

## **The Bases of Ownership Claims Over Natural Resources by Indigenous Peoples in Papua New Guinea**

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Marilyn Strathern recently made the following observations, which in my view beautifully capture the age old desire of human kind to make ownership claims over the parts of the natural environment that they live in. These observations in many ways also resonate with the age old desire, perhaps fantasy, of humankind to keep on looking out for that particular part of nature which may give one wealth and riches some day. Of Euro-American moderns Strathern observes:

[People] become attached to a world they see full of useful and beautiful things. It is a world that they imagine that people desire to appropriate, whether they think of private individuals in exclusive possession of property or of the common people in open possession of its bounty. Ownership. What is not owned exists either to be owned as some future resource not yet exploited or else is notionally owned by humankind in general, including generations to come. Ownership envelops all (2001: 12).

There are a number of models by which people appropriate part or parts of nature, particularly those 'useful and beautiful things', to make them their 'own'. One model is that of John Locke, in which the application of labour to