ASPECTS OF POLITICAL CULTURE AND INSTITUTION-BUILDING IN MELANESIA: CONSTITUTIONAL PLANNING IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA AND THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT IN SOLOMON ISLANDS

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This paper is concerned with two attempts to adapt national political systems established under colonial rule to Melanesian[1] society: the constitution-making process in Papua New Guinea and decentralization in Solomon Islands. Both provide interesting insights into Melanesian political leaders' perceptions of their countries' political systems shortly before independence as well as insights into efforts to devise systems of government that, respectively, accord with "Papua New Guinean ways" or "*fitim* Solomon Islands" (Papua New Guinea 1974a:Part 1,2/3, 2/12-2/15; Kausimae 1978:43). It is also possible in the former case to review the founders' conceptions of how particular institutions would operate in the light of up to six years' experience and to inquire into the relative influence of endogenous and exogenous factors in shaping the beliefs, values, and patterned behavior (cf. Verba 1965:513; Pye 1968:218) of Melanesian political leaders and their publics since establishment of those institutions.

Establishment and Operation of the Constitutional Planning Committee in Papua New Guinea and the Special Committee on Provincial Government in Solomon Islands[2]

By the time the Constitutional Planning Committee was established in Papua New Guinea (1972) and the Special Committee on Provincial Government in Solomon Islands (1977), a tradition seemed to have been established in both countries that major constitutional changes--and even important policy changes, in relation to land, for example, should take place only after the widest possible popular consultation. In both cases, the tradition owed something to the absence and, later, the weakness of political parties and other organizations which articulate and aggregate public opinion in other countries. In the circumstances of both countries, coloni-

al administrators and Melanesian politicians who believed that popular consultation was necessary to legitimate major changes or was right in itself had no real alternative to direct consultation with the people. In Papua New Guinea, such consultation had the additional advantage of justifying the Australian government's policies to foreign critics by showing that proposals which were more conservative than those which its critics advocated nonetheless anticipated popular demand (Wolfers 1971a:149-50). But it would be wrong to conclude from the existence of the tradition that popular views had a decisive influence on Australian government policy when vital national or electoral interests were at stake (as in July 1970, when substantial transfers of executive power were announced by the Australian prime minister without prior consultation with Papua New Guinean political leaders [Wolfers 1971b:131-38].

When the Constitutional Planning Committee was set up in Papua New Guinea, the government seemed to have reservations about repeating the nationwide tours undertaken by previous Select Committees on Political and Constitutional Development, mainly because it believed that there would not be sufficient time (it hoped to have the committee's report within nine months, in time for consequential legislation to be in force at the inauguration of internal self-government on 1 December 1973). But the committee strongly favored a tour, which ultimately involved public meetings at more than 100 centers in all subdistricts of Papua New Guinea. In Solomon Islands the Special Committee on Provincial Government held public meetings in 134 villages and provincial headquarters. Both committees also received many more written and oral submissions (Wolfers 1977a:313; Solomon Islands 1979:5).

In his speech announcing the government's decision to establish the Constitutional Planning Committee, the then-chief minister, the Honorable: Michael Somare, referred specifically to his government's commitment to the preparation of a "home-grown" constitution--a constitution "suited to the needs and circumstances of Papua New Guinea and . . . not imposed from outside" (Papua New Guinea 1972:279).

The commitment had a number of possible connotations: that the constitution should be legally autochthonous--that is, it should not owe its legal authority to foreign legislation--(Wheare 1960:89); it should be devised by Papua New Guineans for Papua New Guinea; it should be the product of negotiation between Papua New Guinean political actors (that is the embodiment of a "political settlement"); it should embody values, practices, and beliefs which are common--and perhaps peculiar--to Papua New Guineans.

The decision to establish the Special Committee on Provincial Government was consistent with any or all of the last three interpretations.

Somewhat ironically, the commitment to a "home-grown" constitution in Papua New Guinea was influenced by foreign precedents-- mainly, the constitution-making process which had been followed in Western Samoa (Davidson 1967:chapters 10-13; cf. Roberts-Wray 1966:298-301).[3] In Solomon Islands, both the procedures and substantive proposals which had been followed in establishing provincial government in Papua New Guinea influenced the government, the Special Committee, and other participants in the process of devising a system of decentralized government suitable to local circumstances. The Special Committee also had criticisms of the Papua New Guinea system brought to its attention.

Both the Constitutional Planning Committee and the Special Committee on Provincial Government were government--not parliamentary-- committees, though the first consisted entirely of members of parliament and the second contained six parliamentarians out of a total which reached seventeen. But, while formally answerable to the government, both were assured of the right to present their reports directly to the respective national legislatures. The membership, and especially the effective leadership, of both committees assured them of a certain independence from the respective governments of the day. The provision of independent consultants enhanced their independence from the public services. In Solomon Islands, but not in Papua New Guinea, the widespread expectation that the committee's report would be followed by a government white paper, as had been the case with reports of previous committees, seemed to incline the government to leave the committee largely to its own devices on the ground that it would have its say later. In Papua New Guinea, the unexpected tabling of a minority report, followed by a government paper and the United Party proposals (Papua New Guinea 1974b,c,d) produced the most severe parliamentary crisis for the government before independence.

In negotiating the compositions of the two committees, both governments seemed to accept certain assumptions about the appropriateness of the processes chosen for institution-building in their respective countries' political milieus. Their first assumption was that the questions with which they dealt were in some way above or outside politics (that is, that government members should not be numerically dominant in either body-- though the Papua New Guinea government initially sought to be so). Secondly, they assumed that a small number of parliamentarians could repre-

sent the wider legislature (both as to parties and regions in the case of Papua New Guinea and as to regions in the case of Solomon Islands).

The first assumption, combined with a reluctance by committee members to take--and sometimes even to listen to--advice from public servants, meant that both committees' reports lacked a systematic input from the executive (the Constitutional Planning Committee much more so than the Special Committee on Provincial Government). The second ignored the weakness of both party and regional groupings in the two countries' legislatures; and, as consensus and an *esprit de corps* developed in both committees, so they not only failed to "carry" the other groupings with them but posed a challenge to whatever cohesion the other groupings, including the government, had (again, much more so in the Papua New Guinea case than in the Solomon Islands case [Loveday and Wolfers 1976: chapters 10-12]).

The internal procedures adopted by both committees also reveal considerable information about the political cultures of national politicians in both countries. Both spent a great deal of time in what might fairly be described as "ground clearing"--discussing many different political questions in general terms in order to define what individual members hoped to achieve and to discover where they stood on contentious issues (information which could not be assumed from party or other organizational affiliations). Both displayed a marked propensity to look for consensus, but in a way which did not necessarily mean that everyone gave a little in a collective search for compromise; it sometimes meant that the most intransigent participant in a discussion got his way through sheer exhaustion on the part of members who would not outvote him. Ultimately, both committees had to resort to taking votes; and, on one subject--the question of who should hold title to land in Honiara--the presence of firm advocates of two opposing positions combined with the unwillingness of other members to take sides to produce a situation in which the Special Committee on Provincial Government failed to resolve a contentious issue (Solomon Islands 1979:13). Both committees paid close attention to the submissions they received, though they sometimes dealt with them in the manner of Rousseau's sovereign interpreting the general will--preferring what people "really" meant to what they actually said (Rousseau 1913). The legitimacy which was attached to their reports by virtue of the country-wide tours and other submissions, as well as the committees' respective *esprit de corps,* made them powerful opponents of those who would alter their recommendations--though, again, the expectation that there would be a government white paper, the ministerial experience of some committee members, and the actual involvement of some eight

members in a functioning system of decentralized government tended to moderate both the recommendations and the conflict in Solomon Islands.

Adapting National Political Systems to Melanesia

The notion that a constitution should be "home-grown" in all or any of the senses listed has obvious nationalist appeal.[4] Three of the four senses outlined above will be familiar to students of modern political history, especially those familiar with the U.S. Constitution. But the fourth point out requires further exploration, particularly in its application to Melanesia, am area famed for its structural diversity and small precolonial political communities.

The idea that it is possible to prepare a "home-grown" constitution or institutions fitted to local circumstances 'in the fourth sense outlined above' rests on two assumptions: (1) that the people in each of the two countries have sufficient in common to make it possible to speak of Papua New Guinea or Solomon Islands as having national values, practices, and beliefs; (2) that what they have in common is relevant to, and consistent with, the existence and continued functioning of the nation-state. The preamble to the Papua New Guinea Constitution affirms both propositions in its reference to "development . . . through the use of Papua New Guinean forms of social, political and economic organization" (Papua New Guinea 1975a: Preamble, 5). The Solomon Islands Constitution affirms the first, in somewhat paradoxical fashion, in the preamble through invocation of "our common and diverse heritage," and suggests elsewhere that at least "traditional chiefs" might have a role in provincial government (Solomon Islands 1978:Preamble, section 114 [2]). The Papua New Guinea Constitution also refers to the variety of the country's peoples (Papua New Guinea 1975a:Preamble, 5 [4]).

Many nationals of both countries disagree with the first proposition, though they differ among themselves as to whether the most significant communities of value and belief are to be found among close kinsmen or inhabitants of a single village; members of linguistic or cultural groups; or people in particular provinces, regions, or former colonial territories. Some, including senior public servants, argue that what nationals of their country have in common is irrelevant to, or inconsistent with, modern government, education, and business practice. Those who believe in the existence of Papua New Guinean ways are not agreed--and sometimes not clear--as to whether those ways have precolonial, colonial, or even post-colonial origins. And some of the most fervent advocates of a return to precolonial Melanesian ways tend to see or emphasize those features of

the past which are consistent with the Christian faith, the cash economy, and the nation-state--even to the point of denying the prevalence and bloodiness of precolonial warfare.[5]

A further question which arises in the context of dealings between nationals of either country and outsiders is whether the shared characteristics of Papua New Guineans or Solomon Islanders extend to all Melanesians, Pacific islanders, formerly colonized peoples, and/or people from developing countries. It is implicit in many discussions of the relevance of foreign precedents, the advantages of international--especially regional--cooperation, and the merits of supporting anticolonial movements in dependent territories or the proposals for a new international economic order.

In their reports, the two committees claimed that their recommendations were appropriate to local circumstances. In the case of the Constitutional Planning Committee, that "what has influenced us above all . . . has been the desire to meet Papua New Guinean needs and circumstances" (Papua New Guinea 1974a:Part 1, 1/2). In the case of the Special Committee on Provincial Government, the claim was that it had "tried to give the words 'provincial government' a Solomon Islands meaning" (Solomon Islands 1979:10). But even the final report of the Constitutional Committee, which makes the claim more strongly and more frequently than the report of the Special Committee on Provincial Government, does not provide a full account of the main features of Papua New Guinean society.

Neither report explains at length how two of the most obvious and widespread features of precolonial Melanesian political systems--suspicion of outsiders and statelessness--can be reconciled with the nation-state. But, theoretical problems aside, both contain the products of concerted, partial attempts to adapt a centralized and imposed state to Papua New Guinean and Solomon Islands society--mainly, through decentralizing power to elected provincial governments.

(i) Decentralization

Decentralization of power is regarded by many Papua New Guineans and Solomon Islanders as a way of reconciling the nation-state with Melanesia and as a means for bringing government, in the well-worn phrase, "closer to the people." The constitutions of their countries suggest that decentralization is a worthwhile goal in itself (Papua New Guinea 1975a:Preamble, 2 (2); Solomon Islands 1978:Preamble). But it seems fair to say that, in the case of the two committees under discussion, their recommendations on the subject--and specifically on the establishment of a

system of provincial government--were heavily influenced by more immediate political and administrative considerations, including a perceived need to accommodate, or forestall, secessionist movements while building on existing systems of administration.

Members of both committees tended to believe that political decentralization would attract opponents of the inherited political and administrative system, involve them in government, and thus acculturate them to the nation-state. One of the main risks they ran was that political and administrative decentralization would provide the infrastructure for effective secession.

By way of answer to criticisms that have been made of both committees' recommendations, one is tempted to argue that no system of government yet devised can meet all needs and eliminate conflict (though supporters of provincial government in both countries have sometimes sounded as if they expected it to do so); that both sets of recommendations were framed in the context of immediate political situations as well as in the light of long-term considerations; that both are the products of negotiation among Melanesian politicians; and that, even if the recommendations went beyond expressed or "real" public opinion, both committees consisted of political leaders engaged not only in assessing but in mobilizing that opinion. More often than not, the main source of criticism of both committees has been uneasiness, on the critics' part, at the prospect of elected political leaders replacing appointed public servants as decision makers.

In both countries, advocates of political decentralization have had aspirations varying from bringing about specific changes, such as improving local schools, to gaining greater resources for rural development, to ensuring that government is generally subject to political control (Wolfers, Conyers, Larmour, and Ghai forthcoming:4-7, 47, 123). The Constitutional Planning Committee, though not the system of provincial government that was established in Papua New Guinea after 1977, tried to take into account this variety by allowing for the introduction of provincial government in stages, with movement from one stage to another subject to local control.

Neither committee argued that provincial government is wholly consistent with precolonial Melanesian political values and beliefs. However, the competitiveness of electoral politics, if not the holding of a specified office for a fixed term (Langness 1972:933), bears some resemblance to the competitiveness of "big man" politics; and the decentralization of power goes some way toward recognizing the autonomy of local commu-

nities. Moreover, both committees recognized that many people in both countries had come to identify themselves and interact with wider communities than before. The units of government to which they recommended that power should be decentralized were essentially colonial artifacts; and respect for the autonomy of provincial governments prevented both committees from devising means of enforcing--as distinct from encouraging--further decentralization to precolonial political communities.

In Papua New Guinea, the constitution protects local government councils, which were generally set up by the colonial administration, against suspension or abolition by a provincial government acting on its own (the concurrence of the national parliament or the national executive council is required [Papua New Guinea 1977:Section 187I (4)]). The Ministry of Decentralization has conducted an inquiry into appropriate forms of government at the local or community level, and come up with a varied range of options for provincial governments to consider. Some provincial governments have experimented with further decentralization to community governments, though their approach has sometimes been formalistic and niggardly in the powers transferred. The colonial administration sometimes sought to take local practice into account by defining council wards in terms of kinship groups instead of references on a map. The Kainantu Local Government Council in the eastern highlands has reorganized its wards into area communities *(eria komunitis)* based on local affinities. But the General Constitutional Commission has repeatedly called for serious thought to be given to further decentralization "down from the Provincial level to the villages" (Papua New Guinea 1980a:iv).

In Solomon Islands, the role that chiefs should play in government was repeatedly discussed during the constitution-raising and in the Special Committee on Provincial Government. As in the North Solomons Province of Papua New Guinea, where the same issue arose before independence, the proposed role was gradually reduced. Anxious as they said they were to find a role and show respect for local leaders, educated national and provincial leaders in both countries were generally reluctant to give chiefs substantial power beyond the local and traditional sphere.

The discussion of the role that chiefs should play in Solomon Islands was particularly revealing for what it showed about the attitudes of national and provincial representatives toward local leaders.[6] Those attitudes owed something to deep personal conviction that those leaders should be respected, to the proximity and salience of local leaders in national constituencies which have an average population of only a little more than 5,000, and to sometimes millenarian claims to personal or communal ascendancy over rivals.

When anthropologists who had worked in Solomon Islands were asked for advice about the role of chiefs, they tended to be skeptical as to their very existence. But many Solomon Islanders say that they have chiefs. Some claim to be chiefs. Chiefs also figure in the constitution (Solomon Islands 1978:section 114 [2]).

Analysis of the ways in which the term was used suggests a certain imprecision. In fact, when the Special Committee used the term in its report, it referred to "recognized chiefs," of which there are clearly some, and coupled them with "other traditional leaders" (Solomon Islands 1979:28). The position of "recognized paramount chief of a province" (Solomon Islands 1979:18), which received separate mention and is accorded special functions, appears to be a relatively recent--and sometimes only a potential--creation.

(ii) Other issues

The Constitutional Planning Committee had much broader terms of reference than the Special Committee on Provincial Government and hence more opportunities to adapt the nation-state to Melanesia and more problems with which to grapple. Its final report contains many claims that particular recommendations accord with Papua New Guinean ways and values; it also contains exhortations to public officials to be responsive to the needs and aspirations of the country's people. The constitution imposes a "duty" on "all governmental bodies to apply and give effect to" the national goals and directive principles, which include a commitment to "Papua New Guinean ways." Thus, every government body is required to do its best to bring about

> a fundamental re-orientation of . . . attitudes and . . . institutions
> towards Papua New Guinean forms . . . and a continuous renewal
> of the responsiveness of these institutions to the needs and atti-
> tudes of the People

and to foster "respect for, and appreciation of, traditional ways of life and culture." But only the Ombudsman Commission in its capacity as administrator of the Leadership Code can enforce the duty through the courts (Papua New Guinea 1975a:25[1], [2], [4]; Preamble 5[1], [3]).

In its recommendations on the executive, the Constitutional Planning Committee said that the executive power should be vested in a group, the National Executive Council, instead of a single person "in accordance with the practice of most of our societies, in which decisions are made by a group. . . ." It proposed that Papua New Guinea should not have a head

of state and that the functions of the office should be distributed among other office-holders--partly because a head of state "would be contrary to the customs of most of our people" and a "foreign idea" (Papua New Guinea 1974a:Part 1, 7/l).

Ultimately, the Constituent Assembly did not accept the Constitutional Planning Committee's proposed arrangement for distributing the functions of a head of state but did accept part of its argument. A separate head of state, the queen, is represented in Papua New Guinea by a governor-general--symbols of continuity with the colonial past. But, as the Constitutional Planning Committee proposed, the head of state has been deprived of almost all discretion.[7]

Few members of the Constitutional Planning Committee or of the Constituent Assembly seem to have been impressed with arguments in favor of combining the functions of head of state and head of government into an executive presidency, though the combination would, arguably, have been consistent with the failure to distinguish clearly between power and. authority in precolonial Papua New Guinean societies (Langness 1972:928). The chief minister, who would have been the most likely successor to such an office, was not alone in opposing such a bold departure from the Australian precedent, even though his deputy, Sir John Guise, had previously advocated what he termed a "semi-presidential system," which seemed to be a form of executive presidency (Guise 1973:38-39).

When it came to citizenship, the committee recognized the arbitrary nature of the country's international boundaries--the frequency of movement and the strength of local ties across them--and the difficulty of determining exactly to which territory some people belong. It therefore recommended that Papua New Guinean citizenship should be granted automatically on independence day to any person who had "no real citizenship" and was descended from "two indigenous grandparents," all of whose own grandparents were born in Irian Jaya, Solomon Islands, or the Torres Strait Islands (Papua New Guinea 1974a:Part 1, 4/14; cf. Papua New Guinea 1975a:section 65[1]-[3]. Cf. also Solomon Islands 1978: section 20[1][b], which confers citizenship on persons whose grandparents were indigenous to Papua New Guinea or Vanuatu).

An earlier proposal, which made Papua New Guinean citizenship more accessible to the descendants of a union between a Papua New Guinean father and a foreign mother than to the descendants of a union between a Papua New Guinean mother and a foreign father, seemed to owe more to inequalities and legally enforced distinctions during the colonial period than to traditional Melanesian male chauvinism (cf. Wolfers 1975: 135).

At many points in its report, the Constitutional Planning Committee sought to ensure that institutions which were to be set up to suit Papua New Guinea at independence would continue to adapt thereafter--hence the emphasis on popular sovereignty, executive accountability to the legislature, and the appointment of constitutional office-holders, including judges, for terms of years instead of for life. The provisions in the Papua New Guinea constitution establishing the Law Reform and General Constitutional commissions (Papua New Guinea 1975a:section 260, Schedule 2 [Part 6]) make it easier for the political system to keep changing as society changes, just as the Special Committee on Provincial Government hoped that the law reform and other reviews it recommended (Solomon Islands 1979:37-38, 95) would also do. The Leadership Code and the proposed Investment Code might also be regarded as parts of the wider attempt to ensure that government would be responsive to the people of the country by regulating outside influences.

However, many recommendations in the Constitutional Planning Committee's report--and the Papua New Guinea constitution--owe as much to the requirements of modem government generally as to conscious decisions that they were particularly appropriate to Papua New Guinea (see, for example, the chapters dealing with the public services and disciplined forces [Papua New Guinea 1974a:Part 1, chapters 12, 13]). Others embody compromises influenced by immediate pressures--for example, the proposal that the Public Services Commission should consist of four members "broadly representative of the various areas of the country" (Papua New Guinea 1974a:Part 1, 12/6). By implication, at a time when regional movements were becoming important foci of attempts at political mobilization, the recommendation meant that one commission member should come from Papua, one from the New Guinea islands, one from the highlands, and one from the New Guinea mainland coast. For politicians from the highlands, in particular, the formula gave some assurance that a person from their region of the country would be at the head of a public service in which highlanders held a very much lower proportion of positions than they formed of the total national population. For others, it managed to do so without mentioning--and, perhaps, thereby strengthening support for--the regions.

A few recommendations, including those providing for freedom of movement and sexual equality, seem more consistent with ideas which were current in liberal democracies in the 1970s than in precolonial or colonial Papua New Guinea. The Leadership Code, which was intended to ensure that national leaders would have "a genuine commitment (Papua New Guinea 1974a:Part 1, 3/2) to the national goals and directive

principles, including "Papua New Guinean ways," raises interesting questions in relation to the adaptation of the nation-state. The main aim of the Leadership Code as envisaged by the committee was to prevent and punish abuse of office, corruption, and collaboration with foreign businessmen by designated holders of elective, constitutional, statutory and other senior public offices. But political and economic entrepreneurship have often gone together in precolonial, colonial, and, now, independent Papua New Guinea (Finney 1973:115-21; Good 1979:114-18; Hegarty 1979:199-202). Refusal to acknowledge the demands of kin and affines may be as "corrupt" by precolonial standards as their acceptance would be under the Leadership Code (a statement by a member of the Public Services Commission in 1981 that there was nothing wrong in using his position to help a relative certainly seemed to suggest so). Some Papua New Guineans believe that the provisions of the Leadership Code which prevent ministers and their families from holding directorships in companies or foreign enterprises (Papua New Guinea 1975b:section 7 [1]) inhibits localization of the economy and makes them--unfairly--responsible for the activities of others. As with other codes of conduct in other countries, the Papua New Guinea Leadership Code may come to provide guidance to the really wealthy and morally corrupt, who can afford the services of accountants and lawyers in circumventing the spirit or concealing the breaking of the law.

In a manual published for the guidance of leaders, the Ombudsman Commission has sought to deal with some of the difficulties mentioned. While personal gifts of more than K50 must be declared, no limit has been placed on "internal family gifts, traditional gifts and exchanges within tribal groups" (Papua New Guinea 1980b:33). But what are the limits of the "family"? Does the Ombudsman Commission regard it as including, for the present purpose, classificatory as well as biological kin? What of gifts worth more than K50 received in trade or ceremonial exchange systems with precolonial origins? And what of the prospects for long-term success when a character witness for a person charged with a variety of breaches of the Leadership Code was reported to have described him as an honest and fine man, "well known for his generosity out in the streets quite a free spender--a good example to everyone" (*Papua New Guinea Post-Courier* 7 September 1981:2)?

Political Culture in Papua New Guinea from the
Late Colonial Period into the Early 1980s

A paper written, but not published, during the late 1960s provides a contemporary outline of the main features of "the . . . principal clusters of

popular indigenous orientations towards politics" in Papua New Guinea (Wolfers n.d.:1). Its findings serve as a useful baseline from which to assess changes in Papua New Guineans' political values, beliefs, and behavior from the late colonial period to the early years of independence.

The main focus of the paper was on Papua New Guineans' attitudes toward the only nationwide political organization in the country--the colonial administration--and the political communities with which they primarily identified themselves. The main finding of the paper was that, except for a few Papua New Guineans who seemed to have been absorbed into the political culture of the still-dominant colonial administration, the political values, beliefs, and behavior of Papua New Guineans could be classified into three main clusters. The clusters were: (1) a local-level political culture in which the focus of attention was essentially the same as in the precolonial political community; (2) an extended local culture in which ties and coalitions were developed beyond the precolonial political community to neighboring communities, speakers of a common dialect or language, trade or exchange partners, or residents of an administrative unit such as a subdistrict;[8] and (3) an urban political culture in which an increasing number of Papua New Guineans from almost all parts of the country--but, for historical reasons, still relatively few highlanders--were developing links with one another and beginning to think actively about the nation.

People who shared the local or extended local orientations could be found in almost every part of the country. But, unlike some of the townsmen, they were seldom more than distantly aware of the fact or were indifferent to it. Like most townsmen, they were not organized to pursue what were often common interests.

For many of the Papua New Guineans whose main focus of attention was the precolonial political community, the colonial administration (*gavman* in Pidgin, *gavamani* in Hiri Motu[9]) was often little more than an occasional source of interference in their lives--a body to be listened to and, at least outwardly, obeyed.

The political actors who were developing ties and building coalitions beyond their precolonial political communities included most members of the House of Assembly, members of local government council executives, and a variety of other people who were becoming prominent at subdistrict or district levels. Their relationship with the administration was not that of legislator (cf. Meller 1967) so much as that of legate. The holders of elected office among their number tended to see themselves, and to be seen by their constituents, as having a duty to take requests for local improvements to the government, hearing what the government said, ex-

pressing their own concurrence or disagreement, and informing the elec-
torate of what had transpired (Wolfers n.d.:9). Or, as a candidate for the
Chuave Open electorate in the 1968 House of Assembly election explain-
ed the role:

> The elected members are like as a donkey. Well, we all know
> about the donkeys. When one donkey gets a heavy loads on its'
> back. Then it can go and come as the way it is commanded. Now
> we know the elected members are just as a donkey. When they
> wanted to came in the House of Assembly. Then they carry all
> kinds of questions and problems in. Which they found from their
> own people. After showing these to the House of Assembly, they
> carry out the complete answers and Lawes out to their people
> [quoted in Wolfers 1968:8].

The elected representative's role as legate (or donkey) appeared to be so
widely accepted during the late 1960s that it seemed that

> the only pressure for him to do other than act as a link commu-
> nicating instructions from, and requests to, the government
> comes from the few people who are aware of the formal po-
> tentialities of his role, his local European constituents and the
> few relatively well-educated indigenes employed on the local
> government station. . . . The mass of his constituents simply wait
> to hear what has happened [at meetings he attends], and to ex-
> press their pleasure or dismay at decisions they do not feel com-
> petent to change [Wolfers n.d.: 13].

The political concerns of urban Papua New Guineans ranged from
those of people whose main interest remained focused on the village to
those of people who, while saying that they planned to return eventually
to the village, were beginning to work out more or less permanent accom-
modations with the town. Among the latter, attitudes toward the town
and the colonial administration still seemed "fluid," but common prob-
lems and frustrations were giving rise to an increasing sense of opposi-
tion--both to continued Australian rule and to its acceptance by most
Papua New Guinean parliamentarians (Wolfers n.d.:15, 17-18).

Soon after the paper was written, the Australian government began to
disengage from governing Papua New Guinea. A commitment to seem-
ingly open-ended "preparation" was replaced by an urgent and-active
policy of withdrawal.[10] The change had a dramatic effect on Papua New

Guinean political attitudes. Politicians who had previously been--and, more importantly, felt--heavily dependent on administration guidance began to display an increasingly autonomous conservatism, critical of Australian policy. Townsmen who had felt frustrated at colonial rule received increasing official support. Politicians who had opposed rapid constitutional change in the name of national unity found themselves revealed, at least by implication, as spokesmen for regional--especially highlands--or foreign economic interests. Townsmen who had spoken, in the abstract, about national issues involved themselves increasingly in local issues in an effort to build bases of popular support.[11] The authority of the colonial administration began to come under increasing challenge from a variety of local groups (cf. Somare 1975:111-39).

Before and for some time after the accession of the National Coalition Government in 1972, political leaders often sought to distance themselves symbolically from the colonial administration by devising and then wearing a "national dress" where it had previously not been allowed; selling the chief minister's designated official residence; declining to ride in large official cars; and substantively, by appointing a number of bodies--including the Constitutional Planning Committee--to make policies independently of the Public Service. But it was not long before a new official residence was being built; a fleet of larger cars was purchased; and the government, advised by public servants, found itself in conflict with the Constitutional Planning Committee. By the early 1980s, the populist style of apparent personal self-denial which had been current during the late-colonial period had given way to the public display of success. The change was no less evident among members of provincial assemblies and their staffs than among national politicians and theirs. Ministers were still frequently critical in public of the Public Service. But, on many issues--including such widespread and potentially popular causes as increased compensation for land alienation--they were speaking for a wider-than-local good and accepting responsibility for government actions.

The increasing sense of autonomy felt by Papua New Guinean leaders was suggested by the way in which the government was changed in March 1981 (Wolfers 1981:274-77), by the frequency with which backbenchers criticized or moved against particular ministers or the government as a whole, and by the confidence with which members of provincial governments approached the national government. It was expressed in a particularly forceful and striking way in the response reported to have been made by the deputy prime minister, Iambakey Okuk, to allegations that he had signed a K20 million deal to purchase aircraft for Air Niugini without the required cabinet approval:

> Forget the bloody procedures, I've got a good deal for PNG. The
> procedures are no good anyway. If things are good for the best
> interest of PNG, forget the procedures. But of course I will come
> back and ratify my actions. The deal was a good one. It took me
> about half a minute to sign the contract [*Papua   New   Guinea
> Post-Courier,* 1 October 1980:1].

Although few would match the deputy prime minister's ebullience,
members of Papua New Guinea's national parliament no longer regard
themselves as legates carrying messages between government and people.
They and other practicing and aspiring politicians no longer see them-
selves as learning roles within a governmental framework but as exercis-
ing power with governmental instruments (Ghai 1972:405-6). They are
testing conventions inherited from Australian precedents or recommended
by the country's constitution makers and creating conventions of their
own. Their frame of reference is increasingly the region or the nation,
while candidates for and members of provincial assemblies sometimes dis-
play a stronger sense of provincial identity than was generally apparent
during the early 1970s.

Working through parliament as an institution, members have repeat-
edly tried to secure their positions--by raising the age of candidacy from
21 to 25 (Papua New Guinea 1975a:section 103[1]), thereby disfranchising
rivals who would otherwise have come of age between the 1972 and 1977
elections[12]; by requiring public servants who wish to regain their jobs af-
ter contesting an election to resign six months beforehand instead of three
(*Papua New Guinea Post-Courier,* 4 September 1981:2); and, in a move
described by the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Constitutional
Laws and Acts as "against the intention and spirit" of the constitution, by
raising the nomination fee from K100 to K1,000 (Papua New Guinea
1981:3). The Organic Law required to give effect to the sections of the
constitution dealing with the "integrity of political parties" (Papua New
Guinea 1975a:Sections 129-30) has not been presented to parliament; and
even though all leaders' direct involvement with foreign-owned businesses
is limited by the Leadership Code, most of the funds collected by the ma-
jor political parties for the 1977 general elections came from just such
businesses. A similar tendency to secure their own positions has been re-
ported among aspirants for and holders of official positions in provincial
governments.

Moreover, even as individual parliamentarians have been given the
power to allocate substantial government funds to local projects and the

terms and conditions of their office have been improved, many people would be "surprised," so the prime minister, Sir Julius Chan, has said, if they

> knew how much . . . time . . . I have to spend coping with requests for special favours of all kinds, financial and otherwise, from individual politicians. I will be even franker and say that if a Prime Minister is determined to stay in office he can do so quite easily if he is prepared to grant enough favors.
> . . . I can't speak for my predecessor, Michael Somare, but I would be most surprised if he didn't face the same problems and I cannot see how any alternative head of Government could avoid them [Chan 1981:6].

The prime minister's sense that holders of high office have their own rightful prerogatives was suggested by some remarks he was reported to have made when justifying the purchase of a K5-million jet aircraft, mainly for ministerial use: "The aircraft was never meant for the old man in the village. It was meant for the people who are going to run this country--it was meant for the Government" (*Papua New Guinea Post-Courier,* 11 March 1981:2).

The extent to which the changes that have taken place should be regarded as endogenous or exogenous is a moot point. Is the change in leadership style an extension of the display frequently exhibited by "big men," or an imitation of a foreign model? Is the assertiveness of Papua New Guinean leaders a continuation into a new environment of the autonomy of the 'big man,' or a sign that they have not been fully socialized, into novel roles and, perhaps, are not confronted by effective countervailing forces? Do changing attitudes toward development priorities represent movement away from colonial or neocolonial values of the early 1970s, or do they indicate acceptance of a new neocolonialism? Despite the existence of the National Investment and Development Authority ('NIDA') and the Leadership Code, which some Papua New Guinean leaders regard as inhibitors of development, are foreign influences gaining the upper hand--not directly, through colonial rule, but indirectly, through acceptance by Papua New Guineans? Are some Papua New Guineans beginning to become what an influential leader once alleged that some people from other newly independent countries were--"black birds in white cages"?

Legitimating Institutions

Many of the articles and books published about Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands during the colonial period, including some by the present author, describe aspects of the two countries' political systems as "alien," "arbitrary," "foreign," or "imposed." They often do so in ways which suggest that their institutions should or will be changed to accord with "Papua New Guinean ways" or to "*fitim* Solomon Islands" but without explaining how. The omission, however unhelpful, is not surprising for an area of which one of the most widely read, authoritative attempts to generalize about local organization states that

> virtually the only constant is a negative one: the failure of Mela-
> nesian societies to develop complex, permanent forms of political
> organization that would weld together even those people who
> have a common language and culture [Chowning 1973:21-22].

Almost every aspect of precolonial politics and many aspects of local politics seem, at first sight, to be inconsistent with or actively hostile to the principles embodied in the nation-state. How, then, might the nation-state be reconciled with Melanesia?

In some respects, the two committees' respective commitments to devising institutions which accord with "Papua New Guinean ways" or "*fitim* Solomon Islands" should be regarded as expressions of nationalist and, in some cases, pan-Melanesian identity, but without the venality which Myrdal claimed to have found among exponents of "Asian values" (Myrdal 1968:98). To some extent, they were reactions to the ways in which foreigners had looked down on Melanesian society and preached the virtues off their own beliefs and systems of social organization during the colonial period (cf. the discussion of the "well-meaning souls who in cultural congresses point out . . . the specificity and wealth of Western values" [Fanon 1967:33]).

However, neither the Constitutional Planning Committee in Papua New Guinea nor the Special Committee on Provincial Government in Solomon Islands sought simply to reconcile the inherited nation-state with pre-colonial Melanesia. Members of both bodies recognized that most political communities in their two countries had undergone too many profound changes for the option to arise.

In some respects, the procedures followed by the two committees resembled practices which are often cited as being typically Melanesian: consulting and/or mobilizing public opinion through face-to-face contact

and trying to arrive at decisions by consensus. However, as with some of the committees' substantive attempts to reconcile the nation-state with Melanesia, the use of the first can also be explained by reference to colonial precedent,[13] while application of the second sometimes had to be abandoned.

By the early 1980s, the recommendations of the two committees seem to have acquired considerable legitimacy in their respective countries, however much the behavior of national and provincial politicians in Papua New Guinea had begun to depart from the "founding fathers' " expectations. The final report of the Constitutional Planning Committee was being employed as an aid to constitutional interpretation in the courts (cf. Papua New Guinea 1975a:section 24). The report of the Special Committee on Provincial Government had been embodied, in modified form, in legislation (Solomon Islands 1980). But it was difficult to tell how much the seeming legitimacy of the Papua New Guinean political system owed to its embodiment of widely held Papua New Guinean values, and how much those values had been influenced by the system, and especially the processes by which those institutions had been designed (cf. Verba 1965:513, Barry 1970:48-52).

The reports prepared by the two committees suggest that their members believed that their commitment to devising institutions which accord with "Papua New Guinean ways" or "*fitim* Solomon Islands" would help to legitimate those institutions. But is it, therefore, unfair to ask whether the committees' work--particularly their consultation with and mobilization of public opinion--might not have helped to legitimate their conceptions of their members' own particular societies? The pervasiveness and influence of their ideas among citizens of their respective countries would seem to suggest that their work did so.

Acknowledgments

NOTES

1. The term "Melanesian" is used loosely to distinguish what might otherwise be termed "indigenous"--whether Melanesian, Micronesian, or Polynesian--from what has been introduced in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands.

2. Detailed, though not complete, accounts of the background to and history of both committees are to be found in Wolfers 1977a for the Constitutional Planning Committee and in Wolfers, Conyers, Larmour, and Ghai forthcoming as well as Wolfers forthcoming for the Special Committee on Provincial Government.

3. The late Professor J. W. Davidson, who had previously been a constitutional adviser in Western Samoa, served as a permanent consultant to the Constitutional Planning Committee in Papua New Guinea until his death in April 1973.

4. The four meanings do not need to go together, though they are not inconsistent. The Australian constitution, for example, is the product of negotiation among representatives of the Australian states, though it is not legally autochthonous. The Western Samoan constitution--a "model" of autochthony (Roberts-Wray 1966:300)--contains elements which owe more to foreign precedents than to *fa'a Samoa* (the "Samoan way").

5. Narokobi (and His Critics and Supporters) 1980 contains a useful collection of newspaper articles and correspondence on the existence of a Papua New Guinea/Melanesian way. Olela n.d., Narakobi n.d.:24, and Narakobi 1981 contain additional relevant materials.

'Writer, barrister, law reformer, former judge, constitutional expert, visionary, family man and villager' (*Papua New Guinea Post Courier,* 29 May 1981:5), Bernard Narakobi was a permanent consultant to the Constitutional Planning Committee and has become a leading exponent of the Papua New Guinea/Melanesian way.

6. For a more detailed analysis of the discussion on chiefs, see Wolfers, Conyers, Larmour, and Ghai forthcoming:21-23.

7. For a more detailed discussion of the debate about the head of state and the functions of the governor-general, see Wolfers 1977b.

Rumors suggest that the General Constitutional Commission, which is due to issue its final report in early 1982, is likely to propose a president as head of state.

8. A. number of election studies suggest that ties or coalitions of the kinds described have had a considerable influence on voting--see especially Watson 1965, Ogan 1965, and Wolfers 1968. They do not, unfortunately, show exactly how the ties or coalitions have been developed by the people concerned.

9. Both words are derived from "government" in English.

10. The origins, process, and immediate outcome of the change are analyzed in some detail in Wolfers 1971b.

11. The phenomenon described in the two preceding sentences is one of the reasons why "behavior" has been linked to "values and beliefs" throughout this paper. If values and beliefs were treated on their own, as the definition of "political culture" in Verba 1965:513 seems to allow (cf. Pye 1968:218), then those Papua New Guineans who spoke in favor of and believed in national unity--with the highlands as their point of reference--would appear to have been less parochial and more nationalistic than those who spoke of local government in East New Britain or land rights in the North Solomons with much wider issues and ambitions in mind (cf. Wolfers 1971b:142-45). But were they really so? And how ought one to classify a candidate who leaves the national capital to campaign on seemingly national issues before a bewildered or uninterested rural audience (cf. Kiki 1968:167-77)? Is he an unsuccessful mobilizing nationalist or a person with a parochial, if urban, frame of reference?

12. The Constitutional Planning Committee recommended that the minimum age for membership in the national parliament should be 23 (Papua New Guinea 1974a:Part 1, 6/20).

13. A similar set of alternatives also arises with respect to aspects of prime minister Michael Somare's political behavior: while he claims to have drawn on the Sana tradition from his own village when dealing with opponents (Somare 1975:110, 148), his spuming of approaches from opposition leaders to form a "grand coalition" before independence is consistent not only with a commitment to competitive politics but with the quite general political principle of sharing the fruits of office with the minimum winning coalition (Riker 1962).

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