were often forced to empty their pockets (Sexton 1982: 186). In the brideprice it seems wife-givers forced wife-takers to ritually reveal what is always assumed to be kept in reserve, forcing the partner to reveal the potency of easily hide-able money (cf. Graeber 1996)¹⁰. Cash amounts, which should not be handled by the principle players, are nevertheless collected and collated to be used in an exchange by two parties. It would be ridiculous to suggest for instance that each contributor give their money individually to the other side, a point which shall become prescient later in the chapter. Sexton found the same to be true for *Wok Meri*, where loans made between individuals of different groups would deliberately have their personal possession of the debt or credit hidden by the two corporate *Wok Meri* groups (Sexton 1982: 188). It is the ‘logic’ of pooling money and its hiddenness in the collective individual that remain across the chapter’s examples.

Aside from the incorporation of employees, the account of brideprice negotiations given here is not at all unusual; analogous earlier situations were found further up the Asaro Valley among for example the Auyana (S. Robbins 1982: 89-93), and in other areas of the Highlands (see Brown & Brookfield 1959; Fiel 1987). Nor is it unusual all across New Guinea to see gifts of abundance of all types, or to see wealth collected and accounted precisely (Rubel & Rosman 1978; see Young 1971 for a Massim society). My point may seem banal, and/or abstract to the point of uselessness; one need only refer to Mauss (1954) to know that largesse is very often a matter of large gifts. Rubel and Rosman make a similar assertion – that there is always a

¹⁰ See chapter six.

prestige attached to the size of exchanges – based on their comparative study of Papua New Guinea peoples (1978: 277).

One way in which D.K. Fiel singled out Eastern Highlanders from Western Highlanders, amid their common interest in exchanges, was the former's "aggressive undeveloped love of things" (1987: 234-5). Among ethnographers of the Eastern end of the Highlands, Salisbury found the Siane "ebullient materialists" (1962: viii); Newman described the Gururumba as "thing-oriented" (1965: 51); Kenneth Read thought the Gahuku-Gama "materialists ... to the point of exhaustion" (1965: 60). Aggressive gifting and self-interested accounting seem particularly pronounced in this area. As I mentioned, S. Robbins, working among the Auyana (upper Asaro Valley, just north of Goroka) found it easier to define groups formally as "pooling units" (1982). S. Robbins decides upon the term as a matter of functional expediency, and does not develop the notion of pooling as a guiding aesthetic. Indeed, while searching through the literature, amid details of sugarcane stands and exchange patterns, surprisingly little attention has been devoted to the act of bringing together itself, much more on the formalities of what needs to be reciprocated, when, and by whom, following Mauss. They peered through the top of the kaleidoscope at the patterns produced, but did not consider the way decisions were made. It is in this regard that the *Wok Meri* material stands out, because of the novel way that pooling was achieved and the exacting accounting, which may have caught attention because of its refracted proximity to "western" accounting procedures (Sexton 1982: 167). My focus on bringing things together came from my broader interest in collective betting, rather than formal rules for reciprocation.

In each instance of pooling cited above, display was central and exact tallies kept. There was regularity and aesthetic pleasure in bringing together valuables for an exchange, and they were formative in self and opposition building. Nothing new is presented here, my concern is to see what might be gained by refocusing the questions and embracing naïveté: why is it necessary to display? Why is it preferable to draw in as many people as possible within each group's proscribed social demarcations? Why involve your colleagues Pasde? Was it not too complicated? M. Strathern asserts powerfully that exchanges act to define one group as against another, a proposition that I and others take somewhat for granted (J. Robbins & Akin 1999: 36). But what are the limits of this necessity for inclusion? How are collections brought into being for and by the situation, materials and actors involved? When is this principle of

inclusive pooling not applicable and when is it imperative in a socially diverse situation such as contemporary Goroka? I now explore these questions by drawing parallels and differences between the brideprice situation described above and another, more unorthodox situation of collaborative pooling during bets made over the State of Origin rugby league competition. I do not claim that betting and bridewealth are equivalent, far from it, but the aesthetic of collection arose once more at this time in a way which invited placement alongside 'traditional' agglomerative situations.

Origins of Origin

Pasde's brideprice was sandwiched between State of Origin games. These are great Papua New Guinean spectacles and the county's largest gambling events, but the games happen in Australia. Rugby League is the third most popular sport (by attendance) in Australia, behind Australian Rules football and horse racing (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2005-2006). Australia is divided into six states, each with a strong sense of identity and sporting preferences, and sport is an important conduit for expressing differences between, and gaining bragging rights over, other states. In some sports professional players periodically return to the states from which they claim origin, to play for that state in inter-state competitions. The only such competition that makes an impact in Papua New Guinea is Rugby League's State of Origin, where games are played between New South Wales (the "Blues", because of the colour of their shirts) and Queensland (the "Maroons" for the same reason). The contest's current form dates from 1982, when it was agreed that regardless of players' team affiliation, they were only eligible to play for the state in which they were raised¹¹. The relative prominence of the sport in Australia, their domination in international competition, and the knowledge players have of each other through their association at club level, mean some pundits argue that State of Origin hosts the highest quality rugby of any competition¹².

¹¹ It was a pragmatic move by Australian Rugby League because at this time nearly all rugby league players played the game in New South Wales. There has been an inter-state competition in Rugby League since 1908.

¹² An analogy here might be the regional Champions League football competition in Europe, whose quality of football is often regarded as better than that of the international World Cup.

Australia was colonial administrator for parts of (what is now known as) Papua New Guinea since 1920, and the whole territory since 1945, relinquishing control in 1975. They brought a number of sports into the Highlands region in the 1930's with the gold rush, but the one that really caught on was Rugby League, mainly as a spectator sport; it was played predominantly by expatriates until the late 1960's. Rugby League is now (uniquely) the national sport of Papua New Guinea (see Foster 2006) and in the Highlands it is an obsession. Goroka is a leading centre for Rugby League, with a highly successful local team (the Goroka Lahanis) and a wealth of talent that supplies other provincial teams.

Robert Foster rightly draws a link between nationalism and Rugby League in Papua New Guinea in a way that replicates the colonial relationship (2006), but the fascination Highlanders have for Rugby League and particularly the State of Origin competition warrants further ethnographic attention. Nowhere else is "League" held in such high regard, even in England (its country of origin) it remains relatively provincial. Yet the ethnographic literature on rugby league in Papua New Guinea is sparse (but see Wilde 2004; Foster 2006, and short references in Imbun 1995; Skeldon 1980; Standish & Standish 1974).

It would be simplistic to put the popularity of State of Origin down to historical happenstance: a colonial connection, Australian domination of Rugby League and its hosting the (arguably) apical competition would warrant attention from any nation whose people had taken wholeheartedly to Rugby League. Gorokans cited both quality and the history of the game as explanations for State of Origin's popularity, but most often the idea of playing for one's place of origin captured their imaginations. Gorokans' immigrant/local/naturalised statuses resonated strongly with those of their Rugby League idols. Gorokans also identified with distinctions made in Australia between the two teams as either urban or rural. New South Wales (NSW) is Australia's most populous state and contains the country's largest city, Sydney. Its "Blues" are therefore often described as "city-boys" in Australia, and hence *siti lain* or *taun lain* (lit. 'city set/lineage' or 'town set/lineage') in Goroka. Queensland is comparatively rural and contains some famously rugged terrain, so the "Maroons" are "country-boys" and in Goroka *ples lain* (lit. 'village/home set/lineage'). These categories animate Gorokans; they express connections with their home villages, the town, or with aspects of their personalities through their preferences. For example Gorokans said that there were many more fans of Queensland than NSW because Goroka is comparatively rural.

State of Origin's popularity must also be seen in conjunction with another competitive forum deriving from Australia: pokies. State of Origin is the theme for the most popular pokie machines in Goroka (and Papua New Guinea), making up 80% of all machines nationwide (National Gaming Control Board pers. comm.). The State of Origin competition is so popular Gorokans sometimes called it a 'religion', and it is little wonder that gambling machines depicting it are more popular than others. Yet I do not think the causality is unidirectional: analogies between the two were common among informants and had no particular direction, so I now briefly discuss attributes they are thought to share.

In chapter two I said that for Gorokans most events were subject to the influence of others and forces which could never be fully comprehended. In Chapter four I introduced the pokie machine, which was valued for the fact that people could relax their minds in its presence, more or less sure that their fellow Gorokans were unable to influence the game against them, because they were machines whose "program" it was beyond their powers to control. Many Gorokans expect corruption and local people to influence things in their own country. They see themselves as morally weak in opposition to the supposedly *stret tok* (lit. 'straight talk') and *tok tru* (lit. 'speaking truthfully') that they attribute to *ol waitman* (lit. 'white people'). Papua New Guinean rugby league competitions are thus thought to be problematic as betting events. When I asked people why they do not bet on their own rugby league competitions, they would usually cite corruption.

State of Origin (in both forms) is beyond Papua New Guinean's perceived capacity to influence. While numerous players playing in the State of Origin were considered 'black' and therefore thought to be more closely related to Papua New Guineans¹³, those players were not subject to the strains of the *wantok sistem* (lit. 'one talk system', sometimes referred to as 'wantokism', meaning preferential treatment through pre-existing ties, see Ayius 2007; Brigg 2009) in Papua New Guinea, brought up as they were in Australia. One joke (told as a true

¹³ In Goroka many believe that African and other dark skinned people are of the same line of ancestry as Papua New Guineans (as opposed to 'white people' who are usually thought to be more distantly related), and assume that they share a similar outlook on the world.

story) that arose around Origin time displays this quite well: a sore loser from the coast¹⁴ destroyed their television set by throwing it out of their window and into the sea, and people laughed and said *sapos yu lus bai yu mekim wanem, kalup lo balus na flai i go lo Australia na paitim ol?* (“if you lose what are you going to do, get on a plane to Australia and fight them?”). The misdirected attribution of responsibility to a broadcasting medium adds a comic layer of stupidity, when the correct action would be to resign oneself. Gorokans cannot imagine their own sorcery or wantokism affecting the result of State of Origin games, just like their pokie counterparts.

As an essentially benign arena for competition, with only two teams, almost the whole of Goroka and the surrounding region picks one of them. Inevitably when fans pick one side then their affiliation cuts across all kinds of kinship, affinal, language group and colleague ties. Each year it is husbands against wives, fathers against children, and ego in league with affine against kin. Though the cross-cutting nature of State of Origin affiliations is not explicitly valorised, the possibility of competing against novel others is obviously enjoyable to people when they speak of specific instances. On the other hand, when talk turned to the violence surrounding the game, stories usually revolved around inter-marital conflict and murder resulting from opposed affiliations. As opposed to the comic destruction of televisions, news of this topic usually brought consternation.

The fact that State of Origin cuts relations and radically reimagines ties was important from a Gorokan perspective. Like media-based sports fans everywhere, people chose their teams for many different, often un-geographical reasons, and people did not make (nor did I find) any correlation between one team and particular relatives. On the contrary, people often stressed their individual preferences for such-and-such player or style of play. Hence, on the day of a game, the atmosphere is one of exuberant collective identity, only divided in two. There was a special sense that on this day friendships and alliances were created anew and generalised upon frivolous, simple grounds, allowing novel camaraderie and in more serious encounters giving vent to unvoiced antipathies. It is hard to get across the excitement and ubiquity of the occasion, it seems the whole country stops and redraws itself, with national newspapers seemingly devoting half their pages to the Blues and Maroons for days either side of the

¹⁴ Jokes portraying idiocy are often directed by ‘Highlanders’ against ‘Coastal’ people, showing a regional mentality.

showdown. Gorokans used Origin to forge some dormant ties and stage nascent oppositions with others, safe within an event that they (for the most part) recognised as arbitrary. Hence the jovial boisterous atmosphere watching State of Origin contrasted starkly with watching the local Goroka Lahanis team play in the domestic Bemobile Cup competition, where the atmosphere was quiet, tense, without betting, and subject to furious expletives and accusations from the crowd.

When fans of Blues or Maroons bet on State of Origin games, they stressed that the competition was mediated by another who takes no particular interest in themselves, and thus their competition with others can appear good natured and not over-antagonistic (see also chapter four). Violence sometimes erupted, but this was put down to wayward morality rather than the negative influence of the game itself, and people cited the supposed lack of violence in Australia. Having given the origin of the competition and a little of people's attitudes to it, I shall now proceed to an account of the betting allowed by it.

Pooling – State of Origin Bets

In 2009 the State of Origin contest was played on June 3, June 23 and July 15, around the middle of the Australian National Rugby League season (March – September) as usual. Having arrived in Goroka on 16 April 2009, I was fortunate enough to get a true sense of the scale of Origin and thus Gorokan gambling in the first few months of my research. This State of Origin series was on the verge of becoming historic, the Maroons had the entire Australian national back line as their own, and were chasing a record-breaking fourth successive Origin victory. Blues fans maintained hope, and on the day leading up to each game Goroka filled to bursting with excited youths and visiting relatives. Enterprising people painted patterns and logos on eager faces in acrylic paints of either blue or maroon, or sold flags in both colours along the roadside. The shade of your shirt, shorts, even your string bag, was taken as a statement of preference, and those who had them were sure to wear their replica shirts.

I watched my first State of Origin game in the lecture theatre of the National Sports Institute, and the next two outside a man's house in *Kaunsil Kem* with a crowd of settlement dwellers. There were five such houses, each selling access to a television, with 40 to 50 eyes glued to the

screen. Maroons triumphed in the first two games. The Blues' experimental side did not find enough defensive strength and attacking penetration until the third game, by which point the series was already lost. The following year I consolidated my observations, as Queensland consolidated their victory with a whitewash and a new record for consecutive series wins.

Gorokans said Queensland's dominance affected the betting. They expressed either exasperation or unbridled confidence about the impending result, but many bet on despite suspecting a loss. Form is an important factor in deciding whether to bet, but games are considered standalone betting events, and nobody bet on the series. One reason for this is the event-ness of a game in series: a sequence of games represents multiple rounds with spaces in between for tactical renewal. While many sporting events occur on a regular basis, and some involve the same competitors each time, only a few have only two teams and swap locations¹⁵. Within this small category, only State of Origin is played over three annual games at short intervals.

Like social groups exchanging women for wealth, many Gorokans think wins even out long term. People laud the three-game format because it gives losers a chance to win their money back. I think this stems from a desire to have as many replicable instances of wealth redistribution as possible. Gorokans feel that, bet or no bet, win or lose; they or their opponent will quickly get another opportunity to redress the balance. In this respect the game's regular reiteration in winner-takes-all competition mirrors and models the oppositional structure of lifecycle events like the brideprice described earlier. It also mirrors the act of betting on a slot machine, which is effectively back at point zero after each engagement with it. It is unlike *Wok Meri* in this respect, where loans are thought supportive and opposition is stylised (Sexton 1982: 179).

Most betting occurs in the afternoon and evening leading up to kick-off¹⁶. There was some commercial betting at the betting shop in the centre of Town, but the trade is paltry compared to private bets. According to a short survey of 38 NSI staff or family of staff, 58% made a bet on at least one of the three State of Origin games in 2009; many bet more than once on each game. Each bet averaged K32.30, which is second only to pokies in magnitude, and ranged

¹⁵ Other examples being the Ryder Cup (golf) or the Ashes (cricket).

¹⁶ It was anathema to bet during play, as the contest was underway.

from a typical low of K5 and a typical high of K50. Women bet, but men make the majority of bets. Both genders say it is men who play rugby and so they who are most interested. In a separate sample, discussed below, I found big-men bet an average of around K800.

Many drank heavily in the three days surrounding games and fights occurred, usually after the game; two Gorokan deaths were attributed to State of Origin by locals in 2009 (one husband murdering their wife and one vice-versa). Sometimes drunkenness was tempered by its very consumption, in two senses: 1) parts of Goroka literally ran out of beer, and 2) in the days following, I more than once stepped over the sprawling unconscious bodies of sun-baked young men who were unable to collapse into shade. People bet with alcohol too: 1, 2 or 5 litre bottles of locally brewed strong fruit-wine (itself quite dear) along with cash. Within betting, drunken or otherwise, there is an unspoken 'logic' which, by my dissection, I think reveals underlying similarities to other exchange events. For reasons that shall become clear, bets are divided in two, those made: 1) collectively without a central character, and 2) between and around big-men.

1. Collective Bets

My clearest recollection of State of Origin is of *Kaunsil Kem* settlement, where I witnessed people pooling bets before the second and third game of 2009. I will describe three instances. The first occurred twenty minutes before the kick-off of game two. It involved a group of 10 or so teenagers, who rushed into the beer shop I was in, waved K92 (methodically fanned out to look enticing) in my face, shouting *nainti-tu Maruns, yu bet!* (lit. 'ninety two [Kina on] Maroons, you bet!' meaning they were betting on Maroons and I was to bet against them). I recall it well because I panicked inside, having been warned about the settlement's volatility on Origin nights. The fanned notes, though not displayed with other items of wealth, were carefully arranged and physically advanced, fronting a group who were identifying themselves as a collective in relation to it. Someone explained that they had assembled this amount between them in order to entice potential adversaries. Their collectivisation anticipated and might elicit a competitor, anonymising contributants for a collective identified with a sum.

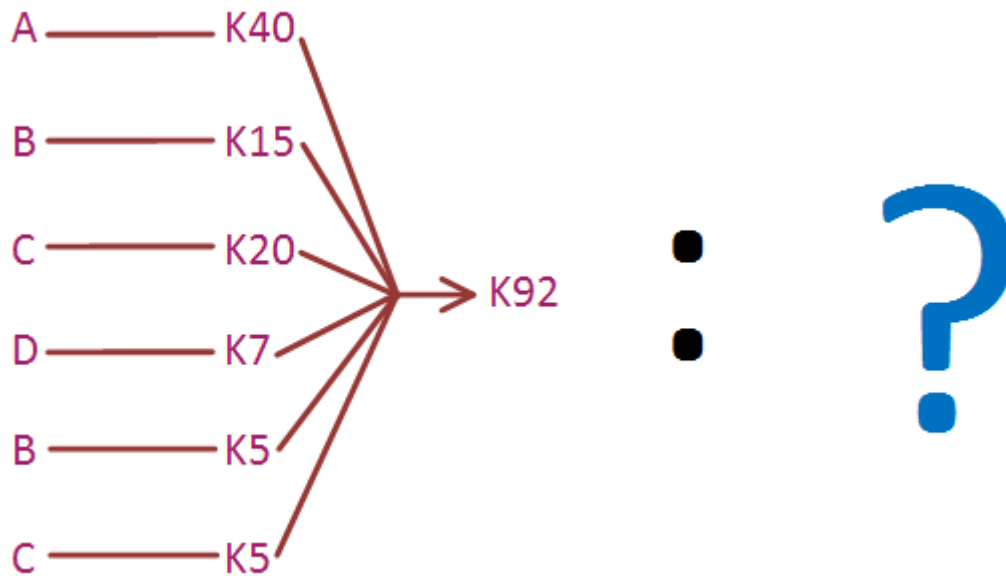


Figure 5.3: An attempted collective bet made by a group of teenage boys.

The boys created a position from which a transactive counter might exist, just as Wok Meri groups cajoled others into forming “daughter” groups with the abundance they displayed at “washing hands” ceremonies (Sexton 1982: 189; see also M. Strathern 1988). When a “daughter” Wok Meri group was set up, they were defined by a sum given to the group as a group, rather than as individual mothers to individual children (Sexton 1982: 173). Precedents also existed among Auyana (Eastern Highlands); at their life-crises a “collection area” was made and wealth put in it without earmarking particular contributors; failure to anonymise oneself made the larger “unit” angry (S. Robbins 1982: 86). The boys set up their opposition in the very hurried, speedy, boisterous and aggressive way that epitomises youth (see Sykes 1999; chapter two), but here I limit myself to the necessity for abundance in its creation. To my mind it would seem more difficult to attract people to oppose a high bet (K92). If the stakes are high, I would assume the bet is an expression of supreme confidence from my adversary; that would put me off. But the boys attempted to attract opponents by gathering a large amount of money and thrusting it raucously in others’ faces.

The boys had faith in the aesthetic power of plenty upon potential opposition, and this resembles Pasde’s brideprice. The plenitude (and the distributive potential that is inherent in it) created the possibility of transaction. If the amount was large enough, it would draw another collective into existence to oppose it. In the brideprice situation the bride-giving clan exists in relation to the bride-taking one inasmuch as the latter receive the payment, while the

payment is only acceptable if it is large enough to satisfy the assemblage of people who designate themselves as the clan to receive it. The assumption on both the giver and receiver's side, and both the bettor's sides, is that more is better because larger imbalance invites stronger responses. It makes people consider engaging in its other side, sucking people into the transaction with centripetal force; imbalance tempting completion. One attempts to demonstrate not only that one can afford an expensive bride or a big bet, but that, give or take, win or lose, the relationship is intensified through transactions of pooled wealth. In both cases a breakdown is threatened if a suitably large amount of wealth is not provided to solidify the transaction, even though a large transaction will inevitably increase the responsibilities both parties have toward each other in the future. Like *Wok Meri* groups before them, and pig enterprises before that, Eastern Highlanders tend to see events like State of Origin as "corporate enterprises held in opposition to other, similar units" (Fiel 1987: 253; see Sexton 1982; Read 1952; Watson 1983: 55).

Likewise *Wok Meri* groups fretted over the size of their "washing hands" ceremonies, the more impressive they were, the more resolute "daughter" groups would become. *Wok Meri* groups, like brideprice and collective bet contributants, used the desire to create large transactions as a mode of increasing their individual abilities to put together a large sum (Sexton 1982). Creating widely felt exchange was therefore more important than exchange between individuals.

But these simple observations are well trodden ground in Melanesian anthropology. The real question remains: why collectivise the transaction? Is it just to make more potential for regard because individuals lack wealth? Is it just that, as Feil notes, when people have a little they prefer to pool to make their wealth seem a lot (1987: 253)? Later in the chapter we shall investigate larger and more personal bets between individuals, but another instance shall help to clarify why people bring things together for transaction without any seeming need.

The second instance I recall happened among the crowd at a *TV haus*. After buying beer I walked over, paid the entrance fee for my companions and me, and sat on a tarpaulin with 40 or so others. Five minutes before kick-off a middle-aged man (A) announced that he had K10 he wanted to bet on the Maroons. A middle-aged mother (E) with two children in front then said they would bet K15 on Blues (thus far M10:B15). Another mother (F) exclaimed that they

had K5 to bet on Blues (M10:B20), while a young man (B) shouted excitedly he had K5 to bet on Maroons (M15:B20)¹⁷. One of my companions called Peter decided to act as third party, collected the bets together and looked after them; this was known as *narapela bodi holim* (lit. ‘another body holds [it]’).

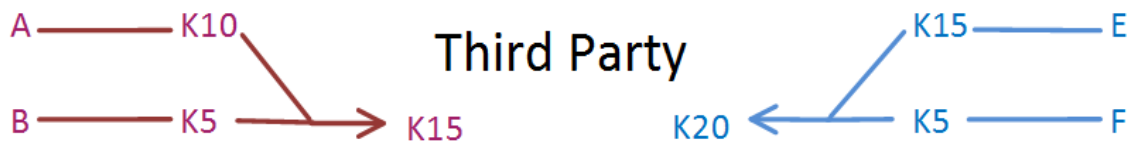


Figure 5.4: Bettors attempting to set up a pooled bet and coming to different totals.

Participants called out for someone to bet the difference. When no one came forward, the bet was broken up and Peter handed back the money. One would think that surely the K5 bettors (K5 Blues mother vs. K5 Maroons young man) would bet individually after the collective bet broke down (they were on potentially betting terms because I saw them gamble together regularly), yet this did not happen. At the time I thought it was incredible. I almost suggested it. I later realised that this was to do with the fragile community relations going on in the settlements; they did not want to bet against each other if they were in direct competition¹⁸. Not only was it polite to be as inclusive as possible, but bets which were not communalised when people were watching had no place (see below). Without a game that limits the participation of people (as in the case of *bom*, *kwin* or pokies, but not so in *chalinj*¹⁹) there is a necessity to include anyone who wishes to join in. To bet with a lone other was not equivalent.

Instead of betting individually, they might just as easily have refused bettor F and the match would have been even (M15:B15). It seems the need not to refuse others who want to be included takes precedence over the transaction itself, which makes the transaction at least as much about the collective as it is about the win²⁰. In other words pooling is a reason to act in and of itself; prior to betting. An historical parallel lies in Salisbury’s assertion that for Siane pig

¹⁷ It so happened that bets were made on gender lines on this occasion, but this was not usually the case.

¹⁸ Another reason that *chalinj* games are not played in settlements (see chapter three).

¹⁹ See chapters one and two for *bom* and *kwin*, three for *chalinj*, and four for pokies.

²⁰ Though I heard nothing to this effect, there might also be a desire to meet the aesthetic criteria of rugby itself: where bettors become a team for each side. It would be interesting to draw the analogy between teaming and pooling, but further research would be needed.

festivals (north of Goroka), their scale and timing came second to the need to initiate a group of new boys (1962: 93). Newman's (1965: 52-53) description of Gururumba (upper Asaro) gives the impression of an almost baffling frequency of exchanges, with participants dividing themselves into host and guest, and thus giver and receiver, taking any opportunity to do so, even when it seemed superfluous. A similar priority was apparent at Pasde's brideprice: the cost of the bride was reduced by the husbands pressing need to marry again. Equally the need to invite NSI staff members and for them to come and contribute was above the need to demarcate bride-giver and bride-taker precisely. The requirement to include was primary. This contrasts with Hagen and Enga, where economic considerations take precedence in conducting their exchange festivities (Feil 1987: 239) rather than the readiness of initiates²¹.

In the *TV haus*, people were already in a collective, so it made sense to formalise that collective into an exchange transaction of oppositional sides. This is particularly important because State of Origin is also a tense and dangerous time where heavy drinking people vent frustration or extend sporting dominance into physical violence. Risk was reduced in distributed culpability. Bettors were less likely to refuse to pay up or pressurise Peter to give them their money back if there were many on the other side who might also be capable of violence.

Now let us imagine that instead of breaking up because of unequal stakes, the bettors were joined by others who were able to establish an equivalent total, and the bet went ahead. Figure 5.4 represents this imagined scenario²². Taking the initial bettors as given, C and D staked a further K2 and K6 respectively for the Maroons, while K3 was placed on Blues by G. The bettors were thus organised into opposing camps, each contributing to a single pot. As long as the pots were even and the bet finalised (by Peter putting it away in his pocket; see chapter six) then the duality of the opposing amounts of money was eclipsed and they transformed into a single amount belonging to either one group or another, ready for distribution according to contributions. At this moment they resembled *Wok Meri* savings, brideprices, mortuary payments or any pooled 'gift'.

²¹ See also chapter four for a more extensive comparison.

²² I saw as much on different occasions and so meld these with the current example for narrative purposes.

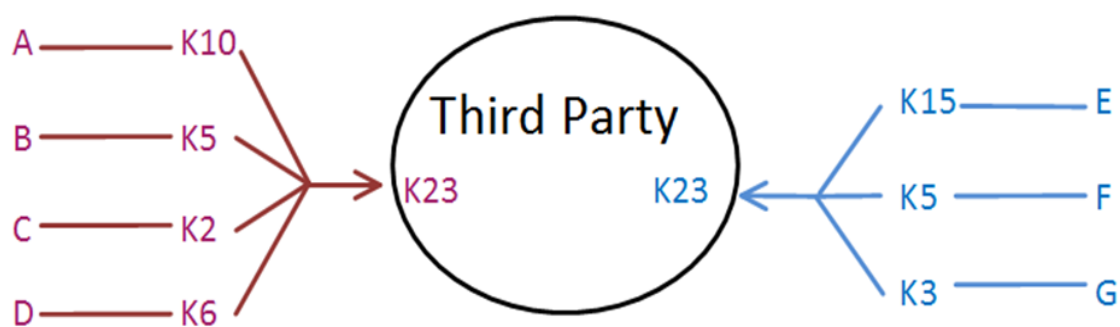


Figure 5.5: The imagined successful conclusion of the *TV Haus* collective bet.

When it was concluded, the initial bet's conflicting nature was removed, becoming only a 'gift' whose direction had not been decided. This is its novelty: the direction of this 'gift' was not predetermined by an existing debt, instead it hung upon a contingent and uninfluencable event beyond the Torres Straits. The direction was willingly taken out of the competitors hands, and its destination could serve as instigator for compensation, drinking together and other merriment, or if compensation was not forthcoming then vengeful violence compounded by the sense of loss that comes from sporting humiliation. As I saw other times, one party doubles their money, but when they collect it they are impelled to distribute some of their winnings to the losing party in the form of consumables like betelnut or alcohol, and sometimes a portion of the money itself, usually imparted with the instruction to buy something consumable with it.

The need to give was extended to those who were party to the transaction, though less strongly, so Peter was bought consumables too, and others expected at least a rolled cigarette. Drunkenness compounds a sense of entitlement and allows people to ask for gifts without shame (cf. Mosko 1999). Winners often use their collective winnings to buy something to consume together as a group such as a bottle of fruit wine, in which case the scale of the distribution is not conducted in proportion to the initial bet²³. This was commonly done to avoid the need to distribute more widely. A band of winners, especially young men, could be very intimidating when drunk, and so recipients would often gain further if what they received was alcohol.

²³ See Sykes (1999) for a discussion of how over-consumption might alienate young people who are unable to participate in exchanges in their home villages because of their obligation to reciprocate with fellow townsmen.

In analysing the three instances together I find that the value of money is increased in its compositeness. The greater the number of contributors giving meaningful amounts of money, the greater the potential to attract money in opposition²⁴. An illustrative equation representing the decision process of a person confronted with an imbalanced bet and the opportunity to join in would look something like this:

$$\Sigma(A_i \times m) = X + \Sigma(B_i \times m)$$

Where 'A' and 'B' are bettors, 'i' is their importance to the person choosing whether to bet or not at that time (presuming for a second that this type of thing was quantifiable), 'm' is the amount bet. 'X' is then the attraction of the imbalance remaining in the bet. If 'X' is higher, then the desire to bet will be higher. I do not suggest that such decisions are formalised in Gorokan minds in such a way, I am merely illustrating how the attractive potential, or value of an amount of money, can vary according to the number of persons involved in the bet²⁵.

At the same time, within a bet there was a great need to use the money in terms defined by that transaction, and thus to redistribute it to people around them. The number of participants increases the need to consume the money in ways that all can enjoy rather than dissipating it into another version of its original distribution, hence the consumption of communal alcohol. This is desirable because collective consumption makes ties increasingly close (see Sykes 1999). As in *Wok Meri*, money is most valuable when it is invested and where the person loses some control over it (Sexton 1982), but unlike *Wok Meri*, value is morphed into a process of consumption (see also Reed 2007). Money is consumed in the process by which its value is realised²⁶. In terms of the equation X is increased in a larger communal bet relative to the amount of money needed to participate, and this consumption of money (because it will be

²⁴ See also chapters three and four.

²⁵ Here I take inspiration from Goffman and his formalised decision based approach to gambling (2006 [1969]), though my use is more illustrative than actual, a model for grasping emic action given our irreducibly etic perspective.

²⁶ Sykes (1999) focusses on the personal realisation of alienation during consumption, my stance among (primarily) permanent Town dwellers is that people find value in these consumptive acts when they are their primary mode of transaction.

consumed in the distribution) can then be compared to other sharing based consumptive uses for the money. Therefore in this analysis I see money's value as a result of the incorporation of other's capacities into money. That the direction of the exchange is not controlled by the participants makes the incorporation of others into a collective amount of money safe; it defuses worries about people's coercive capabilities over the money's direction.

As I have said, like other forms of gambling in Goroka, and unlike former novel transactive forms like *Wok Meri*, State of Origin betting cross-cuts kinship, language group and affinal relations as well as those based on colleague status, friendship and residential proximity. To do so in a group is to transgress existing ties and reconfigure the social order on a temporary basis, creating that exuberant atmosphere in transactional terms. As such money is subject to the aesthetic of pooling, which modifies its movements, restricting the flow in a large marketplace for bets because of the need always to create bonds with it. The movement of money is subject to the forces of distribution even before it is put into circulation, and in a group the pressure to distribute winnings directly is partially deflected onto others. Everyone was involved already and the pressure of giving to others was diluted by others' involvement. Let us not forget that the need to buy betelnut, cigarettes and other compensatory gestures that happen during card games also apply here (see chapter one). This is because a communal bet, public as it is, already anticipates itself as redistribution. People may prefer their personal one-on-one bet not to be distributed, and hence they do it in private, as I discuss below.

Similarly to the *luk* (lit. 'look', free game) given to players who lose at cards (chapter two), the possibility of a repeat performance and the willingness to bet again with an opponent is a key feature of State of Origin betting, and this comes out in a more pronounced way when looking at "individual" bets. I now turn my attention to the few who have particular people in mind to bet against, often year on year. If the bets are substantial, the fame of their betting relationship may increase participants' renown. This renown in turn attracts smaller bets, and so even "individual" bets seem to take on a communal character.

2. Big Bets and Satellites

Before the collective betting just described, many bets will have been cast between individuals across the Town. As well as revelling in the atmosphere, people make a point of ambling around the Town to see others and to be seen so that they may challenge or be challenged to bet. Random meetings are deliberately courted as a way of engaging in playful talk about the game and to participate in betting. According to the survey I conducted of staff at NSI, 58% made a bet of this sort for at least one of the State of Origin games. Six made small bets with kin, others with colleagues (5), language mates from their village (3); some in a pooled bet of the type I discussed above (3), some with neighbours (2); others with acquaintances known as supporters of opposing teams and big bettors (2); one with an affine and three with perfect strangers they talked to about the game. Once again we see betting cutting across all kinds of relationship, and even creating new ones. It even has a fractal quality, because whomsoever one bets with, everyone evokes the same opposition; a kind of national identity exists in the capacity to turn any two people into Blue or Maroon as two sides of an exchange (cf. Foster 1995a; 2006).

Unlike at pokies (see chapter four), betting partnerships were rare, and alliances tended to be *ad hoc* and based on proximity, with betting partnerships more a matter of etiquette in letting the loser have a rematch than a formalised relationship²⁷. For some people one bet was not enough, and when a number of bets began to coagulate around individuals then interesting social forms took shape. Of these bets I have chosen to concentrate on those around big-men; during the festival atmosphere leading up to a game their outlandish betting was a favourite topic.

Some big-men claimed that people sought them out and challenged them to bet. Whether they were in fact coerced by another into betting, it was always better to have been perceived to have been coerced, as it was a demonstration of fame. Therefore, as an outsider witnessing a 'challenge'²⁸, it was quite difficult to work out who was challenging who, and often both parties claimed to have been challenged. The ambivalence over whether an event was elicited by oneself or another (see M. Strathern 1992a) allowed bets to appear exchange-like, complementing the analysis of chapter two. They cause wealth to travel in one or the other

²⁷ See Fiel 1987: 260 for a characterisation of Eastern Highland exchange events that matches this description perfectly.

²⁸ See also chapter three.

direction, without the troublesome problem of determining who is forcing the exchange upon the other²⁹.

Big-men often made a substantial bet (usually K800 or so³⁰) with someone of equal standing. The year before my arrival two big-men, betting partners and arch fans of opposing teams gave K25,000 each to the local car dealership, telling the dealer to give the keys of a brand new Toyota Land Cruiser to the winner. The death of one of these men prevented a rematch in 2009. Big-men were reputed to bet wives (though I never met any who claimed this). Polygamous big-men boasted of their secret wives, how these women lusted after them and how they now controlled them. Betting wives may have been bravado, but it gives some idea of the extent to which big-men were expected to have confidence in their own resources. There are yet more farfetched stories of Port Moresby big-men betting ships and aeroplanes. Whatever the extent of actual bets, the idea of magnified, even grotesquely outlandish betting tripped off the tongues of many, and big-men with big wallets that I spoke to were careful not to diminish this rumour, sometimes actively promulgating their involvement.

When in 2010 I made a point of accompanying big-men to watch the games, I was quite disappointed. Many chose to watch quietly at home, away from the drinkers and from any pressure to make big bets. On the opening day of Origin 2010 the upmarket Bird of Paradise bar contained very few people, and their attitude toward the game was quite blasé. I switched between hotel bar and pokie lounge bar; the latter hosted a broader range of Gorokans, and had an above average crowd in watching the game. These people were altogether more boisterous, more drunk and exuberant, more like the *TV Haus* of 2009. They followed every play, jolted forward in glee or recoiled in empathy with each big hit. Even here, among a crowd that had become all too familiar over a year or so of negotiating punters and sports fans, there was no betting to be seen. I was disappointed.

²⁹ This is another reason that gambling is play, antithetical to work (see chapters three and four), because nobody claims to have worked in setting up the 'exchange'. *Wok Meri* groups also describe their savings as a mode of work (Sexton 1982: 176), presumably because savings are wealth that has purposefully been kept antecedent to social life.

³⁰ Perhaps not coincidentally this was the price of a large pig in 2009-10.

It is only clear to me in retrospect that the betting, to whatever extent it went on, was part of a battlefield of information that permeated the Town, while visible acts of giving, taking, and betting are usually concealed. Tactical modesty shrouded such activities when they happened and flamboyant exaggeration gilded deeds done. Hiding the extent of one's transactions only serves to magnify their size in the eyes of ordinary people, and the effect is clear in joyful retellings of big-men betting all they had, even their wives, on a game of rugby played across the sea. Betting falls heavily on individuals of renown in Goroka. This burden, I argue, is quite unusual in a place where transactions take new but familiar shapes. While part of the aesthetic of measured and tactical pooling that I have discussed above, it shows how easily big-men can have their "finance" pulled from under them (see chapter four).

Aside from a central bet, big-men were also challenged to many smaller, satellite bets. Their affiliation was known to most people, and "lesser men" often made their main bet (usually K10-K100) against them; for the big-man this was a *sait-bet* ('side-bet'). "Lesser men" knew big-men had to accept or risk losing face, but above all enjoyed transacting with him and the memory this imparted. Figure 5.5 illustrates the relationship between large bettors and smaller bets as big-men saw them. They perceived the *bikpela bet* (lit. 'big bet') as feeding their reputation and the 'side bets' as a kind of duty. Explicitly they said if you accept "small" challenges then those people will come to you when they have a crisis, i.e. ask them for financial support for a ceremonial event (see chapter four). The sheer number and monetary amount of bets they drew quantified their status among other betting big-men. They pointed to an enlarging field of reciprocal support that big-men could rely upon. The money used to bet was part of on-going and enlarging reciprocal networks where the initial direction of the "gift" of winnings was less important than the tie itself. Even so, it would have been unwise to bet too much, so I think big-men preferred to retire from public view when they felt they had bet enough.



Figure 5.6: Two leaders (A and B) involved in a large bet for a car. A is in maroon representing their team, B in blue. Below it are smaller bets made by the big-men with “smaller” people. Note that each leader is surrounded by bettors of a different colour, and hence they stand to lose a lot of money should their team be defeated.

Big-men said large single bets were more beneficial to their ‘name’, because news of such a bet would travel more widely. Like the flute-playing of a sub-clan whose member gave a large pig to a festival (observed by Read among likely ancestors of some of my informants (1952: 19)), news of a big-man’s exploits allows kin members to bask in its collective glory. In this sense the single large bet was also a collective bet, even if big-men were at pains to assert their singular control over it. If they back the wrong team, it still reflects the financial muscle of their clan, and their ability to absorb its loss. Just like big-man-less communal bets, win or lose, the destiny of one’s winnings are compromised, becoming subject to all kinds of requests. While big-men as strong personalities can refuse requests with relative ease, it still makes sense to bet something like a car: it is less alienable than money, and can be loaned out or used to ferry people about without being taken from the owner. The key point is that the money was mobilised when it was committed to a bet and therefore represented a public sum by definition, because knowledge of it required distribution to at least some extent. The large bet, being public, is of the same order as a brideprice payment because it is by Gorokan definition already a collective sum *in potentia*.

Yet the oppositional character is different from that seen in a *Wok Meri* group, a *Chalinj* game, at a pokie joint, or at lifecycle events like Pasde’s brideprice. The two big-men who were engaged in a big bet may have been friendly competitors in leadership, and the smaller bettors were supporters of their big-man. So far, so similar; however, supporters are actually in direct

competition with their patrons. Note the blue/maroon colouration surrounding each big-man in figure 5.5. A great deal of wealth may have arrived or departed, but the onus fell directly upon the leader, and not the leader as collective individual (*contra* Fiel 1987). Unlike pokies, or Wok Meri, or a brideprice, there is no financial support. Instead the aesthetic of accumulation takes on an extreme potlatch dimension. It expresses the capacity of a big-man to already have wealth, to have access to wealth outside his kin base, and/or to already have control of the wealth of his kin; he must be able to absorb both the actions of other big-men competitively transacting with them and his supporters simultaneously. State of Origin betting is therefore risky for big-men, so no wonder that talk of big bets outstrips observable cases.

Across State of Origin collective bets, it seems higher value was placed on wealth that was composed of multiple contributions; that they were the proper form that transactions should have taken in group situations. Big-men, brides and groups of young boys alike, all seemed to want to bring people together in single transactions and create Gorokan style collective ties. Thus the collective bet was an aspirational analogue of the large bet made by a single big-man, itself an iteration of the oppositional 'pooling unit'-making actions of bride-prices and Wok Meri groups. Yet the ambiguity of a betting 'gift's' destination can lead to some unusual social forms, most notably the big-man as lone potlatcher.

Conclusion

On the day of a State of Origin game, towns and cities were divided along the lines of Blues or Maroons. I described how dividing the Gorokan social world on this novel basis was a radical reimagining of relations upon deliberately frivolous, cross-cutting lines. This created a carnivalesque atmosphere, which affects not only Goroka; it splits much of Papua New Guinea in a truly national event. This simple opposition can unite strangers against existing kin, something rarely seen in Melanesian ethnography (but see Reed 2003; cf. Foster 2002). One can imagine the opposition playing out at many levels, and I have focussed upon only one: the bet. I attempted to show that bets of this nature are like floating gifts, restricted to two directions, but only two. Within their dyadic form their destination was deliberately given over to an outside force, creating an ease that adds to the festival atmosphere surrounding games.

Free to put cause down to another, a bet became a gift to be consumed and enjoyed in good-natured opposition.

Having described betting in terms of pooling in reference to this one event, I think it fruitful to reflect back on the games described in previous chapters through the notion of pooling. The major card games in Goroka, *kwin* and *bom*, for instance, pool money in every round, and in chapter one I consider how within these games people might manipulate the pot with their contribution so as to attract it toward them. These games are also pooling events on a smaller scale. Yet one set of pooled wealth is not opposed to another, so they could not be described as oppositional. The money returns to the original “pooling unit” every time a game is won, but remains within the province of a single player to use as they please. *Chalinj* also pools money, and this time the pooling is oppositional, one bet contributed to by multiple parties against another of the same order. Yet *chalinj* is not winner-takes-all (as is the case in State of Origin) because the incumbent may decide how much they wish to bet from their overall winnings. This serves to increase the pooled wealth during the course of the day.

Each of these games appears now as a variation upon the theme of pooling and then distributing. It is pertinent then to remind the reader that *kwin*, *bom*, *chalinj*, and State of Origin are considered indigenous-style games, even though the mediums they use (playing cards or a game of rugby league) are thought to be things from outside. The only odd one out is pokies, which is thought of as wholly coming from the outside, and does not involve pooling. It would be quite possible for people to pool their money for a game of pokies and then distribute the winnings, as they do during State of Origin, but this never occurs. Instead pokies are things from outside that should be transacted with individually (*wan wan*), as people believe one transacts with *ol waitman* (white people). This seems to be based upon the existence of an agent (the machine) that acts individually and requires a person to interact with it individually. Rather than paying attention to an external and thus fair medium for intra-Gorokan bets (as in the case of the cards people play with or the rugby game they bet on), pokie players bet with the outside agent “controlling” the machines. Though I did not ask about the pooling-based distinctions between games, I find it striking that all the gambling events that involve pooling are thought to be indigenous-style games even when using exogenous materials and events; meanwhile pokies are considered manifestly exogenous, and

people do not consider pooling their wealth in opposition to it, perhaps because its agency interacts with them in an exogenous, non-pooling style.

Through a range of events, I postulated that pooling is a far-reaching Gorokan aesthetic, recurring again and again at different times and during diverse events³¹. Collective exchanges in single transactions made transactions worthwhile, and thus had a distorting effect upon the potential for exchange of money. I have attempted – through explaining how and why people constructed the types of transactions that they preferred to make – to assemble a reasoning that might seem unproblematic for the Gorokans who made such transactions with both consummate ease and tense anticipation. At the same time the value of money was further “distorted” to account for these types of transactions which I have understood as embedded in the need to make social connections with money. The desire to spend money in betting, to consume it, manipulated money toward inclusion rather than excluding others through denominational difference (you have K10, I have K5). Collective bets and their composite counterparts in big-men’s bets (just like brideprices and *Wok Meri*), encouraged people to make money a part of a larger whole, and in so doing manipulate the properties of money itself³². I shall follow this line of reasoning into the final chapter, where I take winning as the starting point, and look at how money disappears inside pockets only to be revealed in a manner that is designed to exceed the expectations of a recipient. The disseminatory *potentia* of money is problematized because money may collude with winners, hiding in pockets and refusing to live up to ideals of wealth distribution. This final chapter also sums up the aggregate of possibilities brought forth by gambling and money in Goroka.

³¹ It might even be possible to reread other ethnographies through the notion of pooling as aesthetic, though there is no space to develop the notion here.

³² From cursory observations of church fundraising and donations, the same aesthetic seems pertinent, though I have not included this in the thesis.

Pocket Calculator

This final chapter is both an exploration and a conclusion, using new material to reflect back on what has been said. Anecdotes often marshal material in a conclusion, they are used to bring ideas together and reflect on them anew. Having portrayed a summative, perhaps anecdotal instance of gambling in each of the previous chapters, I focus instead on a related arena for the manipulation of money – the use of pockets – as a way of illuminating gambling by revealing what it is not. Before that, it will be necessary to review the points I have made thus far.

In relaying how gambling connected Goroka, I have discussed its history, breadth, and the kinds of ‘logics’ which surface in and around playing. Most local forms of gambling were explored¹, from everyday card games to their flamboyant and speedy equivalents in markets, from nightly slot-machine “finance” to the festivals of gambling surrounding sporting events. Interwoven in the description were some ‘logics’ of money, contingency, sales, and accumulation. I have attempted to explode the definition of gambling from a means by which individuals make wagers on contingent events in the pursuit of a return to a method by which objects of value are gathered together and then differently distributed amongst contributors based upon principles other than their original agglomerations.

I have drawn a number of conclusions, some of which were fully developed within the contexts of discrete chapters. In the prologue I introduced gambling and its spread into Goroka, suggesting that it offers a motif for relating. The material culture and rules of gambling were re-envisioned as a kind of imposed uniformity that allowed for interactions between members of a highly diverse and fluid populace. Gambling became a method for seeing urban space through a practice that unites it. I therefore relinquished an interest in formally defining Goroka as a bounded anthropological site, choosing instead to use the rules of gambling as the

¹ Excepting betting at bookies, dart games, and pool tables, which had to be left aside in order to give sufficient space for the existing material.

locus of formalisation throughout the thesis. Through the chapters that followed, I offered gambling-led characterisations of various phenomena and anthropological tropes.

In chapter one I discussed shortcomings of some literature on gambling, where assumptions of chance-based determinacy turned people into dupes of the games, and games redistributed wealth above and beyond indigenous consciousness. Through an explanation of betting during five-player card games, I argued that the rules and mathematics of Gorokan gambling were instead consciously geared toward making subtle gift/acquisitive expressions by manipulating the value of money. I reflected on how this position adjusted assumptions of certain money-theories, particularly that money is by definition abstract because the calculations made with it are number-based; and that abstraction always means distancing from the human realm. Money was redefined as “marked paper and metal shapes whose numerical value is set as commensurable and fungible but whose actual value is set by the situations in which moneys are separated from each other at different times and places”. Throughout the thesis I then elaborated on ways that moneys had their values manipulated to elicit distinctions between people(s).

Chapter two began placing the thesis within the ethnographic corpus, discussing Melanesian perceptions of causality, the opacity of others minds, and using the Kula as analogy. Via an exploration of the two most popular games in Goroka, I suggested gambling as a rule-bound arena for increased transaction in an urban setting. Through accelerated transaction, gamblers penetrate the assumed opacity of their own and others’ minds. Games model larger “relational” fields in the form of patterns, operating as an indigenous analytic. Relations between cards were analysed as abstractions of what has been called a “relational” life-world, and I posited ‘pattern’ as an indigenous analogue of the “abstraction” attributed to money by theorists discussed in chapter one, shifting the grounds for analysing Gorokan use of money. I showed that over time gambling games replicate and cultivate the speed of thought that they are thought to embody, providing a model for Melanesian social change. At the same time games foster either a ‘Melanesian’ approach or an un-Melanesian one, which meant people enacted social change processually by the games they chose.

In chapter three I explored marketing and gambling together, on the revised assumption that both are likely to contain their own ‘logic’, a form of indigenous accountancy, and that it will

have diverse manifestations depending on indigenously understood variables. I suggested that because value is projected during marketing as a mode of ensnaring customers into reciprocity, Gorokans think of 'work' differently; work is defined as prior to the transactive sphere rather than as activity that generates income. I used the 'logic' that develops to explain the existence of an unusual game by Gorokan standards, and its location in the centre of marketing, while showing how the 'logic' of gambling is contiguous with these other areas of town life.

Having started expanding the scope of the thesis in chapter three, chapter four shows how pokies (slot machines) bring forth emerging forms of inequality as they cultivate innovative forms of "finance". A new generation of 'big-men' use pokies as a medium to launder their money into gift-able forms. Pokies are only enjoyed individually, and this concentration allows big-men to escape from obligations, freeing up their money to be used as gifts beyond their kinship bases and expand their opportunities through alliance. I argued that pokies are among the places where 'big-men' break through 'traditional' constraints on Eastern Highlands leadership, connecting the thesis to national level debates over the corruption of elites.

Chapter five examined collective bets around the time of the State of Origin rugby league competition in Australia. Through analogy with brideprice payments and *Wok Meri* groups, I discussed the process of "pooling money in opposition" as a recurrent theme in Melanesian anthropology. Yet pooled bets had a different, jovial atmosphere because the groups that were defined in the collective transaction were novel and un-enduring. I postulated that money which is composed of multiple contributions has a higher indigenous value than the equivalent from a single source, which united these bets with their "traditional" counterparts. I reconfigured the notion of betting into a 'gift' without a preordained direction, the important thing being that money, once bet, is freed for consumption. This was a different form of manipulation to the use of denominations to leverage gifts from others explored in chapter one. Instead of the money's value being cajoled by using the material indivisibility of money, value resulted from the redefinition of people as collectively either Blues or Maroons and the amalgamation of different denominations in a single pot.

In recapping my findings and analyses, I find that two points cut across different chapters, and these would benefit from being drawn together and further developed here. Firstly, I was

concerned to counter the idea that gambling is only self-interested acquisition, and that Gorokans were simply an example of a 'gift-society', two assumptions that turn Gorokan gambling into a social-scientific paradox. I therefore focussed instead on a wealth of transactions and how each subtly manipulated value in a way that Gorokans recognised, revealing a series of indigenous formalisms for monetary transactions. Gambling was seen to have a central place in excavating the capacities of monies, while valuation and calculation were seen as an everyday communicative language, rather than an economically driven instance of universal commoditisation. It is the pervasiveness of these formalisms which I feel requires further attention. In this concluding chapter I turn the tables to see what gambling, which invites the analyst to think formally, allows one to excavate about other daily forms of transaction, and of gifting itself. I analyse the use of pockets as a vehicle for transactions, much as I did with gambling, and find that many of the themes of the thesis emerge in this seemingly unrelated part of everyday life. During the thesis I have characterised money in terms of flows of wealth that are brought forth by gambling. This is where money and pockets meet, the former being the irreducible form of wealth, the units of its flow, like the different size rocks that wear away the river bank. The latter are wealth's vessels of aggregation, the tributaries and estuaries through which wealth keeps its course. A look at pockets shows how people hid the wealth that gambling reveals, illuminating gambling by showing what gambling must overcome in order to bring money forth.

The second area of investigation that would benefit from further explication is my stance on social change. At the ethnographic level this thesis clearly adds to the literature on social change in Melanesia, simply because of the startling lack of urban anthropology in the region (but see Reed 2003; Goddard 2005). As a corollary, most economic anthropology in the region is based on village economics, so it is of clear import simply as a record of urban economic activity. On the level of analysis my approach to social change was driven by the idea of change that seemed built into gambling. In chapters one and two I used the Tok Pisin phrase *paten senis senis* (lit. 'the pattern changes changes') to illustrate the way in which games model social change in their own transformations. I did not, however, develop the parameters of that change. In my discussion of pocket use in Goroka I develop the idea that indigenous formalisms appear in many guises, and that their supersession is a necessary, even inevitable path for achievement in Goroka. In turn each innovation elaborates and creates new boundaries for future formalisms, and so 'pattern' come forward in a new guise.

Both of these points would benefit from a fresh perspective, and pocket-use provides an ideal opportunity in this regard. Like gambling, pockets were exogenous to Goroka; they arrived when gold prospectors and colonial patrollers came in the 1930's wearing trousers, shirts and jackets (see Strathern 1992b; Nelson 1982). Just as gambling was predated by elaborate forms of redistribution, pockets encroached upon a highly significant localised tradition of gendered string bags looped by women. Carrying was also gendered: Mackenzie notes that in the Central Highlands (to which we can add Goroka to the east) women were the sole carriers and big-men were particularly notable for never carrying anything (1991: 128). Yet in 2009-2010 I encountered a pocket obsession among both sexes that rivalled gambling. There has been a move towards undersised, more pocket-like string bags. Many young men in Goroka now carry a small squared string bag so shaped to contain documents. Among women pockets are usually contained in shorts worn underneath their long, modest, flowing dresses. Big-men and small alike have visible pockets to carry the technological trappings of Town life (mobile phones, cash, cards), and both sexes talk about pockets.



Figure 6.1: Hariet, an astute gambler, in her long flowing dress, with shorts underneath. Her bag is notably deflated (see below).

At gambling centres like *Kakaruk Maket*², I often heard people speculate on whether one person or another had money in their pocket, or joked about times they won money, put it in their pocket and left without revealing it to anyone. Gorokans particularly liked to muse on the fullness of people's pockets at places like betel nut markets, where money flows most prolifically, and they fantasised about the wealth within being released and spread around the

² See chapter three.

place. They might state – more in hope than expectation - that such a release would not concern those who parted with the money. This is a fantasy because pockets are primarily a device for withdrawing things from circulation, and people moaned of money disappearing into pockets so that they never received any. For the most part, people use pockets to avoid giving to others that which they would otherwise feel obliged to donate. In Goroka garments are often sought and bought because of their deep or many pockets, but others balk at the overt display of pockets. Some people therefore stitch hidden pockets into their trousers so that they can have more of them without appearing to. It is not enough to hide things away in one pocket, because as I shall discuss, the pressure to give means that pockets need to be a complex series of ‘vaults’, each with a different level of security and access. What emerges is a precise but malleable mode of concealment, and complex discourses on the appropriateness of pocket styles and quantities, and a symbiotic relationship between pockets and gambling.

I discuss the way Gorokans associate pockets with the skin, a place where transactions make themselves apparent to others. I then describe how pockets are used to contain wealth items close to the skin in a way that prevents others from gauging their contents. The following section demonstrates the skill needed to maintain control over money in ones pockets when faced with overriding pressure to transact with others. Subsequently I explore the possible kinds of revelations available to those who use their pockets well. I argue that hiding and conventionalising one’s wealth allows pocket users to reveal and donate in a way that maximizes the surprize effect of their gift and its impact. Finally I reveal how people’s knowledge of these revelations as conventional strategies allows them to moralize pocket use, overshadowing pockets in turn. People observe another’s pockets and judge them self-interested, contrasting themselves as someone who does not use pockets to hide their money and is thereby open to sharing, breaking the bounds of peoples pocket ‘systems’, or formalisations. I refer to gambling throughout as appropriate, and return to their shared ‘logics’ at the end of the chapter.

A Pocketful

Gorokans say pockets are the best places to keep wealth because they are by various degrees *pas lo skin* (lit. ‘fastened to the skin’). Women often used this as a justification for wearing

shorts under their dresses. Skin (as opposed to eyes) is the primary index for assessments of moral standing (where glossy/greasy is good, while ashy/dry is bad, see O’Hanlon 1989). Among the Gahuku-Gama just outside Goroka, Kenneth Read found that good or bad skin was indicative of character; debts were kept upon the skin, loosening your own skin upon discharging and making good the skin of another (1965: 266). Knowledge of someone was couched in terms of having seen their skin, doubtless with reference to transactions; belonging to a group was to have one skin (ibid). In the Waghi area to the west O’Hanlon found the skin’s ideally glossy appearance could be rendered ashen by contact with women, by magic, or by morally compromising relationships (1989). So transgressions are manifest on the skin, which may be made attractive with the application of pig grease on ceremonial occasions. In mourning Highlanders also famously cover their skins with mud that dries, demonstrating the physicality of their loss in their ashen appearance (see ibid: 122; Crook 2007b).

In Melanesia at large, people’s insides are the locus for their ‘faculties of both reason and emotion, and their communicational capacity, the intentions and things with which they interact with others’ (Strathern 1992b: 249). The skin is the place where these capacities present themselves. It makes sense therefore that containers that can fasten themselves to the skin, with all its capacities, became special idiomatic places. Imagine then a pocketful of money, reassuringly fastened to the skin, with all the control that it brings. When money is released and made ‘public’ by gambling, where they could ‘see the face of money’³, it relinquished this reassurance and launch money into the contingency of others’ capacities.

Marilyn Strathern gave the word skin special prominence in *No Money on Our Skins* (1975), an account of migrants from Hagen in the Highlands to the capital city Port Moresby. She reveals analogies with the Gahuku-Gama and the Waghi as she explains her title: ‘[p]eople at home have many things on their skins, all the traditional forms of wealth and valuable resources by which they make their name; the wage earner has nothing but money and in their eyes little of that since he finds it hard to deploy it in ways approved of by his rural kinsmen’ (ibid: XV). These urban migrants complained about having no money on their skins when they lack savings or ready cash (ibid: 314). The important distinction seems to be between money used as a consequence of being trapped in a city, and money which is on the skin, i.e. money under their control however it is spent (see below on ‘pocket money’).

³ See chapter one.

In Port Moresby Strathern encountered first and second generation users of money and their notions of skin. In contemporary Goroka among second, third or even fourth generation residents money has been naturalised⁴. Nevertheless wealth in its current form should be close to the skin in order to remain as safely as possible under its possessor's control. Magical substances which are used to attract money and to win at gambling are also best located in a snug pocket, so that it can act in conjunction with that skin and attract money towards it⁵. Pockets also provide a means by which wealth can act in union with the skin, and as we shall see, this gives people extraordinary feelings of potency and confidence. The pocket on the skin is a place of both concealment and contained revelation, so among clothed skins the pocket becomes the mediation point of flow between skin and world. Its importance plays out in the detailed tactics of pocket users.

With typical self-consciousness, when I asked how people arranged things in their pockets, they immediately recognised the question, and often replied *sistem blo me em olsem...* (lit. 'my system is like this...'). Some people learnt their 'systems' for distributing money about their person from family but many more invented their own systems and they all told me their methods in secret. Pocket 'systems' resembled the *aidia* (lit. 'ideas') that gamblers used to try to win, and which were kept secret because of their idiosyncratic efficacy, and which adjusted the 'pattern' of games. With pockets the 'systems' were various and secret because if anyone else knew how they arranged things, that person would be able to tell if they were holding back money, much as revealing *aidia* would compromise one's tactics in gambling. In chapter five I described Pasde's bride Lauren, who grew up in a village and was not used to organising her money about her body; she told me how she consciously worked out her own system when she married into Town. Now Lauren always puts money in her front two pockets; if she put it in her back pocket, she said, then thieves would get at it easily. When she walks around town, one side is used to buy things, and all monies start on that side. Then when Lauren gets change from shops, smaller notes go in another pocket, while K10 and above go in the first pocket. The second pocket is used to buy cigarettes, betel nut, and any other small purchases.

⁴ See chapter one.

⁵ See chapter two.

Another pocket 'system' came from my marketing friend Charlie⁶, who surreptitiously demonstrated how he folds K2 notes in half, K5's in thirds, and K20's in quarters⁷, so that he can feel about in his one pocket and bring out the right money for the right occasion. When not marketing, smaller notes went in one pocket, larger in another. Within pockets numerical moneys are arranged for unmistakable access, one kind of note folded one way, another differently, another order of magnitude in another pocket altogether, or left loose. Monies are pooled in pockets, but denominations play a clear role, melding the analyses of chapters one and five. Living in Goroka I found that I had unwittingly adopted a version of local practices, folding larger notes inside smaller ones and counting my way towards the middle so as to only bring out what was necessary, with one large note stashed away for shopping.

Loui – who helped conduct my survey and appeared in the prologue – once told me how he organised money when I convinced him to tell me how he had spent a payment I had given him:

My system for holding money in my pocket is to have the K20's covered by the K10's, then K5's, and finally K2's. I fold them in half and then I twist them around [into a cylinder, he demonstrated], so that the higher notes are in the middle. I invented this method myself in the sixth grade [age 12], as at the time my guardian used to give me K20 a day for food. When I am hiding the money in my pocket, I am not hiding it from others but from myself, so I don't spend it . . . I wrap the notes up which I want to keep for myself, and I reach into my pocket and grab the loose money, that is what I do when I have to give to someone.

This quote stresses that money hidden through careful arrangement is under the possession of its owner, while revelation automatically leads to spending (see Keane 2008: 475; Strathern 1988, 1992b). Loui asserts that keeping hold of money should be within his powers, but he nonetheless clearly senses that he needs to be vigilant, because he feels pressure to give to others when he sees them. Organising the money in the pocket is a method of self-control

⁶ Who appeared in chapter three.

⁷ Denominations of 100 to 2 Kina are made of a paper-like plastic, K1 and below are metal based. See Foster (1998) for the significance of different denominations and the pictorial representations thereon in the project of nation building.

while it is still possible to exercise it. In this light, it is possible to see that gambling, which is a tightly controlled mode of releasing money, which is tied into a game and is not subject to gifting until it has been won or lost, is a mode by which money can be safely revealed without subjecting oneself to accusations of inequitable distribution. Once again, gambling is shown not as simply acquisition without reciprocity, but a mode of self-conscious release for money at large.

The supreme act of hiding is the *stil-poket* (lit. 'steal-pocket'); this is hidden outside of people's view, usually on the inside of a pair of trousers, and as close to the skin as possible. These hard to detect compartments are a sought-after feature of garments bought in second-hand clothes shops (the primary source of most Gorokans' clothes), and as I mentioned some sew them in themselves. A *stil-poket* is used to hide particularly high value notes and/or money one cannot afford to lose. People showed me how they would *autim ol poket* (pull their pockets inside out) as the ultimate sign of poverty, while money remained safely stored in their *stil poket*.

A *stil-poket* is also a measure taken against pickpockets, who are thought to roam the streets in legions. Pickpockets are thought to be the lowest criminals and are regularly compared to pigs and dogs because they only follow their own interests. Certain kinds of criminality may be valorised, but pickpockets are considered too cowardly to steal glamorously (cf. Reed 2003: 71-7). They often cut the bottom of string bags with a razor and then following behind waiting for money to drop out.

People seek deep pockets, because they fear others will assume they have a lot of money if their pockets are tightly packed. This is no overreaction as people (not criminals but acquaintances) often deliberately brush past pockets to cop a feel of what is inside. If they know the person well enough, if they are 'one skin' with them, they may brazenly palm the bulge. To my mind, the line between coercing someone's money out and pickpocketing is a matter of overtness and not necessarily intention. This brings home Loui's urgency about controlling his money. Noteworthy here is the Tok Pisin word *lus*, used to refer to *coins i stap lus* (lit. 'coins that stay loose', i.e. loose change not fastened to the skin), and also the word for losing, as in *mi lus pinis* ('I have already lost', as one often hears around gambling events⁸). Therefore linguistically at least, and certainly in people's attitudes, loose change is already

⁸ See chapter one.

somewhat lost or out of control, and people deliberately keep notes intact to avoid losing money. As I explored in chapter one, this was why Michael playing his K20 note was so dangerous and provocative: it could suck in smaller notes while giving eager players a target.

Visible pockets can also be turned to the advantage of their wearers. In Britain money is most often kept in the gendered wallet/purse, but I found most Gorokans disliked and would not use them, finding the idea of having money all in this one spot to be too risky: if seen then they would be unable to hold back from giving to those who saw the money. Better to be able to bring out only what one intends to give to another and no more. Having a visibly deflated pocket can therefore strategically index having little money. My adopted father, the big-man Tom Liam, reversed this convention and used a wallet to confidently show disdain for those who hid money. This gave the impression of supreme nonchalance and resilience in the face of others' jealousy (his son, who was not yet a big-man, said he was not yet secure enough to carry a wallet). His fat wallet was jammed in his back pocket every night we went to pokies; leaving no one in doubt he had money⁹. Even displays like this where wallets acts as symbols of status and highly visible cash-containers can be a bluff; some people's wallets were diversions while money was hidden away elsewhere.

On the whole women prefer to keep money inside their string bags: some loose, some in a purse, some larger notes inside a book to guard against pickpockets. But just like the wallet, the string bag is often a front; their noticeable string bags and lack of visible pockets disguise money and prevent demands. Wives of some big-men (formerly notable for the many tubers they brought home in large string bags) distinguish themselves by carrying only a *bigshot bilum* (lit. 'big-shot string bag'), so called because it is too small to contain anything other than cash cards, mobile phones, and money. Such women no longer perform garden work, they support their husbands through effective money and business management, and women's ability to do so is indexed in these over-small string bags, whether used for money or not.

For market-sellers like Charlie many-pocketed combat trousers were the vogue; they are capable of hiding betel nuts from direct vision and thus police harassment while their protuberance tells everyone betel nuts are for sale¹⁰. Consequently money was relegated to a

⁹ See chapter four.

¹⁰ See chapter three.

single pocket when Charlie was marketing. On other occasions pockets allow for faked donations to offering buckets at churches: I sometimes saw people conspicuously stuff their hand deep into their pocket, pull out a clenched fist and then open their empty palm deep down in the bucket to feign a donation. Gorokans know that pockets hide, but they imagine their insides contain money, and this makes them perfect everyday concealers (see also Keane 2008; cf. Strathern 1992a).

Concealing or showing off, money is distributed purposefully in pockets across people's bodies with recipients in mind. The materiality and particularly the portability of money enable pockets to play the role of concealer, just as the materiality of money aids gamblers to reveal while effecting subtle value statements. Some prefer paper-money because it does not clink, others coins because they do not float up and out of pockets like loose change. Larger notes are used for major shopping purchases (and thus more likely end up in a *stil-poket*); smaller monies are dotted about them for petty street purchases and for gifting. Part of many people's fortnightly routine is to buy goods in Town from shops which have more change, and then to take this change to the produce markets where it is often in short supply. Many hopefuls therefore hang around inside shops, eager to see associates reveal a large note in their presence and in so doing relinquish a portion of its change to them.

The reader will notice that I have focussed on the individual possessor of money in this description, and throughout the thesis, and this is quite deliberate. Gorokans have a particularly autonomous attitude toward compartmentalising money, which a comparative example throws light upon. Jean Lave shows how in the United States money is distributed through checking, credit cards, bank accounts, and cash payments to family-enhancing ends (1988). Starting with unequal pay checks, families bring their money together in joint accounts where principle earner is by no means principle spender. Accounts act as unifiers for the family who realign pots of money into communal mutual support funds, categorising funds according to their destination as opposed to their source. Accounts stand as points of contrast between family and an assumed adversarial outside world made up of buyers and sellers (ibid: 134). This shall be familiar to many readers; it immediately speaks to my (orthodox if low tech) approach to arranging money at home: my partner and I combine a portion of our income in a jam jar which we use to buy all the things that we consume together. This and Lave's example stand in clear contrast to how Gorokans spread their money about their person so that they

are always singly oriented toward others. The contrast deserves more elaboration for what it reveals about the importance of Gorokan pockets and gambling.

In Goroka money is kept separate from others when possible, even husband from wife, mother from son (cf. Sexton 1982). All the action occurs between singular people, either in their bank accounts, hiding places at home, or on their skin in pockets. Money is usually held in cash¹¹ and each gift is typically transmitted not as an attempt to make consumption mutual but with a specific purpose: *baim lans blo yu* (lit. 'buy your lunch'), *lukautim ol pikinini blo yu* (lit. 'look after all your children'). Separations make themselves apparent not only in these small gifts, but also in wider marketing and gambling practices, when for instance husbands and wives play against each other at cards, or support opposing teams: Blues vs. Maroons. This is unproblematic because while each often gives to the other, monies in a person's possession are the province of that person individually. This does not imply that a person is free to do what they like with money, but money not yet given is importantly tied to its current owner for the time being. In fact the popular use of the term *poket mani* (lit. 'pocket money') among grown men and women shows this very well. Instead of being a (trifling) sum of money given to children (as in Britain and Australia), pocket money is a popular name given to all monies held on the person which are not already committed to another person. That people allocate money to themselves on themselves indicates both how intensely others claims to money are felt, and the necessity that such monies are still nominally under the control of people before they are given over or gambled.

One's ability to secure moneys' distributive potential on the skin is thrown into relief by the coercive power of money not kept in check, which can direct its possessor (*moni bosim yu*, lit. 'money bosses you'). Loui continued his story about spending a windfall payment:

...During the time that I had the money in my hand [a phrasing that suggests it was not yet hidden away safely], I was feeling high and unstoppable. ... I felt in charge of my daily activities, but that changed on Saturday night or Sunday morning when I realised that I had nothing left. I was continually recalculating how much I had,

¹¹ People did use bank accounts for certain purposes, especially as a mode of preventing non-payments and excuses by setting up direct debits. This was often done to prevent husbands from forcing wives to give them money to spend rather than paying rent or other expenses.

and I kept telling myself that there had to be a wiser way, I had two minds to what I was doing, I felt like fifty-fifty, I kept telling myself to calm down and not go beyond my limits or my level. I was not worried about anything when I had the money; I felt like I could just not hold anything back.

Loui was clearly exhilarated by the decisions he faced when he had money, and he was desperate to keep his money at bay with pocket calculations. At nineteen Loui was inexperienced when it came to windfalls, and this one clearly took control over him. He felt very disappointed with himself when it was all gone, waiting for me for hours at my house to give a confession I considered strange and unnecessary at the time. The beauty of a gambling windfall is that it is not subject to guilt when it is spent: there is no one to confess to because money won is neither earned nor received as gift. People are aware that they can become recklessly self-centred if they are not careful with the money they receive. The dangers of not controlling money lead to tactics for keeping money in ones pockets. I have called these tactics 'pocket calculations' and I shall now make the claim that they are geared towards a particular logic for revealing money that speaks directly to gambling's parallel manipulation of value.

Simon's Skills

Some clue to the form that pocket calculation takes lies in the neat explanation given to me by Simon, a security guard who worked at the National Sports Institute where I lived. I was asking about the importance of having one of something when faced with the prospect of distribution (prompted by my observations with cards), and he responded by citing the deception made possible by pockets and money. Simon described an abstract scenario in which he had two betel nuts, and sat chewing one of them as I walked by, noticed and said 'your mouth is red, you are chewing betel nut, give me one'. Simon knew he could say 'I only have one and I am chewing it', thinking of later when he will want to chew again. If he has only one of something, Simon says he feels fine saying no to people, but it is different if he has money in his pocket. If this was the case he would give away the betel nut, as he knows it will come back in another form.

In beautifully simple terms Simon shows that a thing that is singular may be refused to another on the grounds of its singularity, but money can stand in the place of that other object and thus mobilize forms of sharing¹². The betel nut which would otherwise remain with him for selfish purposes is now released because money, which might have had any number of uses, is earmarked to cover the temporary absence of that second betelnut (cf. Zelizer 1997). Money on the skin allows people to share what they have while remaining at ease because wealth is secured to them. It allows itself to be hidden while revealing something else in its place. In the process money makes the betel nut appear more valuable than it is. But what exactly makes this possible?

There are two aspects of Simon's explanation to consider in more depth: 1) the divisibility of money, 2) its concealability. As both means and measure of value, money can be divided in purchases and therefore exchanged with anything, supposing one has enough of it (see Strathern 1999; chapter two). It is worth stating that a concern with divisibility is by no means exclusive to Melanesia, but in Euro-American discourse it is usually coupled with commodification (see Strathern 1992a; Gregory 1982, 1997). After all, this is what makes denominations of money fractal parts of a singular abstract currency, and thus convertible. It seems pertinent to my discussion of chapter one, and Zelizer's critique of classical theorists of money who said that the "'mathematical character' of money filled social life with 'measuring and weighting', with an 'ideal of numerical calculability', which necessarily 'blunted personal, social, and moral distinctiveness'" (1997: 200, quoting Simmel 1990 [1907]: 444-5). The inkling was to equate divisibility with abstraction, a common market and depersonalisation. The counterargument, of which Zelizer is a leading proponent, was to ask when "monetary transactions multiply, do they render social life cold, distant, and calculating?" (1997: 2). Yet, once again, the pocket calculations I have presented seem to suggest that while people calculate with their money, the aims and uses of these calculations challenges the idea that money necessarily fosters distancing (see also Akin & J. Robbins 1999; Gregory 1982; Strathern 1999; Munn 1986; cf. Maurer 2005).

¹² As in M. Strathern (1999), transactions are also a method for separating persons from each other and defining them. Pockets make relations visible as the money leaving them becomes apparent, so money in one's possession can affect a broad range of Others.

I discussed calculation with reference to gambling and divisibility throughout the thesis, but with pockets comes the possibility of concealment, another perennial concern for Melanesians but one which barely figures in Euro-American theories of money (but see Zelizer 1997; Lave 1988). Gambling systematically reveals money, but it is only in the knowledge of how money is concealed that we can fully appreciate what gambling does to money. When money is concealed then pocket-users are confronted with the practical reality of denomination. The capacity for monies to act like currency and be fungible is deliberately hidden in pockets, with only a portion revealed to a recipient. The actual work of money as abstract measure is therefore never transparent because its true extent is hidden from the beneficiary. It is fungible only for the giver, and the recipient attempts to attain as much as the reality of denomination allows.

There may be only one betel nut in Simon's pocket to give away, and he appears generous, but in reality Simon still has plenty of betelnut in the form of money. For its possessor money offers peace of mind and enables increased gifting and generosity because of its ability to be partially concealed and partially revealed at the same time. The recipient does not know how much Simon still has in his pocket, but assumes he probably does have some, while having to acknowledge and react as if Simon has given away his last betelnut. This is the source of the power that Loui felt when he had all the money in his hand, but it was not sufficiently channelled because he did not use his pockets effectively; the same could be said for Michael's gambling exploits in chapter one.

Simon's statement has power because of a common Melanesian assumption that it is impossible to speculate as to the intention of another's mind according to their speech, which was discussed in chapter two, and brought to light by J. Robbins & Rumsey (2008; see also Pickles forthcoming). They contrast this assumption with Euro-American language ideology where people ideally think that there should be an identity between speech and intent so that occasions where the two do not match are exceptional states of amorality or dishonesty. In the knowledge that no one can know what you are thinking from your speech, Simon plays with multiplicity and oneness in mentally converting the materiality of notes into betel nuts (see Shaffner 2012; Pickles 2009). Consider figure 6.2, in which a man (represented by the pair of trousers) gives a K2 note to someone else (represented by the hand). A line has been drawn between the trousers and the hand to represent the fact that while we are able to see both

interpretations of the transaction, in practice each is only party to their own reading. The diagram should be read as indicative rather than exhaustive. The following section aims to make plain that the process is at core creative and can easily rupture the bounds of the diagram, giving shape to shifting forms of invention in much the same way as changing gambling games rupture previous formalisations in the very moment that new ones are created (see also Wagner 1986: 51).

For now let us concentrate on the giver, who makes a decision about what to give in relation to the money he has at his disposal in his small gifts pocket (bottom right), comparing his K2 to other small value notes. At the same time he is also placing the situation and status of their relationship outside the remit of their other pockets, he is saying something along the lines of 'this person before me is worth recognising with this kind of gift (K2), if they had been an affine they may have received from my back pocket (K20), my wife may have received from my *stil-pocket* (K50). This is a multi-layered and spatially organized form of assessment which he has set up in order to prevent being caught out and having to overestimate the value of their relationship.

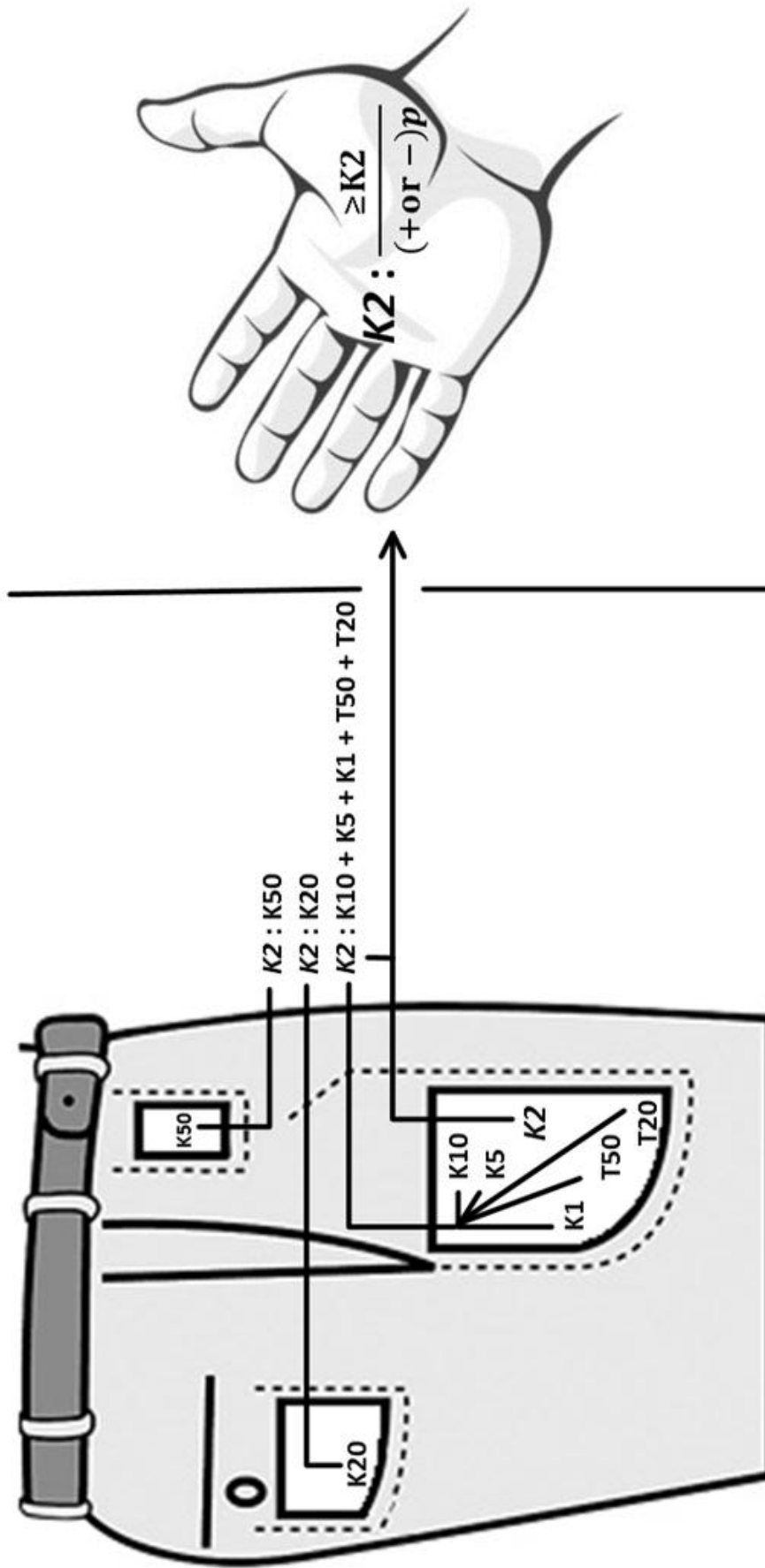


Figure 6.2: A formal (and static) representation of the logic of gifting with money and pockets (cf. Mimica 1988).

While the man decided to give their interlocutor K2¹³, he still has the opportunity to make the gift appear like a more substantial gift than it is. The K2 note comes along with the words that the donor may give to accentuate the gift's value. This is a further way that people play with multiplicity to encourage favourable valuations and thus convey messages of goodwill at as little cost to them as possible (as in marketing freebies in chapter three). People qualify almost every potentially give-able thing of value belonging to them as being of small value, as being *liklik mani* (lit. 'small money') or *liklik kaikai* (lit. 'small food'). When things are actually given from one to another, the same applies, but with a subtle difference, the *liklik* means only a small amount but a large proportion of the total of what they have. For instance the giver in Figure 6.2 is likely to say something like *nogat wanpela samtin lo givim yu na mi gat wanpela tu kina na mi laik givim yu* (lit. 'I don't have one thing to give you and I [only] have this two kina and I want to give it to you'), or *mi lus lo kas na las tupela kina mi laik givim yu* (lit. 'I lost at cards and am down to my last two kina, which I would like to give you') even when they may well have either won or not played cards at all¹⁴. People receiving must always believe that the donor has gone above and beyond in honouring their obligations. It is an opportunity for the donor to exceed the recipients expectations, surpassing the usual by lowering the recipient's perception of what is a normal sized gift.

Thus people are always belittling themselves while boasting or demonstrating their high respect for others. The circularity of this is not lost on me: belittle yourself, show high respect for another, and therefore show yourself to be highly honourable. The gift goes through a reverse process: an amount of money is given, its value relative to the amount the giver has is set as high, the value of things in general and the K2 in particular is brought down in comparison to their relationship, and its value between the two transactors is increased as a result, and possibly requires a return gift of higher numerical value. What we might see as deception (but which is really just good etiquette) is only possible when the total of one's possessions cannot be known, and thus pockets act as foils for the transmission of not only

¹³ I concentrate on individual choices in the moment, but people do make retrospective judgements that assume that each gift was elicited by a previous action, and I see no conflict between these positions (See Strathern 1988).

¹⁴ This can only occur once players have managed to leave the location of a gambling game where the news will not travel with them, and is thus paradigmatically associated with towns.

money but value. In so doing, the K2 that passes between them leaves the first person with at least a hyped up if not a heightened value. It is a parallel play with money to the ones seen in gambling, where money's visibility is used to effect value changes by using it to swallow up other monies (chapter one) or index fecundity and thus entice others (chapters three and five).

Without knowledge of what the giver really has, and a general knowledge that gifts are always hyped up, recipients get the impression that there may be a lot more money that has been withheld from them. Pockets thus potentially magnify perceptions of extreme differences in wealth, since the actual amount people have can be vast or tiny in your mind. This is the kind of assumption of wealth that big-men faced in chapters four and five. Consider again figure 6.2, but on the other side of the divide, where the recipient knows that the donor must have had more than they gave. They compare (':') the K2 they receive with the inflated ideas they may have of the wealth being held by the donor. The amount they could have is in principle unlimited and thus represented as greater than or equal to K2 (' $\geq K2$ '). How much they think they have received in proportion to what they think the other has is tempered ('/') by '(+ or -)p', the *perception* that the recipient has of their donor, i.e. how selfish they think he is, his kin relationship to the recipient, the recipient's knowledge and experience of past transactions between them and between the donor and others, whether he is thought generous ('+') or mean ('-')¹⁵. In agreement with the contributors to the J. Robbins and Rumsey's (2008) special issue, I see the speculation made by the recipient in this case as one about both action (which in Melanesia really does speak what words cannot) and speech (the honesty of the claim that 'I have only K2'). For Melanesians others' intent can be known through their acts (in particular their gifting and generosity) but the combination of speech and act makes it problematic to judge intent. In his afterword to this special issue, it is telling that Webb Keane reverses the connection I make here, stating that "to walk around exposing one's thoughts to others in words is like walking around with no pockets, having no hiding places for things" (2008: 477). I agree that the opacity of others' minds highlights pockets, but it also extends their usage in particular ways. He continues:

"the authority or the capacity to keep something hidden would seem to be a source of power. The opacity claim, viewed in this context, is not so much about

¹⁵ Note that I have not added a *p* coming across from the donor, because as I discussed earlier, words are not to be trusted.

whether we can or cannot know the thoughts of others, but whether others can keep us from knowing. Or at least whether they can lay claim to the right to be the ones to put those thoughts into words, to articulate that which perhaps everyone knows. We might all know at some level what others think, but not have the right to say so in words.” (ibid: 478).

Pockets – which Keane highlights as a concern in many accounts from Melanesian societies (unfortunately without providing references (ibid: 475)) – help people retain ownership and control of their own thoughts and to reveal those thoughts through gifts in a way that serves them.

Meanwhile, the friction between the perspectives of donor and recipient are apt to create both the outlandish assessments people have of the wealth of others, and an atmosphere of suspicion that surrounds those who use money (i.e. everyone). Recipients are therefore often left disappointed with what they received. The same kinds of dissatisfactions are frequently cited in the case of ceremonial displays (see O’Hanlon 1989), “cargo cults” (see Brunton 1971), big-men or big-shots (Martin 2010), and most notably in direct dealings with many a *waitman* (lit. ‘white-man’) (see Bashkow 2006). With this kind of fractious background and suspicion of others, to gamble becomes an important act, a mode of releasing money and demonstrating openness, and it is not surprise that Gorokans are (often) positively accused of being gambling-mad.

To talk of decisions, distributions, and the quantification of relationships is always to talk of value, and when the K2 gift is given in figure 6.2, it holds different values for donor and recipient. Therefore K2 is equal and not equal to other K2s when it emerges from the pocket, as was the K20 in chapter one. Success or failure in manipulating value is a matter of making one’s gift seem exceptional while others appear ordinary. I now show how this ability to change money’s value means the number and size of pockets evokes strong reactions in people. People respond by trying different strategies to eclipse a donor’s ability to use their pockets, opening up pocket users’ ‘systems’ to further innovation, and interlinking with innovation in gambling forms.

In Each Other's Pockets

While pocket calculations allow freedom to hide money; it is not simply that more pockets make life easier. If a person has too many pockets on display then others assume they wish to hide things and therefore cannot be trusted. With everyone having experienced both points of view, this is hardly surprising. For instance devout male churchgoers' make a habit of wearing clean smart trousers¹⁶ of a single colour and with only a couple of inconspicuous pockets¹⁷. These were of the suit-trouser type, in which hands slide in easily implying straight-forwardness; they do not corrugate knuckle skin like jeans (see Colchester 2003). Their shirts often had pockets too, but these were frequently and noticeably adorned with pens and/or papers (for diligent bible study). It would have been unseemly for a devotee to admit to having a *stil-poket*, which could be used to deceive their fellows. Female churchgoers overwhelmingly wore skirts or flowing dresses with no pockets and tended not to wear shorts under their dresses on Sundays (many still carried tight-looped string-bags, which were often purposefully empty). When not at worship, churchgoers' were more likely to openly refuse claims made on the basis of customary obligation or kinship since their devotion to church partially disconnects them from these other spheres of obligation (see J. Robbins 2004). As pastors emphasised, they should have nothing to conceal. Or rather concealment itself is suspect as it shows you are still playing the game of custom in your own way. Pastors give fashion advice to this effect, stressing the distinction between themselves and others by the kinds of (among other garments) trousers they wear. Meanwhile devotees vigorously proclaim that Faith shall *inapim poket blo yu* ('satisfy your pocket'), one of many references made to material success brought through spiritual application (ibid).

Gamblers on the other hand had numerous and obvious pockets, and for this they were often stigmatised, told they are only interested in acquiring 'fast money'. At *Kakaruk Maket* I used to count the pockets of players. They averaged 5 per person, far higher than the 3 seen at

¹⁶ For a discussion of 'informal adornment' and the appropriateness of certain kinds of Western clothing in different locations and across age groups in the Western Highlands, see O'Hanlon 1989: 86-87, 109-110.

¹⁷ At least among the Four Square attendees I spent time with.

church¹⁸. Given the manipulation of money which went on while gambling, it is hardly surprising that gamblers brought this trait to their pocket-use as well. Gamblers had more need to use pockets to maximum effect – especially if they won – because they had to contend with greater demands for the money they had revealed.

The *siks-poket meri* (lit. ‘six-pocket woman’, meaning woman of low renown, insinuating casual prostitute; these women were heavily associated with betel nut markets) was marked out for particular criticism; her fidelity is in question because of her evident desire to acquire and conceal items in multiple pockets. Said by church leaders to walk around in makeup, ready to sleep with any man for only small sums, she was a favourite object of scorn for church leaders. While clothes transmit more meaning than their pockets (see Colchester 2003; Kuchler & Were 2005b), in these ways pockets were singled out for critique. This illustrates the potential of pockets and their implied transactions to bring to the fore judgements which are otherwise inaccessible without seeing transactions in the flesh; transactions like gambling. In other words the propensity to be forthright in transaction is indexed by the amount and size of the visible signs of transaction. The *siks-poket meri* loses status by the very implements that should help her to transact successfully.

People can be to some extent characterised by their pockets, but pockets and their garments also stand for relationships (see also Kuchler & Miller). MacKenzie takes her cue from Strathern to suggest that string bags act as persons (1991: 150), and I found the same was true of clothing. String bags were often being transferred from their makers to others who recognised the object as a metonym of its maker and thus saw it as inalienable (see also Gregory 1982). Along with fashion advice, pastors often encouraged people to give a nice piece of clothing to their visitors, in order that they would be remembered. Clothes are indeed very common and popular gifts; they hold part of the giver tight to the recipient’s skin, reminding them of their relationship, and people often talked about others in their absence as having given an item of clothing that they were wearing.

Pockets take on extra significance as the vessel for distribution made possible by the person who has given them the garment. Imagine then putting your hand into your pocket to feel for

¹⁸ Among gamblers I counted 166 pockets among 31 people. The churchgoers sample was smaller, 30 pockets between 9 people; I am confident of their representativeness.

money to give to he/she who facilitated the act, and now putting your hand in another pocket of equal significance but containing more or less money. Here we see the giving of garments potentially eclipsing the power of the garment to control money. Pastors driving home the church message seem to recognize this when they preach of how recipients will remember them down the line. Others outside of the donor-recipient dyad will also identify relationships by recognising garments, so talk of my departure would usually revolve around persuading me to donate an item of clothing to the person left behind, who could then evoke their relationship with me to others, possibly receiving a gift as a result. The contingency of events therefore changes the principles employed in calculation. By taking this into consideration, we can see that pocket 'systems' are open to other forms of one-upmanship, and that continual invention pushes the frontiers for gifting. We can see it in the shift from string bags to pockets; from shells to money; and, I think, from one gambling form to another.

Pocket use and gambling preferences each create forms of logic in which possibilities are constrained, while in their very formalisation they contain the seeds of their own supersession. As *aidia* lead to new tactics and new games, so does pocket use get overshadowed by new ways of transmitting money (see Wagner 1986; cf. Sahlins 1981). Pockets and gambling as formalisations-in-process refocus the object of study toward calculations as they are made and remade (see O'Hanlon's 1989; Strathern 1999). Melanesian forms therefore appear both resilient and changeable (see Wagner 1986; ____). Pocket and gambling calculations and the tropes emerging from them set up more conventions for the next generation of Melanesian inventions to subvert (probably as mobile phone banking, mobile lotteries and bank cards become more ubiquitous). Pockets work in conjunction with money, which for many Melanesians is their most pressing concern, and the need to both use pockets and override them effectively (by buying clothing or indeed gambling) produces an innovative Melanesian economy. It remains to be seen whether new ways of transferring wealth without being seen shall destroy the aura of creativity that currently surrounds gambling and pockets. One can only imagine what emerging opportunities for revelation and concealment like mobile phones, banking, lotteries, casinos and forms of invisible finance will engender. In the end therefore, the challenge lies in identifying the constraints within which new forms of creativity emerge.

Conclusion: Pocketing the Difference

In the history of Melanesian anthropology it could be said that after M. Strathern's *Gender of the Gift* (1988) there was a paradigm shift from production to exchange, where the primary concern became illuminating how people created their social world through exchange (see Carrier 1992; Mosko 2000). Robert Foster's book (1995) could be seen as another watershed, shifting the focus from exchange to consumption, and the making of people at various scales through the consumption of (primarily) imported goods (see Sykes 1999; Gewertz & Errington 2010). My analyses have drawn from both perspectives, but gambling was not reducible to either. It is neither conventionally exchange-like, nor straightforwardly consumptive (even at pokies). Instead gambling seems concerned with revealing money, turning exchange into consumption and consumption into exchange. Gambling bridges the two paradigms, and I would hope moves them forward.

Given that gambling is both consumption and exchange, and that neither encompasses the other in gambling, it is perhaps worth thinking about whether more material could be invigorated if thought through gambling. I hinted as much when I discussed whether we could re-perceive Kula as card-game-like, and brideprices as collective bets. One possible question going forward could be: how might one reread ceremonial gift exchange if we understood it as a supplement of gambling, rather than the other way around? If consumption and exchange can be rethought through (game-like) formalisms that exist indigenously, might it be possible to dispense with overly imposed anthropological articulations of the relationship between these spheres? Is their separation even warranted at the level of analysis? These are inquiries for another day, but the fact it is possible to ask as much is testament to the undervalued and underestimated interstitial place that gambling occupies.

Gambling (as interstitial motif for relating that plays on money) forced my research to refocus on the place of value as a mode of moving across uses and purposes. Value – in Goroka or anywhere – has never been inherent, not in notes, coins, betelnut, cigarettes, gold, or anything for that matter. In Goroka the slipperiness of value comes close to economists' received notion of money's value fluctuating with exchange rates and inflation in the dominant world economy (see Gregory 1997). But Gorokan value play is more ingrained, more daily, more fluctuating, more personal (see Munn 1986). It was possible for a particular piece of money to hold many values at once – not between markets but between husband and wife – depending on what

someone decides to do with it, where they put it, how they attempt to get more of it, who they know, and who knows they have it. Mine was an exploration of intentional value (see Sahlins 1981: 69), generalised. Within that fluidity lay shifting formalisms that shape and are reshaped by canny individuals whose concern is turning value to their advantage.

Money likewise played an interstitial part, because it does particularly well at concealing the nature of its power through the difference that it perpetuates between itself as idea, and as effective value. It is in this tension that theories of money dwell, where *adequatio intellectus et res* provides imaginative space for some of the great theorists of the modern age: Marx, Simmel, Smith. As Maurer (2005) points out, the intellectual efforts of the anthropologist are much the same, we make ethnographic facts (or formalisms) from our experiences and equate them with ideas in our heads, projecting them back out as knowledge and expertise. I understand that this duality of money is an end in itself, so that rather than revealing an underlying facticity to reality through the data, I attempted to make the form of my intellectual enterprise reflect the form that money takes in the reality belonging to residents of Goroka. What resulted was a contingent mathematic of perception in the flawed sense that Gödel envisaged with his theory of mathematic falsification, a mathematic that depends on the reality of Goroka for its *intellectus* and its *res*. Gambling was a motif for relating, but those ideas and realities are changing, and as they do so, more patterns will appear fleetingly, offering a record of ideas in motion; each record shall change the ideas once again. And so the pattern changes changes.

Key to Maps 0.2, 0.3 and 0.4

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