THE AMBIGUITIES OF EDUCATION IN KILENGE, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

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The island nations of the South Pacific have changed greatly in the years since the Second World War. The alterations have been widespread and diffuse, encompassing both political and economic, as well as social and cultural, aspects of life. In the field of learning, there is a firmly established trend toward formalized institutional education. Although late in coming to the South Pacific region because of the exigencies of colonial policies and economies, formal education now seems there to stay. But people see it as a mixed blessing. Along with local and national desires for formal education, and the aspirations for progress that seem to motivate those demands, has come the realization that education and imported educational structures have not proven to be a panacea for the social, economic, and political problems of development.

For Papua New Guinea, formal education has generated at least as many problems as it has solved. Education researchers are in the forefront of those critics who point out the weaknesses and failings of current education policies (see, e.g., Conroy 1972 and 1976; Lancy 1979; McKinnon 1973; Wilson 1973). They find even themselves unable to cope with the wide range of problems and difficulties engendered by the transposition of an educational system from one cultural situation to another. Regional diversities and disparities further compound the

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problem in Papua New Guinea, limiting the applicability of specific approaches such as those proposed by Taviavi (1972) and Zinkel(1972); what works in one part of the country will not necessarily work in another. But because of the magnitude of the problems they face, researchers and planners must, perforce, examine education on a national or regional level, subsuming the idiosyncracies of particular village situations in favor of quantitative and generalized data for large areas. However, if care is not taken, this bird's-eye view of education can lead to myopia, unless it is balanced with an understanding of village realities.

This paper examines perceptions of education in a village in West New Britain Province, Papua New Guinea. We find that the Kilenge people have rather ambivalent feelings toward education, and their attitudes directly affect both the utility of education and the place of the community school in the village. We employ a somewhat narrow "traditional" anthropological perspective because we believe that it yields valuable insights into some of the problems facing educators today. It is essential not to lose sight of the local people, who are the ultimate beneficiaries or victims of international, national, and regional decisions regarding education and educational institutions. If educational experiences are to prove meaningful to Pacific Islanders, then education planners must take account of and be able to accommodate local needs, goals, and capabilities. By presenting this case study, we hope to demonstrate that an understanding of village reactions to education can inform planners and politicians, enabling them to design programs making education more meaningful at the local level.

The ambiguities of education in Kilenge arise from the dual nature of education; as process and product. The Kilenge have mixed emotions about both, In some respects they despise the process of schooling and teaching that contributes to, they believe, the rebellion of their children; in other ways they value it as a means by which their children are learning about the external world. Likewise, the products of education —job qualifications, skills, or knowledge gained from the process—are judged ambiguously. They may be valued because they can lead to a well-paid job, but they may also be disparaged because they produce little of use to other villagers. The Kilenge suffer from the same internal doubts about the utility and value of education as do many other Papua New Guineans. "There is the view that schools should somehow serve rural communities in a very direct way, especially with reference to social and economic development" (Lancy 1979:97; cf. Zinkel 1973). When they do not, villagers begin to grow dissatisfied. Villagers evalu-

ate education in terms of the perceived social and economic benefits they derive from it. On the whole, their negative evaluation stems from their belief that education has not helped them to better their lot in life. To understand these attitudes toward the school and education, we will explore the history of education in the Kilenge area and the role that villagers want education to play in their lives.

The Kilenge

Over one thousand Kilenge people live in three contiguous village groupings along the coast of northwest New Britain. The villages of Portne and Ongaia each have approximately 250 residents, and Kilenge proper contains more than 500 residents.[1] Another several hundred Kilenge live and work in other parts of Papua New Guinea (see Grant and Zelenietz 1980). The Kilenge share a common language with the Lollo, their bush-dwelling neighbors. Administratively, the Kilenge are included in the Kilenge-Lollo Census Division and the Gloucester Local Government Council, and they vote for members of Parliament in the Kandrian-Gloucester Open and the West New Britain Provincial Electorates.

The Kilenge are subsistence horticulturalists, relying on their mountainside swidden gardens for taro, sweet potatoes, yams, manioc, and other foods. Occasionally, they supplement their diet with fish, wild game, pigs or chickens, and purchases of rice, tinned meat or fish, and sweets from the numerous local trade stores. Although individuals own the gardens they plant, land itself belongs to men's houses and ramages. Kilenge social organization, characterized by cognatic descent and flexibility in group affiliation and membership, allows an individual a wide range of choice in residence and land-use rights. While postnuptial patrilocality is most common, a married couple may reside in any village and with any group that accepts their claims of membership.[2]

Kilenge knowledge of Western peoples and cultures began some time before the Kilenge themselves experienced intrusive influences. Neighboring Siassi Islanders had been in contact with the Germans during the nineteenth century; in fact, they explain the eruption of Ritter Island in 1888 as divine retribution for their attempted murder of Bishop Colomb some years before. The Siassi also forewarned the Kilenge about the Lutheran missionaries who had settled in the islands. Fearing the "white skins," who would ban ceremonial masks and dances, the Kilenge hurriedly burned their own sacred Nausang masks before they even saw these strange new people.

While the Siassi Islanders eagerly spun yarns about the missionaries, and demonstrated the versatility and superiority of their steel axes, they would not trade the new tools to the Kilenge. Undaunted, the New Britons sailed to the mainland of New Guinea in order to acquire axes and learn more about the European intruders.

By the first decade of this century the Kilenge were in direct, albeit infrequent, contact with the Germans. Some Kilenge went to work on plantations in the Kokopo region. Others joined the work force as native constables, seeing action on Ponape and as far away as German East Africa. Recruitment was not always voluntary: on at least one occasion the Germans held aged villagers hostage until the young men "volunteered" for plantation labor.

In 1929 the Kilenge invited the Roman Catholic Mission of New Guinea into their area to establish a church near the village. In the course of their conversion to Christianity, the Kilenge lost or abandoned many of their traditional beliefs and practices—particularly those related to their indigenous cosmology—but their heritage continues to influence village life in many respects. Ceremonial cycles still provide a vehicle for the accumulation of status and prestige by traditional hereditary leaders and serve as the context of initiation for children (see Zelenietz and Grant 1980); people still participate in mortuary feasts and exchanges, and sorcery beliefs and practices still inspire fear in the villagers (see Zelenietz 1979, 1981).

Despite the change from German to Australian administration during the First World War, life changed little for the Kilenge people until the establishment of the mission. With the mission came new times and new ideas. Wage labor became a fairly common activity, and most young men signed up for at least one stint of work at the mission headquarters in East New Britain. Working for the mission offered a chance to see distant places, to come into closer contact with Europeans, and to earn trade goods and money. The Church also brought an idea that eventually became commonplace: formal education.

Prior to the establishment of the mission, learning in Kilenge had been an experiential process of socialization: a child learned appropriate behavior and activities by helping parents or relatives in daily tasks. Children acquired knowledge about customs, local history, and myths as they listened to the older people tell stories around the fire at night. Initiation at puberty provided the child's formal introduction into the world of esoteric knowledge.[3] In the period of seclusion following the actual initiation, the initiates' guardians would give instruction in village myth and lore. They would reiterate family genealogies and histo-

ries, and recount and explain the various rights and taboos that people had to know to function as adults in Kilenge. Through socialization, both in everyday living and in the rites of passage marking important transitions., an individual gained the knowledge that would give his or her life meaning and the skills that would earn a livelihood.

But even by the time the mission came to Kilenge, the indigenous processes of socialization had begun to falter. Severe smallpox epidemics raging through the area between 1905 and 1915 (Haddon 1934) virtually eliminated the older members of the community, thus interrupting the flow of some knowledge and skills between generations; the Kilenge claim that they lost most of their sorcery skills at this time. The absence of young men from the village for periods of wage labor also contributed to the problem of passing knowledge through the generations. While they were working on distant plantations, young men missed the opportunity to learn some of the details of stories, myths, and lore. While daily village life continued much as it had before contact, many of the intricacies of Kilenge culture were fast disappearing.

Mission Education

Mission schooling between 1929 and 1942 had little direct influence on the lives of most Kilenge villagers. With the establishment of the mission, the priest began to instruct a few young men in the rudiments of reading and writing so that they might come to understand and help spread the Gospels. Those receiving instruction from the priest, and later from lay Brothers, were expected to teach their newly acquired knowledge to others. Only toward the end of the prewar period did the mission school begin to follow a formalized syllabus and prepare students for continuing their education at a higher level. Mission personnel selected a few students whom they felt would benefit from continued education and sent them to the advanced school at the mission headquarters in Vunapope, near Rabaul. There they pursued a course of studies to prepare them for work as catechists.

While the mission school had limited impact during the prewar period, the new religion brought many new ideas, which the Kilenge learned both in the village and abroad. The mission recruited many village men to work at the mission station at Vunapope. The Catholic recruiting ship became the main conduit for wage-labor migration from the Kilenge area (Grant and Zelenietz 1980). As a check against overrecruitment, and as insurance that families would not be left destitute by having too many ablebodied men away at the "station," potential

recruits needed the priest's permission to sign a two- or three-year contract. The mission thus controlled (intentionally or otherwise) Kilenge exposure to the outside world, and hence managed Kilenge acclimatization to the new and increasingly important introduced elements in their social environment. In the dormitories and work places of Vunapope, Kilenge men learned about the ways and customs of people from other parts of the Territories. They came into sustained contact with Europeans. Mission personnel monitored and controlled life on the station. A worker performed prescribed tasks, ate at specified times, and received only a portion of his pay on a regular basis while the mission withheld the bulk of the contract payment until the worker returned home. People who remained in the village benefited from the labor migration in that a returning worker came back laden with goods and money to dispense to his relatives, and with new ideas and skills to distribute in the community. The known results of wage-labor migration were more significant in fueling rising expectations regarding material goods than was the educational system instituted by the Church, at least until the Second World War.

When the war hit New Britain in 1942, it caused a hiatus in formal education and wage-labor activities. However, the war itself was a major learning experience for the Kilenge, as it was for other Papua New Guineans (Eri 1973). The Japanese occupation and subsequent American invasion of the Cape Gloucester area exposed the Kilenge people to much that was powerful, fascinating, new, and frightening. While the poorly supplied Japanese burned villages, destroyed sacred paraphernalia, killed pigs, and raided gardens, the well-supplied Americans who displaced them gave villagers wealth beyond their previous dreams. The Kilenge remember this period, the beaches piled high with cargo, with fondness and longing. While villagers repaired their gardens and houses, the Americans supplied them with necessities (and some luxuries as well). Ablebodied village men went with the invading forces to continue fighting in Bougainville and New Guinea. When they saw black Americans working and fighting side-by-side with whites, they realized that dark skin need not be a mark of inferiority.

The wartime experience with Americans showed the Kilenge a new world of economic and social near-equality. But bitter disillusionment and disappointment followed. After the Americans moved out of New Britain, ANGAU[4] detachments confiscated property and goods the troops had left for villagers. The prewar power structures and policies of social differentiation based on race soon reappeared.

It was in this setting of social upheaval occasioned by the war and its

aftermath that formal education began to make significant inroads into Kilenge lives. In the years directly following the conclusion of the war, as many as a third of the young men of Ongaia village went to Vunapope to train as catechists. The youths who persevered received a few years of training in English, reading, writing, mathematics, social studies, and religion. They also learned something about teaching techniques. Trained for the life of village catechist, they saw their major role as disseminators of knowledge. In fact, they formed a new corps of teachers in the mission schools.

Kilenge catechist-teachers began to assume their posts as early as 1950. Most of them worked in West New Britain or in the Siassi Islands. A few returned to Kilenge to serve as the nucleus for a revitalized mission school. Ill-equipped and inadequately trained to develop a full curriculum, the young catechists spent most of their time instructing children in reading and writing basic English. However, the teachers' poor command of the language of instruction undoubtedly restricted the success of the effort. It appears that, as much as anything, these early schools served to introduce villagers to the *form* of education, although their ability to transmit the desired *content* was limited.

The postwar crop of students provided the Kilenge with their first practical example of the utility of education. Some of those who left the course at Vunapope before completing their studies found better than average jobs, either with the mission or with private industry in Rabaul. The half-schooled men fared better in the labor marketplace than their unschooled brothers, who invariably had to take work as manual laborers on the copra plantations. The Kilenge saw education as the means by which they could attain attractive job prospects for themselves and their children.

Those who served as catechist-teachers began to leave their positions by the mid-1950s. Dissatisfied with the low pay and the often poor working conditions, they either moved to the Rabaul-Vunapope area to find new work or returned to their natal villages. By the mid-1960s, the personal disillusionment of the catechists combined with the higher standards required for teacher qualification had removed almost all of the early postwar catechists from their teaching positions. The catechists who work today in the Kilenge area do not operate as part of the system of formal education, but strictly as servants of the Church.

The disillusionment of the catechist-teachers, the first truly "schooled" Kilenge villagers, appears to have been the first sign of a growing ambivalence in attitudes toward education. These men, trained for a particular type of work, had tried to accept the Western

ideal that they would progress because of their education, but then received little remuneration for their efforts. Classmates who had taken nonteaching jobs earned better salaries. To compound the matter, after years of dedication to their work for the mission and school, many of the catechists lost their positions because their training was no longer deemed sufficient when the government took over the school system. They began to wonder about the value of the education they had received.

The returning teachers and catechists underwent further disillusionment upon their return to the village, They discovered that their occupational status and prestige was not very portable: they came back from responsible positions in the spheres of Church and school only to find themselves classified as young men, hence socially unimportant in village affairs. The experience they gained on the outside was not directly translatable to village life, and their prolonged absence had removed them from participation in many of the activities that would have established them as "mature" men in the village: they had not actively participated in the sponsoring and supporting of ceremonial cycles (Zelenietz and Grant 1980); furthermore, they were not yet middle-aged and seldom had more than a few children. Their education and their ability to learn could not overcome their lack of status; the returnees had practically no role in village politics. Only after they had been back in the village for a number of years, establishing themselves as senior men by virtue of their participation in village life, did people begin to grant them additional respect and status because of their former positions as catechists and teachers.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the school and schooling served as a way for villagers to see some of the world. The best students went to the mission high schools where they furthered their education and increased their prospects for finding well-paid jobs. Some completed the teacher-training course and went on to work in the various mission schools, following in the footsteps of the postwar catechists. Others took their qualifications into the job market, where they signed on with government service, mission service, or with private industry.

But the availability of employment could not indefinitely keep pace with the number of school graduates in Papua New Guinea, nor did the educational qualifications for employment remain static (Conroy 1976; Conroy and Stent 1970). By the early 1970s, researchers were acutely aware of the difficulties that standard six (primary school) leavers encountered in trying to find jobs that would utilize their skills (Conroy and Curtain 1973), and predicted even greater discrepancies in the

future (McKinnon 1973). The administration's emphasis on securing widespread access to schooling led to a situation where the number of people completing a basic primary education, heretofore a ticket to a good job, grew at a faster rate than the number of jobs available. To further compound the difficulties for primary school leavers, the increasing numbers of high school leavers served to up the ante on the job market (ibid.). Jobs that formerly went to people with primary schooling now fell to people with secondary schooling. Today, as more people attend the university, the process of escalating qualifications for job placement continues. These two factors (the increase in the number of school leavers and the escalation of qualifications) have combined to raise serious dilemmas in the minds of villagers, who had thought that the relationship between education and good jobs was simple and direct.

Attitudes toward education, thus, have changed dramatically. At its introduction, it was highly valued by both parents and students in Kilenge. Parents saw education as a way to better their children's chance of economic success in the white man's world. Education promised the ability to get a good job, which was directly translatable into pounds and shillings (see Conroy 1972). The children would benefit materially, and presumably they would transfer some of their wealth back to their parents. Education also helped the villagers to fulfill the obligations they felt as Christians. Through the school, their children would receive proper Christian education and become socialized as good church members.

But through the course of the last ten to fifteen years, parents have begun to question their previous assumptions about the benefits of education in general, and the local community school in particular. While at one time they lauded education as a promise of progress and wealth, now they recognize that it is a complex institution with drawbacks and limitations as well as benefits. In the process of coming to terms with the complexity of education, the Kilenge have developed ambivalent attitudes toward it, reflecting the failure of educators to answer their questions about its purpose.

Education Today

While the Kilenge consider education (i.e., the acquisition of job-related skills or knowledge) the key to success in modern Papua New Guinea, and hence laud it as a tool of development, parents also see that Western learning isolates them from their young people, and they fear

that loss of control. In examining the local context of education we find some of the causes and consequences of Kilenge attitudes toward the school.

The primary school, run by the provincial department of education, sits on misson property near the church. It has no real play area, except for a small space between the buildings. The mission gives the teachers access to some land for planting food gardens for their own use and for instructing the children in agricultural techniques. The lack of a play and exercise area is one expression of village indifference toward the local school. While there is a fair amount of unused land near the school, none of the owners will grant a lease for the use of the land as a playground. People also demonstrate their lack of commitment to the school by failing to participate in public work for the school. When the Parents and Citizens Committee calls for a work force to paint the school or to repair fences, or when it asks people to pay their children's school fees, little or no action results. But perhaps the high rate of absenteeism and the significant number of dropouts are the most telling indictments of the institution and people's attitudes toward it.[5] Persistent rumors that shortfalls in school revenues are caused by misappropriation of funds further contribute to disenchantment with the way the school is run and with its role in the village.

In the West, we tend to regard formalized education as a major agent in the socialization of children. Schools and teachers have, in many instances, displaced the home and parents as the social, moral, and cultural guardians and exemplars of behavior. In many regions the teacher has rights in loco parentis, as a substitute parent. The Kilenge have not, as yet, abrogated their rights and obligations as parents in favor of the school and its teachers. However, they do believe that educational institutions should at least support indigenous socialization practices. Children spend much of their day in the school, learning the knowledge, language, and customs of foreign cultures. Nevertheless, parents still expect their children to continue to exhibit behavior that is acceptable in the village context. There is little sympathy for graduates who act arrogantly, as if their education makes them superior to their illiterate parents. Such *bikhet* (big heads) are subjected to considerable social pressure to rectify their behavior, and parents often attribute their disruption of community standards to the influence of the school.

School removes a child from the village environment for some of his formative years, and thus partially isolates him from the influences that normally would assure his socialization as a proper Kilenge.[6] The child spends several hours a day under the tutelage of teachers who, for the

most part, are from other parts of Papua New Guinea and who may not share village ideas of what constitutes proper behavior. Moreover, the teachers do not see their role as one of inculcating village norms; rather, they believe they are in the classroom in order to impart a given amount and kind of knowledge to the children. Thus, the teachers may work at cross-purposes with parents' wishes: first, the teachers present "foreign" role models for behavior; second, they are more concerned with imparting knowledge than with socializing children. If children emulate the behavior they see in their teachers, parents may be disturbed, especially where they view such behavior as inappropriate or unacceptable in their own cultural context. Indeed, they may attribute any untoward behavior on the part of their children to the foreign influence of the teachers in the school.

Children sense that their teachers may not approve of village customs. By its very nature, the school transmits to its pupils a perception of their inferiority. Because students are generally taught about nonindigenous concepts and topics, they may infer that the ideas and practices of their forefathers are less significant than those about which they receive instruction. When such doubts lead to acts of disrespect, outraged parents and village elders quickly blame teachers for turning the children against them. It is not the wish of most teachers to foment revolt, but if they are successful in their job of transmitting knowledge to students, they often unwittingly sow the seeds of discontent as well.

Conflict and competition between Kilenge culture and foreign teachers for the minds of the children could possibly be alleviated if the teachers in the school were predominantly local or if they remained at their posts for lengthy periods. For a few years in the early 1970s, villagers were happy about the staff composition at the school. At that time the headmaster was a Kilenge man. He set what parents felt was a good example for the children. Furthermore, he drew on local people to provide classes on traditional Kilenge arts, crafts, stories, and myths. In 1977 two of the six teachers in the school were Kilenge men, but villagers criticized the example that those particular individuals set for the young people.[7] In 1981-1982 none of the teachers were Kilenge.

Children are undoubtedly influenced by the attitudes of their parents toward the teachers and the school. They recognize that their parents disparage the school, so they often fail to take the institution or its agents very seriously. The high rate of absenteeism reflects their perception of the school's irrelevance.[8] While ill-health, work duties, or distance may be given as excuses for truancy, in effect neither the children, nor in many instances their parents, seem committed to the school. But

here we glimpse the ambivalence that underlies Kilenge attitudes, because while parents don't always insure that their children attend school regularly, they do want their children to attain an education that will enable them to find a good job or to bring "development" to the village. Their desire for the final product conflicts with their dissatisfaction with the daily process and its interim products, as will be explained below.

Education as Process and Product

In part, the ambivalence of the Kilenge about education stems from their ability to distinguish the process of education, *skul,* from the product of education, *edukesin.* But the dualism in their perception of the nature of education (as schooling or as qualification endowment) is based on even more basic ambiguities in their understanding of the purpose and utility of education.

Ideally, the Kilenge want to like the school. Government officers and mission personnel have long extolled its virtues as a medium for the inculcation of essential knowledge about the world outside the village. Villagers do not want to be left behind while all around them progress. They believe that the school can imbue their children with the knowledge needed to survive and succeed in the modern world. But they also insist that their children remain Kilenge, that they continue to respect village norms and traditions. It is the failure of the school to meet village expectations that has led the Kilenge to question its character and its relevance. To all intents and purposes, the school is very much an alien institution. Villagers may participate in the Parents and Citizens Committee to look after the school buildings, but they have little say in how the school is run or in its curriculum development. While the institution may be called a "community" school,[9] the community does not perceive it as such. It does not meet their expectations, so rather than lower their expectations some villagers cease to care whether their children attend or not. There are still those who perceive the school to be a positive influence despite the sometimes offensive behavior of students, but many elders use any public or private occasion to decry its effects on the young. As parents and as villagers, they see the school as a socially disruptive institution that they lack the power to control. Their feelings of powerlessness in the face of an institution that shapes the minds of their children contribute to their ambivalence toward the school and its products, especially its interim product of youthful disrespect and disobedience.

In addition to the ambiguous nature of their attitudes toward the

process of education, the Kilenge also have mixed emotions about the final product of education. On the one hand, they appreciate that educational qualifications are essential for well-paid jobs in modern Papua New Guinea. On the other hand, they recognize that those qualifications are constantly escalating, and a primary or even secondary diploma no longer necessarily guarantees a good job. Until the last decade or so, children with high school experience found good jobs in town and brought or sent gifts and cash home to their parents. However, changes in the urban employment context and competition for jobs have diminished remittances.[10] Parents can no longer be sure that they will benefit directly from their child's education. Their faith in the remunerative powers of education has been shaken, And, as their doubts about the ultimate utility of the product of education increase, their willingness to suffer the negative impacts of the process of education diminishes.

Most children in Kilenge complete no more than six years of schooling. Only the top third of the graduating class will be granted admission to high school, and only a few of these will actually leave the village to continue their education. Some parents are unwilling or unable to raise money to send a child off to high school: in 1981 a high school education cost over K100 (U.S. $140) a year, a substantial sum in an area where the per capita cash income is probably around K50 annual1y.[11] Other social factors limit the number of young girls who attend high school: parents do not want girls to be away from their control, and fear that young women who attend high school will succumb to the temptations of bright city lights and the advances of Lotharios from other places.

Because so few students go on to further education, parents have come to examine the product of education in terms of village experience and utility. They ask, "What is the relevance of primary schooling to village life?" Naturally, they conclude that the skills acquired in school have little meaning in the village. Reading and writing are skills that atrophy quickly through nonuse.[12] Although agricultural skills have been introduced into the curriculum, ostensibly in an attempt to improve upon traditional practices and to relate educational experiences to village customs, parents do not give children the opportunity to employ methods that differ from those of the ancestors. Some parents suspect that the teachers are using the children as free labor in their gardens; they argue that when it comes time for children to learn agricultural skills they should go to the gardens with their parents. This skepticism about programs designed to make the curriculum more relevant to the local situation will have to be overcome if such changes are to have the desired effect.

Other problems confront those who go on to high school. Older peo-

ple bemoan the fact that young people who return from town with a high school education do little to help the villagers develop by starting successful economic projects. The adult villagers cite examples from other villages in West New Britain and the Siassi Islands where young people have initiated and/or aided local attempts at development, and constantly wonder aloud why the Kilenge youth have not done the same. Adults berate the young for having gained skills applicable only to office work. Young people, on the other hand, say that they can do nothing to help the village because no one will listen to them. Seniority, both genealogical and chronological, is an important organizing principle in Kilenge, and young men are excluded from decision-making activities by virtue of their age and relative inexperience in village affairs. Observational evidence supports the validity of the young people's complaints: no one listens to their suggestions. In the innumerable public meetings we attended, young people seldom spoke up; when they did, their elders ignored them. Such treatment can sometimes lead the youths to be sullen and less than cooperative with their elders; then, their behavior is interpreted as disrespect, or *bikhet.* Youths are publitally criticized for such attitudes, exacerbating the antipathy between the generations.

The young people are put in a difficult social bind: adults expect them to take the initiative in developing the village, and yet those same adults refuse to cooperate with, let alone acknowledge, the young people's lead. Senior adult Kilenge will not relinquish control of village affairs. By allowing the young men and women a chance to develop the village, the elders would thereby loosen their relatively tight rein on communal life. They themselves had to wait until maturity to enjoy the fruits of leadership and control, and they see no reason why the younger generation should not wait its turn. As the elders struggle to retain their preeminent position in Kilenge society, they are forced to denigrate the educated youths who may be potential challengers in the contest for control over the future of the village. Hence people who may be best equipped to lead the villagers to the realization of their economic dreams are consistently prevented from having input in decision making. Young, educated people are in a no-win situation, the subjects of criticism simply by virtue of their years of schooling.[13]

Many of the young people who have completed high school try to avoid the pressures and frustrations of village life by seeking work in town, but even away from the village they are prey to the attitudes and expectations of their parents. Because of their superior education, villagers expect them to find lucrative jobs in town, but good jobs are hard to find. Lack of success on the job market leads villagers to classify them

as failures. Those who are fortunate enough to find jobs are expected to remit money home on a regular basis, and to accumulate substantial savings to bring back to the village as did their parents a generation ago. But the conditions that today's children face in town are radically different from those faced by their parents (Grant and Zelenietz 1980). Years ago, young people who worked for low wages had minimal housing costs, more or less enforced savings, and no visitors. Today's urban worker, while earning a higher salary, must pay for food and shelter and may be forced to entertain a seemingly endless stream of visitors. Also, with access to a wide range of luxuries, from alcohol to tape recorders, a worker finds it hard to save money. When migrants return home, people berate them as unsuccessful: they have no wealth to show, nor did they send back money to their parents in their absence. Parents who invested substantial sums of money in the high school education of their children feel cheated of their just rewards.

The Future

Many education researchers feel that rural development in Papua New Guinea is contingent on the government spending money in the rural regions, and that such local development "will be led by the same people who are leaders in town, secondary and tertiary graduates" (Lancy 1979:102). This is unlikely to occur in Kilenge at the present time: Kilenge social organization and worldview militate against educated youth assuming the mantle of leadership. While the educated have become the urban elite, controlling the state bureaucracy (Good 1979), their influence in many rural communities is limited.

All Ongaians, from the eldest residents to the newest students, have ambivalent feelings toward education. A classic love-hate relationship wrenches the fabric of village social order. A system the Kilenge once embraced wholeheartedly as the solution to their problems and as a promise of progress and success has let them down. Their dreams unfulfilled, the Kilenge have come to question the utility and relevance of the institutions and processes involved. The system's attempts to rectify the problems of curricula unsuited to local needs cannot handle the issue of unsatisfied expectations. Jaded by their experience, the Kilenge look suspiciously at changes in the educational system: the skepticism with which they greeted the agricultural program in the local school is a notable example. There is ever the danger that attempts to make the curriculum "more relevant" to local needs will be perceived as making rural schools "second best" in relation to urban schools.

School is an ambiguous experience for young people. In the confines

of the classroom, teachers attempt to teach them many and varied subjects, few of which seem to have any applicability to the life-style children have come to know in the village. If they study hard and use the teacher as a model for their attitudes and behavior, they find themselves alienated from their parents, relatives, and friends. On completion of six years at the community school, most children face the challenge of reintegrating themselves into village life. Some adapt readily, rapidly taking their place as the dutiful son or daughter, but others feel that because of their education they are superior to their parents and elders. These children find it much more difficult to adjust: people readily perceive their attitudes and denigrate them as lazy and arrogant. This creates a cycle of mutually reinforcing negative feedback, a cycle some children can break only by leaving the village to find employment in town. But most standard-six leavers are several years too young to find wage-labor employment (cf. Wilson 1973) and must spend those years of waiting in an uncomfortable, and ambiguous, social position in the village.

The problem of readjustment to village life is even greater for those who have had some high school experience. They return to the village with knowledge, ideas, and goals, only to have them stifled by their elders. Given no chance to display their organizational ability, young men become sullen and withdrawn in the presence of adults, and their elders criticize their lack of interest in helping the village develop. Once again, some see employment in town as their only option, at least until they become older. When they finally return to settle again in the village, they begin to act like acceptable adult Kilenge and treat the most recent crop of high school returnees in much the same way that they themselves were once treated.

While the international community and the national and provincial governments of Papua New Guinea see education as a basic tool in the process of development, in Kilenge its success is limited. English literacy and mathematical skills may make for competent urban workers but do not help rural residents take advantage of the benefits of modern life. You don't need to understand geometry in order to husk coconuts for making copra, nor need you speak English to assert that both cash cropping and schooling are part of a colonial legacy—a legacy villagers can't help but resent. Although the school may facilitate the gradual process of modernization, it does so at considerable cost in individual frustration and social discontent.

Many of the concerns about education in Kilenge are far from unique in Papua New Guinea. This particular case study asks once again the

critical question, ably discussed by Conroy (1976): Is "development" the ultimate purpose of education? If education is seen as a national tool for development, then the state must have specific goals for its educational policy. While it was clear in the 1960s that English literacy was the predominant educational goal (Griffin et al. 1979), the purpose of modern education is less evident. The Kilenge case denies any argument that could be made for "education as development." Neither the curriculum changes designed to make education "relevant" in a rural context nor the graduation of wage-labor employees has resulted in material improvement in the village. Educated Kilenge youths do not make a more significant contribution to the village's well-being than do their uneducated brothers. What then is the purpose of the community school? This is a question researchers in Papua New Guinea must seriously address if the nation is to fully develop its most vital resources: its people in rural communities.

NOTES

This paper was first presented at the International Conference on Education in Oceania, Victoria, Canada (March 1980). The research that forms the foundation of the paper comes out of informal interviews with all adult residents of Ongaia village, Kilenge, with many young people, with school teachers and mission personnel. We lived in Ongaia from March 1977 to January 1978 and from November 1981 to January 1982. The work was supported by grants from McMaster University, University of Papua New Guinea, and Nova Scotia College of Art and Design We owe an endless debt of gratitude to the Kilenge people for their cooperation with, and interest in, our work.

1. Many of our references to the "Kilenge" are, in fact, based on generalizations from our data on Ongaians. We must note that not all of the Kilenge react in the same manner as do the residents of Ongaia, but since we do not have extensive information on other villagers, we build our case on that which we have.

2. A full account of Kilenge social organization is available in Zelenietz 1980.

3. For males initiation entailed superincision and later ear-cutting, while for the girls it meant having their ears cut and being formally dressed and decorated.

4. Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit.

5. On 27 June 1977, only 90 of 184 students registered in the community school attended class. By November, toward the end of the academic year, 34 students had withdrawn from the school. In 1981 no students from the village of Kilenge proper attended Standard five or six, despite the proximity of the village to the school.

6. To forestall such disruption by the school, Lancy (1979) suggests that school entrance be postponed until a child is eight years old, thus allowing the child more time to develop in his natural social setting. Curiously, the opposite policy has been implemented in the

Kilenge community school. In 1977-1978 children entered school when they were seven years old. By 1981 the entrance age had been lowered to six years old.

7. The two teachers frequently participated in drunken and rowdy behavior and were generally considered to be a bad influence on the children.

8. There are marked differences in commitment to education from village to village in the Kilenge-Lollo area. Those villages closest to the schools, not surprisingly, seem more concerned that children receive an education. Attendance of children from more distant villages; tends to be very low. It also appears that fewer men leave the "bush" villages to seek work in urban centers. Perhaps for that reason bush dwellers see less utility in an education. But their disinterest in the school may be part of an elaborate set of values and beliefs that we do not fully understand.

9. Although the mission still owns the school buildings, the provincial government staffs and operates the school. Standards one to six are available in Kilenge, but children must leave the community for high school.

10. In our census of Ongaia in December 1981, we found that 53% of all households (27/51) had children working outside the village. Of these 43 absentee workers, 16 (37%) sent at least. occasional remittances back to the village. These 16 remitters came from 12 different households. Thus 23% of all village households, and 44% of households with absentee workers, received remittances.

11. Kilenge villagers greeted with pleasure the announcement in 1981 that the national government of Papua New Guinea would subsidize schooling and pay school fees (i.e., institute a system of free but compulsory education). However, each province was to decide for itself whether or not it would accept the government's offer. Ongaians expressed a sense of outrage and betrayal when the minister of education in West New Britain (himself a man from Ongaia) announced that parents would continue to pay primary school fees. Later in 1982, after we left Ongaia, the government of West New Britain announced that it *would* take advantage of the federal program after all. The effects on the village remain to be seen.

12. There is little reading material available in the village: occasional letters, newspapers, and comic books. Only those people who have been to high school seem interested in reading and are capable of fully comprehending the material they read, especially when it is in English.

13. The recent establishment of youth clubs in the Kilenge villages may provide young people with a way out of their dilemma. In the context of the clubs they can organize their own projects and provide their own leadership without adult interference. In early 1982 the Ongaia Youth Club was busy building a bakery to supply the villagers with fresh bread and to earn cash needed by the club for other projects.

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