RASCALS, THE STATE, AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

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This article contends that as conditions worsen in Papua New Guinea's urban areas, it is apparent that the escalating crime and violence associated with rascal gangs are creating new rules of authority. The cumulative effects of criminal activities associated with gangs are negating the existing social order, spreading fear deep within civil society. In so doing, these activities deliver yet another blow to the legitimacy of the state. Continuous migration and the concomitant expansion of the newly urbanized population are defining a new urban landscape. Likewise, the persistent drain of national wealth by pervasive corruption, civil war, or domestic unrest further compromises the capacities of an already weak state. It is within these confines that rascals have direct effect on the state.

THE EMERGENCE OF URBAN GANGS, "rascals," in Papua New Guinea, while surprising to some, nevertheless has been observed and analyzed for more than twenty-five years (Klein 1995:220–221; Clifford, Morauta, and Stuart 1984; Oram 1976; Griffin, Nelson, and Firth 1979; Nelson 1998). As one would suspect, during that time the gangs have changed, as have analyses of their significance. Beginning with the early observations of Nigel Oram, Hank Nelson, and Jim Griffin, to Bruce Harris's groundbreaking work (1988), and continuing to the most comprehensive, up-to-date analyses of Sinclair Dinnen (1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 1999) and Michael Goddard (1995, 1998), much is known about this important phenomenon. But, as the new millennium takes hold, rascals have evolved and so has the state's response to them.

A few years ago, after tracing the rise of urban gangs in greater Port Moresby, I concluded that the relations between urban gangs and governing institutions were essentially about authority. As such, the emergence of rascalism was not only an urban crisis but a "systemic" crisis as well. That is to say, it appeared that weak state institutions coupled with restricted operational capacities contributed to a breakdown of the moral fabric of the new order (Hart Nibbrig 1992). The inability of the police to maintain law and order, often seen as a sign of the state's weakness, was but one example of the state's operational weakness. Furthermore, I suggested a fatal association between the state's inability to meet the personal expectations of the many people drifting to the settlements and squatter villages of Port Moresby and the rise of urban gangs. Failure on the part of the state to effectively meet the new expectations fed a sense of indignation among the urban poor, especially young, unemployed males. Indignation functioned as the psychological link between failed expectations and an increasingly militarizing police. The rise of rascalism was seen as one of the predictable outcomes of system rigidities of a weak state. Therefore, I believed that much insight could be gained by understanding how rascal gangs adapted to new urban realities. Rather than assuming that rascal "gangs represented something foreign to the development of the new state," I argued that rascals had to be understood as part of that development (ibid.).

The burdens faced by the state have increased over the twenty-seven years since Papua New Guinea gained independence from Australia. These burdens include a continuing rise in crime and violence; a prolonged "civil war" in Bougainville; the so-called Sandline Affair; pressures from the International Monetary Fund, Asian Development Bank, and World Bank forcing more controls and limitations on the national government; and deep corruption in the highest circles of government. These circumstances constitute the backdrop to the further growth of criminal gangs and how they redistribute opportunities through gang activities (Kavanamur 1998; May 1998).

By most accounts, the first signs of gang activity began sometime in the early to mid 1960s and the first use of the term "rascal" occurred shortly afterward. What appeared to be random break-ins and occasional assaults largely involving native groups were not initially worrisome, especially among the almost ten thousand or so expatriates, most of whom were Australian. It is instructive to read some of the accounts describing Port Moresby in the sixties as a "peaceful town" with houses running off Boroko and Angau drives without fences, barbed wire, or watch dogs (Nelson 1998). Within this context the term "rascal" had the connotation of "scallywag," not the present fear and apprehension the term generates in the minds of people today. Hank

Nelson, one noted historian of the period, suggested that most reported crime, especially by locals, was considered minor while most serious crime involving substantial amounts of money was usually committed by whites against other whites (ibid.). For the privileged few 1966 represented the "golden era of civic peace," an era to be remembered with distant nostalgia.

By the late 1960s residents in Horse Camp, Hohola, and the Goilala Camp at Three Mile were beginning to deal with increasing violence and theft. As historian Hank Nelson recounts (1997), the total number of homicide cases coming before the courts throughout the territory had grown to around two hundred. With dispatch the courts handed out light sentences for those convicted of murder, which signaled that such acts, especially those committed by locals in the newly pacified territory, were not considered the work of "violent criminals." The "expat" community generally accepted the new legal order, viewing most of the emergent crime as remnants of traditional enmities associated with traditional obligations as well, and exhibited little alarm about lawlessness. Indeed, it was a golden period of civic order. As Nelson observed (1998), an Australian family could picnic in the most remote area and be safer than in most of Australia.

That golden time is gone for those who now live in the growing National Capital District. Today, Port Moresby has become the poster child for what can go wrong within a country negotiating its way through the early years of independence. It does not take long to get the impression that Port Moresby is under siege by criminals, its wealthy inhabitants locked behind doors protected by razor wire, alarms, watch dogs, and private guards. Such is the state of civic life in the National Capital District and other parts of Papua New Guinea. The same fears are expressed at the village level in certain other areas and towns, especially Lae and Madang. Additionally, rampant violence has been reported recently associated with the illegal use of alcoholic products called O.P. rum and Gold Cup; these two strong spirits are being smuggled into "dry" (alcohol-free) regions in the Hagen area of the Western Highlands. Not surprising are reports of increased violence and drunken brawls that sometimes end with the rape of women (Stewart and Strathern 1999).

New Landscapes of Despair

Port Moresby at the turn of the millennium is a transformed city. Although no place remains the same, what has occurred in Port Moresby and its nearby suburbs has been startling. To begin with, the noncitizen population has declined from ten thousand in the 1960s to seventy-five hundred today, twenty-eight hundred of whom are Australian. Underlining this change is the

fact that noncitizens from the Philippines now equal those from Australia. Gerehu and Waigani, suburbs of Port Moresby, now contain populations larger than all of Port Moresby in 1966. Even more dramatic is the transformation in the composition of the populations of Boroko and Korobosea, suburbs once predominantly white. What was once a one to one ratio of white to black is now fifteen to one black to white. These ratios reflect the character and breadth of the demographic shift. At the beginning of the 1990s, for every one white Australian there were one hundred Papua New Guineans. That ratio changed to one to one-hundred-fifty at the end of the decade. New Guineans from the Highlands are on the verge of becoming the dominant native population group, displacing Papuans. These changes prompted Hank Nelson to suggest that Port Moresby has become a city in which both Australians and Papuans have become minorities.

Radical population changes signal deeper social, political, and economic changes as well, which have profound implications on the growth of crime in general and rascalism in particular. Port Moresby in the 1960s was a white Australian town with all of the privileges associated with colonial domination (Oram 1976). Some might say that it still is a town dominated by a new elite, both native and foreign. Regardless, profound changes have occurred in the composition of both Port Moresby's general population and the country's elite. In the 1960s there were no rich Papua New Guineans who lived in the hills of the colonial capital. Rather, white Australians observed the kind of social segregation and race-caste boundaries reminiscent of the American South. Much has changed in this respect. Today, native Papua New Guineans live in the nicest sections of the town and travel conspicuously to Australia, the Philippines, and Hong Kong. There has also been an authority shift in the highest echelons of government administration, the political system, and the upper reaches of the business community. At the end of the 1990s more foreign business interests controlled more of Papua New Guinea's resources than in the decade preceding independence (Nelson 1998:5).

The national government of Papua New Guinea, like many postcolonial entities, is of recent vintage, having achieved independence from Australia in 1975. As a young nation and as a country where more than seven hundred indigenous languages are spoken, Papua New Guinea shows many of the difficulties and problems we have come to associate with other countries that are trying to bring about a sense of national coherence: how to forge new governing institutions, create a sense of legitimacy about both the institutions and processes of governing, and survive the powerful pressures stemming from national and institutional interests hell-bent on exploiting the country's bountiful natural resources (Strathern and Stewart 1998:8). These struggles constitute the larger setting for an examination of the role of the

state as it attempts to hold itself together while affecting the course of internal development within Papua New Guinea's rapidly growing urban areas, especially the National Capital District.

Changing State

Most observers familiar with the problems of governance in Papua New Guinea describe the state as weak and severely handicapped in its ability to effectively manage the profound changes the country has been undergoing for the last twenty-seven years (Dauvergne 1998a; Larmour 1998). My focus here is to underline the significance of the relationship between the state and the various social enclaves developing within urban areas. Among the state's roles in this regard is to remedy societal disorganization by recombining the discrete and often contentious fragments of society that are often present during periods of rapid, fundamental change. From this perspective rascal gangs represent one of those fragments. It is the state's ability or inability to deal with growing migration to urban centers, especially the National Capital District, and the resultant social problems that rightfully call into question the very authority and legitimacy of the state. Whether the state will collapse under the burden is not the focus here, but there is reason to believe that claims of its imminent demise have been vastly exaggerated. In this respect Papua New Guinea's resilience, largely neglected, appears stronger than has been expected. There are too many forces that augur for a more realistic appraisal of the country's future (Migdal 1998).

My argument here posits that the state, imperfectly organized, represents the strongest, most comprehensive set of institutions in this country of competing and defiant authorities (Strathern and Stewart 1997:687–690). Within the context of rapid, uncontrolled urbanization the state will continue to be a defining player in the development of what constitutes civil society within the National Capital District. But it will not do this alone.

It is the dialectical relationship between the state and new social entities such as urban gangs that will shape the urban landscape in the future. In other words, the forging of civil society, even a nascent civil society, at its root deals with how-the state interacts at the national, regional, and local levels with competing and opposing enclaves of authority. The relationship is dialectical in that it involves opposites. But that opposition would not be sufficient. The state's public policy, its public transcript, suggests its opposition to criminal activities. Its hidden transcript is to somehow render the opposing authority, represented by rascal criminal organization, inert. Given its already discussed weakness, the state is hampered in its abilities to deal with these problems. What is striking is that the state with fits and starts continues to

gather its "bits of authority" and appears to be engaged (Filer 1992). What other set of institutions commands a semblance of a national constituency, a forum of international transactions? The metaphor of poker is applicable here. Among all players holding cards, the state has the big hand. But like poker, the winner is determined by the ability to play those cards, not in merely holding them.

The state with all of its "bits of authority" continues to have more potential than competing enclaves to create new identity formations and shifts more in line with its interests. As this happens we have to look for transitional markers, signs indicating that enclaves are being redefined in new political contexts. Rascals in this context are seen as carriers of dispersed values; left to their own devices they would contribute to the erosion of state authority. Enclavism is an adaptation, a reaction, to transformation by global forces through the mediation of the state (Stewart and Strathern 1998). In this regard the state and civil society are linked, albeit crudely. How this transformation plays out will be determined largely by the state's capacity to penetrate, absorb, or marginalize competing authority systems. In other words, the state and rascals are referential within this transformation process. As the state increases the process of capital accumulation, it is responding to the dominant interests within and outside the society. At the same time it will attempt to "restructure" the opposition between public and private spheres. The mechanism compelling this adaptation to new structural arrangements is economic integration.

Rascals and Civil Authority: A New Social Order

In this section I examine rascal gangs and rascalism as a site of emergence of a recent urban social order. While rascals do not constitute urban civil society in Papua New Guinea, gangs nevertheless can be associated with a growing and parallel form of civil society (Putnam 1993). As already noted, even with limited authority the state attempts to establish social order and public safety as well as suppress gangs (Dinnen 1998b). The dissipation of traditional infrastructure for male socialization has changed the very foundations of social relations in the urban subsystem. In the reciprocal interactions between rascal gangs and police authority, gang activities (auto theft, robbery, assault, drugs, rape) along with gang members' utter defiance at times of police authority forces the state to revise and adjust strategies of apprehension and punishment and to seek ways to depoliticize gangs.[1] In so doing, the state implicitly acknowledges that gangs can and do assume protopolitical forms as groupings of individuals able and willing to defy and confront police authority. In many cases the police are afraid themselves of rascals,

partly because of the gangs' putative possession of powerful weapons. One observation is that rascalism constitutes not just an effort to reinvent social structure but represents an emergence of an incipient political order. While the state in Papua New Guinea has been described as weak and possessed of limited capacities to suppress insurgent challenges and civil strife, its power to remake civil society is even more politically limited. This is because the formation of civil society occurs slowly through the development, formation, and integration of social capital into networks of civic tradition, something that takes not only time but extraordinary political will (Putnam 1993).

While severely limited, the state in Papua New Guinea continues, albeit with mixed results, to foster civil society. In this context the development of civil society does not depend entirely on the state but in the final analysis is influenced by state policies for good or ill. Weak or not, the state is crucial even with its limited capacities to affect outcomes. For example, government policies determine directly or indirectly the concentrations of migrants entering the urban social system, their locations, and conditions under which Papua New Guinea's emergent urban underclass lives. The state and those myriad decisions that constitute economic policy determine the social forces acting upon the development of civil society. The institutions of the state create what amounts to social capital, or the institutions of social interaction that facilitate some measure of political and social cooperation. For example, government and corporate policy decisions in mining, forestry, and so forth set the conditions of urban employment and thus the extent of urban class formation. These social processes, determined by government and industry, profoundly condition Papua New Guinea's growing urban poor as to whether they perceive themselves as having access to employment, education, and other necessities. As I have stated elsewhere, a sense of injustice and indignation will grow even stronger out of the violation of expectations as underclass numbers increase (Hart Nibbrig 1992).

In precolonial Papua New Guinea civic traditionalism was vested in the various microsocieties that still comprise more than eighty percent of the population. What amounted to social capital was located within the tight bonds of tribe and clan, which constituted the natural order for most people. As the urban push and pull deepened more people, especially males, were attracted to Papua New Guinea's small but growing cities. Throughout Australia's dominion over Papua and New Guinea the cities became the repository largely of men who felt the need to seek new ways of living. They came, redefined the urban landscape, and established new bonds that were more appropriate within an urban setting. New social networks necessitated ways of communication and cooperation in the new social and economic spheres. The result was that new urban identities were being developed and the mix-

ing bowl was the helter-skelter urban context. New patterns of social engage-
ment developed among this emergent urban subaltern class. In the village
setting the dominant ethos was defined by communal norms. The new urban
setting changed that. As noted earlier, continued migration since the 1960s
to Port Moresby and its suburbs has fundamentally transformed the urban
setting and created the conditions for the development of an emergent urban
underclass.

Conduits to Consumption Culture

The new urban context—with its rapid flux, continuous migration, and resul-
tant displaced social norms—gave rise to an emergent urban underclass and
became a breeding ground for the development of urban gangs. It should be
mentioned here that rascals also exist outside urban areas, and not everyone
who is unemployed turns to gang life. But for those who do join a gang there
exists an ethos of adventure, mystique, and prestige associated with being a
rascal in a mobile, multiethnic context of fluidity and generational difference
(Goddard 1995). Nevertheless, as Sinclair Dinnen noted (1998c), growing
unemployment constitutes the "primary context" for explaining rascalism.
"Urban underclass," as used here, refers to the growing numbers of people
collecting at the bottom of the new, urban class system. Their life chances are
severely limited even in the best of circumstances: These people are socially
isolated, that is, not part of what constitutes the mainstream; their activities
are disproportionately labeled criminal; and in many places they are defining
new, parallel social institutions, often in conflict with formal society. The con-
cept describes an emergent status group in and around the National Capital
District. Something new and quite portentous has occurred during the last
ten to fifteen years, and that development will one way or another define the
very nature of state authority in a country struggling to survive the profound
changes being forced upon it.

As seen from these landscapes of despair, crime has become an accepted
avenue to surviving the pressures stemming from the urban economy, even
the preferred way of generating income for many. As Theodore Levantis
wrote recently (1997), "Crime is now so well established [as a source of
income] that, despite the extraordinary level of participation, it could hardly
be thought labour in excess of supply to the formal labour market." Within
the confines of the new urban context many who are undereducated and
underemployed are pulled into criminal activities and some find a home,
temporarily or otherwise, in criminal gangs. Gangs under these circum-
stances are not simply criminal organizations but increasingly must be seen
as one of the conduits pulling those from the bottom into the urban con-

sumption culture (ibid.:83). Criminal acts and the benefits perceived to come from them will increasingly define the mechanisms of identity, status, income generation, and, ultimately, mainstream civil society. Who better prefigured this process than the former prime minister, Bill Skate, who openly claimed past and current rascal connections.[2]

As the situation now appears, the state will do little to meet the challenges of urban growth and the escalating needs for urban infrastructure, educational opportunities, and an economy that can absorb those whose poverty, literally, is changing the face of urban Port Moresby (Dinnen 1998b). As social needs mount and the state remains unable to meet those demands, one can reasonably expect that the informal economy will expand, at least as a parallel structural reality, at worst as the dominant source of employment within the National Capital District's lower strata (Levantis 1997). Under these circumstances the furthering of civil society remains residual: Consumption and consumer goods are what is valued and little suggests that urban youth will place high value on civic obligations. There is not much here affording a future.

If urban youth leaving school early with scant prospect of entering the developing formal economy were not enough, urban violence associated with rascal activities will further remove these young people from civil society. Likewise, if nihilistic violence, so apparent in underclass populations in other parts of the world, continues to develop, the structuring of lives beyond the mainstream will be all but sealed, their social isolation all but complete. At this point rascals do not recognize any right of the state to control their activities or demands (Strathern 1993; Strathern and Stewart 1997:689).

Rascal gangs have become societal agents operating according to nonlegal rules, rules they are creating with the partial acquiescence of governments in Papua New Guinea (Dauvernge 1998a). Their criminal behavior for years has forced parts of the urban community—not just the constabulary forces but civil society itself—to behave as if deviant social norms simply existed, thus furthering the gulf between society, the state, and its emergent underclass. Regardless of intent, the state's responses appear to be counterproductive (Dinnen 1998c:271). The urban experience of those pulled and pushed to the urban center only got worse in the 1990s. At the same time, the list of demands escalated: education, employment, roads, sanitation, and more.

The urbanization process has brought about new modes of communication and organization, one possible outcome of which is the emergence of an underclass, one that defines the urban turf. The breakdown of social cohesion associated with life in the village, a by-product of urbanization, already reveals the nuclearization of the urban setting. That is to say, we see the coupling of a newly emerged spatial ordering of the urban landscape and a cor-

responding spatial organization of a more complex system of values, norms, and behaviors.

Social cooperation, the outward expression of a civil urban culture, becomes more difficult. The urban basement of the National Capital District will become more dangerous not only for those who have responded to urban violence with an architecture of security, but to those who live daily in the throes of urban poverty. More youth are likely to be drawn to rascal gangs, and in response to ever-escalating violence those very gangs are expected to become more reliant on firearms. Again, as Hank Nelson reminds us (1998), the murder rate in Port Moresby has increased since 1966. There is little reason to believe that the more-militarized police forces will have much effect on those rates (Strathern and Stewart 1997:688–690).

Increased violence and reliance on weapons will only create the illusion of security to those drawn to gangs for protection from either rival gangs or the police, who have shown a penchant for targeting presumed gang members. Armed violence spiraling out of control is not a farfetched outcome in a country that has been grappling with a civil war on Bougainville and the near rebellion of armed forces as a result of former Prime Minister Julius Chan's hiring of outside mercenary troops to put down a rebellion (Dinnen 1998b). These circumstances encourage new forms of mutual protection among gangs as new fears, anxieties, and threats of death drive the development of new modes of self-protection. Within this expanding urban substratum unregulated self-interest will diminish social returns. That world will become more dangerous and competitive. The "juvenation" of urban crime will produce youth with few social controls and a psychological detachment from traditional ties (Dinnen 1998c). The loosening of traditional controls has created a perverse outcome: The urban setting has elevated male youth to prominence over the elderly. This setting demands new survival skills, and youth socialized to new urban realities have become the new "big-men" in many situations. This authority shift within the emergent underclass has profound implications for the social ordering of underclass life. Faced with diminished adult authority on the one hand, and the state's incapacity to construct new, viable social structure on the other, urban youth will undoubtedly choose retribalization and self-help through gang association.

Regardless of the various descriptions of changes in the National Capital District, the burden, if not the responsibility, to socialize urban youth has been transferred to public authorities, schools, and the police. As discussed above the state, while limited in its capacities to respond effectively to challenges, nevertheless has demonstrated more resiliency than had been expected. From this perspective the very limitation of the state's authority—not its overbearing presence—has highlighted the reconfiguration of urban society in Papua New Guinea. In effect, in a seldom discussed role, rascal

gangs are providing a mechanism for the redistribution of labor within newly defined informal labor markets, in the absence of opportunities in more traditional labor markets that are largely out-of-bounds for those who make up the underclass (Hart Nibbrig 1992; Levantis 1997). As anger, social despair, and a powerful sense of grievance among rascals and nonrascals alike continue to grow recent observations suggest further decline, further disintegration, and increased poverty. Begging, which was absent from the streets of the National Capital District in the 1970s and 80s, is now commonplace, as are daytime assaults in Boroko's main shopping area (pers. com., Sinclair Dinnen, 2000).

Previously I linked a sense of anger, frustration, and indignation to rascal violence. I also argued that much of that sense of having been wronged derived from the country's colonial past and the creation of the formal economy.[3] Here I place less emphasis on the colonial legacy of domination and more on the inability of government to live up to high expectations, which, according to one observer, further contributes to the disappointment and anger found among urban youth (Dinnen 1998c). Today, there seems to be ample evidence that much of the anger and frustration underpinning rascal attitudes and correspondent activities draws from a deep well of contemporary resentment focused less on the past and more pointedly on the corrupt practices of those who govern at the national, regional, and local levels. The "real" rascals are asserted to be not on the streets but in the corridors of government. Indignation deepens. In part, understanding the development of an underclass involves understanding the normative shifts that occur as marginalization and social isolation deepen. The frustration and anger noted by Sinclair Dinnen among the newly urbanized poor will not only increase but also become part of the cultural mix that defines a new status group less by ethnic affiliation and more by common experience as subalterns in the urban class system.

This normative dimension of underclass development has less to do with encounters with the police and more to do with what is happening to the state. Put another way, what appears to be driving this development is the systemic changes occurring throughout Papua New Guinea, as those who govern and those who influence that process struggle to avoid some of the pitfalls of a new country born into a complex, global world. There is ample evidence that the economic, social, and moral underpinnings of traditional life in Papua New Guinea are undergoing profound change, and those changes are reflected in the increasing level of violence throughout the country. The changes in the character of violence seem to be systemically linked (Strathern 1993). Newly emergent social realities are forcing the state, as well as nongovernmental agencies, to define new ways to create alternative, legitimate institutions.

Rascals, the State, and Civil Society: Three-Way Tango?

The developing urban subaltern class is not, and will not be, monolithic in its social composition or social inclination. In other words, one should not be inclined to assume that one set of social attitudes and beliefs reveal the hidden pool of values of the poor. For example, several close observers of criminal gangs have noted that one of the strengths of rascals is their ability to disappear within the population of settlement villages and thus avoid apprehension by the police (Goddard 1995). This protection exists based on a common bond nurtured by experiences in an urban settlement village and on intimidation. Intimidation and otherwise preying on "homies" may further differentiate rascals from others.

What is interesting about the development of rascal gangs and their organizational changes over time is that the gangs constitute institutions and organizations that parallel and intersect with civil society. As early as 1988 Bruce Harris noted the development of organizational complexity over time and associated that complexity with function, that is, with specific gang activities (Harris 1988). Although serious questions have been raised about some of Harris's conclusions about gang structure, those questions and concerns do not undermine the point being made here: Rascal organizations are complex and represent development of subaltern institutions that are growing more viable, not less (Goddard 1992, 1995). In this connection violence is associated with the demands of economically and socially marginalized youth for money, status, and identity. Illegitimate uses of force come to be viewed as acceptable and further remove these youth from social cooperation.

Sinclair Dinnen described and analyzed the elaborate "ritual" of some gang members giving up their arms to the police, as well as the limitations of this as an effective way to "defang" rascal gangs of their arms (1998a). The results were mixed, at best, and the method is not considered to be viable for disarming rascal gangs in the future. Reality dictates that it would be naive to assume that youth socialized in this subaltern stratum are inclined to override self-interest in order to realize the tangible and collective benefits of group association. That group association is likely to be rascal association one way or another.

Final Words

As conditions worsen in Papua New Guinea's urban areas, the escalating crime and violence associated with rascal gangs are creating new rules of authority. The cumulative effects of gang-related criminal activities negate the existing social order, spreading fear deep within civil society. In so doing,

these activities deliver yet another blow to the legitimacy of the state (Strathern and Stewart 1997:689). Continuous migration from rural areas and the concomitant expansion of the newly urbanized segment of the population define the new urban landscape. Likewise, the persistent drain of national wealth—by the pervasive corruption of those who govern, by civil war, by domestic unrest due to the wanton exploitation of the country's abundant natural resources—further compromise the capacities of an already weak state. Within this context rascals have a more direct effect on the state.

In the course of countering the activities of rascal gangs state officials formally and informally perceive that rascals do perform certain functions normally associated with legitimate nongovernmental institutions. That is to say, the gangs provide mechanisms for obtaining status, identity, food, clothing, and security. With employment opportunities swamped in urban centers, criminal activities constitute an alternate source of generating income (Goddard 1995). In this, gangs constitute an important mechanism to redistribute the labor of the underclass.

We cannot assume, however, that the informal and parallel civil redistributive functions will be the norm in the future. Underclass organization lacks the persistence, associability, and mutuality of civil society. Gangs create diffused forms of civil structures. In their own eyes rascals constitute "authority domains" that exercise coercion and organize relations of social exchange. Bruce Harris understood some of those exchange relationships when he described rascal linkages with political and government elites at the national and regional levels of government (1988). Those who engage in crime, especially nihilist, violent crime, exercise a genuine measure of power. Government officials, via the police and military forces, along with nongovernmental organizations have projected onto rascals an imagined political capacity. This view is reinforced as rascals show disdain for the police. On its face, open defiance of the moral authority of the state and a disregard for the abilities of the police cement in the minds of the public the notion of power.

This presumption of power and granting of urban space to rascal criminal gangs may be manifestations of the urban trauma of significant numbers of newly urbanized people confined to the bottom of an emergent class system. The trauma suffered by recent arrivals to urban slum living, caused by the absence of the social cohesion found in village life combined with frustration and anger, produces fantasized images of power as a response to police authority and the corruption of government leaders and their business associates. Rascals construct a cultural frame of interests, desires, and symbols that involves a potential for political authority. Again, Harris understood this potential when he indicated that rascals prefigured one of the few inter-ethnic organizations forming in the National Capital District (1988).

The state's role in this developmental process is evident as it delimits and expands the objects and domains of criminal behavior and punishment in order to depoliticize this threat to its authority. Predictably, state officials can be counted on to further militarize their responses—even develop new discourses and punishments—in an attempt to reassert the authoritative boundaries of the state amid social disorder (Foucault 1979). It is within this dialectical dance that the state implicitly acknowledges real challenges to its authority. Likewise, the very dialectic in which the state acknowledges threat inspires recognition of the potential of a new authority. As this process of asserting competing authorities continues, the rest of civil society has breached the gap by constructing an elaborate architecture for private security, itself a testament to the power of that challenge.

Crime as a way of life is being integrated into civil society. One reason is the difficulty in putting hard and fast boundaries between those who commit crimes and those who do not. Likewise, as Bruce Harris and Michael Goddard noted early on, stolen goods pass easily into the legitimate economy and the benefits are shared by all involved, directly or indirectly (Harris 1988; Goddard 1995). Even prison boundaries do not preclude the exchange of gifts and goods, legally or illegally acquired. Serving time in Bomana has achieved a cachet and is perceived by some as a rite of passage.[4] Prison time is widely accepted, especially among hard-core criminals, as not necessarily an unpleasant fact of life for those who see their horizons dimmed by life in settlements and squatter villages (Goddard 1995; Borrey 1993). As more males are incarcerated, prison will provide an even more important thread linking criminals to others. In this way the noncriminal parts of these emergent subaltern environments are linked to violence, drug dealing, assaults, and killings. Goddard is correct when he emphasizes the difficulty in erecting boundaries between legal and illegal, criminal and noncriminal (1995). In sum, the rise in urban crime and violence constitute the growth of a new surface emergence. In this evolving social order the state with all of its limitations has responded with a revised regime of punishment. In effect the state, or "bits" of it as Colin Filer suggests (1992), is used to establish a custodial presence in a context where civil institutions are barely emergent and hardly viable. This presence is a difficult burden for institutionally strong and viable governments, a Herculean task for a state so challenged as that in Papua New Guinea.

Changes in this complex relationship between shifting norms of civil society and the profound economic shifts affecting the political economy of the state are also causally connected with the "juvenation" of crime. These forces are understood at some level by the people who live at the bottom of the urban system, albeit imperfectly. As a result the ordinary urban dweller can

identify with the economic pressures operating on those who are jailed. The ordinary person and the jailed criminal share a perspective on the realities that limit life chances within this emergent underclass. Under such circumstances the effectiveness of the state's use of its ultimate sanction—imprisonment—is undermined. If the social stigma attached to being imprisoned no longer holds sway, then its capacity to deter crime has been severely compromised. This is the treadmill that the constabulary is forced to run in light of the magnitude and complexity of the social changes faced by the state.

Conclusion

Rascal gangs indicate the surfacing of a still emerging urban infrastructure for male socialization that is a manifestation of social changes and new patterns of cohesion. In this connection rascals reflect protopolitical formations of subcivil society. This process constitutes a new political condition: the reassembling of a shifting social structure and political resistance to it by the state through militarized police authority. As an evolving form of civil society, gangs and the violence associated with their activities create new rules and operate beyond the existing social norms, and as such they directly challenge the authority of the state.

In reaction to the defiance from below, the political authorities engaged in combat with rascals are formulating alternative rules to suppress, control, and depoliticize gangs. Finding alternatives is made more difficult by the reality of no clear boundaries between legal and illegal, criminal and noncriminal. The fact that political leaders have used to one extent or another their association with rascal gang leaders only distorts our perception of this reality. Nevertheless, the state's public transcript will emphasize sterner punishments to intensify the discipline to which young males are subjected.

It is within this context that the state attempts to delimit its authority. Faced with the burdens of paying off international debt and deep corruption in the highest decision-making circles of government, the state presents a public transcript that it will intervene whenever the hidden transcript driving social order is threatened. In the process the state redefines the relationship between government, civil society, and subaltern underclass as it attempts to reassert and define the political boundaries between social order and disorder.

While violence has grown disturbingly over the last ten years in Papua New Guinea, most of the violence associated with rascal gangs has been used to define territorial boundaries or establish a gang's authority. Weapons such as machetes and knives have been replaced by a variety of homemade and manufactured pistols, rifles, and semiautomatic weapons. The increasing use

of guns has manifold effects on the sense of security of a public already living near hysteria. In contrast, more weapons have given gang members an enlarged sense of fearlessness and an increased willingness to defy police authority and intimidate those who would defy their authority. Faced with intimidation new urban dwellers are often not ready to confront the growing lawlessness of young gang members. Within the subaltern life of the growing urban underclass, urban dwellers may react personally to crime; they are often the victims. But at this juncture they are not prepared to assume responsibility individually for arresting crime. Given the circumstance of a severely compromised state, one whose very legitimacy is held in question, the outcome is clear. Because urban dwellers have few real incentives to counter the perceived power of gangs they fail to sustain a sense of a public sphere, a disengagement that leads to further civil distrust. Under these conditions there is little support for intervention.

As the militarization of the police response deepens, the state is forced to invent opportunities to extend the legitimation of its intervention. Again, Sinclair Dinnen's perceptive observations on the elaborate mass surrender of firearms by some members of rascal gangs illustrate the ends that police will turn to to create the impression of effective efforts to stem gang violence.

In addition to the spectacle of the government's revised strategies of harsh regulations on the one hand and a willingness to negotiate with rascal leaders on the other, internal factors inhibit the political economy of urban gangs. As noted previously, imperfect social bonding affects the abilities of young gang members to forge and maintain bonds of solidarity and thus limits their opportunities to extend activities across larger territories. In an earlier article, I took issue with Bruce Harris's optimistic view of the viability of rascal organization and the extent to which it would develop and grow (Hart Nibbrig 1992). With the advantage of hindsight I would add that though rascals generate income from a variety of sources including growing trade in drugs, weapons, and stolen goods, they are apparently unable to generalize their wealth-producing activities. For example, there is little evidence to suggest that rascal leaders are accumulating wealth and acquiring holdings in the mainstream economy in Papua New Guinea or elsewhere. In other words, if wealth is being accumulated it is not done from the bottom. That accumulation is reserved for those who have control of, or access to, decision makers high in government. Rather, gang leaders appear to operate with limited cognitive processes, similar to those associated with "token" economies. In these circumstances wealth production is unconnected to such power-expanding processes as entrepreneurial vision, constrained consumption, or strategic investment decisions (Lane 1992:351–355). This means that whatever we think of the income-producing capacities of rascals, they are confined to

microniches governed by short time horizons and narrowly defined conceptions of self-interest. Given this, their potential for transition to larger domains of economic activities remains restricted.

Politically, rascal gangs, in whatever form they take, reveal something about the shape of the emergent urban system that is developing in Papua New Guinea. Concomitant with this is the disturbing fact that political officials and the police forces around the country lack the wherewithal to articulate a meaningful political vision, to say nothing of the state's eroded legitimacy within the very domains in which it attempts to assert itself. Meanwhile growing numbers of economically and socially marginalized individuals continue to reject the existing social order. Correspondingly, cultural differences spawn deviant and destructive behaviors. The proverbial beat goes on. Seen in this light, rascals are part of a growing, dissonant, angry, evolving political culture spawned by national economic development policies that are fundamentally transforming the lives of hundreds of thousands. This continuing development process powerfully affects the rapid growth of urban social life in Papua New Guinea and is reflected in the social and political culture of urbanized areas generally and the National Capital District particularly. While the old cultural ties to village life remain strong and viable for many, those ties weaken with every generation born within the new urban reality. Something quite different—oftentimes ugly, uniquely urban, too often violent—now shapes the growing underclass segments of Papua New Guinea's poor.

NOTES

1. Rape is a common form of violence in Port Moresby; elsewhere it is not justified as being motivated by economic deprivation. Analysis of rape requires a separate framework based on the literature of violence toward women and of gender relations in general.

2. Interview with Mr. Skate in 1988.

3. For a different analysis, see Goddard 1995:55–80.

4. Michael Goddard doubts that there are rigorous rites of passage with respect to gangs in Papua New Guinea.

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