

PACIFIC STUDIES

Vol. 14, No. 2

March 1991

THE FAILURE OF ECONOMIC REFORM IN THE SEPIK: THE ROLE OF CHURCH AND STATE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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In his study of the Gnau people of New Guinea, the anthropologist Gilbert Lewis described a rural society seemingly free of any outside economy. Lewis saw the Gnau of the Sepik Fall as a “compact and small” village society where people lived on sago, yams, and greens and were “able to hunt for pig, cassowary and small mammals . . . in extensive tracts of uninhabited bush” (Lewis 1975:3-4). He described the village as “discrete, compact and bounded, and can also be economically self-sufficient” (Lewis 1975:21). There is nothing incorrect or misleading in Lewis’s observation. The Gnau, like many Sepik societies, can be economically self-sufficient. Indeed, a substantial part of Lewis’s ethnography makes abundantly clear how that sufficiency is achieved. What is not immediately apparent is that since World War II modernization pressures have been directed towards altering Sepik economies by drawing an increasing number of villages into a free-market political economy. For over thirty years, members of both church and state have attempted to create or construct new economies for the Sepik, ostensibly to create economic self-reliance. Their attempts have failed. Economic and agrarian reform in the Sepik has created poverty, disadvantage, and a breakdown of traditional economic structures. The use of the phrase “*can be economically self-sufficient*” has taken on new significance as a result. The economic history of the Sepik since the war has been described by the term “economic development.” The reality, though, is that where once Sepik societies were autonomous they are now dependent and have experienced declining standards of living.

This article examines the impact of the outside world on the Sepik over time. In part, the study looks at wage labor and the periods of labor migration, but it considers in greater detail the visions of modernity held by church and state. The study chronicles a series of unsuccessful development projects and the economic and cultural impediments to their success. The history of economic development in the Sepik is viewed as the failure of introduced initiatives in modernization. Much of the failure was due to policy differences between church and state--differences that have given rise to a sustained state of economic disadvantage throughout the Sepik.

Both the Roman Catholic Church and the Australian colonial government initiated development programs to improve human conditions in the Sepik. But there was a considerable hiatus between the need church and state saw for development and the need local communities saw for social stability during the modernization era. The church responded sensitively to the divergent modernization and local development initiatives. But the church's involvement with economic development programs relied upon a managerial style unfamiliar to Sepiks, resulting in programs that demanded the uninterrupted support of missionaries.

Sepik and church interest in development (and through it, concepts of progress) were dissimilar. So attempts by the church to implant Western perceptions of modernization within the village context were destined to fail unless missionaries could offer sustainable development by integrating their activities to those of the village (Duggan 1989; Mitchell 1988). Nevertheless, village communities considered the church's presence as vital in the struggle to maintain the level of development already achieved. The role of the state, it will be seen, was largely benign. Embarrassed by this, it determined to expel the church from the modernization process. External pressure required greater political development of the region than either church or state could provide. The regional inequality in the provision of development emphases found greatest articulation in the Sepik as a result of tension between church and state.

The Context: The Labor Frontier

European sightings of the West Sepik coast in the 1800s were accompanied by reports of a huge, available labor reserve (Wiltgen 1971). The Sepik provided a regular supply of laborers even before church and state drew the region into the colonial sphere, and continued to provide it into the postcolonial or independence era. The acquisition of Sepiks for copra plantation labor was instrumental for developing other parts of

New Guinea at the expense of a breakdown of trade and exchanges throughout the region.

From the turn of the century, the Sepik provided much of New Guinea's plantation labor needs. The labor frontier penetrated the West Sepik coast in 1894 where men could be found in great numbers (Sack and Clarke 1979:58, 133, 232). By 1910 it had reached the Torricelli Mountains but labor recruiters did not cross during the German colonial period. As the labor frontier moved further into the region, there was an accompanying disruption of traditional trade. The loss of men entailed a loss of farming labor for the villages as well as for specialist hunting and farm production. The nature of trade was also affected: laborers were paid in coins and goods; items of trade from Europe, Asia, and Australia took precedence over those produced within New Guinea. As labor disrupted trade in the form of the loss of men it came to disrupt it further through the devaluing of traditional wealth-generating items.

In 1914 World War I reduced the flow of the labor trade. A hiatus of some five years was followed by a resurgence of labor demands upon the Sepik (see Shlomowitz 1987: 165-170). By the early 1920s the labor frontier moved along two separate fronts. Recruiters crossed the Torricellis to tap the labor reserve of some one hundred thousand people at that time: the Wape, Palei, Au, Arapesh, Urat, and Abelam. And, as in the German period, recruiters moved up the Sepik River to tap into the large riverine populations. The typical recruiter during this Australian colonial period evidently went about his business in an even-handed manner and recruits often volunteered for work (Marshall 1938: 22-34). The state during this interwar period endeavored to control the flow of labor out of the region through quotas that limited the loss of village men to 33 percent per village.

The labor frontier did not penetrate beyond Lumi to the south and Yili to the east in the West Sepik (Marshall 1938:22-34; Lewis 1975:1-26), but it covered a wider expanse in the East Sepik (Tuzin 1976: 15-27; Allen 1976; Curtain 1980). By 1935, however, the Sepik coastal region was heavily overrecruited, leading to a depopulation of coastal and inland villages (Stanley 1932:2-5) and prompting requests from *kiaps* (patrol officers) to have certain areas closed to recruiting (McCarthy 1935). By this stage, the social fabric of life had been irrevocably changed. Intervillage warfare had virtually disappeared. Trade between the coast and the Sepik Fall was severely disrupted because coastal villagers no longer desired inland trade items (bird of paradise feathers and weapons, for instance). There was also the loss of game from the region due to population pressures and overhunting (Marshall

1938:36-66; Mitchell 1973). Healey claims that a rapid collapse of trading systems in New Guinea was quite common owing to an imposed "market and colonial political economy on a plethora of small, autonomous tribal polities" (1985: 127). In the West Sepik some trade between the coast and mountains continued until around 1946, thereafter the monetization of the coastal economies caused the collapse of intervillage trade. Indeed, the inland laborers who returned to their villages brought with them cases of shells from the coastal plantations, effectively devaluing traditional trading items (Lewis 1980: 188-190, 202-210; see also Grossman 1984). Returned laborers could become farmers again but the agrarian economy had altered, essentially through disruptions to trade.

Reconstructing the trade system that connected the Torricelli Mountains to the coast and other parts of the Sepik is complicated by a virtual absence of anthropological and historical data. Fragments of evidence suggest that trading routes were extensive in the precolonial and colonial periods but the actual network consisting of links, "markets," and flow of goods is difficult to verify. The patrol officer J. E. Fowke, after spending time with Gilbert Lewis, suggested that the main trade route from the Wape- and Au-speaking areas was via Mount Somoro to the coast (DO, Lumi, no. 8, 1968/1969). Fowke claimed that the Wape and Au made contact with the German trading posts; Firth (1982) has recorded that Wape men (possibly from villages on the coastal plains and towards the Torricellis) were successfully recruited during the German colonial period. My discussions with men from Wabutei and Miwautei established that the trade route from the Wape villages took two or three separate paths: the Karaitem Gap, Mount Somoro, and the Ningil Gap. Villagers from Miwautei and Wabutei were interested in securing shells from the Sissano, Arop, and Bakla. In return they exchanged bows and arrows and bird of paradise feathers. Indeed, the *kiap* J. R. Adam-Wilkes encountered thirty Wape men at Yakamul in 1924 seeking shell arm rings in return for spears and armbands. Paid labor eventually reduced the need of coastal people for Wape items as the coastal villages maintained work and trade relations with the Germans and later with Australian traders. The transition from intervillage trade to Sepik-European trade is revealed in mission documents.

Mission papers disclose that the coastal villages, particularly Arop and Sissano, engaged in substantial trading with Sepik Fall villages, which required shells from the Sissano lagoon and the offshore islands. However, when the Catholic mission entered the Highlands early in the 1930s, the missionaries used shells to enter into and maintain friend-

ships with Highlands populations. The Siau redirected their supply of shells from the Sepik Fall to the mission--shells that had once formed the core of Sepik economics constituted the medium for a new set of relations between the church and Highlands societies. Given that the Wape were using shells for bride-price commitments until the mid-1950s, it is reasonable to assume that they too may have been paid in shells and other trade items for their labor on coastal Society of the Divine Word (SVD) plantations. Indeed, when writing to the religious superior of the SVD mission (earlier the resident priest at Sissano) on 10 October 1950, Bishop Ignatius Doggett indicated that he had "bought and shipped" around three thousand kilograms of shell (*tambu*) to the SVD mission at Alexishafen from 1949 to 1950. The shell was stocked at Malol. Evidently Doggett and the Franciscans were accused by the SVD of supplying shells to nonmission personnel, to which he replied that "the story we have supplied the Government and non-catholic missions in the Highlands is not true. [The recruiter] Hunter Kirk personally collected Tambu with the 'Francis'. Brass--of happy memory--sat in Arop and bought for McVoll [?] at 3/- a small saucepan full [of shells] and police boys came out for the Government. On one occasion a Norseman was chartered to take it away from Tadjji [airstrip]" (Doggett to Fastenrath, 10 Oct. 1950, DA, Bishop's Correspondence).

In his reply Fr. Bruno Fastenrath, SVD, revealed more complex arrangements.

There was some talking about the "Tambus" when some Fathers came from the mountains to Alexis[hafen]. . . . When the Fathers heard that others have been buying tambus too, Brass from Arop, police boys from the Government and Hunter Kirk for himself they stopped talking on this matter. . . . "The Regina Maris" brought a load of tambu to Alexis recently and all were very happy and grateful for your good work. . . . I know the best places for tambus are Arop and Malol. Before the war Fr. Becker had this tambu business while I had to buy saksak [sago]. (Fastenrath to Doggett, 1 Nov. 1950, DA, Bishop's Correspondence)

It is clear from this that the Malol and Arop (and by implication Sissano) villagers were heavily involved in trading shells with the mission, the government, and a recruiter.

The Wape could not compete with the Europeans, who could pay more to the coastal villagers, and it can be safely assumed that the Siau

excluded Wape from the new trade network that linked the Sepik to the central and eastern Highlands. The breakdown was not recent. From the 1920s the Wape had sought labor recruiters and work on coastal mission plantations. Their arrival at Yakumul looking for shell suggests that by the mid-1920s the traditional source of Arop-Malol had begun to dry up. This explains an observation by *kiap* A. K. Jackson in 1946 that there had been a "breakdown of the native currency system and disruption of traditional trade agreements." Jackson later claimed that "attempts to bolster native trade have met with only partial success" (DO, Aitape, no. 13, 1945/1946). Indeed, the *saksak* mentioned by Fastenrath was also in heavy demand by the mission to feed students. The mission station at Sissano supplied sago to the Aitape Islands.

The disruption to Wape economic, exchange, and ritual processes dependent on shell cannot be underestimated. Indeed, in the early 1950s when shell had not been completely replaced and devalued by cash, a conventional Wape bride-price required:

- 2 tambu shell headdress[es]
 - 20 cowrie shells
 - 86 shell rings (one to two inches in diameter)
 - 12 Shell rings (three inches in diameter)
 - 2 belts of European pearl shell buttons
 - 4 belts of girigiri shell
 - 9 belts of single row tambu shell
 - 2 belts of quadruple row tambu shells.
- (DO, Lumi, nos. 2 and 4, 1956/1957)

World War II stopped further penetration of the labor frontier. The need for paid labor ceased around 1940 and trade did not resume for nearly a decade. Beginning around 1949, the labor frontier made a sudden and sharp lunge across the Torricelli Mountains. Recruits were needed again for the plantations and civil labor requirements of growing towns in the postwar development period. By now, however, Sepik men pursued the labor trade and offered themselves in great numbers to the recruiters. The large Sepik populations were drained in a very short period. So continuous and voluminous was this trade that it has enabled Ryan to claim in an emotive sense that "Sepik men are regarded [by other Melanesians] . . . as New Guinea's peasant race" (1969: 16).

Within two years *kiaps* patrolling inland villages recommended many for closure to recruiting. Within six years villages were described as "dangerously over-recruited" with up to 80 percent of village men

absent during a time when 30 percent was regarded as the most a village could endure (DO, Lumi, no. 6, 1951/1952; nos. 1 and 3, 1950/1951). Curtain (1980) has documented the impact of the labor frontier upon the East Sepik. What he has established for that part of the Sepik is equally applicable to the western half. He describes labor in terms of dependency relationships. The more the Sepiks became involved with labor and the cash economy, the more they became dependent upon labor and cash for a livelihood. Men sought wage labor as the increasing monetization of the precapitalist tribal economy entailed a dependency on cash, canned foods, and rice. A return to the subsistence base offered by a village economy became remote.

By mid-1960s the need for Sepik wage laborers on the plantations lessened and the flow of migrants was reduced (Grant and Zelenietz 1984; Grant, Siato, and Zelenietz 1986). The decline in the labor trade was coupled with an increase in village interest in, and need for, *bisnis* (cash crops and trade stores) (see Stent 1984:117-146). But *bisnis* was not an arrangement conducive to Sepik societies. In the West Sepik it was heavily supported by a management structure offered by the church (Duggan 1983, 1989; Herlihey 1981). When examining the western half of the East Sepik, Allen argues:

Bisnis must not be equated with Western concepts of business. Bisnis is a broad concept manifested in a number of ways, which include producing crops for sale, and investing money in enterprises which it is believed will cause large amounts of money to accrue to the individual. The processes by which the money is generated are poorly understood, if understood at all, by many people. When bisnis was first introduced, people believed it was the form of behaviour which Europeans used to gain access to wealth and power, and because of this they adopted rice growing enthusiastically. When people found rice growing was not bringing about the changes they believed it would, they ceased planting. (1976:251-252)

Bisnis endured but ebbed and flowed. In the West Sepik the kinship system prevented *bisnis* from developing into sustainable economic activity and it endured only as long as the missions managed the accounts (Mitchell 1978; Woichom 1979; Duggan 1983). Labor migration, although reduced in volume, remained the main source of Sepik income (Stent 1984:75-146; Curtain 1980:27-50).

Labor migration during the 1960s carried a variation upon the dis-

ruptive effect wage labor had traditionally brought to the Sepik. During the 1960s and 1970s the region entered into a relationship with global economies of the core-periphery type. The Sepik, like other regions of New Guinea, was on the periphery of the periphery, to borrow a phrase from Burkins (1984). This was despite the state's interest in and attempts to economically develop the region.

The Economic Backwater: The Sepik in the 1950s

New Guinea, a United Nations Trust Territory from 1945 to 1973, was administered through Australia's commonwealth government in Canberra. The administration of the territory was carried out by commonwealth civil servants. During the 1950s the state wanted to see the Sepik region developed but the rhetoric of progress was not backed by sustainable economic programs. One official argued, "I am absolutely convinced that until proper economic development does take place in this area, outbreaks of cargo cult and/or other types of nativism expression are to be expected. It strikes me that this Sub-district is economically 'ripe for the picking', but for the harvest to be a good one, we will have to spend money and make staff available. Without this the area will remain an economic backwater" (DO, Lumi, no. 3, 1957/1958).

The interest in local development was in direct response to the loss of village men to the plantations. Government patrol officers responded to the gap between rhetoric and action by seconding missionaries to assist them in economic development programs. The assistant district officer (ADO) at Lumi in the mid-1950s wrote: "The ADO, with the co-operation of the Christian Missions in the area, has interested the natives in road development as the first step towards meeting the problem of economic transport of any cash crops in their area to market" (DO, Lumi, no. 1, 1954/1955). In another instance, the Lumi ADO was requested by his district commissioner in Wewak to seek the Franciscan missionaries' assistance: "Roads are a prerequisite for all development. . . . You should make every possible effort to widen present graded roads and continue to push out new tracks. In this project, I am sure that the Franciscan Fathers would be only too willing to give a helping hand" (Kaad to Jones, 5 Feb. 1957, DO, Aitape, 1956/1957). During the fifties it was the Catholic missions that cooperated in development initiatives. They emphasized education, medical assistance, and the development of mission stations as marketplaces.

Mission activity, however, was localized and dependent on the willingness of villagers to participate in activities meaningful to the church

--Sunday Mass and catechetical instruction, for instance. The dominant form of paid economic activity provided by the church consisted of the employment of teachers, station workers, and some minor labor. The mission provided some trade stores and purchased local produce for schoolchildren. Beyond this minor expression of a cash economy, Sepiks were offered the choice of remaining subsistence farmers or seeking jobs on the coast. The 1960s, however, saw the emergence of additional opportunities: *bisnis*, cash cropping, and road construction.

Conditions in the Western Sepik during the 1960s

During the 1960s the number of contract laborers leaving the western Sepik decreased but the migration of entire families to the coastal centers of Aitape, Wewak, and Kavieng (New Ireland) increased. As with 1950s recruiting the government was unable to prevent the continuing drain of people from the Sepik to other parts of the territory: "As can be seen by the labour potential figures attached the [Sepik Fall] area is heavily over recruited. This has come about by the large number of men who walk direct to Aitape and from there travel by ship to other centres. One pleasing factor noticed is that wives and children are now accompanying the men who go to work at Madang. This form of migrant labour is still the main source of income for the area" (DO, Lumi, no. 5, 1963/1964).

The difficulties village communities experienced due to contract labor did not lie only with disruptions to daily life owing to the absence of men. When a man failed to return, which was not uncommon, he and his future children were lost from the community. His role in providing economic security and ritual knowledge vanished, and the money and knowledge he acquired while away were also lost. As late as 1975 the absence of men through migration continued and so did the unease over the future of those who chose to remain in their villages. An islander from Ali, whose island had been losing people since 1900, wrote of the process:

An island was placed by Nature
In the blues of the Bismarck
People leaving without returning
Island is full of natural life
But people leaving without returning
The soil is rich today with
Rain pouring down

Heat evaporating the life of the soil
 But people leaving without returning
 Because of White Men's Money
 People go by with ignorance. (Amol 1975: 10)

The loss of men through recruiting and the villagers' desire to maintain their standard of living became as problematical for the state as for the villagers themselves. Early in 1958 when a road was completed between Lumi and Fatima, the need of the Somoro Wape villagers for the road to continue north to the coast, where they held land rights, was so strong that patrol officers tried to comply, despite the physical impossibility of traversing the Torricelli Mountains.

The people of the Somoro area insist that no matter where the Government road goes, they intend to have a road over Mt Somoro to Aitape. When it was pointed out that there was little labour potential on the Aitape side, they stated that they were prepared to build the road all the way . . . if the people (north of the Torricellis) would provide food. . . . [The Somoro] people had to be restrained from commencing work until the survey was completed. (DO, Lumi, no. 5, 1958/1959)

Government personnel, expertise, funds, and equipment were insufficient to build roads in the western Sepik, the necessary prerequisite for development programs based on a cash economy. Nevertheless, constant requests from villagers for the government to improve their standard of living challenged patrol officers somehow to provide people with alternative economic activities. Cash crops were believed to be the viable alternatives.

The ADO at Lumi indicated to his superiors in late 1958 that there was considerable demand throughout the Sepik Fall region for cash crops. The *kiap* made peanut and coffee seedlings available to commence cash cropping. He was soon "unable to keep up with the demand . . . coffee is very much in demand as are peanuts" (DO, Lumi, no. 5, 1958/1959). The enthusiasm for cash crops spread throughout the Sepik Fall. The Karaitem villagers in the Wape region cultivated cabbages. The Au villagers from Yili east to Wulukum commenced peanut farming while the Somoro villagers selected coffee and the people of Mukili, fish farming. The government encouraged these activities despite the lack of roads to take the produce out and despite the fact that similar projects in dry rice farming on the coast ten years

earlier had failed due to mismanagement by villagers and government officials. The initiatives represented "economic development," although the outcome was likely to be the opposite.

By the early 1960s the cabbages and peanuts were harvested. People stored their produce and waited for the patrol officers to come and examine the harvest and to transport it to the markets where it would be sold. But there were no roads and no markets. Michael Saweni and Peter Paine, who were both residing in Karaitem during this period, recalled that cabbages were growing from one end of the village to the other. Large storehouses were constructed and these were filled to capacity within weeks of the cabbages' ripening. Paine recalled that the villagers were expecting to be praised by the patrol officer when he arrived on his routine patrol. Instead, he became embarrassed and awkward over the village's successful harvest. He suggested that the villagers eat the cabbages themselves as the administration at Lumi could not purchase the harvest as had been promised earlier. The cabbages at Karaitem rotted. People were annoyed (interview with M. Saweni, Karaitem, Aug. 1981).

In another instance, the Au villagers were peeved when informed that they would have to carry their harvest of peanuts to Lumi for it to be sold and flown to Wewak. But even then there was no profit from the harvest. A Buru'um villager, his home only a short distance from Lumi, "recently brought 188 lbs of peanuts to Lumi to be sold to the Administration, who buys them at the rate of 1½d per pound. After an initial outlay of £1.4.0 for seed, the native in question received £1.3.6 for his peanuts and this had to be divided between fifty other natives who had helped him grow the peanuts" (DO, Lumi, no. 6, 1958/1959).

Having encouraged cash cropping without viable outside markets, the government was faced with the embarrassment of telling successful farmers that there was no future in cash cropping as a commercial venture (DO, Lumi, no. 1, 1962/1963). The government told people instead to consume what they produced, but these farmers did not eat cabbages or peanuts.

The spasmodic, spontaneous, and uncoordinated approach by the government left the people bewildered over their wasted labor and money. The coffee growers in the Somoro region, although not troubled by an absence of markets or roads, were nonetheless annoyed by the amount of care coffee plants required. The idea of providing shade trees and constant weeding was ridiculous to a people who for generations had successfully grown numerous food crops requiring little intensive care. The four to five years between planting and the harvest of a suc-

cessful crop was also too long for people anxious to make money. Reported one patrol officer, informed by the Somoro Wape that they were unimpressed with European concepts of time and farming, "I was constantly met by delegations who stated unequivocally that the people desire to live exactly as does the European. It is plain that this wish has become an obsession with these people. A wait of six years or more for a chance to get real money is unacceptable" (DO, Lumi, no. 1, 1959/1960).

By 1961 patrol officers encountered a cautious attitude towards cash cropping by Au villagers: "They obviously want to see how things will go before they commit themselves to undertaking greater work" (DO, Lumi, no. 4, 1961/1962). Elsewhere too "there was little enthusiasm" and people west and south of Lumi, the peanut growers, were quite uninterested (DO, Lumi, no. 4, 1960/1961). It was not surprising. One officer wrote of the villagers of the western Wape area that they "prefer to live as they always have and want nothing of the hard work and 'hurly burly' that leads to prosperity" (DO, Lumi, no. 7, 1961/1962). He expressed similar sentiments about the Au villagers over the next twelve months (DO, Lumi, nos. 7 and 9, 1962/1963).

The problem with these initiatives rested with a gap between what reflected economic development for the region in comparison to that of the larger country. There were no substantial markets for produce and the harvest had no commercial value within the Sepik itself. For instance, had the state confined cash cropping to the local Lumi area, a market of sufficient size may have been available to absorb the harvest and *kiaps* would have been in a position to work more closely with the villagers concerned; misunderstandings may have been avoided. When the missionaries--Franciscan friars--introduced villagers to the idea of cooperative and industry societies through opening trade stores and inaugurating animal husbandry projects and road building, the closeness of the friars to the village situation not only encouraged villagers' trust but led to financial success for these manifestations of *bisnis* in the village situation. The key link was that the missions could manage projects and also locate markets.

Until the 1960s Catholic missionaries in the Sepik confined their activity to sacramental and welfare concerns. Outside pressure changed this emphasis. For the Franciscans in the Sepik, and indeed all Catholic clergy throughout the 1960s, a revolution in Catholic thought occurred that was legitimized through the the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) from 1962 to 1965. This council gave rise to a new outlook that directed clergy to be servants of the people and not simply dispensers of

salvation. Importantly, it urged the clergy to meet the needs of the people in the terms of those people. These emphases resulted in missionaries diverting their energies into many secular directions and paying less attention to the traditional sacramental role. The cumulative result was that during the 1960s and early 1970s the Sepik Franciscans endeavored to anticipate and meet the secular demands of the Sepik people and to prepare for decolonization. The Franciscans and the Catholic Church in general engaged in activities geared towards agrarian reforms.

Franciscan Involvement with *Bisnis*

During the 1950s the Franciscans considered what they regarded as improving the living conditions in the western Sepik but were uncertain how beyond employing Sepiks on mission stations. Education and medicine proved to be the major areas of village involvement. By the 1960s the friars saw economic development as a vital and essential part of the apostolate, and it was conceived in the terms of expanding a cash economy. The church, however, did not race into economic development programs. The bishop of Aitape, Ignatius Doggett, wrote to the Franciscan Provincial (Australia) that

Extreme pressure [is] being put on the Administration by the United Nations for target dates for Self Government and advancement in education. This pressure is in turn being passed on to all in New Guinea and especially the missions in the matter of education and health. The bishops in the past 12 months have had two meetings to discuss just how far we can allow this pressure to affect our primary work as missionaries and the future welfare of the church. (Doggett to the Franciscan Provincial, 6 Nov. 1961, Franciscan Archives, Aitape)

Two years later he observed, "Owing to political pressure, chiefly from the United Nations, the social development of the people is far too rapid and the people are not able to absorb what is being done for them or what it all means" (Doggett to Enrici, 20 May 1963, Franciscan Archives, Aitape).

As this pressure was translated in the field, the message was quite different. Doggett wrote to Fr. Denis Dobson at Lumi that in regards to "business" he had "seen the need for some kind of assistance to these people for a long time but never precisely [knew] how to go about it" (Doggett to Dobson, 9 June 1961, DA, Bishop's Correspondence). By

the end of 1961 a number of shareholding groups known as village "industry societies" based on livestock were established at Fatima, Yili, Yanungen, Ningil, and Yemnu (DO, Lumi, no. 4, 1962/1963). A village cooperative based on trade stores started at Ningil in the same year and stores were established at Lumi and Karaitem the following year. The industry societies and cooperatives were shareholding partnerships whereby villagers contributed money to commence a project in either trade stores, animal husbandry, or, in the case of Mukili, fish ponds, and then expected a return from profits made in the marketing of produce. The Franciscans acted as the managers of the projects. Thus their entry into economic development programs consisted of advice, direct administration, and physical work.

The Franciscans explicitly justified their entry into commerce with irritation over government indifference to the problems of the region and incipient cult activity. But an underlying motive in entering this realm of secular activity lay with their belief that a growing Christian community was synonymous with a growing European-style society. This desire to see villagers achieve a higher standard of living was nonetheless balanced by a recognition of the increasing reliance upon cash, tinned fish, and rice.

The reliance was symptomatic of the pervasive penetration of the cash economy. Many villages throughout the Sepik were touched, largely a result of the return of indentured laborers and the breakdown in village economic relationships their absence had occasioned. Consequently, the Franciscans tended towards the cavalier when justifying their entry into commerce. Fr. Giles Catellani tersely informed one patrol officer that the Yili mission had "set up the store system in order to give the natives some education in business methods, and as a counter against cargo cults, he said that the Administration had not provided an effective counter to cargo cult so that the Mission was forced to take action" (DO, Lumi, no. 7, 1964/1965). Fr. Timothy Elliot at Ningil introduced a system of trade stores and a network of roads connecting the Ningil, Liaingim, and Auang villages to Anguganak to the east. He wrote to benefactors in Australia:

Happily the natives are becoming increasingly appreciative of the benefits roads bring them. . . . You might call it education by perspiration. . . . With their resources and efforts, we have organised various economic ventures with the profits going back to the people. It would be better if the Administration or some other, non mission agency were to tackle this task of eco-

conomic enlightenment. But there is no such prospect . . . we have seen the urgent need, and so as a last resort we've gone ahead. (*Ningil Newsletter*, Apr./June 1963)

One of the largest, and for some years successful, commercial ventures was poultry farming at Fatima. In view of the impatience shown by the Somoro Wape over the slow and tedious process of growing coffee, the government was impressed by the venture and the potential financial returns. The Somoro Poultry Society began in 1961 with initial shares amounting to nearly A\$1,960. The friars and the Somoro Wape villagers built enclosures for the chickens soon after. On 24 October, 103 chicks arrived from Australia in what the parish priest, Fr. Hugh Campbell, imagined "to begin the Somoro Poultry Society on its hazardous history." Another 320 chicks arrived a month later. On 1 March 1962, Campbell held the first *komiti* (directors) meeting of the Somoro Poultry Society. Attended by the heads of a number of Somoro Wape hamlets, it evidently got off to a bad start: "This was the first meeting of the S.P. Soc. held in its new Haus Bung. It was quite a lively show with Yanapi accusing [the] Keibams of threatening to bump him off. Afterwards they came and said it was to be wiped off the records--as it wasn't all the nice-tok that they wanted at such meetings" (DA, Fatima, 1 Mar. 1962)

The Burns Philp store at Wewak, one of the large chain of retail stores in the territory, agreed to purchase 135 dozen eggs a week (DA, Fatima, 9 June 1963). With Lumi airstrip some three to four hours walk away and linked to Fatima by a vehicular road, the friars in effect achieved a realistic commercial venture for the Wape that not only avoided the problems associated with the care and cultivation of cash crops but required little labor from the villagers and rarely interfered with the daily routine.

Despite what looked like a promising future, the Somoro Poultry Society did not enjoy the success its shareholders and *komiti* anticipated. The heavy physical commitment and involvement of the friars, critical for its smooth operation, only lasted while the friars committed themselves to little else. By the end of 1963 the friars were considering entering other realms of nonreligious activity in addition to commercial ventures. Having set up the industry society, they looked towards a new government-sponsored institution, the local government council (LGC). An increasing involvement with the business society coupled with their interest in the Lumi LGC resulted in the friars being less available to mix with people and to acquaint themselves with village

interests and priorities. The inevitable result of this reduced exposure was a loss of village confidence in the friars and the mission. This became evident early in 1964 when the Somoro Poultry Society experienced financial problems. The ADO at Lumi, C. A. Trollope, reported on the situation: "The Fatima Poultry Society has practically ceased to function in egg production. High food costs have prohibited the maintenance of large numbers of fowls. Small pens only are being maintained at present sufficient for Lumi and Aitape sales. The priest/supervisor has turned his attention to vegetables" (ADO Lumi to DO Wewak, 6 Jan. 1964, DO, Aitape).

In this case the importation of feed reduced the economic viability of the export product. The Somoro Wape, seeing the demise of the poultry industry, became concerned over the prospect of losing their money as well as the business venture. They were disturbed when in November 1964 the supervising priest, Campbell, was appointed to another station: "SPS meeting--everyone a little annoyed. The Bishop cannot transfer Hugh! Obviously they were worried about their money" (DA, Fatima, 17 Nov. 1964). Campbell was nonetheless transferred. Fabian Thorn, who then took over as parish priest, paid back what each person had put into the business. He wrote later, "The business had not produced the goods although there was still a lot of life. Hugh and his mates around the villages and numerous satellite stores had been started and were in various stages of folding up. At that stage there had been no dividend" (Thorn to the author, 30 Sept. 1982).

People were not pleased about the return of their money, and grandiose ideas about investment and wealth remained after Campbell's departure. The experience at Fatima, though, generated a sense of doubt among the Somoro Wape when it came to the friars' handling their money. For instance, Fr. Pius McNamara commenced a cooperative at Carmel mission station, some three hours walk west of Fatima. When people had not received a dividend from their investment, they wanted to see their money. Thorn recorded that "Frs Pius and Fabian hauled 300 in shillings from Fatima to Carmel for 1st Carmel business meeting. Had to drag it back again after they saw the money was still there !!!" (DA, Fatima, 18 Oct. 1965). In view of problems with the Somoro Poultry Society, the Fatima friars concentrated on developing village-based management of trade stores. But the Somoro Wape were not businessmen. When the friars handed the Wape responsibility for management of the accounts, the books failed to balance. The trade stores and poultry farming became unviable and the projects collapsed.

By May 1968 the era of business societies was rapidly drawing to a

conclusion: “SPS--the store is seemingly okay but I would like to get some [agricultural] project going. The whole show is on a bad basis” (DA, Fatima, 1 Nov. 1968). Thorn’s appointment to another station ended any further Franciscan commitment in business ventures in the Somoro area. The story was repeated elsewhere. At Karaitem, to the west of Lumi, other economic initiatives were pursued, but with a similar outcome. Pressure from the villagers for a priest to start a *bisnis*, like those in neighboring Fatima and Lumi, saw the inauguration of the Karaitem Industry Society in March 1963, based on a network of trade stores. The priest only received agreement from the Lumi administration to commence the venture if the Lumi-Karaitem road was reopened. The state support for the project was largely rhetorical. The *kiap* observed, “Unless economic development is stepped up in this area and the natives along this road see some tangible results from their efforts . . . their enthusiasm and interest will slowly but surely fade away” (DO, Lumi, no. 3, 19611962);

The enthusiasm did wane. The road was built, and the trade stores and associated *bisnis* in coffee and cattle flourished, but only while the priest controlled the projects. The crunch came when the Wape showed that their concept of the utility of a trade store combined with their ethos concerning reciprocity, which militated against successful small-scale businesses based on the cash economy unless managed by an outsider. The history of this attempt at economic reform as related by Fr. Regis Smith revealed:

In 1962 [Fr. Valentine Brown] launched the Karaitem Industry Society, a native co-operative. He launched the Society with an initial capital of \$ made up of \$2 shares. Additional shares were issued in lieu of work done in preparing an airstrip and a cow paddock. From the capital raised stores were opened in Karaitern, Eritei, Wugublei, Wantipi and Kalau. During the holding of singsings at Wugublei, Wantipi, Kalau and Eritei, the locals “borrowed” the store goods. When the loss was discovered the four stores were closed. At 27/12/66 the debts owing were . . . \$250.65. (DA, Karaitem, Dec. 1966)

Traditional village norms concerning reciprocity and the need to keep all men below a particular level of status and wealth simply did not allow for the success of business ventures once managed by the Wape themselves. The case related by Smith reveals that the content of trade stores belonged to the villagers regardless of whether they purchased the

goods or not. Moreover, it was not within the interest of any person to prevent the distribution of those goods when it benefited the community at large. Indeed, any person able to distribute "wealth" was respected; conversely, any person who hoarded wealth (or, for that matter, hoarded the means of wealth) was rejected. This was made clear to the first Wape parliamentarian, Makain Mo. The anthropologist William Mitchell related the rise and fall of this man as follows.

At first Makain gave much of his new wealth to his relatives, but his distributions did not keep up with his income . . . and I sometimes heard mutterings against his wealth and power. When the 1972 House of Assembly elections were held, Makain was thoroughly repudiated by the Wape and was defeated. . . . He became ill with pneumonia and, aware that the ancestors and spirits were angry with him, distributed some of his wealth. (Mitchell 1978: 12)

The friars could not know that the Wape were not entrepreneurs (see Mitchell 1988), but by the late 1960s experience was proving this to be the case. After some fifteen years among the Wape, a Protestant missionary claimed:

The exchange system does not allow economic development in projects where capital is required on an individual basis, and where there is not virtually complete involvement and effort by the community. Time and again, cattle, trade store, rice and coffee projects have been ruined by the inevitable conflicts which come when there is a financial disparity between members of the community. A "faf" on seeing his "lulem" own a project feels an injustice. He believes his identity and status to be attacked. Demanding a sum from his "lulem" far in excess of the meagre profits, the venture collapses. (McGregor 1975:71)

Au villagers east of Wape were also not business people. The Franciscan mission's involvement with trade stores and animal husbandry in the Au region commenced early in 1960. The mission began by constructing an airstrip and a network of roads to connect the eastern Au region to the outside world. The Lumi administration offered the local priest little help. Fr. Tim Elliott recorded the main difficulties. "Completed Brugap end of road survey towards Ningil. The usual problem: Everyone willing to have the road pass thru somebody else's bush, and

no comprehension of grade. . . . Approached for co-operation in this project, the Kiap explained he was busy elsewhere. This stand leaves the Admin. no scope for later criticism of a road that in the circumstances, must necessarily be substandard' (DA, Ningil, 23 July 1960).

Three years later when a great many roads and an airstrip had been completed, Elliott was beginning to show the level and strain of his personal involvement: "Airstrip singsing . . . Three thousand dancers from all 14 villages that had helped build the airstrip participated. Every missionary who could come was here--with Fr Brian in full regalia head and shoulders over the dancers. . . . Brian headed off for a Somoro trek to the Retreat. In previous years we've always gone together, but this time I just didn't have the energy" (DA, Ningil, 30 Dec. 1963).

Elliott saw the mission's need for trade stores in 1961 when he argued for readier access to a trade store supplied from the coast. "Ningil, Yili and Yemnu stations asked that Lumi be replaced by St Anna as supply centre for store goods. Goods could be flown direct to Yemnu as easily thru Lumi. Anguganak's better store service has had a devious but real effect on our prestige. The procuration had enough worries closer to home and never did see the S.E. Wape problem as clearly as did the men in the field" (DA, Ningil, 28 July 1961). Largely owing to his own efforts, Elliott saw the proliferation of trade stores throughout the eastern Au region from Brugap to Auang. People had money to spend at stores, another indication that the cash economy was steadily replacing traditional sources of production.

By 1967 Elliott handed over management of these stores to the Au people with Ningil as the major supply center and bulk store. But the Au, as with the Wape, were not businessmen. Profits were lost and money disappeared. The immediate need was for cash, not just a cash economy. Villagers who had paid money into the stores venture failed to receive any returns. Internal village politics dictated that those who had failed to honor the code of reciprocity in everyday village life should be answerable. The village managers sought a way out from honoring their debts and also to attribute blame, particularly as both cash and the cash economy were lost. Elliott and eventually the government became involved. The patrol officer who investigated reported:

A Weigin . . . villager levelled accusations of mismanagement and theft against the Father of Ningil who acts as Manager/Advisor to the stores. . . . The Weigin store is financed by capital supplied by the villagers of Weigin, Auang and Nunsu. The

chief spokesman who is the store manager stated:--Originally the Mission promised a profit of \$10 for every 50 cent share and now refused to pay. (In fact the store had paid a 50 cent dividend.) The mission were stealing all the large profits for themselves. [The manager] was awake up to this . . . and he had closed the store. The people of Weigin supported these allegations. . . . At Ningil I discussed this with the Father. He naturally was a little upset. We discussed various aspects of these stores and after seeing a little of the business sense of the managers I wonder that the stores continue to function. (DO, Lumi, no. 1, 1967/1968)

Faced with these problems at Karaitem, Fatima, and Ningil--to mention three stations--the friars were challenged either to involve themselves more fully with the management and accounts of the industry societies, thereby making them viable, or to withdraw totally from any future involvement. Unfortunately for both the villagers and the friars, the decision was made for them. As the business ventures were turning sour, the vicariate determined to discontinue mission involvement in economic activities. Fr. Regis Smith, at Karaitem, was asked to be discreet when considering cash cropping ventures. He observed that "the whole atmosphere of the coffee venture in this area has cooled. The people have cooled, I have cooled. [T]he people are always intensely keen to 'talk' progress. But . . . the idea is quietly dying. I too think it is a non-goer. The Bishop too told me to go slow!" (DA, Karaitem, Dec. 1966)

Further east, the friars organized dry rice growing in the Nuku, Seim, and Kafle areas; by the 1970s profits from marketing this product were measured in tens of thousands of dollars. Given that recruiting had dramatically declined, these village-based economic ventures were the only means villagers had to acquire wealth. The situation, then, suggests that the friars should persevere despite setbacks in the Wape and Au regions. But in the late 1960s the political atmosphere in the Sepik was not conducive for a continuation of Franciscan involvement with economic projects. As Fr. Smith had so aptly put it, "The Bishop too told me to go slow!"

The Collapse of Economic Reform

In early 1967 the local administration shifted its development priorities from the economic sphere to the political education of villagers to pre-

pare them somehow to recognize the political significance of imminent self-government. Rather than attempting to generate grass-roots economic advancement plans then being advocated by economic advisors, the state chose instead to measure existing programs. In monitoring these programs government officers were assessing the preparedness of Sepik peoples for nationhood in a region lacking a political and economic infrastructure. The government's record in the western Sepik was not good. A coordinated program for establishing government schools in the region did not commence until the 1960s. The state did not provide secondary education. The roads, hospitals, airstrips, and local businesses throughout the coastal and Torricelli Mountains regions of the western Sepik had been initiated largely by Franciscans, as had the other major initiatives in local economic development. In short, the church had endeavored to develop some socioeconomic structure to counter the effects of the penetration of a cash economy occasioned by labor recruitment and later labor migration; the state had not.

When the Franciscan-generated economic projects collapsed, government officers took the opportunity to attribute the poor state of economic and political development in the western Sepik to the Franciscan presence. In reports to Port Moresby, government officers criticized the friars. Although individual friars were not aware of the content of these reports, they were conscious that after the mid-1960s relations between themselves and the government officers were deteriorating. They became aware that some government officers did not approve of the state of affairs between the Franciscans and Sepiks and, moreover, that the government was irritated by the influence the church had extended over Sepiks. For instance, the assistant district commissioner at Lumi wrote of the Ningil venture:

One of the main contributing factors to [Au discontent] in my opinion is the mission/native relationships, especially in the economic sphere. For a variety of reasons the Franciscan Mission have taken it upon themselves to assist the people to operate village trade stores . . . the overall effect has been to undermine the confidence of the people in economic ventures and to substantiate their belief that the European is exploiting them. It avails one nothing, apparently, to point out to the people that their store has failed because of bad, or dishonest management, by their own store boy. In my view, the Franciscan Mission has made a bad error involving themselves in ventures where untrained personnel and lack of supervision would inevitably

lead to failure. This view is endorsed by those priests I spoke to, but having become so involved find it difficult to extricate themselves. (ADC Lumi to DC Vanimo, 21 Sept. 1967, DO, Aitape)

These were critical words from a body that had experienced poor relations with the Au people since 1951 and whose economic activity was confined to advice. Indeed, in his 1970 annual report, after having taken credit for the Franciscan-constructed roads and profits achieved from dry rice growing in the Maimai region, the district commissioner criticized the friars.

In the Lumi sub-district there are still some 27 unofficial [cooperative] societies. . . . The Catholic Mission in the area is largely responsible for the formation of these societies, although individual indigenes have also commenced several of these unofficial organisations. The various priests in the Mission admit their culpidity [*sic*] as regards the chaos the majority of the societies are in, but still talk of commencing additional ones to raise funds for a pet project. (DO, West Sepik, 1969/1970)

The annual report revealed that the Franciscans managed a cane-furniture industry that returned profits of A\$12,774.80 to local villagers and that dry rice growing in the Palei and Wape regions had returned profits of A\$18,357.00 and A\$1,321.00 respectively. It was acknowledged also that due to government staff shortages "continuity of development and contact with the people had suffered." Until then, the friars had offered that development and contact. But even here, they drew criticism from the government. One patrol officer, after patrolling the Au region, claimed that the "unrealistic balance between Mission and Administration had been maintained since 1949 with the result that the Missionaries have not only acted as 'watchdogs of the Administration' but have completely taken over some Administration spheres and have permanently biased others" (DO, West Sepik, 1969/1970).

This final criticism reflected government antagonism over the prestige and success the Franciscans enjoyed in the region. After some twenty-five years of postwar colonial administration, the government had left people with a poor image of patrol officers and economic and political development rhetoric. Rather than simply instruct people to "develop," the Franciscans actively participated with villagers. But being deferential to the government, the friars gradually and cautiously

withdrew from this politically controversial sphere of activity. There was no statement of policy on the matter from the diocese of Aitape. Rather the friars themselves personally saw a need to become, as it were, less and less obvious in *bisnis*, and the general deterioration in church-state relations only highlighted that need.

The reaction of the people to these collapses and the subsequent withdrawal of the friars from commercial activities, which in effect brought to an end the friars' involvement in village-based economic development programs in the western Sepik, was one of considerable disappointment. Whether or not cash cropping, with its often detrimental legacy of being tied to world markets, or trade stores for profit were of any functional value to villagers in the long run was beside the point in 1970. Village communities were experiencing economic disadvantages associated with some two generations of labor trade and subsequent declining standards of living. The collapse of recruiting by the 1960s, the failure of cash cropping also in the 1960s, and, finally, the withdrawal of the friars from commercial ventures by 1970 left people anxious, frustrated, and annoyed. Migration to the coast increased as villagers sought paid employment and cash. For the Ningil, for instance, events in the late 1960s found the breach between villager and European widening. The human geographer J. Herlihey wrote that the church's resolve to abdicate from the economic sphere "widened the breach with Ningil villagers, who felt that the mission, their only hope, was failing them in the field where they most needed help" (1981: 171).

Some villagers were bitter over the repeated failures and frustrated with their involvement with Europeans. One patrol officer wrote that the Au attitude held that economic development programs were "introduced by 'the white man and if he sponsors it in Au he must pay for it to be done'. The interpretation has been extended to include all activities associated with improved housing, health and traditional subsistence and agricultural practices" (DO, Lumi, no. 8, 1968/1969). My own conversations with Wape villagers (July to Sept. 1981) testified to the attitude that people required the Franciscans to manage and control economic ventures. So when the friars withdrew from these programs, people were surprised and disappointed; they saw the friars in the same light as patrol officers, that is, as Europeans who were prepared to tell people what should be done but not help them translate those instructions into action. It was clear that unless the friars were in personal control of ventures people were reluctant to become involved. For instance, most projects commenced at Karaitem, Yanungen, Mukili, and Monandin, including Sunday Mass and weekly school, simply foundered when

the permanent priests left these stations. With the departure of the priests, people lost interest.

This naturally raised the thorny problem of whether economic projects and institutions introduced by friars were viable in that they bore little relevance to the indigenous situation. This, however, does not reduce the significance in Herlihey's observation that the friars were seen as assisting the villagers in the field "where they most needed help." Importantly, the mission station provided one of the few points of access to cash and imported goods. For the villagers, at least the friars were trying--that was what mattered. Without mission--based economic activities there was little opportunity to generate a local cash flow among villages.

Conclusion

The Sepik is very much a land of farmers. For generations men and women confined their major labor to agrarian activities that resulted in village communities ethnographically described as small, compact, nucleated, and economically self-reliant. Colonization of the Sepik brought a significant disruption to this agrarian activity. Men left the region over a period spanning two generations. They returned with cash, and a cash economy emerged as the men continued to leave and return. When wage labor came to a sudden halt in the 1960s, the pursuit of cash had resulted in a need for cash. The standard of living dropped. Cash was required for taxes, school fees, air fares, and trade-store goods. Agrarian reform throughout the 1960s was therefore essentially an endeavor by the missions to meet the need of village communities to secure access to a cash economy without members of those communities having to leave the region. The projects initiated by the missions were generally successful while they controlled the projects. When, however, political pressure forced the missions to cautiously withdraw from the economic sphere, the projects collapsed. Trade stores folded, cabbages rotted, peanuts were dumped, coffee plants withered, and dry rice (cultivated into the 1970s) also rotted.

The mission projects had offered an internal economic infrastructure. That infrastructure has not reemerged and the standard of living continues to decline. In the East Sepik, at least, some researchers have noted the emergence of a peasantry, characterized by an ongoing partial incorporation of people into wage labor and an associated reliance on a commodity market (Connell 1979: 104-105, 121-127; Smith 1985:51-60; May 1984; Fahey 1988:91-113). Connell recognized the significance

The Failure of Economic Reform in the Sepik

of the emergence of a dependent economy accompanied by the destruction of the natural economy, with its trading links now replaced by an open economy marked by importation of 50 percent or more of consumer goods including food (1979; see also Connell 1980). The increasing reliance of Sepiks on imported goods is manifested in a class system, where class formation is characterized by “large (or rich) peasantries, small rural and urban working classes, and most recently, the production of a small educated petty bourgeoisie” (Connell 1979: 127).

Since the 1960s then, a class structure is said to have emerged throughout the Sepik, one based on a rural-urban drift as Sepiks once again seek cash and opportunity beyond their villages and beyond the mission stations.

The rise and fall of economic development programs and *bisnis* in the West Sepik presents a problem in interpretation, though. Economic change and agrarian reform for West Sepik societies have not resulted in the formation of a class structure or a class of peasants. The transition of West Sepik societies from economic autonomy and self-sufficiency to a dependency on cash, imported food and clothing, and consequently a wage income has not resulted in a stratified (West) Sepik society. West Sepiks remain in control of their land and, importantly, what is produced on that land. What they have not controlled--and cannot--is a way cash crops can be effectively disposed of and a stable source of income can be maintained. A regular flow of cash to the region, as we have seen, ended with the collapse of migration labor and *bisnis*. Current wage earners are a different type of migrant worker--teachers, government officials, and unskilled laborers, with the odd successful trade-store owner. There are problems with the distribution of their income. Wape teachers, for instance, more than one hundred in all, are reluctant to share their salaries among relatives, although traditionally this was a key mechanism for the village to secure access to the income of migrant laborers. The major trade store in Lumi ceased to operate when the owner died and was buried on the same land as the store. Cash is nonetheless still required to pay for travel, food, clothing, school fees, and taxes. Currently, the only route to employment is through formal schooling, which, like employment itself, is difficult to secure and maintain. West Sepik schools remain on the periphery of the national school system.

What remains to be examined is a comparative study of West and East Sepik economic histories and class formations, as the East Sepik is evidently characterized by clear class structures even among village societies (see Connell 1979). Moreover, the role of schooling in main-

taining the Sepik tradition of securing cash, migrant labor, and economic sufficiency remains the key to examining the form and function of economic change in the formation of a peasant structure in a province that remains among the poorest and most disadvantaged in Papua New Guinea.

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