Village Inventions: Historical Variations Upon a Regional Theme in Uiaku, Papua New Guinea

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ABSTRACT

Anthropologists have come to realize that even the most ‘traditional’ Melanesian practices and ideologies may be historically shaped by the people’s experiences within encompassing regional systems. This article examines the reshaping of local understandings of the village among the Maisin people of Oro Province over the past century. I distinguish three contexts within which Maisin notions of the village have been formed: colonial models of village government imposed before the Second World War; Christian village cooperatives in the post-war colonial period; and village meetings in the 1980s. The paper shows that the idea of the village has a complex evolution, shaped within overlapping dialogues between villagers and significant outsiders and between elder and younger village leaders who have had differing experiences of the outside world and the place of their own community within it.

Before brother
We never thought
But now beware
We must think

You used to live in a village
Now you live in the town
The village is good for you
The town is not good for you

Leave the Town,
Kali Vatoko and Albert Leomala (Wendt 1975:41).

Ethnographers have long worked from within Melanesian village societies, often viewing them as microcosms of larger socio-cultural groups. Recent research into local histories and regional systems, however, suggests that villages may be studied as historical creations in their own right. Over the past twenty years, a number of researchers have worked from the premise that local Melanesian ‘cultures’ should be understood as ongoing creations or ‘inventions’ formed within historically constituted regional fields rather than as autonomous, self-reproducing systems (see Carrier 1992). This insight has been projected into the pre-colonial past in several important studies of regional trading networks. It has also encouraged many anthropologists to seriously consider the effects of colonial and post-colonial systems upon local communities. We now have excellent studies, for instance, about the ways local peoples adapt received kinship and
exchange practices in response to encompassing market systems (e.g., Carrier and Carrier 1989, Gewertz 1983, Gregory 1982); about the growing self-conscious use of ‘culture’ by Melanesians in political actions and the formulation of identity (e.g., Keesing and Tonkinson 1982, Thomas 1992, White 1991); and about the hegemonic subversion of some indigenous institutions in the course of colonial expansion (e.g., Keesing 1992, Lindstrom 1990, Schwimmer 1991).

Scholars have paid less attention to Western institutions and ideas that have become part of village life, but their findings are extremely interesting. We now have a better grasp of how Melanesians adapt and subvert institutions like churches, schools and tradestores to the local ‘moral economy’ (e.g., Barker 1990a, Jolly and Macintyre 1989); how they develop new forms of awareness as consumers of mass-produced commodities (e.g., Foster 1995, Lindstrom 1990); and how they negotiate their place within the ‘imaged community’ of the new Melanesian nations (e.g., Gewertz and Errington 1991, Hirsch 1990). In a series of provocative articles, Lattas and his associates have suggested that such local readings should be understood as ‘mimicry’ — as symbolic appropriations of key colonial symbols which contest or even reverse hegemonic presumptions (e.g., Lattas 1992; but see Errington and Gewertz 1994). While drawing from a wide variety of theoretical positions, these scholars share a broad interest in the regional history of Melanesia, albeit usually from a local perspective.

Many insights into the changing nature of Melanesian villages can be gleaned from these studies. Two recent ethnographies, however, are especially suggestive. In *Hard Times on Kairiru Island*, Michael French Smith (1994) provides a sophisticated analysis of the moral conundrums Kragur villagers face as they struggle to reconcile the values of capitalism (as they perceive it) with local values as imagined in the ‘Good Way’ ideology. Karen Brison (1992), in *Just Talk*, documents the same sort of struggle in an informed analysis of the heated discussions and gossip occurring in Kwanga communities. Both Kragur and Kwanga peoples expend considerable energy criticizing and attempting to reform their villages; both groups perceive this as the best way to achieve the benefits of ‘development’. The village in both cases is thus a self-conscious object of moral concern and political negotiation. Although Smith and Brison work in the East Sepik Province, their studies may illustrate a common phenomenon in the long-contacted lowland societies of Papua New Guinea. The Maisin people of Oro Province, for instance — culturally distant and having experienced different colonial administrations and missions from the Kragur and Kwanga — engage in debates virtually identical to those examined by Smith and Brison (e.g., Barker 1985, 1990b, 1992).

While villages have always provided venues for political struggle, the nature of local politics in lowland Papua New Guinea has been shaped and reshaped by colonial policies and the emergence of new regional systems. Scholars have examined the impact of early colonial policies upon villages and have addressed the present day political process within village societies. They have paid less attention to the historical space between. This is where I hope to make a contribution. Drawing upon my research with the Maisin people of Uiaku, I present a historical sketch of the village from the inception of the colonial project in 1890 to the mid-1980s in independent Papua New Guinea. The main thrust of my argument is as follows: regulating villages to conform to European notions of community was a signature ‘project’ of colonial governments and missions. After several decades of enforced reform, Maisin leaders came to conceive of their villages in comparable ways — that is, as ongoing projects and as key sites for the formation of political entities. Over the years, the Maisin’s consciousness of their community has been informed by people’s regional experiences; by their perceptions of their traditional cultures and significant outsiders; and, importantly, by their past experiments in creating village solidarity.

I do not provide a strict chronological account of the several ‘inventions’ of Uiaku
village. Instead, I divide my analysis into three periods to make related but distinct points. The first section deals with the years between 1900 and 1942 and argues that the colonial administration and Anglican mission initially imposed the village project upon people with a very different conception of local politics and polities. The second section turns to the village cooperative movement lasting from 1946 to 1964, a movement that grew out of a meeting of minds on the ideal nature of village society between Anglican missionaries and the first generation of Maisin Christians. I then jump to the 1980s, the time of my own fieldwork, to describe how Maisin have internalized the notion of the village as a political unit and their attempts to work out the implications of that knowledge in the circumstances of post-colonial Papua New Guinea.

COLONIAL INTERVENTIONS IN UIAKU, 1900-1942

The early administrations of British New Guinea (1888-1906) and Papua (1906-) pursued broadly consistent policies aimed at suppressing raiding and warfare, improving health and security, and assuring a supply of labour to European plantations and mines. Chronically short of personnel and resources, the administrations relied heavily on Christian missions and Native appointees to extend and maintain control over local populations. From the start, government agents identified villages as the primary venues of control: as the base units in the hierarchical administrative structure. The missions also grounded their work in villages, around churches and schools. The political, economic and ideological forces at work in the early period of colonialism did much to define localities and the people living in them — so much so that it is now difficult to appreciate the fluidity of precolonial Papuan society.

Ethnographic and archaeological evidence points to a very high degree of fluidity, of substantial flows of goods and people, across wide areas of present-day Papua New Guinea. Collingwood Bay provides a good example. There is evidence of trading links extending as far as the Trobriand Islands going back some 1000 years (Egloff 1979). Before contact in 1890, the Maisin participated in trading and raiding networks encompassing the Bay and adjoining inland regions. Maisin from Uiaku worked greenstone into axe and adze heads from a quarry at Wakioki at the base of Mount Suckling (Seligman and Joyce 1908); they journeyed as far away as Cape Vogel, trading the finished stone blades along with sago and other goods for obsidian from Goodenough and red spondylus shell from further east; and they engaged in raids on villages from points east of Cape Vogel and west past the Musa River. Long distance trade and warfare ended with pacification around the turn of the century, although Maisin continue to engage in some local trade to this day.

Linguistic, ethnographic and historic evidence indicates substantial movement and mixing of peoples in recent pre-contact times. Dutton (1971) identifies five languages and twenty-two dialects in the Collingwood Bay region. Members of the four larger language groups are widely dispersed. Maisin-speakers, for example, live along the southwest corner of the Bay, in the community of Uwe near Cape Nelson, and in the great Musa swamps far to the west (where they believe humankind originated). All the peoples studied in the region have extensive oral traditions of migration, warfare and dispersal and remember hundreds of village sites and encampments in the bush and along the sea (Barker 1985, Kamit 1975, Stephens 1974, Gnecki-Ruscone 1991).

These linguistic groups did not and do not correspond with polities. Nor do the villages necessarily form political units. People identify first with their patrilineal clans, each with its own emblems and history of migration and settlement. In the larger multiclan villages like Uiaku, people do not share a common sense of pre-contact history. Because different clans arrived in Uiaku via different migration routes from the Musa area, clans are believed to be allied first with groups they encountered en route rather
than with their neighbours in the village. Although these events happened long before their own births, Maisin spoke to me of these alliances as if they are still active; many told me that they had been invited to take up 'their land' among the allied clans at one time or another in their lives. Everyone was aware and occasionally suspicious of these ancient alliances; it is not uncommon when disputes arise in the villages for people to whisper that so-and-so is not 'really' Maisin but a foreigner. And, in fact, several smaller clans in Uikau openly claim to be of foreign extraction: immigrants from the middle Musa or northern Collingwood Bay who threw their lot in with Maisin-speaking clans when they passed through foreign territory on their way to their present homes. As the largest village on Collingwood Bay, Uikau thus internally mirrored the deep social fragmentation of the region (cf. Gnechen-Rusconi 1991).

Uikau was first visited by Governor William MacGregor and the Anglican missionary Albert Maclaren in 1890 during their exploration of Collingwood Bay (Synge 1908). The earliest census in 1916 put the population at 675. Like other large villages in the New Guinea lowlands, Uikau was composed of hamlets scattered along more than a kilometre of shoreline, each occupied by one, sometimes two, patriclans (cf. Malinowski 1922:351; Tuzin 1976). The clans were of two types. Kowo clans occupied the larger hamlets, their houses typically surrounding an oval plaza used for feasting and dances. Sabu clans straddled much smaller plazas, often little more than wide pathways. Maisin regarded kowo and sabu clans as comparable to older and younger brothers. Kowo clans held the prerogative of hosting feasts in their hamlets; their associated sabu assisted by providing additional food and by dancing. Sabu could not dance in their own hamlets, but they held the traditional right to lead raids and to throw the first spear during fighting. Two larger associations or loose federations of kowo and sabu clans, known as Mera ari Kowo and Worari Kowo respectively, from time to time faced off in competitive feasts, similar to the abutu of Goodenough Island (Young 1971). The larger clans enjoyed a fair degree of autonomy according to Maisin oral traditions. Maisin asserted clan identity through such customs as male initiations, hosted in clan plazas, and various taboos including a prohibition against casual entry into hamlets or gardens by non-members (cf. Seligman 1910).

The divisions between clans were offset by marriages, competitive feasting, shared raiding and common defense, especially against Musa warriors who raided Uikau during the dry season. All the same, intra-village alliances appear to have been fragile. Pre-colonial Uikau was less a 'community' than a node of overlapping and shifting networks, continually recreated by men who led by virtue of their prowess at trade, feasting or warfare and who drew upon allies within and outside the village (cf. Panoff 1969). Individuals and clans within Uikau sometimes took up arms against each other, even calling upon foreign allies for help. Elders of the Simboro clan, for instance, tell of how one ancestor joined forces with Doiriri warriors, the erstwhile enemies of all Maisin, to avenge himself upon six of his sabu clans, which were entirely annihilated. Maisin say that they once all lived together in Uikau until local quarrels led to their dispersal around the Bay. One does not have to go into the legendary past to find evidence of the fragility of local peace. Clans fled Uikau following fights during the colonial period — a fact noted in government reports. In 1983, following the beating of a young man and the near-drowning of some of his clansmen in retaliation, it appeared that clan warfare might return to Uikau.

Precontact Uikau was thus not a polity. Nevertheless, administrators and missionaries assumed that Papuan society was village-based. The projects of pacification and 'civilization' depended on the existence of cohesive villages, and, just as importantly, went some way towards creating them. The colonial authorities established churches, schools, village constables, and councils to serve whole villages, not kin groups and the shifting political factions they contained. I will discuss these introductions briefly, but I
first want to consider two less obvious but perhaps more influential ways colonial policies contained the Maisin within village limits.

First, the regional system established by the government curtailed much of the influence of clan leaders while having a minimal impact on institutions that cross-cut clan boundaries. With the imposition of police control in 1901, Maisin were no longer able to conduct raids. Further, most young men by 1917 worked for at least 18 months as plantation and mine labourers elsewhere in the Territory, draining the village of manpower. They also became the main source of imported goods. Although safer from attack, Maisin thus had fewer inducements to travel around the region. Large inter-tribal feasts continued to be held in Uiaku and elsewhere into the 1930s; but with fighting becoming a distant memory, they lost much of their raison d'être as forms of compensation and alliance-building. The initiation ceremonies for young boys in the clans disappeared even quicker (Barker and Tietjen 1990). Maisin in Uiaku appear to have become more inward looking during this time. Both oral and archival evidence suggest a marked increase in village dances and exchanges accompanying rites of passage, particularly for first born children, marriage and mourning. Perhaps these were stimulated by the flow of new goods and money from the plantation workers. Clan leaders did not organize such events. They were instead organized by elders within networks of kindred, cutting across the clan boundaries. Even the kawo/sabu distinction was greatly muted in these kindred-based activities.

Second, mission and government imposed regulations upon villages as whole units. The first missionaries and government appear to have assumed that the villagers were unified. Thus agents spoke of the ‘chiefs’ of the Maisin people and wrote nothing of clan distinctions. Indeed, patrol officers did not get around to recording clan names until the 1950s. It was the villages that counted; and which, just as importantly, provided the unit for counting. Government officers counted and recounted people, houses, dogs, latrines, coconut palms planted, cases of sickness, breaches of ordinances and innumerable other details within the village units. Missionaries counted pagans and various categories of Christians (‘hearers’, catechists, baptized, etc.), those who had fallen away from the Church, contributions, and so forth. These tabulations provided the numerical basis for enforcing regulations concerning ‘hygienic’ measures (building latrines, destroying diseased dogs, and so forth); providing labourers for government projects (particularly carriers for patrols); and, after 1918, collecting the head tax. The tabulations made it possible to compare villages: to see which were ‘progressing’. Government officers punished entire villages for poor showings on such measures, often arresting large numbers of men (and thus pushing up a village’s incarceration count).

These many interventions into the most intimate corners of local life carried an underlying message, as Thomas (1990) reminds us. They communicated the ultimate authority of colonial agents to remodel virtually any facet of life, to define ‘governmentality.’ For the first two decades of the century, Uiaku villagers resisted many regulations and the colonialists’ right to enforce them. They often refused to bury their dead away from the village, to establish coconut plantations, to carry for the government, or to repair the church and school. Elderly people in the 1980s still remembered racing into the bush whenever the resident magistrate’s boat appeared, to avoid his orders and his punishments. After 1920, however, an increasing number of villagers embraced the colonial agenda with the same fervour with which they had at first rejected it. Uiaku took on a whole new appearance as Maisin rebuilt their houses in a style favoured by the administration, as they rearranged their hamlets into parallel lines and decreased the prominence of the plazas, and as they planted extensive groves of coconuts near the village. This enthusiasm continued unabated into the 1930s, when Ganijiga (a section of Uiaku regarded by the administration as a separate village) won an award of £5 as the most ‘attractive ‘village in the district.’
By the 1920s, the young Christians filling Uiaku’s school and church were growing up in a world shaped as much by colonial practices as by ancestral institutions. They maintained their clan identities, but now also experienced themselves as villagers in a wide range of contexts. All the same, Maisin had few incentives or opportunities to govern their villages. The Resident Magistrate had appointed village constables for Uiaku (later for Uiaku and Ganjiga) since 1901. As elsewhere, however, these men had limited autonomy, serving primarily as the eyes and mouthpiece of the government representative in Tufi. Prior to the establishment of a Local Government Council in Tufi in 1965, colonial authorities made only two ineffectual efforts to involve Maisin in village government. In 1919, the mission appointed several young male converts to serve as a church council for the village. The administration followed in 1930, forming its own village council also made up of young male converts. Neither council proved effective, perhaps because they were given little to do and lacked the supervision and support received by the village constables and the mission teacher-evangelists. Despite the practical changes in village life, then, the Maisin probably had only a limited conception of Uiaku as a polity before the outbreak of the War in 1942. The changes they had experienced lay at the level of hegemony — of commonsense and practice — but had yet to rise to consciousness.

THE ‘NEW DAY’: CHRISTIAN COOPERATIVES IN UIAKU, 1946-1964

Prior to the Second World War, Maisin were obliged to heed administrative and mission rules concerning the village order, at least during the periodic inspections of colonial agents. This remained true after the War, and was much resented by villagers. But indigenous attitudes towards village society took an important turn. A group of Maisin men who had come of age during the colonial period and served during the War advanced an ideal for moral and economic reform that imagined the village as a single unified entity. Announcing their vision as a ‘New Day’ or ‘new time’ (kindi itei), these leaders advocated a sharp break with the past; indeed, they deliberately malign the customary past to win support for their programme. At the same time, the imagined New Day bore significant moral continuities with the older Maisin culture. As in so many other cooperative and millenarian movements of this period, the Maisin advocates of the New Day advanced a persuasive vision of a moral and economic order that drew upon both Western elements and deeply ingrained cultural assumptions. While the hoped for New Day failed to arrive, its elegant vision of village amity continued to inspire Maisin in the 1980s as they encountered new ideas and ideals of village life.

From the start, the cooperative movement leaders fastened on the village as the political and moral locus for achieving political and economic autonomy from the colonial masta. Ironically, the colonialists’ own insistence on dealing with the Maisin as villagers may have eased the way for this development (although by no means causing it). The Maisin’s situation bears some resemblance to that of the Tswana of southern Africa, as analyzed by Jean and John Comaroff (1991). The Comaroffs describe a series of contests during the nineteenth century between the Tswana, Protestant missionaries, and colonial authorities over the hegemonic or commonsense order of daily life. Eventually absorbing or appropriating key colonial assumptions, Tswana leaders began to speak of Tswana as a people with a common language and culture, comparable to the Whites. In other words, they began to contest colonial domination more or less within its own terms. While the Maisin did not experience anything like the comprehensiveness (or brutality) of colonialism in southern Africa, the village cooperative movement suggests that certain hegemonic notions of the village had insinuated themselves into their commonsense world by the 1940s.

The more immediate inspiration for the New Day, however, came from local
Anglican missionaries and their experiments with ‘Christian cooperation’. The New Day took the village church as the fulcrum of the imagined new moral order. Long after the mission abandoned its interest in village cooperatives, Maisin leaders continued to base their hopes for village moral reform upon the strength of villagers’ Christian faith. In this section, I want to pick up my narrative by looking at the missionaries’ activities in the late 1940s and what Maisin leaders made of them.

Upon their return to Uiaku in 1945-46, Maisin war labourers and soldiers looked to the Anglican mission for support in bringing economic prosperity to their village. There is considerable irony in this. Prior to the War, mission spokesmen frequently condemned commercial interests in Papua while celebrating a romantic image of the traditional Papuan village, now properly Christianized (see Wetherell 1977). However, as the War had progressed several missionaries felt that the economic aspirations of Papuans should no longer be ignored. The trick would be to introduce change building upon, rather than undermining, ‘good’ customary practices. In the Rev. John Bodger’s mind, an appropriate technical education in the colony should primarily benefit Papuans:

> It will be an attractive task to educate the Papuan to become a peasant proprietor. He may be induced to begin communal gardening of whatever crop grows most readily in his district in order to exchange it for some commodity which he requires and cannot produce. This will readily be an extension of his existing system of barter, which more civilized countries have called ‘Land Lease’. Perhaps the Papuan will teach the world that humanity’s needs and not market prices should govern the scale and distribution of food and other necessities of life (Bodger 1944:33).

In the world imagined by Bodger, Papuans would be taught to become more efficient farmers. They would grow food for their own use and for exchange with their neighbours. The aim of development would be to improve and strengthen village life; to keep Papuans free from capitalist markets rather than underpaid workers within them. Following the War, two prominent Australian bishops further developed and enshrined these ideals in a book-length manifesto, *A New Deal for Papua* (Cranswick and Shevill 1949).

A remarkable priest gave life to Bodger’s vision at the Gona station in Orokaiva country. James Benson had served the mission briefly in the 1920s before returning to Australia. After his wife and child were killed in an auto accident, he took vows within a religious order. In 1937, he returned to work at Gona, supervising Papuan teachers and running a new hospital. Japanese troops captured Benson in 1942 and imprisoned him under appalling conditions at Rabaul for the remainder of the War. Returning to Gona, Benson took up religious art, drawing a ‘Papuan angel’ on a large piece of tapa cloth in the church (Henslowe 1957). He spent the last years of his life as Canon of the huge gothic cathedral at Dogura near Milne Bay, where he painted a dramatic mural above the high altar. The mural depicts the adoration of Christ by the Papuan church (Kelly 1980). Figures from various racial and tribal groups form circles around the central prominent Christ, whose features are deliberately muted — at once Papuan and European.

As in his art, Benson aspired to marry the best aspects of Papuan and European cultures in village cooperatives. In 1946 he joined forces with Samuel Ungega, a mission school graduate and former member of the Papua Infantry Battalion, whose interest in cash crops had been fired by an Australian soldier during the War. They founded the Gona Public Trust, which was run by a committee made up of Papuans with Benson as advisor. Membership quickly grew as villagers contributed what money they could.
The members built a large tradestore. The following year, a government officer convinced the co-owners to split the cooperative into eight smaller societies centred in individual villages. When Benson left for a leave in 1947, the mission hired Alfred Clint to develop the cooperative program further. 'Rev. Clint was insistent that Christian ritual be associated with co-operative action. Educational and committee meetings always closed with a special prayer, there were church services at which tools were blessed and newly planted seed was blessed in the gardens' (Dakeyne 1966:60). Benson returned in 1949 and wrote in his diary of 'barns and storehouses bursting with rice, people happily busy ... true comradeship and Christian co-operation' (quoted in Dakeyne 1966:60). Despite this success, the cooperatives folded within a year of Clint's departure in 1950. According to Dakeyne, the cooperatives failed because of irreconcilable differences between the mission and the people. Benson and Clint saw 'the production of rice by co-operative methods mainly as a way of improving the subsistence diet of the people, and the people themselves ... saw it as a way of earning money' (1966:61).

Word of the Gona cooperative spread quickly through the Northern District. Schwimmer (1969:86-87) reports experiments with growing rice and Christian rituals among the Orokaiva at Sivepe and Inonda villages and William McKellin heard of cooperative activities in remote Managalase communities (personal communication). The Maisin learned of the cooperatives through two intermediaries. David Hand, then the district missionary, addressed the Uiaku church council in June 1947 on economic matters: 'Spend wisely. Bank & save NOW. Fr. Benson's ideas. Co-op' (WLB:2 June 1947). But the Maisin appear to have been especially impressed by one of their own. Saul Garandi of Uiaku, like Samuel Ungega, had served as a lance corporal in the Papua Infantry Battalion. Following the War, he went to Gona where he met Clint and Benson. He went home to Uiaku, returning with two Maisin boys to undergo training. 'Our chairman was Brother Tony Ambora,' he told me in 1982. 'He taught us. They told us to tell the people not to fight too much — to become Christians and start a co-operative. Others from [neighbouring villages] also went there to train. From there I got the seed rice and brought it home. Then I called a meeting.'

By this point, the Uiaku villagers had already tasted entrepreneurship. A Maisin teacher had pooled funds from village partners to set up a trade store and to market copra and trochus shell at Tufi. The district missionary did not approve of this mix of employment, and fired the teacher. The business collapsed soon after, with the disgruntled investors demanding their money back (Bramwell 1949). Garandi returned to Uiaku at this juncture. In September 1949, Father David Lidbetter, Hand's successor as district missionary, attended a meeting to discuss a village cooperative at which talk turned to 'inter-village hostility' (WLB:13 Sept. 1949). People remembered this meeting vividly in 1982.

In 1948 (sic) all the people from Yuayu to Yamakero came to Uiaku to have a meeting. The meeting was to start a cooperative. All the people came. At that time, Worari Kavo and Meriari Kavo used to fight too much with clubs. So we had a meeting to start a Christian cooperative society and to break the clubs. At that time Worari Kavo did not walk in Meriari Kavo's hamlet ... They walked through the salt water. They did not sit together and tell stories. So they wanted to make friends, to make peace ... Three brothers from Worari Kavo and the village constable broke the clubs. They broke them in the Meriari Kavo hamlet. From that time we could visit friends and go to each other's hamlet. After that there was a second meeting at Meriari Kavo and that is where they made a good peace (Samuel Garandi, 13 Nov. 1982).

This account, like others I heard, compresses a great deal of history into one event. By
1949, the confederacies were largely anachronisms — they had not sponsored food competitions for many years. Also by this time overt violence had become very infrequent and, according to several informants, few still respected the old prohibitions against walking in other's hamlets. The account, however, captured the ideological thrust of the meetings: an affirmation of community transcending clan identities. While appealing to Christianity as a point of unity, Garandi and others who recounted this meeting for me recalled stressing indigenous values, now to be applied to new circumstances. At the time of contact and presumably earlier, allied groups typically made peace with enemies by ceremonially breaking clubs and spears and holding a large feast. Enemies might then be transformed into exchange partners. The cooperative leaders now urged the reconciled confederacies to act like kinsmen (roisesinamme — 'siblings' or extended families), freely exchanging land, labour, and crops to better the entire community. They thus attempted to encompass the entire village in an ambiance of the type of generalized reciprocity normally shared only between close kin.

The villagers formed two 'Christian' cooperative societies on either side of the mission station at the centre of Uiaku. This was a significant innovation: for the first time, the Maisin independently created polities based upon location rather than clan affiliation. Each society put aside a shared gardening area to plant rice. At the request of the cooperative leaders, Lidbetter held communion services in both gardens that year during which he blessed the crops (WLB: 29-30 Nov. 1949). In April 1950, Lidbetter reported that 'The Ganjiga-Isu Coop Gardens are excessively good — rice & many experimental crops' (WLB: 11 April 1950).

Standing on the sidelines, government officers regarded the budding alliance between the mission and the Maisin with considerable misgiving. Administrators in the Gona area had already expressed fears that the cooperatives marked an upsurge of 'cultism' comparable to the cargo cults being reported from New Guinea (cf. Dakeyne 1966:60; Schwimmer 1969:86). Tufi officers suspected that an unrealistic desire to gain access to the massive wealth and power of European society motivated the local rage for Christian cooperatives. They reported that the natives were increasingly defiant, even impertinent.

All the peoples of Collingwood Bay are very co-operatively minded and have been ever since the war. The failures they have had in the last few years have in no way deterred them. They have seized upon co-operation as a means towards an end, a complete new order, by which they will advance both economically and socially. Any attempt to talk them out of this immediately breeds suspicion in the minds and they imagine they are being robbed of their chance of advancement (Bell 1955).

Bell was directed 'to interfere as little as possible and let the people work out their own problems'; harsher measures might cause villagers to withdraw even further 'into mission sponsorship and this in turn makes assessment of the position difficult since missions (as does the Administration) tend to keep failures to themselves' (G. Morris, in Bell 1955). From the administration's perspective, the Christian cooperatives were at best impediments and at worst threats to orderly change in the rural areas. Officers across the Northern District objected to 'communalism', which they identified as a Papuan trait (but which also formed an essential part of Benson and Clinit's notions of Christian cooperation). Villagers insisted on pooling resources, labour and proceeds in each commercial venture. As a result, the officers believed, the tremendous enthusiasm with which villagers took up each new cash crop quickly gave way to disinterest as they faced the problems of getting everyone to work together, especially when large profits were not quickly realized. The cooperatives thus stifled entrepreneurship and made the
reinvestment of profits into new ventures almost impossible since this required a consensus of cooperative members (Crocombe 1964:29).

Even after the mission terminated its cooperative program in 1950, the administration found it difficult to bring the village cooperatives in Uiaku under control. Recognizing that the leaders needed training to handle simple financial records, the Assistant District Officer arranged for Saul Garandi to attend a new cooperative school in Port Moresby (Born 1950). Garandi failed to complete the course and withdrew from the cooperative. In 1952, the Territorial Co-operative Officer, Harry Jackman, visited Uiaku and closed down the two cooperatives, publicly (and dramatically according to witnesses) disbursing the collected funds of £484. Immediately afterwards, the Maisin reinvested £442 to form a single Uiaku Christian Village Society (Stuntz 1952). Through the 1950s, agricultural officers encouraged Maisin to plant coconuts, coffee and cocoa. The villagers took up each crop with enthusiasm, but always on a cooperative basis. Each failed. While administrators blamed the cooperatives and ‘communalism’, the Maisin blamed the government. Villagers complained about the lack of regular coastal shipping which made it difficult get the new crops to market. They also suspected that the government itself was not fully committed to their welfare. Saul Garandi believed (incorrectly) in 1983 that the ‘Government sent [Fr. Clint] away. They wanted to start the cooperative themselves.’ But they did not follow through with ‘advice’: the knowledge that would have helped cooperatives succeed.

Although missionaries were only peripherally involved in the Uiaku cooperatives, Maisin leaders spoke of the organizations as the mission’s gift. This should be understood in two senses. First, the Maisin regarded the cooperatives as something given to them by the originators, Benson and Clint. Second, as in any exchange, this gift implied an ongoing moral relationship and the obligation to make an equivalent return. And so it was in association with the mission that the Uiaku Christian Co-operative Society had its most important success. Through sales of copra carried by the mission boat to Samarai, the Uiaku people raised enough funds through the decade to construct permanent houses for school teachers and an iron-roofed church in their village, the first in Collingwood Bay. When Bishop George Ambo consecrated the new church in 1962, he also installed a (Papuan) priest — the first resident priest among the Maisin since 1920. For this ceremony, the Maisin surrounded the church with a fence of crossed sticks (oraa) made from the tree emblems for each of the high ranking (kawo) clans. Symbolically, the church was turned into a ceremonial clan house (kawo va) like those which had formerly been erected in hamlet plazas during feasts. By putting the clan insignia together, the Maisin signaled, as they had with their ceremonial breaking of spears and clubs thirteen years earlier, the new unity of their village in cooperative activities and in the church. As we shall see, Maisin elders in the 1980s spoke of the church as a physical embodiment of the New Day and as the return ‘gift’ to the mission (and to the Christian god) which had made it possible.

Even as the cooperative was enjoying some successes, the Assistant District Officer sought to close it down and prevent establishment of new societies. In 1962 Romney Gegeyo organized a new Maisin Cooperative Society while on holiday from his job as a cooperative inspector stationed on Bougainville (Dunkerley 1962). Gegeyo told me in 1982 of his vivid memories of Jackman tearing up the cooperative account books in 1952. Now an inspector himself, he became progressively impatient with what he saw as the Cooperative Branch’s lack of interest in the Collingwood Bay villages. ADO Dunkerley reacted quickly to shut down the new society. Villagers protested vigorously, forcing the administration to relent and at last agree to support the establishment of a cooperative at Uiaku. Two high school graduates, Mervyn Moi and Nigel Bairan, took courses in running trade stores and bookkeeping at Port Moresby and the villagers began to collect shares, eventually investing £990 in early 1964 (Cape Nelson, Annual
Report 1963-64). Never much of an economic success, the Maisin Cooperative Society was still sputtering along as a trade store in 1986.

The Anglican mission’s involvement in village cooperatives lasted only a few years, but Maisin continued to associate local economic development and village government with Christianity. Wary of capitalism, the missionaries had come up with an initiative that resonated with the Maisin’s aspirations and cultural orientations at the time, particularly in its emphasis on sharing, community solidarity, and ritual. As Erik Schwimmer (1968, 1973) notes in his analysis of similar developments among the Orokaiva, these rather vague Christian values mapped easily upon indigenous notions of exchange, morality and magic. Not surprisingly, Schwimmer, like many government officers, suspected that the cooperatives movements were merely dressed up older cultural orientations in a new guise, albeit one more acceptable to the colonial power. While I believe this assessment is no longer tenable, I do think that the various cooperatives and their associated ideologies of the New Day marked a fusing of local concerns and presuppositions with some of the dominant structures of the colonial order. In the case of the Maisin of Uiaku, this fusion proved to have a longer life than the colonial order itself.

COOPERATION AND AUTHORITY: IMAGES OF VILLAGE SOLIDARITY, 1981-1986

Uiaku did not change much in physical appearance between 1965 and late 1981, when I first arrived; but the changes were telling all the same. The village had shrunk from around 600 people to less than 500. Children, young families and the very old made up the bulk of the population. My village census revealed an hour glass shaped distribution of age groups, reflecting a massive out-migration of people to schools and then jobs mostly in the expanding public sector of Papua New Guinea. Because of their early access to mission schools, including the first high school established in Papua, Maisin adapted to decolonization by exporting elite labour to the urban areas (cf. Carrier 1981). In turn, working Maisin supported their kin in the village with gifts of money and commodities as well as the school fees for the next generation of children. Hence most villagers had become somewhat dependent upon money and factory manufactured commodities. Everyone wore European clothing, used nylon fishing nets, and purchased tobacco from the local cooperative shop. Villagers collectively were responsible for their priest and deacon’s salaries, the upkeep of the school and aid post buildings, and other public works. And while nobody had much by ‘First World’ standards, some households possessed more than others, introducing a new kind of inequality to village life. In short, Uiaku had become significantly more integrated into the emerging national economy of Papua New Guinea.

As in other isolated rural areas of Papua New Guinea, however, the economic opportunities for local folk opened by this increased integration were limited. Uiaku remained far from roads and shipping lanes making it near impossible for villagers to market cash crops with the limited exception of tapa cloth. Villagers remained subsistence gardeners, fisherfolk, hunters and gatherers, much like their ancestors. They continued to rely upon the forest, swamps and ocean around them for most of their needs. And they still lived in clan-based hamlets, engaging in regular informal and occasional formal exchanges. On the surface, the assimilation of Uiaku into the larger economy seemed rather smooth. But there were many undercurrents of tension. I have suggested elsewhere that reconciling the inevitable inequalities caused by the remittance economy, in which those families well-endowed with working relatives received more than others, generated most of the discontent. It had become progressively more difficult for villagers to even out exchanges. In public discourse, however, Maisin focused their frustration on local institutions for which they shared responsibility, espe-
cially the cooperative society trade store. As in Kragur village, described by Smith (1994), most Maisin felt they were 'poor'. They also felt to a considerable degree that they were the authors of their own problems (Barker 1993). Many things would have to change to correct the situation. The key, everyone agreed, was to unify the village (and eventually the Maisin people as a whole).

As we have seen, this was an old theme. In reality, Uiaku had never been so unified politically, mostly as the result of its integration into the national economic and political system. In 1965, when Uiaku and Ganjiga first elected representatives to the new Local Government Council at Tufi, there were only three village-wide associations. Sixteen years later, Uiaku boasted at least a dozen associations and committees, almost all geared to promoting economic and social development projects in the community and maintaining public institutions such as the school, church, medical post and trade store. To be sure, these institutions often existed more in name than actual presence. The same small group of high school educated people acted as the executives for most of them; they had only sporadic success at keeping the villagers focused on common projects. Yet by the 1980s it had become commonly accepted that projects and politics affecting the whole village should be handled by the village associations and their leaders.

As in previous generations, Maisin found themselves caught up in a dialogue between two conceptions of community. The dialogue had now literally come home, expressed in periodic community meetings called to discuss common concerns. With women, children and newly married men sitting at a distance, middle-aged and elderly men sat together in a community shelter near the church, making speeches in turn about the concerns of the day. The aging men who had organized the post-War village cooperatives formed one party of opinion. I shall refer to them as 'elders' since they no longer led any village corporations but commanded respect both from their past accomplishments and their senior positions in their clans. The other party was made up of a younger group of men, then in their late 40s, who had gone to high school and beyond and worked for a period in government posts before returning to Uiaku. I shall call these men 'managers' since they managed the village corporations. I do not want to suggest that elders and managers explicitly opposed each other. Their differing images of the village were implicit in their speeches at community meetings. While each party's perspective implied criticism of the other, they focused their comments upon common enemies of village unity.

Not surprisingly, elders spoke mostly of the legacy of the village cooperative movement. They structured their representations of the New Day as a conversion experience, a turning away from the violence and divisions of the past to communal unity (see Barker 1993). This transformation was achieved through reciprocal relationships with colonialists, especially the missionaries. Adelbert Sevaru at a meeting in 1982 provided villagers gathered to discuss the ongoing difficulties of the cooperative store with a typical history lesson:

During the War some Europeans didn’t know much about the Papuans. So they asked those Europeans who had been here a long time: “How do these Papuans live? They make gardens but they have no money.” Before that time we made gardens and went fishing. We didn’t think of money. The government tried to make us plant coconut plantations — but the people just ate the coconuts. They didn’t worry about money. Missionaries taught us, gave us advice. Those Europeans gave you the Society. Every day you go to the Society store. Give advice to those who run the store. Look after it always. It is not good to let the store men face temptation ... The government and mission agreed to give the Society to you. The priest said you must always attend the store and
give advice to the young people ... Father Lidbetter said, “It is O.K. The Uiaku people built a wood church with an iron roof, so it must go to them.” So the Society comes to us because we built that house to the Spirit (Fieldnotes, 8 Oct. 1982).

Sevaru appeals for social amity (marawa-wawe), for the people of the village to work together as they do with close kin.

Whereas the elders’ speeches would be mostly opaque to outsiders unfamiliar with Maisin history, the managers’ speeches sound very familiar. The managers spoke of ‘development’ and ‘self-reliance’; that is, they spoke in phrases (using the English terms) resonant with the language and ideology of international development favoured by the elite in Papua New Guinea. They spoke in terms of a top-down model of change, in which villagers should accept directions from their educated and elected leaders. However, they also took care to situate their imagined government within Maisin history. Thus in a speech concerning the cooperative store, Romney Gegeyo reminded the gathered people of how their parents used to work together to celebrate the patron saint of Uiaku’s church.

In the old days, all the people worked together for St. Thomas Day. They hunted and fished and cooked together. But these days only a few people fish, hunt or cook on the mission station for St. Thomas. In the old days they worked together and helped one another. But now people always argue and do things as they wish ... In the old days, the elders did it. Now most of them have died and so it is you who must do this. The elders who organized things and shared the food are all dead. Now it is you! You have their place ... These days we select new leaders, so we must listen to them. We select them as leaders, so we must listen to them (Uiaku, 16 Feb. 1982).

Gegeyo here acknowledges the amity celebrated by the elders, but he places it in the ‘old days’. The point of continuity he stresses instead is ‘listening’ (or obedience) to leaders. The speech seems to suggest that if the villagers will listen to their new leaders as they did to the old, they will no longer fall prey to arguments and selfishness. Development is thus seen as evolving from the older efforts of the elders — perhaps as their legacy. Gegeyo, however, shifts the source of village solidarity from the value of amity (marawa-wawe) to the equally important, and ‘traditional’, value of ‘respect’ (muau) towards one’s elders. His remarks are also markedly more secular than Sevaru’s.

Elders and managers idealized the village in distinct ways that imply some discomfort with each other’s vision. However, I never witnessed anything resembling a debate or open disagreement between a manager and an elder. They did not present themselves, nor were they perceived by villagers, as ‘progressives’ and ‘traditionalists’. Such a distinction could not be supported by Maisin’s common assumptions concerning their recent history. While Maisin had had differing involvement and experience in the colonial world over the years, no one could be seen as — and no one proclaimed themselves to be — ‘traditionalists’ rejecting the changes that colonialism had brought. The key events of the New Day were repeatedly evoked in meetings and in private and had become a pivotal moment in local history, of equivalent importance to the emergence of the first people from the underworld (Barker 1993). The elders’ riposte to managers drew its strength from these events and their associated values, not from a defense or even a distinct image of tradition. Managers and elders actually shared much common ground in their embrace of the village as a polity.

First and foremost, elders, managers and everyone else accepted that the village should be unified, that all villagers should work together. The fact that villagers were
unable to achieve this ideal — at least never for long — provided the main fuel firing the long village meetings. Second, all accepted that, whatever help the government and mission had given in the past, they were uncertain partners at best for the present. Villagers wanted their leaders to seek funds and expertise from outside for local projects — this is why they elected high school graduates to leadership positions — but they remained suspicious of the motivations of outsiders, particularly those with interests in Maisin lands. Third, all Maisin embraced a vigorous ethic of equality (cf. Burridge 1960). Elders and managers both denounced ‘big-heads’ who neglected their community duties and thought only of themselves. They blamed the failures of village ventures on such individualism. As has been documented in many other Papua New Guinea communities, the managers themselves were targets of these kinds of criticisms. Since they handled relatively large quantities of money and commodities, and dealt with outsiders who were capable of advancing bribes, most villagers found it easy to believe that their leaders were working only for themselves and their families. Communal efforts floundered on such gossip. And so gossip itself, as much as individual selfishness, was seen as one root of the community’s ‘poverty’. Thus while they put a different ‘spin’ on the problems facing Uiaku, the elders’ and managers’ critiques embraced a common cast of scapegoats.

The attitudes I’m describing have been documented in scores of monographs on Papua New Guinea villages. As Smith (1994) and Brison (1992) show in their fine grained accounts of village meetings in the East Sepik Province, for instance, village leaders speak of a strong sense of guilt mixed with frustration and sometimes anger (see also Burridge 1960). Different as they are, ideologies of conversion and self-reliant development alike are double-edged: they promote heady notions of self-empowerment, but, at the same time, explain failure in terms of personal faults or inadequacies. There is little wonder then that villagers in Uiaku often seemed obsessed with their failure to achieve ‘development’, a failure explained mostly in terms of gossip, selfishness, and ignorance — and in terms of sorcery, which encompasses all such moral failings. Managers and elders alike spent much of their time in village meetings either confessing the general moral failures of the village or castigating villagers for not living up to their idealized community.

In narrow practical terms, the Maisin of the 1980s were far closer to realizing a form of village government than they had been through the long years of colonial rule. But perhaps this is not the point. As discourses, the ‘New Day’ and ‘development’ hung upon idealizations of village solidarity, at once nostalgic and urgent: backdrops against which present dissatisifactions stood out in sharp relief. In authoring and authorizing such constructions of the village, elders and managers both worked to legitimate their own authority. The silence in village meetings concerning women’s contributions to the local economy (subsistence and tapa cloth) and the people’s reliance upon remittances was deafening. Leaders instead articulated a historical construction of village society that excluded women and young men while celebrating the village institutions under their own control.

I do not mean to imply that the male-sponsored visions of village solidarity should be reduced to a kind of false consciousness. During the 1960s the Maisin entered into a period of rapid change unmatched since first contact. By the early 1980s, virtually all younger men and the majority of women in their 20s and 30s were living away from Uiaku, mostly in distant towns. The villagers who remained enjoyed the money and goods flowing back from their employed relatives, but now also found themselves responsible for unprecedented expenditures, especially the school fees that allowed their households to stay within the remittance system. Apart from nagging educated children about their continuing obligations to their rural relatives, villagers had minimal control over the workings of the remittance system. Some children were more gen-
erous than others; jobs came and went; some families had more working relations than others. Uneasiness with growing inequality and economic uncertainty contributed to people’s perception of rampaging individualism. Images of village solidarity spoke to a hope of transcending such divisions, one that drew upon cherished images of tradition and of community gatherings, as well as hopes of eventual adjustment to the outside economy. And while institutions like the cooperative store seemed to cause people little but grief, it is hard to see what other symbols of solidarity and economic hope people might have found.

The discussions I heard in village meetings in the 1980s reflect, in the long term, a dialogue between Maisin culture and the encompassing socio-political order. But these two domains had long ceased to be separate in Maisin discourse. Both the New Day and the ‘development’ ideologies incorporated Western assumptions in different ways. The immediate dialogue between managers and elders, then, was between two images of accommodation, each of which rested along the continuum of village solidarity. The political significance of these accommodations is anything but clear. On the one hand, we can see them as evidence of the Maisin’s deepening entanglement in and domination by the capitalist world. On the other hand, it is not hard to hear the note of defiance in the key symbol of village solidarity and its foil, the individualistic ‘big head’. The idea of Uiaku as a village polity may be a product of colonialism, but it is also one with which Maisin have steadfastly resisted the dissolving powers of the capitalist economy and reasserted their autonomy against outsiders (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 1991).

CONCLUSION

THE PAPUAN VILLAGE IN REGIONAL AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

One expects villages to be conservative places. The long tradition of pastoral romanticism in the West, explored in Raymond William’s classic The Country and the City (1973), has influenced many outsiders’ views of Papua New Guinea villages. Distressed by the disruptions of industrialization in Europe, for instance, missionaries convinced themselves that the villages of tribal peoples marked ‘A way of life that has come down to us from the days of Virgil,’ and thus worthy of preservation once the evils of pagan religion had been purged (see Barker 1987). While later anthropologists did not project nostalgia for a lost way of life into their study of Melanesian cultures, they still saw villages as ‘traditional’: as repositories for cultural forms and ideas. It is safe to say that many Papua New Guineans also consider villages to be ‘traditional’ spaces. Maisin certainly do. In two earlier papers, I have explored the opposition Maisin construct between the ‘mission station’ — the school and church located in the centre of Uiaku — and the ‘village’: an opposition equivalent to contrasts between global/local, Western indigenous, and present/past (Barker 1990b, 1993). The named hamlets, the layout of houses, the constant exchange of goods: such village signifiers speak to Maisin (as they do to me) of the continuing presence of culture and of a history stretching unbroken to the moment of the emergence of the clans from the underworld. For the Maisin, all of whom to varying degrees are involved with the world outside the village, Uiaku appears alternately as a refuge and as a trap. Given the villagers’ continuing integration into the wider Papua New Guinea society, and their lack of control over that integration, it is hardly surprising that they expend so much energy and emotion debating both the nature and the future of their community. Maisin and those outsiders who have interested themselves in their fate thus tend to share a commonsense understanding of the village. Uiaku is somehow outside history; it stubbornly resists the historical forces that are transforming the larger society.

In this paper I have constructed an alternate history of Uiaku, one that perceives
the village in terms of colonial and post-colonial incorporation into the larger state and economy. I see this history operating at two levels. First, at the level of daily practices I have tried to show how colonial presumptions of village solidarity insinuated themselves into people's practical experience. In the early years of colonialism, colonial agents not only imposed village-wide institutions such as the church and the village constables, they also promoted and enforced a wide range of social initiatives that presumed a village polity, a form of personal and social government that was fundamentally new to the Maisin. Second, I have explored the conceptual emergence of the village as a product of the Maisin's engagement with significant outsiders since the turn of the century.

Jean and John Comaroff (1986, 1991) argue that hegemony and ideology mark the end points of a continuum along which power enters culture. Contests over cultural identity occur around 'habitual' practices, like the construction of houses, at one extreme, and in explicitly ideological discussions of the fate of the village, at the other. While we see both levels at work through the history of Uiaku, the contest over the hegemonic definition of the village obviously predates the entry of the 'village' as a conscious concept into Maisin discourse; unable to communicate easily with local peoples, colonial agents did their jobs as best they could to 'improve' village society. Only after the War did the village enter local consciousness, when the generation of Maisin who had come of age during the early colonial regime began a 'conversation' with outsiders which presumed the village as a natural unit of government. Changes in village practices thus appear to have 'softened up' the Maisin for new forms of self-awareness. It is as 'villagers' that they today contest their treatment by powerful outside forces.

What are the general implications of a historicized view of Melanesian village societies? The present case study suggests two. First, it contributes to a growing scholarly consensus that local social and ideological forms are best understood in terms of regional developments as well as local cultural inheritance. As many critics have pointed out, we can only achieve such contextual understandings if we move past simple oppositions between Westerners and Melanesians to examine the particular activities and interactions of both colonial and indigenous agents in a region (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, Thomas 1994). Several years ago, for instance, Schwimmer (1973) put forward the intriguing argument that the Orokaiva cooperative movement, and the New Day ideology that grew out of it, marked a cultural appropriation of Western forms and ideas. Like the Maisin cooperative leaders, the village counsellor Schwimmer focuses upon a proclaimed major break with the traditional past. Through a detailed study of Orokaivan notions of exchange, magic and ritual, Schwimmer convincingly demonstrates how the Orokaivan embrace of the colonial programme possessed a distinct cultural signature. He ends his analysis at this point without considering the colonial agents with whom the Orokaiva leadership were actually interacting. My interpretation of the Maisin New Day complicates Schwimmer's analysis. As we have seen, there was also a strong Anglican signature on the cooperative movement, the result of the innovations brought to the area by Benson and Clint. Furthermore, the notion of the New Day was promoted by a small group of younger male leaders against, as they saw it, the ways of 'traditional' society. While the New Day undoubtedly incorporated certain indigenous conceptions, it is a far jump to assert, as Schwimmer does for the Orokaiva, that it represents a continuing indigenous 'philosophy'. Instead, something new came into being.

A second implication of this study is that the experiences of earlier generations of Melanesians, particularly in long-colonized areas, must be taken into consideration if we are to understand the issues of the present. The managers who wished to bring Uiaku into an era of 'development' did not construct their vision in opposition to traditionalists but in a dialogue with older leaders who had embraced an alternative vision of village solidarity and prosperity in their younger days. The New Day ideology, as
expressed in the 1980s in village meetings, reflected a specific regional configuration in which local colonial agents, particularly Anglican missionaries, for a brief time acted as partners with village people like the Maisin. The managers, of course, articulated a vision of the village they had formed in a very different regional context; one in which they had considerable personal experience of Western education and work settings and in which formation interactions with powerful outsiders had taken place far from the villages. While managers and elders had their differences, they collaborated in their construction of a Maisin history that legitimated their own authority on the basis of remembered solidarity against the foils of traditional clan conflict and modern 'selfishness'. The villages they imagined simultaneously embodied tradition and its rejection: a neat ideological trick, although by no means an uncommon one (e.g., White 1991).

NOTES

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1. I use 'project' in the sense suggested by Nicholas Thomas (1994).
2. See, for example, the many accounts of the kula, the hiri and connected trading systems along the coastal areas of Papua (e.g., Seligman 1910, Malinowski 1922).
3. Maisin continue to trade tapa cloth with Ubir people to the north for clay cooking pots, with Miniafa people for sea-going canoes, and interior peoples for feathers. It should be noted, however, that tapa today is easily converted into cash and thus desired by neighbours for this as much as its ceremonial uses.
4. Maisin also refer to Uiaku as Goropi, their name for Mount Suckling.
5. At the time of my fieldwork, members of Mera or Kawa clans were in some disagreement as to which clans belonged and which did not. Some Maisin also identified a third association, Yun Fofu, although relatively little was known about its history. Each of these conglomerates of clans were believed to have settled together after their emergence from underground and to have made their way to Uiaku as a group (see Barker 1985).
6. Burridge notes a similar development in the hinterland of Madang, where cult activities declined marked in the face of colonization while community feasts and dances, as well as exchange, remained popular (Burridge 1960:17).
7. Despite these changes, most patrol officers continued to think of the Maisin as the most recalcitrant people on the Bay, largely on the basis of the early patrol reports.
8. Jackman (1972) credits Benson with the introduction of cooperatives in Papua.
9. Much of this money came from compensation payments made by the administration to native labourers after the War.
10. All of the people from the village clusters of Yuyamu and Uiaku. The other Maisin communities, Sina and Airara, apparently did not join in.
11. These are the two clan confederacies mentioned in the previous section of this paper.
12. Suspicions and accusations of sorcery, however, were as common in the 1940s as they were in the 1980s (see Barker 1989).
13. Livingstone Awuja headed the Yamakero Christian Co-operative to the south of the station and Saul Garandi took charge of the Gan jiga-Isu (or Vayova) Christian Co-operative to the north.
14. There is no indication in the Cape Nelson records that administrators thought the Mission was encouraging mystical attitudes towards cash crops by blessing the crops and tools and so forth, although there are hints of such suspicions in the case of the Gona cooperative (see Dakeyne 1966:60).
15. This was George Nixon Simbiri who, like the Bishop, came from the Notu village of Eroro not far from Gona.
16. For more details on the significance of this event to the Maisin, see Barker (1985, 1993).
17. As in many Melanesian communities, Maisin women rarely speak at public gatherings. However, they do make their opinions known to male kin and their husbands privately.
18. The quote is from Crabbe's, The Village, cited by Williams (1973:24).
19. Such perceptions, of course, are not limited to anthropologists. Keighly (1995:4) notes how prominent Melanesian nationalists, like Bernard Narokobi, portray contemporary villages as 'pre-Christianity, pre-labour conscription, pre-urban and pre-national.'
REFERENCES


