FOR BREAD AND DIGNITY:
Complicating the Bougainville "Resource Conflict"

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"For a colonized people, the most essential value, because it is the most meaningful, is first and foremost the land: the land, which must provide bread and, naturally, dignity."

-Frantz Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* (1961)

INTRODUCTION

In 1972 the Panguna Copper Mine was opened on the island of Bougainville, part of Papua New Guinea (PNG). The displacement and pollution associated with the mining project in conjunction with the lack of compensation for the Bougainvilleans fostered local hostility towards the Australian mining company—Conzinc Riotinto of Australia (CRA).This hostility manifested itself in violent conflict starting in 1988, continuing for a decade, and resulting in thousands of deaths.

The well respected political scientist, Michael Klare, refers to the struggle in Bougainville as a "resource conflict" and "a conflict over minerals," stating that "at the heart of the Bougainville conflict is the social and environmental damage wrought by the large-scale copper mining" (2001: 198, 195, 196). He is not alone in this characterization (Böge 2006). Tad Homer-Dixon, the father of environmental security, cites the conflict in his book *Ecoviolence*, and attributes the conflict to "group identity and relative deprivation motivations" that came about from a conflict over a socially important resource (1999: 147).

These characterizations of the conflict are overly simplistic. In reality, Klare's "Bougainvilleans as wealth-seeking" hypothesis and Homer-Dixon's more nuanced though resource-based view are both incomplete. I agree that the mine was a significant force in pushing Bougainvilleans to militarize, however this requires more explanation.

In this paper I will review the Bougainville conflict and how it fits into the existing dominant literature regarding the environment and violent conflict. Taking a political ecology approach I will then offer my view that the violence in Bougainville was not a resource conflict at all, but a struggle against outside control. As the importance of the mine in the conflict is unarguable, I will then explain how the mine created conditions

that encouraged conflict. The paper will finish with a broader description of the multiple actors involved in this oft-simplified struggle, and lastly an exploration of the "resource conflict" as a concept.

Illustrating the complexities of the Bougainville conflict is important for several reasons. Broadly, it provides a critique of the literature concerning environmental or resource conflicts. It also helps to inform policy decisions concerning resource extraction. The Bougainville case certainly doesn't suggest that all mining projects will result in separatist movements. Rather, looking at the specific aspects of the crisis will hopefully steer companies from exacerbating already unstable conditions and encourage them to examine possible secondary impacts of extraction and planning for these. Additionally, it implicates the larger political and economic structures in place and recognizes actors in resource conflicts who frequently evade blame.

On a smaller scale, it advances the analysis of the Bougainville issue specifically. The situation in Bougainville is neither "old news" nor resolved; the Bougainvilleans have gained autonomy, but the nature of this autonomy and the possibility for sovereignty are up in the air, as well as the future of mining on the island. Looking at the precise causes of instability and conflict on the island will help PNG and Bougainvilleans decide how to proceed to avoid future violence.

BOUGAINVILLE , THE PANGUNA MINE, AND THE CONFLICT

The Papua New Guinean province of Bougainville—comprising two percent of the total country's area, at almost 10,000 square kilometers—is composed of the islands of Bougainville (8,646 square kilometers) and nearby Buka (598 square kilometers), as

well as five atolls and many smaller islands (Ghai and Regan 2000). Though these islands are governed by the government of Papua New Guinea—whose capital, Port Moresby, is 1,000 km to the west—they are physically part of the Solomon Islands chain, the nearest island of which is only four kilometers away.

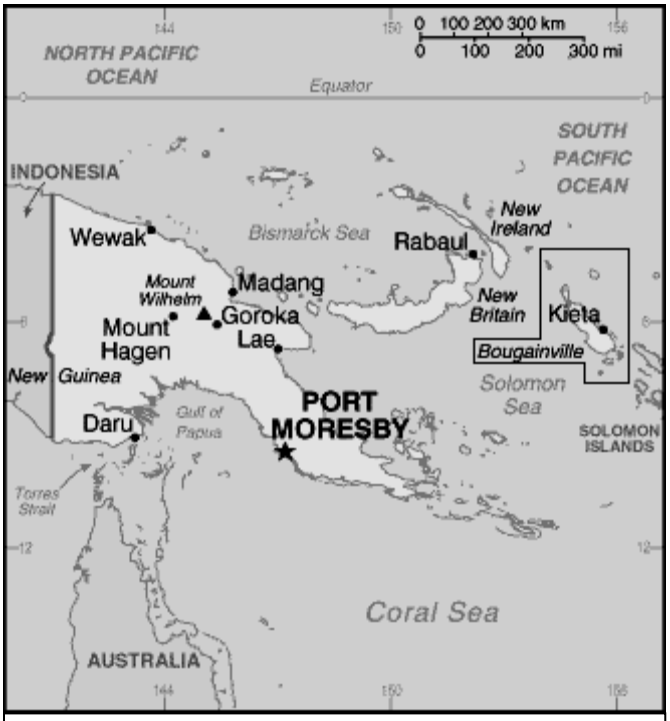

Figure 1: PNG with Bougainville in box. Source: CIA Factbook 2006.

In 1888, Bougainville was politically conjoined to New Guinea through German colonization. It was agreed by colonial powers that the rest of the Solomon Islands chain would come under British influence. Following World War I, the Germans lost their possession and the New Guinea colony, still containing Bougainville, became a British colony administered via Australia. During World War II Bougainville was occupied by the Japanese, who were subsequently ousted by American-led allied forces, and the islands were returned to British Australia. It became a full-fledged Australian possession with Australia's independence, and in 1975 Papua New Guinea gained independence and inherited Bougainville, against the will of the islanders. Bougainville has endured a long, unfortunate history of control by outsiders.

There are just over 175,000 people currently living in the province of Bougainville. The term "Bougainvillean" describes around twenty distinct language groups of Melanesians with darker skin than people found on the Papua New Guinea mainland (leading to a local differentiation of "black skin" Bougainvilleans and "red-skin" mainlanders). Between and within these language groups there is significant cultural diversity (Ghai and Regan 2000, Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization 2004.)

Bougainvilleans have much more in common with their neighbors in the Solomon Islands than their compatriots from Papua New Guinea's mainland. A previous Interim Peace Officer of Bougainville refers to the political separation from the rest of the Solomons by the initial 1889 colonization as a wrong that should be corrected. "For ten thousand years [the Bougainvilleans] had been trading and marrying with the people from the Shortland Island and the Choisuel [nearby Solomon Islands]" (Miriori 1996: 59). Ever since Bougainville was first fused to New Guinea by the Germans there has been resentment about the artificial bond, disenfranchisement, and "restrictions wrought on freedom, autonomy and customs" that Bougainvilleans incurred as ethnic minorities on a distant province ("Constitution of Autonomous Region of Bougainville" 2004: no page). In fact, in 1953 a UN mission visiting south Bougainville heard a formal request by the islanders to split off from Papua New Guinea and become part of the Solomon Islands (Carl 2000).

Colonial administrations reinforced the division. While early Germans often ruled with a heavy hand, they gave Bougainville the same amount of attention that they gave the rest of PNG, making sure that adequate infrastructure was in place. The British and

Australians, on the other hand, neglected the Bougainvilleans, leading to a deterioration of infrastructure and complete lack of services provided on parts of the mainland, which upset the islanders (Ghai and Regan 2000). Predominantly Catholic missionaries filled the void created by British and Australian neglect. Until 1960 the only schools were Catholic schools, which allowed for the "emergence of a cohesive and educated elite unique [within] Papua New Guinea" which was eventually instrumental in uniting Bougainville and creating a politicized identity (Ghai and Regan 2000). In addition, many colonial officials played up ethnic differences by deeming the Bougainvillean "black skins" more suited for leadership positions, while PNG highlanders were favored for physical labor (Ghai and Regan 2000).

Settler-operated cash crop plantations sprang up following World War II, but it was not until the mid-1960s that land issues came to the forefront of the Bougainvillean struggle, where they have remained to this day. It was 1960 when huge copper deposits were first found in rugged central Bougainville. As explorations continued, there were student protests and villagers in the vicinity of the future mine pulled up survey pegs and even assaulted workers (Solidarity South Pacific No date). Despite the reistance, the Panguna copper mine was planned in 1964 by Conzinc Riotinto of Australia (CRA) —an Australian company and subsidiary of the British company Rio Tinto Zinc (RTZ)—who then founded Bougainville Copper Ltd. (BCL). Unfortunately, it the mine was planned on land belonging to the Nasioi people, whose land ownership arrangements, were, according to one anthropologist, "were more complex than any other he had experienced" (Vernon 2005: 260). Mine development started in 1969, and production began three years

later (Böge 1999). As of its opening in 1972, the Panguna mine was the largest open pit copper mine in the world.

The mine was intended to bankroll Papua New Guinea's independence. The majority of the profits from the mine, 62%, went to the PNG central government. Another 33% went to the foreign shareholders of the mining company. Of the remaining 5%, 4% went to the Bougainville provincial government and 1% went to local landowners. During its years of operation, the mine provided 44% of PNG's exports (Böge 1999). Because of the incompatibility of local systems of land tenure and the deals worked out between the mining companies and Bougainvilleans, many who customarily owned the area received no compensation for the new industry that had taken over so much of their land (Hunt 2000).

In addition to the issues of uncompensated displacement and appropriation of resources, the mine had considerable effects on the health of the island. Hundreds of millions of tons of pollutants—150,000 tons a day—were dumped into the island's two primary rivers, the Jaba and Kawerong, and waste products were killing plant and marine life (Böge 1999). Before long both rivers were completely devoid of their fish populations which previously sustained Bougainvillean families. The flow of the rivers was reduced, but those who were able to use river water to irrigate their crops found that the agricultural productivity of their land had decreased considerably. The local populations were drinking water polluted by the mine and were "showered in toxic chemical dust" (Heinrich 2002).

Though Bougainvillean dissent was present from the very first days of the mining operation, it was in 1988 that the New Panguna Landowners Association (New PLA)—

originally formed to investigate the environmental impacts of the mine—had turned into a force ready for military action (Carl 2000). In November of 1988, the New PLA's leader, Francis Ona, decided that peaceful negotiation had proved ineffective for too long. Along with many young Bougainvilleans, Ona stole the mining company's explosives and began destroying strategic company structures (Hunt 2000b). This grew into a full-fledged militant force known as the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (Conciliation Resources 2002).

The BRA continued to be led by Ona, who was joined by fellow Bougainvillean and former Papua New Guinea Defence Force soldier, Sam Kauona. When perpetrating the initial attack, Ona and his cohorts wanted to see an increase in compensation for landowners and greater Bougainvillean ownership of the mine, but the BRA quickly gained support under a new banner of secession. This new, dominant Bougainvillean force was anti-foreigner, ethno-nationalist, and wanted independence and a "traditional, idyllic, egalitarian society" (Conciliation Resources 2002). Papua New Guinea quickly deployed their military in response to the destruction caused by the BRA and various other militant splinter groups.

In the ensuing conflict Papua New Guinean forces "arbitrarily destroyed" villages causing mass displacement. Innocent civilians, including women and children, were tortured, raped, or murdered. These atrocities have been catalogued by Amnesty International, International Red Cross, and the Australian International Development Bureau, and various media sources (Kabui 1991). Throughout the course of the conflict, Papua New Guinea withdrew all of its officials and all national services and banks were shut down. The navy imposed an embargo on the island, blocking all aid and trade to the

province (Carl 2000: 40). This sudden lack of incoming goods—especially medicine, food, and fuel—became a pressing issue for Bougainvilleans.

Adding to the mayhem were internal skirmishes among Bougainvilleans. Much of this was owing to disagreements over land ownership after customary tenure had been disrupted by the mining project. Younger generations who had just come of age were at a distinct disadvantage to previous generations who had made deals with the mining company. Also, small bands of Bougainvilleans saw this period of turmoil as an opportunity to loot fellow islanders without the danger of imprisonment. Additional internal conflict was caused by essentially divergent wishes for the future of the island. Over time, however, new institutions such as the BRA and interim governing bodies were able to take control and unite the majority of the population.

A lasting peace agreement was finally signed in 2001 between Papua New Guinea and Bougainville. The foundations of this agreement were the creation of an autonomous Bougainville Government with its own constitution, the promise of a referendum on the future political status of Bougainville by 2016, and an agreement on the part of Bougainvilleans to disarm and dispose of their weapons. The final draft of the Constitution of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville was adopted in November of 2004.

By gaining autonomy, a future referendum on independence, and shutting down the mine, the Bougainvilleans were the unlikely victors. Against a recognized state that had the support of Australia, a large corporation, and even the World Bank, the Bougainvilleans were able to succeed with homemade guns and coconut bombs reminiscent of “The Swiss Family Robinson”.

ENVIRONMENT AND CONFLICT: DOMINANT SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

Environmental Security

Bougainville does not fit neatly into the dominant literature concerning the relationship between violent conflict and the environment. Despite the incompatibility of the Bougainville conflict with either the environmental security or resource curse model, both Homer-Dixon and Klare have cited the Bougainville case as illustrative of their seemingly antithetical theses[1].

In *Ecoviolence*, Homer-Dixon introduces the idea of "environmental security," which has gained great popularity among policy makers. He advances the idea that increasing population pressures and resource consumption are leading to environmental scarcity. These scarcities have social effects—such as impoverishment or migration—that then lead to violent conflict. Though conflict can be avoided though effective adaptation, "contextual factors also influence the ultimate potential for instability in a society" (Homer-Dixon & Blitt 1998: 224).

The environmental security model is difficult to apply to Bougainville for several reasons. Homer-Dixon's thesis was meant to apply to "renewable resources like cropland, forests, and freshwater supplies" (Homer-Dixon & Blitt 1998: 1). The conflict-inducing resource in the case of Bougainville is copper, a non-renewable resource. Secondly, the mine was shut down long before the ore had been completely extracted. The copper was hardly a scarce resource. A total of 13,000 hectares of land— about 1.5% of the total area of Bougainville—were leased by the mining company for operation and waste dumping

[1] Kahl (2006) has ably reconciled the two viewpoints by 1) arguing that a resource can be scarce at one scale and abundant at another and 2) arguing that abundance can produce scarcity, citing Bougainville as an example of the latter. Despite the logic of both of these arguments, their accuracy in describing a given situation still ultimately depends on points against which I have already argued.

(Vernon 2005). This rocky, mountain land was less fertile than most other parts of the island. Land, then, could not be considered the scarce resource either. Perhaps only the fish stocks in the rivers, which were essentially eliminated in the mine's twelve years of operation, could be considered scarce, but this certainly was not a conflict sparked by a fish shortage (Böge 1999).

Homer-Dixon describes the Bougainville situation a "good recent example" of how "degradation or depletion of [a resource to which a social group is strongly tied] can accentuate a feeling of relative deprivation" (1999: 147-148). Puzzlingly, he doesn't explain what resource he's referring to, stating only that "a foreign-owned copper mine...had severely damaged the island's environment" (1999: 148). The best explanation is that the depleted resource is the "environment," a resource which eludes quantification or claims of scarcity.

What does seem to fit Homer-Dixon's model is the presence of contextual factors or pre-existing conditions that provide fuel for a resource issue to ignite. Bougainville also illustrates the importance of social change as a mediator between environmental changes and conflict.

Resource Curse

In stark contrast to the neo-Malthusian theory of environmental security, many neoclassical economists have argued that it is abundance, not scarcity, that engenders violent conflicts. This phenomenon is often argued to be more explanatory of conflicts within a single state, as opposed to interstate violence. Abundance is theorized to provide an incentive for a rebel group to take control of a certain area to gain access to that

resource. Insurgents are attracted to profits gained by resource control either for the money itself or as means to advance their cause, presumably against the present government. These two goals have been referred to as "greed" and "grievance" (Ballentine and Sherman 2003). It is argued that the resource that creates the incentive for rebellion is also the reason that the state is unable to quash the resistance. This is because the abundance of a primary resource can foster dependence on that one resource and lead to instability and development problems, a phenomenon referred to as a "resource curse" (Kahl 2006: 12).

Though Michael Klare does not believe that this is the form all resource conflict takes, he believes that it's highly descriptive of internal wars over minerals, gems, and timber "between ethnic and political groups that are already divided over a variety of issues" (2001: 190). While these pre-existing divisions are then exploited to gain support, "it is a desire to reap the financial benefits of resource exploitation that most often sustains the fighting," in his estimation (2001: 191).

The resource curse model initially seems to fit the Bougainville situation fairly well. Clearly there is an abundance of copper on the island; the Panguna mine was the world's largest open pit copper mine. Aggression was directed towards those who held the mine based on, among other things, resentment over the negligible benefit of the mine profits to Bougainville and its permanent residents. On top of that, Papua New Guinea's under funded and under trained military was unable to defeat the rag tag army of Bougainvilleans armed with a combination of refurbished World War II guns and homemade weapons.

The resource curse model fails, however, when we look at the motivations of the Bougainvilleans with respect to the resource. Attacks on the copper mine closed it back in 1989, and it has yet to resume operation. Though there existed and continue to exist varying desires among Bougainvilleans regarding the fate of the mine, "for many Bougainvilleans, the aim of rebellion was not to harness the mine to a free and independent Bougainville but to have an independent Bougainville free of mining, as well as all other economic activities threatening traditional society" (Regan 2003: 157). If the rebel group makes no use of the resource that they supposedly sought to acquire, then it is hard to conceive that they wanted to secure it either for greed, or as means to fund further action to redress their grievances.

In *Resource Wars*, just before delving into his analysis description of Bougainville, Klare states that the case study—along with case studies of diamonds in Sierra Leone and timber in Borneo—will help the reader appreciate how "the violent pursuit of resource wealth in poor and divided countries, the lack of an effective international response, the willingness of many resource firms to traffic with warlords and rebels, and the prominent role of PMCs [private military companies]" tend to reinforce each other. In the case of Bougainville, a PMC was commissioned by the PNG prime minister but never deployed, no resource firms trafficked with warlords or rebels (as the Bougainvilleans shut down the mine), and an international response led to a successful treaty that has held for the last five years.

There was a violent pursuit of resource wealth, but it was on the part of PNG (who sent in troops), Australia (who provided attack helicopters and other assistance), and the World Bank (whose money was offered to a force of British mercenaries through

the PNG government). Either Klare was oblivious to the fact that Bougainvilleans ceased all mine activity after taking Panguna over, or he really was implying that the three powers just mentioned where those seeking wealth, in which case the impetus for rebellion is left unexplained.

The Political Ecology Approach

Having deemed the aforementioned models of resource conflict unsatisfactory for explaining this conflict and judging the authors' engagement with Bougainville superficial and under researched, I will take a political ecology approach. Matt Turner suggests that "when referring to 'struggles over resource access', political ecologists need to utilize their fuller understandings of resource-related conflict to explain the full material and nonmaterial dimensions of these struggles" (2004: 885). Such is the advantage of political ecology, which doesn't try to match events to universal, predetermined models, but takes a place-based approach to examine each case anew. This approach also respects the complexity of conflicts and does not give precedence to any one factor. Finally, it emphasizes the importance of understanding the local context while taking into account the global political economy, and all scales in between.

With this in mind, I do not wholly discount the ideas of Homer-Dixon or Klare, but note that each of them has described only a very limited portion of the situation. Especially vital, in this case, is an analysis of the nonmaterial dimensions of the Bougainville conflict. In the following sections I will describe what motivated Bougainvilleans to instigate a revolt against their federal government. Though the acquisition of resources was clearly a major cause of conflict on the part of the PNG government, we find that the Bougainvillean desires should be understood in a broader,

non-resource based context. If we contextualize the Papua New Guinean motives, as well, we find that the conflict can in some ways be traced back to PNG's colonial past and the dominance of the global capitalist political economy and a modern development narrative against subsistence economies.

BOUGAINVILLEAN MOTIVES: WHAT WERE THEY FIGHTING FOR?

The models of the Bougainville crisis proposed by Klare and Homer-Dixon both assume that a resource was a direct cause of conflict, in either its scarcity or abundance. Homer-Dixon is not clear on what resource the sides are vying for, and Klare definitely points to copper as the contested resource even though Bougainvilleans have not extracted a gram of copper since they first gained control of the mine. Neither provides a satisfactory argument for the conflict being based on resource possession or dispossession; this is the primary reason that neither model fits the Bougainville conflict.

Of course, if I am to contest their proposed causes of the conflict, I must also provide an alternative cause. Upon studying the history of Bougainville and the claims of the islands' people, it becomes clear that the conflict was rooted in a Bougainvillean desire to shed the yoke of colonial rule. By the time Bougainvilleans was signed in 2001, the Bougainvilleans had been ruled by four different governments for over a century, been coerced into indentured labor abroad by foreign plantation owners, lived through large scale wars on their own territory that they had nothing to do with, and had their lands stolen and degraded by foreign corporations. This was always a source of resentment among Bougainvilleans. While it is common sense that so many years of oppression would create a disgruntled population ready to revolt, a review of

Bougainvillean history and analysis of some more recent documents does much to support the argument that control by outsiders was the primary grievance and self-governance was the primary goal for the Bougainvillean resistance.

The long history of oppression from outsiders has been well catalogued earlier in the paper, but it is necessary to also look at the history of resistance to outside control in the years leading up to the violence. According to a prominent Bougainvillean leader, "independence has always been an aspiration of [Bougainvilleans]" (Kabui 1991). Islander resistance was not politicized during the German administration as the various cultural and linguistic groups were not integrated enough to respond to German colonization on any sort of large scale. We can imagine, however, that individual clashes with the German authorities were common, given the standard colonial practices of forced labor recruitment and "punitive exhibitions," in which German officials would attack and murder groups of Bougainvilleans without provocation—despite their being termed "punitive"—in order to establish firm control (Sack 2005).

The first record of a significant and organized move for independence from colonial forces came in 1953, when Bougainville was controlled by British Australia. At this time UN officials visiting the southern part of the main island were told in a meeting with locals that the Bougainvilleans wished to be annexed by their brothers in the Solomon Islands, and sever their political ties with New Guinea, Australia, and Britain (Carl 2000). As would be the case with many subsequent requests, this proved fruitless.

In 1962, a visiting UN Decolonization Committee met with a Bougainvillean delegation and again, the Bougainvilleans requested that they no longer be aligned with the Australian territories of Papua and New Guinea (Carl 2000). What was unique about

this claim was that instead of asking for independence or annexation to the Solomon Islands, they requested US control (Ghai and Regan 2000). This was perhaps because of the comparatively good treatment they received from US soldiers during World War II, and may reflect a growing desperation for a change in leadership as geologists probed Bougainville's interior. By this time nearly all Bougainvilleans had quit working at foreign-owned copra and cocoa plantations, and began to produce these cash crops only on their own land (O'Callaghan 2002).

While test drilling began at the future site of the Panguna mine in 1964, Bougainville sent representatives to the PNG House of Assembly to ask for a referendum for independence; their request is denied ("Chronology" 2002). In the two following years student groups protested the Australian administration as well as the mining company, and voiced their right to self-determination. During this time groups of Bougainvilleans met several times to discuss secession (Carl 2000). Though the strong desire to secede was by no means universal, it began to gain support. In 1970, two pro-independence groups held informal votes in on secession, revealing populations in the northern part of the province who were opposed to the idea. The movement for secession continued simmering and in September of 1975 Bougainvillean leaders declared independence two weeks before PNG. Their new government was only recognized by the Solomon Islands.

As if the compelling history of desire for self-government wasn't enough, we can also look at the words of the leaders of the rebellion, to determine their motives. In the constitution adopted by the recently formed Bougainville Autonomous Region in 2004, the preamble contains passages such as:

> "Mindful of the restrictions wrought on our freedom, autonomy and customs by colonial aggression, foreign influences, and the devastation of foreign wars..."
> "Proud of our long struggle to free ourselves from adverse colonial and foreign influences and to renew our freedom, autonomy and customs..."
> "Recognizing the sacrifice of Bougainvilleans for the causes of autonomy and self-determination..." ("Constitution of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville" 2004)

There is no mention of anything related to the mine in the preamble, save the seventh of ten objectives which is to "protect the land, the sea, [and] our environment...for future generations" (Constitution of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville" 2004). In a statement to the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations, a Bougainvillean leader does explain the plight of Bougainvilleans in the face of the damage of the Panguna mine and PNG's attacks and embargoes, but he begins by stating that Bougainvilleans have been "denied the fundamental right to self determination" and, as a result, have suffered the "gross human rights violations which so often typify such unjustified subjugation by alien peoples" (Kabui 1991: 1).

Klare stated that the at heart of the Bougainville conflict was damage caused by the mine, but further investigation shows that the conflict has much deeper roots, and is a result of decades of oppression and a seething antipathy towards their myriad foreign meddlers.

THE ROLE OF THE MINE

While it was not resources that prompted Bougainvilleans to endure a decade of war and depravity, the Panguna mine was nevertheless an integral part of their anti-colonial struggle. No organized mass uprisings occurred in Bougainville until the mine was constructed. Clearly, the mine was the primary target of the initial attacks, and

continued to be the focus of battles throughout the nineties. To disregard the importance of the mine in the Bougainville conflict would be ludicrous, and no scholar has ever suggested that the mine's role was minimal. Indeed, though the conflict was not one over resources, the copper mine was most certainly a catalyst of the violence. The mine inciting the conflict in several ways that I will explain further: firstly, it gave PNG a reason to fight; secondly, it created a pan-Bougainvillean identity; thirdly, and on a completely related note, it fostered an animosity between Bougainvilleans and non-Bougainvilleans; and lastly, it created a sense of immediacy for the realization of desires that had been present for a century.

It takes two to wage a war. The copper deposits being mined in Bougainville may not have been the reason why locals wanted outsiders off of their island and out of their politics, but it was certainly the reason why those outsiders insisted on staying despite countless acts of protest. Were it not for the mine we can speculate that the various governing administrations and the mining company would not have been so uncompromising with the Bougainvilleans, and a conflict may have been averted.

The Panguna mine helped to unite Bougainville against the colonial regime. "The politicization of ethnic identity – the mobilization of wide support based on identity in pursuit of political goals...—began in the 1960s," when it became clear that the mine was going to open (Ghai and Regan 2000: 242). Though they were more similar to each other than to mainlanders, Bougainvillean cultural and linguistic groups were distinct from each other before the mine was built. Peaceful contact between groups began with colonial rule and recruitment of plantation laborers from various parts of Bougainville (Ghai and Regan 2000). Intra-Bougainville contact increased as the transportation

infrastructure was developed for the mining company and the move to a cash economy necessitated contact outside of one's own group (Vernon 2005). The relocation of certain peoples because of the mine and the disruption of customary land tenure also led to more contact between groups, paling the lines of distinction between Bougainvillean groups.

The negative impacts of the mine, both social and ecological, became causes around which many Bougainvilleans could rally. Notably, those Bougainvilleans most resistant to the idea of secession were those in the northern part of the main island and those on Buka, the provinces second largest island, who were effected the least by the mine. At the outset, it was mostly landowners near the mine who began to unite in opposition, but "as some...grievances were felt by Bougainvilleans well beyond the landowner groups directly affected by the mine, they tended to become generalized complaints expressed in many parts of Bougainville" (Ghai and Regan 2000: 246).

This phenomenon is described by what Robbins calls the "environmental identity and social movement thesis," whereby ecological marginalization of distinct groups unites them so that they may better represent themselves politically (2004: 188). Parajuli posits that this formation of an "ecological ethnicity" comes about when there is "uneven appropriation of nature" by others and when the uniting groups have "proposals about alternative modes of production, consumption, and distribution" (1998: 204). Both of these conditions are unquestionably met, as evidenced by the completely lopsided impacts of the mine in relation to local farming and by the Bougainvilleans' decision not to reopen the mine. The fomenting of this new identity as a Bougainvillean—as opposed to only identifying as a Nasioi or Nagovisi or Siwai, for example—facilitated the collective action that was necessary to elicit change.

The creation of the Panguna mine intensified the differentiation and animosity between Bougainvilleans and outsiders, which contributed to the conflict both directly and indirectly, by further articulating the unique, unified Bougainvillean identity in contrast to the mainlander identity. Most of the mine's employees were not Bougainvillean; the creation of the mine brought in thousands of non-Bougainvilleans. As most Bougainvilleans never had the chance to leave the province, this was the first time they were exposed to the "red-skin" culture. Similarity among Bougainvilleans and dissimilarity between Bougainvilleans and mainlanders was illuminated with the juxtaposition of the two. Though Bougainvilleans are well-off compared to those in other provinces of PNG, the mainlanders and expatriates in Bougainville all had relatively high paying jobs with the mining company. The "relative affluence" of the "red-skins" in conjunction with their distinct culture resulted in their presence "serving to enhance the sense that the mine and all that came with it had been imposed upon the people of Bougainville" (O'Callaghan 2002: no page). An "us and them" mentality was advanced by the fact that the riot police used to stop the early protests and the soldiers sent in following the initial attacks were all mainlanders (Ghai and Regan 2000).

Divisions were not only along ethnic lines. Class differences brought about by the mine led to conflict among Bougainvilleans as well. "An immediate if less often noted target of attacks than on Bougainville Copper Ltd. (BCL) was property owned by the Bougainville Development Corporation (BDC) and other indigenous firms...raising the language of class struggle, 'those in revolt...deliberately destroyed...property owned by "fellow" Bougainvilleans'" (MacWilliam 2005: 224). Animosity was borne out of the feeling that those who were feeling the greatest costs of the mine—the landowners

around it—were not the ones who were benefiting the most—the employees and the federal, mainland government. The opening of the mine was arguably most overt act of exploitation perpetrated against Bougainville, and it gave them sufficient reason to fight back.

Bougainvilleans had historically been upset with their lack of political control and the systematic suppression of many of their traditions, but the mine represented a more acute threat that needed to be stopped soon before it caused any more damage. In contrast to past anti-colonial concerns, the mine provided a sense of immediacy and intensity that demanded action. It was the Panguna mine that triggered "a dramatic intensification of grievances against the colonial regime" that resulted in widespread public support for secession (Ghai and Regan 2000: 245). Unless they could attain more control over their own territory, they would face many more years of exploitation degradation of their home to the benefit of the mainland and the unwanted immigrants on Bougainville.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA'S MOTIVES: WHO IS TO BLAME?

This conflict has largely been viewed as a civil war or rebellion, as PNG and the Bougainvilleans are the two parties who actually fought. Those who are pro-Bougainville in are often anti-PNG (Solidarity South Pacific). Such a construction ignores the greater economic reality of the situation. While the Papua New Guinea Defense Forces were sent in to face off against the Bougainvilleans, they did so using Australian military equipment in response to attacks on a private Australia company with a British parent company. This conflict was a multi-party struggle that involved more than just state actors. We must question the quality of Papua New Guinea's independence from

Australia, who had control of the country until 1975. The state was not necessarily the 'bad guy' it is often chalked up to be, and was put in such a position by other forces.

Papua New Guinea's possession of Bougainville has largely been due to the copper deposits on the small island, which were supposed to bankroll the impoverished and little-developed Papua New Guinea's independence and emergence as a viable independent state. Currently, 85% of Papua New Guineans participate in subsistence agriculture, as the Bougainvilleans did before the 1960s (CIA 2006). The World Bank and IMF supported the mine as part of their "world-market-oriented development approach" (Böge 1999). The World Bank and AusAID, PNG's largest donor, continue to put money into development projects that prioritize integration into the cash economy, often at the expense of functioning subsistence economies. The World Bank even gave PNG money to hire a mercenary force after the PNGDF failed at quashing the Bougainvillean resistance (Klare 2001). Given the depressed and underdeveloped condition that PNG's previous colonial powers had put it in, and the pressure it was getting from these same powers to develop in a certain way, Papua New Guinea cannot receive full blame for the conflict in Bougainville and the adverse effects on the people and environment. More accurate than Homer-Dixon's view of scarcity leading to conflict is one advanced by Hartmann, where "declining foreign assistance, high levels of debt, unfavorable terms of trade, and financial austerity measures—not shortages of renewable resources—are creating the real 'scarcity' that weakens states" (2001: 55).

Lastly, we can't forget the foreign interests involved in the conflict. A third of the profits were going to foreign shareholders of Conzinc Riotinto of Australia and it's British parent company, Rio Tinto Zinc. Despite having been a sovereign nation for

almost 15 years, two previous colonial powers of PNG continued to extract resources for their own profit while degrading PNG's environment, harming its people, and creating political instability.

CONCLUSIONS

The environmental security and resource curse models for violent conflict and the environment are extremely ill-suited to describe the dynamics of the Bougainville conflict. I believe that the attempts by both authors to force the crisis into their respective models is a sign of a complete lack of research on their part, rather than a fundamental difference in how they would interpret the situation in Bougainville. This case shows how the rigidity of these models, in contrast to political ecology, serves to obscure and simplify cases of resource-related conflict.

While we can't say whether or not the conflict would have happened had there not been copper in Bougainville, we can say that the Bougainville conflict is inextricably tied to the creation of the Panguna mine. Yet this case seems much different from the case of water scarcity in Gaza in Homer-Dixon's *Ecoviolence*, or Klare's study of oil-related conflicts in the Persian Gulf. This disconnect begs the question: what is a resource conflict? If the public demand for secession in Bougainville was mostly in response to an escalation of concerns with the mining operation, does that make this a resource conflict?

On a website of his, Klare defines a resource conflict as violence as a result of "competition over access to scarce or especially valuable resources" (Klare 2006). I endorse this definition, with the caveat that scarcity and value of a resource are not fixed, but are dependent on specific locations, situations, and will change both over time and as

the scale of analysis changes. Given this definition, the Bougainville conflict is not a resource conflict but it certainly is an environment-related conflict. Though in the process of the struggle Bougainville did secure a resource desired by the opposing side, this was not the goal. The problem was not that the mining company and the government were *taking a resource* that Bougainvilleans wanted; the problem was that they were *degrading the land* of Bougainville.

By degrading Bougainville's environment, the mining company and PNG government were negatively affecting Bougainville in two dimensions: a livelihood dimension and a socio-cultural dimension. The opening of the mine threatened Bougainvillean livelihoods in several ways. Most obviously, the environmental problems caused by the mine and its tailings jeopardized the productivity of subsistence farms and cash crops. While earning power was diminishing, the island's economy was changing with the influx of wage laborers for the mine who were making more than the average Bougainvillean. If the mining was to go on for decades, there was the possibility that the Bougainvilleans would be increasingly marginalized financially relative to this new class of mine-workers who could change the structure of the economy make prices of goods comparatively more expensive.

On the socio-cultural level, the mine was degrading the home of Bougainvilleans, who have a strong connection to their land. "Land is our social life, it is marriage; it is status; it is security; it is politics; in fact, it is our only world. When you take our land, you cut out the very heart of our existence" (quoted in Miriori 1996: 59). "To Bougainvilleans, land is like the skin on the back of your hand—you can neither buy it nor sell it. You inherit it, and it is your duty to pass it on to your children in as good

condition as, or better than, that in which you received it" (quoted in Cooper 1992: 31). For these outsiders to come in and brazenly ruin this land tore at the social fabric of many Bougainvillean communities. The disruption of complex land tenure systems resulted in intergenerational conflict within Bougainville and the undermining of the traditional matrilineal inheritance practices (Regan 2003).

As criticisms of environmental security and its ugly step-siblings surface, perhaps we will be able to move beyond universal models for conflict and disaggregate the unfortunate sweeping categories and deal with conflict using a place-based approach, with experts who aren't afraid to do the necessary field work and aren't too haughty to do careful analysis.

ACRONYMS

BCL – Bougainville Copper Ltd. (a subsidiary of CRA)

BRA – Bougainville Revolutionary Army (the primary rebel force)

CRA – Conzinc Riotinto of Australia (the mining company in charge of Panguna)

PMC – Private military company

PNG – Papua New Guinea

PNGDF – Papua New Guinea Defence Forces (the national military)

RTZ – Rio Tinto Zinc (the British parent company of CRA)

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