2009

From Mining Widows to Prayer Mamas: Women, Christianity and Modernity in a Papua New Guinea Village

Christina Marie Gordon

From Mining Widows to *Prayer Mamas*: Women, Christianity and Modernity in a Papua New Guinea Village

(Spine title: Women, Christianity and Modernity in a PNG Village)

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

Christina Marie Gordon

Graduate Program in Anthropology

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

Abstract

This thesis is based on an ethnographic research project that explores the relationship between charismatic women and Christianity in Telefolmin, Papua New Guinea, and sheds light on issues surrounding gender and the politics of modernity. As fewer cash remittances come to the village as the nearby Ok Tedi mine moves towards closure, and as more men leave the village in search of money, women are taking on the everyday jobs that were once the responsibility of men. When these facets of labor migration come together, what one is left with is an increasing feminization of subsistence, which increases women's burdens. Telefol women, especially *prayer mamas,* are managing these burdens (*bikpela hevi*) through the church, which not only tells them how to live but also provides them with a context in which to act.

Keywords: Women, Christianity, gender, Papua New Guinea, women's groups, mining, labor migration, feminization of subsistence, agency, modernity.

She dreams in color, she dreams in red...
Pearl Jam

For Tom and Sheree...

Contents

Illustrations

Maps

All maps are courtesy of Dan Jorgensen; created by University of Western Ontario, Department of Geography.

Figures

All photos were taken by the author.

List of Appendices

'Sounds in the lingering mist' – Opening thoughts

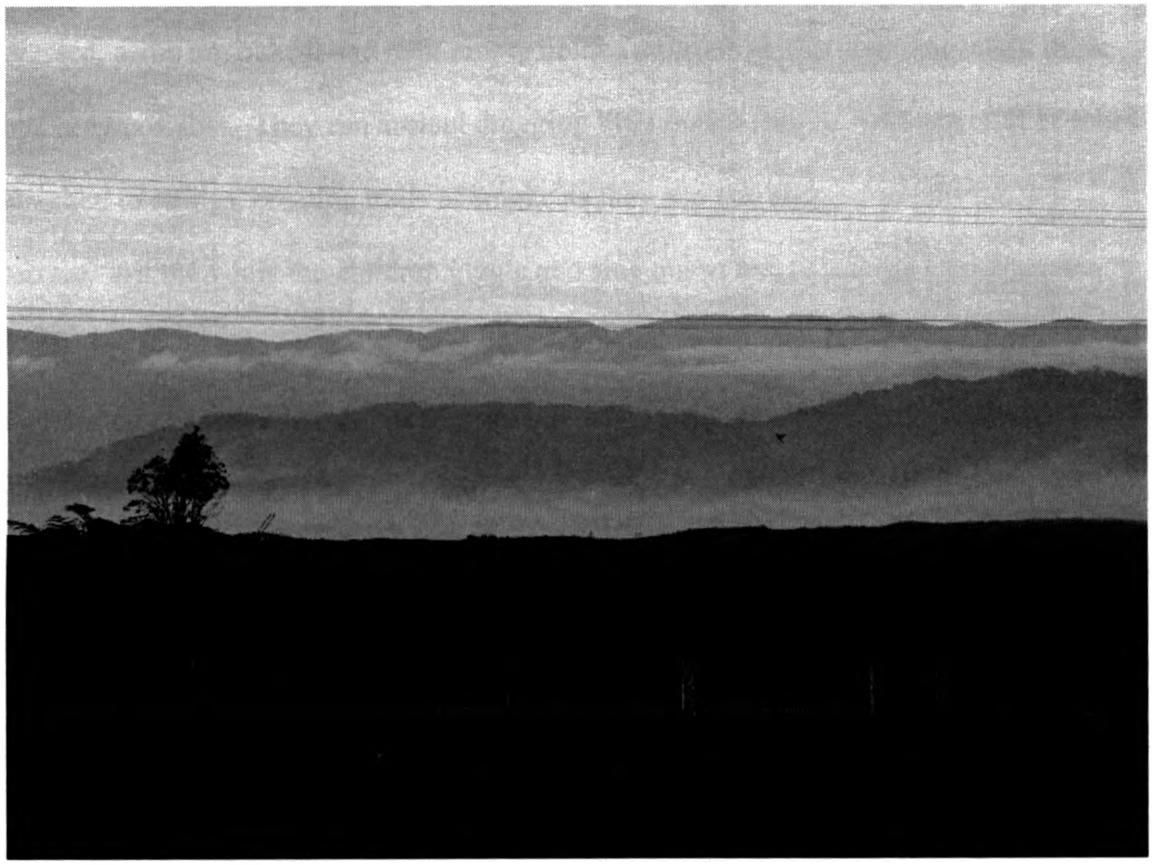


Figure 1 Morning fog.

I am walking along slippery stones, stepping over ankle-deep puddles of last night's rain. I dodge pig droppings on the ever-gradual inclining road as I make my way towards the Telefolmin District Headquarters Station, *Antap* (upslope), to a crossroads known locally as *Benddown Market.* Like most places in Telefolmin, names are based on what they represent and this is a market at the crossroads where women sell their garden produce or other goods on the ground, spread out on banana leaves, if that. The buyer must 'bend-down' to see the goods, as well as to interact with the seller.

There is a bright, lazy fog that blankets the valley. A sweet aroma of someone's house cook fire is dancing in the water droplets, competing with the scent of decaying

earth. The lingering mist carries more than smells; it carries the sounds of pigs crying out to be fed, the crow of the rooster, and the laughter of children. The children are scantily dressed, some are naked, and their empty bellies protrude farther than one might think humanly possible. They run around dragging little *tinfish* (tinned fish) cans full of ashes attached to strings, creating trails of smoke as they slip and slide across the mucky terrain. All the while the children giggle and sing out to me, "Morning Christineaooo." "Morning *tru*" I sing back. These children will still be slipping about when I pass by in an hour on my way back and later in the day when I am on my way to an interview, as the rain spits on my face. These children, in fact, do not know the modern "conveniences" of iPods, the Cartoon Network, or even jigsaw puzzles. Their days are spent running around outside, playing in the clay, rain and sun, until they are old enough to go to school—that is of course, if their parents can afford the school fees.

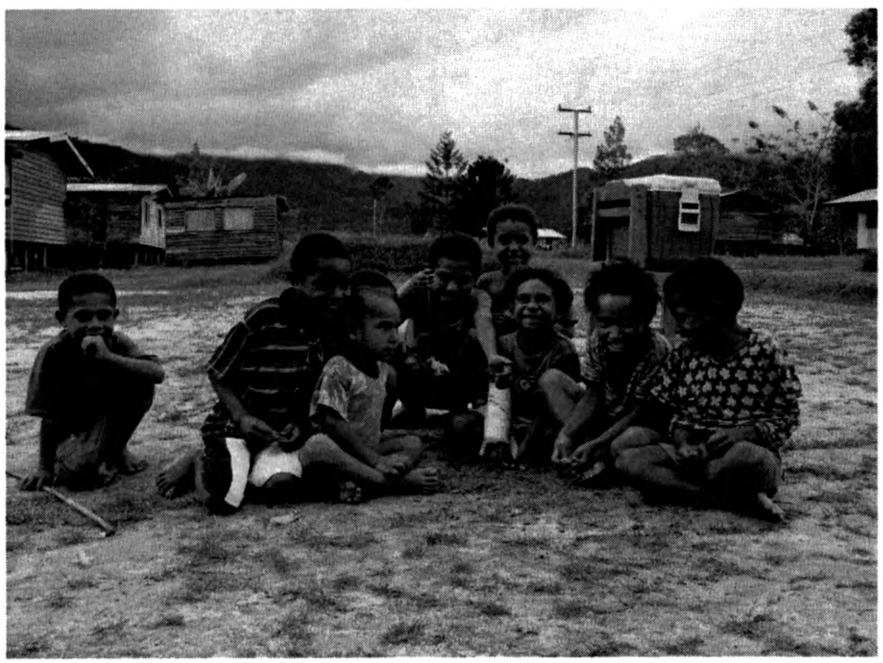


Figure 2 Children playing in Derolengam Village.

Figure 3 Woman selling *kumu* at *Benddown Market.*

I come to the crossroads near the station and find myself surrounded by public servants[1]; all of us are looking north towards a village we cannot see, but whose women often bring surplus garden produce to be sold at *Benddown Market*. Their valley is more fertile than our own and their overflowing *bilums* (hand-made barkstring net bags) are evidence of this. I talk with the public servants in English. They tell me that the new Member of Parliament is the first to ever visit the district headquarters.[2] They also tell me how they are hopeful for the future and the Member of Parliament's promise to make life better for the most remote district. "Life here is hard. It is very difficult to keep my children fed," says a single mother from the Highlands who works for the Department of Health at the government station. "Especially for us who do not make a lot of money working for the government" chimes in another woman. "We have no gardens" the first woman replies. "We are not from here—we have been appointed to work the district headquarters by the government. We are not used to this way of life and we are not paid enough to eat. You see how we live, this is not good." So I stand there and chat. We wait. Others come. Others lament. Some are high school teachers; others are from the village below Derolengam, Ankem. They also need food, even though they have their own gardens. Too much rain and not enough sun have *buggerup* (ruined) the ground and gardens, causing the *kaukau* (sweet potato) to be too small and the taro not to grow. Moreover, the price of freight is continuously increasing on store bought goods, making it nearly impossible to buy rice and *tinfish* to supplement one's diet. It is July 12, 2008

---

[1] Those who work for the Telefolmin District government, local schools or health clinic.
[2] This, it turns out, is untrue – but is part of local feelings concerning relations with the government.

and the cost of oil has risen 40 percent since January; this increase is becoming ever more apparent to villagers and their already arduous lifestyle.

"Life is hard, but it has not always been like this," says one of the women from Derolengam Baptist Church. I recognize her face and her tattered red tee shirt that she always wears backwards, exposing herself the least this way. I cannot recall her name, but I can recognize her from the two perfectly circular tattoos on her cheeks. She, like many other women here, has homemade battery acid tattoos on her face. I smile at her, say it is good to see her again, and ask how her last born child is. Her two-year-old daughter has malaria; it is the third time this year that she has had it and she is at the *haus sik* (health clinic)—a set of rundown teal buildings, which lack the presence of a doctor and electricity. A one-minute walk from the *haus sik*, through a field of mud and patches of grass, sit the government station buildings, not even one hundred meters from where we are standing at the crossroads. I tell her I am sorry. She clicks her teeth. "Why is it hard" I ask, trying to revert the conversation back to her comment. She explains,

> *The weather is no good. Too much rain, not enough sun.* Kaukau *is small. My husband has been gone two months... he is panning for gold to help pay for school fees and food but has not sent any [money] back yet. I had to make the new garden alone. The tradestore prices are too high, 10 kina for a package of rice.* Aiiiiiiii. *No one can pay that. I am tired of the rain. I am tired...* (12 July 2008)[3]

[3] Unless otherwise specified, all interviews or conversations were conducted in *Tok Pisin*.

Narratives such as the one above[4] were how I was introduced to *bikpela hevi.* *Bikpela hevi* are the "big worries" or burdens that *prayer mamas* and other women feel and are based on an increase in outward male migration, which results in an increase of village responsibilities for women. It was through the stories, sermons, and prayers at the weekly Christian women's gathering, known as Women's Fellowship, and during conversations along the road that I learned about village women's worries. These worries and how to handle them are couched in a Christian idiom based on one's conduct[5] and service. For the women of Derolengam, it is through this church group that *prayer mamas* (most of whom are lacking a husband) make sense of their lives and find guidance, structure, and hope. *Prayer mamas* also create projects, provide services, educational programs, and travel outside of the village through their network. More than just a charismatic support group, *prayer mamas* produce change in Telefolmin.

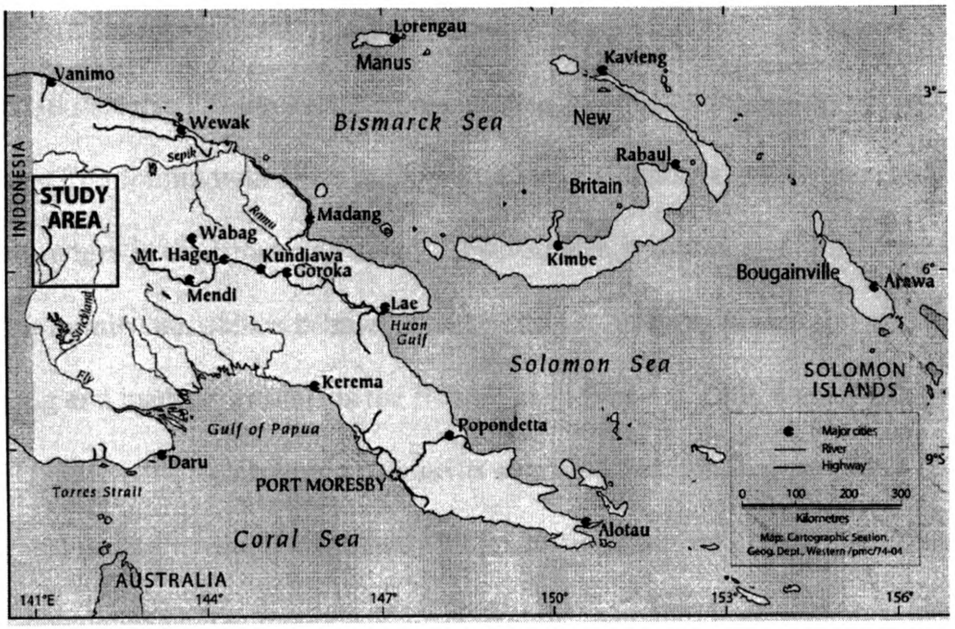
Telefolmin

Telefolmin are part of a cultural group known as the Min whose language is of the Mountain Ok family and are found in a small region in the central mountains of the western part of Papua New Guinea's Sandaun Province (Jorgensen 2006: 240; see also 1981a). All Min claim descent from a common ancestress, Afek, the builder of the ancestral village and spirit house in Telefolip; a structure, 20 minutes from Derolengam, that Telefolmin claim stewardship over (Jorgensen 1981a: 24).

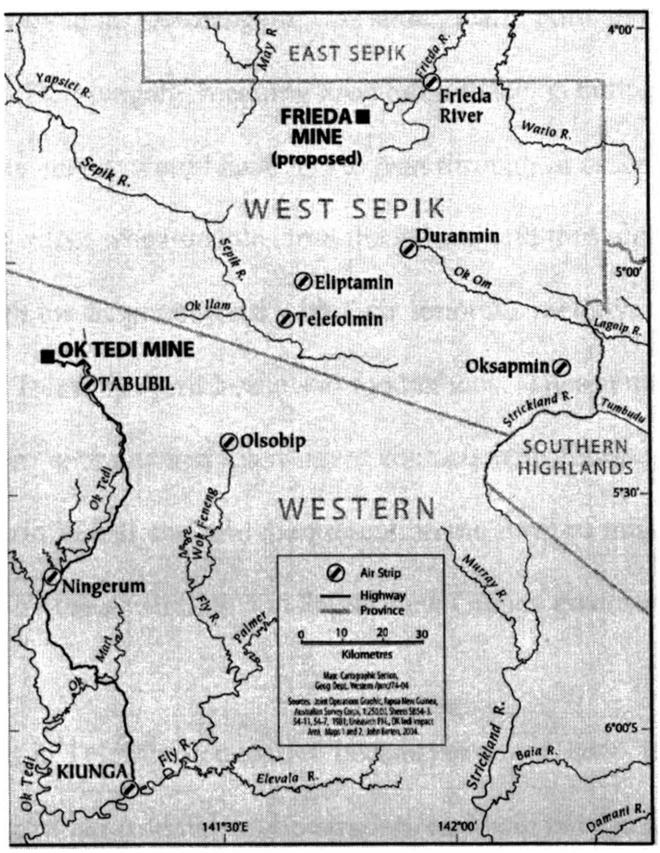
---

[4] Throughout this thesis I use first person anecdotes and informants' narratives to tell the story, the story of women, because I know of no other way of capturing a woman's story than by using her voice.

[5] I use conduct here as a gloss for *pasin*, a *Tok Pisin* word that Telefolmin use to describe individual behavior. This is a complex yet central concept that I examine in more detail in Chapter 3.



Map 1 Papua New Guinea. (University of Western Ontario, Geography Department; courtesy of Dan Jorgensen)



Map 2 Study Area. (University of Western Ontario, Geography Department, courtesy of Dan Jorgensen)

There are approximately 25,000 Min in Papua New Guinea (Jorgensen 2006: 238), and of these, 4,500 are Telefolmin. Derolengam, one of the largest villages comprising Telefolmin with close to three hundred residents, is nestled between two mountain ranges in the Ifitaman Valley. At 4,700 feet, it is cool and rainy most of the year. Telefolmin subsistence is based on a shifting cultivation of taro and sweet potato, pig tending and hunting, as well as the flow of cash from Ok Tedi, a nearby copper mine.

Traditionally, Telefolmin settlements averaged two hundred people or less, congregated in small villages of roughly built square houses on slender pile structures. Today, settlements are compounds of western style clapboard houses alongside bamboo house kitchens and outhouses. Before contact, intertribal raiding was common, so much so that the very village I lived in, Derolengam, was strategically built and named in accord with these raids. Derolengam, meaning Frog Song Place, is built on the side of a swamp through which an enemy would have had to pass through in order to get to the village. The frogs grow silent when people cross the swamp and thus alerted thus village men to be ready. Though the frogs continue with their sonorous melody, raiding is obsolete, much like the Telefolip spirit house and food taboos. These cultural changes began in the 1920s when "sporadic and intermittent contacts with Europeans" occurred, and continued after World War II and into the present, in the form of missionaries, cash income, and influences by the Australian and Papua New Guinea government (Jorgensen 1981a; 2005: 25).

Cultural changes in Telefolmin occurred because of a cash economy, implemented by the Australian colonial administration, and later catalyzed by mining opportunities and missionaries. From 1955-1965, local Telefolmin worked as migratory

laborers on infrastructural projects for government and mission facilities at the district headquarters, outlying airstrips, and built a circuit road that connected the headquarter villages to the government station (Jorgensen 1981b: 65). Some Telefolmin men traveled out on two-year labor contracts and upon returning in store bought clothes and with cash in their pockets, relayed stories of adventures, sparking the interests of other villagers (Jorgensen 1981b: 65). Life was changing in Telefolmin, and quickly. Men's initiations were being disrupted by contract labor and work found around the station, while women were involved with the nursing and Bible schools (Jorgensen 1981b: 65-67). Moreover, cash and material goods were beginning to reshape locals' idea of self in relation to the world (Jorgensen 1981b: 65-67). Today, these changes continue, but are a result of a reduced labor force at Ok Tedi, an increase of outward male migration, and a surplus of responsibilities for women to maintain village life.

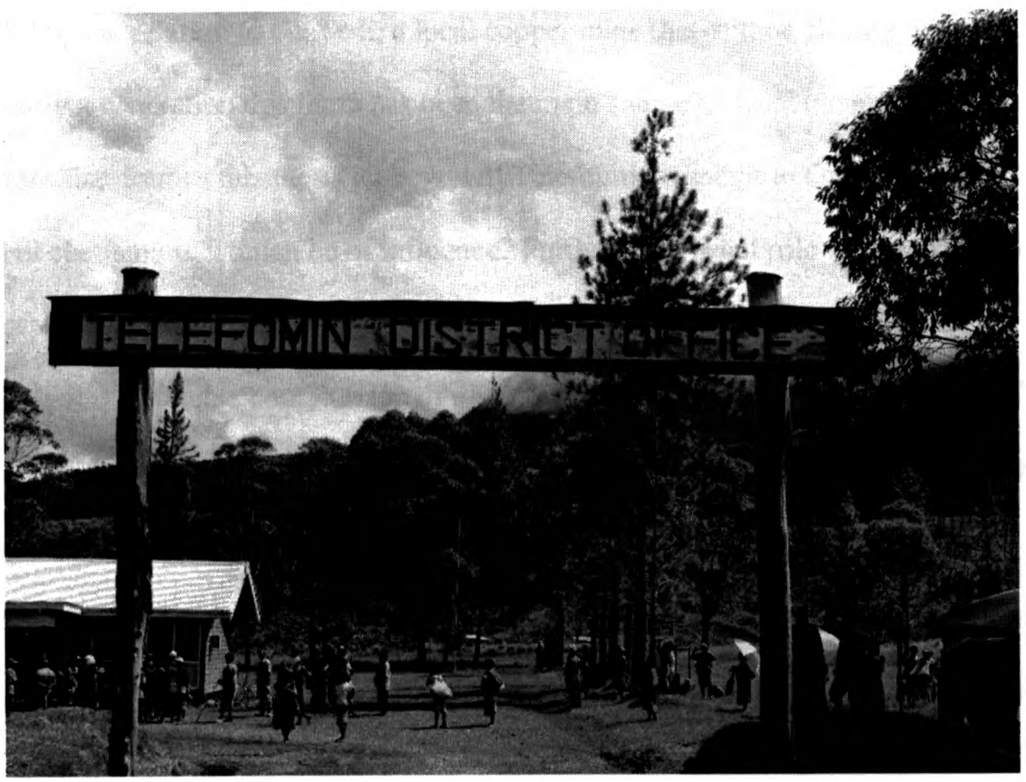


Figure 4 Telefolmin District Headquarters.

The thesis: field research and chapter overview

This thesis sheds light on the politics of gender and Christianity in a rural mining outpost in the western mountains of Papua New Guinea. While Robbins (1998, 2001, 2004a) has clearly taken the lead in anthropological research on Christianity in this part of the world and the Pacific in general, he lacks a comparative study of Christianity and gender. Therefore, the focus, scope, and rationale of my preliminary trip were to fill the gaps that previous literature has failed to explore, to set a baseline for subsequent research that I might conduct, as well as to familiarize myself with the land, language, and people. I went to record the life histories of *spirit meris*, a group of charismatic women who were the driving force of the Christian Rebaibal movement in Telefolmin during the 1970s, but instead found *prayer mamas*, the successors of *spirit meris*. I wanted to understand how charismatic women have shaped Telefol life and to examine my findings in relation to Ok Tedi, a local copper mine that will be closing down in 2013. For nearly a generation this mine has been the main source of local incomes. One of the questions that frames this thesis is: how will Telefolmin respond to Ok Tedi's closure, and will charismatic women be of influence? Furthermore, what role will women play in this response?

It was through a combination of observations of church services and Women's Fellowship, and semi-structured and informal interviews with villagers, schoolteachers, government employees, and *prayer mamas* that I established a foundation for understanding the active role that women play in Derolengam. My focus centers on the stories of women in Derolengam; narratives often told at Women's Fellowship, translated

and written by hand in real-time, and sometimes re-explained by Deta,[6] my main informant and the local high school librarian. I also participated in daily living as socially defined by my gender. I bought goods at *Benddown Market* and local tradestores, hand-washed clothes on a cement slab, helped bathe children, sat around the house cook fire and participated in *stori* (to talk or tell stories), helped clean the house that I was living in,[7] played soccer and tag with local children, helped prepare meals, and walked to a few mountain gardens. These walks were along narrow tracks through thick, itchy brush, included fording of swollen streams and sliding up and down mountain banks. Once at the gardens I did my best to dig sweet potato from the sticky clay. I often failed miserably at this task and would resort to scraping the dirt from the sweet potatoes instead so the *bilums* would not be as heavy for the hour and a half walk home. The village joke was that "*white meri i painim dirt, tasol. Aiiii.*" (White woman only finds dirt. *Choral laughter*).

It was during these garden visits that I began to understand the gendered division of labor. Two children, ages five and a half and six, male and female respectively, accompanied me and several other women to the gardens. The boy often played while the women and the girl worked. He would run around naked, play in the streams, shoot grasshoppers with his bow and arrow, and nap under a tree. On the trip home, the young boy would often whine and cry about being too tired to walk. Thus, he would be carried on his twenty year old mother's shoulders, sitting above the machete, which sat on top of the bundle of firewood, which balanced on top of the *bilum* of sweet potatoes, pumpkin,

---

[6] Deta is a local Telefol woman who was fluent in Telefol, English, and Pidgin.
[7] I lived with Beksep's family in Derolengam where I was able to experience domestic life firsthand.

and *kumu* (greens) suspended from his mother's head. The young girl had spent her time at the garden digging for sweet potatoes, collecting more in her one visit than all of my visits combined, or gathering firewood. The miniature *bilum* dangling from her head contained a few sweet potatoes, a small bundle of firewood, and a petite bush knife. The only sounds coming from her mouth were the words to Backstreet Boy songs as she smiled and giggled for the ninety-minute walk home. I did what I could to help out the generous people who were helping me better understand Derolengam life and in this helping I often found myself learning.

Many ethnographers are qualitative social scientists whose quality of work comes from the interactions they have with people, the environment, and the language. From these experiences comes an understanding of another way of living, and from that comes the interpretation, analysis, and argument. Numbers and statistics do not form the strength of the argument, which rather depends on experiences and encounters with individuals of the culturally significant group. The longer an anthropologist finds him or herself in this environment, the better his or her understandings become and in turn, the stronger his or her argument. To represent the fluidity of culture, which is comprised of a constant movement of ideas, interpretations and actions, I used Abu-Lughod's (1991) approach of the "ethnography of the particular," representing one specific example in time—the narratives of *prayer mamas* as a response to widowhood and the *bikpela hevi* they are experiencing. By focusing on the narratives of *prayer mamas*, I understand (and read) their narratives as a text (having multiple interpretations); taking what they said and did, and interpreting how their understandings shape, produce, reproduce and transform their experiences and identity in Derolengam.

In using the approach of "ethnography of the particular" (Abu-Lughod 1991) and using personal narratives as an insight into Telefol culture, I have begun to understand what is occurring between the Derolengam villagers and *prayer mamas*, which are part of the issues surrounding the politics of modernity in Melanesia. I understand the politics of modernity as the fluid and volatile consequences that result from an introduction of values, beliefs, and practices surrounding the acquisition of cash and commodities. These consequences are fluid because they affect each individual and group differently and volatile because these differences are unpredictable in impact and duration.

For the majority of the thesis, I have done what I can to make space for the women's voice and put their utterances as accurately as possible into their stories. Following Lisette Josephides (2008), my research is comprised of a series of narratives that when combined form one major narrative, the story of *prayer mamas* in Derolengam. I have also taken into account that "in their endeavors to construct moral persons, narratives as life stories must also construct coherent selves seeking their identity on the scale of an entire life" (Josephides 2008: 103, references omitted), meaning that *prayer mamas* have constructed their narratives to make sense to themselves. With this understanding I sketch out the remainder of this thesis.

Chapter 1 situates Derolengam in the wider context of mining, Christianity and how the two have come to shape the village. I begin with a literature review, which is followed by a brief history of Telefolmin's engagement with mining and Christianity. Derolengam is then figuratively constructed in Chapter 2. In order to understand *prayer mamas*, the mine, and Christianity, one must have an understanding of this area of Papua New Guinea. The chapter begins as a stream of consciousness, as I walk the land and

take it all in, with side notes on history and facts intermingling with a narrative of space. Somewhere the stream of consciousness ends and is replaced with mini segments of detail that explore the structures of village life. The chapter ends at the church, which is where Chapter 3 picks up. I begin this chapter on a Tuesday morning, introducing the reader to these women and their fellowship. It was through the stories of *prayer mamas* at Women's Fellowship that I was introduced to issues of gender and modernity in Telefolmin. I talked with *prayer mamas*, heard about their daily struggles to make ends meet, their perspective on life, the changes they are facing and how they are coping with the coming closure of Ok Tedi. I go on to explain the many roles *prayer mamas* play and conclude by exploring gender issues in Derolengam as interpreted under a charismatic idiom. To understand gender issues in Derolengam, one must further understand the influence *prayer mamas'* memories have had on their perceptions of life. Chapter 4 begins with memory, the role it plays in shaping a woman's expectation and explores the connection between *prayer mamas'* expectations and their understanding of life's aspirations. These aspirations have, at times, led *prayer mamas* to make mistakes. Chapter 5 sheds light on *prayer mamas'* ability to generate support as a group within the village. A *prayer mama's* behavior is, at times, socially incorrect. I argue that the village awareness that these women are sinners allows for a manner of understanding and therefore, respect among villagers, which in turn results in collaboration for village projects. And it is through this respect and collaoration that *prayer mamas* become a collective resource for fellow villagers. This chapter serves to demonstrate the interactions between Derolengam villagers and *prayer mamas* outside the realm of the church. However, it is also in the final section of this chapter that I bring forth my final

questions for analysis, tying together male outmigration and the feminization of subsistence, which results in a particular set of *bikpela hevi.* I conclude with what this all means for women in Derolengam and how their situation might inform the anthropology of modernity and Christianity in Melanesia.

A note on terminology

When I refer to Telefolmin, I am referring to the people who reside in the village of Derolengam. Any statements or generalizations made about Telefolmin necessarily deemphasize the individual variation that exists within the population. I use actual Telefolmin names, with their consent, and spell them based on how I heard them pronounced in the field. Also, it must be noted that approximately 85 percent of field research was done using *Tok Pisin* and that local vernacular terms and concepts are largely unavailable at this time. Terms in the Melanesian creole, *Tok Pisin*, are italicized; *ol* before any noun pluralizes that noun. When first introduced, each *Tok Pisin* term or phrase has a translation in parentheses immediately following it. It should be noted that some informants used English words while speaking *Tok Pisin.*

Telefolmin: the mine and the Min
1

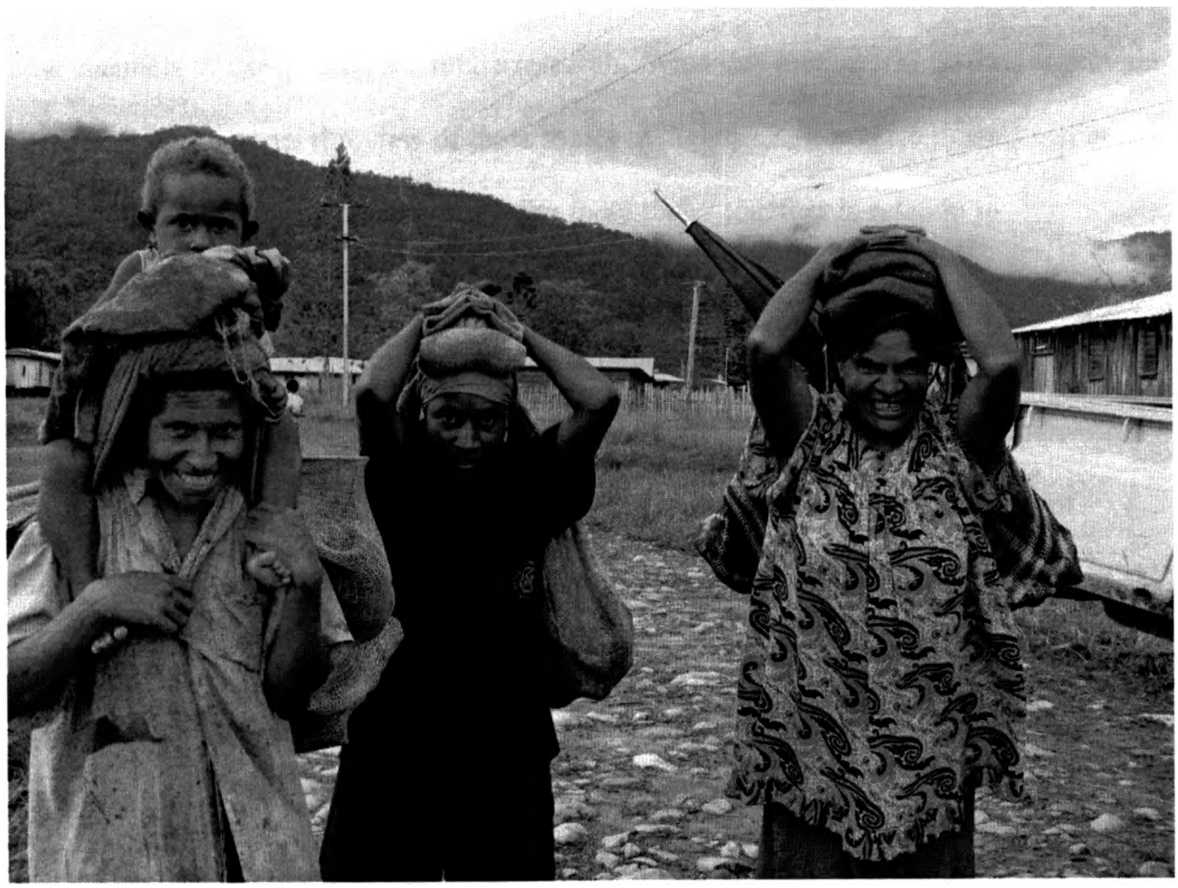


Figure 5 Women returning from garden.

This chapter provides background and sets the stage for the thesis. It begins with a review of previous ethnographic works that shed light on women, Christianity, and modernity in Melanesia. I then introduce Telefolmin's past interactions with Christianity and mining, which have had a direct impact on the situation found today.

Women, Christianity and modernity in Melanesia

A gap exists in the Melanesian literature surrounding the topics of women, Christianity, and modernity; the literature on women and modernity largely ignores the

role of Christianity (see Wardlow 2004), while the literature on modernity and Christianity largely ignores women (see Robbins 2004a). I hope to address this gap through my thesis by bringing these topics together within a single context and open up new channels of exploration for future research. What this section will do then is provide the reader with a general review of these topics in Melanesia, introduce themes that are relevant to my own project, and then bring these topics together in relation to Derolengam.

I understand modernity as the "consumption of values, beliefs, practices surrounding the acquisition of cash and commodities made both possible and impossible under capitalism" (Wardlow 2002a: 146). In Papua New Guinea, the acquisition of money stems from males leaving to work on projects surrounding natural resource extraction (mining, logging, etc.) or cash crop production (coffee, cacao, etc.). Women generally have the responsibility for maintaining village life (Wardlow 2001, 2004; Polier 1998; Barker 1996, 2007), which is becoming burdensome due to male migration.[1] During the past 30 years, an influx of income in many villages throughout Papua New Guinea due to development schemes has resulted in a heightened divergence of gender roles (Barker 2007; Polier 1998). This divergence has often been marked by tensions between men and women, and one expression of women's agency has been a departure

[1] The division of labor for a woman is gardening, chopping firewood, pig rearing, childcare, preparing meals, keeping the house clean, laundry, making net bags, and generally jobs that require endurance; see Chapters 2 and 3 for a detailed portrait of life for women in Derolengam. It should be noted that many of the tasks that women today undertake are themselves relatively new – most especially laundry and washing household utensils such as plates, pots and pans. None of these chores existed in traditional times. Men are responsible for jobs such as hunting, house building, preparing bush for a garden, village politics; traditionally men also took part in garden planting and harvesting. See Chapters 2 and 3 for a more detailed portrait of men in Derolengam.

from (or even defiance of) traditional gender roles (Wardlow 2002a, 2004; Polier 1998; Barker 2007; Eriksen 2006; Dundon 2002). Therefore,

> if modernity is inherently disjunctive, and if people must find the means to make sense of such ruptures, then perhaps vernacular modernity cannot be forged without gender—or perhaps some other creation of essential difference (Wardlow 2002a: 161).

What I suggest then, is that one cannot look at the impacts of modernity in Telefolmin without understanding the impacts this rupture has had on gender.

The impacts of modernity in Telefolmin are the result of local mining ventures and the departure or defiance of gender roles. This change is further fueled by the feminization of subsistence, a common theme in studies on the impacts of modernity on gender throughout Melanesia (Dundon 2002, 2004; Polier 1998; Wardlow 2002a, 2004). The term was first coined in African anthropological literature to illustrate how "male outward migration has led to a modification on the structure of family life and has transformed women's social and economic position to their detriment" (Brown 1983: 367). Today, the 'feminization of subsistence' is used to describe an increase in a village or family's reliance on women in maintaining agricultural livelihoods because men have either found work elsewhere or are too busy with their own local endeavors to help out. Moore goes into a further explanation:

> The 'feminization' of subsistence agriculture is thought to come about through two mechanisms or processes, which are sometimes combined. The first is the process of the commercialization of smallholder agriculture, where men engage in growing cash crops while the burden of providing for 'family' consumption needs falls on women, who find themselves contributing increasing amounts of labour time to subsistence agriculture. The heavy demands of subsistence production themselves, and the frequent bias of government schemes and incentives in favor

> of male farmers (and the cash crops they produce) leads to further discrimination and disadvantage for women. The second mechanism or process which leads to the 'feminization' of subsistence agriculture is male migration, where men leave an area in search of work and the women remain behind and continue supporting the subsistence sector. (Moore 1988: 75; citations omitted)

For many women in Derolengam the feminization of subsistence is because of the latter; it is a result of outward male migration and the primary cause of *bikpela hevi.*

The impact of males migrating in search of capitalistic opportunities in Derolengam is not an anomaly when compared to other migration movements throughout the world. When one examines migration patterns across the globe, one realizes that in "Africa, men predominate in migration to cities and women remain in rural areas to farm the land; whereas in Latin America, the Caribbean and Philippines, women are migrating to cities" (Pedraza 1991: 310). Respectively, men are leaving in search of employment at precious metal and stone mines and women are leaving in search of domestic and factory labour or for prostitution (Pedraza 1991). Because the situation in Derolengam resembles that found in Southern Africa with men leaving and women remaining, I turn to this genre of ethnographic literature to contextualize my research surrounding the themes of the feminization of subsistence.

Much of the literature surrounding male migration focuses on the "sufferings of 'women without men' or the destructive impact of male migrant labor on family life," (Ulicki and Crush 2000: 64; Brown 1983; see also Jetley 1987; Houstoun et al 1984) however there are several similarities that I would like to highlight that go beyond such topics. In Lesotho, Rhodesia, and Derolengam, men migrate in search of new income, whereas women migrate because of social and reproductive factors (Ulicki and Crush 2000; Dodson 2001). Everett Lee (1966: 51) considers this pattern a push/pull theory of

migration, where women are accompanying their husbands and children are carried along by their parents. Houstoun et al (1984) elaborates on this idea by discussing patterns of female migration flows as secondary movements generated by the original migration of economically motivated young males. According to Houstoun et al. (1984: 919), "women migrate to create or maintain the family unit," which is a situation that previously existed in Derolengam during Ok Tedi's peak construction phase. However, the current situation in Derolengam does not follow a pattern of 'family following' migration and rather resembles that of Ulicki and Crush's (2000) research of a woman remaining in the village while her husband leaves in search of employment (see also Jetley 1987 for a comparison from India).

Mine closure, and a reduction of labor in mines still producing, has created high unemployment rates for males in Lesotho and Derolengam, therefore placing a heavier burden on women to maintain the family unit by finding alternative sources of income. In Lesotho, 57 percent of males described themselves as unemployed and/or looking for work (Ulicki and Crush 2000: 72). Although I do not have the statistics to compare this trend, I do have comments by *prayer mamas* that suggest that over 50 percent of the males in Telefolmin are unemployed, looking for work, and/or at Freida River panning for gold. Because 50 percent of the males in Telefolmin are gone, one could argue this means approximately 50 percent of the females in Telefolmin are the sole wage earner for their family; a trend that parallels Lesotho (Ulicki and Crush 2000: 73). Women, therefore, take on a de-facto head of household role as the behind the scene decision maker as well as the main wage earner.

Another region of southern Africa that resembles trends found in Derolengam is that of Botswana. Many of the effects of male migration on rural females that Brown (1983) describes mirror the situation in Derolengam. Migration not only causes love affairs, engagements and marriages to end (Brown 1983: 372; Jetley 1987: 52), but it also increases the need for cash to buy goods and services in the ever-increasing commodization of the economy.

> Services such as education and goods such as school uniforms [clean clothes in the Telefolmin case], radios, teas and sugar are in increasing demand. The penetration of capitalist relations of production has altered old forms of cooperation and exchange....There were [are] few opportunities to earn a living beyond the village and few ways to store wealth. (Brown 1983: 378)

Women therefore engage in a variety of economic activities in order to care for themselves and their families while males migrate in search of, or wait for, a new source of income.

Mine retrenchment also increases womens' burdens. "Men wait hopefully for mine reemployment, while females search for other income-generating opportunities" (Ulicki and Crush 2000: 73). In Telefolmin, women are selling excess produce, *bilums*, and *plauas* (fried dough) at *Benddown Market* to generate surplus income to maintain the family unit while their men wait patiently for Xstrata to begin construction (which could happen as early as 2016) or live at Freida River for a few months of panning.

However, one should realize that outward male migration does not directly cause feminization of subsistence, but under a given set of circumstances, such as those found in Lesotho, Botswana and Derolengam, it does correlate with this pattern of heavier burdens on the woman. Women can choose to migrate with their men but often decide

not to because to move would require too much of an investment. Historically in Derolengam, women remained in the village because of the 'perks' of local life—a network of friends, a church community, already established and flourishing gardens, local schools for one's children, and ownership of cook house and sleeping structure—the same reasons still expressed today. Previously, however, remittances were being sent home; today, this is no longer the case. Many women in Lesotho, Botswana and Derolengam are taking on more responsibilities because the remittances are not making it home. Though women are choosing to stay for the same reasons, the flow of cash into the village appears to be dwindling.

Modernity poses a rupture in the reproduction of village life, and in Derolengam there has been a distinct break in the previously socially defined roles men and women held in maintaining village and family life. As men leave in search of work, women must not only maintain previous responsibilities but must also take on the work of their male counterparts.[2] Moreover, modernity has created a reliance on a cash economy in Derolengam: school fees and tinned fish were not part of village life forty years ago but are seen as necessities now.

Access to cash is an important issue in domestic life: when cash comes into a village in Papua New Guinea, it often goes into the pockets of men, regardless of who actually did the "work" (Wardlow 2002a, 2002b, 2004: 97-98; Polier 1998, 1999; Barker 2007: 193-195). Cash income, for a male (and especially for those living outside village

[2] See Chapter 5 for a detailed example of women and the maintaining of village life without men.

settings), is spent on the self: cigarettes and clothing, plane rides, alcohol, and paid sex.[3] Women often use what little cash they acquire for the family—to pay school fees and supplement a family's diet with tradestore goods that are seen as a necessity, not a luxury (Douglas 2003). Likewise, men often demand any money a wife, sister, or daughter has (Wardlow 2004; Polier 1998).[4] As the necessity of a cash economy continues to reshape village politics and social dynamics, and women continue to feel left out or cheated, it will be worthwhile to note the types of agency women exercise and if they result through the defiance of gender roles.

In some areas of Papua New Guinea women have become effectively commoditized through brideprice so that the social meanings behind the marriage exchanges no longer hold true (Jorgensen 1991: 261-266). Rather, fathers and brothers may see their daughters and sisters as a cash good and not social pawn; a way to make several thousand Kina and/or receive over a dozen pigs (Jorgensen 1991, 2007; Wardlow 2002a, 2004; Polier 2000). Husbands see this transaction as a way to show off their wealth, as well as place unrealistic expectations, demands and responsibilities on wives (Polier 1998; Wardlow 2004). Some women, in turn, have created a rupture by refusing to be a part of such transactions.

Extensive work on the agency of women in response to commodification of gendered roles has been explored in Papua New Guinea by Wardlow (2002a, 2004), Polier (1998), Macintyre (1998) and Barker (2007). For some Huli or Faiwolmin women,

---

[3] Men are often expected to pay remittances to kin in their home villages, but these expectations are frequently unfulfilled (see Jorgensen 1993, 2006).

[4] In Telefolmin, women have gotten around this demand by buying future MAF plane tickets as a disguised savings account scheme – concealing what cash they have and putting it beyond the reach of husbands and others.

prostitution is the chosen path because a woman would rather have control over her commoditized body and receive the payment directly, than be the pawn of clan relations and a means of income for her brother, father, or uncle (Polier 1998; Wardlow 2002a, 2002b, 2004). For Maisin, women exercise agency by saying no to a reinstatement of the barkcloth trade in which their labor was crucial[5] and in doing so, have had a direct power over the politics of village life and the Maisin economy (Barker 2007: 193-195). This agency, as a response to modernity, does not mean that women escape oppression but it does allow them to choose their own way of living (Barker 2007; Dundon 2004; Polier 1998, 2000; Wardlow 2002, 2004; Zimmer-Tamakoshi 1993, 1998). *Prayer mamas* in Derolengam exercise agency, as a response to modernity, through activities within the church.

I am interested in how modernity and Christianity come together in Derolengam as a response to modernity. Christianity enables individuals new ways of thinking about and experiencing the world, especially that of development in Papua New Guinea.

> The idea of development in Papua New Guinea is a very salient one—issues of development or lack thereof, foreground discussions about violence and raskolism[6] in Papua New Guinea, about cargo cults and millenarian movements, about money and markets, about bodies and Christianity and in discussions of land and resource rights (Dundon 2002: 5, references omitted).

In many areas of Papua New Guinea the quest for development becomes an ongoing process of negotiating the types of person that one is, the place in which one

---

[5] When the tapa co-op failed in Collingwood Bay and Maisin men tried to reinstate it, women said no, as it was an extra burden for them to make tapa cloth and they were not benefiting from the sales.

[6] *Raskol* is a *Tok Pisin* word to mean criminal. *Raskols* are known for robberies, rapes, and armed hold-ups throughout Papua New Guinea.

lives, and the future that will result after the attainment of development (Jorgensen 2005, 2007; Robbins 2004a). Furthermore, some Papua New Guineans believe that the stronger an individual's or village's faith, the greater the likelihood development will occur (Dundon 2002; Jacka 2005; Jorgensen 2005; Robbins 1995, 2004a; Barker 2007; Lohmann 2001). Dundon explains how "contemporary Christianity plays a central role in the prescription of responsible and embedded personhood and consumption" (2004: 80). The Gogodala see their consumption of "white man goods" as connecting them with a wider Christian community, and the conjunction of religion and development becomes an interesting focus for understanding how women position themselves within, and attain, local perceptions of modernity. Robbins (1995: 212) has argued that for the Urapmin, Christianity is the lens through which development and transformation become visible. He writes: "it is through their understanding of Christianity and what it means for their view of themselves and their environment that Urapmin have interpreted the possibility of development" (Robbins 1995: 214).

Christianity creates an opportunity for women in Melanesia to transform themselves (Dundon 2004, 2007; Hess 2006; McDougall 2003; Eriksen 2006). In most of Melanesia, the spread of Christianity stems from women actively engaging and working with the church, which gives women a voice and is a source of power (Robbins 1998; McDougall 2003; Polier 1998; Eriksen 2006: 231). This is particularly so among charismatic denominations because it is an avenue of power for women. "Charismatic religion offers women opportunities for leadership among women, granting them inspirational if not institutional status, improving relations within the household (by domesticating errant husbands)" (Robbins 2004a: 132; see also Dundon 2007). The

relationship between women and the Holy Spirit is understood to be a demanding and difficult one (Tuzin 1997; Dundon 2007; Robbins 2001, 2004a, 2004b), but regardless of how demanding and difficult it might be, the Holy Spirit provides women who are neglected and deprived with a medium to air their grievances obliquely and gain satisfaction (Lewis 1966: 314; see also Boddy 1994; Douglas 2001). This also creates the possibility for learning, critical thinking and reflection

Women in Melanesia have found a place of power of the self within the church as a response to development (McDougall 2003; Dundon 2007; Eriksen 2006). For many women in Melanesia the church becomes a vehicle of change to help them escape the responsibilities of traditional life, by providing the opportunity to simultaneously refuse dominant ideologies of a woman's place in the world (Polier 1998: 526; see also McDougall 2003; Dundon 2007; Macintyre 1998; Eriksen 2006). Christianity also provides women "an articulation with local and wider spheres in context where the state is locally absent or invisible" (Douglas 2000:6; McDougall 2003). Thus, "women can produce themselves as 'First World' actors, negotiating a global marketplace of practices, ideas, and commodities through their religious practices" (Jacobson 2008: 336; Dundon 2004; Robbins 2001). Annual church conferences, meetings, prayer groups, and women's fellowships all allow women to feel a part of something bigger than their village.

Dundon explores charismatic women's agency in response to development through the stories and experiences of Warrior Women in Gogodala. These women pray to the Holy Spirit asking to have their bodies cleansed and eyes "turned" so that they can see those in the village and towns that threaten the health of others (Dundon 2007: 30-

31). This threat comes in the form of AIDS, which is a result of an influx of people due to development schemes. Moreover, AIDS is perceived as a secretive disease, "operating outside the bounds of the visible", where the sickness is transmitted without showing any signs of ill health (Dundon 2007: 30). Warrior Women have taken it upon themselves to purify the village of this threat by patrolling the streets at night and the early morning, thus "posing a formidable and very public challenge to sexual practices that break…their living landscape" of Gogodala (Dundon 2007: 40). Additionally, in order for Warrior Women to "see," via the Holy Spirit, they must cleanse their body by remaining "sexually abstinent and morally pure" even if they are married (Dundon 2007: 37-38). This exposes them to the threat of disgruntled husbands but regardless of the threats that are posed to these women, Warrior Women feel it is their responsibility to address the activities that they feel pose a threat to the community wellbeing through their charismatic activities (Dundon 2007: 38-40). Warrior Women's faith provides the strength and understanding needed to carry out their "patrols".

Among the Faiwolmin, Polier explores women's agency in response to colonialism, Christianity and capitalism through the narrative of one 'bighead' woman (1998). Stella, a prostitute, single mother and shunned woman, represents the global processes and their effects (Ok Tedi mine) on her region (Faiwolmin) (1998: 512). Stella chose not to marry within her village, lived with a Kiap, sold her body for money, and supported herself rather than rely on kinsmen. Regardless of what they became or how they exercise agency, Warrior Women and *bikhet meris* show how departures from traditional gender roles can emerge as a response to development.

In understanding that "gender is the central axis of difference through which the disjunctures of modernity are engaged, performed and instantiated" (Wardlow 2002a: 147), one realizes the impact money has had on gender issues in Papua New Guinea. What I hope to do through this thesis is to use my account of *prayer mamas* in Derolengam to bring together the themes of women, Christianity, and modernity in Papua New Guinea ethnography. What this thesis intends to do is show how *prayer mamas* exercise agency as a response to anticipated mine closure. I will try to show how the cash economy and development influence the ways women think, act and respond, when less money is making its way into Derolengam. I will also try to show how Christianity becomes a lens for interpreting experiences and a source of action. The stories of Derolengam's *prayer mamas* that follow reveal that women become modern through self-conscious reflection as well as through the repudiation of expected social roles. Thus, the stories that *prayer mamas* told are an oral representation of the self as developed and lived under a Christian discourse, influenced by one's expectations of modernity. In order to understand this response, however, one must first know the past interactions that Papua New Guinea, and particularly Telefolmin, have had with mining and Christianity. I turn to these issues in the following sections of this chapter.

Christianity in Telefolmin

Contemporary Telefolmin are Christians, a result of *Rebaibal,* a homegrown version of charismatic Baptist Christianity that swept through the valley in the 1970s (see Jorgensen 1981a, 2005, 2007; Lohmann 2000, 2001; Robbins 2004a; Brutti 1999). Traditionally, life in Telefolmin was divided by sex, age, and ritual moiety association and based on a ritual division of labor and food taboos (see Jorgensen 1981b, Whitehead

2000). Telefol cosmology was dominated by the ancestress Afek and Maglim, the bush spirit. Afek founded Telefol culture, was responsible for most Telefol myths and rituals, and built the men's spirit house in Telefolip—a sacred place responsible for taro fertility throughout the hinterlands (Jorgensen 1981b). Afek died, whereas Magalim is still alive, and his spirit continues to disrupt Telefol life into the present. While I was in Telefolmin, Magalim (sometimes interpreted by Christians today as a manifestation of Satan) was explained to be responsible for the death of a local pastor and his son-in-law on March 22, 2008. Moreover, while a predominant Christian way of thinking governs most daily living, ideas surrounding Afek of the past and Magalim of the present remain active in Telefolmin Christian culture.

During the 1960s Baptist missionaries built a bible school for male youths that taught Pidgin literacy as well as trained men to become local pastors and councilors when the Local Government Council was established in 1969 (Jorgensen 1981b: 64; Bennett and Smith 1983). The mission also built a nursing school for young women and a maternity clinic whose staff would travel to remote areas to teach about health and nutrition (Jorgensen 1981a). A sawmill facility was also built to provide timber for construction projects, which included a tractor to haul the sawed timber from the bush to the district station. The mission also built "the single largest tradestore in the country, despite its location in one of the most economically depressed regions" (Jorgensen 1981b: 66).

Two events came together to help push the *Rebaibal* movement along in Telefolmin: national independence and mining. During the 1970s, Papua New Guinea and Australia were pushing for Papua New Guinea's independence. Policies were

adopted to help with the changeover in 1975. One of the policies was localization; towns and villages throughout Papua New Guinea were to transition from a reliance on missions and the Australian government stations to self-sufficient entities. In Telefolmin, this occurred in two forms: Australian Kiaps[7] phased out while local Kiaps took on the responsibilities of running the district headquarters and the Baptist mission turned over evangelization from Australian missionaries to locals.

Figure 6 Daily gathering at a tradestore.

In the late 1970s a form of spirit mediumship emerged in a Christian movement called *Rebaibal*, which followed the failed Ok Bembem cult that aimed at reestablishing contact with the dead (Bennett and Smith 1983: 127-146; Jorgensen 1981a). *Rebaibal*

[7] Australian government officials in rural areas, also known as Patrol Officers.

was in part prompted by post-independence Baptist policies. In 1977, the Australian Baptist Missionary Society established a Baptist bible college in Duranmin, under the direction of a man from the Eliptaman valley, Diyos Wapnok (Lohmann 2007; Jorgensen 1996). From 1978 to 1979, a dramatic cultural transformation was led by female mediums possessed by the Holy Spirit, known as *spirit meris*. This resulted in the destruction of men's cult houses (with the significant exception of Telefolip, which was destroyed in 2002), and "saying no" to traditional practices (Jorgensen 2007: 116). *Rebaibal's* goals included local conversion to Christianity, the cessation of traditional cult practices, and the creation of egalitarian relationships between men and women (Jorgensen 1981b: 76-77, 2007). This

> movement aimed at nothing less than a total revision of life in Telefolmin...[it is] a locally-styled variant of Christianity, making extensive use of many of the features of mission rhetoric, practice and ideology. As such it makes much the same appeal to women and younger people in Telefolmin, and holds that men and women must be drawn closer together in the context of the family... (Jorgensen 1981b: 77)

The *Rebaibal* stands out because it was mainly female spirit mediums under the direction of the Holy Spirit, known as *spirit meris*, which were the agents of most changes in the region. S*pirit meris* have the ability to

> 'work the spirit' (*wokim Spirit*) by going into trance...seeing pictures relating to the future or to the causes of current illnesses in [the] community...speaking in glossolalic utterances which are left uninterpreted, but once the trance has ended she explains her utterances to her audience [of] what she has seen and the course of action her vision suggests is necessary. (Robbins 2004a: 153)

Spirit meris said no to traditional ways of life in Telefolmin and in saying no, the spirits did not retaliate; harm was caused to no one (Jorgensen 1981b: 77). Thus, Telefolmin

began to listen to *spirit meris* and adopt this new lifestyle. Additionally, as is common with charismatic Christians elsewhere, believers received gifts of the Holy Spirit and had experiences that included speaking in tongues, healing, and prophesying (Dundon 2007; Douglas 2001; Jorgensen 2005, 2007; Robbins 2004a; Schieffelin 1981, 1996). These gifts became proof to all that witnessed them that this phenomenon was real. Even non-believers and skeptics who would at first cast doubt soon found themselves overwhelmed with the power and presence of the Holy Spirit (Jorgensen 2002: 76).

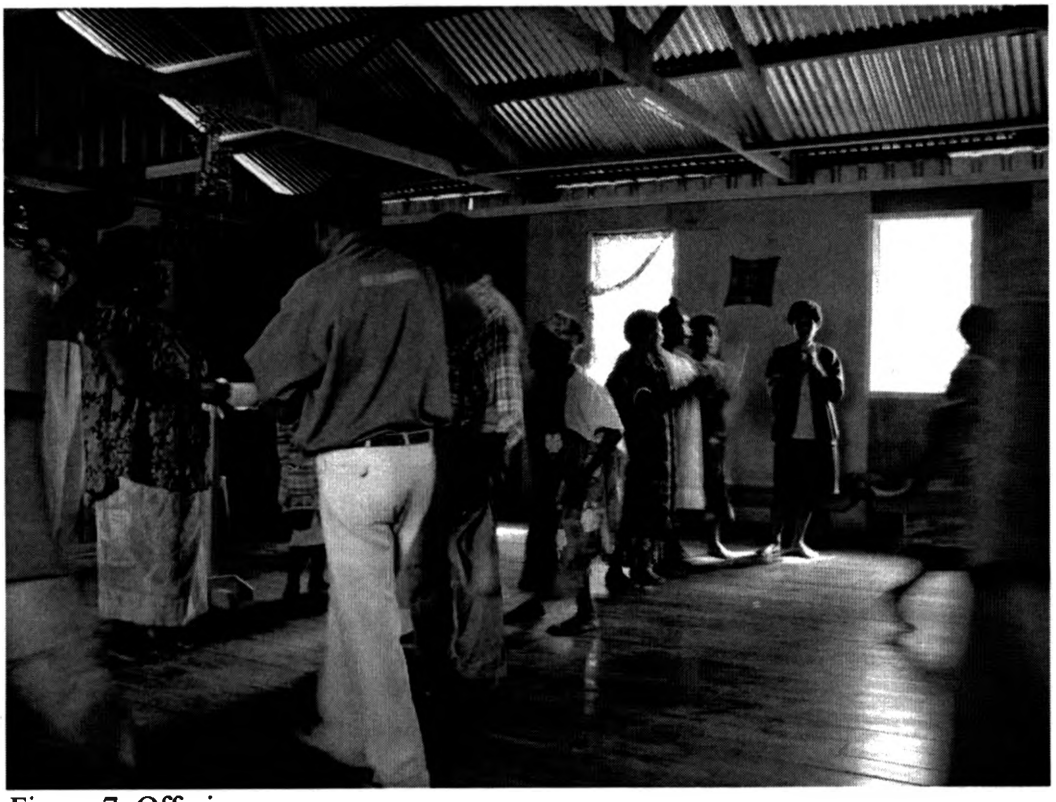


Figure 7 Offering.

Spirit meris played an important role in the establishment of charismatic Christianity among the Telefolmin who now worship in a church in which charismatic gifts and the actions of the Holy Spirit play a central role. Of the seven churches found at the District Headquarters, five are Baptist; one is a Seventh Day Adventist, and the other a "Revival Church", though it is not part of the original *Rebaibal* movement. There are

also seven people who consider themselves Jehovah Witnesses. Thus, the Baptist church has become the most prominent religious denomination in Telefolmin, though the style of worship is along Pentecostal lines with the laying of hands, speaking in tongues and the gifts of the Holy spirit occurring frequently in church services.

The mine: Ok Tedi and Tabubil

While the events surrounding *Rebaibal* were unfolding, mining was also making an impact on Telefolmin. Good wages, travel, and an alternative lifestyle known locally as *developmen* were introduced to several Telefolmin while working on outlying airstrips for the mission, in contract labor, or for Kennecott Copper near where the Ok Tedi Mine is now located (Jorgensen 1981a). Other Telefolmin were working at a prospective mining site at Frieda River.[8]

Ok Tedi has impacted various groups differently (see Blinkoff 1998; Jackson 1993; Jorgensen 2006; Polier 1998; Robbins 2004a), based on proximity to the mine, an airstrip, a river or a road. Telefolmin have the most "complex and intense history of engagement" with mining in the Ok Tedi hinterland (Jorgensen 2006), which has created one of the strongest dependencies on development: carpentry skills, education, bank notes, health care, store bought goods, and/or the ability to travel (Jorgensen 2005). Close to 40 percent of the men at the government station of Telefolmin or at the head of the Eliptaman Valley were able to find wage work in Tabubil during the peak construction phase from 1981-1983, and have since prospered further as entrepreneurs in spin-off developments as contractors and/or as village tradestore owners (Jorgensen 2007: 122). Today an entire generation exists that has grown up with tradestores, planes, and cash.

---

[8] An alluvial gold rush is now taking place at Frieda River.

Official announcements say that Ok Tedi Mining Limited will close sometime between mid and late 2013, although there are rumors that the mine will begin a new phase and remain in operation for several more years.[9]

Ok Tedi Mining Limited presented a draft *Mine Closure Plan* in June 2000, which "described the technical and operational aspects of closing the mine and rehabilitating the mine environment" (OTML 2009). Every two years the *Mine Closure Plan* draft is updated and workshops are held with local community leaders, working groups and other stakeholders involved with Ok Tedi's closure. Even so, these workshops and drafts have had little or no effect on villagers who are not employees or dependents, although they experience the effects of the mine without having a direct link to it. Moreover, it is these people, especially women, who seem to be facing the burden of an uncertain future the most.

Approximately two days walk from Derolengam is Ok Tedi's mining township, Tabubil, the nearest town to Derolengam. Tabubil was developed in the early 1980s to serve Ok Tedi and now has a population of 20,000, though the Ok Tedi mine only has a working population of 3,000. Built to support the mine, the township has a grocery store, bakery, two regional banks, a police force, an up-to-date hospital, a golf course, a gym, a hotel, paved roads, an international airport, and the headquarters of Ok Tedi Mining Limited. Moreover, compared to other mining towns, such as Paiam (the mining town of Porgera) and Panguna (Bougainville), Tabubil is a benign city with a relatively low crime rate. This is because Ok Tedi implements strict rules and security control over the

[9] During the time of the fieldwork there was much gossip of the intended closure and the desire/hope that Frieda (a planned copper mine a week's walk away from Telefolmin) will begin construction soon and hire "the District Headquarters' people" to do the work.

township and airport, with a zero tolerance policy on weapons, drugs and violence. This is made possible by the fact that the only two means of access (apart from the difficult journey on foot) are the airstrip and the road to Kiunga. Moreover, the rounding up and flying out of people who have caused trouble or seem threatening is common practice by Ok Tedi security. Derolengam residents feel ambivalence for Tabubil because it is so different from Telefolmin, with hot showers, paved streets, vehicles, restaurants, and a diversity of people. Rumors of rapes and crime, the influx of Highlanders[10] that have come to find work, and the possibility of hardships from failed opportunities are also part of Tabubil's social landscape. On the outskirts of Tabubil are shantytowns, evidence of those that came and did not strike it rich with a job or *wantok* (friend).[11] However, Derolengam villagers are also attracted to Tabubil, what it represents, and the possibilities that could occur from living there: row houses, the newest fashions from Indonesia, and a bakery to buy bread from. Tabubil is not Derolengam. Tabubil is different; Tabubil is an attractive alternative to village life.

Tabubil is also the base for all tradestore goods that come to Telefolmin. Individual village tradestore owners buy goods in Tabubil, and have dry goods flown to Telefolmin via Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF).[12] In the village these dry goods are then sold at inflated prices. Salt, cooking oil, sugar, and *Nescafe* coffee are consumed daily by Telefolmin, and *Maggi* noodles, *tinfish*, *Bull* brand crackers, and cookies are consumed on a weekly basis. Some Telefolmin avoid the inflated prices by flying to

---

[10] Highlanders are said to not only pose a threat of violence, but also an increase of HIV cases.

[11] Often people come to Tabubil to find a friend, family member, of even someone of the same language group (*wantok*) and request money, assistance, food, or help in finding a job.

[12] I go into greater detail on MAF in Chapter 2.

Tabubil for 320 Kina[13] round trip on a morning MAF flight, they spend the day shopping and stocking up on goods, have a medical or dental check up, and return to Derolengam that afternoon or a couple of days later. Other villagers catch the Ok Tedi chartered flight on Thursday mornings that is available to workers' families and is free for the first three roundtrip flights per year and only costs 15 Kina roundtrip after that. Nevertheless, for some who do not have the money, contacts, or opportunity to travel, Tabubil is just a place on the other side of a mountain.

The effects of mining and Christianity in Telefolmin

Jorgensen has worked in Telefolmin since pre-independence and has recorded the plethora of changes, which are a direct result of charismatic Christianity and mining. Some of Jorgensen's work includes discussions on space and place making in Telefolmin in relation to the global via Christianity and Ok Tedi; the impact of mining on societies located along the fringes—such as that found in Derolengam and Telefolip; and most recently, charismatic Christianity and Third Wave theology within Papua New Guinea, with a concentration on a cult found in the area, Operation Joshua (Jorgensen 1981a, 1981b, 2002, 2005, 2006, 2007). "Like other peoples of Papua New Guinea, most Telefolmin have within their lifetimes confronted a series of events adding up to a historical experience radically different from that of their fathers and grandfathers" (Jorgensen 1981a: 25; 1981b: 62).

As Ok Tedi mine began to fill the need for money and *developmen,* gender issues burgeoned in Telefolmin, thus raising questions on how to live (Jorgensen 1981b, 1993, 2007). Telefolmin lives were governed by taboos, based on age and sex differentiation,

[13] Approximately $110 CAD.

which directed the traffic of daily living and eliminated dilemmas of distribution by prescribing the flow of goods (Whitehead 2000). Telefolmin taboos determined what things people could do and food taboos allocated who ate what and with whom (Jorgensen 1981b). However, with money, as it came with the mine, wage labor, and working, there were no rules. Wage labor disrupted male initiations, the process of socializing boys into men, and raised issues about maintaining one's obligation to the village through established principles and priorities. It was unknown by Telefolmin who money was for, how much people got, and when. As a consequence money created a lot of dissension, which helped *Rebaibal* find a foothold in Telefolmin. *Rebaibal* resolved the moral dilemmas that money posed by addressing the problems faced by Telefolmin (Jorgensen 1981a, 1981b). Simply put, in the *Rebaibal* money goes to the nuclear family: husband, wife, and kids. This resolved problems of distribution.

Or did it? A paradox occurs: in order for a family to have money, a husband must work. And in order for a husband to have waged work in Telefolmin, he must leave. What none of the understandings of *Rebaibal* addressed was that in order for a family to have money, the family had to separate. Yet one of the main themes of *Rebaibal* was to bring the family together. When *Rebaibal* was underway, many men chose to convert to avoid being separated from their wives and children, who (as Christians) were going to Heaven—a choice men made in preference to joining parents and ancestors in the Telefol Land of the Dead. Thus, to whom were the man's loyalties attatched? Most men were loyal to their wives and family, by providing for their families through wage earning, but in order to do so they had to leave Telefolmin.

Mining allows a population to enter the cash economy and participate in development on many different levels, but only within a limited life span (Filer and Macintyre 2006: 221; Ballard and Banks 2003: 303). Additionally, as with all mines, serious repercussions result, which are not promising to those villages that rely on cash. When a mine stops producing, so does the income. Mining is more than just health clinics, schools built, and airstrips to connect remote areas to towns. Although it is all of those things, the biggest effect, the largest repercussion of mining is the aftermath on the communities once the mine stops operating.

What the mining companies do not tell and what the villagers do not foresee is the dependency on the mine and how life will change once a mine closes. In Telefolmin, this dependence on mining results in outward male migration (to Frieda), which causes an increase in the feminization of subsistence and thus *bikpela hevi.*

Christianity played a major role in creating the idea of sharing money, but at the cost of separating families. Moreover, as Ok Tedi continues to reduce its labor force, as Telefolmin no longer find wage labor as they did twenty-years ago, the tension and problems due to separation produce what *prayer mamas* call *bikpela hevi.* As a man's income becomes more precarious, women find their *bikpela hevi* increasing. However, *prayer mamas* attempt to manage *bikpela hevi* through their beliefs and the church. In the next chapter I provide a detailed description of Derolengam and its context.

Morning fog, cook fires and the clanging of the bell: Derolengam 2

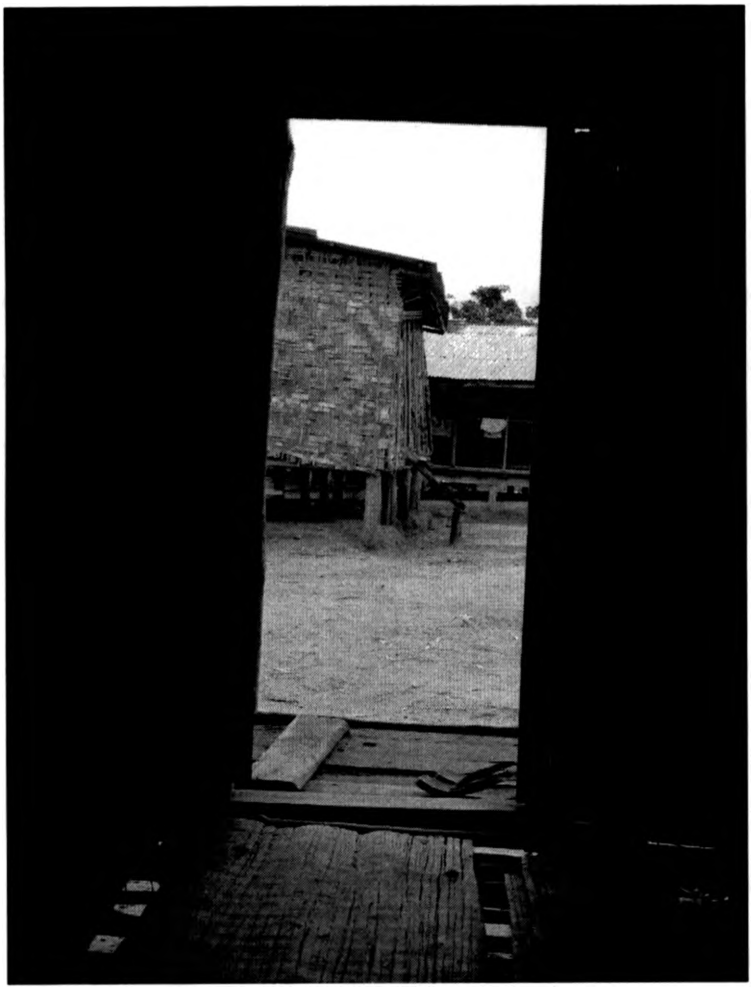


Figure 8 View from a house cook.

I wake each morning when the chickens sing out. My family does not own chickens, but my auntie does. I scrape the skins on the sweet potato while Ma-ma wakens the fire from the coals. I eat a sweet potato and walk to school. I am in Grade Ten. I study very hard and practice my English when I get home before it gets dark. Sometimes I stay up and read with a candle but that hurts my eyes. I want to be a teacher...

(Margaret, 20 July 2008)[1]

[1] Conversation in English.

This chapter describes Telefolmin. In order to understand *prayer mamas* and the Women's Fellowship in relation to mining and Christianity, one must understand their setting in Telefolmin. The chapter begins as we walk the land and take it all in, with side-notes of history and facts. This is followed by a description of the framework of village life.

Setting the scene

Telefolmin is beautiful. Telefolmin is also remote. There are no roads that connect it to anywhere else and the plane that one flies in on lands on a muddy, rocky, grass landing strip approximately 1200 meters long at a seven percent grade. Mountains surround Telefolmin; some have large hardwood trees with green canopies and others have green brush with the charred skeletons of trees that did not survive the 1997 drought fires. Some mountains have both. There is a mist that lingers at the tops of the peaks and seems to gently roll down into the valley. It does this every single day. The air is damp and it is strangely quiet; the mist smells fresh.

I am at *Antap* (upslope), at the airstrip, at the part of Telefolmin closest to the district headquarters. *Taunbilo* (downslope) is Derolengam, the village where I live, which is approximately 1.6 kilometers away. The road is made of mud, rocks, river stones, and puddles. This is their road. They are proud of this road; they probably even know or can name ten different people that helped to make this road when the Kiaps organized its construction in the 1960s. This road defines them, their history, and their future—a future that to some is viewed with foreboding. Along the road are young girls carrying younger siblings on their hips, an old man crippled over a stick is walking

somewhere, several women with *bilums* suspended from their foreheads carry sweet potato and some firewood; younger men smoke bush cigarettes and linger around the tradestores after a day spent on the hill. A white tradestore is on my left, then another, and one more, but this one is closed down. Litter plagues the ground: *Twisty Chips* bags, a faded, smashed can of *Fanta*, *Bull Cracker* wrappers are all footprints of modernity—footprints of the mine.

Figure 9 Women selling produce at *Benddown Market.*

I have come to a crossroads; it is where women sell their surplus produce and is locally known as *Benddown Market.* There are no women here. It is too late in the day. To my right is the government station; which is home to the district education, agriculture, and health offices, a 'bank', and the one phone that can be used by locals

from noon to one o'clock in the afternoon, Monday to Friday. Farther up the road past the station is the *haus sik* (health clinic) and some government workers houses, and beyond them are garden plots on a rugged mountainside. I go left at the crossroads leaving the station behind me, down the road past two more tradestores and towards Derolengam.

A straight line of poles and power lines frame the left side of the road and as far as I can see the poles continue. The power and water supply only go as far as Ankem though, a village five minutes beyond Derolengam. Hydro-electricity might run for two hours at 12am and 6am, 12pm and 6pm daily—but that depends on the rains. The water supply comes from a mountain cave, is contaminated, but can be used for cooking. Potable water comes from gathering rainwater from the rooftops into barrels.

Figure 10 MAF Telefolmin.

I pass the Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) pilots' houses, three of them on the right, bragging in their own way with their solar panels and expatriate children running around with afternoon tea and home-made chocolate chip cookies. There is a

strong dependence on these three men and their families; without them, their Christian organization's plane, and subsidized prices, Telefolmin would have no outside connection. Every day but Sunday, MAF makes the roundtrip from Telefolmin to Tabubil, and several other connections to outlying communities in the western part of Papua New Guinea. MAF also flies to the city of Mt. Hagen every Thursday. From Wewak and Vanimo to Aitape and Rumginae, MAF is the sole connection to many of the most remote areas of Papua New Guinea, which allows the movement of tradestore goods, secondhand clothing, and healthcare workers, in addition to the all too frequent medical evacuation service.

The walk continues. On my left is a swamp that serenades the village at night with the frogs' songs. On my right, nearly 50 scantily dressed village children and one blonde MAF boy are playing soccer in a patch of mud and grass with a flat soccer ball. I come to learn that there are more children than there were in the past, regardless of the lack of men in the village. Women explain "family planning" and how every three months they go to the *haus sik* to drink medicine,[2] but sometimes they forget and get pregnant. Some of these "family planning" children stop to drink from a broken water spigot that constantly has water dribbling out of it.

I continue down the road and pass the Telefolmin Baptist Union Headquarters, the remnants of the original Baptist Mission in Telefolmin. Silas Neksep is the head of Telefolmin Baptist Union and is writing the history of Telefolmin and the impact of the church in this region. Furthermore, in conjunction with his wife, Kom, and her best friend, Josie, these three, together with the Baptist Union of Papua New Guinea

---

[2] Receive a birth control shot.

(BUPNG) and Australian Aid (AUSAID), are creating the *Telefolmin Women's Resource Center*. This center will have literacy, cooking, and sewing classes to provide women with the opportunity to learn skills that will help them earn supplementary income and/or the knowledge to help their children with their schoolwork. The Telefolmin Baptist Union also runs two guesthouses at the mission and is responsible for bringing BUPNG activities to Telefolmin. BUPNG missionaries give immunizations, teach literacy classes, and inform women about family planning and nutrition for infants in the most remote areas. Within the district headquarters, the Telefolmin Baptist Union organizes Peer AIDS Awareness workshops, as well as carpentry, specialty *bilum,* and sewing classes.

Farther down the road is a neglected nursing school, which is currently being used to house widows, and another tradestore with a compact disc from Irian Jaya blasting an American pop song. The hydro-electricity is on due to the rains that fell all night and all morning. A paradox surrounds the rains; if they fall they allow extra electricity but if too much falls, then gardens get ruined.

Education in Telefolmin: the school grounds

At this point in the walk, one can turn left onto a small service road, a remnant of the Australian administration, instead of continuing with the line of poles. To walk this service road is to walk to the primary and high schools of Telefolmin. The buildings sit on a hill on the other side of the swamp, approximately 15 minutes from Derolengam. This old service road bisects the swamp, appears at times to be below the water level, and has two railroad-tie bridges that one must balance on to cross the swamp-creeks. The swamp eventually gives way to a grassy incline and the beginning of the school grounds.

A naked flagpole leans into the sun beside a basketball court with two goals. The packed-earth court usually has a pick-up game in progress between the hours of 12 PM to 3 PM. Other students might be found on the volleyball court adjacent to the net-less basketball court or sitting on the bank of the field, giggling and making *bilums*. Occasionally someone is stealing a nap under the twisted Eucalyptus tree at the end of the clay-rock road.

Figure 11 Telefolmin Primary School.

The primary school is used for Grades Three through Eight, and is in dire need of repairs. Shattered windows, torn fly wire, broken desks, and missing doors are the norm. The whitewashed classrooms were built in the 1970s with help from the Australian government and have not been updated since. The newest buildings, two trailers, were donated by the Japanese government in 2005 and are the Grade Five classrooms. Potable water is collected from the roofs and kept in tanks; bush toilets are found on the backside of the property, right before the 50-foot drop off into the small side-valley of the Ok

Afaam. A Telefol-language elementary school (Prep, Grade One, and Grade Two) in Derolengam consists of two bush material houses in the hamlet of Bemolavip, and runs from 8 AM to 12 PM, Monday to Friday.

Telefolmin high school classrooms are much like the primary schools – in desperate need of new desks, chalkboards, and books, as well as structural repair. These wood buildings with green roofs were built in the 1980s and are the high school's cookhouse, dormitories,[3] and classrooms. Some classrooms have doors; however, many doors have been removed from their hinges and are lost, like most teaching paraphernalia. According to the headmistress, the school "cannot afford to replace or update their educational equipment. [They] barely have enough money to keep the boarders fed all year." Lunch, a bowl of rice, is provided daily for all high school students. Breakfast and dinner, two pieces of bread or another bowl of rice, respectively, is provided for boarders, seven days a week. However, because so many students are behind in paying their school fees, the headmistress often finds it difficult to feed the students and sometimes uses teachers' paychecks to charter a flight from Telefolmin to Tabubil to buy rice and flour so that the students can be fed. This of course can be problematic because teachers are left without enough money to provide for their own families.

Education in Telefolmin: school fees

Money is difficult to come by in Telefolmin and school fees are considered one of the biggest concerns for parents, after having enough to eat. There are three levels of

[3] In February of 2009, I received word that the female dormitory and part of the high school had burned down. As of May 2009, the structures had not yet been repaired.

education in Telefolmin, each one increasing in cost. Most children receive an elementary education (Prep, Grades One and Two) in their village, which costs 100 Kina[4] a year and is taught in Telefol or Pidgin. Primary school, taught in English, consists of Grades Three through Eight and takes place on the hill. The school fees for primary school are 150 Kina per year for Grades Three through Six and 250 Kina a year for Grades Seven and Eight. Students who would like to continue their education past Grade Eight must take a national test to receive admission into Grade Nine and subsequently Ten, which is the highest level of education available in Telefolmin. For students to attend Grade Nine and Ten they must pay 1,080 Kina a year as a non-boarder, and 1,680 Kina if they board. Roughly 150 students are boarders, as this high school is one of only two lower level high schools in the Telefolmin district.

Students who want to continue with their studies past Grade Ten must pass another national level test and transfer to either a national upper level high school or to the national school in Wewak. After Grade Twelve completion, students that have passed the final national test, and have the funds for tuition, traveling, and living expenses, can then choose to attend a technical school, teachers' college, university, or return to the village.

Ten years ago students did not have to complete upper level high school to gain admissions to teachers college or technical schools. However, the government of Papua New Guinea implemented this rule, which severely hurts families in Derolengam who find it difficult to pay school fees, especially upper level high school fees. This is because for a student to complete Grade Eleven or Twelve, the student must again pay

[4] Approximately $37 CAD.

1,680 Kina for school fees, boarding, and meals, in addition to the 1000 Kina for a return ticket airfare, and any money they might need for other necessities. According to one parent at *Benddown Market*, "my main goal is getting him there—I will not worry if he will have any extra spending money while living away for one year. I just want him to be at school so he can learn something. His education is a very big thing."

Figure 12 Telefolmin grade 5 classroom.

If one were to juxtapose the cost of school with how much a family makes in one year in Derolengam,[5] one soon realizes that it is almost impossible to pay school fees and many parents, especially mothers, feel school fees are a burden on the family. Some women sell *bilums*, while others sell surplus produce at *Benddown Market* to cover the costs. Other women choose to sell pigs, which can take anywhere from one to three years

[5] Average incomes in Telefolmin range from a mother's income from selling goods at *Benddown Market* at 1200 Kina a year to a school teacher's income of 4,000 Kina a year or public servant at 8,000 Kina a year. These figures do not, however, take remittances into account, which are difficult to estimate.

to reach the 1000 Kina size. Other families manage school fees by borrowing money from friends and relatives. This "*wantok* system" is a network of reciprocity, where if one has a need, he or she asks a friend or family member to help them fill their need. According to the *wantok* system, there is no need to pay the friend or family member back immediately; one may take months or even years for repayment. "If someone has a need, we all contribute to the need. Eventually a need comes upon the giver and then everyone gives to that person. It goes around and around like that," explained Mary, a *prayer mama* and mother of two.

Figure 13 Woman selling produce for school fees.

Another way to make money is to pan for gold at the alluvial gold rush that is taking place at Frieda River. However, this is a very dangerous course of action that

usually only males do. It takes approximately one week to walk to Frieda, where there is no bush meat, no gardens, and the tradestore is a one-day walk from the panning site. Consequently, living at Frieda is very taxing on individuals. Moreover, when men go to pan, they usually stay at Frieda for several months to make it worth their time and money. Some men send money to their families when they have a *wantok* returning to the village and others keep their money with them. Other men do not send any money back and some do not return to Telefolmin. The latter is quite common, as many men find new wives and start new lives during the process of making money for their Telefolmin families. Regardless, some families depend on the Frieda gold rush to manage school fees.

Many women say that their biggest worry is paying school fees even though the prime minister of Papua New Guinea, Michael Somare, and Papua New Guinea's Department of Education, claim that it is illegal to deny any child admission, regardless of whether or not the family can pay school fees. Teachers argue that a school cannot function if fees are not paid and that the government does not subsidize the schools' costs well enough for this rule to be implemented. Moreover, village parents say that their children are kicked out of school if the fees are not paid or denied admissions for the following year. One widowed government worker, with children in Grades One, Four and Six, lives on 170 Kina per fortnight and explained fees as such: "School costs money, *bikpela moni*; it is not free. The government subsidizes the cost but many families still find it difficult to pay their children's school fees in Telefolmin…it is very expensive to live here."[6] Some teachers suggest that school fees should be paid in produce weight so

[6] Conversation in English, with *Tok Pisin* stress.

that a teacher's paycheck could be supplemented with garden produce. In addition, the produce could also help feed the boarders. However, village women claim that they cannot grow enough to keep their own family fed, much less grow enough to equal their children's school fees. Teachers argue that this is just an excuse for a lazy population while parents argue that teachers do not understand how difficult it is to grow produce in the valley.

Education in Telefolmin: the teachers

There is a paradox surrounding the ambivalence that teachers and parents have for each other. Parents feel that the teachers should be doing everything possible to ensure the child's success, and teachers feel villagers are not supportive of their needs. Teachers in Derolengam seemingly do not have enough time in the day to make lesson plans, teach class, grade papers, and take care of their own families, houses, gardens and pigs. As a result, teachers rely on fortnightly paychecks, tradestores, and *Benddown Market*. However, the market and the produce for sale are as sporadic as the electricity and as miniscule as the sunshine, thus making life very difficult for those teachers that have been appointed to work in Telefolmin.

Life for Telefolmin teachers is very demanding because of the area's remoteness. Teachers' housing can be found in intermittent clusters throughout the educational grounds, with cookhouses, bush toilets, and small gardens alongside the ramshackle houses. Four houses have solar panel water systems, but most appear to have been transplanted from the villages down below. One teacher explained living conditions in

Telefolmin as "strenuous because there is no town infrastructure."[7] Banks, doctors, grocery stores, and entertainment are non-existent in this region. Working on two-year contracts, most teachers do not remain longer than their assignment; some even cut their contract early.

Derolengam: Frog Song Place

Having walked back to the main road from the school grounds, I continue on that ever gradual, always slippery, declining terrain of mud and river stone from the station to the villages, which brings me to an area called Bemolavip, the first hamlet of Derolengam.

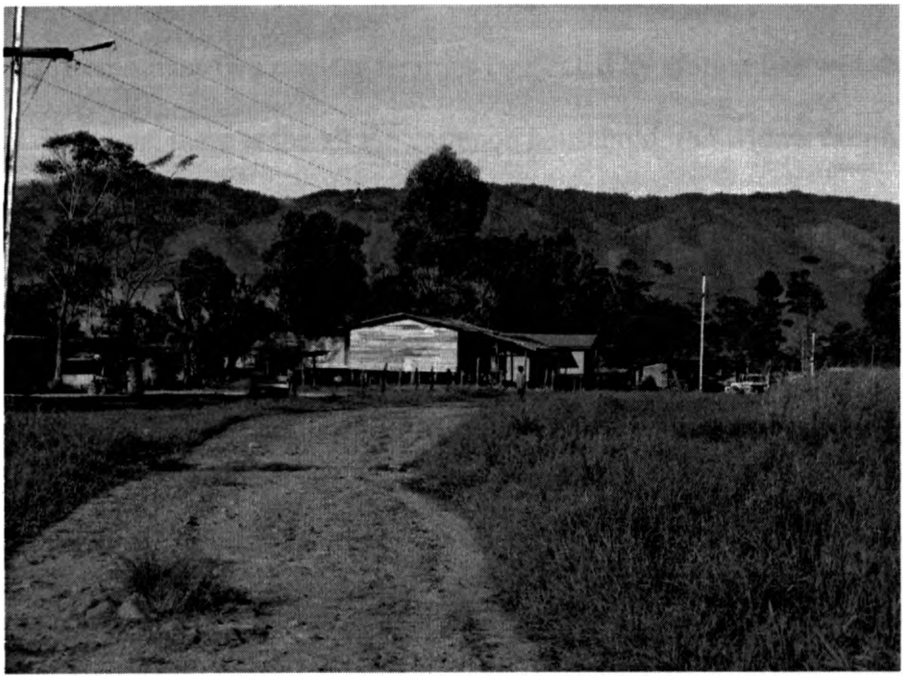


Figure 14 Entering Derolengam village.

On my right are two bush material buildings—the elementary school for five and six year olds. Beside their classrooms is the village soccer field that is full of locals supporting one of the two village teams each Saturday. Beyond the fields is the beginning of family

[7] Comment in English.

compounds, which are western-style clapboard houses connected with wires and framed by water drainage trenches. There are also bush buildings with each house, a *haus kuk* (house kitchen or cookhouse) and outhouse. The housing compounds, or hamlets, have between six and twelve dwellings and are arranged via family (consanguineal and affinal) linkages.

Derolengam's social landscape varies as much as its topography. Each home and family tells a different story. Some might be multi-generational, with grandparents, parents, and children all living under the same roof. Or perhaps the home is a household in which grandparents are raising their grandchildren while their children work in another town, often Tabubil. Or perhaps the house contains a nuclear family of a mother, father, and children. Sometimes two nuclear families connected by sibling ties will share a house. And of course, there is the all too common household, the widow family, with a mother, absent father, and children.

The road has a story

It is not just the members of each house that have a different story to tell; the road tells a story, perhaps a bigger story. The road connects people, ideas, and dreams. The road is an emblem of a prosperous future, of what the village could have if they were to connect the bush path to Tabubil or Frieda. The road is also a way to learn of the latest *tokwin*, or gossip. Somare is coming to visit, Frieda is operating, Carol Aminip[8] is coming and opening up a tradestore. All of these utterances are forms of gossip that may or may not be true; however they are also the motif of the dreams that people share and hope for. The road is also a market. If a woman passes with a bulging *bilum*, someone

[8] A pseudonym.

might *singaut* (to call out to someone), ask how much for some vegetables and proceed to buy some. The road also whispers of previous development schemes that have failed in Telefolmin. The skeletons of closed up tradestores dot the road, a constant reminder of how quickly success (and money) can come and go. Forgotten 'development schemes' of rice, vanilla and coffee gardens are overgrown beside well tended sweet potato gardens on the mountainside. Along the road are broken down tractors, sawmills, and the occasional pickup truck[9] rusting in someone's yard that were brought in through the years for one development scheme or another. From logging ventures to rice fields, Telefolmin have tried different agricultural development schemes in an attempt to bring money into the village. All of these images are footprints of Telefolmin development schemes that have burgeoned and have waned since the 1980s due to the area's remoteness in keeping a project running.

Figure 15 Broken down sawmill.

[9] Usually bought second-hand from the mission or government.

Most of the failed schemes are related to the remoteness of the region, making it too expensive to keep a program going. "We have no [agriculture or economic] market here. We are hard working people; we want a market. We want to grow food and sell it. We want a market like the Wahgi Valley (near Mt. Hagen) but we have no roads and the plane cost lots of money," explained one resident. So without a market and without income to keep an agriculture program going, the various development schemes to create jobs and money in the Ifitaman Valley fail. As the head of the Department of Agriculture for the district explained,

> *We [district government] do not have enough money to carry out the activities, such as moving the portable milling machine [for rice] to gardens. We do not have enough money to buy fuel to keep the machine going and we have no money for the DPI officials to carry out travel to teach how to grow rice in remote areas. These people could benefit from rice as a staple to their diet. Not just to make money and buy more food.* (July 14, 2008)[10]

The road also divides. It is an invisible fence marking factions and rivalries, up road and down road. Family relations depend on where you live, whose side you took during the last argument over the latest teenage pregnancy, and which team you play for on Saturday morning. In essence, the road separates as much as it connects. These separations are even more visible in village life: the have and have-nots of Telefolmin—those that have prospered during Ok Tedi's reign and those that have never been able to benefit from development. The "haves" walk the road with a new shirt or shoes, and the "have-nots" in the ragged and torn shirt, stained from last years garden and splattered with today's wet mud. Those that have a 10 Kina package of rice in their *bilum* versus

[10] Interview in English.

liklik kaukau (a little sweet potato) or she who has a husband to help carry the firewood home versus she who has no man.

***Oh, Papa God em i bikpela samting!* – Derolengam Baptist Church**

In Derolengam, the church unites people and is hope in physical form. Derolengam Baptist Church is a white metal building with six windows on each side, two bush toilets out back, and is surrounded by grass and drainage ditches. Inside are three rows of two-foot high pews on the wooden floor and an altar on a stage with a pulpit. Handmade "Eye of God" decorations made of yarn hang from the ceiling to accompany the Christian flag draped on the wall behind the pulpit. A broken chalkboard is propped up on the wall, to the left of the flag, and sometimes has Sunday morning songs written on it; other times this board just has the handprints of intrepid children. The clergy of the church is comprised of a head pastor, associate pastor, several deacons, Sunday school teachers, youth leader, *prayer mamas,* and one treasurer. Every Saturday one *prayer mama's* hamlet sweep, mop, and dust the interior and cut fresh flowers for the altar to prepare it for Sunday service.

Banging on a "bell" made from rusty iron salvaged from somewhere or other signals collective time. Each Sunday there are three bouts of clanging to notify Derolengam of the church service. The first toll means it's time to get ready. *Prayer mamas* show up after the second bout of ringing and begin their singing in the front corner of the church, to the right of the pulpit. The a cappella music is full of passion and energy[11] and the beat is kept by their clapping. As the church begins to fill with villagers, they too join the *prayer mamas* in singing, which continues until the church is full and

[11] Sung in Telefol or Tok Pisin.

the service "officially" begins. At this time, the pastor welcomes the crowd, but then gives the service right back over to the *prayer mamas*, who resume worshiping in song. Four or five upbeat songs are sung, and then a slower song, to bring the level of energy down to prepare for service. After the singing is "witnessing time," where men and women tell stories about recent experiences and about how *Papa God* has helped them. During these accounts, the congregation joyfully calls out "Amen!" or "Thank You!" and claps for the speaker.

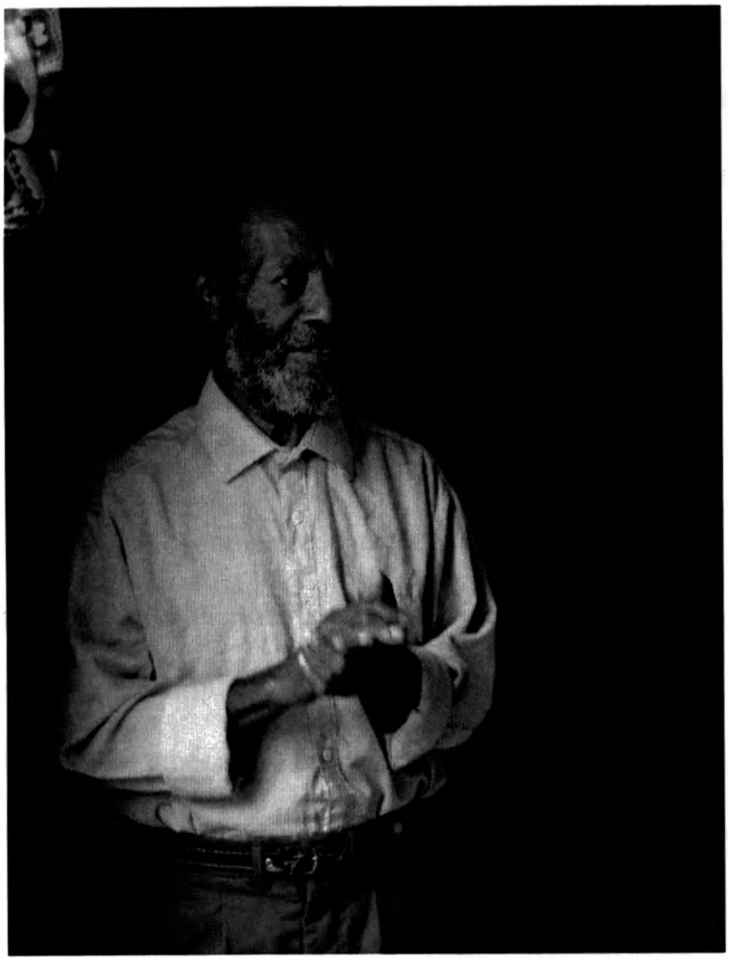


Figure 16 Man singing during Sunday service.

After the witness stories there is a short prayer said by a *prayer mama*, followed by the offering. *Prayer mamas* sing while individual villagers walk to the front and place

money (usually coins) into the three plastic bowls—tithes, offerings, and mission. The pastor or a *prayer mama* (as it depends on the week as to who speaks) thanks everyone for giving money to the church and begins the announcements portion of the service. He or she tells of upcoming Telefolmin events, the whereabouts of congregation's members who are sick or having a hard time, prayers for individuals, and the weekly prayer item. Weekly prayer items ranged from terrorists crossing the border in Vanimo to the MAF-Ok Tedi meeting about whether or not MAF can continue to fly into Tabubil. Another prayer and the sermon follow the announcements. The pastor begins by reading scripture passages, which is done by calling out the book, chapter and line and asking for someone to read aloud the message. After the Bible readings comes the sermon, ranging from daily living to self-betterment. At the end of the monologue the pastor begins a prayer in which the congregation joins, creating a loud and cacophonous request to God that crescendos only to soften and be closed by the pastor. This ecstatic prayer concludes the service and everyone leaves amid handshakes, hugs, and goodbyes.

Derolengam Baptist Church represents the whole village, not one hamlet, not just down the road, but each individual that lives in the village. All who want to come, come; all who want to worship, worship. Some congregation members identify themselves as 100 percent Christians, and others take on the label of 50/50. Some come every Sunday, while others drop in when they feel they want to be there. Some come and sleep, some catch-up on the latest gossip and others come for the message. The pews divide the church much like the road, except here, the division is between gender and age and not socio-economic status, education, or factions. The haves and have-nots are brought together Sunday morning.

Sunday afternoon is no longer considered Sabbath and people's gardens might be tended if rains are not falling, or not falling too hard. During my six services, four of the afternoons were spent in a garden and according to the librarian, "We work when we can. No one can afford not to work in the garden when the time is good, even if it is Sunday. If we waited, we would all starve." So off people go, to their gardens, to their homes, perhaps to a neighbor's or a friend's house.

The walk ends here, at the church, where the stories of the women begin. I listen to their laments and worries, their childhood stories, and their hopes for the future. I come to learn how they cope with *bikpela hevi* and how most are affected by the labor reduction of Ok Tedi and the gold rush at Frieda. I learn what it means to be a widow and the changes that are occurring because so many men are gone.

Prayer Mamas: 'We do more than just pray'
3

Figure 17 *Prayer mamas* leading praise singing.

There is something about these women, a presence that surrounds them. It is not because they sing beautifully or because they recite intensely passionate prayers. It is not the laying of hands, the going into trance, or the healing ceremonies. It is the not their devotion to God that makes them different either. It is their *pasin* (way of behavior). This chapter explores the social roles of *prayer mamas*, which are seemingly bound with each woman's *pasin* and reinforced through the church and Women's Fellowship. I conclude with a glimpse of gender issues in Derolengam.

Pasin

I heard the word *pasin* my first night in Telefolmin. I was handing out welcoming gifts and had just given the head of the house miner's lamps. He put one on his head,

turned it on, and explained how the light would be perfect; imitating a hunting scene with an imaginary bow and arrow, spotlighting a tree marsupial, pulling back the bow, releasing the tension, and killing the animal. This little charade ended with the licking of his lips and the comment, "*Pasin bilong yu, em i gutpela*" (Your *pasin* is good.) This light will make hunting much easier, he explained.

Simple enough: *pasin* meant I was a nice girl, my behavior was good; by giving a gift I was showing respect and offering my thanks. It was not until the following week at Women's Fellowship that I began to learn about the other meaning of *pasin*, which very well might be the most crucial component of being Christian, of being Telefolmin, of being human. This understanding of *pasin* not only describes behavior, but also the inner qualities that shape behavior. *Pasin* encompasses three Telefol words that when combined become hold many meanings.

The three Telefol words that amalgamate into *pasin* are *kugup, aget,* and *san.* In Telefol, *kugup* are the patterns of one's actions and, the term is often used to describe or explain one's behavior. *Aget* is the Telefol noun for one's thoughts and inner feelings ("what one's heart says"), while *san* describes the consequences, not cause of, behavior. *Pasin* is *aget*, *san*, and *kugup* taken together. The thoughts and inner feelings that shape one's behavior are described as *pasin*. During conversion, the Holy Spirit enters a person, lives inside his or her body, and influences his or her thoughts and actions—*pasin.*[1]

When understanding Telefol life, the *pasin* of an individual, in the behavioral sense, can reveal a lot about the *pasin* of an individual in the sense of internal qualities. With the adoption of Christianity, taboos were forgotten and individuals became

---

[1] Conversion is explained in more detail later on in this chapter.

answerable to God not each other. Therefore, the change of one's *pasin* signals not only a change of heart, mind, and action, but also a change in one's perception of self and obligation of being. Christianity made each person his/her own boss, answerable to God rather than just relatives and neighbours. Additionally, the main guidelines that now govern Derolengam come via the church, and therefore people's perceptions of self are directly connected with Christianity.

***Prayer Mamas*: Who they are**

> *It was in 1999 or 2000 that Marcus went to Vanimo for a Baptist Union Papua New Guinea Conference and learned about prayer mamas. He brought that idea back and got some of us women together—me, Emma, Nonta and Merol and some others, I cannot remember who else. He got us all and told us about* prayer mamas, *he said it was our job for* Papa God *and asked if we wanted to help. He said we pray for those who have a foreign spirit that is no good inside of them or are sick. He said we will help everyone know* Papa God. *We went to the bush for an all night prayer session with Marcus and Pastor Yemis. We did this many times. All night we prayed, we sang, we read the Bible. All night we talked to* Papa God *and He talked to us.* Papa God *said we had His work to fulfill, a big work. He said the time one becomes a Christian, one has work to do. He also said one must believe and have faith with action. Everyone has* Papa God *knowledge, just some choose to use it and help themselves and others with God's word.* Em i bikpela samting spiritually ol manmeri i save. *[*This is a big thing spiritually that all men and women know.*]* *So that is when prayer mamas came to Derolengam. And now we have plenty of* prayer mamas *and plenty of people to help. You can see the behavior of people; many people do not know* Papa God *very well. But we help them, we help everyone know* Papa God. (Maria, 1 July 2008)

They call themselves *prayer mamas* and have been in Derolengam since 2000. *Prayer mamas* are a group of charismatic women who pray to the Holy Spirit for

guidance and healing. They pray for each other, their families, and the village. They pray for instruction, peace, and life. They pray for healing of the past and for a better future. They pray for understanding. Sometimes they receive visions from the Holy Spirit about what is ailing someone and sometimes they speak in tongues. Others heal; but all pray. *Prayer mamas* always pray.

The following description is a patchwork of answers to questions I asked about becoming and being a *prayer mama*, which occurred on 22 June 2008, my first Sunday in Derolengam and first meeting with *prayer mamas*. To be a *prayer mama*, a woman must give herself completely to God through her actions, thoughts, lifestyle, and must also be fully open to receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit. A *prayer mama's pasin* must be good, her intentions pure, and her actions devout. Some women in the village are in the process of becoming a *prayer mama* through Christian action and thought. However, until the woman can completely succumb to the appropriate Christian lifestyle expected of her by her peers, she is not allowed to have the label of *prayer mama.* Maria explained, "Everyone has this knowledge, but [*prayer*] *mamas* choose to use their knowledge."

The process of becoming a *prayer mama* requires several months to even a few years of: devotion to God (reading the Bible, attending all night prayer vigils, helping run Women's Fellowship and Sunday's service, helping neighbors, praying to God, giving tithes and offering); imitating the lifestyles and actions of veteran *prayer mamas*; listening to the words of the Holy Spirit and making decisions based on this communication. If the Spirit moves the novice *prayer mama* to speak in tongues or heal, she will, even though she does not carry the label of *prayer mama* yet. Once the newcomer feels that she is fully committed to the lifestyle of being a *prayer mama*, she

tells the head of Women's Fellowship, and they speak about the importance of sharing one's gifts. Once she has satisfied the head of Women's Fellowship about her devotion, the other *prayer mamas* say a prayer over her, asking the Holy Spirit to provide her with the safety and strength she will need in her new social role and the responsibilities associated with being a *prayer mama.* It should be noted that it is very common for a *prayer mama* to backslide and it is actually through this sinning that this group becomes a collective of social action for Derolengam.

It was difficult to find the appropriate time to gather group statistics due to the short duration of my stay in Derolengam. Most of my interactions with *prayer mamas* were during organized church events. When I did find myself alongside one of them, walking down the road, I often chose to converse with them and inquire about their personal lives, and not about group statistics. However, I gathered the *prayer mama* group in Derolengam to be comprised of approximately 25-40 women, ranging in age from late teens to mid to late 60s. In my estimation, approximately 20-25 *prayer mamas* are or were married, and of these, approximately 15 are widows (either death, divorce, or abandonment). All *prayer mamas* could read the Bible, had a garden, and had at least one child (either by birth or adoption). Some *prayer mamas* had lived elsewhere for a period of time with a *wantok* or husband, while others had never left the valley by plane. Lastly, of all the *prayer mamas,* only eight had been part of the group since its inception in 2000.

On Tuesday mornings, *prayer mamas* and Christian woman alike, meet at the local Baptist church for a couple of hours known as Women's Fellowship. It was through their stories that I was introduced to issues of gender and modernity in Telefolmin. I talked with *prayer mamas*, heard about their daily struggles to make ends meet, their

perspectives on life, the changes that they are currently facing, and how they are coping with the prospective closure of Ok Tedi.

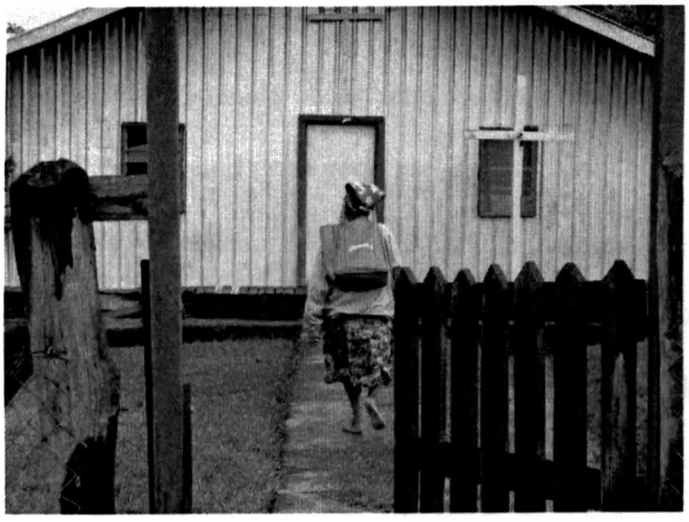


Figure 18 *Mama* going to Women's Fellowship.

Figure 19 Metal for striking.

***Prayer Mamas*: Today the ringing is for the Women's Fellowship**

The bell has been struck twice now to mark the start of Women's Fellowship. The second ringing, the one just heard, means *hurry up, hurry up*. It is a three-minute walk from where I am staying and when I enter the church, some of the women are already deep in *stori* (gossiping/talking). I take a seat beside a woman whose name I forget, but whose face I know. She has what appears to be a cross tattooed on her left cheek.

The General Manager of the Frieda mining project[2] comes next week—everyone seems excited about the potential of a township being built at the headquarters of Telefolmin, which includes Derolengam.[3] The women that are in Wewak at the annual

---

[2] Frieda is a planned copper mine that may begin construction in 2016 and is approximately a seven day walk from Derolengam. The mining company, Xstrata, is on level three of twelve in their analysis of whether or not a mine should be built in the space.

[3] Dougi Wilson, the general manager of Frieda said "no" to this township the following Monday at the meeting, stating it was the responsibility of the government to create development schemes.

Christian Women's Conference were not making it on today's MAF flight and therefore will be in Wewak until Saturday. A few *prayer mamas* are worried about the women since they are staying longer than planned and do not have enough money.[4] The topic of money leads to Emma's lament and the final ringing of the morning.

"My husband is no good and I have plenty of worries. I saw Pauline yesterday and she told me I owe school fees." Pauline is the headmistress of the high school and Emma's husband is at Frieda River where an alluvial gold rush is taking place. He has been gone eight weeks and has not sent any money back to her.

> *I am very angry and I have big worries. How will I pay these school fees—rain, rain falls down and now all the ground is* buggered up. *I do not have enough to feed my family. I have nothing to sell. I have big worries and it is not a good thing.* (8 July 2008)

Some of the women make a tsking noise, others say *aiiii*; all make some sort of gesture to say they are displeased with her husband.

Other women have come in during the last two minutes and joined the group in the back corner of the church. We sit on small wooden pews that a local carpenter and his son built. Before the two-foot high benches, everyone sat on the wood floor that is stained with muddy footprints. Women's fellowship is not an elaborate affair like Sunday morning services. Women wear ragged T-shirts and stained shorts or skirts as opposed to semi-clean, not as ragged T-shirts or skirts. Their nails usually have Monday's garden soil underneath them and their hair is not combed. Their children barge in and out of the service, receive the occasional spanking, and are hissed at when their disobedience becomes nerve-wracking. Women's Fellowship, as I said, is not an

---

[4] Most girls barely had enough money to go to Wewak, much less stay an extra five days. This is why the *mamas* worried.

elaborate affair, but it is a time of worship, fellowship, and scholarship. It is a time with *Papa God.*

Figure 20 *Prayer mamas* singing at Women's Fellowship.

Women's Fellowship, like Sunday service, begins with singing four or five songs, which are followed by a prayer. The prayer sounds like the chatter heard in a market place. One woman begins a softly spoken prayer in Pidgin, which gradually becomes Telefol and increases in volume, as all the while others start their own prayers. It becomes a thicket of noise with everyone's prayer competing to be heard by *Papa God.*

After the singing and the prayer, we return to Emma, her story, and the sermon. She explains a little more about her predicament and then reads from the Bible.

> *If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's house, then the Lord will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar*

will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth (Genesis 28:20-22).

I read this last night after I saw Pauline. I have not been giving Papa God *one tenth.* Papa God *is not providing me with enough food and clothes and money because I am not giving Him one tenth. If I give Him one tenth, then He will take care of me. Sometimes on Sunday I do not give any money and I never give the church one tenth of my garden food. And* Papa God *wants one tenth of one's life too, and I do not do this either. We must give one tenth of each day to* Papa God. *Pray in the morning, pray in the evening, sing to* Papa God, *read the Bible. We must give* Papa God *our life, our time. Not just our money and food.* Papa God *is not helping me because I am not living 100 percent. I am a 50/50 Christian. No I am 75-25. Once I am 100 percent by giving one-tenth of money, food and time, then* Papa God *will provide for me. Then the money will come.* Papa God *is reminding me that I need to put Him first. I have big worries because I am not giving enough.* (8 July 2008)

This is how women's fellowship goes. A section of the Bible is read, which is the sermon for the day and then women chime in to explain why the section is relevant. Women tell personal narratives about how the verse applies to their life, to the *bikpela hevi* they feel, and to what they believe could make life easier. Bible verse, therefore, helps *prayer mamas* understand each other's worries and problems, just as personal stories become a medium of example, a way for a woman to realize that others have faced the troubles she faces, and that she too will manage this hardship because whatever it is she is facing someone else has faced too.

The latter part of Acts 14:22 was a favorite, as it relayed the idea that one must face a life of many troubles in order to enter Heaven and therefore one should not give up on one's commitment to God. It reads: "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." Each woman told her trouble, each woman explained this trouble

as something that she must endure in order to enter Heaven, and each woman said that these troubles were making her stronger, a better Christian. One woman said she would be more devoted to *Papa God*. Others agreed. It is through their Christian action that many of these women feel empowered as individuals; because of their actions today they are gaining salvation later. In essence, they control their future.

Deta, the librarian, explained to the group that these troubles are part of the walk with *Papa God* that everyone must make at some time or another, and now is Derolengam's time. Everyone must face a lifetime of hardships; it is God's way of seeing one's true *pasin*. In the end, the person will survive the *bikpela hevi* and God will make her into a better person and eventually grant her eternal life in Heaven. Heaven, in Derolengam, is the ultimate goal.

I walked with Deta to the high school that morning after Women's Fellowship. I had questions about that day's sermon. During our conversation Deta remarked, "I am very worried for Emma. She is a widow, like me, but she is not 100 percent." Being a 'widow' in Derolengam does not mean that one's husband is dead. Emma is a 'widow' because her husband is absent. Deta is a 'widow' because of a divorce after her husband took a second wife at Frieda. However, just like the other women that are 'widows', she did not worry when she became a single mother, caring for her aging father and two boys on 160 Kina[5] a fortnight. "I am a Christian woman, my *pasin* is good and I believe God will take care of me." Deta explained being a Christian this way:

> *God is a spirit and when you decide to be a Christian, you breathe in this spirit and it goes into your belly and it lives there. It tells you what is right and what is wrong and you must listen to it. Then when you die or suppose the time comes*

[5] Approximately $56 CAD.

> *when Jesus comes back to Earth, that spirit is a magnet.*[6] *And a larger magnet is pointed at you and if you have the spirit, then you get sucked up and go to heaven. I have the magnet inside me and I will go to Heaven. I do not worry about my time here,* Papa God *controls that. Emma is also a Christian but like she said, she is not one hundred percent. Her magnet is not strong.* Papa God *is giving her many troubles so that she becomes 100 percent...I will pray for her, we all will.*
>
> (8 July 2008)[7]

Prayer Mamas: **Today an absent husband means widowhood**

I realized a few things about gender issues in Derolengam that day. Being a widow means having a heavier burden to bear and women blame themselves for the problems that they are facing. Women must prepare all meals, care for children, care for pigs, harvest garden produce, make new gardens, cut firewood, cut grass with a machete, make net bags to carry goods, wash and mend clothing, and complete ward duty.[8] Women try to sell garden produce for a little cash, which is then used to pay school fees and buy tradestore goods to supplement the diet.

Previously, an absent husband meant that the man was working at Ok Tedi and sending remittances home. Life was not as hard: women had luxuries like washing machines, hotplates, store-bought goods, a steady stream of remittances making it back to the village, and the ability to pay school fees and buy tradestore goods. Today, an absent husband means widowhood. It means he is panning for gold at Frieda and could be courting a new woman or contracting a sexually transmitted infection through paid sex

---

[6] While millennial thought is pervasive in Telefolmin, it is not always talked about.
[7] Conversation in English.
[8] Each village must perform 'ward service' one week per month; this includes, but is not limited to, cutting grass, cleaning trash, and digging out drainage ditches. spading drainage ditches, cutting grass, cleaning up trash. This service, introduced by the Australian government, was intended for hygienic purposes.

while there (see Wardlow 2004). Today's absent husbands may or may not send any money back. He may or may not return. What the husband has done is provide the woman with more responsibilities and these burdens contribute to *bikpela hevi*—the worries concerning one's life, one's family, and one's future.

Figure 21 Women and children clearing land to build a house.

Bikpela hevi is the doing of *Papa God*, not the husband, and is the result of a woman not living her life for God. In women's eyes, they themselves are to blame for their distress. Deta called herself a 50/50 Christian until she was divorced. "It took the divorce for me to change my *pasin*. Now I am a widow but I am also a good Christian. I lost a husband but earned a space in Heaven." At Women's Fellowship I heard many grievances over worries and how these worries are a result of one's behavior. A woman's worries are a part of God's plan. They are the result of His doing, a "sign" to

get back on track and live the life of a 100 percent Christian. Therefore, if a woman is experiencing "worries", it is because she is not doing something right in her life; she is not being a good enough Christian in *Papa God's* eyes.

Figure 22 Woman carrying firewood bundle.

***Prayer Mamas:* 'We do more than just pray'**

> *I help many people. I pray for them and when I pray I ask* Papa God *what is it that has made this person sick and He tells me, and then I make this person better. I also pray for people whose* pasin *is no good. I pray that their soul will become pure. I help them know* Papa God. *I touch them, like this, and I pray. I say, "My heavenly father, thank you very much for this lovely day provided... for us to live this whole day...please love us and protect us with your lovely Jesus blood. You alone will keep us safe from the arms of the evil one and you will be helping us all day long. Please help us be good and know you." I say this prayer and then* Papa

God *touches their heart and they feel happy and then they have a good day. They come to me each day and we pray together.* (Betty, 4 July 2008)

I prayed for the young boy for three days...he was shivering from evil spirits—shaking all over, eyes in the back of the head, cold, about to die. My prayers were not strong enough and his Mom was shouting and crying. I called out for Mama Ervin to come and help me. Mama Ervin comes and prays over young boy with me, We hold hands and we put our other hands on the boys face and heart. We sang to him, we prayed over him, we asked Papa God *to heal this boy. The next morning he was better. He has never been sick since. That is when we knew the Lord is real and have had a strong faith in God since he showe his power that night. All it takes is belief.* (Merci, 6 July 2008)

I go everywhere. Hagen, Vanimo, Madang, Lae, Moresby—people will fly me there and take care of all my expenses; people know of my power and pay for me to come use my gifts to heal those that medicine cannot heal/help. I give the money they give me as a thank you to the church when I return—I give it all to the church. It was God's work, not mine that saved their life. (Jocie, 31 July 2008)

Prayer mamas bridge the gap between individualistic Christian values (see Robbins 2001, 2004a) and the Melanesian 'dividual' (see Strathern 1988; Wardlow 2002b; Hess 2006) through their actions as a Christian women's group in the village.[9] *Prayer mamas* are a medium between daily living and eternity through their lessons and actions, which serve to guide the lives of the other residents of Derolengam. For instance, Betty, from the above excerpt, sits on her porch each morning waiting for villagers who seek Christian support. Nonta volunteers at the village clinic on Tuesdays

[9] Strathern's (1988) argument is that Melanesians do not think about social life in terms of the individual versus society; rather "Melanesian persons are as dividually as they are individually conceived. They contain a generalized sociality within. Indeed, persons are frequently constructed as the plural and composite site of the relationships that produce them" (p. 13).

after Women's Fellowship to offer her Christian devotion and action. It is understood throughout Derolengam that anyone seeking advice, healing, or help is welcome to attend Women's Fellowship, Sunday morning service, or seek out a *prayer mama* anytime of the week. As Maria explained, "We are always ready to help. We know we have gifts from *Papa God* and we are meant to do His work. So anytime, day or night, we will help. We do more than just pray. We help."

A villager can channel the appropriate *pasin* through a *prayer mama's* service. *Prayer mamas* are a type of village advisor that have become a source of support, builders of beliefs, and teachers of worship. Even though individuals are responsible for their own lives, and their entrance into Heaven, *prayer mamas* provide direction for villagers who want to achieve a Christian lifestyle.

Evangelistic monologues are recited by *prayer mamas* at *Benddown Market*, along the road, or in each other's home, which tell people how to avoid making mistakes, and/or how to avoid giving into temptation and/or anger. Such monologues often include a personal anecdote as well as an alternative action like: "pray to *Papa God* when you feel angry inside" or "sing a song." *Prayer mamas* also talk about how to be good Christians when faced with adversity. Temptations range from wanting to take four sweet potatoes at *Benddown Market* and only pay for three, to lying, to harboring bad thoughts and feelings towards someone. One woman explained a common scenario in Telefolmin and how she remained a good Christian while dealing with the problem.

> *I was very angry with my neighbor. Her pig is ruining my yard. I wanted to shoot her pig and be finished with it, but instead I sang to it. I sang very loud and it ran away. Afterwards I felt good inside. I did the right thing.* (15 July 2008)

Sometimes the very thought of harboring ill will towards another human is considered as much a threat to one's purity as to proceed with impure action. Therefore *prayer mamas* are very concerned with not only overt action but inner thoughts as well (see Robbins 2004a: 215-252 for a comparative study).

Prayer mamas are also sought out for their healing powers because of their relationship with the Holy Spirit. Many villagers understand that these women have a gift from *Papa God* and seek their services. Jocie, Yamsey, Mama Fitangsie, Mama Nonta, and Kom have all been flown more than once to other areas of Papua New Guinea to heal the sick. All of the *prayer mama's* trip expenses are taken care of by the requesting family and the journey can be as short as one week and as long as a couple of months. Yamsey, upon returning from a six-week trip to Port Moresby with a wad of cash (a thank you from the family she helped) said, "This is a gift [her ability to heal] of *Papa God*, not a gift of me. I cannot keep the money. It is work of God.... I must give it back to the church and I must share with my sisters of God."

When a local villager is sick, someone dies, a woman is having a hard labor, a woman needs help in her garden, or a woman finds herself a widow, *prayer mamas* take on the responsibility of helping. They may take up a collection of money, garden produce, or tradestore goods. They may also offer their time to sit with the sick or dying, prepare meals, work gardens, or cut firewood. *Prayer mamas* also lead prayers, read scripture, and sing songs to help heal the broken stillness that sickness and death brings to the village. They lay hands on a woman in labor while praying to God that the child and woman live through the delivery. According to the Head of Health at Telefolmin, the

number one cause of death in Telefolmin is labor delivery; it is also the number one reason for medical evacuation by MAF.

> *One time Anna was in labor and it was not good. We found out during the night that it was bad and so we (*prayer mamas*) walked up to the clinic and prayed over her. We tried to heal Anna and her baby. We asked* Papa God *to make the baby come easy, but it did not. The baby was born dead. It was blue.* (Maria, 20 July 2008)

Not all prayers are answered. Not all people are healed. Not all stories have happy endings. Nevertheless, *prayer mamas* try to help or heal and do use their faith for the benefit of the village.

Figure 23 *Prayer mama* selling *plaua*[10] at *Benddown Market.*

[10] Fried dough that resembles a doughnut.

Prayer mamas also provide emotional support for each other during times of need. The anger, resentment, loneliness, and pain a woman feels when she becomes a widow is difficult to portray. On March 22, 2008, Pastor Yemis of Derolengam Baptist Church and his son-in-law died within a few hours of each other. One woman described the pain felt from these two unexpected deaths as a big knife in her stomach and heart, but she could not die; she only felt pain.

> *We* (prayer mamas) *'policed the floor'*[11] *with Mrs. Yemis after her husband* (the pastor) *had died. We sang songs, we cooked food, we read the Bible, we slept on the ground beside her.*[12] *We stayed there with her. We felt her pain and we asked* Papa God *to help take some of it away. He did, we all felt lighter.*
>
> (Deta, 20 July 2008)

The people of Derolengam, especially the *prayer mamas*, took these deaths as a sign from *Papa God* that their village was not living right. In order to correct themselves and please *Papa God*, the *prayer mamas* and the congregation from a church that was half a day's walk away, conducted a prayer walk—everyone circled the village and prayed to the Holy Spirit for the cleansing of Derolengam. Maria, the head of Derolengam's *prayer mamas* gave this explanation:

> Papa God *sent a sign to us. He said we were not living our lives for Him. We had 77 people [*of Derolengam*] give their lives*[13] *to* Papa God *that day. Everyone was scared; we knew this was a sign that* Papa God *was coming soon.* (Maria, 1 July 2008)

---

[11] Understood as lying in the house for the week after the death; an important notion in Telefol mourning practices.

[12] This week of policing and sleeping without a mosquito net led to several *prayer mamas* coming down with malaria the following week.

[13] To have hands laid on an individual and prayers said over her, after which the individual agrees to give her life to God; to become born-again into Christianity.

The agency *prayer mamas* exercise is founded on their role as Christian women. They use their voice, knowledge of the Bible, and identity as *prayer mamas* as a medium to demonstrate their opinions on correct Christian behavior and impose these ideas on the village (compare Dundon 2007 on Gogodala Warrior Women). For example, several high school girls were caught watching a pornographic film by a mother of one of the girls, who is also a *prayer mama*. The *prayer mama* summoned three other *prayer mamas* and reprimanded the girls with a two-hour lecture on what it is to be a good Christian woman. The *prayer mamas* concluded the harangue by belting the girls' calves. Having missed the condemnatory speech, I was given the gist of the diatribe the following morning after passing a few of the girls on the road and later questioning Deta about the scabbed lines on the back of the girls' legs. She explained the situation, having been one of the *prayer mamas* summoned.

> *It is very important that these girls know what is right and what is wrong. And we* [prayer mamas] *know what is right and what is wrong because of the Bible. Everything you need to know is in the Bible...Sometimes people forget and we* [prayer mamas] *have to remind them.*

Another *prayer mamas'* admonition took place at the beginning of one Sunday's service. Many of the villagers were slow in coming after the third sounding of the bell; once the church was full, but before the actual service began, Emma stood up and harangued the congregation for being lazy.

> *One day a week you must come, and sit, and listen. One day a week. And everyone comes late. Everyone should be ashamed. This behavior does not make me happy, it does not make* Papa God *happy. Now stand up and sing to* Papa God. *Let him know you are sorry.* (20 July 2008)

Robbins (2004a: 232, 269-279) discusses special kinds of perception of the self that occur through confession, prayer, crying and dreams for Urapmin, a Min group a day's walk from Derolengam. For the Urapmin, confession centers on a deep concern for whether or not the inner self is sinful. Thus, in dealing with or ridding the self of inner hostility, confession became a medium of purification.

In Derolengam there is no such system of sin purging but rather rules recommended by the church via the Bible and maintained by the self. In Derolengam, individuals have a relationship to a transcendent God, which in turn establishes the individual as an autonomous or sovereign agent. Although the jurisdiction of a pure life is left up to the individual, the mindset that *Papa God* knows all becomes the main channel of judgment. This personal jurisdiction is also the core enforcement of the rules. For one can only lead a church service or be a member of Youths or Women's Fellowship if one is leading a true Christian life.

***Prayer Mamas*: a cultural transformation in Derolengam**

What I believe is going on in Telefolmin is a cultural transformation. Eriksen (2006) argues that women were the key actors in cultural transformation in the establishment of Christianity in Vanuatu, although their significance may be easily overlooked. Her argument stems from Marshall Sahlins' (1985, 1999, 2004, 2005) ideas on the transformation of communities by "unlikely celebrities" and I believe that the *prayer mamas* of Derolengam will fit the same paradigm during Ok Tedi's closure. *Prayer mamas* are the point of intersection, the conjuncture, between everyday life and the future, between Christianity and the mine, between locals and migrants.

Being a *prayer mama* redefines the role of a woman. No longer must a woman define herself as a mother, gardener, pig tender, wife, or widow. Rather, now she can define herself as a Christian support for other women as well as being a mother, gardener, pig tender, wife or widow. *Prayer mamas* have found a slot in village politics and are able to hold village positions through their involvement in the church. In addition to these roles, being a *prayer mama* also helps a woman maintain her *pasin*; a woman cannot be a *prayer mama* if she is sinful. A woman, as a *prayer mama*, can critique the life of others and use her life as an example. A woman can exercise this agency because she is a *prayer mama*, and no longer must she be defined through her association with males.

Prayer mamas are agents of change in Telefolmin. In giving more time to *Papa God*, they are giving more time to their neighbors and their families. In attempting to understand their worries through charismatic Christian beliefs and live their lives with the correct *pasin*, as well as influence the *pasin* of others, *prayer mamas* are changing Derolengam. Through purposeful action, in having the ability to influence village life, women are influencing the future.

Great Expectations:
a *prayer mama's* memory, hope and reality
4

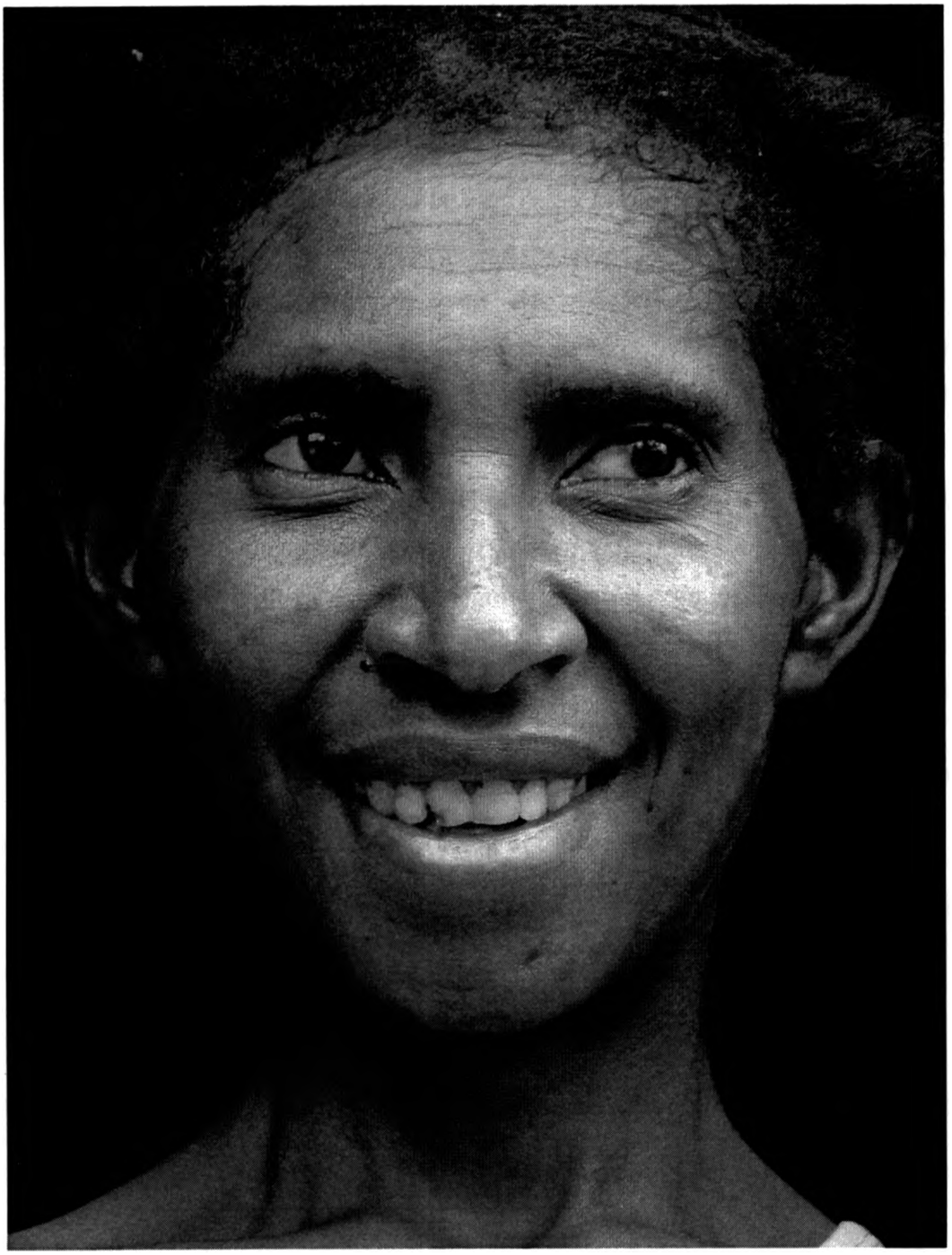


Figure 24 Telefolmin woman.

My dad was a very good man. When I was little, I would go to the garden with him. It was a very long walk and sometimes he would carry me on his shoulders. All day he would work—big work—cutting firewood, planting trees, collecting breadfruit and cutting [down] bananas. He would let me play in the stream beside the garden. Sometimes he would give me a banana or make a fire and roast some breadfruit. All day we would be together. Aiiii it was a good time. I was his favorite [child]. Men are not like this anymore. You see them. Plenty of men are gone. If you see one, he is sitting down, doing nothing, smoking and talking. That is it. That is all men do now. Sit, smoke, and story. Or they leave. My dad would be very angry to see how men are now. This is not Telefol way. This is not white man way. We watch the pilots [MAF Australian male pilots]. They hang the laundry for their wives! Aiiii, you will never see a Telefol man hang laundry. But they did work more. Now men are no good. I have no man, and this is why. (Josie , 22 July 2008)

My husband is no good. He was a good man—why else would I have married him? But he changed. Money changed him. He went to Tabubil to find work and stayed there a year. Now he is at Frieda River panning for gold with his cousin brother. He says he is making money for school fees and to build a house. Maski (forget about it). *I have not seen any of this money. I pay the school fees.* (Emma, 2 July 2008)

This chapter is an analysis of how Christianity serves as a thread of connection between a *prayer mama* and her understanding of life's desires. I begin with memory and the role that it plays in shaping a woman's expectations. A composite sketch of men in Derolengam is then provided in order to situate the experiences of Derolengam's women within the wider frame of the effects of a mining economy. Conversion and marriage narratives follow to reveal how women think about life, which is the focal point of the discussion. I continue my argument by addressing how Christianity can provide a woman with an alternative medium to fulfill her expectations. I conclude by arguing that

being a Christian, especially a *prayer mama*, means that one always has to improve oneself, and to improve oneself is to be modern.

Memory: building expectations

Memory is an abstract concept that encompasses one's past and shapes one's future. For the women of Derolengam, the ideas they have about the responsibilities of men are based on the memories of their fathers, grandfathers, and uncles. For many Derolengam women, the memory of what it is to be a male is strongly linked to the notion of locality, to the recollection of a man whose role was to help work the gardens, hunt, and keep the house structures maintained—a man committed to village life. There are, however, a handful of *prayer mamas* with fathers that had brief employment stints at Ok Tedi as builders during the construction phase in the early 1980s or who were hired to work for Ok Tedi permanently. These women are some of the youngest in the group, ranging from 16 to 35 years of age, and they don't consider an absent husband or father to be unusual. Nevertheless, for most *prayer mamas*, the absence of males is a recent, but very common situation—a situation that leads to disappointment. The man is not present and if he is, he is often deemed indolent. Therefore, the hopes and aspirations *prayer mamas* have for life are resituated through a charismatic discourse and through activities at Women's Fellowship.

Men in Derolengam: different modes of livelihood

Before I continue with the situations and expectations of women, one must first understand the different types of men that can be found in Derolengam. These composite

sketches should help to situate the breakdown of familial relations and the failed expectations of women.

Traditionally, Telefol life was centered around the garden. Families would go to the garden for several nights to several weeks at a time. Couples would escape the drama of village life, accomplish the great task of starting new gardens, look after previous gardens, harvest produce, and enjoy intimacy together. Ok Tedi disrupted this pattern by providing jobs, educational opportunities, and healthcare, in addition to initiating the movement of goods, ideas, and people. However, not all residents of Derolengam benefit directly from Ok Tedi and a brief dissection of male categories allows one to understand the present-day predicaments of women, their expectations for the future, and why they feel cheated.

Village Man: Beksep is in his late fifties, a local carpenter, and the handyman for Telefolmin High School. He witnessed *Rebaibal* and the dubious development schemes that have passed through this region since independence in 1975. Beksep has witnessed change, experienced the introduction of a cash economy, and is informed about development. With five children and two grandchildren, he is also a family man. When his grandson refused breast milk before he was one year old, Beksep flew to Tabubil to buy hundreds of eggs and cartons of formula so that the infant would still receive his daily protein. Beksep is used to sacrificing and investing in his family. When he was a young man, Beksep quit smoking so that he could use that money on his children. When Ok Tedi and the township of Tabubil were being built, Beksep went and became a trained and sought-after carpenter. After construction finished, he returned with his skills and found local carpentry work with the mission, government, or fellow villagers.

Selfless and hardworking, Beksep made sure all five of his children completed Grade Ten and his investment has paid off; his two sons have wage work in Tabubil, his eldest daughter is a nurse in Vanimo, his middle daughter is a local elementary school teacher, and his youngest daughter moved into his house with her husband and son. Beksep also has ten gardens, which he works on the weekends or in the afternoon after his work has ended at the high school. His hard work ensures that there is always plenty for his family and his pig to eat. However, one must not misinterpret Beksep and his situation; money has not come easily and most of his success has been based on his own hard work and perseverance. As an illiterate self-proclaimed Christian, much of Beksep's achievements come from living as his ancestors did—by working hard and living off the land. Beksep is also a part of a small population of Telefol men whose formative years occurred at the beginning of the Christian transformation in Derolengam. Thus, much of what he learned as a child was based on traditional Telefol life—pre-mine and pre-Christianity.[1]

Public Servant: Michael, in his mid to late thirties, grew up in Derolengam and now works at the Telefolmin High School as their agriculture and commerce teacher. Michael went to Highlands Agriculture College and worked in the Highlands as a district agriculture officer for several years during which time he traveled to different villages throughout the Highlands and taught people how to grow a variety of crops. Seven years ago Michael returned to Telefolmin to be closer to his natal family and to take a job at the local high school. It was while teaching that Michael met his wife, with whom he now has three children. The high school provides Michael and his family with a house, a flush

[1] Beksep also belongs to the last cohort of men to complete the traditional men's house initiation sequence.

toilet, electricity, and solar panel hot water. Nevertheless, Michael's situation is far from ideal, especially after living in Goroka and Hagen. "It is hard here. In such a place as this, where goods are only moved by air, which is the most expensive way of transportation, life is harder. It is very difficult and very expensive to live but I like raising my children where I grew up."[2] Michael values education and claims that only education will be able to change the Telefolmin belief that women are second-class citizens. "I consider myself progressive and hope to make a difference in the future of Telefolmin through my hands-on agriculture teaching and lectures."[3] Michael's category of men is also a minority in Telefolmin: to be raised by parents that were part of the semi-traditional/semi-Christian lifestyle, to have an education, to grow up with a strong village economy via Ok Tedi, and to hold a local waged-work job.

Migrating Frieda River Man: Carson[4] is 23 years old, has a Grade Ten education, and is a local soccer star. He is fluent in English, and though he did well in school, he did not continue on because of school fees. He is married, with a five year old child, and does not hold a regular job. He does, however, provide the village with their local tobacco and marijuana, which he grows adjacent to one of his wife's gardens. Carson has been to Frieda River three times, each stint lasting somewhere between 12 and 16 weeks. The first time he went to Frieda River was to get Grade Eleven school fees. However once he realized how much money he could make (4,500 Kina in three months), he decided to drop out and pan for gold whenever he wanted or needed money. The original 4,500 Kina lasted less than six weeks. Carson took a trip to Vanimo, crossed the border

---

[2] Conversation in English.
[3] Conversation in English.
[4] A pseudonym.

and went to Irian Jaya where he bought an MP3 player, CDs, clothes, shoes, sunglasses, real cigarettes,[5] chocolate biscuits, and beer. Then he flew to Tabubil where he visited kinfolk and returned to Telefolmin with 100 Kina left in his pocket. The money that he accumulated from his other two trips has gone toward his wife, son, and other friends and family members who were in need of money. Carson's last trip to Frieda River was in September 2007 and he had plans of returning in October 2008. "I did see women at Frieda River, but never did anything with them. It is very hard work [panning for gold] and at the end of the day, you go back to your tent, eat some rice, and go to sleep. You do not want to talk to a woman. You have no energy."[6] Carson is a part of the majority of men in Telefolmin: less than 40 years of age, educated and unemployed, and the consumption of imported goods has always been part of his life in the village.

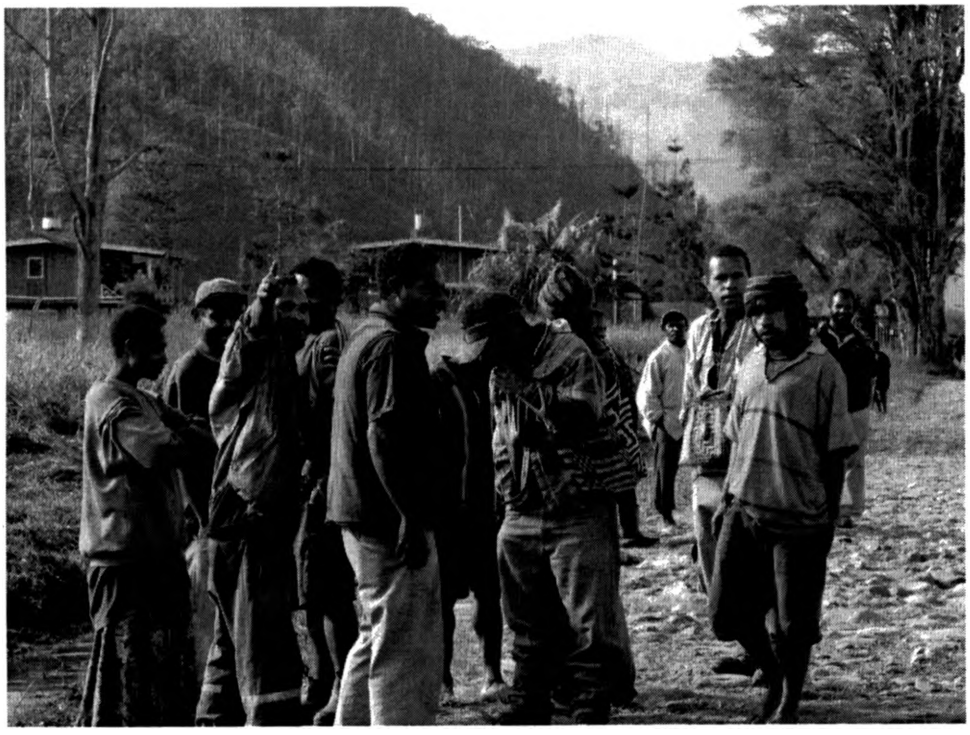


Figure 25 Men at *Benddown Market*.

[5] As opposed to handmade, bush tobacco cigarettes.
[6] Interview in English.

In reading the above sketches, one can see how the mine has affected villagers differently. Beksep did not get a permanent job at Ok Tedi and was too old to attend the schools that were built with funds from Ok Tedi and the government. Indirectly, however, Beksep has succeeded because of the mine since the money used to hire Beksep's services (carpentry/handyman) is generated through the mining economy. Without the mine, Beksep would not have become a successful carpenter and entrepreneur in Telefolmin. Beksep also belongs to the category of men that most represents the memory and expectations of women: a non-migrating Telefol man that takes care of his family.

Michael benefited from Ok Tedi by getting an education at the local schools, continued on with Grade Eleven and Twelve, received tertiary education in the Highlands, and now holds a steady job at the local high school. His salary is paid by the government, which directly reaps the benefits of Ok Tedi because it owns 30 percent of the shares (OTML 2009). Ok Tedi provided Michael with the opportunity to get an education and now provides the district government with the means by which to pay their employees. Michael is also part of a small minority of men in Telefolmin. He holds a local job, provides for his family, and lives with his wife and children.

Carson is representative of the many younger men in Telefolmin, who benefited from Ok Tedi by being born after the schools were built and by having the opportunity to complete Grade Ten. Carson, however, has not continued to benefit from Ok Tedi nor any job opportunities in Tabubil or other parts of Papua New Guinea. In fact, without a Grade Eleven or Twelve education, Carson's job opportunities are fairly limited. He could take part in a grassroots-logging venture or become an apprentice of Beksep's.

However, neither of these opportunities interests him. Therefore, his only option for a decent income comes from panning for gold at Frieda River. It is estimated by *prayer mamas* that approximately half of the men in Derolengam fit into Carson's category, away from the village and panning for gold at Frieda River.

Each category has positive and negative outcomes on family and village life. Without the mine and the money it provides, opportunities such as education, healthcare and a village economy would not be possible. A reduced amount of money in the local economy, if Ok Tedi were to shut down, would mean Beksep would be commissioned for fewer jobs, and thus he would have to become more reliant on his gardens than he already is. In addition, fewer children would be able to attend school because their parents would not be able to manage the school fees. Further Michael would likely lose his job due to budget cuts, particularly because his classes are electives and not a part of the core curriculum. However, the majority of men in Derolengam fall into Carson's category; a type of man that is not reliant on Ok Tedi but rather is reliant on the luck of the draw from his adventures at Frieda River. Thus, for the majority of males that live in Telefolmin, life could continue on its current path even if Ok Tedi shuts down, which is the type of lifestyle that causes *bikpela hevi* for *prayer mamas*.

Derolengam is a place where living is dependent on cash (tradestore goods, clothing, school fees and supplies, housing materials, etc.), yet the lack of local opportunities often results in men leaving to find work and women remaining in the village. Previously when men left they went to Ok Tedi; however, as Ok Tedi reduces its labor force, men are going elsewhere in search of income, an income that is not as steady as that from Tabubil. Women stay because of kin, friends, church and gardens and also

their children can attend elementary, primary, and lower-level high school while living in Derolengam.

Mining migration compared: Ok Tedi versus Frieda River

This section compares two types of male migration from Derolengam to a mining site because this action is one of the main catalysts for *bikpela hevi.* A male migrant in Tabubil is working for Ok Tedi or a contracted company. Unless he is a senior employee qualified for married housing, he sleeps in an all male barracks, eats at a mess hall and participates in company sponsored sports teams. The Ok Tedi worker has the ability to catch the company-chartered flight, Regional Air, on Thursdays to return to his village for a holiday or to bring his family to him in Tabubil. Men work a six-and-two block, meaning six weeks working at the mine with a two-week holiday. Though the husband is absent, a wife is confident her husband is doing well.

Male migration to Frieda River is very different. When a man migrates to Frieda River, he must walk a precarious track over mountains and down steep ravines for seven days. This is because MAF flies from Telefolmin to this area only once every six weeks, if that, and it costs approximately 800 Kina[7] roundtrip. The Frieda River villages, Ok Isai and Wabia, do not have a hospital, grocery store, or police force regulating the area. Sleeping occurs inside makeshift bush huts or tents. Water comes from the river and lavatories are simple pits or trenches. Local women frequent the area, offering their "friendship" for the right price, and food is bought at tradestores. Some males work in teams with one man using a vacuum pump to suck the water and rock from the river and the others sifting through the sprayed pool. Other men prefer to work alone. Some pan

[7] Approximately $296 CAD.

for gold while others wear goggles and a snorkel and gather nuggets from the riverbed. Tabubil provides a set wage given fortnightly; Frieda is a gamble between luck and hard work. Gold at Frieda River is bought when the gold buyer passes through. Therefore, all men must store and hide their cache.

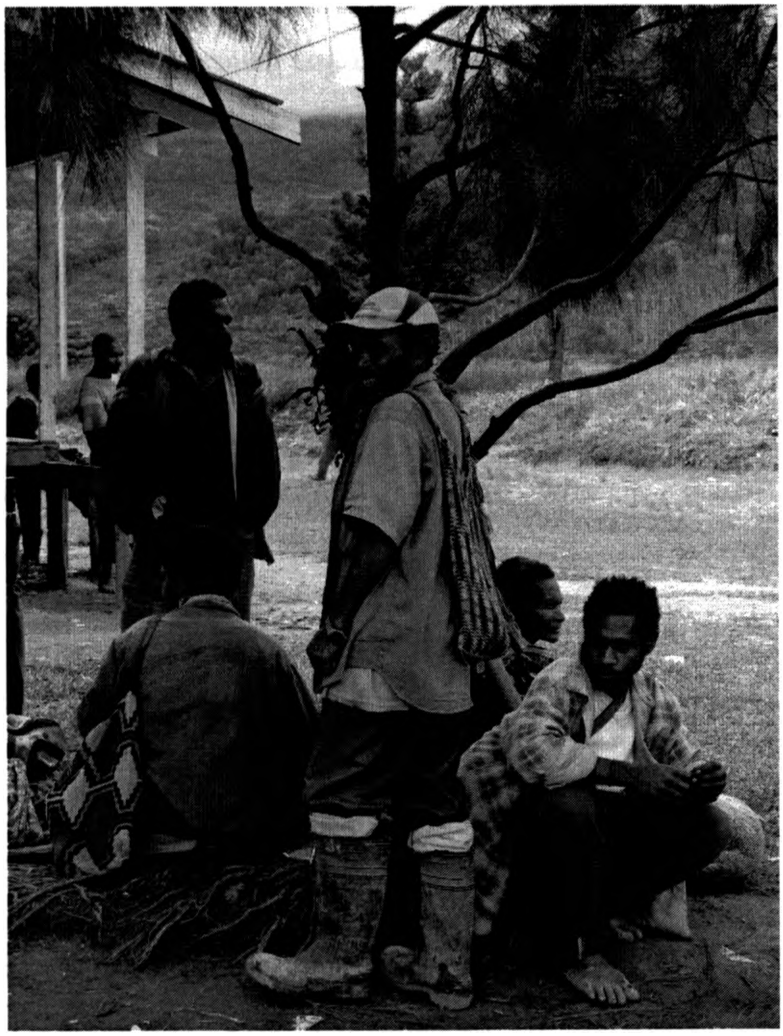


Figure 26 Village men and women hanging out.

There are major differences between the two mining sites that Telefolmin men migrate to. Although men are able to make an income much quicker panning for gold at Frieda River than by working for Ok Tedi, their adventure comes at a much higher risk. Frieda River men might not strike it rich, they might not establish kin relations to gain

access to panning rights, and they might not see their family for several months. One returnee, a local carpenter and entrepreneur, gave the following narrative when I was inquiring about his experience at Frieda River.

> *I made 4,000 Kina in six weeks, but only returned with 2,000 Kina. Food cost a lot of money. Rice. That is all we ate. Morning and night, rice, rice, rice. I became a big man* [meaning fat] *and was very sick when I returned.* ['How come you were sick?' I ask*]. There was no garden food, I did not get strength [from what I ate]...When I was walking home I saw some kin on the track and had to give them some money. They knew where I had been. I could not lie.... I am buying a portable sawmill in Tabubil with this money. Then I will saw timber for anyone who wants to build a house. I will become rich.* (25 June 2008)

Regardless of the dangers, many males in Telefolmin make the weeklong trek to attempt their luck at Frieda River. For these men the money is worth the danger. However for many of the wives who remain in the village, a husband's journey gives rise to self-doubt in regard to her status as a Christian and her devotion to *Papa God.* But, regardless of the benefits of the money men earn, the family situation can deteriorate; problems can arise and women realize that life as a single mother is not what one experienced as a little girl. This experience contributes to *bikpela hevi.*

Hope: narratives of expectations

The narratives described below are a simple representation of *prayer mamas'* opinions. They shed light on how women understand their situations. Contradictory in outcome, conversion and marriage narratives center on the same theme: the expectations of a woman's life. Conversion stories begin with a brief life history, followed by a summary of problems and failed anticipations. The narrative of the conversion event tells of the day when the woman gave herself to God, and how life is better now that she

considers herself to be 100 percent Christian. Marriage stories begin with a brief history of how the couple knew each other, when they became interested in one another, the marriage, problems that arose after the couple married, and how life is now. Narratives were told prior to women's fellowship or brought up during the sermon, and if possible and acceptable, I would ask questions following that day's gathering. It should be understood in reading these excerpts that Women's Fellowship often turned into venting sessions, where each woman seemed to be outdoing her peers with her story of hardship. Therefore, as with most anthropological research, the reader should understand that this is from a certain place and time and is not a representation of all women's views or opinions in Derolengam.

Figure 27 *Prayer mamas* before Women's Fellowship.

> *Life was not easy; I had lots of worries, not enough to eat, and an angry family situation.... my personal relationship with* Papa God *was no good....then one day I went over to Nonta's house and we talked. She listened to me and then said she wanted to say a prayer for me. During her prayer I heard* Papa God *talk to me. Inside my head I heard Him say I needed to have Him inside me to live. And I told Nonta that I wanted to have* Papa God *come inside me... and we prayed and I felt better. Then I knew what to do in my life....my life is better now that I have* Papa God *on the inside.* (Deta, 5 July 2008)[8]

Conversion narratives revealed that the particularities of a woman's past do not matter as much as the convert's perception of the event and the after life that followed. Conversion is a rapid experience, where the woman heard God speak to her in a church service, during a prayer, at Women's Fellowship, at an all night prayer vigil, or during the witnessing stories of others and the woman decides right then to become a Christian. The woman could have already considered herself a Christian but a "fifty-fifty" one,[9] or the woman might have not considered herself a Christian at all. Some women said that they have gone to church every week since they were children but could not hear what was said at the sermon or forgot what was said and thus continued to live their lives as non-Christians. These women would often make oral requests for God, the spirit, to come inside them and live.[10] Once the Holy Spirit did so, their lives would take on a whole new dynamic. "I did not get mad at my children so fast." "Something inside me changed." "I felt lighter." "I felt calm or at peace." "I no longer felt crazy." "I was a better person." "I

---

[8] Interview in *Tok Pisin* and English.
[9] Going to church but not believing, chewing *buai* (betelnut), drinking alcohol, cheating on husband.
[10] The magnet inside the body as described in Chapter 3.

helped my neighbor [the one she always had problems with] in the garden when she cut her foot open with the machete. I would have never done that before."

> *I gave my biggest taro to the tradestore owner that died [of Sik AIDS]. We all knew she had Sik AIDS and came here to die. I knew that a true Christian would help. I am a true Christian and I helped. I would take her food and give her firewood. I cleaned up her diarrhea. I took care of her even though her pasin was no good.* *(Maria, 8 July 2008)*

Marriage stories followed the opposite course, beginning with the couple not being able to get enough of each other, sneaking off into the bush to experience the physical fondness of one another, and eventually deciding to marry. Happiness and ease as well as love and physical desire plague the couple. "Love makes you crazy and everything seems good," explained Laura. Some women remained happily married, while other women did not. Deta explained her situation, which paralleled many of the stories of younger women.

> *Married life is fun in the beginning, but then problems begin. Sometimes problems begin before the children are born; for me the problems came after I had two babies and needed more money. Before, we did not buy much but we had to buy more [cloth] nappies and formula once I had the second baby....the worry of needing money made problems. He went to Frieda River and then he had the second wife. I was very angry. I was very sad. I did not think this would happen.* (5 July 2008)[11]

Other women said problems began because of separation. "My worries began stacking up, like too many sweet potatoes and not enough mouths. I thought about him with other women or liking that life more," explained Emma, whose husband used to live in Tabubil. Emma continues her explanation of a marriage weakened through distance.

---

[11] Interview in *Tok Pisin* and English.

> *Jealousy creeps into a woman's heart and mind. It is not a good thing. I was jealous of the money...of the other ways of life. I wanted to ride the plane. I wanted the electric stove and the market. I wanted to sit in Cloudlands*[12] *and eat. I wanted to go to the store and buy clothes.* (2 July 2008)[13]

Many women's perceptions of married life are based on their childhood memories. Mary explains a common perception *prayer mamas* have about family life in the following narrative and contrasts this idea with her experiences, a situation common for many *prayer mamas*.

> *When a man and woman are smitten for one another, the woman will move into his family's home, taking on the responsibilities of a wife. Eventually the couple may cook a taro in a fire, split the taro in half, and each eat half. This is considered a Telefol marriage. The woman will make taro and sweet potato gardens in her husband's family garden, keep house, prepare meals, and raise pigs. She will be a wife. The husband goes to the bush and cuts big bamboo and makes a house kitchen for his wife so that she does not have to use his mother's [*house kitchen*]. He will give her some money to buy oil, rice, and salt. If he has a lot of money, she might buy flour and oil to make* plaua.[14] *The money from* plaua *might buy some* tinfish *or chicken. Eventually she becomes pregnant and the baby comes; the baby sleeps between them on the floor. But this is not how it is anymore. Perhaps for some, but not everyone. Now the baby comes and sleeps beside the mom only. The husband is gone. He has gone to find money...many men are leaving, looking for work, trying to get money at Frieda River. The wife stays and must make money to buy tradestore goods... she does this at* Benddown Market. *This is not how it was when I was a little girl. Everything is changing. This is not Telefol way.* (20 July 2008)

---

[12] Cloudlands is the only hotel and sit-down restaurant in Tabubil; it was built by Ok Tedi.
[13] Interview in *Tok Pisin*; parts translated by Deta in English.
[14] Fried dough, resembling a doughnut and sold at *Benddown Market*.

However, life in Derolengam has changed. Husbands must leave in order to make money to support their family, but in leaving problems often arise.

Figure 28 Woman feeding child.

Women in Derolengam often spoke of feeling weary of their current situation: not receiving land royalty payments from Ok Tedi, not having the support of males, nor ever having enough money. Women presume their husbands are happier having the freedom to do what they want: to travel and see new places, experience other forms of life, and be with other women if they want. Women, however, consider themselves to be left out and experience feelings of melancholy and covetousness.

So how does being a Christian help women understand their failed expectations of marriage and life? I suggest that it is the very essence of being "Christian" that makes the

situation better; Christianity provides an arena for a woman to fulfill her expectations and accept her disappointments. The following story provides an example of this.

Mary had a Coke bottle full of saltwater

Around 4 PM Mary had returned from the annual Women's Christian Conference in Wewak with 18 other women on an MAF flight, and with her came presents and items bought for friends, as well as the infamous bottle whose contents held remnants of the Bismarck Sea. This bottle was a surprise, a communal gift, as most have never seen the ocean, much less tasted saltwater. As Mary poured the water into the red cap and gave it to individuals to taste, she told us about the feel of the waves, the intensity of the sun, and the stickiness of her skin from the salt. Most would spit it out, a few swallowed, but everyone laughed in delight at the odd tasting water. We did this for several hours that Saturday night, sitting on the dusty wood floor in the house, tasting the sea, and hearing about Wewak. Stories ranged from praying over the sick at the regional hospital to the adventures of visiting the coast for the first time. Between these stories and tasting the water, gifts were given. Some residents in the village had given Mary money before her trip and requested particular items, others had given her spending cash as a gift to treat herself, and some had just made requests. Mary bought chocolate candy bars, soap, flip-flops, *Nescafe* coffee, *Carnation* coffee creamer, women's underwear, razors, combs, cutlery, coffee mugs, and a pirated DVD. She had an entire duffle bag (bought in Wewak) full of items for her family and neighbors; an entire duffle bag full of another way of living. It was through her stories and her *Coke* bottle that Mary connected several residents of Derolengam to another part of Papua New Guinea, to a reality most have never experienced.

Reality: *prayer mamas* and their options

Christianity provided Mary and the other women this opportunity to travel much like mining has provided men. Those who did not attend this year's conference reminisced about previous trips or expressed their desire to go next year. They also discussed how they would the raise the money for next year's trip. Mary is one of the women in Derolengam who considers herself a Christian, identifies as a *prayer mama,* and attends Women's Fellowship weekly. She is in her late twenties, has a husband and two children, and a Grade Ten education. Although she has been to Tabubil before, she has never traveled as far as Wewak and her stories that evening were a reflection of the opportunities that Christianity can provide. Whereas husbands and the mine have been a disappointment to these women's expectations for life, the church has provided an alternative perspective and situation.

Participating in the Women's Fellowship and being a *prayer mama* provides women with the opportunity for new experiences and to see other parts of Papua New Guinea, help people in other villages, meet and worship with hundreds of other Christian women, learn new songs, hear different scriptures and prayers, make memories, and build expectations. Whereas married life and mining have wearied many of these women, Christianity creates a channel for hope and aspiration. Christianity not only connects these women to God, but also to other places with other Christians through modern mediums: plane travel, live satellite programs, DVDs, world conferences, and books (see Robbins 2004b). Being a Christian in Derolengam is a way to be part of the larger world, it is an "imagined community" (see Anderson 1983: 12). It allows one the opportunity to

envision a connection to others around the world who are worshipping, also praying to God, singing songs of praise, and reading the Bible.

Reality: understanding expectations

A Derolengam woman's expectations of Christianity are twofold. A woman creates expectations of herself as a Christian and has expectations of what Christianity can do for her. This concept is analogous to modernist Western ideas where one must have a self-conscious awareness of who one is and who one wants to be. To be a Christian is to be constantly looking at the sinning "self" as a project of improvement. For a *prayer mama,* the constant redefining and improvement occurs through Christian service. A woman can always become a better Christian by praying, singing, reading the Bible, helping neighbors, evangelizing, witnessing, or completing more selfless acts of love. Moreover, there is a perpetual dissatisfaction with the self that one is never good enough for *Papa God* (see Robbins 2004a).

A shift in consciousness occurs when a woman becomes a 100 percent Christian, which is a complete change from traditional Melanesian perceptions of the self. This makes me think there might be a fundamental difference between classic ethnography of the Melanesian self and what is occurring today with *prayer mamas* and the relationships that exist because of the church. In the classic formulations of Melanesian ethnography, emotions were seen as uprising *between* people and not *internal* to the individual (see e.g. Schieffelin 1983). Today's connotations, however, suggest that, for a *prayer mama,* emotions are an internal state of affairs that only she and God can truly know or understand. Robbins (2004a) claims that the Urapmin are unable to find a balance, a harmonious acceptance, between the sense of self as a Christian individual and the

Melanesian sense of what he calls the relational person. For the Urapmin, individuals are always caught between the two. *Prayer mamas* in Derolengam, I would suggest, are able to find a balance between living as a Christian with an individual subjectivity and maintaining responsibilities to the village. They do this by situating the self, the individual, in an interpersonal space, through self-recognition via Women's Fellowship, helping run the Sunday morning service, evangelizing and organizing improvement projects for Derolengam.[15] Therefore, the "relational" (Strathern 1988: 13) form of being a *prayer mama* allows a woman to use her individual subjectivity to help other individuals with their relationship with God.

A woman is provided with an alternative understanding of her life, self, and expectations by being a *prayer mama*. Although there is nothing a *prayer mama* can do to reach her goal of perfection, in always working on the self, and by being part of a group after the same goals, she can experience 'modernity.' To be modern, to these women, is to be fluid and in a constant state of improvement; to be a *prayer mama* is to be modern. To keep her children in school, to attend Women's Fellowship, to run the church services on Sunday, to attend the Annual Women's Christian conference, and to constantly reconfigure the self are all ways of being modern. Although *prayer mamas* do not have the life that they imagined when growing up, Christianity provides *prayer mamas* other opportunities for living. Moreover, the end result justifies the *bikpela hevi* of the present; Heaven is worth the worries and burdens of daily life.

---

[15] I go into greater detail on these projects in Chapter 5.

Moving Forward:
humility, social action, and some closing thoughts
5

Figure 29 *Prayer mama* praying.

Everywhere in Telefolmin you see prayer mamas. *Walk* antap, *on the backside of the airstrip, you will see them cutting the grass and hear them singing...Saturday afternoon you will see them at the church cleaning and cutting flowers. Sometimes at night you hear them at Maria's praying and singing. Suppose you have a spirit no good, you can find a* prayer mama *and she will make you better.* Prayer mamas *are everywhere in Telefolmin.* (tradestore owner, July 22, 2008)

Look over there. You see the toilets?[1] *We built those. We raised the money. We built them.* [Only women built those? I ask] *Yes, only women,* aiiii. *We did that. Deta showed us how.*[2] *Now when you come to church you can go to the bathroom.*

(Emma, July 28, 2008)

This chapter concentrates on the humility of *prayer mamas* and their ability to generate support within the village. *Prayer mamas* are not without flaw. They struggle with the lure of *ol samting nogut* (bad things) just as much as the common villager and from time to time *prayer mamas* expressed shame for things they had done or said. I argue that the understanding of these women, as 'sinners', makes them more accessible and easier to identify with, which leads to the heightened respect they receive in Derolengam; the same respect that allows *prayer mamas* to create social change through their actions and create opportunities for reestablishing order. This chapter serves to demonstrate the connection between Derolengam residents and *prayer mamas* outside the realm of the church and concludes with some closing thoughts. This final section explores the vital role that *prayer mamas* will likely play in social change during mine closure in Derolengam.

Humility: '*prayer mamas* make mistakes too'

Prayer mamas devote their time and energy to serving God, providing for their family, and helping their neighbours, but are not perfect. *Prayer mamas* sometimes sin, and when they do, they admit that their *pasin* was no good. It is explicitly understood in

---

[1] A contemporary bush toilet where the commode sits on top of a pit, rather than the typical 'squat-over a hole' style. There are two stalls, one for men and one for women.
[2] Deta took a two-week carpentry course through Baptist Union Papua New Guinea in 2006 when they came to Telefolmin District Headquarters. In 2009 BUPNG is conducting an electrical course and Deta plans on taking it as well.

Derolengam that a *prayer mama* must not chew betelnut, smoke tobacco, drink alcohol, dance provocatively[3] or commit adultery. However, mistakes are made and several *prayer mamas* have found themselves in situations where they had to undergo a reacceptance process as a *prayer mama* because of their mistakes. The following is a patchwork of what happens when a *prayer mama* sins and provides an account of a reacceptance ceremony I witnessed during a Sunday service.

It is not a quiet matter when a *prayer mama* makes a mistake nor is the process of reacceptance quiet. For *prayer mamas*, making their sins known can occur via personal confession to another *prayer mama* or the entire Women's Fellowship, or it can result from being caught and admitting to the mistake. Regardless, the woman confesses and the other *prayer mamas* talk to her about her failed judgment. During this time, Bible verses and personal stories are shared about how mistakes are common and that God expects everyone to have faults. After discussing her failings, the *prayer mama* is told she can no longer participate in *prayer mama* activities in order to understand the severity of her "*pasin nogut*". During the time off she is expected to renew her devotion to God to restore her *pasin* to prevent succumbing to future temptations. Though the woman is allowed to attend church and Woman's Fellowship, she is not allowed to call herself a *prayer mama,* attend all night prayer vigils, lead Women's Fellowship or stand at the front of the church during Sunday morning service. However, after the allotted time off, if the woman chooses to rejoin the group, she informs the *prayer mamas* on Tuesday morning, and the reacceptance process commences.

---

[3] Some agreed that one cannot "dance physical" ever and others said one cannot "dance physical" with anyone but their husbands. The other "rules" of *prayer mamas* were not disputed.

> *If a [*prayer*]* mama *backslides and sins, then she has to take time off. Suppose she drinks or chews betelnut. Maybe she slept with a man [*that is not her husband*] then she must take some time off. Sometimes she takes off one month of being a* prayer mama*; sometimes she takes off many months. Finally her time off is done and she decides she wants to be a* prayer mama *again, she wants to be one hundred percent...this woman comes to Women's Fellowship and she tells us. We* [prayer mamas] *gather around the woman and pray over her* [with their hands on her head]. *We say our prayers to* Papa God. *We ask* Papa God *to forgive her. We ask for her* pasin *to be good. She prays too... and many women cry. We are all children of God, so we all have the ability to be a* prayer mama *but some do not want to give up bad ways.* (Deta, 24 July 2008)[4]

The final act of repentance is the reacceptance process; a public display of humility that occurs during Sunday service, is a time of praise not shame, and the entire church is involved. The ceremony begins with the sinner in the middle of the stage, sitting on a white, plastic lawn chair in view of the entire congregation. Once seated, a soliloquy from one of the *prayer mamas* informs the church of the woman's action, the amount of time she took off, how she repented,[5] and her request to become a *prayer mama* again. This is followed by a string of Bible verses that relate sinning to repentance and reacceptance. All congregation members are then welcomed to join the *prayer mamas* at the front of the church, to lay their hands on the seated woman, and pray. One *prayer mama* begins the prayer and is joined by the other *prayer mamas,* and then by the congregation. Then one after another, the congregation and *prayer mamas* silence their prayers, leaving only the voice of one *prayer mama*. This one *mama* then begins the

---

[4] Interview in English.

[5] Repentance is the sinner asking God for forgiveness, Christian knowledge and personal strength, which occurs through more time devoted to God through prayer, Bible reading and song.

Lord's Prayer and is joined again by everyone in one final unified request. The Lord's Prayer ends the atonement session and church members come to the woman and congratulate her, shake her hand, hug her and/or offer a word of encouragement.

I believe it is the reacceptance process that connects *prayer mamas* to the village, on a level that is not charismatic or church based. The same enticements that meander through Derolengam and into each villager's mind are just as much a problem for *prayer mamas. Prayer mamas* sometimes give into temptation, they do make mistakes, and they do acknowledge their "*pasin* no good." As Deta put it one afternoon while we made my final walk along the Telefolmin loop road:

> *Christina,* prayer mamas *make mistakes too. Make sure you write that,* prayer mamas *make mistakes too. This is why* Papa God *died, because He knew we [the human race] would sin. We [*prayer mamas*] are children of God, we mess up too. But we also ask for forgiveness and want to not sin. We want to always be one hundred percent Christians with good* pasin. *But sometimes it is hard. We make mistakes too.* (1 August 2008)[6]

I believe that making mistakes and the resulting humility places *prayer mamas* on a level of immanent, rather than transcendent individual; thus making *prayer mamas* easier to acknowledge and understand, listen to and respect.

Charging Forward: *prayer mamas* generating support

Prayer mamas as sinners, and not just as spiritual exemplars, help them coordinate and implement projects for the betterment of Derolengam, particularly fundraising. The mentality that surrounds money in Derolengam is that there is never enough because paying school fees and buying tradestore goods are two of the biggest

---

[6] Conversation in English

worries women talk about. Several years ago *prayer mamas* had a weekend fundraiser of selling *plaua* (fried dough) at *Benddown Market* to raise the cash needed to buy wood, nails, and hire a carpenter and his son to make pews for the church. Another fundraiser occurred when a village man died of AIDS in July 2008. *Prayer mamas* sold garden produce and deep fried dough rectangles stuffed with greens, *Maggi* noodles, and tinned beef at *Benddown Market* for coffin materials (plywood/nails) and food for a week of meals at the *haus krai,*[7] since the normal generosity of villagers was lacking due to the shame surrounding the cause of death. Additionally, *prayer mamas* organize Thanksgiving, an annual event to raise money for community projects.

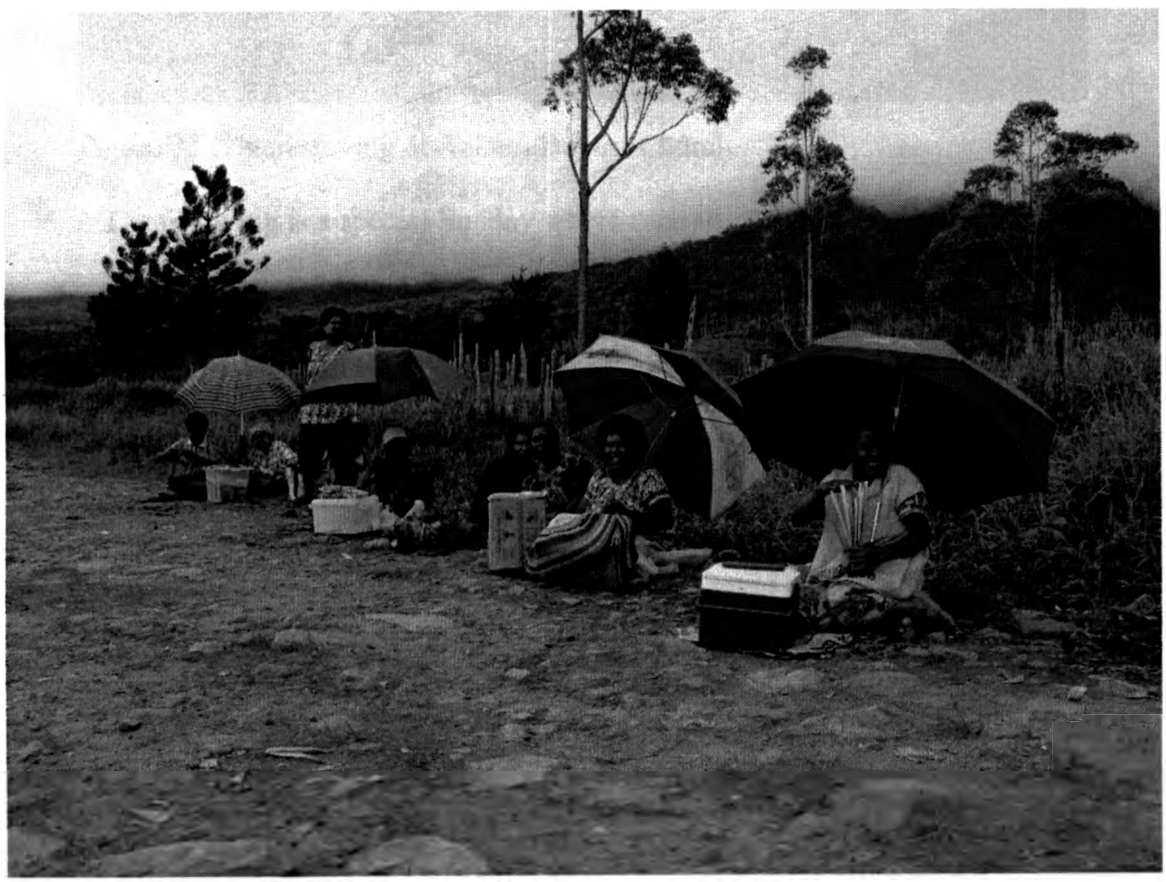


Figure 30 *Prayer mamas* holding a fundraiser at *Benddown Market.*

[7] *Haus krai* is the home of the person that died, which is full of visitors for seven to ten days.

Figure 31 Thanksgiving at Ankem Baptist Church.

Thanksgiving is a special Sunday where each ward donates garden produce that is auctioned off at the end of the church service. On this day, the service starts an hour earlier than normal and a visiting pastor gives the sermon. Thanksgiving 2007 for Derolengam Baptist Church generated enough money to buy wood, nails, tin roofing, two toilets, and pay the freight for the church renovation. Thanksgiving 2008[8] is aimed at generating enough money for wood, nails and paint to build a new front porch and put up new fly-wire screens for the windows of the church. The Women's Fellowship at Ankem Baptist church, the village ten minutes past Derolengam, held their Thanksgiving two weeks before I left. Six compounds donated several *bilums* over-flowing with garden produce: yellow and green long beans, carrots, pumpkins, three different types of greens, yellow bananas, cooking bananas, taro, sweet potato, oranges, lemons, avocadoes,

[8] Organized for September 2008.

pandanus, sugar fruit, *lalas* fruit, sugarcane and corn. The assortment of produce was above and beyond anything ever sold at *Benddown Market*, took less than ten minutes to sell out and generated over 5,000 Kina. People from surrounding villages walked in to participate in the fundraiser, only to leave empty handed because they were not quick enough. The money generated flew two Ankem men to Port Moresby to buy a sound system for Ankem Baptist Church.

Prayer mamas use their knowledge of village life to organize programs they feel benefit Derolengam the most. In organizing programs, *prayer mamas* often work with Baptist Union Papua New Guinea (BUPNG) which offers free or subsidized programs ranging from health care to craft and trade classes. BUPNG funds, which are sometimes padded with Australian Aid (AUSAid), are used to fly qualified teachers to Telefolmin from other cities in Papua New Guinea, and purchase the materials needed for their stay.

Prayer mamas are responsible for the organization of educational programs for the development and well being of Derolengam. Four times a year the Telefolmin AIDS coordinator conducts a two-week long peer awareness course in Derolengam on AIDS care and prevention, through the help and organization of *prayer mamas*. Students also learn about other sexually transmitted infections, gender equality, alcohol and drug abuse, marital violence and how to educate one's peers on these subjects. At the end of the course a pig feast is held and all the students receive a certificate of completion. Additionally, *prayer mamas* coordinate literacy classes that transpire two nights a week during twelve-week sessions and are free for all villagers.

Beyond general education, women's health is a major concern of *prayer mamas,* who arrange educational seminars. Healthcare workers from the Telefolmin *haus sik*

come to Derolengam Baptist Church and educate villagers on how to prevent sickness and pregnancy via "family planning"[9] (birth control shots). Women are also taught the importance of nutrition and immunizations for infants and toddlers and how to avoid contracting malaria.

Women's Fellowship also has a sewing class that occurs one Saturday a month. All villagers are invited to learn to sew[10] or make different styles of curtains, net bags or women's dresses. Women sign up for this class in advance and pay five to ten Kina, which buys fabric, lace, and buttons from Tabubil. Some women bring old curtains, dresses, or fabric to reuse or share. Moreover, some of the items made are later sold at *Benddown Market,* with the profits donated to the church and/or Women's Fellowship.

To help with the shortage and unstable flow of income, *prayer mamas* organized a "Budget" seminar for the Tuesday afternoon after my Saturday departure. All villagers were invited to learn the importance of how to manage one's income. This seminar was broadcast to the congregation on my final Sunday and talked about throughout the week at *Benddown Market.*

For the residents of Derolengam *prayer mamas* continue to be a channel of outside information. When Ok Tedi shut down Tabubil's airport to all flights except Ok Tedi mining flights,[11] *prayer mamas* were the ones to announce it. When the 408 Gang[12]

---

[9] Family planning is only available for married women.

[10] Women brought their own foot pedal, sewing machines, which appear to be from pre-independence.

[11] Ok Tedi Mining Limited owns the airport in Tabubil, not the government. Therefore, MAF does not have rights to use this airport and must therefore abide and respect any regulations OTML feels is necessary to maintain a safe mining township. This includes no MAF flights in/out of Tabubil. However, a four hour meeting addressed the situation of safety and the need for MAF to continue to use Tabubil as a daily base, which OTML

painted graffiti on different public buildings and structures in Vanimo, *prayer mamas* relayed the information to the village with the request that everyone pray for God's protection. When Carol Aminip[13] organized Michael Somare's visit to Telefolmin to obtain gas and oil exploration licenses for Telefolip landowners, Derolengam's *prayer mamas* informed everyone of the controversial visit. "We walked through the town telling everyone how she is part of Operation Joshua (OJ)[14] and not to trust her, regardless of what she or Michael Somare said the following day" explained Maria when I questioned Carol Aminip's involvement with Derolengam.

> *She is a very bad person, a* giaman (con-artist). *We [*prayer mamas*] know that OJ is a bad thing. We know she is no good and lies. She caused many problems for Telefolmin. Her "whiteman's* sangguma*" caused the death of two MAF pilots in 2005.*[15] *We know she is bad. OJ is not a good thing and we [*prayer mamas*] told everyone not to trust her.* (Maria, 24 July 2008)

In reading this brief sketch of Women's Fellowship programs in Derolengam, one can begin to understand how the actions of *prayer mamas* inform, influence and produce change.

---

agreed to so long as MAF regulated the goods/people coming in/out of Tabubil via their services.

[12] The 408 is locally understood as a terrorist gang that has come from Indonesia into Papua New Guinea at the Vanimo border and is causing problems. It is rumored that this group is a fundamentalist Islamic group and threatens Christianity.

[13] A local entrepreneur and one of the heads of the Operation Joshua (OJ) movement.

[14] Operation Joshua is a charismatic movement based on 'Third Wave Evangelism;' there are mixed emotions about this movement and its credibility. See Jorgensen 2005 for further information.

[15] *Sangguma* is a generic Tok Pisin term for lethal sorcery; the attribution of new forms to "white men" has become increasingly common over the last decade. Much debate and mystery surrounds the crash and subsequent death of two MAF pilots in 2005. Bad weather, combined with pilot error, is the MAF understanding of the crash, but to many locals, it was the cursing of the plane by Carol Aminip that is the cause.

Christianity unites, *prayer mamas* unite

The relatively recent spread of Pentecostal varieties of Christianity has been the focus of scholarly attention (Robbins 2004b). *Rebaibal* Christianity is one variant of this, and it is through these avenues that one can understand the social processes that are changing Derolengam. Christianity has continuously provided a lens of understanding for *prayer mamas*, an interpretation that not only tells *prayer mamas* how they could live, but that they should live. And it is through the happenings of Women's Fellowship that highlight *prayer mamas'* desires to be a part of a global Christian identity.

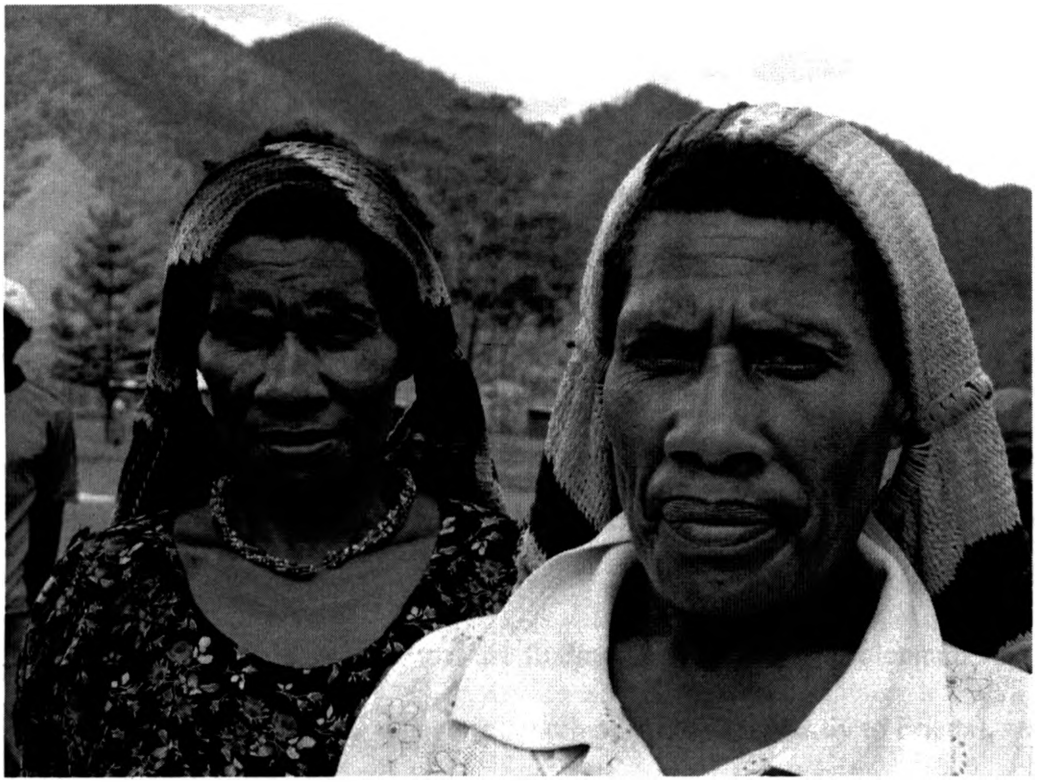


Figure 32 *Prayer mamas* at *Benddown Market.*

Being a *prayer mama* and part of Women's Fellowship has become an alternative to traditional ideas of womanhood in Derolengam and is a way for women to interpret and manage their lives under changing circumstances. What these women have taken on, as an identity, is that of leadership through the lens of charismatic Christianity. Women's

Fellowship is also a place for women who find something lacking, be it virtues, religious knowledge, love, support, friendship, husbands or garden help. And through this network *prayer mamas* have found the community that they desire, as well as a voice within the village (Lewis 1966). Additionally, *prayer mamas*, as agents of Christianity, help organize Derolengam by taking the lead in various learning opportunities that enable local development and create connections to the outside world (cf. McDougall 2003). Thus, *prayer mamas* are shaping Derolengam's future through the changes they create, and are doing so under the umbrella charismatic Christianity.

Closing Thoughts

I have not gone to the garden because of malaria[16] *and have very little money. My dad is sick and cannot go to the garden either. And I am worried, I stayed up all night and worried and prayed and read my Bible with that candle flashlight you gave me. I thought what will we eat? I asked* Papa God *to help me. I prayed and prayed. And today, this morning when I came to school, Letty gave me some extra sweet potatoes from her garden. And then you just gave me 20 kina for no reason. And I know* Papa God *is taking care of me. He heard me pray and then He sent you and Letty to me today. We [*her family*] are going to be okay.* Papa God *always takes care of me because I live my life for Him.* (Deta, 18 July 2008)[17]

Now that fewer cash remittances are finding their way into Derolengam via Ok Tedi, and as more men leave the village in search of money (primarily to Frieda), women are taking on the everyday jobs that were once the responsibility of men. Women are

[16] When the man died of AIDS in Derolengam, *prayer mamas* stayed in his house for a week with his wife. During this time they did ritualized crying, praying to Papa God, and took care of his wife. They also slept throughout the house on the floor, without blankets, pillows or mosquito nets. This resulted in 50 cases of malaria the following week—Deta being one of them. And when a woman is sick with malaria she cannot go work her gardens.

[17] Conversation in English.

finding alternative ways to supplement the family's income through *Benddown Market.* Women are practicing unconventional ways to build new gardens by requesting the help of Youths or *prayer mamas.*

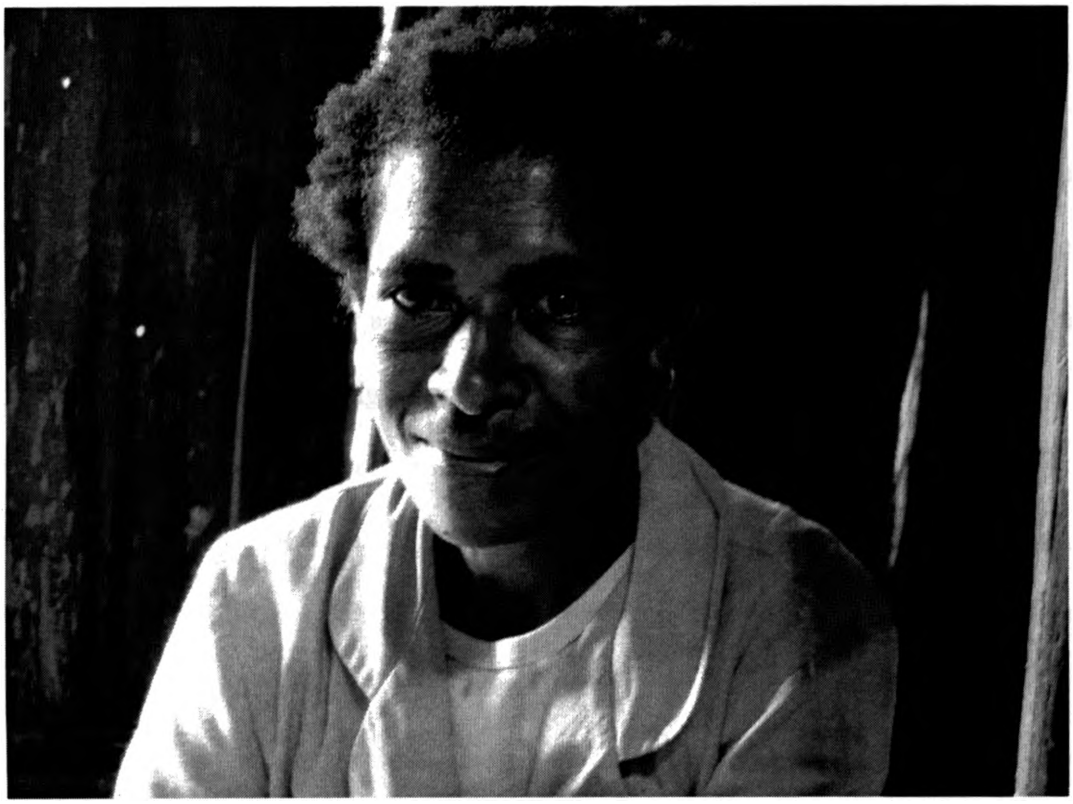


Figure 33 Deta.

Yet, why has it become women's responsibility to help the village, maintain the family, and carry these burdens? When I questioned men on women's increasing village or family responsibilities without help by the males that remain in the village I received the response: "That is woman's work." For the past twenty-five years men have been leaving Derolengam in search of work, with employment that usually resulted in a steady flow of remittances. The men that left found other responsibilities and roles, and in doing so were able to help their family with the income they made. However, the decrease in labor at Ok Tedi has disrupted this relationship. Men who no longer have an income at

Tabubil have returned to Derolengam, only to leave the valley in search of money. Others sit around and avoid subsistence tasks since man's work is earning money, and there is no money to be made in Derolengam. This situation has created a void, a void that is not filled by remittances but rather by women's hard work.

However, one should consider that the situation is not as bad as it seems. For many of these women, though times are tough, and though they have a heavier burden to bear, they also have a place in the church, the support from a group, and a voice in the village. Although life is harder and many women suffer from *bikpela hevi*, *prayer mamas* understand their worries as a sign from God to get back on track. And though it is a difficult responsibility to take on, this void is also appreciated. With proper action, a woman will not only get back on track but also earn a place in Heaven. So, to succeed, to pay school feels and keep one's family fed, to have money and food to give to the church by offering each Sunday, are all signs from God that one is doing the right thing.

For Deta, a widowed woman who finds solace in Women's Fellowship and lives her life as a *prayer mama*, the ability to make ends meet and feed her family is proof to herself that she is in good standing with *Papa God.* From Deta's perspective, times are bad but God is providing her with the necessary means in order to manage all of her increasing responsibilities so long as she lives her life for Him.

Looking to the future

A woman's role in Derolengam is to be a provider and caregiver. Women are to take care of the gardens, the family and the pigs, as well as any other responsibilities that come into maintaining village life. However, through Women's Fellowship, women have found an alternative position and voice. In the light of the positive role that *prayer*

mamas are playing in Derolengam, I hypothesize that the difficulties of villagers' adjustment to mine closure will increasingly be managed through Christian women's groups.

Figure 34 Girls singing at Sunday service.

When considering the future of Derolengam and where anthropological research should go from here, I think it is important to link development, gender and Christianity when attempting to understand the effects of mine closure. It is my hope that this research has generated interest and is just the beginning of subsequent research in the anthropology of mining, women and Christianity. In closing I ask several questions worth pursuing: what happens when Ok Tedi closes in 2013—will men return to Derolengam and compete for their previous social roles? Will they move to Frieda River or another mining site? Further, if men do return to Derolengam, will women accept them

into the village structure and life? Will this cause *bikpela hevi* to subside? Or will *bikpela hevi* increase, and if so, how will women understand and manage the changes? Moreover, will the church continue play such a central role in village life and remain a source of inspiration and hope? Or will women be looking for other sources of encouragement and power?

References

Anderson, Benedict
1983 Imagined Communities. London, New York: Verso.

Abu-Lughod, Lila
1991 Writing Against Culture. *In* Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present. Richard G. Fox, ed. Pp. 137-62. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

Barker, John
1996 Village Inventions: Historical Variations upon a Regional Theme in Uiaku, Papa New Guinea. Oceania 66(3):211-29.
2007 Ancestral Lines: The Maisin of Papua New Guinea and the Fate of the Rainforest. Toronto: Broadview Press.

Bennett, Keith and Lindsay Smith
1983 A Revival Movement among the Telefolmin Baptist Churches. *In* Religious Movements in Melanesia: A Selection of Case Studies and Reports. Wendy Flannery, ed. Pp. 127-146. Garoka: Kristen Pres INC.

Boddy, Janice
1994 Spirit Possession Revisited: Beyond Instrumentality. Annual Review of Anthropology 23:407-434.

Brown, Barbara B.
1983 The Impact of Male Labour Migration on Women in Botswana. African Affairs 82(328):367-388.

Brutti, Lorenzo
1999 Afek's Last Son: Integrating Change in a Papua New Guinean Cosmology. Ethnohistory 47(1):101-111.

Dodson, Belinda
2001 Discrimination by Default? Gender Concerns in South African Migration Policy. Africa Today 48(3): 73-89.

Douglas, Bronwen
2000 Introduction: Hearing Melanesian Women. *In* Women and Governance from the Grassroots in Melanesia. Bronwen Douglas, ed. Pp. 3-7. State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Discussion Paper 00/2. Canberra: SSGM Project, Australia National University. 3-7. Online <http://rspas.anu.edu/au/melanesia/2000.htm>
2001 From Invisible Christians to Gothic Theatre: The Romance of the Millennial in Melanesian Anthropology. Current Anthropology 42(5):615-650.
2003 Christianity, Tradition, and Everyday Modernity: Towards an Anatomy of

Women's Groupings in Melanesia. Oceania74(1):6-23.

Dundon, Alison
2002 Dancing Around Development: Crisis in Christian Country in Western Province, Papua New Guinea. Oceania 72:215-229.
2004 Tea and Tinned Fish: Christianity, Consumption and the Nation in Papua New Guinea. Oceania 75:73-88.
2007 Warrior Women, the Holy Spirit and HIV/AIDS in Rural Papua New Guinea. Oceania 77:29-42.

Eriksen, Annelin
2006 Expected and unexpected cultural heroes: Reflections on gender and agency of conjuncture on Ambrym, Vanuatu. Anthropology Theory 6(2)227-247.

Filer, Collin and Maratha Macintyre
2006 Grass Roots and Deep Holes: Community Responses to Mining in Melanesia. The Contemporary Pacific 18(2):215-231

Hess, Sabine
2006 Strathern's Melanesian 'Dividual' and the Christian 'Individual': A Perspective from Vanua Lava, Vanuatu. Oceania 76:285-296.

Houstoun, M. F., Kramer R. G., Barrett,J. M.
1984 Female predominance of immigration in the United States since 1930: a first look. International Migration Review 18:908-963.

Jacka, Jerry
2005 Emplacement and Millennial Expectations in an Era of Development and Globalization: Heaven and the Appeal of Christianity among the Ipili. American Anthropologist. 107(4):643-653.

Jackson, Richard
1993 Cracked Pot or Copper Bottom Investment? The Development of the Ok Tedi project 1982-1991: a Personal View. Towsnville: Melanesian Student Ceter, James Cook University North Queensland.

Jacobson, Shari
2008 Modernity, Conservative Religious Movements, and the Female Subject: Newly Ultraorthodox Sephardi Women in Buenos Aires. American Anthropologist 108(2):336-346.

Jetley, Surinder
1987 Impact of Male Migration on Rural Females. Economic and Political Weekly 22(44):WS42-WS53.

Jorgensen, Dan

1981a Life on the Fringe: History and Society in Telefolmin. *In* The Plight of Peripheral People in Papua New Guinea. Robert J. Gordon, ed. Pp. 59-79. Cambridge MA: Cultural Survival.
1981b Taro and Arrows: Order, Entropy and Religion among the Telefolmin. Doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia.
1991 Big men, great men and women: alternate logics of gender difference. *In* Big Men and Great Men: Personifications of Power in Melanesia. M. Godelier and M. Strathern, eds. Pp. 256-71. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
1993 Money and marriage in Telefolmin. *In* The Business of Marriage, R. Marksbury, ed. Pp. 57-82. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.
1996 Regional history and ethnic identity in the hub of New Guinea: the emergence of the Min. *In* Regional Histories in the Western Pacific, J. Barker and D. Jorgensen, eds. Pp. 189-210. Oceania Special Issue. 66:3.
2002 The Invention of Culture, Magalim, and the Holy Spirit. Social Analysis 46(1):69-79.
2005 Third Wave Evangelism and the Politics of the Global in Papua New Guinea: Spiritual Warfare and the Recreation of Place in Telefolmin. Oceania 75:444-461.
2006 Hinterland history: the Ok Tedi mine and its cultural consequences in Telefolmin. The Contemporary Pacific 18(2):233-263.
2007 Changing Minds: Hysteria and the History of Spirit Mediumship in Telefolmin. *In* The Anthropology of Morality in Melanesia and Beyond, J. Barker, ed. Pp. 113-130. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Josephides, Lisette
2008 Melanesian Odysseys: Negotiating the self, narrative and modernity. New York: Berghahn Books.

Lee, Everett
1966 A Theory of Migration. Demography 3:47-57.

Lewis, I.M.
1966 Spirit Possession and Deprivation Cults. Man 1(3):307-320.

Lohmann, Roger Ivar
2000 The Role of Dreams in Religious Enculturation among the Asabano of Papua New Guinea. Ethos 28(1):75-102.
2001 Introduced Writing and Christianity: Differential Access to Knowledge Among the Asabano. Ethnology 40:93-111.
2007 Morals and Missionary Positionality: Diyos of Duranmin. *In* The Anthropology of Morality in Melanesia and Beyond. John Barker, ed. Pp. 131-147. Burlington: Ashgate Press.

Macintyre, Martha
1998 Persistence of Inequality: Women in Papua New Guinea since Independence. *In* Modern Papua New Guinea. L. Zimmer-Tamakoshi, ed. Thomas Jefferson University Press: Missouri, 211-231.

McDougall, Debra
2003 Fellowship and Citizenship as Models of National Community: United Church Women's Fellowship in Ranongga, Solomon Islands. Oceania 74:61-80.

Moore, Henrietta
1988 Feminism and Anthropology. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

OTML [Ok Tedi Mining Limited]
2009 Ok Tedi Mining – More than a Mine: Mine Closure Planning. Electronic document accessed 18 May, 2009 at: http://www.oktedi.com/operations/mine-closure-planning .

Pedraza, Silvia
1991 Women and Migration: The Social Consequences of Gender. Annual Review of Sociology. 17:303-325.

Polier, Nicole
1998 True transgressions: refusal and recolonization in the narrative of a Papuan migrant 'bighead.' Feminist Studies 24(3):511-534.
1999 Culture, community and the crisis of modernity in Papua New Guinea. Political and Legal Anthropology Review 22(1)55-65.
2000 Commoditization, cash and kinship in postcolonial Papua New Guinea. *In* Commodities and Globalization: Anthropological Perspectives. A. Haugerud, M.P. Stone and P.D. Little, eds. Pp. 197-218. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.

Robbins, Joel
1995 Dispossessing the Spirits: Christian Transformations of Desire and Ecology among the Urapmin of Papua New Guinea. Ethnology 34(3):211-224.
1998 On Reading 'World News': Apocalyptic Narrative, Negative Nationalism, and Transnational Christianity in a Papua New Guinea Society. Social Analysis 42(2):103-130.
2001 Whatever Became of Revival? From Charistmatic Movement to Charismatic Church in a Papua New Guinea Society. Journal of Ritual Studies 15(2):79-90.
2004a Becoming Sinners: Christianity and Moral Torment in a Papua New Guinea Society. Berkeley: University of California Press.
2004b The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity. Annual Review of Anthropology 33:117-143.

Sahlins, Marshall
1985 Islands of History. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
1999 'Two or Three Things I know about Culture.' Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute. 5(3):399-421.
2004 Apologies to Thucydides. Understanding History as Culture and Vice Versa. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
2005 'Structural Work: How Microhistories becomes Macrohistories and Vice Versa'. Anthropological Theory 5(1):5-30.

Schieffelin, E.L.
1981 Evangelical Rhetoric and the Transformation of Traditional Culture in Papua New Guinea. Comparative Studies in Society and History 23(1):150- 156.
1983 Anger and shame in the tropical forest. Ethos 11:181-191.
1996 Evil Spirit Sickness, The Christian Disease: Innovation of a New Syndrome of Mental Derangement and Redemption in Papua New Guinea. Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry 20:1-39.

Strathern, Marilyn
1988 The Gender of the Gift. Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Tuzin, Donald
1997 The Cassowary's Revenge: The Life and Death of Masculinity in a New Guinea Society. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ulicki, Theresa and Jonathan Crush
2000 Gender, Farmwork, and Woman's Migration from Lesotho to the New South Africa. Canadian Journal of African Studies. 34(1)64:79.

Wardlow, Holly
2001 The Mount Kare Python: Huli Myths and Gendered Fantasies of Agency. *In* Mining and Indigenous Lifeworlds in Australia and Papua New Guinea. Alan Rumsey and James F. Weiner, eds. Pp. 31-67. Adelaide: Crawford House.
2002a "Hands-Up"-ing buses and harvesting Cheese-Pops: gendered mediation of modern disjuncture in Melanesia. *In* Critically Modern: Alternatives, Alterities, Anthropologies, Bruce Knauft, ed. Pp. 144-172. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
2002b Headless ghosts and roving women: specters of modernity in Papua New Guinea. American Ethnologist 29(1):5-32.
2004 Wayward Women: Sexuality and Agency in a New Guinea Society. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Whitehead, Harriet
2000 Food rules: hunting, sharing and tabooing game in Papua New Guinea. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Zimmer-Tamakoshi, Laura
1993 Bachelors, Spinsters, and 'Pamuk Meris'. *In* The Business of Marriage: Transformations in Oceanic Matrimony. Rick Marksbury, ed. Pp. 83-104. University of Pittsburgh Press.
1998 Papua New Guinea Women in 'Town: Housewives, Homemakers, and Household Managers. *In* Modern Papua New Guinea. L. Zimmer-Tamakoshi, ed. Pp. 195-210. Thomas Jefferson University Press.