

*The Flight of the Cassowary:
On Subjectivity and Encompassment*

When in the 1920s and 1930s gold prospectors and adventurers penetrated the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, they discovered that nearly half the island's population, some million people, lived on the slopes and plateaus cradled in the tall mountains. After World War II, the door of the Highlands opened to the world, and the West entered in force: evangelists hungry for souls and entrepreneurs for money, patrol officers bent on bringing civilization and ethnographers on recording culture. Each arrived with their own mission and sense of purpose, each so engrossed in their own concerns as to be only barely aware that the next performance in the theater of modernity was about to begin.

And in the beginning was the word as myth. The Maring have always lived by myths, archetypically stories of their primordial past. These myths on the origin of exchange and fire, the birth of kinship and the wages of war, all told how the world and its people came to be as they are. All, that is, except one rather singular, idiosyncratic tale about a time in the future when, all things cultural having been so transformed, today's customs reduced to cinders, that nature, the elemental order of orders, itself responds to these enormous changes in the world's fabric, and the cassowary, the flightless bird, takes flight. This is a "new myth," nothing more than a fabricated and amusing tale by Maring lights. But behind the laughter lies the invention of culture and the reshaping of expectations, the fact that a story of this kind, with its eyes fixed on the future, is possible and meaningful now. The story, as told to me one rainy afternoon by some young men, goes like this:

There was a man who had much to drink, and falling asleep, had what he thought was a dream. For a long time, he had been residing with his wife's kinsmen who inhabited a very remote region. The man eventually feels lonely, and when he hears that there is to be a bride payment he decides to visit his "root" place. For two days he walks through the mountains to reach his natal village. When he gets there, he discovers that the road entering the town is paved. At the edge of the village he sees an airfield,

trucks, jeeps, and cars, and a whole array of paved roads shooting off in all directions. At the center of the new village are food stores, a restaurant, and a store selling everything needed to build a house: hammers, nails, finished woods. The man stumbles wide-eyed around his natal village. When he asks where he is, everyone laughs, and then someone informs him that they have become “white” [“though their skin is still black as ever”]. Shaking his head, he asks where are the pigs and gardens. His true kinsmen tell him that everyone now has and eats as much rice as they want, and that fish, pork, and even taro arrive every day on the planes in tin cans. The man is so dazed and bewildered by these changes that he wanders off into the brush. There, he is happy to chance upon two large cassowaries in a corral. He assumes the cassowaries must be a part of the upcoming bridewealth payment. But his comfort at finding a familiar reference point turns to shock when to his amazement the cassowaries, stunned by his presence, flap their stunted wings and take flight. Now scared and disoriented, the man takes his own flight back to his wife’s village to the sound of laughter of his own former villagers.

This “myth”—can we call it such—is as far from traditional mythos as the metropole from the hinterlands. Traditional myths are about primordial events, ancestral times, and unquestionable truths. Our story is about the future rather than the past. It is an imagination of what is to come and what has been left behind in the encompassing gesture, the uncharted cultural acceleration toward a future the Maring sometimes refer to as “civilization” in contrast to the kingdom of *kastam* (tradition or custom). Our story (according to a story about the story) is the twin of a coastal tale; it is like the modern itself, simultaneously imported and customized in the rites of retelling. The reenactment of another reality that is fast becoming your own.

Whatever the status of the story, there’s more at stake here than a case of cultural eavesdropping. Like the tarnished secondhand clock that hung on a wall of the mission school, it is a lesson in the remaking of temporality. Appropriately, the story abandons the cyclicity of traditional time. How out of place to assume, as the Maring have always assumed, that the clan as the main unit of reproduction will replicate itself from one generation to the next, its continuity guaranteed by exchanges with ancestors and affines (see LiPuma 1988: chaps. 3, 4). The story recounted here is also unlike traditional myth in that it is not about the heroic actions of the ancestors or timeless truths. It is not about how societies remember, but rather how they learn to forget. And indeed there is a growing number of

accounts of this type. From a Western viewpoint, these accounts spring up as myths, stories, and sometimes wild rumors of change. Above all, they are narratives of transformation. Who could not be impressed with the tale that “Skip and Annie” (Rappaport, the first anthropologists to work among the Maring, 1963–64) would soon return and deliver untold wealth from America to the Simbai valley (thus replacing local forms of wealth creation). Or that the sacraments of Anglicanism harbored a powerful sorcery that the attuned Christian could appropriate and direct at his enemies. Or that in the bowels of some unspecified building in Port Moresby there were mountains of wealth, now hidden and hoarded by the national elite. The myth of the flight of the cassowary, like other narratives of modernity, was part of an unending attempt to make sense of a world in which the structure of perception and desire, patterns of expectation and rewards, ways of speaking and listening, images of body and thought, the limits of travel and imagination, have all changed course rather abruptly, quite irreversibly. In their attempt to gain practical and conceptual mastery over this world-changing, the Maring have constructed these many stories, ranging from myths and cargo-cultish wish lists to descriptions of sojourns to Port Moresby and other cities, tales of life on labor plantations, and reminiscences about the varied Westerners they have known. These stories, devised and revised, edited and reformulated, are their way of progressively coming to terms with the encompassing process. Whether they are or appear factual or fanciful, singular or common, these stories are pragmatic attempts to experiment with the representation and meanings of the modern. The collective working through of these myths, tales, narratives, descriptions, and dreams is the Maring analysis of modernity.

So over and above its country-bumpkin humor the flight of the cassowary sings with the gravity of the matter: it announces a sense and feeling for change almost beyond imagination. The man in his own dreamtime has been away for less than a lifetime when all that has happened takes place. This mirrors Maring experience from the 1960s, which, in the limits of one lifetime and two generations, has gone from relative isolation to a burgeoning engagement with things Western. That the tale concerns a bride payment makes it that much more ironic and symbolically charged, for bridewealth payments not only antedate contact but have changed in shape and content in response to the advent of the modern. Bridewealth payments are a crossroads at which gender and domesticity, the immediate economy and wider politics, talk to one another. And insofar as they are inseparable from social reproduction, they are a marked index of societal transformation. It was also appropriate that the myth is a dream (or the dream a myth) in that the Maring, like other Melanesians, believe that dreams are omens of what is to come.

The symbolic density and irony of the story does not pause there: it

locates our unknowing, bewildered visitor outside the space of “modernized” commercialized life. His spatial marginalization to the outer fringe of Maring territory parallels his cultural marginalization in the face of great change. The myth also plays with the intimacy between history and territory, conjuring this new village as a mediation between the metropole, the once and future city of modernity, and the bush hinterlands where traditional, ancestrally dependent clansmen dwell in some temporal warp. The story not only transmutes history into space but capitalizes on the Maring concept that differences in residence create differences in types of people. The distance between the new village and the hinterlands is thus measured in differences in identity and future trajectory. Even more, the myth invites its contemporary tellers to take their own grandparents and parents as objects of contemplation. For like this bewildered man, their own ancestors were culturally overwhelmed when they first encountered planes, cars, flashlights, and other Western technologies of modernity and power. The myth maps an imaginary frontier between generations, a promised height from which to look down upon their own past. So it was that Abraham, the son of Yingok, tells me (and a house of other young men) about the ignorance of his ancestors when faced with airplanes and white men, his local audience smiling in a bemused, slightly embarrassed way, aware of my presence, as though they were both confessing to this “genealogical” connection and letting it be known that they were now citizens of another more enlightened and slightly cynical viewpoint.¹

From the tradition of a world that is at once spiritual and thoroughly personal, where the creation of value is as visible as a man burning a garden or a woman tending to her pigs, modernity is magic on its way to becoming miracle. On this understanding, the elder generation of Maring yearned to capture and deploy the magic lying behind the Westerners’ ability to create value. And thus my old friend, Tipika the shaman, after teaching me his spells against illness, asked in return if I would teach him my magic for “pulling” things (without, apparently, my doing a lick of real work).² For Tipika and most of his generation, the world works by the old principles even if the players are new and the objects of desire come in cans and cartons. By contrast, the younger generation has no such illusions, simply the desire to indulge in the modern miracle of money and things produced from afar, the alchemy of turning gold flecks and coffee beans into *kina* (the Papua New Guinea national currency) and the kina earned into things of foreign origin. In this glittering light, it is not surprising that the myth of the flight of the cassowary should stand in marked contrast to other myths of beginnings. It has nothing to say about the creation of clan-ship, the complementarity between men and women, the inauguration of exchange relations, or the migrations of the ancestors. Thus does the story or dreamtime foresee a future so changed that the cultural anchors and

sources of continuity have vanished. Here the myth cuts clear to the bone, for nothing is more central to the construction of Maring clanship and affinity than locally grown foods, which in the imagined tomorrow of the myth have been replaced by their canned, imported ghosts. In this and other stories of the modern, against the echo of their own laughter, the Maring have come to imagine their future as a great break with customs past even as, and this is the anthropological moment, their future must embody and simultaneously reinvent that past. As my friend and housemate Gou once observed as we stood at a crossroads on the outskirts of Mt. Hagen, the provincial capital of the Western Highlands and for the Maring an exemplar of the urban, just because a road is paved doesn't mean that it goes where you want it to.

Themes and Theories

This book is a description and argument concerning the nature of cultural transformation and the way that it informs the lives of those who experience it. I explore the themes and issues of encompassment that lay in the background of my earlier study *The Gift of Kinship* (1988). At issue is how these people of the Bismarck mountains or any people can reproduce themselves in the face of modernity: a catchall term for those processes by which a society reshapes itself as a consequence of being inexorably encompassed within a state (first colonial and then national) and inundated by Western capitalism, Christianity, and commercially driven mass culture. I employ the term *encompassment* (detailed later) to describe these processes, and indeed an aim of this study is to contribute to the theoretical groundwork needed to produce an ethnography (that is also a history) of the encompassment of Melanesia. For my view is that we can only construct a genuine history of Melanesia, a history of the modern, from a communion of local histories—ethnographies that face both inward toward the meanings, strategies, and desires of the practical life and outward toward the encompassing universe. I accept without reservation the viewpoint of Fernando Cardoso, the anthropologically oriented political scientist who later became president of Brazil, who once observed that history is where global forces touch everyday lives.³

The embrace of the West and the acceleration of modernity animated an encounter that was relentlessly dialectical. To begin with, the changes induced were dialectical because the presence of Western practices reshaped indigenous ones and simultaneously the determinate appearance of Western practices (schooling, medicine, Christian rites, elections), which were inseparable from, because mutually determined by, their local counterparts. For example, to the frustration of the mission men, the Mar-

ing conception of Jesus, his miracles, and his place in the social cosmology has been inseparable from Maring conceptions of ancestors, magic, and clanship. In the same spirit, their views of Western medicine and justice informed and were informed by more indigenous concepts and practices. Reciprocally, the weight of Western practices forever transformed the trajectory and meaning of indigenous practices to the point where the distinction between Western and indigenous becomes progressively relativized and the subject of its own discourse. The intertwining of thought, desire, and practice in an endlessly reciprocal spiral is itself a hallmark of the Melanesian encounter with the modern. And so we fail the ethnography when our theory and method fail to capture this dialectic, substituting in its place simple lines of causation, such as those that imagine a world of an imposing West and resisting Other. It sometimes seems as though the anthropological nostalgia for Culture and the academic imperative to defend our space by defending our concept blinds us to the reality that the processes of encompassment neither leave others alone nor make them Western. Rather, encompassment creates new terrain and terms for the production of sameness and difference, value and meaning.

Importantly, to understand the modern as dialectical is to relativize relativity. It is to acknowledge that what is considered (and contested) as *kastam* today has been inflected by Western presence and pressures, just as what is considered Western (parliamentary government, Christianity, the use of Western-like money, etc.) now bears an unmistakable Melanesian imprint. The modern is also intrinsically dialectical because encompassment is most determinative and inevitable at the level of the form of society. All encompassed peoples will become capitalist—but to what degree and in what way is first open to and defined by the intersection of imported capitalism with local practices, and then triangulated as international capitalism continues to interface with its domestic offspring (itself the product of the first interaction), and also with what local agents come to define as tradition or *kastam*. And what holds for capitalism is also true for the nation-state, commercial culture, civic education, the mass media, and much else. In a word, the modern is a dialectic of sameness and difference, a negotiated terrain in which the absolute difference between Melanesians and Westerners, that heavenly time before contact and encompassment, is no more or less than an imaginary space, albeit a necessary space, that allows anthropologists to construct the past and Melanesians the future.

Ethnography must honor this dialectic to avoid what has been a persistent problem in Melanesian studies. The tendency is to so fetishize how Melanesians differ from Westerners that their similarities disappear. There are no commonalities of conception and spirit. No points of commensurability that would allow a conversation to take place across cultures. What we can understand of others is their difference and how, due to the weight

of colonialism, capitalism, and Western cultural imperialism, these differences are gradually and grudgingly being effaced. This vision tends to tell the story of encompassment in oppositional terms, reducing it to a war of Western domination versus local resistance. Indeed, the story is too often told as a machine of domination on one side and a history of small victories on the other, memorialized in stories (usually told with a wry smile) of how local agents outwitted missionaries, patrol officers, and other soldiers of modernity. Somehow, in a kind of backhand tribute to the “human” spirit, certain practices are thought to have come through the Western onslaught unscathed. More than theoretical, our attachment to this position has deep roots in the anthropological psyche (but that is a matter for another time, another chapter). The trouble with this way of thinking is that it cannot erase the realities of encompassment—the fact that big oil and various Christianities, the English language and the commercial culture of rock, democratic forms of governance and statutory law, the World Bank and the United Nations, are now so much a part of Melanesian history that the encompassment of Melanesia is part of our history. And African history and southeast Asian history and Amazonian history. This view also embraces a kind of romanticism that must see the modern as exogenous to the strategies and interests of local agents. It must pretend that people are not enchanted, seduced, and desirous of the modern,⁴ and that, even more, the ground of enchantment and desire were not original conditions of the indigenous world. And finally, this viewpoint tends to see the purveyors of the modern, the missionaries, doctors, state officials, and the like, as a homogeneous class (the anthropologist excepted). As I will argue, none of these propositions is more than half true.⁵ To keep the dialectic in sight seems the first job of modern ethnography.

The dialectic of the modern is also necessarily hierarchical because one of its principal turbines is the interaction among structures of different orders of magnitude, power, and intelligibility. More than anything else, this is a story of mediation. The ethnographic challenge is to document how the state, provincial and local governments, Christian missions and missionaries, health clinics, schools, the judicial system, the mass media, and commerce in the capitalist spirit, all mediate the relationship between the forces of encompassment and local societies, even as they come to embody both. This story involves not only how the Maring were encompassed and transformed but also how they, like local agents throughout Melanesia, reformed the institutions and agents of mediation. As the account unfolds, we will see that this relationship is self-consciously important to the Maring, and that they conceptualize mediation practically in terms of the now familiar concept of *kastam*. In this respect, the category *kastam* was triangulated. It was defined against things Western and those foreign forces that impinged on local lifeways, and also against

local conceptions of what being modern is: what the Maring, like other Melanesians, call *bisnis*, a word of Tok Pijin origin that is now, appropriately and ironically, equally Tok Plas (the indigenous language). This triangulated category was part and product of the Maring way of knowing their world and was inseparable not only from an epistemology of knowledge but of desire and disposition.

The heartbeat of my account is social desire and epistemology. I am concerned with the new terms and conditions under which people represent and objectify their experience and define their wants. The question is, How does the advance of the modern change the very foundations of experience by reshaping people's notions and categories of knowledge, the means by which they grasp their world and the conditions of its representation to themselves and to others, and the forms of desire appropriate to this new world? My intent is not to grasp these changes in knowledge and desire in the abstract, but to locate them in two ways: first, to view them within the political economy of change, especially the rise of the nation and the influence of the state, the penetration of capitalism into rural areas, the internationalization of Western culture, the advent of affordable forms (e.g., radio) of mass media communication, and especially the emergence of generation as the critical social category; second, to locate the changes in knowledge, desire, and disposition within lived practice, such as going to school or a medical clinic, listening to a radio commercial about the virtue of a commodity or political candidate, or having to deal with anthropologists. These transformations also and simultaneously forged new conditions for the construction of personhood and peoplehood. For example, emerging local capitalism tended to endorse forms of interpersonal relations, such as acting "greedy," that were formerly unequivocally defined as antisocial and worthy of condemnation (e.g., ancestral retribution); simultaneously, the empowerment of these forms of relations and their embodiment as dispositions to behave a certain way in specified situations (e.g., when managing a trade store) tended to promote the development of indigenous capitalism. Changes in the way Maring define themselves and produce an identity go hand in hand with the transformations motivated by, and built into, new practices.

The book shapes an argument that is at once ethnographic and theoretical. To grasp the changes that beset the Maring requires that we locate their communities in the process of encompassment. This encounter unfolds dialectically as an intricate set of mediations and mediating institutions, such as the Anglican Church, that analysis must explicate in order to comprehend the shape of the encounter. The most profound aspect of this encounter is the transformation of Maring epistemology, desires, and dispositions because, once set in motion, these transformations touch off an endless wave of other changes. These transformations are embodied

within, and especially apparent in, members of the junior generation who embrace and struggle with modernity as the key to their own future. The thesis is that for an account of modernity to be adequate to its object it must include an explicit account of encompassment and the externalization of social life; it must include an account of power and the conditions of its production; it must include a theory of generations, which is to say a theory of the interplay between the objective structure of practice and the cognitive and motivating structures that drive behavior; finally, it must include an account of the transformation of indigenous epistemology and desires produced by the modernizing process. The explicit claim is that the most critical, transformative aspects of the Maring encounter with Westerners and Western practices were the changes introduced in their social epistemology and the organization of desire. Though it is easier to focus on and catalog visible change, such as the building of a new road or attending church, these changes were ultimately more telling because they were generative; once they existed, they assumed a life and dynamic of their own; once they were ingrained, they redefined reality from the silent underside of practice.

On this account, each of the chapters develops the following perspective. What is critical about the appearance and local appropriation of Western practices and values is that these practices and values embody Western epistemology and desires. These Western exports are transformative because they (a) are imbued with power based on “indigenous” images of efficacy and modernity; (b) operate not only consciously but on a non-conscious plane (e.g., as presuppositions to action); and (c) become inscribed in the shape of thought, desires, and practice. The motivated changes are so generative because they become married to the remaking of subjectivity and peoplehood. The Maring’s own conception of themselves as a collectivity, the possession of an identity that oversteps the limits of clanship and affinity, was directly bound to a notion and knowledge of *kastam* as distinct from, and generated in opposition to, what they understood to be Western ways of knowing, desiring, and living. What complicates the matter is that the local ways of “knowing” what *kastam* is, and what Westerners are, are themselves products of the encompassing encounter. In this regard, social epistemology is connected and homologous to language in that every change in content is also a change in form that, in turn, informs the interpretation of any future content. Moreover, these changes in knowing were inseparable from the self-acknowledged and visible changes in the production of persons. As Moses, the leader of the most successful locally run trade store in the Jimi Valley noted, what the new road demanded was people who know, and know how to discover what they need to know and do, to win in the time of the “white world.”

What Moses left for ethnographers to say is that this “new” episte-

mology bears a family resemblance to its antecedents because it is a synthesis between that which is embodied in Western practices and local means of apprehending, appropriating, and representing the world. A “new” conceptual and emotional landscape comes into being that is not Western, indigenous, or even some logical combination of the two. One indication of this was that the “Westernization” of Maring epistemology and desire varied from one context/practice to another. Certain practices retained a semblance of traditional epistemology, whereas others, like going to the health clinic, inclined greatly toward a Westernized set of concepts. The result was that people professed and depended on mutually contradictory epistemologies. To the extent that knowledge is power, and the power to know one’s world is empowering (e.g., by speaking English), these two epistemologies were in a state of struggle. The modern also buffeted most people, and most of all the junior generation, between a desire for freedom—the chance to fly above the demands of kinship and community—and a desire to remake and reawaken the autonomy of that community. It was precisely this contention, discord, and ambiguity between the modes of knowing and desiring-in-living that defined the modern era.

Though this account concerns the Maring, and only during one specific if crucial period, it is also responsive to a wider set of issues affecting the “culture area” called Melanesia and that theory of “others” called anthropology (even when “we” are those “others”). The claim is that global processes are made manifest in specific cases through the agents and institutions of mediation. On this terrain, the ethnography deals with the vexing problem of the way knowledge and desire, as rooted in cultural practice and the infrastructure of the everyday (housing styles, treating an illness, etc.), become transformed forms of what they were, and further, how these changes in knowing and desiring inform the shaping and reshaping of personhood and peoplehood. What are the processes that encourage the emergence of the possessive individual? How do social relations mediated by kin and community become social relations mediated by labor? When do the Maring cease to be a “culture” and become an ethnic group? How do people deal with the confrontation between the binding sociality of community and the unhinged freedom of modern lifeways? To begin to answer these questions (and this is only a beginning) entails that we travel analytically up and down among structures of different genesis, degrees of transparency, power, and orders of magnitude. It entails finding a space and language to expose the conjuncture of global forces (e.g., capitalism), the specific and often contingent appearance of those forces (e.g., as pressed by local missionaries), the structure and structuring principles of local practice, plus the creativity and innovations of agents in these situations—their “experimental practice,” to exchange a phrase with the Comaroffs. The way that I see it, anthropology’s devotion to (not to say

fixation on) the local sphere is now its greatest virtue and its singular limitation. The challenge is to incorporate the character of encompassment into our images of theory and ethnography without sacrificing our commitment and devotion to the local. This is not an original insight, but it does remind us that to grasp the reality of a world encompassed we need to rise above the methodological mud of localism.

Global, Local, and In-Between

The temptation is to frame my argument within the discourse of globalization, the understanding being that a work receives a better reading if the categories used to construct it match those that will be used to decipher it. The threat, especially with a subject as unwieldy and uncharted as globalization, is that the categories often seem to think in our place. Certainly, in much of the literature thus far, the analyses appear to simply ride the back of badly assembled categories. To begin with, the term *globalization* is a misnomer, a kind of deliberate disavowal of the politics in process. It leaves the impression that what we are witnessing is simply ever widening concentric circles of engulfment in the world (dis)order. The global swallows the local, creating sameness in the place of difference. As Robertson (1992) underlines, the growth of global institutions and movements, the speed and reach of communication, an expanding universal concern for the environment, a commitment to capitalism, the ascendance of the problem of individual rights, and a sense of "world citizenship" characterize the modern phase of globalization (59). The contemplated result is that the nation-state is a bystander in its own future, as the global flows and traffic in internationalized culture ignore national boundaries (Hannerz 1989), delivering a once unimaginable ensemble of representations, objects, information, and desires to unimaginably diverse peoples and places (Appadurai 1990). Or so the story has been told from the top down, from the insiders out.

For the Maring and the peoples of Oceania, like those of Black Africa, the Indian populations of South America, and a good deal of Southeast Asia, the modern age is the age of encompassment. The structures of economy and polity, the dissemination of culture and flows of information, the reach of the notion of individual rights, and everything else swept up by the term *globalization* unfold in a highly asymmetrical context in which they have, and have had since the age of empire, almost no voice. The people of Melanesia do not experience the radiating waves of globalization, they absorb, reshape, and respond to the changing face and forces of encompassment by the Western metropole. Guided by their own stars, they do this in ways that are never predictable from the charac-

ter of the encompassing agents and institutions alone. As the many species of Catholicism, never mind versions of Christianity, should remind us, even the powers of the Vatican (at once spiritual, institutional, and economic) are insufficient to guarantee that abstract signs—the Virgin Mary comes immediately to mind—will possess even a semblance of universally uniform local meanings and values. Equally important are the ways that the modern Melanesian state, shorn of some of the original (for emerging nations, only imaginary) powers, intercedes between the encompassing world and indigenous agents, often creatively, sometimes capriciously, and always particularly. However our epoch unleashes capitalism, it is always as an intertwining with local markets, paths of circulation, modes of production, and conceptions of consumption. “Macrocosmic modernities, in sum, [are] at once singular and plural, specific and general, parochial and global in their manifestations” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997:6).

The removal of the political, and hence critical, edge of analysis—through the image of globalization—cohabits with a diffuse notion of power. Power here seeps into the most remote corners of sociality and subjectivity, guided by unstable signs in search of even the most temporary of homes. That sign systems may be porous and at times unstable, the value of practices and action less than determinate, the expression of power never exhausted by the political—while certainly true—is taken to mean the absence of any larger social determinations. But such a perspective can never account for the experience of those places and peoples who continue to reside in the shadow of an encompassing West. Such a perspective can never account for the forms of (historically determinate) totality that motivate the production and reproduction of hegemonies that, despite the instability of signs and actions, not to mention the everywhere-ness of power, impose a substantial measure of order and stability on ourselves and others. And have done so for at least the better part of two centuries. The argument shaped here, which is no more than a literal reading of the Melanesian experience, is that the intrinsic relationship between capitalism, the nation-state, and internationalized Western culture produces larger social determinations.

In the framework of my analysis, the significant issue is how the state, intranational regimes of production and exchange, and the appearance of culture in specific locales mediate the relationship between encompassment and community. The concern is the construction of a particularity that has critical threads of sameness in the face of apparently homogeneous and universalizing forces that, on closer examination, reveal critical threads of particularity. On this score, the discourse of globalization is frequently uninformative because of an overdeveloped sense of homogenization. Too often the idea is that the globalizing capitalist economy is obliterating local economies only to remake them in its own reflection

(Hopkins and Wallerstein 1987; Wallerstein 1990; Kurtzman 1993; among others). Either as an attachment or alone, there is the corollary notion of the disappearance of the state, as global forces progressively overtake and compromise its sovereignty. Never mind that most of the states of what is euphemistically called the Third World are very much alive, rapidly adapting to the modern shape of encompassment, even as they struggle to “regain” a sovereignty they never had. Finally, theorists of the modern have told us that, insofar as the globalization of culture expunges the conditions for the production of local images and identities, cultural localism will wither away (Gellner 1987). The problem with this take on globalization is not that capitalism has renounced its predatory march, or that missions and mass media do not proselytize Western culture, or that migration, electronic commerce, and the like are not dissembling aspects of the state. The problem is that the forces of localism, and the entrenchment of heterogeneity, are themselves constitutive of the globalizing process. Buttressed by its intimacy with the local, the anthropological thesis is that the encompassment and localization of cultural, economic, and political production are two moments of the same process (Foster 1991:235–36; Hannerz 1992: chap. 9; Comaroff 1996:194). Perhaps the most profound irony is that postmodern accounts of globalization reproduce the Eurocentric philosophy of imperialist expansion by portraying the relationship between globalization and localization as a struggle between universality and particularisms, thereby simultaneously misrecognizing the particularity of the West and the relations of power thus implicated in the process of encompassment.

Contrary to much of the grander theorizing on globalization, the anthropological thesis insists on the mutuality of local and global, and hence the absolute necessity of taking the particular seriously—the local in all its complications, manifold relations, and lines of mediation. The vernacular as a token that is more than a type. Objecting to the tendency to ignore the particulars in favor of the hegemony of “triumphant categories,” Geertz writes, “matters are cast on a resolutely grand and abstract scale, a dialectic of mega-concepts heavily annotated with opportune mini-facts, assembled from here, there and elsewhere, rather in the manner of a lawyer’s brief” (1983:517). But this will not do. Encompassment can only be grasped when analysis joins a theory of capitalism, the nation-state, and internationalized culture adequate to its object to an account of locality adequate to its.

Lines of “Influence” or the Sea of Coauthors

My project does not come out of the wilderness. It owes a debt of gratitude and builds upon the accounts woven by other ethnographers and histori-

ans. Though the focus is somewhat different, my analysis takes much of its intellectual and spiritual inspiration from the work done by Jean and John Comaroff (1991, 1992, 1997) on the relationship between Christianity, colonialism, and consciousness in South Africa, and Simon Schama (1988) on the origins of capitalism and peoplehood among the Dutch. Both Schama and the Comaroffs have written cultural history in the most complete sense of the term—histories able to bear the full weight of culture and ethnographies that live within their own temporality. Having done three years of field research in northwestern Spain (Galicia), I have drawn comparatively on my own understanding of Western culture and class (see LiPuma and Meltzoff 1989 and 1994), and from the European social theory tradition, most immediately from the work of Pierre Bourdieu (esp. 1962, 1977, 1987) and Moishe Postone (1993). My aim has been to join the sophisticated analyses of culture, class, and consciousness in the West with the historical processes now unfolding throughout Melanesia. Though those who study Melanesia have been slow to hear the drumbeat of encompassment, there has been a recent acceleration of interest, led by the pioneering studies of Robert Foster (1991, 1993, 1995b), Deborah Gewertz and Fred Errington (1991, 1995), and Andrew Strathern (1996), plus several critical edited volumes (Carrier 1992; van Meijl and van der Grijp 1994; Linnekin and Poyer 1990). What all these studies have in common is an attempt to thematize and theorize the issues surrounding modernity.

I am Western, writing for a mostly scientific audience, and so in keeping with my own cultural traditions I will assume full responsibility and also, of course, credit for what I write here. In a very non-Melanesian way, I will remove the social relationships out of which this work was created to footnotes, citations, and acknowledgments. I will detach this work from the body of others though I know on very good authority that it embodies their labor—my labor simply mediating between their labors and the production of the text. In the absence of these others, this book might not have come into being at all and certainly not in its present shape. Among other things, this practice of citation and acknowledgment insures that our ideology of the autonomous individual (the author) and the commodity form (the book) remain unchallenged. They remain in their misrecognized state because that is what is necessary to reproduce our way of life. Under the euphemisms of *influence* and *sources*, this practice externalizes the social and intellectual relations that are internal to the construction of the text—lest the individual and the individuality of the author be compromised. Let it be said immediately that no Maring would entertain these concerns. They assume that persons and the things they produce, from garden vegetables to flowery speeches, are joined to their sociality. A person is partly and only ever partly the author and cause of his/her own actions. If, as scientists of ourselves, we were to expose the highly social

process of the construction of the ethnography, it would undermine the ideology of the autonomous commodity producer on which we base our notions of scientific production, presentation, and reward.

Or suppose we turn the tables and imagine that a Maring ethnographer of the West is examining our views of authorship and agency. To this imaginary eye, the claim that authors divine ideas that are wholly original and fully their own would be understood as neither more nor less than the Western ideology of the narrative construction of the Western self. Our commitment to the ideologies of the individual and the pure commodity guarantees that this book will appear to be extrinsic both to its producer, me, and the set of relations that have produced me. So it will go under my name alone and have a life of its own as a product circulated in the scientific field even though I deserve neither full credit nor full responsibility for what I say here. The joy and terror of the person in culture—especially in capitalist societies—is that we are given singularly rewards we have not won alone and punishments we do not singularly deserve. I highlight the relation between the ideology of the individual and that of the commodity form in respect to my own production because this relation figures centrally in my discussion of how Westerners would like the Maring to imagine the person and the object world. As I will argue, one of the ironies of the Maring encounter with the modern is that because they subscribe to a notion of the person that more closely resembles Western reality than Western ideology, the agents of modernity considered them tradition-bound and unmodern. I will underline the point by noting that the West considers Others never more “primitive” than when they resemble us in ways that we cannot, and mostly do not, admit to ourselves on pain of not reproducing ourselves as individuals of the capitalist nation-state. A critical irony is that the Western discourse of the “primitive”—or, in its more advanced anthropological form, the uniqueness of the Other—is a conversation about ourselves thought through the body of others. Luckily, Melanesians such as the Maring return the favor. They think of themselves through the body of Westerners insofar as missionaries, ethnographers, and the like socially exemplify those aspects of the subject that the Maring consider non- or antisocial.

Framing the Ethnography

The “ethnographic present” is no longer contemporaneous with itself, if it ever was. Recognizing this, we are (like those we study, like the Maring) enjoined by change to separate ourselves from our traditions—meaning that we must give our narratives a historical frame, a set of temporal brackets that define what we know and can say aloud. A big-man, Yingok,

once enumerated for me everything that was novel since he was a young boy, counting off rhythmically, beginning with the appearance of airplanes and the stoppage of warfare, the cultural arrivals and departures of these years. What happened during his lifetime is the epicenter of the ethnography that follows. The historical period is the quarter century after the arrival of the patrol officers and the founding of an Anglican mission when the first generation of Maring, educated and exposed to Western practices, were coming of age. I wish to document their experience and convey something of their struggle to be a person in a world so changed in form and substance that little in their cultural memory could have prepared them for. The time frame is from 1955 to 1980, when the oldest generation could recall a life unfettered by foreign rules and interventions; the generation in power, aged thirty to mid-fifties, had been brought up in a traditional world but lived now wholly in the modern; plus a younger generation who had never known a world untouched by missions and government and capitalism. This process of encompassment ignited a struggle between generations, not least over the generation of generations. Where before the cultural memories laid down in the cycles of war and peace defined a generation, now the mode of generation would revolve on the nonlinear and often indeterminate interrelationship between the Maring and the agents and institutions of encompassment.

To focus on encompassment in Melanesia is to give an account of the conquest of consciousness in its embryonic phase. It is also a study of a people's consciousness of this conquest. These two moments are increasingly imbricated, bound in the cultural and psychic spiral toward modernity: what the Maring refer to as "the new road." Literally, new roads are signs of modernity. They connect places and people in ways that were barely conceivable prior to contact. They create new forms of relatedness, animating the flow of novel views, values, goods, and services—plus a swelling stream of "old" goods and services such as pigs and sorcery. The image of the interconnecting road or path has always had metaphorical weight, symbolizing marriage and military alliance between clans. As a conjunction of the old and new, there can be no more appropriate or strategic image than that of a new road. Metaphorically, the new road may be seen as connecting two overlapping topological spaces, each with its own habitus and generative principles, and hence forms of personhood and peoplehood. What happens when the objective structure that instilled the dispositions, desires, and senses of one generation has, by virtue of encompassment, become so transformed that different dispositions, desires, and senses are instilled in the next? There is a generation gap, a gap in the way in which humans are shaped into specific kinds of subjects. At issue is how subjectivity and peoplehood are constructed when the conditions of their construction undergo such a dramatic and overarching

change. Two arguments, which are connecting threads throughout the book, are anticipated here. The first is that an account of generation, as category and practice, is essential to an ethnography of modernity adequate to its object. The concept of generation, long undertheorized and bracketed, must now be brought to the foreground. The second argument is that true understanding of the reshaping of subjectivity and identity entails an account of the relationship between encompassment and epistemology—or more precisely, epistemologies. At issue is how the frame of knowing of everyday life transforms in response to Westernization of the world.

Speaking in the Ethnographic Past

That period from 1955 to 1980 is a strategic time-frame for several reasons. It was during this period that the universe of goods and services for purchase, and even more for contemplation, expanded dramatically. By 1980, Maring were making regular runs (via the Christian air service to and from Koinambe) to Mt. Hagen, the provincial capital and primary Europeanized marketing center. Led by six men in their mid-twenties, two of whom were fluent in English as well as pidgin, there began a steady flow of consumer products into the western Jimi Valley. It was, as noted, within this epoch that the first generation that had grown up under the sway of encompassment came of age. With very few exceptions all were baptized Anglicans, with some believing, some understanding the doctrines of Christianity. They spoke pidgin well, had been schooled in a Western fashion, and were vibrantly conscious of the increasingly monetary nature of the world. In great contrast to their parents, they had uniformly sojourned to the coast to work on a plantation, experiencing new forms of social hierarchy, new forms of leadership, the politics of resistance and regionalism, and, of course, wage labor. It was also during this period that cash cropping for coffee became integral to village life, Western money forms (such as Papua New Guinea kina) replaced traditional shell valuables, and gold was discovered and panned for. By the mid-1970s, the Maring had also become well acquainted with anthropologists. By 1980, more than a dozen ethnographers had lived with various clan clusters. For their part, the Maring recognized that ethnographers were valuable economic and political assets, and they fast developed strategies to make the best use of them. By 1980, the signs if not the concepts of modernity had dug into the cultural landscape to the extent that its hallmarks, from fifty-pound bags of rice to the Christian cross, had become taken-for-granted features of life. Where before the Maring's own sign-scape was the unspoken and presupposed condition of seeing and being,

now there was a proliferation of contesting signs, of alternatives for the gaze and stringbag. And thus it came to be that a certain species of Christianity, a certain arm of state power, a certain way of being the subject of inquiry, a certain concept of and desire for Western goods, an awareness of cultural distinctiveness (e.g., the difference between whites and blacks), and much more became inseparable from the local concept of modernity. On all fronts the period from the mid-1950s to 1980 was a time of unprecedented change in Maring lifeways.

It was also a time of erasure and forgetting. For the first time, exposed to the power of Christianity, people imagined that the sacred groves would no longer be used to worship the spirits. Like a sentimental object that no longer has any use but you also cannot bring yourself to destroy, the sacred groves were simply left to be consumed by rain and time and encroaching vegetation. Pressured by the Australian kiaps, the Maring realized for the first time that the rituals and weapons of war were things of the past. And all the powers of colonization let them know that their way of attending to their dead, left to decay on raised outdoor platforms, was profane (or, at least, unsanitary). Within this period, the traditional organization of marriage transformed, and shell money all but disappeared. Everything from the way they were born and married and cared for their young to the way they defecated and died was called into question. It is not just that colonization produced a break with the past in the sense that people acquired new practices and learned about other worlds; by its very nature it demanded that they forget, erase, and devalue, not least that they reconfigure the lights of self-understanding. Christianity, the modern state, and science were presented to the Maring as an explanatory scheme, a scheme that revealed how Melanesians were to appreciate nature, their own bodies, public life, and the culture of the subject. The reason that they had to devote Mondays to road building and other public work was that this was a state imperative; such work for the commonweal as good for the soul as it was for the local economy. In the same vein, the building of latrines at a safe, specified distance from living quarters, and the immediate burial of the dead, were health measures: they were explained by the science of disease, enforced by the state, thus to bring them through these acts of cleanliness that much closer to Christian godliness.

The cosmology of modernity seems an everexpanding universe; the continual increase in possible goods and services, access to new images and ideologies, the expansion of the public political sphere, the inflation of needs and wants, the emergence of novel technologies of power, and the rise of new forms of mass communication and conversation. And this is only for starters. The cosmology of modernity also seems to involve a contraction in local control, an imploding universe when viewed from the

standpoint of social relatedness, certainty, and the security of everyday life. Unbalanced reciprocity rules. In exchange for the wonders of modernity the Maring, like others of Melanesia, must surrender their ways of being a people, their social identity. In this universe, the alignment of forces seems rather straightforward: capitalism, Christianity, Western commercialized culture, and the state imposing themselves on the small-scale societies of Melanesia. The contest here is between an imperial West—driven by the economics of capital accumulation, the politics of the colonial state, and the heavenly commandment to save pagan souls—and cultures that find ways to resist, fend off, and appropriate this Western advance. Or so it seems.

The ethnographic reality is more nuanced, more given over to complex struggles at all levels. The dialectic of encompassment generates a far more intricate tapestry, history conspiring with chance to produce a modernity stamped by its multidimensionality, internal contradictions, and unpredictability. There is no easy historical and ethnographic navigation. The oppositional logics of modernity and tradition, domination and resistance, the local versus the world system, though they come all too easily to mind, do not begin to capture the signs and substance of what is going on here. The transformation of Melanesia is not the result of a simple logical union between the imported and domestic models of reality (Meltzoff and LiPuma 1986:54). Rather, it is more akin to the improvisational dance, which is also a struggle, in which the participants, wittingly and unwittingly, continually respond and change over the course of a dance that does not, cannot, end. As it unfolds, the story of Maring modernity will bear this out. It will also testify to the force of the encompassing process.

The Encompassment of Others

Since World War II, the most powerful and insistent dynamic of societal transformations has been the globalization of modernity, or what anthropologists have more prosaically called social change. On this view, modernity represents a special kind of sociocultural transformation, moved by imperatives as diverse as the exportation of Western mass media culture and modern forms of electronic capitalism to the realization that the “ecological” politics of one nation-state may have telling implications for so many others. If there is a major feature of the globalization of modernity, it is the West’s relentless embrace of other histories and territories. From island Oceania to the New Guinea Highlands peoples who have long stood at the epicenter of our discourse now join labor unions, form women’s rights organizations, consciously engage in the politics of the nation-state,

contemplate the nature of democracy and human rights, invoke the music and images of MTV and Christian broadcasting, attend Western-like schools, learn to speak English, appropriate a wide variety of Western technologies, and are increasingly immersed in mass commodity culture: and this is only for starters. The West has effectively othered others.

But being an “Other” is no easy assignment. Not for Maring or Melanesians generally. It involves a sort of cultural jujitsu in which people absorb and redirect the blows even as they seek to avoid being overpowered. So we find agents using “traditional cultural” sensibilities to deflect a modernizing gesture, such as efforts to relocate a village or introduce tourism (Errington and Gewertz 1996), even as the encounter subtly reconfigures these sensibilities. Even as the reconfigured sensibilities inform and thus alter the trajectory of still future encounters with the modern. Forbidden to bury their dead on raised outdoor platforms, the Maring began to bury them on raised underground platforms, thus preserving their moral geography even as they bow to the modern health code. The examples are as endless as the modern itself, but the point is that to grasp the nature of this dialectic, the anthropology of modernity⁶ needs a theory of encompassment—a perspective that grasps the space in which modernizing forces and local communities become inseparable moments of each other’s history.

I use the term *encompassment* to refer to those processes, at once historical and structural, by which the political economy of capitalism, the state (in colonial and national versions), internationalized Western culture, and interstate organizations (like the World Bank) progressively and simultaneously subsume, enchant, and engulf others. I refer to others in the plural to underscore that the “standardization and formalization” of life necessary to imagine an Other—whether the Other be the Orient, the Primitive, Black Africa, or whatever—is itself one of the ideological tropes of encompassment. Each of these aspects of encompassment has its own historical origins, animating force, and distinctive features. The contemporary conjuncture and codevelopment of these faces of encompassment in relation to local cultures and community is, for the peoples of Melanesia, modernity, “the new road,” civilization, or simply the future. The issue here is not whether the “static” or “cold” structure of tradition will now become historical. The issue is that long bridge from already dynamic structures based on local, cyclical, and nearly determinate forms of social reproduction to a structure of externally motivated, perpetually indeterminate, noncyclical (and nonlinear) transformation.

This approach to Melanesian modernity marries the history of encompassment to the anthropology of culture. It recognizes that confronted with the exceedingly powerful and cumulative forces of encompassment, the cultures and people of Melanesia are tellingly transformed.

A dialectic is set in motion that forever changes their historical trajectory, and also (though less powerfully) the sources of encompassment. It is this interface and intersection, a power-infused, asymmetrical, mutually dynamic relationship, that is the engine of historical change. Ethnographically, this means that an account of modernity must focus on the encounter and interplay between the institutions, processes, and agents of both sociohistorical structures—the colonizer and the colonized, the embracing state and the local community. It is necessary that we tell both sides of the story. The story of the priest as well as the shaman; the story of the Western medical personnel as well as local healers; the story of the patrol officer as well as the big-man; and of course the story of the anthropologist as well as the informants.

These encounters were shaped by, and experienced as, partially interpenetrating and asymmetrical structures of signification and power. Up until 1980, the encounters were partially (as opposed to fully) interpenetrating because the Maring, ensconced in the hinterlands, still retained a good measure of autonomy. The autonomy allowed local agents to exercise some control over the personality and pace of modernity (as when, for example, some Kauwatyí expelled the locally residing Anglican deacon in 1977). The encounters were nonetheless asymmetrical because the degree to which the Maring could transform the West was nowhere near the power of the West to transform them. Finally, the encounters involved signification and power in that the existence of agents and institutions of encompassment could not but transform the context and content of the production of meaning and value. The local health station, to cite an example to which we shall return, combined, mediated, and arbitrated the tension between the Western forms of medicine religiously promoted by medical personnel at the Anglican mission station and traditional health remedies. In the Maring region, these outposts were part of a conduit that “Westernized” indigenous medical tenets and treatments and “indigenized” the Western practice of medicine—although the Maring did not, of course, request that their indigenous practices be Westernized, and their power to localize Western practice was circumscribed. Responding (at long last one might say) to these and the other changes animated by encompassment, Melanesian anthropology has begun to chart the ways in which power and signification are now being transmuted. Issues such as the mass media and commercialized culture, the production of national identities, the reorganization of desire, and the “cultural consciousness” of culture itself are now on the menu. This turn to the study of encompassment marks a critical refocusing, a sea change in our conception of the anthropological subject/object and consequently in the theories and methods that have oriented analyses. Importantly, it requires that we abandon the assumption that individual cultures or sets of cultures (like those of the

New Guinea Highlands) exist in some totalized state. It entails recognizing that there now exists an *intrinsic* (versus external) relationship between the structure of a culture and the encompassing forms. It tells us that if we (and the “we” here is all those who practice science) are to grasp the coming of modernity to Melanesia we must (re)locate ethnography to that partially shared world of historical experience. It means that we have to abandon the romance (and terror) of a divided universe, and locate ethnography in the interstitial space where the Western and Melanesian worlds overlap, collide, and make each other.

Under these sociopolitical conditions, Melanesian societies (such as the Maring) have no ontological autonomy other than that imagined, mapped, institutionalized, and contested in the public political sphere. The existence of these societies is inseparable from the totalizing project of first the colonial and now the nation-state, as this project has unfolded in the contexts of capitalism and internationalized Western culture. Less than fifty years ago the name, the category *Maring* had no real indigenous resonance, the Maring only “learning” that this was their collective name in the 1960s. By 1980, the Maring did exist, a notion of peoplehood having won considerable ground. They began to think of their own practices and language as an integrated, closed, and autonomous system—their “nomane” in contrast to that of neighboring peoples such as the Kalam and Manga. Gradually, at times grudgingly, the Maring came to imagine and construct a notion of sameness, of what they all possessed in common, in opposition to a white Western world that grasped the world in terms of peoplehoods and races. In other words, there is no way to talk about “the Maring,” “the Enga,” or “the Melpa” other than in the context of encompassment. The local subclans, clans, and clan clusters existed long before the first tall ships touched the Melanesian shores, but the Maring as a people, as a critical aspect of the construction of the subject, this is of modern origin. And for the Kauwaty, Tsembaga, or Tukmenga to think of themselves also as Maring (not to mention as Highlander or Papua New Guinean) is to turn their own subjectivity toward the modern. The conception that the Maring have no ontological existence other than that imagined, contested, and institutionalized in the public sphere is radical only in the context of Western societies that, as a condition of their own production, must self-conceal the reality that they are so too constructed. Understanding this is critical because one of the primary ways in which the West naturalizes its notion of the social is through its power to create societies everywhere that it goes. It is through the “discovery” of “societies” in the most remote corners of the world—and few places are as remote as the Highlands of New Guinea—that the West assures itself of the naturalness of society. In essence, by imposing its historically constructed concept of society on Others, and then imagining that it has discovered what was

always there, the capitalist, Christian, nation-state can naturalize its concept of society so successfully that the concept can become the doxic basis of its own structure and self-understanding.

This turn in the compass of study can also be read ironically in that anthropology is returning to the site of its own genesis: the fact that the birth of ethnography was inextricably linked to the march of Western capitalism, colonialism, culture. Even more and more personally, this says that our (and my) romance with the people of Melanesia is bound to modernity and the vast transformations inspired by the process of encompassment. All this has been well-confessed even as the consequences of encompassment have been sublimated, partly out of respect for others' cultures, partly out of fear that these other ways of being human were destined to disappear, and partly because it was undeniable that anthropology was and cannot help but continue to be a part of the encompassing processes. While the character and consequences of encompassment have been confessed (actually, overconfessed by a certain kind of mea culpa anthropology that forgets the good faith and good works of so many fieldworkers), they have not been adequately theorized or melded into anthropological discourse, in what might be called a kind of collective defense mechanism on our part. It is easier either to repress the implications of encompassment or to slap on a postmodern face and dismiss ethnography as beset by objectivist and logocentric leanings than actually to come to terms with the confrontation between the West and peoples of Melanesia. In this light, my objective is to begin to define an anthropology that is also a social history of what happened to the Maring during their initial moments of the advent of the modern. I operate under the assumption that the processes of encompassment are very telling at the local level. They inflect (and deflect) the practices of everyday life by changing the way people think and desire their world. They transform the habitus of senses and dispositions. It is this mediation between the systemic and local that is the ground of anthropology. It is where we have the most expertise and can do the most good.

The Power of Encompassment

It is sometimes said (accurately) that the colonization of Melanesia was a benign, civilized, genteel affair at least as compared with Africa and South America. By the time the colonization of Melanesia, and especially the Highlands, got under way, the heyday of colonialism had faded over the historical horizon, the attitudes and perceptions of those who came had become more tolerant of their others, and in any case, the thirst for raw materials by the industrial world had lessened since the advent of the tech-

nological revolution. Colonialism in the late twentieth century was not the same as its nineteenth-century ancestor. And indeed, few peoples of Melanesia have felt the exercise of power in its most crushing, overt, agentive mode. There is no Melanesian Montezuma or Australian Cortez, no imprisoned Mandela slowly wresting power from a belligerent white minority. Few attempts have been made to directly control the production, exchange, and circulation of signs and objects, or extract a surplus at gunpoint. Certainly the Maring have rarely experienced, and have not incorporated in their grasp of modernity, such forms of domination or hegemony—a point that apologists for colonialism in Melanesia (such as Sinclair 1981) have smilingly exploited.

But there exists another species of power that is mostly out of sight. It acts behind the backs of people, so to speak. This is the power to transform the habitus, the expectations, rewards, and dispositions of everyday life. It is the silent, muted, but authoritative power to suborn once marginal voices, subvert the hegemony of age, and inflect the very knowing of the world. All this is so transformative precisely because it entails no formal cultural surrender. There is a long roster of events that never happened. The kiaps never confiscated the Maring's pearlshells and replaced them with Australian shillings. They never came in force to round people up for plantation labor. The missionaries did not come and set the sacred groves on fire. No one compelled the Maring to plant coffee or pan for gold. No, the Maring have been accomplices of their own transformation.

What we are speaking of here is power in the passive voice, the gradual Western saturation of medical knowledge and justice, the aesthetics of dress and the sociality of food, the conception of thinking and the representation of the body. Thus, the everyday, the routines, the "givens" of life. These changes are, moreover, hardly experienced as direct power. There is only, for example, the displaced pain of the senior generation feeling the cultural ground move beneath its feet. Men sometimes flew into transports of pride when they recalled their wars prior to pacification, wars that were elements of an identity-making that no longer is. The silent indirect power of encompassment is felt as constraints on action, as new conventions and habits, and as changes in knowing and valuing objects and persons. "The silent power of the sign, the unspoken authority of habit, may be as effective as the most violent coercion" in shaping social thought and action (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:22). It is through the repetition of the signs, practices, and desires of modernity that they come to be so deeply embodied in everyday routines that, even as they culturally transform and disarm a people, these signs, practices, and desires cease to be perceived and contested. The Maring have been drawn unwittingly and wittingly into the house of what they call "civilization" in contrast to "kastam." They have both cooperated and resisted in the encompassment of

their world, finding the content of certain Western practices objectionable even as they accept the overall premise. The question for an account of modernity is to account for the practices that have vanished and also those (e.g., sorcery and compensation payments) that appear to have survived, albeit with transformed meanings and implications. Just why is it that some Western practices are clearly embraced by a people, some seem to insinuate themselves into the universe of the encompassed, other practices are objects of contestation and resistance, and others still are simply brushed aside? In other words, we must ask not only how capitalism, colonialism, and Christianity insinuate and impose themselves, but how they enchant the senses, stir desires, and carnivalize the world. We must ask how new forms of personal freedom blossom within the context of increasing objective dependence.

A critical although unrecognized aspect of the exercise of power by Western agents is that it is often unreflective power. Because the technologies of power, control, and influence are so deeply inscribed in Western practices, Western agents frequently understand their own actions only in the most instrumental sense (an understanding promoted by the bourgeois ideology of practice). Missionaries, patrol officers, station managers, nurses, and other Westerners seem to reflect upon their practice almost entirely in terms of what they seek to accomplish. Pushed into a kind of nether world are the forms of power and control, and the changes demanded of the local population, for them to attain these goals. Thus the Anglican churchmen saw their mission as the simple and virtuous act of providing the spark that would induce the Maring to find the light of God. Little did they appreciate the extent to which the realization of their project would change the shape of Maring culture or the extent to which the persuasion of God's word was based on the Church's economic power. In the same vein, the kiaps grasped the building of latrines and the burial of the dead as simple health measures—what, to quote one of them, “any reasonable society would do if they knew the risks”—rather than as a coercive challenge to local conceptions of the body and the afterlife. These examples could be multiplied; anyone who has lived in Melanesia could divine others. But the point is that the mission and state in particular, as incarnated in mission men and patrol officers, were unreflective centers of power. They influenced the trajectory of Maring society in more ways than they ever consciously understood or knowingly intended. The priests, patrol officers, station managers, nurses, and ethnographers who lived in the Jimi, however much they may have been agents of encompassment, were not simply gears in some machine of domination, though in some silly versions of colonialism they are so portrayed. They were mostly people who, in seeking to carry out their life, and because they operated from a more powerful vantage point, could not help but transform the others'

practices, values, and epistemology. The power of colonization, for the Maring and for Melanesia generally, lay not in methodical and systematic efforts by the West to dominate them, but in the unreflective execution of its best intentions.

The power to change a people's cultural epistemology, to set it in historical motion, occurs in the liminal space between the contours of awareness and contemplation and the implicit, deeply buried, and unconscious structure of (semi-)shared meanings and assumptions. It occurs simultaneously, and this is a critical reason why the study of transformation tests the limits of anthropology, in the space between the awarenesses and unconsciousness of one generation and those of the next. The Maring were only partially aware of the changes in their epistemology, and this awareness was itself socially distributed as is people's implicit interest and investment in these changes. People grasped that the substance of life had turned in a new direction. The younger generation more than their parents. But they found it hard to place their finger and words on just what this was. This inchoate recognition, this partial vision, was a source of anxiety. There is an inescapable epistemological tension, inscribed in the possibility of epistemologizing itself, that, distributed across generations, is productive of new hybrid forms of subjectivity and peoplehood, of representation and desire. Everything that follows is simply a way of exploring and explaining this point.

Honoring the Complexities

Anthropology feels hard pressed not only to examine its tie to the processes of encompassment, but to review the institutions and agents that bring this about. Not the least of such problems is the tendency to treat Christianity, capitalism, and the nation-state as rather homogeneous forces. There is too little appreciation or analysis of the fact that the contingent appearance of each of these forces is constitutive of the encompassing processes. That is, the Maring are not simply influenced by capitalism, the state (first colonial and now national in form), and Christianity; they encounter very specific, usually rather unrepresentative versions of each of these agencies of social change. Moreover, one of the most characteristic and disruptive dimensions of encompassment is precisely that this contingency is its nature. To sketch but one significant example, Maring exposure to Christianity is irregular, heterogeneous, and unpredictable. Decentralized and idiosyncratic, Anglican missionizing often seemed like a random walk through the mountains. During this formative era, the religious doctrines that are emphasized, the intensity of evangelism, the

degree of commercialism, the education and tolerances of the mission staff, and much more were different in the Jimi than in the Simbai Valley. The mission also varied in time due to the turnover in mission personnel, the wide latitude that the head priest had in determining local policies, and the gamut of accidental forces that might influence the existence and execution of such policies (e.g., the arrival of an anthropologist like myself who befriended the priest at the Koinambe mission and frequently argued with him about the need to tolerate and accept local practices). Further, some Maring clan clusters were exposed to Catholicism and others to the evangelical, Pentecostal Nazarene Church. In a word, peoples' encounters with Christianity were skewed, uneven, and subject to change without notice.

One reason such contingency has been ignored or bracketed is that the agents of encompassment (such as Father Bailey, a white, effeminate, bookish, middle-class man from San Francisco who oversaw the Koinambe mission) have themselves been considered either unworthy of our attention or a relatively homogeneous class that could be captured in a sentence or two. Similarly, ethnographers have not paid attention to health personnel, such as the nurses who worked at the Koinambe mission hospital. The implicit understanding has been that the agents of Western culture are immediate, unmediated reflections of the society that sent them. Their voices, motives, desires, and intentions have rarely been heard: what projects they imagined and how they responded to local agents. There is little data on how their encounter with Melanesians shaped the ways that they interacted with one another and represented themselves as a white, Western, gender-neutral collectivity to the local community. In order to present both sides of the story we must invite them back into the narrative, not as a homogeneous and faceless class, not as ethnocentric demons bent on destroying indigenous culture, but in all their complexities of organization and personality.

What the anthropology of Melanesia must take account of is that encompassment takes place only through the mediation of the practice, experience, and desires of agents differently situated with respect to capitalism, Christianity, and the state (colonial and national). The objectives and understandings of the clergy, state officials, ethnographers, and other Westerners have points of convergence, but also of divergence and conflict. Indeed, because these Western institutions and agents have occupied very different positions within their own society and with respect to indigenous ones, they have often been on different paths, and in some cases at each other's throats. In a very different way, the indigenous societies are also not homogeneous. Due to all sorts of "inequalities" (which can be as simple and contingent as proximity to a mission or government

station) some people and groups are better able than others to capitalize on modernizing forces. Similarly, the upcoming generation often has the capacity and motivation to embrace modernity in ways that their parents cannot. The result is the existence of “unequal rhythms” (Bourdieu 1962:2) between groups and generations with respect to modernizing change.

It is much too one-sided to think that the missionaries and colonial officials, medical personnel and agricultural extension officers, transformed the Maring merely by interacting with them on terms not of their own choosing. The differentials of power in the hinterlands were never great enough to instigate wholesale unwanted alterations of local life. The power of capitalism, Christianity, and Western culture generally has laid greatly in the ability to enchant, to transform people’s desires, to be spliced into local-level politics. On the others’ side of this encounter, the various Maring clan clusters have influenced the terms of the meeting. Like an orchestra without a conductor, their collective actions and reactions, guided by their cultural habitus, have redetermined the ways in which priests, government officials, medical practitioners, and others consider and interact with them. They have seized and reconfigured the signifiers sent from the West even as these signifiers have changed them in more ways than the practical life can see. More, the reconfiguration of these signs and practices has, on the rebound so to speak, also changed the agents of the West more than their practice can comprehend. Any account must deal with the refractory nature of these processes, the tensions within both the Western and Maring camps, precisely because brute force and repressive inequalities have never been its dominant modalities. Signs of power and the powers of the sign appear at every turn. But they take the form of the carnival of new goods, the promise of new forms of wealth creation, the re-education of the young, the reshaping of desire, the assimilation of Western epistemology, and the transformation of the global context for the production of meaning.

This last point about context is particularly important and importantly overlooked in many ethnographies. Although there is no dearth of insistent and programmatic statements urging anthropologists to be sensitive to context, doing so is really against some of our most anthropological instincts. As I will argue, ethnography in Melanesia has been based on a distinction between modernity and tradition, embodied in the premise that we can parse practices into those aspects that are customary and those that are indigenous. The premise enters ethnography as a pre-supposition; it is not part of our customary discourse about what we are doing. Nevertheless, standard works on Melanesia will offer depictions of marriage, exchange, ritual, warfare, politics, body decoration, and so forth as though these depictions were more or less accurate reflections of traditional practice. Very often ethnographers will make the point by

first describing the practice and then indicating how the practice has changed since contact. Reflecting on this ethnographic trope, the late Roger Keesing noted that even in those “parts of the Pacific for which it would be difficult to imagine pristine exotica—Fiji, Polynesia, Micronesia—many anthropologists still seem to have a remarkable bent for seeking elements of the old and hence genuine and filtering them out from present day realities” (1989:56). The problem is that for all our good intentions this method hides the hand of the larger context and celebrates the empirical at its expense.⁷ A decontextualization of local signs and practices takes place. Ethnography lives and survives by example: so let me provide one.

Early in my field stay, Gou, one of my housemates, is suffering a mild fever and chills from a tropical ulcer. On the second day of the illness after what must have been an uncomfortable night, the shaman Tipika appears in the late afternoon. He is holding a string bag from which he removes a bamboo tube. He pulls the plug from the end of the tube to show me that it holds leaves and water, though of course not just any leaves and water. As he chants in a special ritual language (see LiPuma 1988:127–28), he passes the tube over the surface of Gou’s body, then repeats the motion being careful to encircle Gou’s head. On the surface, this event seems to be positively brimming with “tradition” (my fieldnotes say, rather euphorically, that this is a “real” curing ceremony as opposed, I presume, to that fake modern kind). More, the Maring claim to have followed this curing practice literally from time immemorial. Alas, its meanings and implications cannot be grasped at the empirical level alone. The appearance and possibility of Western medicine inescapably transforms the meaning of traditional curing even if the forms of the traditional practices (e.g., what words are said and who says them) remain the same. Now the indigenous practice is measured against and in relation to the Western one. Whether Maring who are ill visit the local shaman, the health clinic, or more likely both is read by others as an index of the extent to which they accept the vision of the world advanced by modernity. To chose any form of treatment is to make a political statement. Especially in a time of change, all social action and choices, even taking no action or refusing to make a choice, is condemned to meaning. As for Gou, he had a host of other motives besides getting better. Not the least of his modern motives was that he wanted me to “record” this rite, and to record the “correct” version of this practice. In other words, to write Tipika’s performance as if it were “traditional” (read authentic) is to suck all of the meaning and intentionality out of the event. Or, to phrase this another way, we can neither define nor measure change by whether a custom has been retained or abandoned. The real issue here is the collaboration between the continuities of the observable and the transformations in meaning.

The Shape of the Narrative

The dynamics of interaction between Maring and the forces of encompassment are too complex, too multivalent, to be captured or rendered sensible by a simple equation of colonialism, domination, and resistance, or of social change as natural (e.g., inspired by the economics of want). The quest, no matter the difficulty, must be for a nonreductionist account. There is no safety any more in an analysis anchored only in the local. There is even less value in the isolationism of the world systems approach, which, through its addiction to mega- and triumphant categories, dissolves the local level. What possible joy is there in using a theory that effaces what it means to have an identity? Perhaps these theorists have never looked into the eyes of a Enga returning from a weekend war, but they must at least have watched an Olympic athlete receive a gold medal, their eyes swelling, their body visibly vibrating as their national anthem sounds. All the signs of the modern “road” tell us that the substance of modernity lies in the relationships (complex, multiple, and imbricated) between what happens globally and what unfolds on local terrain. For Melanesia, this means the many and varied relationships between the Western embrace and the many interacting, variably overlapping, and unevenly transforming localities. In this frame, our anthropology must be to grasp how the interpenetration and interfunctionality of structures, agents, and processes transform a people’s categories and ways of knowing their world. What, we must ask ourselves, is the role of priests and colonial officials, anthropologists and medical personnel, in the invention of the “modernized” mind? What is the resonance of these agents, and the practices they endorse, on people’s notions of person, peoplehood, rights, and privateness (as in privacy and property and singularity)? In what respect do a people recapture a captured consciousness? What is the relationship between the generation of knowledge and the knowledge of a generation (versus another, for example)? The dynamics of encompassment are anything but linear or straightforward. Nowhere is it simply the push and pull of domination and resistance. Almost everywhere there is an intrinsic, growing interconnection between modernized urban sites and local places. That is why the interrogation of encompassment with respect to people’s categories and ways of knowing their world cannot but raise issues of method, of our intellectual technology and epistemology, in the investigation of theirs.

To compare cultures it is necessary first to understand them: against this wisdom, Hocart, the great ethnographer of Polynesia, replied that one must also compare cultures to have any chance of understanding them. What Hocart knew is that all anthropology is comparative. The analytical trope of explicitly comparing two or more cultures is only the most trans-

parent form of comparison and by no means the most important. Ethnography is inherently a comparative enterprise because it is founded on the commensurability of subjects, on the presumption that the intentions of others and the ethnographer are mutually intelligible. It is to assert that others' forms of subjectivity and personhood are comparable with and at least to some degree overlap with ours. This comparative tension is the normality of living foreign. When I interact with a Maring, I interpret the meaning of his/her words, gestures, and intonations against my own—an implicit comparison between my way of “knowing” what it is to be a *person* speaking and theirs. The corollary of this is that an account of a Melanesian society also entails an epistemological break insofar as the indigenous way of socially knowing the world is neither that of Western culture nor that of its stepchild, science. The process of knowing requires the self-conscious pairing and comparison of Western and Melanesian conceptions of reality in order to expose and destabilize our presuppositions—a project vividly addressed in the “new Melanesian ethnography” (Josephides 1991; Foster 1995b). The recognition of an opposition between the West and its alter is acceptable as long as we do not forget that all contrasts entail comparison, that the possibility of ethnography itself presupposes some degree of commensurability between Melanesian and Western cultures, and that the conjuncture of Melanesian and colonial histories is the history of the modern (see Carrier 1992).

Not the least of the problems in comparing Melanesia and the West is that anthropologists have not always understood their own society. The contrasts that are set up are all too frequently between an in-depth account of a Melanesian society and an ideological account of the Western lifeway. Accepting Western ideology at face value tends to exaggerate the opposition between Melanesia and the West because our ideology seeks to mask and misrecognize our sociality: to commodify all forms of social relatedness and to presume that we are the domain of the universal, free-willed, self-actualizing subject. This is, at best, a partial description of the West; it is also as far removed from Melanesian images of persons, actions, and history as can be imagined. Too strong a contrast between us and them also has a disadvantage in that it can never deal with encompassment, the ways that the structures of encompassment have braided our reality with theirs. What this means for ethnography is that there are multiple layers of comparison and comparability that we must come to terms with in order to write an ethnography adequate to its object. The comparative nature of the enterprise also implies that to come to terms with Melanesia we must come to terms with ourselves. The account of Melanesia must coexist with an appreciation of the West even if this latter dimension remains mostly in the background. The end product is an ethnography that is also partly a history, an account that even in its moments of thickest description is

intensely theoretical, an attempt to tell all sides of the ongoing story of encompassment in a relentlessly nonreductionistic way.

The typical thought against such a perspective is that it is too complicated and complicating. There are few clean analytical lines; there are no singular and dominant determinations; and an uncluttered, linear narrative is out of the question. But it is also true that there are no linear narratives, dominant determinations, or clean analytical bottom lines to be found on the map of Maring modernity. But ultimately, the risk of complexity is small potatoes next to the risk of never knowing.

The Trajectory of the Modern

I have argued that one of the defining characteristics of the modern in Melanesia (like the modern everywhere) is that it is openly indeterminate and nonlinear. In this respect, the “new road” of the Maring has had a trajectory but not a destination. The changes wrought in the life of meaning and practice are never preordained though they are surely path-determined. Through their encounter with a motley and unrepresentative ensemble of Westerners, certain notions, desires, and practices have become canonized as representative of the modern. For example, there is no a priori reason why the Maring are Anglican as opposed to Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, or Buddhist for that matter. External events and processes, a meeting of white colonial minds beyond their spheres of knowledge or control, shaped the color of their Christianity. Internally, the Anglican mission arrived on the scene immediately after a decade of the most severe warfare the Jimi valley had ever seen—that was the story related by the elder clansmen of both the victors and losers in these conflicts. Because they had been driven from their clan territories, the defeated clusters welcomed colonial rule and were quick to embrace Christianity as a new source of power, value, and political opportunity. Not to be outdone, the triumphant clan clusters, most notably the Kauwatyí and Tukmenga, also joined the ranks of Anglican converts. For both of these clusters, this was a self-conscious and calculated decision taken by the leading senior clansmen—what turned out to be a successful attempt to stay ahead of the political curve of modernity. The critical point is that once Maring big-men canonized their clan’s commitment to the Anglican Church—probably for reasons that future generations know little about—the church of Henry VIII was effectively locked in. A contingent event at a crucial historical moment came to determine the Christianity of the Maring. And once the mission established itself, people became progressively more invested in the mission as a source of jobs, imported goods, transportation to urban areas, medicine, communication with their kinsmen

working on plantations, access to the modern, and much more. Eventually, competing religions could make about as much headway against the Anglican mission as, say, Esperanto has made against English.

Modernity continually creates sociohistorical pathways that, once entrenched, no matter how contingent and accidental their origins, define the future trajectory of that people. In this regard, the trajectory of modernity is neither certain nor predetermined, and given the contingencies of its production, certainly not the same for all the societies of Melanesia. The making of these paths should also remind us that the agents and institutions of encompassment are not cogs of a machine that levels everything in its path, only to erect a new and monolithic Western world in its place. The progress of encompassment does not result in the unadulterated Westernization of others. It does result in the transformation of Melanesian cultures, such as the Maring, the state-run project of constructing a national culture in the singular (see LiPuma 1997), and, on the rebound, it also transforms the cultures of the West.

The Social Landscape

Before I launch into the more specific analyses, I would like to set out briefly the actors and groups that will be center stage in the story. I use the term *Maring* as a historically emergent category, aware that prior to colonization the designation *Maring* did not exist and there was certainly nothing resembling a Maring identity. I shall use the term transhistorically, then, merely as a matter of convenience. At the point of contact, the designation describes an assortment of clan clusters who occupy a more or less contiguous space, entertain similar rituals of war and peace, have similar forms of production, exchange, and consumption, and speak mutually intelligible dialects of a common language. There were never clear-cut boundaries, however, as the border communities were always and remain an admixture of practices and languages. For the most part, anthropologists have ignored these frontier communities because they threaten their image of a culture as a totalized, coherent vision of the world, focusing instead on more centrally located “core communities.” As I will argue later, the existence of a culture as a bounded, self-animated, autonomous whole is an analogue of our ideology of the individual, and a more adequate theory would focus on gradients of difference. So at the time of contact, the existence of *Maring* as a collective noun was still something the Maring would have to learn, as they would learn in the ensuing era to begin to objectify their culture.

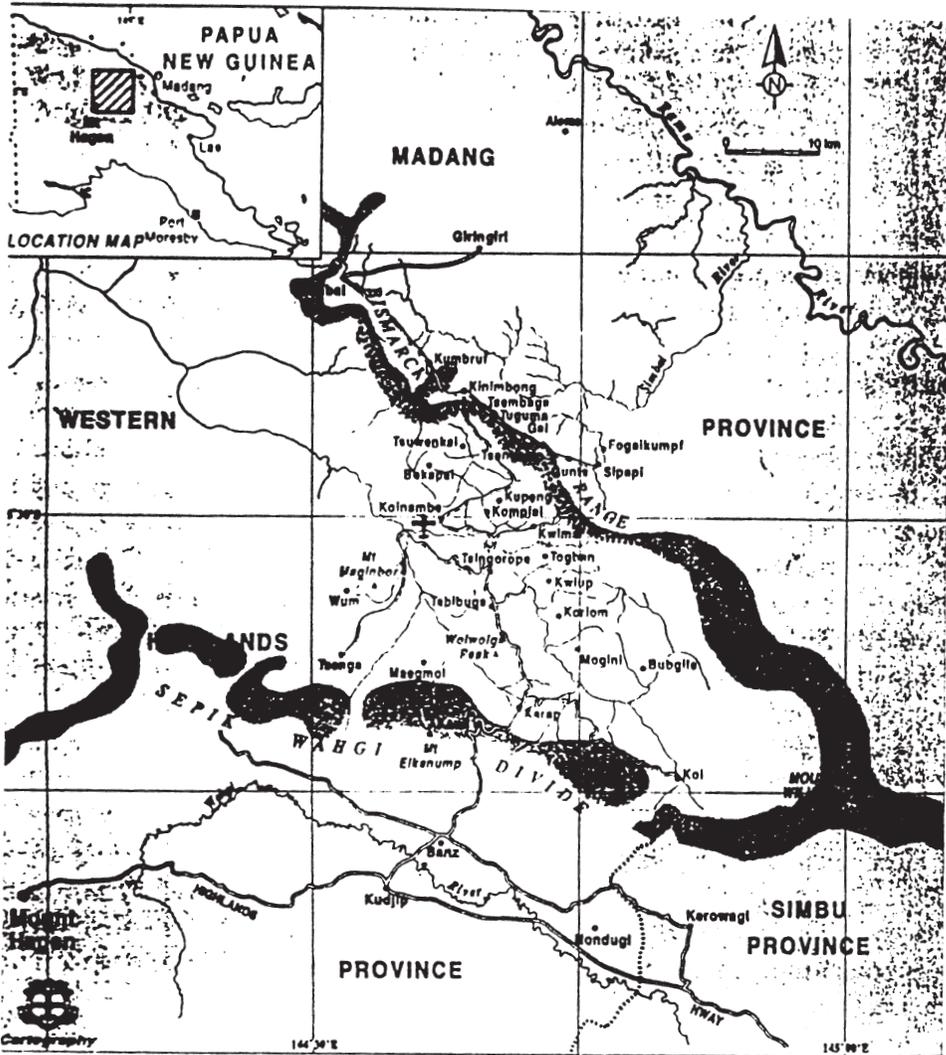
The stage on which this history unfolds is the Bismarck mountain range bisecting central New Guinea (see map 1). The Maring territory

consists of roughly 350 kilometers of steep, rugged, heavily forested terrain—as though a tropical rain forest had been lifted into mountain clouds. There are at least twenty-one clan clusters, nine residing on the northern fall of the mountain range in the Simbai Valley, twelve on the southern fall of the range in the Jimi Valley, plus two mixed clusters that are partly Maring and partly Kalam (see map 2). The Simbai Maring and the mixed clusters are included in the Madang Province, the Jimi Maring in the Western Highlands Province. This political boundary reflects the reality that the Maring occupy the Highlands border and embrace some features of the intermediate stepland societies lying between the Highlands and the coast. For the most part, their cultural and linguistic affinities are with the Highlands.

The Maring language is classified within the central stock of the Eastern New Guinea Highlands Stock (Wurm and Laycock 1961; Bunn and Scott 1962). The Central Family includes at least fifteen languages, extending in a curved band through the Eastern and Western Highlands and Southern Province. Consistent with its location on the Highlands fringe, Maring is the most northerly outpost of this stock, belonging to the Jimi subfamily of this Central Family. Their neighbors to the northeast (see map 3) speak Kalam, an unrelated coastal language. The people at the southeastern border of Maring territory, the Manga, speak a mutually intelligible language (called Narak in the literature) and bear a close cultural kinship. In fact, it may well be an accident of colonial history—at the moment of administrative intervention they were enmeshed in the war with their western neighbors, the Yomban—that they were first classified and then became recognized as a completely separate culture and language.

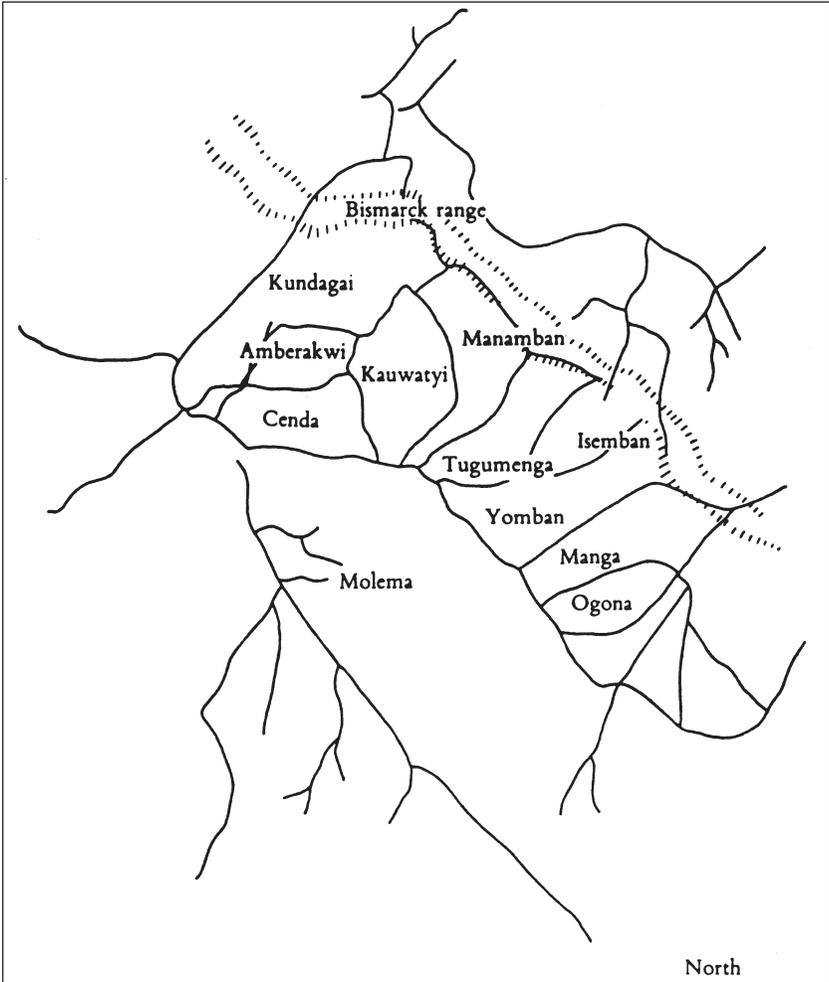
Maring clans are organized into clusters whose member clans are integrated through a history of extensive intermarriage, trade, and daily association. Prior to pacification, these clan clusters were mostly unnamed associations of clans. They were subsequently assigned names by the colonial administration, and the Maring have since adopted these names. Almost all clusters share at least one border with an old enemy, defined by a history of contestation and quarreling that may range over many generations, and a border with a cluster with whom they are allies. This configuration of enmity and alliance serves to localize warfare, and Maring have never engaged in long-distance warfare nor have they aligned themselves collectively against other societies in military engagements.

My ethnography features the Kauwatyi clan cluster (see map 2), though it aims for a much more catholic view of modernity. The Kauwatyi are numerically the largest, traditionally most powerful, and, along with the Yomban and Tukmenga, the most modernized of the Maring clusters. The Kauwatyi cultivate alliances with the groups of the western Simbai,



Map 1. The Jimi and Simbai Valleys

especially the Tuguma and Tsembaga who reside on the adjoining face of the mountain range. In 1980, the Kauwaty numbered in excess of 900 people; this number has swelled in recent years to well over a thousand. Political considerations have always encouraged population expansion since clansmen correlated political muscle with unit size. But despite the political and economic pressures to remain roughly equal in size, the clan clus-



Map 2. Jimi Valley clan clusters

ter varied considerably, ranging from a low of 150 members to more than 900. Prior to pacification, the Kauwatyi were the most militant and aggressive Jimi Valley clan cluster. Their collective memory registers at least five wars, the most recent being in the late 1940s and 1955. The dawning of pacification ended their military exercises but did not chill their aggressive bent. Influenced by the missionaries and persuaded by capitalism, they became strong proponents of modernity, seeking to win the new economic and cultural wars with an affable ardor that would have made



Map 3. Linguistic boundaries. (Based on Healey 1990:14.)

both Carnegies, Andrew and Dale, proud. By 1980, most of the Kauwatyí aged ten to twenty-five had completed some school with about a dozen going on to secondary school. They were also ambitious in the planting of coffee, the opening of trade stores, and assuming jobs at the mission station. During the epoch in question, ethnographers also carried out significant research on the Tukmenga, Tsembaga, Tuguma, Kundagai, and Fungai-Korama clan clusters.

The Koinambe Mission Station

All of the Westerners (except the anthropologists, of course) were situated at the Koinambe mission station. The head of the station from 1975 to 1982 was Father Brian Bailey, an Anglican priest who had been born and raised in San Francisco. The only child of an older couple, Father Bailey was an effeminate, bookish intellectual, a portly man less accustomed to exercise than reading and thinking. He had been in Melanesia much of his adult life and made no secret of the fact that he felt more at home there than any place he had ever known. He read and talked about what he had read constantly—his own house lined wall-to-wall with books on history, religion, and especially military warfare. I interviewed him numerous times, often well into the night, our discussions of Christianity, his views on Melanesia and the Maring, and the role of the mission interspersed with discussions of the flanking maneuvers of the panzer division leader Heinz Guderian. Often unreflective and blinded by his faith, he was always kindhearted, good-natured, and sympathetic toward the Maring. Often discombobulated, given to mood swings, and uncertain of his destiny, spreading the word of God and saving the souls of others was his way of imbuing his life with meaning, a redemption song for having sinned seemingly for just being. During the period from 1979 to 1980, several other priests, all from England, stayed at Koinambe for periods of one week to three months, plus there was a visit by the Archbishop.

The other critical members of the white establishment were a nurse and a station manager sent by the Volunteer Service Organization of England (VSO). The nurse was a young and energetic Irish woman from County Cork who talked quite dismissively of life and the medical profession in her homeland. During her tenure in charge of the mission hospital, she ran it with singular devotion, animated by a degree of freedom and authority that she could not possibly hope to enjoy at home. Her relationship to the mission men was tenuous but cordial; she was a dispirited Irish Catholic who radiated little affection for England or things English. Moreover, she had the head and heart of a scientist, finding the good father's admonition to the Maring that they should pray for the remission

of a disease at best a tolerable absurdity. Indeed, their relationship embodied the contradiction inherent in a missionary project that both celebrates the rationality of the West, especially its biomedical explanations and treatments, and also suggests to the penitent that they should pray to God for relief from illness and disease because He is the final arbiter.

Her VSO counterpart, the station manager, was a former policeman from Manchester who envisioned his stay to the Highlands as a change of scenery that would allow him to put his life together again. He had originally arrived with his wife, herself a former policewoman, but was soon on the road to divorce as she left him for a young Australian Talair pilot (who was not long after killed when his plane crashed and burned). Prior to his sojourn to the Highlands, he had never left England, and though a very competent station manager from a technical standpoint, he was hardly intellectually or emotionally prepared for the world he had to face. He thought the Maring lazy by nature and inclined to irrationality, they seemed unable or unwilling to adhere to schedules or rudimentary standards of punctuality, and their temperament resembled more that of a child than an adult. They seemed to show only the most grudging appreciation for what he was doing for them—leaving the comforts of his homeland to help them become self-sufficient in the modern world. He worked tirelessly to improve the Koinambe mission station, create new job opportunities for local men, and generally assist others in the best way he knew how. He, like many of the missionaries, had the unnatural, or more precisely uncultural, expectation that the Maring would become modern by first converting themselves into “modern” agents so that they might begin to appreciate and enjoy the wonders of modernity—not least the way those who were already modern or civilized were willing to help them, such willingness to help the lesser races itself a mark of the civilized man. This way of thinking the world could not help but to imagine the categories of the West as universal categories. The relationship between the station manager and the priest was strained both because they were endowed with different temperaments and because the former policeman was indifferent to religion.

The final group of Westerners who inhabited Koinambe was the Bible translator from the Summer Institute of Linguistics, his wife, and the Maring girl that he had adopted. Before receiving a calling to Melanesia, he had been a schoolteacher in a hamlet outside of Perth in Western Australia. He had attended school only through the secondary level and had little training, talent, or even special interest in linguistics. What he did possess was an unyielding belief in the might and right of Christianity to transform others for their own benefit. By 1980, he and his wife had lived for well over a decade in the Jimi Valley, making dogged headway in their attempt to translate the Bible into Maring. His principal assistant—who

was in fact the actual translator—was a young Kauwaty man he had semi-adopted, sent to secondary school at Ukurumpa (the capital of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, it resembles nothing so much as a cozy, middle-class, mid-American town replete with split-level houses and bustling supermarkets, though it is, of course, located in the heart of the New Guinea Highlands), and then to college in Australia. Like strangers trapped on an elevator (to heaven?), the Bible translator and the priest in charge displayed a situational solidarity, as the only long-term residents of Koinambe and the only white practicing Christians in a sea of black faces of dubious faith and white transient lapsed Christians. But it was always clear that the hard-wired fundamentalist from Australia could not bring himself to like or trust an effeminate, bookish, Anglican from America. And so days would go by when they spoke nary a word to one another, the translator holed up in one house and the priest in the other.

Though Koinambe was a mini United Nations with an Irish nurse, English station manager, American priest, and Australian Bible translator (not to mention visits from a “black” Indian nurse and a Chinese dentist from Hong Kong), the Maring viewed the white community as homogeneous. The community of Westerners encouraged this impression, maintaining a strict code of solidarity and harmony when Melanesians were present. In public, they always expressed a fondness for their native land even as they all confessed a fundamental unhappiness, of how coming to Papua New Guinea—“PNG” was how they always referred to it—was a reply to a feeling of dissatisfaction and estrangement with their homeland. Once in PNG, a reversal occurred, however. The marginality of the expatriates, their distantness from their own culture, was “corrected” in the Maring context: for in Melanesia they stood for precisely what they were alienated from, thereby reasserting their connectedness with their “home” by virtue of being spatially, culturally, and spiritually separated from it. What a task for the Maring to assemble a picture of Western society from this odd, psychologically distressed, and highly unrepresentative sample, made that much more peculiar by the occasional locally resident anthropologist. Nonetheless, assemble a picture of modernity they did. They transformed themselves in the face of transformative powers of encompassment. What follows is my attempt to capture one part of that history. My only hope is that it yields whatever truth is necessary for this historical moment; for as an anthropologist and a man, it is the only way I know of thanking the Maring for their generosity toward me.