

Hal B. Levine and Marlene Wolfzahn Levine, *Urbanization in Papua New Guinea, A Study of Ambivalent Townsmen.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979. Pp. 161. \$29.95, Paperback \$9.95.

Jean Rouch's fascinating film, *Jaguar*, concerns the adventures of three young Songhai men, who, at the request of Rouch, travel from their village in the hinterlands to Accra, the capital of Ghana. Although the three are total strangers to the urban scene, they quickly find jobs that suit them, and almost immediately, or so it seems from the film, they are taken up and into the rhythm, style, and strategies of a distinctly urban milieu. The film may be more Rouch's creation than documentary fact, but what is vividly expressed through the responses of the three men to their new situation is that the city, although perplexing, is neither foreign, isolating, nor hostile.

More than once, as I read *Urbanization in Papua New Guinea, A Study of Ambivalent Townsmen* (town dwellers?), by Hal B. Levine and Marlene Wolfzahn Levine, the memory of Rouch's camera shots crystallized differences between the West African urban experience and that of Papua New Guinea. As Levine and Levine note, such comparisons have roots in different colonial histories and pre-colonial political organizations. In visualizing Rouch's images, however, the major theme of the Levines' Papua New Guinea study became all the more dramatic. The contrast between Accra's market places and, for example, the Koki Market in Port Moresby exemplifies the Levines' position that the colonial experience in Papua New Guinea prohibited the development of a distinct urban identity and ideology.

Few will come away from Levines' study (based on the authors' own field research in Port Moresby and Mount Hagen and including research studies by others on urban Papua New Guinea) without recognizing the sharp split between a Western notion of urbanization and rural villagers' responses to town living. Examining the processes of social interaction that create the milieu in which urban dwellers find themselves, the authors "distinguish two sets" or levels of urban life in which, and through which, urban dwellers organize themselves. The two major chapters in the book, "Security: Primary Social Relationships in Towns" and "Formal Institutions in the Wider Urban Field," spell out the complexities inherent in these "two sets."

In the former, kinship ties and the Wantok system create primary links within urban situations. Such links, rooted in rural ties, have resulted in what the authors regard as the development of urban ethnicity. In this way, clan and village allegiances and connections provide an urban route through which rural villagers moving into towns find access to jobs and living quarters. The inefficacy of formal institutions—such as voluntary associations, and business and administrative networks—to grow strong enough to cross-cut these primary patterns of social interaction directly

contributes to the expansion and growing strength of rural identities. Thus, the authors conclude that while some departures from the colonial urban situation have occurred, in general, the promotion of an urban consciousness, class distinctions, occupational hierarchies, or the formation of a "national tradition" has not taken place.

The Levines' study provides an important synthesis of the problems inherent in contemporary Papua New Guinea urbanization. The issues raised in this study should become the springboard for continued urban research. Of high priority should be whether the strength of primary ties is totally the result of colonial isolation of Papua New Guineans from urban centers contributing to the subsequent lack of urban identity, or whether the urban situation presents yet one more example of the strength and resiliency of what it means to be a member of a particular local group.

Equally high on a list of priorities should be issues concerning the relationship between the national and provincial governments as this is affecting the growth of towns that are much closer, geographically and socially, to rural contacts. The Levines' study concentrates almost exclusively on the effects of colonialism and its relation to urban lifestyles. With a policy of decentralization, however, and with both the national and provincial governments' involvement in development projects that affect both rural and urban areas, the organization and the ideology of urban life is becoming more complex.

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