

Glenn Banks and Chris Ballard, eds., *The Ok Tedi Settlement: Issues, Outcomes, and Implications*. Pacific Policy Papers, no. 27. Canberra: National Centre for Development Studies, Australian National University, 1997. Pp. xi, 279, map, bib. A\$20 paperback.

Reviewed by Alex Golub, University of Chicago

In the early 1980s the Ok Tedi copper and gold mine began production in Western Province, Papua New Guinea. Throughout the eighties the mine caused massive pollution that seriously affected the lives of the subsistence horticulturalists living in the area. Eventually, these people retained an Australian legal firm to sue BHP Limited, the main shareholder in the mine. The resulting lawsuit received international attention and pressured BHP to settle out of court in a multimillion-dollar deal that is unique in the history of the industry.

Amidst the growing body of literature on Ok Tedi, *The Ok Tedi Settlement* stands out as an important contribution. The volume itself is the result of a workshop held at the Australian National University designed to explore the implications and issues that arose out of the Ok Tedi settlement. This

background is what gives the book its unique flavor—it reflects the varied background and viewpoints of the workshop participants, which included a diverse assortment of people ranging from an indigenous leader, mining company executives, academics, and political activists.

Initial papers by Glenn Banks and Chris Ballard, Meg Taylor, John Burton, and Colin Filer help sketch the historical, legal, and social context of the mine's construction and operation. Burton and Filer in particular provide detailed and insightful analyses of the realpolitik surrounding national and corporate interests in the mine. David King argues against a simplistic view of indigenous people as concerned environmentalists victimized by the mine. But while King emphasizes the primacy of local demands for development, both Alex Maun and Stuart Kirsch emphasize the more-familiar view of Fourth World people fighting transnational capital in order to preserve the environment.

John Gordon, Brian Brunton, Ila Temu, Gavin Murray and Ian Williams, and Chris Harris discuss the details of the lawsuit proper and the implications it has for the law, the mining industry, and political activists. Gordon's paper is particularly well written and conveys the way legal issues blended with life outside of the courtroom during the duration of the litigation.

The most interesting thing about this volume is the way it integrates a wide range of interests and opinions. However, this diversity of viewpoints is also responsible for the volume's shortcomings. One gets the feeling that the editors have encouraged multivocality to the point that it strains the narrative coherence of the volume. Contributors frequently repeat the same general facts while embellishing them with details drawn from their own fields of specialty. The result is paradoxical: basic facts and background are repeated again and again in the introductory section of each article, but without some sort of overarching framework, the reader is left without a view of the "big picture" to organize the wealth of data presented. This lack is all the more important given the extremely detailed level of description in all of the articles. Even the reviewer, a graduate student specializing in indigenous people and mining in Melanesia, was occasionally lost contemplating, for instance, whether BHP and DEC were, as ICRAF and MPI claimed, implicated in the issue of subrogation arising from *Trident General Insurance v. MacNieve Bros Pty Ltd (1988)* for their part in the Eighth Supplemental Agreement and the Compensation (Prohibition of Foreign Legal Proceeding) Act 1995.

Additionally, although the authors include a diverse group, two main players—the national government of Papua New Guinea and BHP itself—are not represented. Although there are chapters by people from the mining industry and the PNG government, actors from the company and agencies involved are not included. While this is undoubtedly an artifact of the antag-

onistic nature of the lawsuit and settlement rather than the editors' partiality, it is unfortunate that such important players do not present their side of the story.

Despite the complexity of the issues involved, the book succeeds on many levels. Differences of opinion are highlighted, and important debates are not papered over. The volume demonstrates that one cannot rest content with the simple view that Papua New Guineans are a homogenous, nature-loving group of people, nor can one assume that the mine operators are cunning capitalists for whom human error and ignorance is merely cover for extractive schemes. Colin Filer's paper in particular demonstrates that the state of Papua New Guinea, as both shareholder and regulator of the mine, does not always act in the interests of its citizens. Similarly, the fact that the leaders instrumental in bringing Ok Tedi to court could not parlay their victory into success in local elections suggests that views of local politics must be complicated.

In sum, the volume provides a detailed analysis of an important event. It does so by representing truly divergent points of view from those best situated to untangle the complex relationships that formed around the mine. Floating behind the particulars of the Ok Tedi case are more-general concerns about transnational capital, the politics and ethics of environmental activism, and cross-cultural alliances. Like the settlement that it examines, the volume will prove to be an important precedent to anyone interested in resource extraction and indigenous people at the end of the millennium.