

# Challenges and Opportunities in the Development of a Cultural Heritage Management Strategy at the Lihir Gold Mine, Papua New Guinea

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## ABSTRACT

In this paper we present a case study of the challenges and opportunities associated with the development of cultural heritage management strategies at the Lihir gold mine in Papua New Guinea. We discuss the contextual drivers and constraints, and outline the ways in which Lihir Gold Limited is aiming to set new industry benchmarks for the region through the development of values-based best practice cultural heritage management programs. This approach is largely based upon a compliance partnership with a local stakeholder group. We argue that such partnerships are a prudent means of mitigating company risk, while constituting a far more necessary tool for local people in the reconceptualisation and negotiation of the experiences of significant social change and modernisation experienced in the context of recent resource development.

## INTRODUCTION

In Papua New Guinea (PNG), mining operations are often established in the more remote corners of the country, typically generating radical changes to the local communities and causing inflated and unrealistic expectations for equal access to economic benefits. Since the catastrophes of Bougainville, the ecological disasters at Ok Tedi and the enduring socio-political dilemmas at Porgera, mining companies and the State have learnt some very hard lessons. In response to government pressure, new industry standards, NGOs and business focused land-owning communities who demand substantial benefits from operations, companies operating in PNG are realising the need for more systematic management approaches to the wide range of issues confronting large scale resource development.

In the PNG context there has been growing attention upon monitoring and mitigating environmental and social impacts (particularly by ensuring more evenly dispersed benefits, gender equity and greater local engagement with mining processes). Until recently there has been comparatively limited attention on the sustainable management of cultural heritage. This is despite the fact that large-scale resource extraction invariably creates huge losses or transformations to local forms of cultural heritage through the destruction of the landscape and the social changes associated with rapid industrialisation. Ignoring the real and perceived losses and changes to cultural heritage is inherently risky for all stakeholders. The sense of cultural loss surrounding changing or declining practices, values and knowledge, or damage to places of cultural significance, can become flashpoints for a raft of frustrations and discontents, which in turn may risk operations or corporate reputation.

Resource companies operating in PNG are now expected to incorporate provisions for the socially and financially sustainable management of cultural heritage throughout and beyond the life of the project. New international codes set forth by organisations

such as the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the International Council of Mining and Metals (ICMM) that specifically address cultural heritage provide opportunities for companies operating in PNG to aspire to a wider range of possible objectives, or to even set new benchmarks for regional best practice.

In this paper we present a case study of the challenges and opportunities associated with developing a cultural heritage management strategy at the Lihir gold mine in PNG. At a time when many companies are talking about 'going beyond compliance', emerging companies like Lihir Gold Limited (LGL) who operate in particularly challenging social and political environments, still face challenges in fully understanding, developing, and implementing programs that actually achieve compliance with best practice standards. However, LGL also has the opportunity to set new industry benchmarks for the region through the development of values-based best practice cultural heritage management programs. We will outline the initial strategies that LGL has adopted to achieve these outcomes, which are centred upon a compliance partnership between LGL and a local stakeholder group. Ultimately this partnership will provide the foundation for long term sustainable cultural heritage management. We will also discuss the contextual drivers, previous and existing approaches to Lihirian cultural heritage, and the range of risks and complications associated with ignoring *and* addressing cultural heritage in such a dynamic environment.

## LIHIR AND ITS GOLD MINE

The Lihir gold mine is situated on the main island of the Lihir Group, off the east coast of New Ireland Province, approximately 950 km northeast of the capital, Port Moresby. Mining has generated major transformations to the local economy and immediate communities far exceeding anything experienced throughout the earlier colonial period or the transition to national independence in 1975. The cultural, social, political and economic changes brought about by large scale economic resource development have profoundly affected all aspects of Lihirian lives. Prior to the commencement of operations, Lihir maintained minimal contact with the national government and other outside institutions and engaged in limited economic activity. Some Lihirians interpreted the mining project as the fulfilment of prophecies for change that emerged in a local 'cargo cult' during the colonial years (Bainton, 2008). Combined with unrealistic expectations for economic development this has fostered a deep sense of dependency upon the mining project.

The project is an open cut mine with a projected life span of approximately 30 years. Exploration was first conducted by the Kennecott Explorations Company in 1982. When construction commenced in 1995, it was managed on behalf of the major shareholder, Rio Tinto, by the Lihir Management Company (LMC). Rio Tinto has since relinquished its involvement and the project is now owned and operated by Lihir Gold Limited. In 1995 the Lihirian population was around 6000 people. Since then, the population has risen to approximately 14 000 people in 2007. This excludes close to 1000 ex-patriates and 'fly-in, fly-out' workers, and an increasing number of migrants that has

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pushed the total population to an estimated 18 000 people. Since production began in 1997 the mine has produced more than 6.3 million ounces of gold, supplied taxes of over K562 million to the national government of PNG and currently employs 1800 staff, including 786 local Lihirians, but it is estimated that at least twice as many people work for other local contracting companies. Nevertheless, most Lihirians continue to look to LGL as the primary source of economic development, through employment, compensation and mining benefits (cf Filer, 1997; Macintyre and Foale, 2004).

### LIHIRIAN CULTURAL HERITAGE

When Lihirians talk about cultural heritage, which they largely gloss as custom (or *kastom* in Tok Pisin), they are generally referring to a range of practices, beliefs and values which they consider to be traditional. At the broadest level Lihirians capture these under the following key categories: the men's house institution, customary laws, the Lihirian language, the clan system and leadership. Within these categories there are numerous forms of tangible and intangible forms of cultural heritage, such as: traditional knowledge, expressed through song, myth, practical and subsistence skills and ritual healing techniques; sacred sites; cosmologies; the production of ceremonial items, including shell money; social and gender protocols; performance; and ceremonial feasting and exchange.

More broadly Lihirian cultural heritage also includes the history of the early German colonial administration, missionary activities, local involvement in the Second World War, the Australian colonial administration, independence and more recently the arrival of the mining company. This history of outside engagement points to the mass of artefacts, pictures, stories, sound recordings and even human remains collected from Lihirian shores over the past two centuries that are now stored in museums throughout the world.

### CUSTOM AND MODERNITY IN LIHIR

Lihirians are largely subsistence farmers, growing tapioca, yams, and sweet potatoes, and raise pigs and harvest small amounts of marine life. As common throughout the New Ireland region, Lihir is a matrilineal society, meaning that people trace their clan identity through their mother's line. Land and other property rights are generally reckoned through these matrilineal descent groups and traditional forms of leadership are primarily vested in matrilineal clans or lineage groups.

In daily contexts *kastom* usually serves as Lihirian shorthand for the series of elaborate exchanges and feasts that mark the various stages in the life cycle (Bainton, 2006). The major feasts involve the exchange of pigs, garden produce, shell money, and now cash and commodities such as store bought rice, tinned meat and cartons of beer. These activities, which normally occur within and around the men's house of the host group, serve to forge and maintain social bonds between clans and lineages, to celebrate the productivity and wealth of specific clans, and to commemorate the lives of particular clan members. These feasts are vital for establishing the authority of individual leaders and the organisation of supporters and allies of a given lineage, and they are highly relevant to the transfer of land rights, resources and lineage leadership. Customary feasting and exchange is central to Lihirian lives and the structuring of the local political economy.

Historically this system has adapted to outside influence and the introduction of new goods and forms of wealth. Recently it has come under serious challenge from the changes brought about by mining operations; however, it has simultaneously expanded. With greater access to cash through royalties,

compensation and employment, modern forms of transport, market produce and trade store food, Lihirians have channelled huge amounts of energy, time, money and resources into local customary exchange and feasting. This has also meant that previously politically insignificant clans and their leaders can now engage in this system in new ways, altering traditional political processes. While feasting is still intended to elicit core social values, contemporary feasting now places more emphasis on competition. People are now under greater pressure to spend lavishly and repay debts quickly; this process shortens what was once a delayed exchange economy (of pigs and shell money).

There have also been changes to knowledge and respect of the sacred geography of Lihir and the maintenance of relationships with the spiritual beings (*tandals*) that inhabit the Lihirian cultural landscape. Traditional ecological knowledge, including healing techniques, is rarely being passed down to younger generations (Macintyre *et al.*, 2005). Traditional skills such as hunting, fishing, making traps, or carving masks and ornaments that use particular designs from the past are also being lost. Dancing is perhaps the one aspect of custom that has been transformed the most, yet paradoxically remained the most traditional, as larger feasts now almost always contain competitive dance troupes. Similarly with increased education and interaction with non-Lihirians, Lihirians are noticing considerable shifts in the local language.

Many of these transitions are inevitable with the introduction of Christianity, education, and economic development and indeed are actively pursued by most Lihirians. However, there is a large section of the community who lament the changes that have been accelerated due the wealth generated from mining development and recognise the need to preserve and maintain their cultural heritage which is fundamental to their Lihirian identity. Many of these people also believe that it is possible to become modern citizens and remain grounded in their local cultural identity, ultimately a key objective of cultural heritage management.

### THE CONTEXT FOR COMPLIANCE

The management transition from LMC to LGL presented numerous organisation and policy challenges for LGL. As a subsidiary of Rio Tinto, LMC was able to rely on the considerable depth and experience of Rio Tinto corporate policies and procedures. As the LGL flagship operation, Lihir is situated within in a small but growing company of its own. It therefore faces the challenge of the widespread redevelopment of its systems and procedures but also the development of an identity and outlook appropriate to its new context.

Part of this process is an internal commitment to the development of an Integrated Management System (IMS), a body of standards and procedures that define and determine the way the company operates. The IMS sets the parameters for all forms of company activity; it is effectively 'the way LGL does business'. The IMS is primarily a series of interconnected standards documents at management and disciplinary levels, supported by an array of standard operating procedures. The IMS also maps across various external codes and good practice requirements from various institutions.

LGL has also become a signatory to the ICMM, which entails becoming a signatory to the ten principles of sustainability of the ICMM<sup>3</sup>. These principles are far reaching, and address financial, environmental, and social accountability as well as labour, health and safety. They constitute a moral and a business code for the organisation. These principles might be perceived as an onerous commitment for a relatively small and developing company; however, there appears to be recognition on the part of the board and senior management that accountability to such a code is necessary if the company is going to project an image of international best practice. At the operational level this has

3. The ICMM Principles can be accessed at: <http://www.icmm.com/our-work/sustainable-development-framework/10-principles>.

created new challenges on how these commitments will be embodied and implemented, particularly in the realm of cultural heritage. As a signatory to the ICMM Principles, LGL is required to 'respect the culture and heritage of local communities, including indigenous peoples' (ICMM Principle 3).

International standards for best practice in the mining industry are laid out in the IFC Performance Standards on Environmental and Social Sustainability<sup>4</sup>. The IFC Performance Standard 8 currently provides the most comprehensive guidelines for best practice in cultural heritage management<sup>5</sup>. Performance Standard 8 adopts and modifies the World Bank and UNESCO definition of cultural property, identifying cultural heritage as all:

*tangible forms of cultural heritage, such as tangible property and sites having archaeological (prehistoric), paleontological, historical, cultural, artistic, and religious values, as well as unique natural environmental features that embody cultural values, such as sacred groves (paragraph 3).*

This segment refers to the kinds of natural features found in the Lihirian cultural landscape, such as sacred rock outcrops and reef sections which Lihirians regard as highly significant. The requirements of Performance Standard 8 also include the protection and maintenance of cultural heritage by:

*undertaking internationally recognised practices for the protection, field-based study, and documentation of cultural heritage (Paragraph 4) ... [and] siting and designing a project to avoid significant damage to cultural heritage (paragraph 5).*

Strong emphasis is similarly placed upon consultation with affected communities (paragraph 6). However the last part of paragraph 3 is perhaps the most salient for LGL, as it states that the IFC Performance Standard 8 will 'apply to cultural heritage regardless of whether or not it has been legally protected or previously disturbed' (paragraph 3).

In Papua New Guinea, the Trustees of the National Museum of PNG are responsible for the management of cultural property, under the *National Cultural Property (Preservation) Act*<sup>6</sup>. This Act covers 'any property, moveable or immovable, of particular importance to the cultural heritage of the country', and 'any object, natural or artificial, used for, or made or adapted for use for, any purposes connected with traditional cultural life of any the peoples of the country, past or present'. The Act identifies a number of offences concerning the damage or removal of national cultural property. It also states that any person (or in the case of mining, the developer) who discovers items of national cultural heritage is required to report this discovery to the National Museum of PNG. Items may include: caves or other places with ancient human remains; carvings, paintings or other representations in rock art; deposits of ancient pottery or historical remains; and places used in former times as ceremonial or burial grounds. All of these types of cultural property are found in Lihir.

At the corporate level all of this has been translated into a clear statement of commitment to protect and sustainably manage the Lihirian social environment, including cultural heritage, whereby LGL will:

*Comply with all applicable acts and regulations as well as industry standards and guidelines and, where these do not exist, adopt internationally recognised standards of practice (LGL Community and Environment Policy, December 2005).*

The original Integrated Benefits Package (IBP) that was signed in 1995 by the State of PNG, the Lihir Mining Area Landowners Association (LMALA) and Lihir Gold Limited, which effectively outlines how Lihirians will benefit from the mine (see Banks, 1998), does not contain any overarching commitments to the preservation and sustainable management of Lihirian cultural heritage. However, the IBP does state that 'LMC will use its best endeavours to avoid disturbing any burial grounds located within the Affected Land [the mining lease zone].' It also contains provisions for compensation for any damages or destruction of graves, sacred sites, or culturally significant resources, such as red clay. Similarly the revised IBP that was signed in 2007, which is comprised of a 107 million kina benefits package to be delivered by LGL over five years, to be implemented through the Lihir Sustainable Development Plan (LSDP), and was largely written by Lihirian leaders, refers to the need for 'stable development':

*To ensure that development in Lihir is stable. This must happen in harmony with the Lihir Society and not destroy and erode the order and culture that existed in the society prior to the operation of the Lihir Gold Project (Lihir JNC, 2007).*

While these sentiments are laudable, reflecting local concerns about cultural change, the revised agreement does not outline any specific programs, forms of best practice, monitoring requirements, or areas of Lihirian cultural heritage that need special attention. Within these two agreements the emphasis is upon compensation for damage or loss, rather than strategies for monitoring or managing or preserving cultural heritage. This largely reflects the relational foundations between Lihirians and LGL, and overriding concerns among prominent Lihirian leaders about obtaining benefits and maximising opportunities for economic development.

## GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY AND LOCAL CONTEXTS

Whereas previously LMC had been able to operate quietly as a backwater of the Rio Tinto empire, LGL is now forced to project itself as morally accountable in a more forthcoming manner. This has potentially brought LGL in line with, and potentially more accountable to, the expectations of an increasingly vocal and expectant global civil society embodied in institutions like Mining Watch, Oxfam, and the Mineral Policy Institute of Australia. This process of commitment to both a rigid set of internal systems and to a code of conduct that reflects expectations of international civil society has placed significant strains on the ideological and organisational orientations of a company which has to develop, change, and reorient its culture of management and work rapidly and significantly.

One element of LGL which plays a key role in this process is the social monitoring programs run by the LGL Community Liaison Department. This role is further mandated by both the mining laws of PNG, and the founding community agreement, the IBP, which constitutes the most fundamental social license to operate of the project itself. Although social impact monitoring under LMC and LGL has highlighted rapid cultural change in Lihir, it has not specifically addressed issues concerning cultural heritage. Aspects of Lihirian cultural heritage have been documented in social impact studies, a range of scholarly research projects, and through the development of the Lihir

4. We acknowledge Chris Ballard for drawing our attention to the details of these international codes.

5. The IFC Performance Standards can be accessed at: <<http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/sustainability.nsf/Content/PerformanceStandards>>.

6. This Act was originally passed in 1965 (no 26 of 1965), and amended by the Act of 1967 (no 65 of 1967) (later chapter no 156 of the laws of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea). This Act can be accessed at: <[http://www.paclii.org/pg/legis/consol\\_act/toc-N.html](http://www.paclii.org/pg/legis/consol_act/toc-N.html)>.



Cultural Information Office in 1998 within the LGL Community Liaison Department. So far this office has been responsible for developing cultural awareness material and documenting sacred sites and customary activities and knowledge. However, these programs are not complete and have been consistently interrupted by a lack of resources, capacity and time, as Cultural Information Officers are drawn into negotiating disputes between landowning groups and LGL.

Correspondingly, the local level government and the revised IBP have both allocated funds for cultural heritage programs, but to date this has not transpired into any significant activity. This is partly due to a lack of local capacity to manage cultural heritage, but also because historically conversations on cultural heritage have been subsumed within the logic of compensation for cultural loss. Overall this has produced an entirely unsatisfactory situation for all parties that has failed to significantly address the mounting political and social issues surrounding Lihirian cultural heritage.

### LOCALISATION OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL COMPLIANCE

In recent years Papua New Guinea has been characterised as a 'weak state', or at least a nation where the state has maintained marginal influence and experienced some rather serious challenges in the task of nation making. In many ways this stems from the extreme cultural diversity of the region that encompasses some 800 language groups, meaning local identities and obligations often retain primary significance. However, it is also closely related to the serious lack of capacity, coupled with varying levels of corruption, throughout all levels and functions of the government. This has been further exacerbated by the limited development of strong civil society institutions. In mining contexts this often means that multinational companies are expected to play quasi government roles and deliver all forms of economic benefit, encouraging the so-called resource dependency syndrome. The limited ability of national and local institutions to carry out their functions also means that companies operating in such contexts have to assume leading roles in pursuing social and political compliance obligations.

It is sometimes assumed that local and global civil society organisations will operate in sympathy and consistency and that there is a shared set of aims and organisational principles belonging to the spectrum of civil society organisations. In practice, this is clearly not the case, especially in Lihir. In effect, the Lihir case has produced a small number of closely interrelated and highly empowered local institutions, the most dominant being the landowners association (LMALA). Landowners regularly challenge operations and hold LGL accountable for the delivery of a wide range benefits and will often (successfully) attempt to halt operations to voice their grievances over delays or non-delivery of benefits, or to craftily extract further concessions from the company through compensation, business contracts or development projects. Simultaneously the Lihir local level government, known as the Nimamar Rural Local Level Government (NRLLG), has found itself in constant competition with the LMALA over control of the revised IBP (Bainton and Macintyre, forthcoming). This has largely muted other voices within the community, such as the women's association and the church. The competition between local groups and the associated tensions threaten the very viability of local society itself, if not operations.

These local institutions operate in a tightly controlled ideological complex which taken as a whole defines a very particular Lihirian response to the experience of modernity in the context of large scale resource development. So far, while the leaders of these groups rhetorically assert the need to preserve Lihirian culture, and will often attempt to gain leverage with the

company through claims to cultural loss, their emphasis has primarily been economic.

One of the ironies of the Lihirian response to modernity, embodied in institutions such as LMALA and most specifically the LSDP, is that it is marked by a highly ambivalent relationship to both the dominance of external cultural pressures embodied in LGL operations, but also to many aspects of its own traditional society and identity. In some ways tradition and custom are thought to compromise the quest for modernity and equality with western corporate interests, and the desire to subsume and control these interests. Thus the lack of community interest groups or cultural heritage management strategies within local political organisations stems from a combination of limited capacity and the apparent tension between different interests, but perhaps also from the fact that many Lihirians are still very busy performing certain customary activities which gives an impression of robust cultural heritage.

### LIKE FROGS IN A SAUCEPAN

Cultural heritage management is not just about protecting places, but also about finding ways to objectify complex practices and beliefs, and then develop strategies that ensure their meaningful continuation in completely altered contexts. In the early mining period Lihirians generated an embryonic form of cultural heritage management characterised by the codification of *kastom* laws merged with social development programs, known as the Society Reform Program. Although these endeavours were unsuccessful, it has meant that most Lihirians have been remarkably receptive to current strategies for developing cultural heritage programs; their early attempts were clearly an indigenous analogue to contemporary management approaches.

The concept of *kastom* often refers to specific activities or beliefs that are regarded as traditional – a self-conscious construction of the past which informs and shapes present behaviour and local identities. In some ways this constitutes a local process of cultural objectification. To some extent there are *kastom* based processes which constitute a kind of social based space for thinking about social change, but these operate at a very micro level and are excluded from the modernist economy and its associated institutions and organisations. The reality of a praxis based concept of culture with limited spaces for the mirroring and objectification of cultural life may be that significant aspects of cultural heritage become like the frog which is slowly boiled: by the time that it realises it is going to die, it is too late.

While *kastom* has proven resilient to change through dynamic and negotiated processes (exemplified through the expansion of feasting activities), it often suffers from an inability to recontextualise the experience of social change through the reframing and objectification of traditional practices. It could be argued, somewhat deterministically, that this process will eventuate in the radical collapse of traditional concepts of culture, which assumes that they are relevant up until the point where it is clear that they no longer have any means of referring to the reality of modern lived experience. To be sure, Lihirians have definitely found innovative ways to ensure the continued relevance of *kastom* in altered circumstances, but many simultaneously fear the possibility that local culture will become transformed beyond recognition.

Drastic socio-cultural disintegration would be likely to produce highly unpredictable social effects and trajectories and may likely be related to social pathologies in gender relations, social order, and intergenerational conflict as well as feelings of dislocation, powerlessness, future discounting, depression, shame and anger. Clearly this constitutes a significant risk for LGL, which operates in the context of rapid Lihirian cultural transformation, but more profoundly for Lihirian society itself.

## DEVELOPMENT OF A COMPLIANCE PARTNERSHIP

By 2008 it was obvious that in order to adequately address corporate commitments to cultural heritage management and Lihirian needs LGL required strategies with provisions for a compliance partnership. The underlying rationale was the need for a civil society institution that could promote those cultural heritage agendas that were not addressed by the dominant political bodies. It is intended that such a group will provide an important balance to the economic emphasis, which, albeit necessary, has displaced attention from other aspects of social change. It will also provide an important external reference point for LGL, and help generate mutually beneficial outcomes that ultimately ensure higher levels of compliance with stated commitments to corporate best practice.

In late 2008, Bainton worked closely the LGL Cultural Information Office to bring together a group of 12 Lihirian men and women to form the Lihirian Cultural Heritage Committee. LGL recognised that this group will only succeed with sufficient capacity and resources. LGL committed itself to funding a ten day cultural heritage workshop across the Lihir Islands in March 2009<sup>7</sup>.

This process served to build the capacity of the Committee, create awareness on cultural heritage issues, and enable the Committee to develop an informed Cultural Heritage Management plan. The plan sets out a range of long and short term goals, concentrating upon the men's house institution, the clan system, customary laws, local language, and leadership. Underneath these high level categories the plan outlines a number of strategies and programs, including: the development of an island wide association; programs for the preservation and maintenance of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, which includes documentation and audio-visual recording projects, developing an archival database, special events, and education programs, and the establishment of a functioning sites register; capacity building programs for the Committee; developing links and collaborative partnerships with national and international institutions and expertise; and the eventual establishment of a cultural centre.

LGL can ultimately extend beyond minimum compliance requirements through the implementation of the plan and by developing the capacity of the Committee to manage their cultural heritage beyond the life of the mine. The significant social capital generated through the cultural heritage workshop is a valuable resource that LGL can utilise and further mobilise through visible and continuing support for the Committee. This signals the potential for creating spaces for new forms of engagement around cultural heritage, increased dialogue between LGL and other major stakeholders like LMALA and the NRRLLG, and the opportunity to develop strong partnerships that address issues of concern to both LGL and the wider community.

This process currently exists in the early stages, representing the first steps towards innovative management; however, it will require long term commitment from LGL through the provision of resources, support, and funding. It also needs to be integrated into the broader 'Lihir Destiny Vision' as it is manifest in the LSDP, which aims to develop Lihirian society through the maximisation of mining benefits before mine closure. However the development and implementation of the LSDP has thus far occurred in relative isolation from the wider Lihirian community, evidenced by the enduring competition between LMALA and the NRRLLG over control of the benefits package. In order for the LSDP to be delivered in a timely fashion, by both LGL and local

leaders, it requires full community involvement. The development and integration of organisations such as the cultural heritage Committee can play a crucial role in this process. Questions over post-mine social and economic sustainability must consider the long term integrity of Lihirian cultural heritage. It must become a key module in LSDP program, contributing towards wider compliance objectives; otherwise it will potentially remain on the edge, to be cut loose at any opportunity. Only through an integrated approach will it be possible to reconcile potentially conflicting needs and aspirations that are part material, part cultural and part spiritual.

## CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

There are two principle challenges to the emergence of a cultural heritage management process on Lihir. Firstly, resource competition and ideological jealousy among other Lihirian institutions which will see cultural heritage as a competing concept which must be either destroyed, or be absorbed within their own sphere of influence. The leaders in control of the LSDP are the most likely actors in this process. Secondly, the cultural heritage management process may be suffocated by LGL itself, probably through the tacit withdrawal of resources, should it become overly convinced of the potential risk of exposure to a discourse about cultural heritage management. Ultimately a capacitated local organisation that has the potential for self determination will also increase the pressure for corporate compliance.

Many resource companies have a tentative and often ambivalent relationship with the concept of cultural heritage and have often seen cultural heritage management as an obstacle to and critique of the development process. Recent research in the Australian context has demonstrated that even though companies operate within a comparatively strong system of cultural heritage legislation, producing a relative culture of compliance, many Aboriginal communities still lack sufficient bargaining power to adequately protect their cultural heritage (O'Faircheallaigh, 2008). However, even in those instances where communities have negotiated mining agreements that commit to the protection of cultural heritage, the viable management of cultural heritage is still dependent upon sufficient and continuing support for activities and processes; where this is absent, high levels of nominal support will fail to deliver 'protection on the ground' (O'Faircheallaigh, 2008, p 38). Such findings are highly relevant to Lihir.

Facilitating a cultural heritage management workshop that is partly designed to address corporate commitments and establish new partnerships has inevitably raised a certain level of interest around some of the more problematic and politicised aspects of Lihirian cultural heritage, in particular the desecration of sacred sites (see Macintyre and Foale, 2007, pp 52-53). It is no doubt that a coherent discourse about the meaning of cultural heritage has the potential to place new expectations on LGL. At times this may cause delays and additional expenses to elements of the project, or perhaps prevent entirely certain elements of the project. It may even be the case that in the short term cultural heritage issues will reignite old disputes or generate new conflicts and rifts between Lihirians, with LGL, or between other major stakeholders.

However, this has to be balanced against three things: firstly the risks to both LGL and to Lihir (and therefore to LGL's reputation) of the collapse of Lihirian cultural integrity; secondly, the fact that LGL has committed itself to respect and preserve cultural heritage through the ICMM principles; and thirdly, the possibilities for new partnerships that create opportunities for meaningful dialogue, actions and resolutions that moves beyond minimal compliance and the compensation paradigm. The development of such management strategies creates the potential for LGL to live out its

7. The facilitation team included Nick Bainton, Nicholas Hall from *Stepwise Heritage and Tourism*, and Chris Ballard and Kirsty Gillespie from the Australian National University, and Luke Kabariu and Patrick Turuan from the LGL Cultural Information Office.

own projected image of a respectful and relatively harmonious relationship between project development, social stability and harmony, and cultural integrity.

In this paper we have demonstrated that there are distinct challenges to the negotiation of civil society expectations posed for operations in weak state societies dominated by vocal and powerful local landowning groups. Not least of these is the development or facilitation of discourses capable of bridging the divide between local and international organisation priorities and agendas. We have also illustrated the complexity and some of the pitfalls and challenges associated with the development of a cultural heritage based compliance partnership. We have not argued that such partnerships are always necessary, but we do argue that they can be a prudent means of mitigating company risk while constituting a far more necessary tool for local people in the reconceptualisation and negotiation of the experiences of dramatic social change and modernisation experienced in the context of resource development.

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