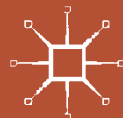
Culture, Mind, and Society

Yabar

The Alienations of Murik Men in a Papua New Guinea Modernity

David Lipset



Culture, Mind, and Society

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Cover illustration: Murik men’s carvings at a sale for tourists.

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For Diana, the huntress

Series Editor Preface

Psychological anthropologists study a wide spectrum of human activity: child development, illness and healing, ritual and religion, personality and political and economic systems, just to name a few. In fact, as a discipline that seeks to understand the interconnections between persons and culture, it would be difficult to come up with examples of human behavior that are outside the purview of psychological anthropology. Yet beneath this substantive diversity lies a common commitment. The practitioners of psychological anthropology seek to understand social activity in ways that are fitted to the mental and physical dimensions of human beings. Psychological anthropologists may focus on emotions or human biology, on language or art or dreams, but they rarely stray far from the attempt to understand the possibilities and the limitations on the ground of human persons.

Professor David Lipset describes men of the Murik Lakes region of Papua New Guinea, who find themselves caught in a sort of cultural limbo, suspended between their older ways and the wider world of a modern nation-state, a global economy and accelerating climate change. In particular, Dr. Lipset looks at the challenges of realizing masculinity in an environment in which neither precolonial culture nor modernity possesses an indisputable authority. In this cultural cacophony, men find themselves alienated not only from their social world but from their very selves. Yet—and in contrast to many studies of the march of modernity—Dr. Lipset does not depict his subjects as scrambling to adapt to a new hegemony.

In rich detail, he describes a number of social realms characterized by a multiplicity of cultural possibilities. While these possibilities leave no comfortable resting place, at the same time they provide opportunities for expression, dialogue and humanity.

Peter Stromberg

Preface

By way of introducing the topic of this book, I want to begin with a word about the meaning of its title and my relationship to it. As an American cultural and psychological anthropologist who is interested in various aspects of the relationship of tribal men to modernity, I have been doing fieldwork on this issue in Papua New Guinea (PNG) since I was a young man in the early 1980s. My research has primarily focused on men and masculinity among the Murik Lakes people, a rural society of coastal fisherfolk and traders who have been living with economic, religious and sociopolitical change since early twentieth century. Now from what I have come to gather, the *yabar* were venerated and feared as their most powerful ancestor-spirits in their precolonial Murik cosmology. Of all of the many ancestors in that archaic world, the *yabar* were attributed the greatest capacity to change the environment and persons. For example, two of them travelled widely in the coastal region, presenting people with outrigger-canoe technology, scattering mangrove propagules and leaving relics of their escapades along the coast. In Murik society even today, *yabar*-spirits use magic to make people terminally ill or just to cause a nagging cold.

Today, many Murik call white people *yabar goan* and *gnasen*, the "sons and daughters of *yabar*-spirits." I had always assumed that the extension of the term originated as a kind of a first-contact, millenarian association of Western wealth and agency with the ancestors of the kind that has been reported elsewhere in PNG and throughout the Pacific region. But upon occasion, I also heard rural Murik referring to middle-class Papua New Guineans as children of "*yabar*." During a casual conversation about the moral qualities of life in town in 2013, a senior widower offered up a

rather unexceptional contrast, which nevertheless startled me for his use of the term *yabar* in noun form. Although it was late in the morning, Sailas had just gotten up, having spent the predawn hours out fishing in the bay in a little outrigger canoe his deceased wife had used. "You people," he remarked, "who live in *yabar* are all right. You are paid salaries. We have to [do subsistence] work in order to eat."

Not until that moment had I drawn the obvious inference. If PNG nationals were no less "sons and daughters of *yabar*" than expatriate whites, then *yabar* had become a vernacular term for a "modernity" that was indifferent to race or cultural background. *Yabar* had become a vision of modernity that referred to a bureaucratic market economy in which paychecks and salaries were distributed every two weeks, as well as, more generally, to a time and space in which people and the environment were subject to massive moral and technological transformations. Of course, Sailas was also criticizing life in *yabar* on ethical grounds. It was for him an immoral economy, a time and space lacking in love, nurture and support. More specifically, it was a time and space of masculine alienation where Murik men lacked the desire that might once have been felt and expressed for them.

The thesis of this book is that such ideas as "yabar" are part of a dialogue of masculine alienation from modernity which preoccupies Murik men. However, I take this notion of "dialogue of alienation" a step or two further. That is to say, not only do Murik men speak of and act in terms of their disaffection from modernity in PNG, their estrangement also extends to their own culture, which I will call their "archaic." Clearly, in Sailas' comment, *yabar* no longer denotes the ancestors at all. The term has been emptied out of all its former cosmological meaning. In this sense, "yabar" expresses not a single but a dual alienation. I want to make a stronger point, however, which is that even before its contemporary expressions of deprivation, and so on, masculinity was already an alienated subject position in and from the Murik archaic.

This argument arose from long-term fieldwork in dialogue with comparative and theoretical analyses; I must also acknowledge, however, that the concept of alienation is one in which I have a bit of personal investment. It is true that the Ashkenazi Jews from whom I descend found themselves on the margins of a Euro-American modernity to which they fled, while Murik men, like men throughout the developing world, find themselves on the edges of modernity, not because they were forced to relocate to them, but rather because the political, economic and cultural

grounds of their lives shifted beneath them. As John Murray Cuddihy diagnosed in his extraordinary book *The Ordeal of Civility* (1987), Jewish intellectuals, having to conform to ambient expectations for emotion and thought that were foreign to them, answered creatively by making various kinds of social and theoretical "scenes" that kept the Gentiles at bay. But what is interesting is that–and this is the crucial point of overlap between them and the alienation of Murik men—modernizing Jewish intellectuals *were no less estranged from themselves* than they were from modernity. Thus Cuddihy observes that Jews were "caught between 'his own' whom he had left behind and the Gentile 'host culture' where he felt ill at ease and alienated" (1987: 4). Oddly perhaps, I share this sort of dual alienation with the Papua New Guinean men of the Murik Lakes who are the focus of this book. My ordeal as a man in the Diaspora and theirs in the *Yabar* are not identical of course, but I think the latter has helped me appreciate the former and *vice versa*.

When Murik men create new folk drama or debate rising sea levels, they speak of a time and space not of the self but of the other; however, following Simmel, Freud and Lacan, I view alienation, whether singular or dual, not as a position of helplessness and moping but as productive, if haltingly so. Certainly, composing this book has not been obvious or pleasant. But let me acknowledge the help and support I have received while doing the research for and writing it.

The fieldwork, which I began with my ex-wife, Kathleen Barlow, and the support of the Anthropology Department at UC San Diego, continued into the following decade with the support of the Australian Museum in Sydney, where Lissant Bolton and Jim Specht were then its primary sponsors. It went on in the early 1990s, now with the support of the Fowler Museum of Cultural Studies at UCLA, where Doron Ross supported a useful fieldtrip that became Chap. 5. I then did not return to the field until 2001, when, at the encouragement of my Minnesota colleague, Steven Gudeman, I undertook the first of seven fieldtrips, data from which informs this book. These received financial support from the Firebird Foundation of Portland Maine as well from the Anthropology Department at the University of Minnesota, specifically the Wilford Fund for Anthropological Research, the Imagine Fund in the College of Liberal Arts and from Travel Grants administered by Global Programs and Strategy Alliance.

A few incidents of fieldwork that primarily took place during 1993–2014 are scattered through this book. Practicing the Malinowskian method of long-term participant-observation, I appear in the villages, at meetings

and feasts in Men's Cult Houses or breakfasting in peoples' houses. I appear standing with Murik informants in the parking lot of a hotel in the national capital as well as sitting behind a betel nut stall along a road in a provincial town. Perhaps, pulling together a coherent narrative from these events might prove somewhat interesting. But the overriding sentiment to which I want to call attention here is the generous cordiality of Papua New Guineans, fictive Murik kin, and many others in that great nation.

Too numerous to mention, I would like at least to make call attention to a few of the more important people. In Port Moresby, I regularly met with Elijah and Anna Ginau and Andrew and Anna Emang as well Stalin Jawa, Andrew's brother. Prof. Steven Winduo and the Right Honorable Sir Michael and Lady Veronica Somare were helpful. In Wewak town, the provincial capital of the East Sepik Province, I was a routine guest of the late Wanuk and Bonoai and their family among whom I spent many happy hours sitting, eating and talking beneath the shade of the Starfruit tree in their yard. There, and elsewhere in town, I also had conversations with Maia, Nelson Kaiango, Sailas, whom I mentioned above, Jacob Ginau, Makus Murakau, Tom Sauma, Wangi and Nick Matui, among others. In the sister Murik villages of Darapap and Karau, I benefitted from dialogue with Andrew Komsing, Jamero, Yaase, James Kaparo and his wife, Regina, Joshua Sivik, Wapo, John Jawa, Smith Jakai, Mata and Errol, Frankie and Tabanus Wambu, Johnny Sakara and Evelyn, Noah Pame, Reuben Wapo, the late Luke Manambot and his second wife, Tekla, the late Joe Kabong and his two wives, Paulina and Du, Simon Baik, the late Willie Koki, his wife, Samoya, and their daughter, Aggie and her two sons, among many others.

I have been a faculty member of the Anthropology Department at the University of Minnesota during the entire time I did the research for, and wrote, this book. It has been a supportive intellectual and social environment. I thank the following colleagues at Minnesota: Mischa Penn, Timothy Dunnigan, William Beeman, John Ingham, Hoon Song and Steven Gudeman.

Of my little stream of Minnesota students and former students who contributed to this project, whether or not they knew they were doing so, I want to acknowledge Katherine Boris Dernbach, Joseph Esser, Jamon Halvaksz, Bridget Henning, Steve Kensinger, Eric K. Silverman, Amir Pouyan Shiva and Jolene Stritecky-Braun.

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While the Introduction and the Afterword were written specifically for this volume, each of its ethnographic chapters first appeared as journal articles between 2004 and 2011. I thank the editors and anonymous reviewers for their support but more importantly for their criticism. And I strongly dispel any suspicion that what have now become chapters in this book are merely republications of these earlier pieces. Not only have they been thoroughly revised in terms of a new theoretical argument which each serves to illustrate, they have also been updated where relevant.

Chapter 2 draws from two articles: "Modernity Without Romance: Masculinity and Desire in Courtship Stories Told by Young Papua New Guinean Men," *American Ethnologist* 31(2): 205–224 (2004), and "Women Without Qualities: Further Courtship Stories Told by Young Papua New Guinean Men," *Ethnology* 46(2): 93–111 (2007). Chapter 3 was partly published as "Tobacco, Good and Bad: Prosaics of Marijuana in a Sepik Society," *Oceania* 76: 245–257 (2006). Chapter 4 draws from "Mobail: Moral Ambivalence and the Domestication of Mobile Telephones in Peri-Urban Papua New Guinea," *Culture, Theory and Critique* 54(3): 335–354. Chapter 5 draws from "A Melanesian Pygmalion: Masculine Creativity and Symbolic Castration in a Postcolonial Backwater," *Ethos* 37(1): 50–78. Chapter 6 draws from "'Skirts-Money-Masks,' and other Chains of Signification in Post-Colonial Papua New Guinea," in D. Lipset and P. Roscoe (eds.) *Echoes of the Tambaran: Masculinity, History and the Subject* (Canberra: ANU E Press). Chapter 7 is based on "The Tides: Masculinity and Climate Change in Coastal Papua New Guinea," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (NS) 17: 20–43.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Masculinity, Modernity, Papua New Guinea

This book focuses on dimensions of alienation among Murik men who live in rural and peri-urban communities in a new postcolonial state, Papua New Guinea (PNG). By "alienation of men," I refer to aspects of ungratified desire that are implicit and explicit in how they size up and act in characteristic circumstances in which they live. Analyses of several contexts reveal alienation not only in and from modernity in PNG but also in and from what I shall call "archaic" Murik culture. Moreover, I argue that dialogue between these two alienations is audible. Before introducing Murik society and PNG, I must start this introduction by enlarging on the four cardinal terms of my project: masculinity, modernity, alienation and dialogue.

Masculinities

A major theoretical view of gender, to which I subscribe, holds that difference consists of a set of culturally constructed ideologies, statuses and practices as well as a biological form of embodiment (Mead 1963; Foucault 1978; Strathern 1988; Ortner 1996; Butler 2006). My interest here lies in the former, particularly because along the peripheries of modernity, where this ethnography is set, masculine subject-positions take composite and unpredictable forms that are not reducible to any physical attribute, much less to a single modern value. While acknowledging her great contribution to masculinity studies, I must therefore take exception to R.W. Connell's well-known "hegemonic models" framework. Connell recognized that

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masculine discourse and practices—old and new, local and metropolitan, dominant and subordinate, unofficial and authorized, centripetal and centrifugal—may be plural on the global margins of modernity. But at the same time, she has tended to insist that power and esteem adhere to elites, e.g., to businessmen, politicians, soldiers, and celebrities, who possess "hegemonic masculinity" (Carrigan et al. 1985). For Connell, the "world gender order" is a system of power that such men embody and deploy (2005: 72, 1987, 1990, 1993, 2014). In other words, masculinity is an object of global discourse, but not a subject of its own signification. In an era of terrorism and fundamentalisms, such a position sounds less and less persuasive, much less comprehensive.

Theoretically, the anthropology of masculinities has adopted more of a bottom-up, contextualist perspective. Inequality, although obviously important in Latin America and elsewhere (Gutmann 2003), does not exhaust what it means to be a man. Masculinity is not only about dominance and subordination, it is rather historically dynamic and complicated. The diversity of masculinity in Japanese state-capitalism comes to mind (Roberson and Suzuki 2002). The varieties of machismo among working-class Mexican men, varieties that relate to other divisions in everyday life, would be another example (Gutmann 1996). Indigenous forms of gender identity and prestige coexist in differing ways with modernity but without being erased by the power of and models from the West. Heald (1999) traced the ambivalence with which Gisu people of Uganda judge male violence to moral contradictions in the culture. And Hodgson (2001) referred the stigma assigned to men who would abandon warrior, pastoral identities in favor of becoming modern to a local category. Normative roles and capacities of men thus become more complicated than perhaps Connell understood them. They may be and are crosscut, or "dislocated" by other forms of inequality, such as class and generation, and may even be adopted and enacted by both sexes (Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994:3). As such, the anthropology of postcolonial masculinities has had the goal of collating comparative and/or regionally based ethnography whose case studies stick to analyses of closely observed events, emotions and practices.[1]

Modernities

I take a similar approach to the ethnography of modernity, or more specifically of postcolonial modernities (Miller 1997).[2] I see them as historically situated and saturated in local values, perspectives and practices which do

not necessarily originate in capitalism or the Enlightenment, much less the Global North. Modernity, in other words, is parochial, diverse and shifting as well as universalizing. But simultaneously, I acknowledge that local values, perspectives and practices inevitably encounter a subject position that is informed by several modernist orientations that I would briefly characterize as follows (Hallowell 1955).

Exceptionalism pervades the modern subject. The modern subject has a sense of being unprecedented; it possesses extraordinary moral agency in time and space. That is, the past is assumed to be illegitimate while "all … normativity" of the present must be recreated from the "authority" of reason (Habermas 2001: 132–3). The institution that epitomizes modern exceptionalism, and the modern subject, is the sovereign state which monopolizes the distribution of universal rights to its citizenry on a bureaucratic rather than a social basis. In an oddly related vein, the modern subject is itself a kind of sovereign state, in that it also assumes that its desire is to be independent of the social. As such, it is self-aware, or reflexive. It is able to compose a self-narrative in response to its own questions about how to act, distinguish right from wrong and so forth. Not least, perhaps the key value of modern identity, objects and space is their alienability as capital rather than as fetishes or personified things. If a theme in all these elements of the modern subject is separation from moral community, from time and from space, perhaps it should not be surprising to view the definitive quality of that subject as an alienated ethos of uncertainty, loss of moral agency and estrangement.

Alienation

Accounts of alienation in early modern social theory not only took differing views of its characteristic qualities and causes; they evaluated it differently. Being critical of modernity, Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, of course, condemned alienation as a symptom of the moral damage modern society and economy were doing to community and subject. For Marx, capital disempowered both the proletariat and the bourgeoisie from moral identity, their "species-being" (1990: 708, 1963: 191; see also Kim 2003). For Durkheim, the loss of collective forms of solidarity deprived people of legitimate means to achieve legitimate ends and made them prey to their worst inclinations (1995; Horton 1964). For Weber, formal rationality eventually left men imprisoned in the meaningless pursuit of empty material and instrument purposes, emptied, that is to say, of sacred value (Weber 1958b).

Perhaps Simmel appreciated the Janus-faced qualities of modern alienation most clearly. For him, modern society made man aware of his moral distance from the other but it also brought about or constituted an inner boundary that made an autonomous self possible. However the "unavoidable corollary" of a subjective sense of freedom (Simmel 1950: 338) was a sense of "homelessness" (Berger et al. 1973: 82). In other words, for Simmel, the subject position of modern man was estranged but generative.

For reasons that should quickly become evident, I shall now shift from these preliminary notes on alienation in early modern social theory to a psychoanalytic view of alienation in the work of Jacques Lacan, the well-known French neo-Freudian. For Lacan, alienation is not distinctive of modernity. Rather, alienation constitutes the subject in all societies whatever their relationship to capital and the state might be (Morris-Reich 2005). Paradoxically, he sees the subject as deprived of desire in return for the capacity to symbolically express and fulfill itself. All persons living in the world of language and sociopolitical order, the world of signification, must implicitly "endure" a kind of moral void at the center of their being.

In this cultural world, which Lacan calls "the Symbolic," signifiers stand for themselves as well as for what he calls an archaic, prediscursive "lack." This absence refers to the loss of the desire of the other, the other being nothing less than "the locus in which is situated the chain of the signifier that governs whatever may be made of the subject—it is the field of that living being in which the subject has to appear" (Lacan 1977b: 205). The features of this lack are of course difficult to imagine since they don't exist. However at the very least they imply an amoral isolation, a kind of collective and individual emptiness in the center of subject and collective order. Thus the predicament of the Lacanian concept of identity is that to the extent persons try to find fulfillment and satisfaction in other subjects and objects in society, they recreate rather than overcome the fundamental condition that has constituted their pursuit: the loss of the desire of the other.

Except for Simmel, social theorists envisioned nineteenth- and twentieth-century modernity as an era of great wounds in which the autonomous subject was diminished by a loss of legitimate agency. Now, the Lacanian view of alienation offers two interrelated insights into this problematic. The first is that alienation is both generative as well as debilitating, and this quality is represented by a masculine trope. Lacan associated acts of signification, which is to say, communication, with a strikingly human image—a phallus, a phallus which is *not* to be confused with the organ. The Lacanian phallus is rather a signifier of presence as

well as absence. It signifies "dependence with respect to the desire of the Other" (Lacan 1977a: 17).

Its irretrievable dispossession from desire and its absent center associate the phallus with the loss of pleasure. But the register in which Lacan casts its alienation is equivocal rather than single-toned. The phallus is signified in people and things that represent both presence and absence at once. The phallus is an emptiness that appears as a force in society, thus to divide, or subtract, women from men by virtue of its illusions. Its modality is one of combination, mixture and incongruity that consists of rupture and continuity, melancholy and optimism. "The phallic signifier," as Žižek phrased this contradictory quality, "is … an index of its own impossibility. In its very positivity, it is the signifier of 'castration'—that is, of its own lack… In the phallus, loss as such attains a positive existence" (1989: 157).

In my view, as a symbol of desire, gender and moral ambiguity, the Lacanian phallus offers a useful template for a reconsideration of the alienation of masculinity in PNG.[3] However, amid postcolonial modernity, everything—every signifier of legitimacy and agency—is multiplied. That is to say, moral order is plural. Instead of a single Symbolic, multiple languages, names, cosmologies, laws, medical systems, currencies and so forth coexist, sometimes in competition with each other, as rival signs of order, and at other times in combination with each other. So instead of one Symbolic into which the phallus is exiled, I am suggesting that there may be two, both of which take their cut from the "very life" of the subject, thus to "bind him to the signifier" (Lacan 1977a: 28). Together, the two Symbolics—the archaic one and that of postcolonial modernity—give rise to unpredictable, complicated chains of masculine signification. In PNG, and this is the point that makes PNG both fascinating and analytically challenging, the former has not been eliminated or completely transformed by the latter. However inaccessible they may be elsewhere in the Pacific, modern PNG is full of archaic signifiers that continue to be both productive and empty.

Dialogism

If the Lacanian phallus suggests directions for an analysis of masculine alienation in PNG, I find the concept of "dialogue" in the work of the Russian literary critic and semiotician, Mikhail Bakhtin, useful for thinking about relationships between its archaic and modern forms (1984a). In his view, the voice is indivisibly social, or dialogical. The voice in dialogue is made up of a shifting relationship between official, or centripetal, voices

and unofficial, or centrifugal, ones. In particular, Bakhtin focused on dialogue in which non-state modes of expression challenged the power and values of authority, and were distinctively egalitarian. Though voices on the margins might be politically subordinate to official institutions in their various guises, Bakhtin insisted that they retained their own autonomous character as "unmerged" (1984a: 6). Implicit in his concept of dialogue is a notion of discourse and agency, or discursive agency, in society that emphasizes the extent to which voices contest each other in inconclusive, or what he called "unfinalized," ways (1984a: 32). Comedy, carnivalesque parody, puns and metaphor typify the egalitarian and unfixed register of the dialogical voice. Suffice it to say, it is not single-toned but composite.

For my purposes, it is impossible to overstate the point that the Bakhtinian notion of dialogue is not literal. That is to say, it is not limited to actual voices. Dialogue does or does not require speech, the utterances of actual, living persons. It is not just made up of voices talking back and forth. Voices in and of themselves, he argues, are saturated with the words of others, whether or not dialogue is actually taking place. Dialogism therefore refers both to present and absent interlocutors. It refers not only to how language may be used socially but also to how metaphor, style, intonation and so forth may themselves be understood as "answers," typically between opposing regimes of authority, that struggle with and against each other to compose a fluid discursive field. In parody, for example, the voice stylization of the other is incorporated for the purposes of ridicule. In "hidden polemic," the object of derision is implied but unacknowledged. In the novels of Dostoevsky, characters are "full of other people's words" (Bakhtin 1984a: 201). The medieval carnivalesque voice fascinated the exiled Bakhtin the most (Bakhtin 1984b). This was the voice that answered the dogmas of the state and the church in comic registers that were, in his view, open ended and transgressive, but together with the legitimate institutions they defied, constituted a coordinate, yet contrary, dialogue. And this pretty well synthesizes how I view the alienation of modernity and the archaic in PNG.

Masculine Alienation in Papua New Guinea

Having suggested a general view of men's dual alienation in which dialogue takes place between modern and archaic voices, a brief overview of some important expressions of that dual alienation is next in order. Prior to such an overview, I should mention that the pace (and quality) of

contributions to the literature on modernity in PNG has held steady since the late 1980s.[4] However, at the same time, while men have been featured, as if hidden in plain sight, masculine alienation has not been a center of analysis (with one magnificent exception, see Tuzin 1997).[5]

Under the democratic rule of an ineffective Westminster-style government, PNG is a *rentier* state (Barma 2014), or perhaps one could call it an alienated state. The economy largely depends on Asian and Western extraction industries exploiting enormous tracts of old growth forest and huge deposits of minerals and natural gas. The state is enclaved: each of its 22 provinces has a municipal center and perhaps one or two other administrative outposts that vary in size. But less than 15% of the country lives in cities and towns, and a significant proportion of the urban population are migrant villagers who inhabit squatter settlements, where they do not own the land on which they live, and whose employment status is often uncertain. Jobs in town, as I indicate in Chap. 4, are few and far between. There is an urban middle class, to be sure; but no less than in the villages, solidarity among elites, peri-urbanites and rural kin remains "mechanical" in the Durkheimian sense of being based in egalitarian resemblance rather than difference. However, today this kind of unity has become tinged with estrangement. Semi-autonomous, kinship-based obligations and relationships continue to rule the day ethically. Indeed, even the state is decidedly regional in makeup, comprised as it is of autonomous tribal economies led by local-level authorities of one sort or another who own the means of production, for example, lineage land. National elections, held since 1975, thus take an intensely parochial cast, and political coalitions conventionally distribute ministerial positions so as to reflect this kind of regionalism and have repeatedly found their hold on the reigns of power vulnerable to successful no-confidence motions (Lipset 1989).

During the first 40 years of independence, regional isolation was also sustained by lack of infrastructure. Radio and travel were the main media linking urban and rural communities. Infrastructure was absent, deficient and/or deteriorating. Roads were either nonexistent, poorly maintained, or opportunities for crime, but travel, via air, boat and various kinds of automobile, was nonetheless possible. One more, albeit clichéd, datum about communication is perhaps a significant symptom of national alienation: PNG is known for extreme linguistic diversity (over 800 vernaculars) that is cross-cut by two market languages, *Tokpisin* and Motu, as well as by English. That is to say, PNG is a deeply polyglot modernity that was and remains nothing if not exceedingly fragmented.

Perhaps another indication of the recalcitrance of tribal constituencies from the modern state is how narrow civil society is in PNG. The existence of a separate, extra-state system of practices and values associated with public virtue and voluntary forms of trust is limited and is only starting to emerge. Although there is indeed a growing NGO culture, the "Melanesian street," as public space, is perceived as dangerous to pickpockets, holdups or drunk young men. Still, urban folk market, meet and talk to kin and "mates" on sidewalks, ride buses and so forth. However, the preference of urban elites to remote villagers is to conduct as much of day-to-day life among kin, or among kin-like relations, where moral accountability is predictable, if not altogether reliable.

A few general remarks about the contradictory nature of men's interests and values amid this state of alienation. At all ranks in society, modernity offers them and they take advantage of opportunities. Men in PNG are deeply engaged in national politics and government. They read and listen to the news. While they criticize the misdeeds and corruption of politicians, middle-class men stand in huge numbers for election. In the cities, young men seek employment in the ubiquitous private security companies (Lusby 2014). Elsewhere in the country, they work in various capacities for the extraction industries, principally, mining, oil and industrial logging.[6]

Simultaneously, in the rural villages, men work in small-holder agriculture, cash cropping foods and commodities (Allen et al. 2005).[7] Rural men are also entrepreneurial. They start small businesses and seek a variety of other modes of development (Sharp 2016), as well as conservation projects (West 2006) and informal opportunities to make money with and/or from kin and other community members (McCormack and Barclay 2013; Bourke and Harwood 2009; Sharp et al. 2015). Rural men go to town for various reasons, to access healthcare, prepare for a funeral, enroll children in school or receive government pension checks. And when they do, they stay with kin (Tokpisin: *wantoks*) in squatters' camps during visits of temporary or longer duration (Koczberski and Curry 2004; Numbasa and Koczberski 2012). Men also stand for and hold local-level offices in their communities and worship in various denominations of missionary Christianity they themselves have come to lead (Robbins 2004). From Christianity, they also adopt new ideas of personal responsibility and moral obligation that emphasize gender equity (Cox and Macintyre 2014), the mutuality of companionate marriage (Wardlow 2006: 73) as well as new ways of raising children (Silverman 2016: 198–199).

At the same time they are duped by the fantasy of suddenly attaining modern prosperity through fast money schemes. John Cox reported a Ponzi scam called U-Vistract that promised 100% monthly returns and drew “as many as 200,000 investors” in the national capital and elsewhere in PNG in 1999 (2013: 176; see also Cox and Macintyre 2014: 141). Elite politicians, high-level public servants, leaders of Pentecostal churches, pastors and other “big shots” as well as the lower classes, men who were otherwise the objects of criticism as financially irresponsible, wasteful and careless with money, spending wages on beer and male sociality, sought to forego their irresponsible masculine natures by investing in fast money schemes that not only claimed to reward male virtue but also as a kind of moral proxy for the postcolonial state that would provide people the tangible benefits—roads, schools, business skills—that it was failing to do.[8]

While modernity in PNG has certainly offered men many opportunities, there can be little doubt that for many, it is very much a time and space of the other (Luker and Dinnen 2010; Zimmer-Tamakoshi 2012).[9] In addition to “nostalgia … deep enough to serve as an emotional touchstone for a distinction between *kastam* and modernity” (LiPuma 1999: 201), violence, both in practice and as an attitude, is a prominent feature of their gender (Wardlow 2006; Dinnen and Ley 2000; Jolly 2012). Seeing it as resonating with the globalized culture of hypermasculine, working-class men, Martha Macintyre (2008) traced the prevalence of violence back to rural norms in which men were forceful, wealthy and dominant. In a context of increasing mobility, and the contemporary weaknesses of the postcolonial state in PNG, she observed that male youth, armed with weapons, worked in uniform as “security” guards. At the same time, other youth were adopting dress and comportment that included dreadlocks, rowdiness, drinking, combativeness, mock fights, risk-taking and so forth. Police, moreover, were difficult to distinguish from the latter youth. Both possessed identical levels of education, sense of style and aggressive temper.

Male violence in PNG evokes the Lacanian signifier, women being its inevitable target. Young women reported attacks both in towns and villages. Sexual assaults, gang rapes (Tokpisin: *lainap*), with the consequence of accelerating rates of HIV+ infection, were associated with the increased movement of men, the so-called MMMs, or mobile men with money, roaming about cities and the country (Lepani 2008). Bridewealth, now paid in money and used to legitimize a husband’s authority and entitlement to a wife’s labor, sexuality and obedience, had been dehumanized. Now the idea was that marital obligation was merely a property right.

A man "owned" his wife, having "purchased" her. Violence was a legitimate punishment should a woman fail to live up to conjugal duties. "By far, the commonest 'mistake' … found … in Chimbu was for a wife to refuse her husband sex" (Eves 2010: 57). Or, to put it more generally, violence had become a male "objection … to any exercise of agency" on the part of wives (Eves 2010: 58). With apologies to Lacan, but in Hagen, violence was at once a tropic and physical answer to the phallus.

Criminal gangs of urban youth (Tokpisin: *raskol*) imperiled the postcolonial scene in the 1990s. Writing in 2010, Luker and Monsell-Davis were of the opinion that *raskols* "remain[ed] … the symbol of PNG's 'law and order' problems" (2010: 81). What was the nature of their alienation from the archaic and modernity? Were they comparable to Sicilian bandits (Hobsbawm 1969)? Were they an undereducated *lumpenproletariate* driven by outrage against corrupt politicians, greedy businessmen and disrespectful missionaries (Morauta 1987; Hart Nibbrig 1992; Kulick 1993)? Or, were they neo-*bigmen*, seeking to create power and maintain loyalties through strategic acts of generosity, à la Melanesian leaders of yore (Harris 1988; Dinnen 1995, 2001)? Did *raskol* gangs parallel archaic forms of social organization, replacing the shifting alliances of Highlands clanship? Were they urban warriors, reinstituting the misogyny of male cults (Luker and Monsell-Davis 2010: 87–88)? Were they just lost souls, educated but unemployed, deadened by the detribalized, moral chaos left by face-to-face societies in decline? Or, were they just burglars, muggers and rapists, that is, small-time crooks and street corner thugs? What was their dialogue with pre-state, Melanesian institutions and modernity in PNG?

Unemployment, Michael Goddard argued, did not cause *raskolism*, but rather *raskolism* caused unemployment (2001: 21). Rather than a single-toned rejection of the state, the culture of *raskolism* resulted from "an integration of pre-capitalist … behavior into a cash-economic environment" (Goddard 1992: 20, see also Goddard 1995: 73). That is, *raskol* leadership was not estranged from urban communities. Stolen money or goods were used for instant gratification or in ostentatious celebrations. "The most common way to spend money" in 1991 was "to buy huge supplies of beer which [were] … consumed immediately and orgiastically" (Goddard 1992: 29). Money was not saved but shared. Wealth obtained through crime was consumed in binges (see also Dinnen 2001). "The dispersal of gains … [was] a process which involves … a … Melanesian pattern of distribution and consumption" (Goddard 1992: 29) in return for which leaders received loyalty and support, or at least acquiescence, particu-