TEMPORARY TOWNSFOLK? SIWAI MIGRANTS IN URBAN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

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With rare exceptions migration and urbanization in Melanesia have been widely perceived as primarily temporary phenomena. Migration has been viewed as cyclical or circular, short-term and transient, based on an ideology of return and the primacy of rural life; movements may be repetitive but the phenomenon may best be viewed as mobility rather than the more permanent relocation implied by migration (Chapman and Prothero 1983; Chapman 1985). However, although a variety of factors continue to discourage permanent urban residence (Connell and Curtain 1982:471), towns are growing in size and apparently permanent rural-urban migration is increasingly a phenomenon in Melanesia, especially in the primate cities and from the poorest rural areas, where economic development opportunities are limited. This is particularly true of the Gulf and Central provinces of Papua New Guinea (Levine and Levine 1979:28; Morauta 1980; Morauta and Ryan 1982), where migration from many areas has continued despite growing urban unemployment (Connell 1985b:95). This article examines the changing nature of migration among members of one language group in southern Bougainville, North Solomons Province, Papua New Guinea, and discusses the factors that have advanced or discouraged permanent urban residence and urban commitment over time.

The people of Siwai, about nine thousand in number, occupy the central part of the south Bougainville plain, on the easternmost island in

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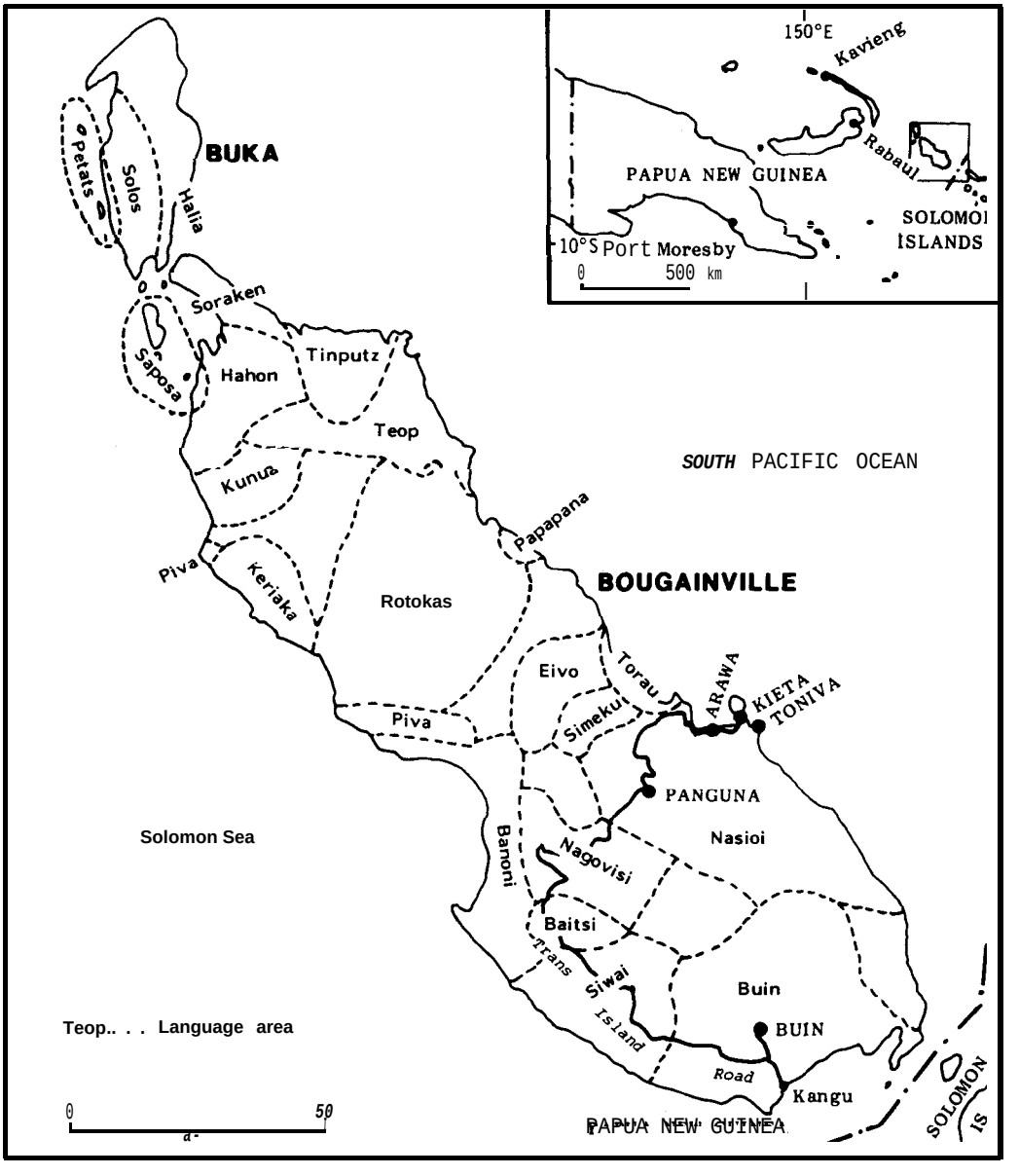

FIGURE 1. **North Solomons Province, Papua New Guinea**

Papua New Guinea (Figure 1). Before World War II, when Siwai's economy and society were studied in considerable detail (Oliver 1955), there was limited trade and contact with the commercial economy other than through migration to work on plantations. Subsequently Siwai became more closely incorporated into the national and global economy, first through cash cropping, initially of rice, peanuts and copra and ultimately and most successfully of cocoa, though accessibility to markets was often a problem (Connell 1978). In 1972 a trans-island road was completed from the east coast, through the new

Panguna copper mine to Siwai and Buin on the south coast; the mine was now eighty kilometers by road from Siwai and the new mine town of Arawa a hundred kilometers away. This dramatically and substantially increased cash incomes in Siwai through improved marketing facilities (for cocoa and vegetables) and increased availability and accessibility of new, well-paid mine and ancillary employment. Siwai moved rapidly from a dominant subsistence base to a commercial economy, becoming one of the more affluent rural areas in Melanesia. However, with considerable pressure on limited land resources and with population currently increasing at an annual rate of more than 3 percent, the extent of emerging affluence is unlikely to be sustained or as broadly egalitarian as it has previously been.

The History of Migration

Much of the early experience of migration in Siwai closely paralleled that of other groups in island New Guinea and in the northern and western Solomon Islands. But primarily because of substantial economic changes in the past two decades, it has taken on more distinctive characteristics. Migration of workers from Siwai probably began toward the end of the nineteenth century when a handful of men went to work on German plantations in Samoa. The first plantations on the east coast of Bougainville were started about 1907, mainly by German companies, and a few Siwais crossed the island to work there (Connell 1985a). During this period working for Europeans was a novelty rather than a necessity, but it laid the basis for subsequent migration patterns. Although migrants returned to Siwai with money, shell valuables, cloth, tools, and new plants, their numbers were so few that labor migration in the German era probably made no significant impression on the rural economy.

The early years of Australian administration, following the abrupt end of German administration in December 1914, changed the structure of plantation migration. The imposition of a head tax of ten shillings on all able-bodied males over fifteen years of age, apart from those contracted to work on plantations (and also some others), was both a direct inducement to sign on and a crucial pressure, since there were rarely rural opportunities to earn the necessary tax money. In Siwai the remoteness of traders and markets limited opportunities for the production and sale of cash crops, so the head tax effectively increased migration to the east coast plantations (Oliver 1955:325, 202-203). Returning plantation laborers stimulated the extension of coconut plantations, but

the acquisition of metal tools was the main material benefit to the rural economy.

The vast majority of migrant workers were employed as laborers on Bougainville plantations, though some became overseers or "driver boys" while a minority served in the police force or were employed in other positions where particular skills were required (Connell 1985a: 124-125). Aisa, of Kuhino village, was probably the first Siwai "doctor boy," or medical orderly, trained to recognize a number of simple ailments and administer a limited range of medicines that were distinguished by color and smell; he visited Australia and may well have been one of a small group of Melanesians taken to the University of Sydney in 1933 for elementary medical training. Generally, however, the inter-war years were characterized by groups of unskilled plantation laborers, earning small but increasingly necessary incomes and learning something of the ways of the world outside Siwai. The migration system benefited the colonial plantation economy and established and accentuated the dependence of the rural population (Connell and Curtain 1982:468-469; Connell 1985b:96). Head taxes and a desire for new commodities created a need for money, for which plantation employment was the only real source, yet migrants required support from their rural families, to whose security they returned when their contracts were over. This structure of "dual dependence," insuring return migration, necessarily emphasized ethnicity in the workplace.

After the war a number of important changes began to influence the structure of migration in Papua New Guinea. These included the emergence of indigenous cash cropping (primarily coconuts and cocoa in Bougainville), urbanization, localization of employment, the extension of secondary education, and a variety of other social, political, and economic changes. The changes eroded the primacy of the plantations as a target for migrant workers and resulted in the emergence of a number of rural areas where a substantial level of rural affluence could be generated from local resources. Labor migration diversified from its prewar dependence on plantations, and "contract labor" gave way to "casual" labor. Individual laborers no longer had to agree to work for fixed and lengthy periods at particular plantations, but were free to go to plantations, mission stations, towns, or ships and work for as much or as little time as they chose. Thus the migration experience became much more diffuse. Rather more experimentation was possible and, essentially for the first time, plantations were not the only destination of migration moves.

By the early 1950s a significant number of labor migrants from south-

ern Bougainville were employed in towns rather than on plantations. Absolute numbers are difficult to establish, but apparently about 10 percent of all Siwai migrant workers were in urban employment, either in Bougainville or at Rabaul and Kavieng in the nearby New Guinea islands (Connell 1985a). Rabaul exerted a special attraction for southern Bougainvilleans: it was larger than any of the Bougainvillean townships; it provided a diversity of skilled, semiskilled, and unskilled employment; and it was much the most accessible New Guinean town in a quite different ethnic environment from Bougainville. Simultaneously the number of migrant workers increased to the extent that there was growing concern over the absence of large numbers of villagers. Whereas before the war rarely more than a third of adult males were absent, in the 1950s it was sometimes more than half. Cooperative village work was not always carried out and wives did not always receive adequate financial support from their absent husbands. Migration brought limited rural rewards.

As the plantation contract system ended and other employment opportunities increased, there was a growing tendency for some migrants, who had obtained skilled or semiskilled jobs, to remain away from their home villages for much lengthier periods. Employers no longer had to send workers home, as plantation owners had after contracts had been fulfilled, and were more likely to wish to retain skilled labor. Each of these factors meant that a growing number of migrants lost contact with Siwai; they were further away, the number of Siwai friends and kin *(wantoks)* was fewer, and less of their earnings reached their home villages. However, despite changing administration attitudes toward urban life, the administration itself was not reconciled to any semblance of permanent migration into the nascent towns of New Guinea. Migrants were recorded in the censuses for their home villages and, following the emergence of the Siwai Local Government Council in 1960, there as elsewhere all migrants were expected to pay taxes to their home council. Virtually throughout the 1960s the administration viewed migrants as no more than temporary absentees from their home villages, people who would eventually return.

During the 1960s, cash cropping of cocoa and hence a rural cash economy were finally established in Siwai. Cocoa was first sold in 1962. During the early 1960s there was a close relationship between migration and cash cropping, with labor migration predominating when cash-crop prices were low. Moreover, much of the income of migrant laborers was used to establish cash cropping, primarily through the payment of labor to clear and plant land. The commercial success of cocoa meant

that the cash requirements of most Siwais could increasingly be met within the rural area, lessening the incentive to move away to find wage employment. Moreover at "home" there was work; away from home merely less dignified labor. By the mid-1970s very few Siwais worked on plantations, and virtually none of those who did were unskilled laborers. Paralleling the establishment of cash cropping in Siwai was a growth of rural employment as agricultural extension and construction work expanded, clinics and schools were established, and a Cooperative Society grew, while individually owned cocoa dryers (and hence private trading) and stores were established. (Female employment beyond Siwai also began in the 1960s, but it was not until 1967 that the council tax returns record a woman working outside Siwai. She was a nurse from Kapana then employed at Buin). Those who preferred migration in the 1960s were invariably young men who lacked the capital to establish cash crops and who had not migrated before, but for whom earning money was only part of the rationale for the experience of leaving home. Older men were more content to cultivate cash crops in their own gardens. Thus, although the early history of labor migration demonstrated a gradual movement toward more permanent migration, usually to distant towns, the establishment of a rural economy emphasized that overwhelmingly migration was intendedly and assuredly temporary, as many apparently permanent emigrants returned to develop their land.

Mine Employment

The construction of the massive Panguna copper mine in the center of the island radically altered the structure of employment and migration within Bougainville. Even as early as 1965, during the exploration phase, there were more than three hundred Bougainvilleans working at the mine site, already the largest single source of employment in Bougainville. By 1967 the mine labor force was becoming substantial and the Buin District (consisting of the Banoni, Nagovisi, Baitsi, Siwai, and Buin language groups and census divisions) consistently provided the greatest numbers of Bougainvilleans employed in the mine (Bedford and Mamak 1976b). Approximately 10 percent of the adult male population of the area, especially from Buin and Siwai, were employed by Bougainville Copper Limited (BCL) over the four years from 1970 to 1973; an even higher proportion have been employed at the mine since the completion of the trans-island road in 1972. Wages of mine workers and those in allied industries were significantly higher, especially during construction, than virtually any other possible employment in Papua

New Guinea during this period, so that a number of skilled and semi-skilled workers left existing employment, such as teaching, to work there. Subsequently, as wages rose in other sectors of the national economy, the distortion in wage scales was reduced and skilled workers have again gone to locations other than Panguna.

Changes in the distribution of Siwai migrants over the past two decades demonstrate the continued growth of the Panguna-Loloho-Arawa urban employment complex (Connell 1985a: 130), associated with the construction and operation of the Panguna mine. By 1970 it employed more than two-thirds of all migrant workers from Siwai. By contrast plantation employment, especially in the Kieta District and central Bougainville, has shown a continuous decline. By 1976 no more than five out of 121 workers (from eight random villages) were employed on plantations, according to field surveys. East New Britain had only recently begun to lose its significance as a center of skilled employment and this was largely compensated by the steady growth of employment in the national capital, Port Moresby--a pattern maintained into the 1980s. The only current centers of Siwai employment on the Papua New Guinea mainland are towns. Overall, therefore, there has been a substantial shift from rural to urban employment coupled with a concentration of migrants, either in the complex associated with the Panguna copper mine or in more distant, urban centers where skilled employment is also available. Wage employment has become more spatially concentrated than at any time in the past half-century.

The completion of the mine coincided with unparalleled affluence within Siwai. Cocoa was well established and the trans-island road dramatically increased accessibility. Not surprisingly, Bedford and Mamak concluded from an analysis of mine migration from southern Bougainville that the demand for wage employment in the area was closely related to participation in cash cropping. When cocoa prices rose sharply in 1973, there was a decline in the number of people seeking employment; moreover workers tended to work at Panguna only during any slack season for harvesting cocoa crops and preparing gardens (Bedford and Mamak 1976b:172; Connell 1985a:133). The response to wage employment was influenced by both urban and rural incomes, with a number of workers seeking to maximize their cash incomes by a combination of mine and rural work. In the early 1970s, therefore, a distinctly new type of migration emerged; rural incomes and urban wages were both high while mine-associated jobs were generally available, leading to substantial and often rapid circularity between village and mine.

The longer that unskilled workers remain at the mine, the better their

conditions become (independent of the higher wages that follow the acquisition of skills); wages increase and housing conditions improve. However, such financial and social benefits of stability tend to be welcomed more by distant mineworkers (especially those from outside Bougainville) than by those from areas like Siwai who can easily circulate between town, mine, and village. Workers from the two nearest districts, Buin (including Siwai) and Kieta, have tended to remain in employment for shorter periods than those from greater distances (Bedford and Mamak 1976b:178). The mine work force from Siwai is characterized by its youth; 56 percent of all Siwai mineworkers in 1976 were younger than twenty-three years of age and the mean length of employment of all Siwai mineworkers was 3.1 years. Even so Siwai mineworkers were marginally older and more permanent than in previous years, suggestive of a general process of stabilization and aging of the mine labor force. Outside the mine the Siwai labor force is even less stable and younger than that at the mine. Circulation between town and village in non-mine employment has been much greater than in the more prestigious and highly paid mine employment.

A decline in copper prices in the mid-1970s put financial pressure on the mine to the extent that new employment opportunities rapidly declined. No longer were there radio broadcasts calling on employees who had overstayed their leaves to return to Panguna. Despite the policy of preference for Bougainvilleans it was becoming more difficult for new aspirants to obtain mine employment and for old employees, who had previously returned to their villages, to reestablish themselves there. Those who had jobs often chose to hang on to them rather than risk losing them by returning for lengthy periods to the village.

With a few significant exceptions, however, few Siwais wished to take up or even continue formal urban employment after the age of about thirty-five, despite the attractions of high wages. Those employed beyond that age were invariably in skilled employment. Other men had become established with cash crops and a family in the villages. By the 1980s this trend had become even more pronounced and, in many Siwai villages, the number of men employed outside the village had actually declined and unskilled workers were retiring earlier than they had previously done. Urban employment was increasingly considered to be "young man's work," especially as social disorder increased both at the mine camps and in towns. This explanation disguised a more important reason: men of this age, even when they already grew cocoa, were increasingly concerned with consolidating their positions in village economy, politics, and society. This trend was particularly apparent in

central Siwai, where land was extremely scarce in a number of matrilineages and disputes over land tenure were increasing. Equally important, new job opportunities were becoming rare. BCL, the main employer of labor, was contracting rather than expanding, laying off older unskilled workers; the few vacancies were mainly for tradesmen and tertiary graduates. A similar, but less clear-cut, trend was apparent in other areas of urban employment. Since 1975 the proportion of Bougainvillean workers at the mine has fallen as some of those with rural income-earning opportunities have elected to concentrate on them. Unskilled school-leavers have found it increasingly difficult to obtain urban employment and several young men in the rural areas, while claiming to be attached to their villages and keen to participate in rural development, are in reality those who have failed to find urban employment. Consequently, as older men retire and younger men fail to find work, the urban labor force has become more permanent.

By the early 1970s mineworkers from southern Bougainville were characterized as having adopted a "peasant" strategy of employment: urban and mine work were considered peripheral to the more important cash cropping and entrepreneurial activity in rural areas since it was cash cropping rather than mine employment that provided security (Bedford and Mamak 1976b:180). Despite the slow increase in the stability of the mine work force from Siwai, there is no real evidence that any semblance of an urban-industrial proletariat is emerging in the manner of that from some other distant sources of labor. The slight increase in stability has been a response to a decline in mine-working opportunities, so that employment at the mine is increasingly tending to become the prerogative of a limited number of more skilled and educated individuals rather than an arena for a much larger number of "circular migrants."

Siwais in Town

The growing commitment to mine employment has not yet been matched by a growing commitment to urban residence. Few Siwai married couples reside in the towns of Bougainville. This is even more true of the other towns of Papua New Guinea. Consequently, this analysis of Siwai urbanization is primarily restricted to Bougainville's largest town, Arawa, and, to a much lesser extent, Kieta and Panguna; the small town of Buin, the nearest town to Siwai, is excluded. Buin is a minor source of employment; in 1975 the township had a population of no more than six hundred, only four trade stores, and almost no social

life (Connell 1976). Very few Siwais live or have lived in Buin, none had been there long, and none expect to remain there long. By contrast, the much larger Papua New Guinean towns of Rabaul and Port Moresby, unlike any other towns in the country, both contain Siwais who seem to have permanently settled there and are not intending to return to Siwai. Few of these had a Siwai wife with them and many had married women from outside Siwai.

At any one time perhaps a hundred Siwais live in Arawa, although less than half of these have formal employment. (Unlike other Papua New Guinean towns, Arawa essentially lacks informal or casual employment to supplement or complement formal incomes. Hence there is relatively little job mobility within the mine town.) There is also a regular stream of visitors, often staying at least overnight; many are visiting kin or the hospital, or are involved in some commercial venture (Connell 1985a:138-139). The urban population is also daily supplemented by Siwai shift workers from the various mine camps, but on the whole the line between visitors and workers is well defined. In Kieta and Panguna there are perhaps fifty or sixty more Siwais living in urban housing and some two hundred living in the mine camps and other barrack-style housing associated with construction companies or small businesses such as Bougainville Bakery. Thus there are over three hundred Siwais in the Bougainville towns on most days other than Christmas, a figure that represents barely 3 percent of the total Siwai population and even less than that proportion of the total urban population. Overall probably no more than 5 percent of the Siwai population live in the urban areas of Papua New Guinea. This small number, alongside the ebb and flow between rural areas, the mine, and the towns, gives the Siwai urban population an unusually transitory ethos.

At the start of 1976 there were no more than twenty-six households in Arawa where the householder was either a Siwai or married to a Siwai. Only two of these households had a total of more than five years experience of urban residence; the mean period of urban residence was actually slightly under two years. (The same duration of residence is probably also true of Panguna, although in the more established town of Kieta and its suburb Toniva, length of urban residence is somewhat greater since fewer residents work in mine-related employment.) Of the twenty-two households for which relevant data were available, exactly half were formed around married couples of which one partner came from outside Siwai. (Observation suggests that this external marital pattern is even more striking in Kieta and Panguna.) This pattern, above all, is the most exceptional characteristic of urban Siwai households, in

direct contrast to rural Siwai where the total number of intermarried households is numerically less although the population is twenty times larger. Even more striking have been recent changes in the pattern of marriage. Between 1960 and 1975 at least a third of Siwai marriages were contracted between partners from the same village and the mean distance separating partners prior to marriage was 2.2 kilometers, as short as any comparable distances recorded elsewhere (Connell 1985a: 142). However, between 1975 and 1981, in the fairly typical village of Siroi, eleven of the twenty-five contracted marriages had one partner from outside Siwai, whereas before 1975 this figure was no more than twenty of 426 marriages.

A more obvious, but perhaps less significant, characteristic of the Siwai (and Bougainvillean) urban population is its extreme youth because of the predominance of young adult males in the towns and the relative unimportance of families (cf. Bedford and Mamak 1976a:459-460). Detailed demographic data were not collected for the Siwai urban population; however, no more than four of the twenty-six household heads were aged over thirty. Relatively few Siwai children lived in town, but remained with kin in the villages. Even in these crude terms this demographic structure suggests a rapidity of population change and the real and potential instability of the urban population.

Unlike all other Papua New Guinean towns of similar or larger size, Arawa (and also Panguna) consists almost entirely of permanent, formal housing that is allocated according to job status rather than through social choice or ethnic networks of access. No employers allocate housing according to ethnic group, hence groups from abroad and from every province are scattered within the town, although the low-rent (low-covenant) areas are occupied only by Papua New Guineans. The fact that access to housing does not depend on the *wantok* patron-client system minimizes one strand of ethnicity important elsewhere in Papua New Guinea. The lack of freedom of choice over the location of dwellings is a common source of dissatisfaction (Bedford and Mamak 1976a:475). Papua New Guineans tend to be concentrated in the smaller houses of Sections 9 and 14 and, of the twenty-six Siwai households, fifteen lived there while the other eleven lived in eight different sections. Not one Siwai household has Siwai neighbors; consequently, and quite exceptionally, Siwai ethnic ties at the workplace (especially at the mine) are actually much less fragmented and disjointed than in the towns. Less than half of those Siwais employed at the mine, whose status entitles them to urban housing, have bothered to obtain it; the others have their “homes” in their villages and live in single workers’

accommodations close to the mine. Some have left urban married accommodations to return to singles' accommodations at the mine site, a measure of their limited commitment to urban residence.

Because of the short distance between the towns and rural Siwai, and also from the towns to the unmarried mineworkers' accommodations, Siwai urban households are foci for Siwai urban life. With one exception (a Siwai man married to an Australian), every urban household in the mid-1970s also contained permanent or semipermanent residents from outside the nuclear family who were involved in formal urban employment. The mean urban household size was therefore no different from rural Siwai. The great majority of households experience a steady flow of visitors from Siwai and also Panguna. Since Siwai households (like those of other language groups) are scattered throughout the town, urban residents tend to be socially oriented toward these visitors rather than to other urban households (including those in houses adjoining their own or households from other parts of Siwai). This constant flow of visitors, the scattered distribution of urban households, and the fact that members of half of the urban households are intermarried tend to militate against the emergence of anything approaching a specifically Siwai form of urban life. Urban households have more social and economic contact with their kin at the mine or in rural Siwai than with their neighbors or other urban Siwais in the towns.

The extent to which present Arawa residents are committed to urban permanence is very limited. Those households where Siwais have married members of other language groups are potentially more committed, as their high proportion of the urban population suggests. Men from elsewhere who have married Siwai women are able to establish themselves in Siwai villages; not all of them wish to do so but a small number have settled, apparently successfully, in Siwai. Although the same is true for Siwai men who have married outside, access to land in a matrilineal society is becoming much more difficult for them. Outsiders, especially from beyond Bougainville where skin color and language are quite different, usually find it difficult to settle into Siwai rural life; some of these marriages have disintegrated and it seems certain that this pattern will continue. Most such couples therefore have a greater commitment to urban life, where they can have access to both groups of *wantoks,* than do the entirely Siwai urban households, whose residential flexibility is much greater.

Among wholly Siwai urban households, only one, where the husband, aged thirty-nine, worked as a clerk at Panguna, stated that they intended to remain permanently in town. They visited their home vil-

lages only at Christmas time (even ignoring some life crises in their extended families), they had no rural house or cash crops (unlike almost all the other Siwai families living in town), and their children attended school in Arawa (along with no more than three or four other Siwai children). In each of these three ways they were quite distinct from other urban Siwai households; nevertheless, despite this expression of urban commitment, they were aware that they were able to return permanently to their villages if they wished. Indeed the same was true of every single urban household and most, including those in well-paid skilled employment, expressed their intention of returning to Siwai within a few years. Decisions on urban residence were generally not made on the basis of job satisfaction but according to the need to accumulate some capital with which to establish a successful cash crop or business venture within Siwai. Reflecting this intended mobility, urban houses are often sparsely furnished while gardens are untended and ignored. There is a visible lack of attachment to the urban residence that contrasts with that of many other Papua New Guineans in town.

Commitment to rural Siwai is expressed through regular visiting, often for weekends, and through remittances. A survey of a random sample of sixteen mineworkers in the 1970s indicated that all customarily sent gifts to rural relatives, while only six claimed to receive gifts;[1] their claims may well be exaggerated but demonstrate the close links between mineworkers and their villages and the consensus of support for the ideology of an urban-rural support system. Indeed, despite relatively high urban incomes, little reaches rural Siwai and in some cases there may be a net rural-urban flow, reflecting an unusually affluent rural society. Direct remittances constitute only a small proportion of the urban-rural income flow, since the majority of cash and goods are brought back to the villages by returning migrants intent on using the cash in the rural economy. All mineworkers in the survey intended to take cash back to the village and a high proportion were able to specify how this might be used. Objectives included the establishment of cocoa crops, the construction of a store, or the purchase of a truck. Many such realistic goals were achieved. There is usually a “target,” often quite vague, to labor migration and such a target is invariably directed to the reestablishment and consolidation of rural residence. The contemporary earnings of mineworkers are for their own use rather than that of their rural kin--a commitment to the rural area as much as to its people.

Urban life is quite distinctive and all households involved in it share a number of characteristics that distinguish them from their rural counter-

parts. First, urban households are closely integrated into a monetary economy. Almost all food is purchased and most transactions involve cash exchanges. Although rural visitors invariably bring food (as do urban dwellers returning from rural visits), this provides only a small part of requirements. Furthermore, most households have no more than 10 to 20 percent of their small urban gardens under food crop cultivation (although the proportion is higher in the lower-paid workers' gardens) and gardens are very small in any case. Certainly more than three-quarters of foodstuffs, by weight or value, is purchased in urban markets or stores. Because of a preference for snacks and drinks (alcoholic and non-alcoholic) this constitutes a substantial proportion of total expenditure (cf. Mamak and Bedford 1977:445-446). Second, Siwais are effectively distinguished from all other urban residents by language and from mainland Papua New Guineans by skin color. Partly because of this they tend to form groups for various social activities, specifically for sport (soccer teams) and drinking; these are semiformal and informal male activities for which there is no female counterpart. Female social life revolves around casual visiting with a very restricted group of visitors or fellow urban residents; the boredom that follows from restrictedness and joblessness, along with contacts with home villagers, is responsible for strong female disenchantment with urban life and consequently a lack of commitment to long-term residence. Nevertheless, because of the large number of Siwais that all urban residents are in contact with, little incentive exists for them to interact socially with members of other language groups. Third, there are neither "traditional" nor "modem" Siwai leaders resident in town. This results in some anomie and loss of contact with the ebb and flow of Siwai social and economic life in which urban residents wish to retain their interests.

Within Siwai there are a number of recognizable districts--notably Rataiku, Mokakuru, Ruhuaku, Korikunu, and Tonu--and people for the most part, especially when they are within Siwai, feel a social affinity and unity within these rather than with the wider Siwai area, which is essentially a colonial creation (Connell 1978:1-6). These social divisions, delineated by minor linguistic and cultural variations, are also apparent in town. Geographical divisions are reinforced by religious divisions between Catholics (who represent two-thirds of the Siwai population) and members of the United Church (who represent the remainder), especially since churchgoing is often maintained within the towns. Casual drinking groups also reflect these divisions. Ethnic divisions vary according to particular social contexts; in the mine other southern Bougainvilleans will, on occasion, recognize a Siwai unity whereas

northern Bougainvilleans are unlikely to perceive any difference between Siwais and others. Mainland Papua New Guineans in general are unlikely to distinguish different groups of Bougainvilleans. Most Siwais come to define a group identity in opposition to other groups, especially at the mine where they are more likely to come into contact with each other than either in the town or in Siwai. Thus, socially, Siwais tend to fear and respect the Tolais of East New Britain, who are often perceived as being similar to themselves, while despising New Guinean Highlanders, generalized as "Chimbus" who are seen as violent and uneducated. These are social divisions that have followed perception of particular groups working or relaxing at the mine or the camps and that are emphasized by political divisions and competition for jobs and promotion. Because of the physical distinctiveness of Bougainvilleans and the politicization of mineworkers, especially in the mid-1970s in response to demands for island provincial and independent government, these attitudes are often shared by other Bougainvilleans. At the mine Siwais are much more likely to express a Bougainvillean and Siwai identity than they would either in Siwai or in town, a situation somewhat different elsewhere in Papua New Guinea (e.g., Morauta 1985:228). In the place where interethnic contact is greatest Siwai identity is most strongly reinforced. By contrast, within the Siwai urban population, district divisions are extremely clear and, in part because of the scattered location of households within the town, the divisions are almost as significant in town as in Siwai. Although urban Siwais are economically distinct from their rural counterparts, they are socially distinct only on occasion, a situation true also of other southern Bougainvilleans (cf. Bedford and Mamak 1976b:181-182). Households from different districts within Siwai have no more than the most casual acquaintance with each other; few are even aware of or interested in the existence of more than half the other Siwai urban households, a feature which is especially true of households without mineworkers. A greater experience of Siwai identity is only slightly engendered by urban residence.

Despite the unusual dispersion of urban households within Arawa, employment is the more important basis for bringing together members of different Papua New Guinean groups. Yet few of these work contacts extend into other forms of social contact. There are, in any case, few social institutions in the towns that might bring together individuals from different areas; voluntary associations are fragile and "urban Papua New Guineans use formal organizations within cities less commonly or effectively than elsewhere in the Third World" (Salisbury 1980:90). Moreover, in almost all areas of employment, Siwai workers

are numerous enough so that, except in a limited number of places (notably in office employment), even work contacts with non-Siwais are generally maintained only at the most formal and superficial level. A major social characteristic of mine employment (the main urban source of employment) is the surprisingly limited nature of interethnic contacts, and hence the manner in which other ethnic groups are perceived through derogatory stereotypes.

Almost all Siwais in town remain, in practice, short-term circular migrants, or what Skeldon has called the "floating population" (1976: 19). Bougainville towns are themselves a novelty, and migrants in town keep in such close contact with the rural area that it is almost impossible for them to be dissociated from it. Although some larger Papua New Guinean towns contain a small but growing urban proletariat, this is scarcely true of Siwais in Bougainvillean towns. The vast majority of even long-term urban residents remain basically oriented to the peasant mode of production with a temporary involvement in urban wage employment. The continued decline in the supply of urban-industrial employment that began in Bougainville in 1975 has strengthened urban commitment by blocking short-term circularity. But, in Curtain's phrase, "it makes more sense to regard these workers as partly urban based peasants rather than as proletarians" (1980:59). Wage employment is essentially a rural adaptation to the expansion of an introduced economic system. The Siwai agricultural economy, rural social organization, and rural political life will continue to be of overwhelming importance in the life of the emerging urban peasantry. Urban life, at least for Siwais within Bougainville, is inherently an extension of rural life. Siwai is essentially a single cultural and linguistic group, based in Siwai but now multilocal, from which there are always temporary absentees, almost all of whom express their intentions to return and most of whom will probably do so.

A Rural Perspective on Urban Commitment?

Every phase of mobility reflects some adjustment to, and participation in, the incorporation of Siwai into a regional and national economy. Labor migration began in the nineteenth century with a tentative commitment to distant migration; during the present century this commitment grew as desires became necessities (and taxes proved inescapable). Absolute numbers of migrants appear to have grown steadily throughout the present century, with only brief periods of decline. Distances

traveled have fluctuated from a prewar focus on east coast plantations to a more widespread dispersion, especially to New Britain, in the postwar years. More recently the emergence of Panguna has centered labor migration in a tiny part of Bougainville for all but a small, more highly educated group who have found jobs in other parts of the country (although many of this group, too, are in staff positions at Panguna). The diversification of urban-industrial employment and, to a lesser extent, education and deculturation in Siwai have also resulted in the contemporaneous emergence of a flow of female labor migrants, who now represent about 10 percent of the Siwai urban work force. Consequently a pattern of migration that was much the same as that in a large number of Melanesian areas, but especially in the New Guinea and Solomon islands, became a pattern of migration that was similar only to that in other parts of southern Bougainville.

In the unusual conditions of a rural economy undergoing a rapid transition from subsistence to affluence, few people in Siwai suffer from the high rate of out-migration. However labor migration (especially in the mining era) has contributed to an accelerated decline in rural social control and the elderly share less of the benefits of migration (because of their poorer access to migrant earnings and labor). On the other hand, rural-urban income and welfare disparities, at least for Siwai, are not evident. The young have benefited especially from access to high mine earnings, enabling them to develop cocoa plantations and business enterprises and to finance their own marriages. Except in exceptional circumstances older men (those much older than age thirty-five) have ended their participation in the wage labor system, being satisfied by rural social life and their cocoa crop earnings (Connell 1985a:145-146). Indeed the Siwai agricultural economy has never necessitated out-migration to meet basic subsistence requirements; it was only the imposition from outside of particular wants and taxation, in the absence of a market economy, that necessitated participation in the migrant labor system.

In the prewar years there was only occasional circulation in the labor migration pattern; few individuals cared to repeat their two- or three-year stint at a distant plantation. In the postwar years circulation became more general. The end of contracts gave migrants much greater freedom of decision making; there were improved educational opportunities and a growing diversity of better paid employment opportunities that, in itself, encouraged movement between different kinds of jobs in different places; and cash cropping continually appeared to be on the

verge of a rapid expansion (although this did not materialize until the 1960s), providing an incentive to remain closely linked to a rural economy of apparent potential. The emergence of mine employment coincided with the success of cash cropping and, since mine earnings were high and the demand for labor was great, there was a very rapid circulation of labor in the years of the construction phase and a withdrawal of labor from all other areas, especially plantations. The proximity of the mine enabled mineworkers to maintain their participation in rural economic and social matters; there was little risk attached to migration. In almost every aspect there was a dramatic postwar shift toward Siwai's incorporation in the national economy; this was almost entirely voluntary in contrast to the "dual dependence" of the prewar years (cf. Connell 1985a, 1985b).

Subsequently, and especially since 1975, circulation has declined as cash cropping and rural business activities have become established and the demand for mine labor has fallen. Circulation in Bougainvillean urban-industrial employment has remained more apparent among the less-skilled, poorer-paid workers in less prestigious non-mine employment. For example, at Bougainville Bakery workers leaving their jobs lose less income and less prestige and are more likely to be able to regain employment. Moreover, as access to rural land and disputes over land and cash-crop tenure worsen, even those with the most apparently permanent urban base have attempted to maintain rural ties by further cocoa planting and house construction, taking out shares in rural businesses, or leaving family members in the villages to maintain their presence and interests.

The slow growth of a Siwai urban population and the decline in circulation among the mine labor force suggest the emergence of a committed urban-industrial proletariat, but this is almost certainly more illusory than real. Greater stability of the Siwai mine labor force has followed the decline in the absolute size of the work force and the impossibility of casual circulation and employment as part of the industrial bourgeoisie. Mineworkers continue to make rural investments and amass savings but must remain in the mine work force until they effectively decide on rural retirement. If the urban employment situation worsens, especially in areas such as the public service where wages and fringe benefits are substantial, this tendency may spread further. A second group of more long-term urban residents are those who have married partners from beyond Siwai and find a harmony in urban areas that may elude one spouse in the home area. As this group rear children in town, sometimes without mastering a rural language, the prospect of

urban commitment increases. Natural increase has not yet become the most important component of urban population increase. Finally, in parts of central Siwai, some matrilineages have virtually no cultivable land suitable for cash cropping; young men from these areas must in the future anticipate that the bulk of their income can only come from urban employment. Consequently, although there are some apparently permanent out-migrants (especially in towns beyond Bougainville where distance emphasizes their isolation and separateness), and others who believe they are, few will remain forever in town. It is still impossible to regard any urban Siwais as permanent urban dwellers. Indeed, unless an individual dies in town he cannot be definitely categorized as a permanent urban dweller. (Although young men have died in mine accidents and others in Arawa hospital, all have been buried in Siwai.) Permanence can only be confirmed retrospectively.

Analysis of the factors that are associated with "urban commitment" or "urban attachment" (Bedford and Mamak 1976b)--such as involvement in formal wage employment, investment in urban housing and business development (rather than remittances to rural areas), perception of declining (or absent) economic opportunities in the village, establishment of social networks in the town (rather than through rural-urban links), a decline in the rate of return visits to the village, expectations of future work and residence, and empathy with urban rather than rural life--shows that Siwais have very little commitment to Bougainvillean towns apart from formal employment. All urban houses are rented, mainly from employers. Only one man has a rural interest in urban business (Connell 1978:205-208), although there are prospects of greater future investment from a rural base. Lineage affiliation retains strength even in the face of status differentiation. For most households other than those with intermarriages, social networks are almost entirely Siwai dominated and therefore serve to emphasize rural kin-based matters and rural-urban ties. Even intermarried households merely incorporate two sets of rural-based urban networks. These rural interests tend to dominate urban life. At the mine few are involved in union affairs, and other urban associations such as school management committees find little Siwai support.

Most Siwai urban workers and, for that matter, most other Melanesians in urban Bougainville depend directly or indirectly on the fluctuating fortunes of a multinational corporation that, in any case, is scheduled to close its Panguna operations about the turn of the century. Urban Bougainvilleans are both unusually dependent on the vicissitudes of a single element of international capitalism and only marginally able

to improve their own situations within the system to the extent that they have a firm economic base in town. (By contrast, in larger towns where the economy is more diversified and less dependent on a particular terminal form of international capitalism, urban migrants are able to obtain a more secure niche in the urban economy although, even there, nonexistent social security provisions, low wages, and employer-owned housing are major disincentives to permanence.) Consequently, despite the fact that many Siwais obtain well-paid, secure employment, the eventual uncertainty of life in mine towns means that even they pursue, in the Salisburys' (1972) felicitous phrase, a "rural-oriented strategy of urban adaptation." Like the Siane described by the Salisburys, but unlike many of the Hageners in Port Moresby whose rural opportunities are more restricted (Strathern 1975:402), urban Siwais are relatively unconcerned with successful urban adaptation. Savings, attitudes, and intentions suggest that most migrants intend to return home and that there is no real distinction between "permanent" and "circular" migration, especially in attitudes.

Many urban employers, significantly in the more prestigious activities such as the public service and Bougainville Copper Limited, provide biannual return fares for workers. Even if this provision represents an assumption that even high-status workers are only temporarily in urban employment, rather than a decision that would encourage this, it strikingly emphasizes the rural origins of urban migrants and their responsibilities in the rural sector. As elsewhere in Melanesia,

> many migrants are not prepared to commit themselves totally to urban life. Indeed in my experience of middle and high-ranking civil servants many envisage retiring around their early or mid-forties and returning to the village. The rationale seems to be that by this time a man will have built his prestige house in the village, will have more or less finished paying the expenses of his elder children's education and will have little prospect of any further or considerable promotion. In the village the tree crops that he has planted every year so diligently will be bearing fruit and will ensure a cash income to cover his needs and support his status when he makes his bid on the local political scene. (Walter 1981:37; cf. Curtain 1980:57-58)

Those with paid leaves and high salaries are thus most easily able to maintain their social and economic position in village life, through regular return and investment. Not only are urban wage differences thus

transmitted into the rural areas but, paradoxically, those with the most well-paid, prestigious urban jobs are those most easily able to return to their native villages.

In comparison with many other areas of coastal Melanesia, Bougainvillean urbanization has been relatively recent, further arrested by the proximity of villages to towns, so that the most striking feature of urbanization is intermarriage. Although such marriages are relatively unstable they are, nevertheless, the most likely basis of a future urban population, but even so that fraction of the urban population will decreasingly be identified with Siwai. As elsewhere in urban Papua New Guinea children may grow up speaking Pidgin English rather than either of their parents' languages, a disability which will make it difficult for them to adjust to a rural culture and life-style even if they so wish. They may also prefer urban diets, accept urban mores, and so on; they may eventually "come to see the urban way of life as their own way of life not as an alien interlude" (Morauta and Ryan 1982:49). For the moment this kind of urban cultural adaptation is not imminent. In Siwai there is now no real land shortage, hence rural options remain viable. Yet in the future migration may proceed out of inequality. Simultaneously, urban children, with restricted familiarity and sympathy with Siwai culture, and long-term absentees may find it increasingly difficult to assert their rights to rural land. Land tenure, flexible within Siwai to the extent that all rights in land are negotiable, is likely to become more rigid. The social and economic cost of high fertility is becoming apparent. At the moment all Siwais in urban Bougainville are mobile and temporary townsfolk; in perhaps no more than a decade it will be impossible to be so dogmatic. Though the Siwai case indicates that apparently permanent urban residents are exceptional, in being generally either part of the industrial bourgeoisie or intermarried, it has become evident that in other parts of Melanesia, and especially in Papua New Guinea, there are now migrants in the towns who are likely never to return to live in their rural villages. By the mid-1970s it was apparent that some Melanesian urban residents were "trapped" or "disposed' in town, especially in Port Moresby, without the financial means to return home and without real rural economic opportunities, because of inadequate access to land. A quarter of all children born in Port Moresby, Lae, and Rabaul had never visited their "home villages" (Garnaut, Wright, and Curtain 1977; cf. Connell 1985b:98-99) and could have pressed only minimal claims to rural land. Many of these trapped residents are from the poorest rural areas, where economic development opportunities are particularly limited. This is particularly true of

migration from the Gulf and Central provinces of Papua New Guinea (Levine and Levine 1979:28; Morauta 1980; Morauta and Ryan 1982), where migration has continued despite growing urban unemployment (Connell 1985b:95). Permanent urban residents are those who would experience real deprivation, either economically or socially, in rural areas. The "dual dependence" of an earlier era is actually giving way to a situation where a growing minority can no longer depend on the rural area for subsistence or incomes. It is this minority, not the more highly paid urban workers, who are the nucleus of the emerging urban proletariat, but they may also be the urban poor. Though Siwai does not yet share in this trend, in the future there as elsewhere in Melanesia, those who are least able and likely to return to their home areas will be migrants from the land-short areas, where income-earning opportunities are now few, along with those who have married outside their home linguistic area.

Yet lengthy urban residence, and urban employment, do not imply urban commitment, though the birth of children in towns is likely to encourage permanence. Similarly the degree of stated commitment to rural kin is not an indicator of dissociation from urban life (cf. Strathern 1985:376), nor is length of urban residence (Fahey 1980). Even those whose residential and employment choices may appear to have been thrust upon them maintain rural social and economic relations, in part because of their need for ultimate social security, and so adhere to customary rural expectations in urban life. Consequently it is the intermarried group, who have diverse expectations and relations, that may be the most committed to urban residence. There is now no doubt that "to talk of temporary urban dwellers with the implication that they will go home in due course is largely wishful thinking" (Ward 1971:103); it is a wish that is often shared by those urban residents themselves but blocked by the social and economic problems that would follow.

NOTES

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