

Discussion  
Paper 2004/1

## **POLITICKING AND VOTING IN THE HIGHLANDS: THE 2002 PAPUA NEW GUINEA NATIONAL ELECTIONS**

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This discussion paper contains three studies relating to the 2002 National Elections in Papua New Guinea (PNG). Drawing upon firsthand observations and fieldwork experience, the authors focus on aspects of the elections in Enga, Southern Highlands and Simbu Provinces respectively. They each discuss the extent to which the elections were democratic, describe how election campaigns and polls were conducted, analyse ongoing or emergent trends and consider the implications of these for future elections.

**Philip Gibbs – Democracy and Enga Political Culture**

**Nicole Haley – A Failed Election: the Case of the Koroba-Lake Kapiago Open Electorate**

**Abby McLeod – White Horse 27: the Electoral Campaign of Bari Palma**

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The contribution  
of AusAID to  
this series is  
acknowledged  
with appreciation.

# DEMOCRACY AND ENGA POLITICAL CULTURE

PHILIP GIBBS

Enga is one of 20 provinces of Papua New Guinea. In this highlands province, during the recent 2002 elections there were 17 candidates for the provincial seat (covering the entire province) and 137 candidates for the five open seats. There were also 2180 candidates for the 327 local council wards. Many of the 43 registered political parties endorsed candidates. In this paper I focus on the national parliament contest.

The elections did not go well. It is an understatement to say that the common roll was “imperfect” (*Post-Courier* 6 June, 2002, p.1), or that the elections were “deficient” (Commonwealth Expert Group on Papua New Guinea’s Electoral Arrangements, 2002). Electoral Commission funds were short (*Post-Courier* 11 June, 2002, p.1) and in many places polls were in turmoil. The Prime Minister himself, after waiting nearly five hours to cast his vote, said: “This is more than a bungle. Someone should be hung for this” (*Post-Courier*, 18 June, 2002, p.1). Political commentator, Sir Anthony Siaguru, described the national election as a “debacle” and a “travesty” and said that the country needs to ask whether “the electoral process has been so seriously compromised because of a combination of disenfranchisement and manipulation that democracy in Papua New Guinea has been put at risk” (*Post-Courier* 28 June, 2002, p.11).

The plan for Enga Province was to have one-day voting on the Tuesday 25 June. This did not happen due to various factors, including the non-availability of ballot papers. The elections began a week later and were drawn out for two weeks in a drama involving hijacked ballot boxes, the bombing of voting papers beside the Wabag Police station and fatal shootings at one

polling place (*National* 12-14 July 2002, pp 1-2; *Independent* 1 August 2002, p.2).

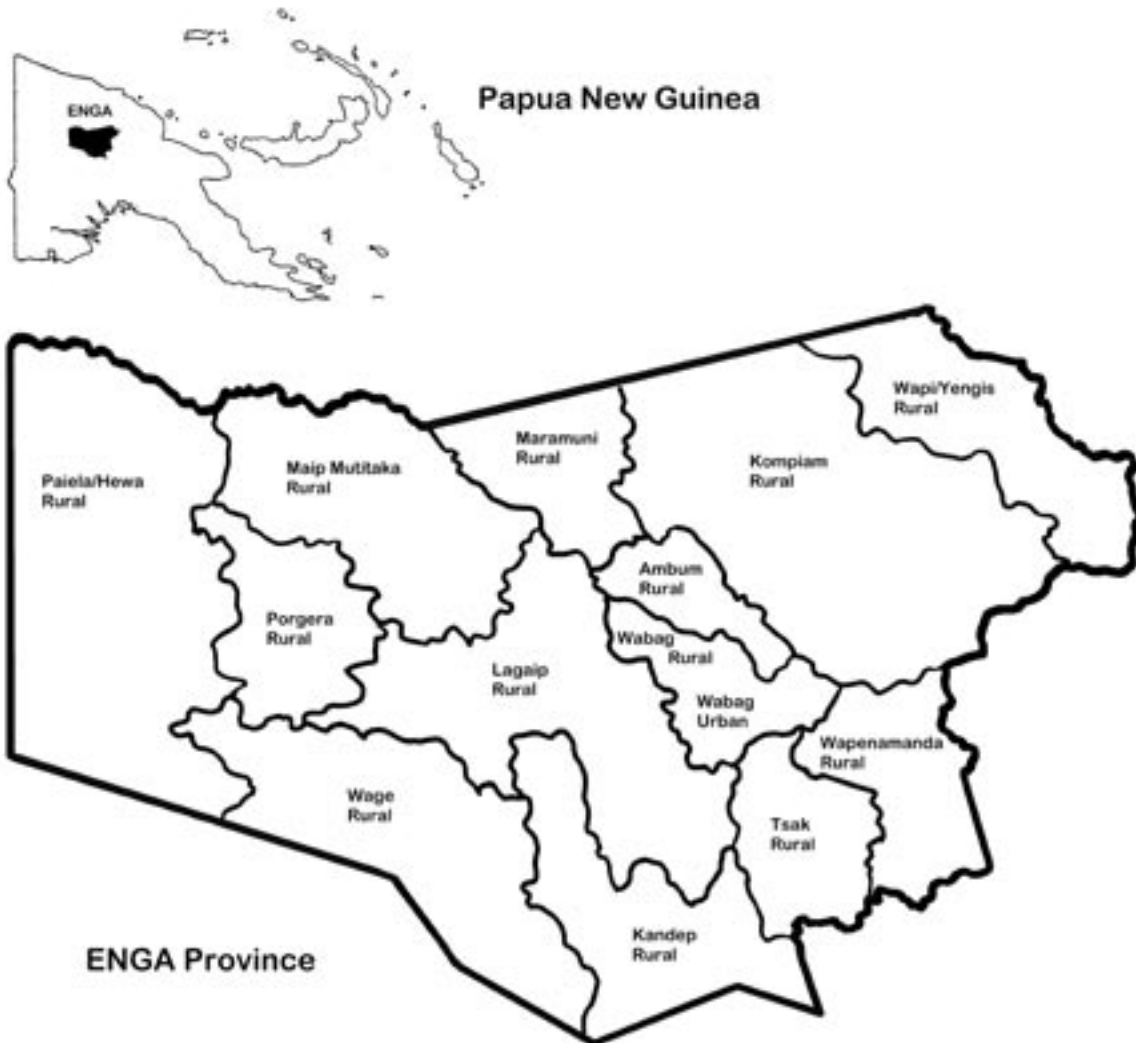
To what degree were the elections democratic? Democratic elections call for real competition between candidates, a choice between candidates and parties, freedom for people to consider alternative policies and a degree of confidentiality for voters’ choices. Dr Henry Okole in a commentary entitled “Democracy, Demo-crazy, or Demon-crazy?” questions whether competition, political participation and civil/political liberties were in fact present and whether “PNG is only masquerading as a democracy” (*National*, 1 October, 2002, p.13).

Results in Enga were declared as follows:

There were court challenges to all the results. Most were dropped or dismissed, but in November 2003, almost a year and a half later, court challenges for Wapenamanda and Kompiam-Ambumu are still unresolved. The challenge by the former sitting member Daniel Kapi against Samuel Tei Abel for Wabag has been upheld, but the dispute is still to be settled through the Supreme Court. Thus people in Wabag are not officially represented in parliament.

This paper seeks to shed light on what happened in the Central area near the provincial capital Wabag. I look at factors that impact on international standards of democracy and ask if “home-grown” Enga forms of political choice are emerging. One political scientist has noted evidence in the nearby Simbu Province, of “village or clan consensus based voting” (Standish 2002b:5). This study tries to ascertain the degree to which clan consensus based voting was present in Central Enga, and its strengths and weaknesses for promoting democracy in the Enga political process. The study is based on personal observation, discussions with election officials and other people, and two questionnaires administered to people in the lower Ambumu Valley, near Wabag (see Appendix). To preserve confidentiality, people’s names are often represented by A,B,C ... N, M; clans by  $\alpha, \beta, \chi$ , and places by X, Y, Z.<sup>1</sup>

Electorate	Candidate	Party	votes	% of vote
Enga Provincial	Peter Ipatas	PDM	123313	38.9%
Wabag Open	Samuel Tei Abal	PDM	11413	24.7%
Wapenamanda Open	Yangakun Miki Kaeok	PLP	16381	23.6%
Kompiam-Ambumu Open	Dickson Masa Maki	Indep.	7178	23.3%
Kandep Open	Don Pomb Pullie Poly	NA	13599	36.4%
Lagaip-Porgera Open	Yarka Kappa	Indep.	12720	9.5%



## REALITIES IN THE 2002 ELECTIONS

Here is an account from an Enga participant in the 2002 elections.

This morning at 5.30AM, I was awakened by sounds of cars and shouts from nearby houses. People were relaying the message from village to village that cars were bringing ballot boxes to polling areas. Five minutes later I heard two gun shots from A's place. Then there was silence.

I went to the main road and met people going to polling areas to cast their votes. I walked along the road and while doing so heard a car coming at high speed. It stopped and B (a candidate) jumped out

of the car holding a high powered gun and gave commands to crowds on the road to move to their respective polling areas and to leave the road and market areas empty. He then set off in the direction of Wabag.

I continued walking fast and encountered a police van full of policemen. Not long after, more police cars arrived followed by several other cars. Two ballot boxes were taken down from the car and brought to the polling area. I asked a young boy in one of the cars for the ballot boxes for my rest house. The young boy pointed to a truck with two boxes and nobody at the back of the truck. I jumped onto the truck and decided to turn back with the ballot

boxes to my polling area. Five minutes later, I heard gun shots coming from X.

The cars did not move and the policemen whispered among themselves. I asked a policeman and he said they needed more security along the road to Y rest house. They feared C (a candidate) on the road to that polling area because there was tension between him and B (another candidate). They knew that the candidate would be on the road waiting for them. D (a candidate) came out of a tinted glass car with a pistol in his hand and looked around and gave a command for the cars to move. We went for about a half a kilometre and the truck stopped at the back of two police cars. The ballot boxes for my rest house were shifted to the police car with an open back. I also jumped onto that police car.

Approaching my polling area, I was asked by the a clan men on the car to take the ballot boxes to their area. I argued with them. I told them that my people must cast their votes using their freedom. When we reached the polling area, I told the driver to stop and brought the boxes to the polling area. E, a reserve policeman, helped me in the argument.

The tables were set for the polling to begin and the presiding officer gave an introduction to the crowd. Before the first person was called by the polling officials to cast his vote, F, an intending candidate suggested that “the table be turned down”, meaning that he would withdraw from contesting, and in exchange, everyone should give their votes to G (another candidate). The people refused, so F told his clansmen that he was still contesting and that they should give their votes to him.

When it came to voting I did not feel free, particularly for the vote for Councillor. This was because, there were three candidates for the Council seat who are very close friends of mine. One has worked with me and another is a relative. I would feel guilty if I gave my vote to one, and not the other two. Each of them thought that I would vote for them. My mind was not working properly now so I decided to leave.

I went and passed by the Y polling area. My name is in the roll book there too,

so I knew I could cast my vote there as well if I wanted to. As I waited to hear my name called I noticed that names of small children under 16 years were on the common roll book. I was surprised to hear H's 9 year old daughter was called and her mother went to cast the vote on the child's behalf. I saw many others doing the same thing. I also noticed that only one person would go back and forth several times to cast votes when names of persons of a sub-clan were called. The persons whose names were called were nearby but they let others do it for them.

Many issues are raised in the this account:

- After many days of delay, people in Enga didn't know when the polling would begin until it happened.
- Guns (including those held by candidates) were part of the scene.
- Police were intimidated
- Even with a police escort, ballot boxes could be taken to sites other than those assigned.
- “Turning the table” (everyone voting for only one candidate) was presented as an option, but the people in this case refused.
- The person giving the account did not feel free when it came to casting his or her ballot (there was no secrecy) – a common experience.
- Multiple voting was quite possible since his or her name was on the roll in different polling places and applying an ink mark to the voter's finger was not practised in most of Enga (and the ink can be taken off with bleach).
- Some people let others vote in their name.
- There were many under-age people with names on the common roll.

## THE COMMON ROLL

There were 405,804 persons on the common roll for Enga province. The Electoral Office in Wabag received 473,000 voting papers. 406,831 papers were sent out to voting officials in the five electoral districts.<sup>2</sup> An electoral officer has noted very few unused ballot papers returned

from polling places throughout Enga. If this is true, then what happened with the papers that were left over? Some were burned but (as this paper will show) many remaining ballot papers were simply filled in and deposited in the polling boxes by candidates or their supporters.<sup>3</sup>

Electorate	Number on common roll
Wapenamanda	77,735
Kompiani-Ambumu	73,581
Kandep	48,362
Wabag	70,053
Lagaip-Porgera	136,073
<b>Total</b>	<b>405,804</b>

Table 1: Number of Persons on the Common Roll in the Enga Province

By contrast, according to the National Electoral Commission reports on the Commission's website, there were 317,213 papers "allowed" (i.e. counted) for the provincial seat and 317,602 papers for the open seats. The 89,000 difference is, mainly due to the destruction and loss of ballot papers or ballot boxes.

According to the year 2000 census, however, there are 295,031 people in Enga Province. The legal voting age is 18, so about 55% of the population, or 162,000 people would be eligible to vote. The huge difference between those eligible to vote according to the census figures and the votes actually cast was noted in an article by Daniel Korimbao in the *National* entitled, "More ballots in Enga than total population."

In a province where thousands of ballot papers were firebombed, and where candidates complained of some of their people not voting at all due to the shortness of the voting period (one day polling), this is an amazing result." 317,213 ballot papers were counted for the provincial seat, in a province which, according to the 2000 census figures has a total population of 295,031 people: men, women and children (*National*, 30 July, 2002, p.2).

These results raise a number of questions. How could the common roll be inflated by 150%? How could the number of votes cast be inflated by 90%? Why did the Electoral Commission dispatch so many ballot papers? Was it simply because the common roll was inflated or were there other factors? It appears that the election results were predetermined to a large extent by the number of ballot papers distributed rather than the number of people eligible to vote.

## CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES

Intending candidates try to attract votes using various strategies:

- establishing and maintaining a "base vote" with their own clansmen and women;
- establishing and exploiting tribal alliances through blood, marriage and trade links;
- establishing strategic alliances with other candidates and seeking to limit access to one's base area by other candidates;
- attracting voters from other areas through rallies and speeches;
- attracting voters, particularly those from areas outside one's base vote area through handouts: motor vehicles, money and sometimes cheques.

Intending candidates need the support of their own clan and hopefully the neighbouring clans that would normally support their group in exchange or warfare. This was easier to accomplish in the past and is still the case in more remote areas where "goods and services" are harder to come by. In areas where tribal fighting is common, whole clans look for means to create allies who have more young warriors, especially those who possess high powered firearms. Clans, particularly those without their own candidate, see elections as a chance to exchange votes with other clans who have more members employed in the public and private sectors. In some cases election alliances overshadow the traditional alliances maintained through intermarriage and pig exchange.

Clan unity is important, but not easy to maintain when people live along the main highway and have easier access to services. There, people have more freedom to decide for themselves and the clan has less influence over its members. For example, if fighting erupts, people living near the highway can more easily escape and seek refuge in other places, or if one is sick, close relatives can arrange transport to hospital. If there is more than one candidate from a clan, that is a sign of serious division and probable election defeat, with the likelihood of recrimination and even warfare.

Within the Sambeoko clan at Par in the lower Ambumu Valley, the Laikini sub-clan had two members standing for the open seat: Norbert Tanda and Titus Mendai. People had

tried to point out how self-defeating it was to try to establish a base vote with two candidates from the same sub-clan, but neither would give way. Norbert Tanda and his supporters supported John Pundari for the Provincial seat, partly because Norbert's mother is from Waialuni, Pundari's mother's clan. Furthermore, Pundari had given Norbert a job. Titus supported the sitting member Peter Ipatasa for the Provincial seat, partly to be different from Tanda, but also because he is from a section of the Sambeoko clan who live close to Ipatasa's home territory, Irelya. Titus is a high school headmaster and many people in education support Ipatasa because of his past free education policy. Another incentive for some of the Ipiamuni sub-clan of Sambeoko to support Ipatasa was because Governor Ipatasa had given one of their members money to publish a book. The polling for the Sambeoko clan at Par ended in disaster with two men killed on polling day and a tribal fight which lasted four months, with sixteen people killed and many injured.

The situation at Irelya also presented a base vote problem for Peter Ipatasa, with himself and rival Kundpen Talyaga being from the same Apulini tribe.<sup>4</sup> However, Ipatasa got the upper hand when the Sikita clan of Kundapen voted first. This gave the advantage to Ipatasa's Talyulu clan because when time came for them to vote it was late in the afternoon and Ipatasa and his supporters ended up with the remaining voting papers.

Having established a base vote, a candidate must maintain it. John Pundari had difficulty in maintaining the base vote he had in 1997 in the Yampu area of the Lower Ambumu. The Aiyele clan had expected some sort of project from Pundari, since his grandmother is from their clan. A group of men travelled to Moresby before the election to ask Pundari for money or second-hand cars. They returned empty-handed and in retaliation they called Wambupi, their main meeting place, "Namba tu Irelya" (second Irelya - Irelya being Peter Ipatasa's home). This was a clear indication that they would be giving their support to Ipatasa. Ipatasa seized the chance and came and gave a *panda pingi* (initial payment to initiate an exchange of valuables) to Siki Pyatoe because some of Ipatasa's supporters had injured Siki in a stone-throwing incident near Irelya. Thus Ipatasa managed to establish some support in what was formerly a base vote area for Pundari.

Some candidates see the elections as an opportunity to establish alliances with former enemies. Consider the case of the Laita and

Sambeoko clans in the Lower Ambumu. Most members of the Laita clan voted for Norbert Tanda for the open seat, and Pundari for the Regional seat. This was because many of the Laita clan are members of the SDA church, so they voted for their fellow church member, Pundari. In the vote for Kompam-Ambumu Open, the Laita clan took the chance to heal relations with Tanda's Sambeoko clan. In the late 1980s, the Laita clan had killed nine men from Sambeoko and lost five men themselves. Compensation had not been satisfactory for both parties. Secondary payments were required to establish a permanent peace settlement, so they saw the election as an opportunity for this. Their voting for Tanda was like compensation to help establish peace with the Sambeoko clan. Unfortunately, it has promoted an escalation in post-election fighting because, as noted above, after two men were killed at Par on polling day, most of the Sambeoko clan and the Laita clan are united in an election-related tribal fight against the Depau clan and their supporters.

Another strategy is to use decoy candidates to split the vote of a rival. For example, candidates for the Provincial seat may endorse candidates for the open seats. If there is a popular candidate for the Open seat campaigning also for one's opponent in the race for the Provincial seat, then one might endorse a candidate in the neighbouring clan to be the candidate for the open seat in order to reduce that candidate's influence. The decoy candidate may not stand a chance of winning, but by splitting the vote and acquiring votes for his sponsoring Provincial candidate he is assured of favours if the Provincial candidate should win. The case of Norbert Tanda could be an example of a decoy candidate luring the Sambeoko clan votes away from Ipatasa, who appeared to be getting more support from the Sambeoko clan in recent times. Rumours abound of candidates being bribed by other candidates so as to bring discord (*yama nuu mandenge* – literally, carrying an evil spirit). During his campaign, referring to such decoy candidates, Peter Ipatasa often warned people of tricksters and secret plotters in their midst (*waa katengipi, yama nuu mandenge dupame kapapao ita naminatami*).

Rallies and campaign speeches are another part of campaign strategy. In responses to the questionnaire we found that:

- all except one of the respondents had listened to political speeches.
- 28/33 said they found them "interesting".
- 26/33 said they found them "convincing".

- One man said that he found a candidate convincing because his speeches sound like a follow-up to the Catholic political awareness campaign.
- An older woman said she thought that what a candidate had said was true and honest: "You can tell from his face."
- One of those unconvinced commented: "Speeches are cargo-cultic in scope and nature, especially crafted to win the hearts of the illiterate/uneducated."

## KEY PLAYERS FOR THE PROVINCIAL SEAT

Unlike some Highlands Provinces, the Provincial Seat was the focus of attention in Enga, particularly the competition and the war of words between John Pundari and Peter Ipatasa.<sup>5</sup> Ipatasa was the sitting member and Governor. Pundari had been member for Kompiam-Ambumu but chose to stand for the Provincial seat, claiming that he wanted to stop corruption in the governance of the Province. The Provincial seat is important because the incumbent normally becomes Governor, which puts him in a position of considerable power over Provincial and Local Level Government resources. Pundari accused Ipatasa of not supporting him in the formation of the new national government in 1999, and Ipatasa accused Pundari of being part of a plot to suspend the Provincial Government in February 2001. In 2001 while Pundari was a minister in the government, he invited the Prime Minister to visit his home area at Yumbalama. Ipatasa was there, and when Pundari came to present gifts to the visitors he began by giving a large healthy pig to the Prime Minister and a smaller blind pig to Ipatasa. The symbolism did not escape the notice of the large crowd.

Later, on 17 May, 2002 in Wabag town Pundari gave a speech which included the following:

At the last minute before the polling, you will be given some money in the night. This money in the form of K2.00 you can spend on tinned fish. This money is yours. You just eat it and give your vote free to John Pundari. [He is warning them against bribery.] John Pundari, Enga Regional! When Pundari wins, the sun in Enga will be bright for the rest of

the time. Also, if you vote Pundari into the parliament, the whole nation will thank Enga for that. The nation indeed is thirsting for good leadership.

Five years in parliament is like five months. Those who enter with a black beard will be still the same by 2007 national election. Please, I ask you now to vote Mr. Pundari this time. If God does not bless Pundari's hands to improve the standard of our living in Enga and the sun does not shine or if nothing happens then you can vote me out in the 2007 national election. Try Mr. Pundari now by casting your pure vote. This is the golden opportunity for the people of Enga. Your one second decision will make differences for the province and the nation.<sup>6</sup>

Pundari likes to promote his clean church-goer image. Nevertheless, he saw fit to give out cheques to village youth groups and church groups during the campaign. Where does one draw the line between bribery and generosity?

Ipatasa liked to promote his image as the "action governor." His speech in Wabag town on 25 May, 2002, included the following:

I don't make empty promises to my beloved people of Enga. What I say is done on the same day or the following day. For instance, if the Kompiam-Ambumu road maintenance does not start before the polling starts, you can call me a liar. All politicians are liars except me. Once, Mr Pundari also had a ground breaking ceremony and started a machine to maintain the Kompiam-Ambumu road but it had never took place as he said it would happen. That is why people have no faith in his leadership. People of Kompiam-Ambumu knew him as a Moresby man, whereas the whole province knows Ipatasa to be the only leader who is with the people who shares their joys and sorrows and burdens. People of Enga should know that Mr. Pundari is only interested in the task at the national level. He tricked the people of Enga by saying that he has his heart for Enga. The only leader in Enga you can trust is your action governor Peter Ipatas. I do things straight away. You can see my finger prints in every district.

Why is Mr. Pundari so concerned about my wives? I didn't try to take his wife away from him! Well, people of Enga,

don't go deep into my private affairs. You can talk more about the services if they are not delivered to you. Mr. Pundari, please don't judge me. Who are you to judge me? I fear God only for my sins. I do not judge you for your wrong doings. All of us are sinners. Let us not judge one another, let God alone judge each one of us. I know, I am taking more wives but I am on the other hand doing God a favour by delivering the basic services straight to His people. God chose men in the Old Testament times according to their good leadership qualities. He did not count their wives. Most of them had more than one wife. I am pretty sure that God really chose me and blesses my governorship in the province and with His help the province is prospering.<sup>7</sup>

Ipatasa has five wives and is reputed to have a life-style not in the best Christian tradition. In this speech one can see the emphasis on his accomplishments for the province and his attempts to belittle Pundari's Christian image. Ipatasa is well known for giving handouts for projects and is known as the governor who "writes cheques on the ground" (yuu kaina seke pingi). In other words, he doesn't even have to carry a cheque book, but will simply tell a group of people to come and pick up their cheque in Wabag the following week.

Another popular Provincial candidate and former governor, Jeffery Balakau, took a different approach. In Wabag on 14 June he argued that the Enga governor seat was his because it was bought by his brother Malipu's blood.<sup>8</sup> (His brother Malipu Balakau, the Regional Member, was assassinated on 30 June 1989.) He claimed that Malipu never lost the seat but was killed in office. He did not die from a sickness but was killed, so, symbolically, his blood spilled over the seat. Jeffery Balakau says that according to Enga tradition he should have the right to claim the seat because the law of blood allows that. A song composed by his supporters goes as follows: Keapanya bui loo wapali bui, taeyokome sambapae o wane mana lato lakapupa (The Kiap's star [position] in Wabag, bought by blood, the children will be taught about it.)

During the election period, some candidates and their supporters also engaged in blatantly dishonest practices such as stacking the electoral roll, paying off police and electoral officials, removing bridges and intimidation backed up by firearms.<sup>9</sup> Despite police escorts, cars bringing ballot boxes were hijacked and the papers taken. Knowing that they could suffer casualties if they

started a fire fight, police chose not to resist. It is difficult to assess to what degree such tactics affected the outcome. Ballot boxes meant for some polling places such as Talemanda in the middle Ambumu Valley were intercepted and polling officials were forced to work the whole night signing ballot papers. When people came to vote the next day they found that the "polling" had already happened and they had little option but to accept the result. Word has gone around that the polling officials felt it was unfair that their captors did not even provide cigarettes or tea during the night!<sup>10</sup>

## CLAN CONSENSUS VOTING?

The responses to the questionnaires revealed four principal reasons for choosing a candidate:

- Clan, marriage or other personal ties
- Desire for material benefit or personal gain
- Personal qualities
- Religious reasons

None of the respondents mentioned party membership. Enga people show little interest in parties. Some commented "I don't trust any party," or "I have no interest in parties." Many were critical of the People's Democratic Movement (PDM), seeing it as the cause of economic hardship, but Ipatasa of PDM was the only sitting member re-elected in Enga.

Clan consensus voting is perhaps an ideal but is not widely practised at present in the Lower Ambumu area. In areas closer to the provincial capital, if candidates can convince a whole clan to unite behind them they are indeed fortunate. Perhaps a *haus* line (extended family) or close relatives will unite in their support, but that might be all he can hope for.

Rather than clan consensus, decision making appears to take place more at a family or even individual level, based on three principal questions:

- What is my advantage in voting for N?
- What will be the cost of not voting for N?
- How can we as a clan vote for several candidates as an insurance for the future?

Behind these questions lie several issues. What happens if someone gets sick? Who will come to our aid in a tribal fight? Who will give a paying job to members of my family? Who will help me with transport if I need it? How can I



travel safely through enemy territory? In the best of cases the “bunch of individuals living within clan boundaries” will realise that strength lies in numbers and they will cooperate in finding a solution to questions such as these. In the worst case someone simply points a gun or a knife at the electoral officials and instructs them how to fill in the voting papers.

The members of the Mulyao clan living near Par in the Lower Ambumu were “free” because they didn’t have their own candidate. They have several strong leaders with their own interests and these leaders influenced the clan to divide their votes three ways. The Lakoneme subclan voted for Pundari in the Provincial poll because Henry Mendai, one of their leaders, is Pundari’s campaign manager, and because one of Pundari’s brothers is a Mulyao clan member. Henry is a contractor for road and building projects and hoped that if Pundari won he could secure the lucrative contracts that in recent times have been the preserve of other groups such as Ipatasa’s Panda Construction Company. The Lakoneme subclan also voted for Henry as their council candidate. Another Mulyao subclan voted for Jeffrey Balakau in the Provincial poll because their leader was a friend to Balakau’s older brother. Two other Mulyao clan leaders and their followers supported Peter Ipatasa in the Provincial poll.

After the voting at Rakaposa, the Mulyao meeting place, there were many ballot papers left unmarked, so they were taken to a house where one of the leaders demanded 200 votes for Jeffrey Balakau, 200 for Peter Ipatasa, and the remaining papers could be marked for John Pundari. Knowing that the leader making the demands and his sons were men not to be messed with, the rest complied.

The Mulyao strategy shows how individual male leaders in a clan could get their way without the consensus of the clan. Strong-willed individuals could go contrary to these leaders, but they would need to depend on their own resources in future rather than the patronage of the leader and support of other clan members. Thus, individuals may have their own strong opinion, yet, most people feel the pressure to take the good of the clan, sub-clan, or *haus lain* (extended family) into account when making choices.

The voting figures in Table 2 show voting patterns for the Provincial Seat in the 35 boxes counted (out of a possible 80) in the Kompiam-Ambumu electorate.<sup>11</sup> In most polling places the vote is shared by several candidates indicating that there was little clan “consensus” since

many polling places are attended by just one clan. However, in eight polling places (nos. 11, 13, 15, 18, 19, 24, 25, 34) one candidate received all or nearly all the votes. There could be several reasons:

- Leaders could have convinced people to “turn the table” and voluntarily give all their votes as a bloc to one candidate. This might happen at the polling place which is the home of that candidate or of a candidate for the Open Seat who is supporting him.
- Ballot boxes could have been hijacked and the papers filled in by a candidate or his supporters.
- People could have voted under duress.

All three scenarios occurred in the Enga elections.

## **FREEDOM TO VOTE**

Democratic principles call for freedom of the individual to vote and some confidentiality. Many people had no freedom to vote because they did not receive ballot papers. Papers had to be flown to isolated areas by an overworked army helicopter. Governor Ipatasa wanted to hire another helicopter using Enga government money, but fearing political interference, Pundari opposed that option. Thus people in Keman, Kaimanda, Pulupais, and most of the Wapi District never received ballot papers and boxes. People from Laialama walked for several days to bring in the ballot boxes after the helicopter failed. At one point the boxes with papers had been delivered to isolated Yengesa, but the polling officers were still in Kompiam with no way of getting to Yengesa. The ballot boxes at Yengesa were never picked up. In other parts of the Kompiam district, such as Lenganasa, Yawalimanda Wenikosa, Kaipotesa Lyaimanda, Lengeme, and Aipanda, people did not receive ballot papers because the bridges on the road had been destroyed or the ballot papers had been hijacked.

It has already been noted that only 35 out of 80 ballot boxes were counted in the Kompiam-Ambumu electorate. As can be seen in Table 3, more than half the ballot papers assigned were not counted, because they were destroyed during fights in the polling, or the helicopter was unable to carry boxes or officials to their destination, or papers being taken by road were hijacked, transport could not be arranged to

Polling Place	Candidate																
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q
1				354	1132					280					8		
2				303	441					190		27			26		
3				388	89			9		42		3		29	2		
4		13		793	453	1				378		5			1		2
5				68	4					12							
6	1	5		105	433					390		7			1	25	
7		123		65	320			63		605		13	1	1	4	7	
8		38		239	215			206		713		3	1		31	4	
9		48		819	85			38		68		20	9	1	6		
10		5		130	325			13		119		12	71	13	2	1	
11				28						1213					1		
12				441	1					8		73		290			
13										1058							
14				113	1910					1							
15				3						1022							
16		5	1	886	64					39							
17		20		142	40			6		678		1	1	4	27		
18				639	2												
19				446													
20		20		371	484			53		58		4		39	16	4	
21	79			611													
22	25	6		96	76					15					1		
23	100			605	590												
24			1	1965						1		2					
25				1034								14					
26		151		349	148					143					5		
27	2			268	59					136		3		2	3		
28		6		301	1497					270		101					
29	3	11		109	238					29	3						
30	45			74	80				30	5		11					
31	48	1		497	3					278		5			29		
32				247	66				9	471		3			7	2	
33				272	113					469					1		
34										1266							
35		5		208	614					10		3			178	1	

Table 2: Voting for the Provincial Seat in the Kompam-Aumbumu electorate

The voting figures in Table 2 show voting

Number of ballot papers assigned	73,991
Number of ballot papers counted	34,937
Papers destroyed at polling	5,070
Papers unable to be sent out to destination	12,775
Papers hijacked	16,371
Papers not returned after polling	4,823

Table 3: Fate of Ballot Papers in the Kompiam-Ambumu Electorate

pick up the completed papers, or when the helicopter arrived, the boxes were no longer in the assigned places, people having attempted to carry the boxes to Wabag.

Apart from the Wabag town area, there is little confidentiality in voting. Voters are normally required to call the name of the persons they are voting for. Candidate's supporters are close by to listen, or to "watch people's mouths". With so much invested in food and money, candidates and their supporters want to make sure that people vote for those who have given handouts. They want to see a person mark a cross or call out a name. Some people stayed away from the voting because they had accepted handouts from several candidates and feared the wrath of a candidate and his supporters.

## WOMEN AND THE VOTE

Women are often in a difficult position because they marry into a clan from other areas. Often a woman will want to vote for her close relative, even though it might not be the choice of her husband's family. A woman from Par said how her husband has three wives and he had received money from a candidate and shared it with one wife. So on polling day when her husband went to claim the voting papers for his entire family she wrested some papers from his grasp and voted for her choice. When her husband wanted to beat her she told him that she "has a mouth too". She was referring both to her right to voice her opinion, and that she had a mouth to "eat" the election handout.<sup>12</sup>

Several women at one Lower Ambumu booth refused to vote at all because they had not received handouts from any candidate. One young woman said, "Pundari's supporters did not share what they were eating, like betel nut and cigarettes. They thought I would just follow their intentions as if I were their slave. Ipatasa's supporters thought that I was for Pundari so they never talked or came close to me. I was really

angry with them so I just refused to vote for any of them."<sup>13</sup>

Other women decided not to vote because they were afraid of the consequences. Most of the nurses at Yampu hospital did not vote because they were afraid of what the local young men might do if they voted for an unpopular candidate. One expressed her concern as follows:

The fear was especially on whom to vote for in the Council election. Councillor candidates were from the same communities and if you vote for one, the other would not like you and your family because he would think that you favour the other and not him. If there had been a place for secret voting, that would have been fine but our right to mark a leader was not allowed by our fear in that situation.<sup>14</sup>

Another woman from Par told of her failed attempt at avoiding having to vote:

I was really worried. My brother had spent a lot of money and pigs in supporting A. But I felt indebted to B. So as the elections approached I was really worried. If I gave my vote to that other candidate, how could I go to my brother for help in the future? So I decided not to vote at all. I gave the excuse that my child was sick and I had to stay back to care for him. The polling started in the morning, so later in the afternoon I decided to go to see what had happened. However, just as I arrived I heard them calling the name of my family. I pretended not to hear, but they came and got me and forced me to go and get the voting papers for my family. I was afraid, so I took the ten papers and gave them to the presiding officer to fill in for me. As I went home I felt afraid and angry. I know my vote is power, yet I felt powerless. During the campaign I was interested but now I don't care anymore.<sup>15</sup>

## **MULTIPLE VOTING**

One way to avoid alienating candidates is to vote more than once. The principal rationale for this is to establish alliances with other clans so as to receive their support in future elections, or to “cover the field” in case another candidate wins.

This year the only limit to the number of votes was the supply of papers. Hence, as shown by the Mulyao clan (above), clan leaders and some supporters met after the regular polling to decide how to split the vote on the remaining papers. To give another example, the Laita and Kali clans voted at Wakumale. As happened in many places the voting was not complete by nightfall. The Laita clan had voted first and the Kali second, thus many of the Kali clan had not had a chance to vote. So the unmarked papers were shared between the two clans, in order for the leaders of the clans to decide which candidate to vote for with those remaining papers.

In questionnaire B (see appendix) people were asked: “How many times did you vote?” 25 people responded that they voted only once. 31 said more than once, the number ranging from twice to 28 times (a mature man). The latter is not an isolated case. One young woman said she voted 26 times, giving 25 votes to one candidate and one to another. Another young man said 25 times and another mature man voted 23 times. These are not all “multiple” voting, but perhaps voting in another person’s name. Of those who voted more than once, 13 said that they split their vote

Multiple voting will be significant when planning for the preferential voting system due to be followed in future elections. In some ways the chance to vote legally for more than one candidate may relieve some of the pressure that people feel under the first past the post system. However, the added complexity of the counting will surely result in more strain.

## **DEMOCRACY**

To what extent can Enga politics be called democratic? How can we measure democracy? Do we risk using a yardstick from liberal democratic principles nurtured in Western Europe? Are the examples in this paper illustrative of a “Melanesian” or an “Enga Way?” Admittedly democracy cannot be limited to forms such as found in America or Australia. For example, Papua New Guinean forms of

democracy will surely show greater emphasis on communal than individual values. On the other hand, could it be, as Ron May has put it, that “the problems that beset Papua New Guinea will diminish the state’s legitimacy and eventually pose a threat to democracy that cannot be explained away as the result of a chaotic-looking but basically sound ‘Melanesian Way’ of doing politics” (May 2003a: 164).

The pre-election Political Awareness Campaign sponsored by the Catholic church in Enga stressed people’s individual rights:

Your vote is very powerful. Your vote represents yourself. Your vote is special. Your vote can make big differences. Your word is the name that you are going to whisper at the polling booth. Your vote is very precious. Your vote is the X that you are going to put on the ballot paper. Your vote is your life....<sup>16</sup>

The gulf between the individual rights promoted by the church and some other NGOs, and the political realities of “gunpoint democracy” (Standish 1996) requires urgent debate before the next elections, since the campaign for the 2007 elections has already commenced.

The Swedish International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) proposes two principles by which a governing arrangement can be called “democratic”: popular control over public decision making and decision makers; and equality between citizens in the exercise of that control. IDEA refers also to mediating values through which these two principles are realized in practice, including participation and accountability. For example, it is through participation in the electoral process that people authorize politicians to act on their behalf. They choose a representative assembly which they can hold accountable through the sanction of future electoral dismissal.

If one applies these ideals to Enga during the 2002 elections, one can only conclude that the democratic process was severely flawed.

- Many people, particularly women, did not participate because they could not vote or felt afraid to vote, or judged it safer not to vote than to be seen voting for a losing candidate.
- Voting papers were destroyed or not counted. In the Kompiam-Ambumu electorate, less than 44% of the ballot boxes were counted.
- With such a strong presence of guns, often people did not have the freedom

to authorize their representatives to do anything.

- Most candidates won by a small percentage of the vote – in three cases with less than 25% and in one case less than 10%.
- Lengthy court challenges with accusations of improper conduct raise questions about the legitimacy of the elected members.
- There is little popular control or accountability when remaining in office is seen in terms of “delivering the goods” or supplying “jobs for the boys.”
- Equality finds little place in the post-election situation of “haves” and “have-nots.” (Lakane and Gibbs 2003). Thus supporters of politicians in power form a privileged elite, while the others, the “non-eaters” or have-nots, struggle to survive.

While this paper focuses on the 2002 elections in Enga, elections alone are no guarantee of true democracy. Victory in the counting room does not mean an open cheque-book for the next five years. Political participation and democratic accountability are equally important between elections. Ideally the demos (common people) can participate in the honest governance of their country. In Enga, on the contrary, most experience what Joel Migdal (1988: 236) has called a “politics of survival” in the face of the fragmentation of traditional means of social and political control.

## NEW POLITICAL STRUCTURES

Traditionally, Enga people did not elect leaders. Bigmen emerged as men of influence in settling disputes and controlling systems of pig exchange. They were men of wisdom, with strong personalities. There is some continuity today with would-be leaders who give away cars instead of pigs, but the monetary system has brought radical changes. People see voting as a way of getting access to money or the things that money can buy.

The 2002 election was the eleventh in Enga (counting by-elections and provincial elections) since the first in 1964. Many people have commented how the 2002 election was different. Previously candidates were freer to travel widely to address people. In 2002 there

were both political and economic restraints so that election campaigns were more subdued and largely limited to rallies organised by supporters who invited candidates to attend. The 2002 election was also marked by more intimidation. Firearms are now a significant factor. We are witnessing new kinds of tribalism with a new type of leader who has access to guns and the ability to open or obstruct access to money and resources.

The system that is emerging has distinct disadvantages. Attempts to establish block voting within a clan may provoke anger in the community. Winners often favour supportive clans by funding their projects and providing services. Relationships soured do not mend easily. Election related tribal fights have claimed the lives of many people since the elections.

Some public servants cannot distinguish between public servants and political cronies. During the election the Governor warned public servants against meddling in politics – that is, supporting other candidates. Government pay clerks withheld the incentive allowances of teachers who were known to support Pundari. Now, other public servants fear for their jobs. In an article in the Independent (25 July, 2002, p. 8) entitled, “Tsak people paying the price for using their democratic right,” a woman from the Tsak Valley describes the hardship of people who voted for the “wrong” candidate.<sup>17</sup>

Over the past fifteen years Enga has experienced rapid economic expansion and radical cultural change due largely to the massive Porgera Gold Mine. Until recently the Provincial Government received over 20 million kina (US\$6 million) a year in royalty payments alone. This amount will halve before the next elections and cease when the mine closes around 2012. The boom is over and in a few years Enga will be financially “poor.” Can a political culture in which a politician is elected primarily to channel goods and services continue when the economy shrinks so dramatically? Anarchy is possible if the political system cannot adapt..

## CONCLUSION

Democracy is at risk in Enga. Freedom of choice between candidates, freedom to vote and a degree of confidentiality are not available to most voters. Critics could well debate whether the intimidation and rough-house politics of the emerging political culture reflects some form of ‘non-liberal democracy’ (Gelu 2000).

Enga politics shares many features found throughout the Highlands: nepotistic patronage, parochialism and largesse bordering on “kleptocracy” (Ketan 2000:53)<sup>18</sup>. Elections are a form of investment, with successful candidates rewarding their supporters and disregarding others. However, there are also distinctive features in Enga. These include following strong-willed leaders rather than clan “consensus” voting, the complete absence of confidentiality, and the ways strategic alliances are formed. The first two points have been illustrated in this paper. Ways of forming strategic alliances are so complex as to warrant separate study. Money, guns, and employment contribute to both continuities and innovations on the traditional Enga systems of forming alliances particularly for warfare and for the tee pig exchange.

The State appears powerless to control an increasingly volatile situation. For circumstances to improve some hard issues will have to be faced. There is an urgent need for a relatively accurate electoral roll. Also, there must be checks to counter political patronage and cronyism at all levels of the provincial administration. Democracy depends on an interplay between electoral participation and groups at the community level (civil society). Perhaps new forms of political structure will incorporate elements of traditional community networks. From another perspective the focus on provincial politics at the expense of national interests might well be modified. As people become more educated and have improved communication, there will be a greater demand for democratic processes that cater for wider issues and individual freedom of choice.

Enga people have proved remarkably creative and resilient and no doubt will develop new dimensions of political culture. There is no shortage of criticism of the present situation. People are not afraid to tell a former member of parliament, *Enganya pawa condom jina nepene* (“You turned Enga people’s power into a condom”) and youth do not hesitate to sing, *Kiaponya bui lao, Wapali bui, nengipi nanengipi game mende pilyo lakapuapa* (“Kiap’s star, Wapali star [position in government], this is a game played between those who eat and those who don’t eat”). It remains to be seen how the game develops.

## APPENDIX – THE QUESTIONNAIRES

The questions below are in English, but the Enga language was used by the educated research assistants who conducted the survey.

### Questionnaire A (for Politics in Enga during the campaign) No.....

Name:

Gender: a) male b) female

Age: a) youth b) mature c) old.

Place/Clan

Education: a) 0 b) Gr. 6 c) Gr. 10

Religious Affiliation:

Status: a) single b) married

Electorate:

1. Have you listened to some political speeches? Y / N
1. (If Y, then continue)
2. Did you find them interesting? Y / N
3. If Yes, what did you find interesting? If no, why was it not interesting?
4. Did you find them convincing/persuasive? Y / N
5. If Y, what was convincing/persuasive? If N, why?
6. 4. Did you hear any tok bokis (kongali) that were interesting? Y / N.
7. If Y, what was the kongali and what do you think it meant?
8. 5. Have you decided who you will vote for? Y / N
9. Who? Why?
10. 6. Does the party membership of the candidate influence you? Y / N.
11. If yes, how does it influence you?

The profile for the respondents to questionnaire A is as follows: N = 34 (18 males and 16 females). In age, 5 were “youth”, 18 “mature” and 11 “old”. 14 had no formal education, 8 had a primary education, 12 had high school education including several with further education such as teachers’ training college. Those married numbered 25, with 9 single. Religious affiliation was: Catholic 24, SDA 4, Lutheran 3, Apostolic 1, AOG 1.

### Questionnaire B (for Politics in Enga after the election) No .....

Name: Gender: a) male b) female

Age: a) youth b) mature c) old.

Place/Clan

Education: a) 0 b) Gr. 6 c) Gr. 10

Religious Affiliation:

Status: a) single b) married

Electorate:

1. Who did you vote for?
2. What attracted you to that person so that you voted for him/her?
3. Did you change your mind many times about who to vote for, or was it always clear for you? (explain?)
4. Did you hear any speeches given by the person you voted for? Y / N If Y, do you think the speech was important in convincing you to vote for him/her, or was the speech not really important for you?  
a) Important b) Not important c) Don't know (Explain)
5. What were the positive qualities that you saw in the person that you voted for?
6. Were there religious reasons behind your voting for that person? Y / N If Y, explain.
7. How many times did you vote? 1 2 3 4 more .....  
) If more than once, was it for the same candidate or different ones? a) same b) different

The profile for respondents to questionnaire B is as follows: N = 56 (26 male and 30 female). In age, 10 were "youth", 34 "mature", and 11 "old". 17 had no formal education, 31 had primary education and 8 had high school education. Those married numbered 43, with 13 not married. Religious affiliation was: Catholic 40, Lutheran 4, CAF 3, One Way 3, SDA 1, and 4 not stated.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Grateful thanks are due to the many Enga people who helped in this study. To preserve confidentiality they remain anonymous.
- <sup>2</sup> Personal Communication, Provincial Returning Officer, Electoral Commission Office, Wabag, 26.11.02
- <sup>3</sup> One polling official, while trying to be honest and return unused ballot papers, was held by the police and accused of being a paper smuggler! (Personal Communication, Peter Yange, at Lakemanda, 23.11.02)
- <sup>4</sup> The rivalry between Ipatas and Talyaga was the focus of *Tanim*, a 50 minute documentary by Faraway Pictures, screened on SBS television in Australia on 14 October 2003.
- <sup>5</sup> Bill Standish (2002b:6) says that in Simbu Province Regional candidates were able to campaign relatively freely around their much larger electorate "because Regional seats – which will disappear in 2007 – are now seen as relatively insignificant, a *rabis vot*." Engas do not share the same sentiments about their Provincial (Regional) seat.
- <sup>6</sup> Speech given in the Enga language and translated from transcribed tape recording.
- <sup>7</sup> Speech given in the Enga language and translated from transcribed tape recording.
- <sup>8</sup> Speech given in the Enga language and translated from transcribed tape recording.
- <sup>9</sup> See *Post-Courier*, '20 Engans Wounded in Ambush', 10 July 2002, p.3: "A man who was in the convoy of trucks and buses, transporting supporters and scrutineers of lawyer and Wapenamanda Open candidate Rimbink Pato, said they were on the way to Wabag when supporters of a rival candidate (named) ambushed them at Yaramanda." This incident provoked a comment in the opinion column of the *National*: "It is ridiculous to pretend that national elections held now in either province will give voters there the Constitution-guaranteed freedoms associated with a democratic election. Murder, assault, major damage to public and private property, and above all the savage intimidation of substantial sections of the community in both provinces ensures that the vote will be a travesty. ... As matters stand, Enga and the Southern Highlands provinces cannot be effectively controlled by leaders drawn from those areas. The provinces have become a meaningless delineation. The reality is tribes, and tribal alliances, and those who control them." *National*, 'Free Enga, SHP from the rule of the gun', 10 July 2002, p.10.
- <sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the presiding officers and community leaders later declared that the polling for those boxes was fair and the boxes were accepted for counting.
- <sup>11</sup> There are only 76 council wards in the Kompiam-Ambumu Electorate. However, 80 boxes were assigned because two at Wakumale near Wabag Secondary School officially form part of the Wabag Electorate, but geographically are on the "Ambumu" side of the Lai River, and two other polling places were given two boxes each because of tension between neighbouring clans voting there. The prime example is Aiyulites near Kompiam where bad feeling is still harboured after the murder of children in tribal hostilities in 2000.
- <sup>12</sup> Personal communication. Lakemanda. 3.8.02
- <sup>13</sup> Personal communication. Yampu. 4.8.02
- <sup>14</sup> Personal communication. Yampu. 4.8.02
- <sup>15</sup> Personal communication. Par 3.8.02
- <sup>16</sup> From photocopied political awareness campaign notes supplied by Philip Maso.
- <sup>17</sup> The article begins: "The sick have become the subject of intimidation because health workers prefer to attend to those who vote their candidates. Women are raped as they try to use bush tracks to get to stores to buy food. Bridges were dismantled leaving only the skeleton iron frame, too risky for vehicles to use. ..."
- <sup>18</sup> Ketan describes "kleptocracy" as the theft of state funds and other resources by government officials and the high tolerance of corruption in government (Ketan 2000:86).

## A FAILED ELECTION: THE CASE OF THE KOROBA-LAKE KOPIAGO OPEN ELECTORATE

NICOLE HALEY

In July 2002, following clarification from the Supreme Court of Papua New Guinea, the 2002 National Elections were deemed to have failed in six Southern Highlands Province (SHP) electorates, leaving the greater part of the province's population without political representation and six of the seats in PNG's 109 seat parliament vacant. Some nine months later, supplementary elections were held to fill the seats in Kagua-Erave, Imbonggu, Komo-Magarima, Koroba-Lake Kopiago, Tari-Pori and the Provincial seat. Focussing on the Koroba-Lake Kopiago open seat, this paper provides an account of campaigning and electioneering during both the failed 2002 National Elections and the 2003 Supplementary Elections.

At the outset, it is worth noting that the manner in which the 2002 elections were conducted in the Koroba-Lake Kopiago electorate was not significantly different to the way the elections were conducted in 1997. Cultural identity and ethnicity played an important part in campaigning, motivating much of the malpractice and election fraud which featured in both the 1997 and 2002 elections (see Haley 2002a). In both instances the elections were not the least bit fair and lacked integrity, so much so that the candidates and their supporters sought to secure votes by fraudulent means. Yet, election practices tolerated in 1997 saw the 2002 election deemed a failure. In this paper I wish to examine and compare the way the elections were conducted in the failed 2002 National Elections and the "successful" 2003 Supplementary Elections, and consider the implications for future elections.

### ETHNICITY: A KEY ELECTORAL ISSUE

In 1997, 2002 and 2003, ethnicity was a key electoral issue. The Koroba-Kopiago open electorate is the north westernmost of

eight open electorates in the SHP. It extends northwest from Koroba and Mogorofugwa — two densely populated wetland basins inhabited by Huli speakers — towards the Strickland-Lagaip river junction, thereby taking in country inhabited by the Duna, Bogaia and Hewa. At the time of the 2002 National Election the Koroba-Lake Kopiago open electorate was home to some 43,500 Huli, Duna, Hewa and Bogaia speakers.<sup>19</sup> Of these 24,850 (57%) identify primarily as Huli; 16,055 (37%) as Duna; 2,310 (5.3%) as Hewa and 285 (0.7%) as Bogaia. It is this ethnic mix that has, in the past, made for fiercely contested parliamentary elections. In 1997, for instance, the electoral contest centred very much on ethnicity, and who, from a Duna perspective at least, might provide for or best facilitate the advancement and unity of Duna people.

Except for the period 1977-1982, the Koroba-Lake Kopiago seat has always been held by the Huli. For the past two decades the Duna, Hewa and Bogaia have been represented exclusively by Huli men in the National Parliament. The Huli's past electoral successes reflect their majority status. Huli outnumber Duna 3:2 in the Koroba-Lake Kopiago open electorate and 4:1 in the Tari-Pori open electorate. Yet, despite the obvious electoral advantage the Huli command, Duna candidates have contested the Koroba-Lake Kopiago open electorate with fervour since it was established in 1972. The Bogaia and Hewa, however, have never fielded a candidate.

Comparatively speaking, the ethnically Huli parts of Koroba-Lake Kopiago are far better developed than those of the Lake Kopiago sub-district, home to the Duna, Bogaia and Hewa voters. This disparity is a source of discontent. The Lake Kopiago sub-district is one of the least developed in the country and lacks even the most basic services. That it remains disadvantaged and poorly developed relative to other districts within PNG has been shown by three separate studies over a 30-year period (Wilson 1974; de Albuquerque and D'Sa 1986; Hanson, Allen, Bourke and McCarthy 2001). In part this disadvantage is explained by the fact that the Lake Kopiago sub-district was one of the last to be derestricted,<sup>20</sup> but the Duna lay the blame squarely upon their Huli neighbours.

In the contemporary context, the Duna, Hewa and Bogaia within the electorate share the belief that the Huli are directly responsible for their disadvantage and the disintegration of essential services such as schools, law enforcement, agricultural extension and health.



When they complain about a lack of support from successive national governments, their complaints are invariably directed towards the Huli. These feelings have been brewing for decades. Duna, for example, see themselves as having been colonised and governed by the Huli, and accuse the Huli with both monopolising and controlling their access to the State and, in particular, their access to health and educational services.

Resource development and access to the benefits that oil and gas production and mining have brought to the province are another key source of discontent within the electorate. Duna, for instance, hold the view that Huli have disproportionately benefited from resource development projects and they are quick to condemn Huli actions with respect to mining. Their discontent is rationalised in terms of traditional cosmological beliefs. Duna see themselves as part of regional system deeply rooted in mythology and ritual. They believe that the fertility of their region is morally constituted (Haley 2002b) and point out that in the past Duna, Huli, Hewa and Bogaia collaboratively participated in ground-seeding and ground-making rituals in order to ensure the ongoing fertility of the region. These rituals, which involve the sacrifice of human substances and body parts, were enacted along ritual roads which criss-crossed the region. Today, Duna charge the Huli with having forsaken both the regional ritual projects they once strongly promoted (see Ballard 1994; 2000:213) and the ties which made such cooperative performances possible.

Duna now see the Huli as pillaging, rather than preserving, the fertile substance of the earth's core. They regard the gold, oil and gas extracted at Porgera, Mt Kare, Hides, Moran, Kutubu and Gobe as part of this fertile substance, and insist that the Huli are wantonly consuming that which should be conserved in order to sustain them and the world. Duna feel that Huli have sold them out. They charge the Huli with monopolising the fruits born of their co-operative ritual efforts.

Before we [Huli and Duna] stayed together like a married couple. Our union bore fruit. Our union bore the oil and gas.... Those things are as much ours. But they [the Huli] are using it, expending it. They have forgotten us.

Sane Noma - Haley ( NB3:54)  
Original recorded in Duna

The Duna likewise charge the Huli with having selectively forgotten that they are brothers who trace descent from a common ancestor, Hela. They note that the Huli readily invoke the rhetoric of their common ancestry when calling for a Hela province, but that they have failed to look after their Duna brothers, going as far as chasing them away from Mt Kare during the height of the gold rush (Haley 2002b). For the most part, Duna have not embraced the growing calls for a Hela province (Biersack 1995; Vail 1995; Goldman ms). They want no part in such a project and have denounced it. They see it as a Huli-owned and driven project, which will bring them no benefits. Many Duna consider the project sinister, suggesting that if it succeeds they will lose not only their land, but also their identity.

In the face of such concerns the past decade has seen growing calls for Duna unity. Indeed, campaigning in the Lake Kopiago sub-district (that part of the Koroba-Lake Kopiago electorate which is ethnically Duna) in the lead up to the 1997 and 2002 National Elections focussed on the need for Duna unity in the political arena, and the need to secure national representation as a matter of urgency. Both elections were promoted locally as the "final election"—the last chance to gain political representation (Robinson 2002). Accompanying the calls for unity were calls for the formation of a Duna Province.

## **THE 2002 CANDIDATES**

There were 19 candidates in the 2002 election for Koroba-Lake Kopiago. This compared with 13 candidates in the 1997 election and 12 candidates in 1992 election. Of the 19 candidates, 13 were Huli and 6 were Duna. All were male. None of the Huli candidates, apart from the sitting member, Herowa Agiwa, had contested the 1997 election. Of the Duna candidates, Jack Karali, Petrus Thomas, and Jack Hundia were also first time contenders, but Paiete Elo had contested the seat on six previous occasions, Ben Peri on three previous occasions, and Matthew Magaye twice before. In 1997, Matthew Magaye (6,582 votes) had polled a very close second to Herowa Agiwa (6,693 votes), while Ben Peri (5,109 votes) had run third.

In 2002, 13 of the 19 candidates had party endorsement and 13 separate parties were represented. In 1997, 10 of the 13 candidates had party endorsement whereas in the 1992

election only two of the 12 candidates had party endorsement. As in 1997 there was no evidence that party affiliation signalled an endorsement of particular political views or positions. All the candidates campaigned on similar platforms: they promised to bring development; to support church, women's and youth groups; to strengthen government services; to ensure that roads and airstrips were maintained and to ensure that schools and health centres were properly funded.

The benefits of incumbency, particularly the considerable amounts of money that Herowa Agiwa had been able to spend "buying" votes in the Huli speaking parts of the electorate during his 10 years in office, meant that the 13 first-time Huli candidates had little chance of defeating the sitting member.

Several of the Duna candidates, though, emerged as strong contenders. In the lead up to voting, it was evident that Matthew Magaye and Ben Peri continued to have strong support, especially in their home areas of Auwi/Logaiyu and Kopiago respectively. Matthew Magaye maintained and even expanded his strong support base. His popularity derived primarily from his ability to make things happen. For instance, he is widely credited with having established Paga High School which has enabled young Duna men and women to continue their education without fear of attacks and ethnic violence (see also Haley 2002a). For this reason the school is thought to have benefited the entire community, not just Matthew's home area.

Despite the obvious support for Matthew Magaye and his strong polling in the last two elections, Ben Peri for the most part retained his popularity in the Kopiago area, having both widespread grass root support and the backing of the older community leaders. As in 1997, Ben was touted as the candidate most likely to effect real change for the Duna, Hewa and Bogaia of the Lake-Kopiago sub-district (Haley 2002a; Robinson 2002). He was also reputed to have the support of disgruntled Huli. That said, there were sections of the Kopiago community who *were* agitating for change. Some of Ben's strongest supporters in 1992 and 1997 felt that he had passed his use-by-date and had failed to deliver. They thought that Ben would once again be defeated, even though he retained strong support. As the campaigning progressed, support for Ben grew, despite concerns about the need for new blood and a new approach. Significantly, his support was strengthened when he was taken hostage during the campaign (see

below), and because he had the support and endorsement of the disgraced SHP Governor, Anderson Agiru, who remained extremely popular despite having been removed from public office.

Although Ben Peri and Matthew Magaye were considered the strongest Duna candidates, newcomers Petrus Thomas and Jack Karali also attracted much talk and attention. Petrus Thomas, a local rugby star who had played for both the Mendi Muruks and the Kumuls, had the support of young men/boys throughout the Duna speaking area. He was thought to have an outside chance of winning the electoral race.

## **CAMPAIGNING IN 2002**

Cultural identity and ethnicity played an important part in campaigning in the Lake Kopiago sub-district during both the 1997 and 2002 National Elections. Dance festivals, in which much energy was spent on articulating Duna identity, were held on a regular basis. These competitions, sponsored by the Duna candidates, were viewed as a healthy way of promoting both Duna identity and Duna unity. What was particularly interesting about these dance competitions was that they were attended by supporters of the various Duna candidates. Within the Duna speaking area, Duna candidates and their supporters were free to move around and campaign. Elsewhere in the country (particularly the Highlands), however, candidates and their supporters were not afforded such mobility. In contrast, this freedom of movement did not extend to the Huli candidates.

Men and women, young and old, earnestly participated in these dance competitions in which all the participants were encouraged to dress in "true" Duna fashion. Old men and women, concerned that their children were coming to look and behave like Huli, chastised younger men for wearing their headband too high on their forehead, or for decorating themselves with red and yellow face paints instead of blackening their faces with ash - both are considered Huli fashions. The dress and deportment of the dancers and dance festivals throughout the campaign was seen to reflect the likelihood of a Duna candidate winning at the polls. For the project to succeed it was felt that all Duna candidates had to work together; the efficacy of the project depended upon people coming together for a common purpose. At another level, the extent to which Duna

decorated themselves faithfully was interpreted as a reflection of their social and moral standing and the state of their world more generally.<sup>21</sup>

Although the Duna candidates could move throughout the Duna speaking parts of the electorate, they warned off and chased away any Huli candidates who dared to attempt to campaign in their areas. For the most part, fear of violent attacks also kept the Duna candidates from campaigning in the ethnically Huli parts of the electorate.

Ben Peri was the only Duna candidate to actively campaign in the Huli-speaking Koroba District. As mentioned earlier, he had successfully garnered the support of disgruntled Huli in the 1997 elections. A partial explanation may have been that Ben's second wife is Huli and that he was well known, having worked out of the Tari area for many years. But Ben has also avidly supported the calls for a Hela Province and this no doubt would have endeared him to the Huli voters. In 2002, Ben was widely thought to be Herowa Agiwa's biggest rival.

Whilst being accompanied by a police escort on Friday 17 May 2002, Ben Peri's campaign party was held up in the Koroba area. A gunfight ensued. One policeman was killed and two others injured. Ben Peri and another two policemen were taken hostage. They were eventually released six days later following intense negotiations by the dismissed yet still extremely popular, Governor Anderson Agiru. During the course of the hostage crisis, Ben Peri's captors publicly demanded a ransom of K500,000 (about AUD \$200,000) for his release.

What was remarkable about these events, was that the sitting member, Herowa Agiwa, refused to become involved in brokering a solution. He was reported to have been in Australia when the kidnapping took place, but upon his return to PNG he stayed in Port Moresby for the remainder of the crisis. In the *Post Courier* on 22 May 2002, he was reported to have admitted that the men holding the hostages were his supporters and to have publicly stated that he would not intervene.

In the electorate, it was rumoured that Herowa Agiwa had orchestrated these events. From several sources, I was told that the sitting member had placed a K300,000 contract on Ben Peri and that this was why his vehicle had been held up. Ben's Kopiago supporters claim that when Herowa Agiwa heard that a policeman had been shot and killed, he became reluctant to pay. Accordingly, the captors sought to obtain the ransom. Locally, the then Koroba

District Administrator, Stanley Kotange, who was reputed to have kept regular radio/satellite phone contact with the sitting member, was also implicated in these events.<sup>22</sup>

Whilst it remains unclear whether Herowa Agiwa and Stanley Kotange actually had any involvement in Ben Peri's kidnapping, it is certainly the case that Stanley Kotange played an instrumental role in another of the crises to grip the electorate during the campaign period. In late May 2002, in his capacity as District Administrator, Kotange sent letters to Hevilift, Missionary Aviation Fellowship (MAF) and Southwest Air, advising that any aircraft, commercial or otherwise, flying in the Koroba-Lake Kopiago electorate during the polling period would be shot down.<sup>23</sup> I was shown a copy of the letter in the company of Nueman Pakalu, the Assistant District Administrator (ADA) from Lake Kopiago, who angrily said he had heard of no such threats, putting it down to an election stunt. On reading the letter he informed me that Kotange was appointed to the position of District Administrator by Herowa Agiwa and that he was known to be one of the sitting members closest allies. Nueman though was hardly a neutral observer – a community school teacher by profession, he was publicly aligned with Ben Peri and had been appointed to the position of ADA at Lake Kopiago by Anderson Agiru.

Stanley Kotange's letter claimed that there were high-powered weapons throughout the electorate and that some people even had surface-to-air missile launchers. I have since had this confirmed by several people from Kopiago. The letter also made reference to two incidents in which Hevilift helicopters were damaged during the 1997 elections. In one instance a helicopter carrying bribe money from Herowa Agiwa was stoned (see Robinson 2002) and in another incident a helicopter in which he was a passenger was shot at. The Hevilift pilot who showed me Kotange's letter advised that the later incident had resulted in over USD \$300,000 damage to the helicopter. As a result, all airstrips in Koroba-Lake Kopiago were closed in the period leading up to polling. An article which appeared in the *PNG Post-Courier* on 3 June 2002 quoted one airline operation manager as saying that they had received specific threats from Pugua, Herowa Agiwa's home area and the place where Ben Peri was held hostage.

In another quite separate incident, 16 of the candidates contesting the Koroba-Lake Kopiago seat threatened to boycott the elections alleging a conspiracy on the part of

Mr Kotange (see PNG Post Courier, 5 June 2002, p. 8). In late May 2002, the appointments of several returning officers who had already attended their electoral briefings and training in Mt Hagen were inexplicably revoked. These men were public servants with past electoral experience. It was claimed that they had been replaced by men known to support the sitting member. Only Kotange retained his appointment as Principal Returning Officer. After complaints to the Electoral Commission and Ombudsman the other returning officers were reinstated at the eleventh hour.

## ELECTION FRAUD AND MALPRACTICE

Attempts to influence the election took place at many levels, both before and after voting got under way. Fraudulent electoral practices employed in 1997, were again employed across the entire electorate in 2002 (Haley 2002a, Robinson 2002). The principle roll of electors was grossly inaccurate, with voter numbers being greatly exaggerated. The common roll in respect of the Lake Kapiago Rural LLG, for instance, contained close to three times as many enrolled voters as eligible voters. It was not updated by Electoral Commission staff but by Nueman Pakalu, the community school teacher appointed to the position of ADA by Anderson Agiru (see also May 2002:03). As noted above, Nueman both supported and was publicly aligned with Ben Peri. He was assisted in the task of updating the roll by local young men who had publicly supported Ben in past elections.

Specifically voter numbers were inflated by including individual voters under each of the names they commonly go by and by duplicating council wards under separate names – for instance, Ambi, Waki and Ambi-Waiki are all listed complete with a total of 1431 names. In 1997, the total population of the Ambi-Waiki area, as confirmed by a household census, was 316 people and of these only 155 were eligible to vote (Robinson and Haley 1998a).

Such examples are not isolated. Indeed the extent to which voter numbers were inflated outstripped even the vastly exaggerated 1997 figures. For instance, the principal roll of electors employed during the 1997 election contained the names of some 40,000 so-called eligible voters. Based on projected population figures, confirmed in many areas by the household census conducted in 1997 (Haley and

Robinson 1998; Robinson and Haley 1998a, 1998b), I have concluded that in 1997 there should have been no more than 22,000 eligible voters within the electorate (Haley 2002a). In 2002, the common roll included the names of 60,300 enrolled voters. Based on population estimates projected from the 1990 National Census and the census data Robinson and I collected in 1997, I estimate that there should have been no more 24,000 eligible voters within the electorate. Accordingly there were 2½ times as many enrolled voters as eligible voters within the electorate.

Intimidatory force was also used to influence the vote. Ballot boxes were impounded, stolen or diverted to other areas and completed ballot papers were confiscated and destroyed. Candidates and their supporters throughout the region took control of ballot papers and boxes ensuring block votes for their preferred candidate.

One presiding officer boasted to me how he and the Returning Officer had allocated a certain number of boxes to each of the candidates in the interest of “fairness”, keeping the majority for their favoured candidate – Ben Peri. Another told how he and his brother completed and endorsed the 1000 or so ballot papers given to them by the Assistant Returning Officer, the evening prior to polling. The same presiding officer reported that others had done the same. In some instances a small percentage of the ballot papers were completed such that votes were given to a variety of candidates, so as to give the appearance of fair play and allay suspicions the votes had been gained by misadventure. By all accounts, most of the ballot papers for the Koroba-Lake Kapiago electorate were completed by the locally employed polling officials themselves, prior to the actual polling day. No one I interviewed in the Kapiago area actually got to vote on polling day and few if any sighted, let alone touched, their ballot papers.

In the case of Koroba-Lake Kapiago the attempts to steal the election through inflated voter numbers proved futile as only a small fraction of the ballot boxes were actually counted. Indeed, while over 100 ballot boxes were distributed throughout the electorate, only three were actually counted. In a press release dated 23 July 2002, Rueben Kaiulo announced that counting for the Koroba-Lake Kapiago electorate was underway in Mount Hagen, with ballot boxes being flown in by Defence Force and Police helicopters. Contrary to the press release, no counting for Koroba-Lake Kapiago

took place in Mount Hagen. In fact the three ballot boxes which were counted, were counted at Hedemari, a Huli speaking area between Tari and Koroba, and thence carried by foot through Paiela to Porgera, via Mt Kare, and from there by PMV to Mt Hagen.

Contrary to Rueben Kaiulo's assertion, no ballot boxes were collected by Defence Force or Police helicopters. In fact apart from the three boxes containing votes for Herowa Agiwa few of the other ballot boxes distributed throughout the electorate were ever collected. On 12 August 2002, the PNG Post-Courier reported John Aiyako, the then Deputy District Administrator for Koroba, as saying that there were still 17 ballot boxes in the custody of Neuman Pakalu (Assistant Returning Officer, Lake Kopiago), 10 ballot boxes in the custody of Jackson Kenamu (Assistant Returning Officer, Auwi/Logaiyu) and 28 ballot boxes with Johnson Balu (Assistant Returning Officer, South Koroba). No helicopters were ever sent to collect these ballot boxes or the polling officials – they made their own way back to Mendi. I was told by one presiding officer that he and "his boys" had guarded the 2002 ballot boxes for several months in the hope they might be collected and counted. As recently as October 2003, many of these boxes were still sitting in the Lake Kopiago District Office.

According to local election officials, the Kopiago and Auwi/Logaiyu boxes were not collected as they had been "tampered with", having been flown into the more remote parts of the electorate by a private charter. Apparently no Electoral Commission funds were made available to distribute the ballot boxes and papers to those parts of the electorate which are accessible only by air – that is the ethnically Duna, Hewa and Bogaia parts of the electorate. Fearing that his supporters would not get the chance to vote, Ben Peri chartered the plane which delivered the ballot boxes to Auwi and Kopiago, and it was for this reason that Stanley Kotange, the Principal Returning Officer, refused to collect or count the boxes in question.

Despite the fact that no attempt was made to recover the ballot boxes held in more remote parts of the electorate, Stanley Kotange declared Herowa Agiwa the winner of the Koroba-Lake Kopiago Open Electorate on 11 July 2002, announcing that Mr Agiwa had gained all 2985 votes in the three and only ballot boxes counted. A fortnight later on 25 July, the Post Courier reported that the sitting member for Koroba-Lake Kopiago had been returned on

the basis of counting which had taken place a fortnight earlier at Koroba. Subsequent to this it was deemed that the elections in Koroba-Lake Kopiago had failed.

The declaration that the SHP elections had failed resulted in widespread confusion and an escalation of violence throughout the province. Dozens of power pylons between Nogoli and Porgera were felled by disgruntled electors, meaning that production was forcibly suspended for three months. Thousands of employees were stood down and much revenue was lost. In the weeks following the election, the leading SHP candidates in the six undeclared seats declared themselves to be duly elected members of Parliament. These same men and their supporters threatened to disrupt the provinces resource projects and promised to "bring the nation to its knees" if their demands to be sworn in were not acceded to. The group of six also wrote to the Prime Minister, Sir Michael Somare, threatening to secede. A spokesman for the group's supporters was reported in the Post Courier to have said:

I'm giving the Someare-led government until 4.06pm tomorrow to declare the remaining six seats...If we don't have a reply (to the above mentioned letter) by 4.06 (close of business) tomorrow, then the Southern Highlanders will become a republic country... More people will die. Roads will be blocked, more bridges will be blown up." (John Honale quoted in the *Post Courier*, 9 August 2002.)

Despite this pressure, the six leading candidates were not sworn in. They and their supporters were forced to wait a further nine months for fresh elections. During this time much energy was spent restoring law and order within the province, in preparation for the supplementary elections.

## THE 2003 SUPPLEMENTARY ELECTIONS

Although 19 candidates (13 Huli and 6 Duna) contested the failed 2002 National Elections, only 12 candidates ran for the Koroba-Lake Kopiago Open seat during the 2003 Supplementary Elections. Of these 10 were Huli and only two were Duna. All but two of the Huli candidates contested the failed 2002 elections. In the intervening months, four of the Duna candidates – Mathew Magaye, Paielo Elo, Jack Karali and Jack Hundia – stood down in

favour of Petrus Thomas. Instead of contesting the elections, they actively campaigned, both individually and collectively, on Petrus's behalf and instructed their own supporters to transfer their support to Petrus. It was felt that if only one Duna candidate contested the election, he would surely win and for the first time in two decades the Duna would be represented in the National Parliament. The candidates who stood down in favour of Petrus are reputed to have held the view that Ben Peri had not only failed to deliver for Duna people, but that he had sold them out by openly supporting the push for a Hela province. They chose instead to favour "new blood" and the fresh approach Petrus offered.

Unlike Ben, who promised that every one would become fabulously wealthy by growing vanilla and coffee if he won the electoral race,<sup>24</sup> Petrus did not campaign with money or grandiose promises. Instead he made a point of visiting the electorate, sitting with people, talking to them and listening to their needs. He gained people's respect by sharing sweet potato and sugar cane rather than attempting to buy their votes. Petrus promised not to play politics but instead to unite the Duna people and to work towards improving their situation.

Prior to polling, Petrus was considered to be the hot favourite. The view in the Duna camp was that if the election was the least bit fair, Petrus would win the seat, although it was held that both Duna candidates would poll well. Indeed, it was felt that with 10 Huli candidates contesting the seat, their votes would be very much split, leaving the way for a Duna candidate to claim the seat. That said, a couple of the Huli candidates were highly regarded and this too was held to strengthen the Duna candidates chances. For instance, the sitting member was still held to command a great deal of support and Fr Mattius Olape, a Catholic Priest from Pureni, was held to be "a good honest man" who had a great deal of support. Petrus Thomas's supporters considered him the Huli candidate most likely to mount a serious challenge.

In the months prior to the supplementary elections, there was much confusion about whether the new preferential system of vote counting would apply or whether the first past the post system would again be employed. Petrus Thomas courted several of the Huli candidates and made deals to trade preferences on the basis that the new system would be enforced. By the time polling was underway, several of the Huli candidates were covertly supporting Petrus

Thomas. They ran, I am told, to split the Huli vote. Matthew Makape, a popular Community Relations Officer from BP Hides, and former Rugby playing mate of Petrus', ran to cut Fr Mattius' vote. Both men were from Pureni, and it was hoped Matthew would pick up the votes of the younger boys. Matthew secured 1164 votes (mostly from Pureni and Tangi), as against the 3730 Fr Mattius gained. In the Koroba area, Joe Kaiyura Mindi, a community school teacher from Tangi, and Ben Maui Mindiria, a science graduate from Maria, ran to split the sitting member's vote. They secured 557 and 819 votes respectively – principally gained in the North and South Koroba areas, as against the 3292 votes gained by the sitting member.

From a Duna perspective, though, the electoral contest was a race between Ben Peri (a fourth time contender) and Petrus Thomas an electoral newcomer. Both were Kopiago boys; their mothers are both from Aiyuguni, while their fathers are from Hagini and Mbatane respectively. As well, they both have connections in the upper Tumbudu area. Ben's father's mother is from Hirane \ Saiya, a Kopiago clan which originates from Pugua, whilst Petrus' father's mother is from the Tangi area. In terms of their respective connections, Ben and Petrus drew on much the same support base, however Petrus had the advantage of public support from the extremely popular Matthew Magaye, who ran second to Herowa Agiwa in 1992 and 1997. In both previous elections, Matthew picked up the majority of Auwi/Logaiyu votes and it was felt that because he had endorsed Petrus' campaign most of the Auwi/Logaiyu votes would go directly to Petrus instead of being split between the two Duna candidates.

## POLLING

Unlike the 2002 failed elections, the 2003 supplementary elections proceeded without major incident. In a departure from past practices, large numbers of police were deployed throughout the electorate to maintain order. In the Kopiago area, for instance, four police officers were stationed at each polling place. This meant that those listed on the common roll actually got to vote, and by all accounts they were able to vote for the candidate of their choice. Several women I have interviewed since insisted that it was the "best election ever" for this very reason.

By all accounts, incidents of multiple voting were substantially reduced as well,

although this is not reflected in the total number of votes counted. Indeed, unlike 1997 where the majority of young men interviewed claimed to have voted two and three times each at neighbouring polling places, very few young men claim to have successfully done so during the supplementary elections. However, it should be noted that the total number of ballots allowed (42,462), more accurately reflects the total population of the electorate (approximately 43,500) as opposed to its voting population, suggesting that two votes were cast for each eligible voter. Interestingly, most people at Kopiago expressed genuine disbelief when I informed them that twice as many votes were cast than should have been.

Whereas multiple voting in its various guises accounted for the extra votes cast in 1997, underage voting accounts for much of the inflated 2003 count. Whilst polling officials and police made concerted efforts to ensure that individuals voted only once, they did not try and restrict the incidence of underage voting. I interviewed children as young as eight who reported not only voting, but voting for the candidate of their choice. These same children reported that they filled out the ballot papers without assistance from their parents or polling officials. In 1997, many children at Kopiago had votes cast in their names, but few actually got to vote themselves. In 2003, it seems any child who was school age or above was afforded the right to vote. Remarkably, several women I have since interviewed have claimed that the fact they and their children were allowed to vote was

indicative of just how “fair” and “democratic” the election actually was.

Voting in 2003 also differed from voting in both the 1997 and 2002 elections in that votes were not cast prior to polling. I did not uncover a single case of block voting prior to the polls. Nor did I interview anyone who claimed to have been pressured or coerced into giving their vote to a particular candidate. To the contrary, everyone I interviewed claimed to have voted for the candidate of their choice, and the vast majority of people at Kopiago insisted that the elections had been both free and fair.

## THE RESULTS

The official election results are shown below. They reveal that the two Duna candidates ran first and second.

Although the election result was to be expected, there are certainly some irregularities and anomalies that beg consideration. Firstly, the two Duna candidates between them picked up two thirds (66%) of the actual votes cast, despite the fact that Duna make up only 37% of the electorate. This indicates that the Duna candidates picked up many Huli votes. The actual ballot box counts obtained by Bill Standish reveal that Petrus and Ben both picked up large numbers of Huli votes. In Ben’s case this had much to do, I believe, with the fact that he ran on a United Resources Party ticket, was endorsed by Anderson Agiru and backed

Table 1. The 2003 Koroba – Lake Kopiago Open Electorate Results

Candidate	Party	Votes Polled	Percent
Nane Petrus Thomas	People’s Progress Party	16401	38.6%
Benias Epe Peri	United Resources Party	11614	27.4%
Matias Olape	National Alliance Party	3730	8.8%
Herowa Urape Agiwa	People’s National Congress	3292	7.8%
David Kelo Kikapu	Independent	2222	5.2%
Robert Paija Tabonago	Independent	1632	3.8%
Mathew Makape Timbena	Independent	1164	2.7%
John Hetawi Arabagali	Independent	1020	2.4%
Ben Maui Mindiria Hela	Independent	819	1.9%
Joe Kayuria Mindi	Independent	557	1.3%
Anderson Andalu Wapiria	Papua & Niugini Union Pati	10	0.0%
Steven Mokola	Independent	1	0.0%
<b>Total Ballots Allowed</b>		<b>42462</b>	
Informal		133	
<b>Total</b>		<b>42595</b>	

by the Hela province movement. Petrus, by contrast, picked up the votes of disgruntled and marginalised Hulis – people who are now choosing to emphasise their Duna connections over their Huli ones. His Huli votes came primarily from bi-lingual census units.

The Koroba-Lake Kopiago Open Electorate comprises four LLG: North Koroba and South Koroba which are ethnically Huli; and Lake Kopiago and Auwi/Logaiyu in which the Duna predominate. About 60% of the electorate's population resides in the North and South Koroba areas. In the 2003 elections the ballot boxes (48 in all) for these areas were counted first. They contained some 16385 ballot papers. The true population of the North and South Koroba LLGs is in the order of 26-28000 people, so there certainly were not vast numbers extra votes counted. After the North and South Koroba boxes were counted Fr Mattius Olape was leading the poll with 3657 votes. In second place was the outgoing member Herowa Agiwa who had secured 3267 votes. The two Duna candidates were sitting in fifth and seventh place with Ben Peri holding 1452 votes and Petrus Thomas holding 1039 votes.

Based on the actual population of the Lake Kopiago and Auwi/Logaiyu areas the remaining ballot boxes should have contained about 10,000 votes, which would have been shared between Ben Peri and Petrus Thomas, allowing one or both of them to legitimately leap ahead of the Huli candidates. As it turns out, the remaining 32 ballot boxes contained 25,760 ballot papers which is more than the total Duna population, indicating large scale electoral malpractice. In total, 15,956 votes were cast in the Kopiago area and 10,204 in the Auwi/Logaiyu area. Based on the actual population, approximately 6000 and 4000 votes should have been cast in each area. Evidently the scale of the electoral fraud perpetrated was roughly equivalent in each area and cannot be attributed to the supporters of a single candidate.

Apart from the fact that thousands of extra votes were cast, the ballot box counts for Lake Kopiago reveal no major irregularities. To the contrary, they suggest individual voters were able to vote for the candidate of their choice. A consideration of the individual ballot box counts reveals that the Duna, Hewa and Bogaia votes cast at polling places within the Lake Kopiago LLG were split fairly evenly between Ben Peri and Petrus Thomas, with Ben picking up 8031 votes and Petrus picking up 7608 votes. This was to be expected given that there were only two Duna candidates and they were both

from Kopiago. For instance, of the 596 votes cast in the Kopiago Station ballot box 281 went to Petrus Thomas, whereas 312 went to Ben Peri. At Yokona 183 votes went to Petrus and 139 to Ben. These examples are indicative of voting throughout Lake Kopiago LLG.

Of the Lake Kopiago ballot boxes only 3 proved anomalous, in that the votes were not split, although there are reasonable explanations in each case. Wagia/Pongolaia for instance is where Petrus' father is from. At that particular polling place Petrus gained 304 of the 349 votes cast. At Hirane, by contrast, Ben gained 1122 of the 1161 votes cast. Ben's father was the councillor for Hirane/Mbara for many years and Hirane is the home to Ben's most avid supporters. At Aiyuguni however, Petrus gained 1147 votes as opposed to Ben's 215. Petrus' mother is an active member of the Aiyuguni community and Aiyuguni is the home to several of the men who directed Petrus' campaign. It should be noted, though, that the resident population of each council ward, including children, is only about 500 so at the Aiyuguni and Hirane polling places more than four times as many votes were cast as should have been, again indicating that the supporters of both candidates sought to steal the election.

Voting in the Auwi/Logaiyu area proved very different to that in the Kopiago area. Petrus Thomas gained the majority of the votes – 7754 of the 10204 votes cast. Ben, by contrast, only obtained 2133 votes. This in itself was not surprising. In 1992 and 1997, Matthew Magaye collected nearly all the Auwi/Logaiyu votes. In 2003, he stood down in favour Petrus Thomas and campaigned on Petrus's behalf. Everyone I spoke to expected Petrus to collect the majority of the Auwi/Logaiyu votes and that is what transpired.

In the tally room, several of the Auwi/Logaiyu boxes were disputed (pers.com. Bill Standish 2003). Ben Peri and his supporters did not want these boxes counted and alleged that they had been tampered with. Given that Matthew Magaye who outpolled Ben in the previous two elections had actively supported Petrus Thomas, Ben and his supporters would have known that the majority of Auwi/Logaiyu votes would have legitimately passed to Petrus, and for this reason they no doubt tried to stop the count.



## POST-ELECTION DISPUTES

Despite the discontent in the tally room, Petrus Thomas was declared the winner of the Koroba-Lake Kopiago Open Electorate on 1 May 2003. He was sworn in to parliament a week or so later. Within days of the result being announced, Ben Peri filed an appeal with the National Court disputing the election result. The appeal is still pending.

For the majority of people at Kopiago the declaration brought jubilation. For the most part, even those who voted for Ben Peri considered the outcome a good one; for the first time in two decades a Duna candidate had secured the seat and everyone agreed that this boded well for the future. Only Ben's most avid campaigners and those who had benefited from Anderson Agiru's patronage disputed the result. Led by Nueman Pakalu, this group mobilised and, using threats of violence, blockaded the Government Station for the best part of three months. Only those who had voted for Ben were afforded safe and free travel onto the station. When Petrus Thomas attempted to visit Lake Kopiago for the swearing in of the Council President he was chased away by Ben's supporters. Similarly, he was met with road blocks when he attempted to travel to Lake Kopiago for the Independence Day celebrations in September 2003.

At present (November 2003), all is quiet at Kopiago. Neither Ben Peri or Petrus Thomas have visited the area since the elections and most of the newly elected local government councillors are absent in Mendi and Hagen waiting to hear the outcome of Ben Peri's appeal. The pending court case is attracting much interest.

In the six months since the 2003 Supplementary Elections, Petrus Thomas's support has continued to swell. Almost without exception, Duna people are disappointed that Ben Peri is pursuing his appeal against the Election result. They feel the election was fair and democratic as far as PNG elections go, and that Ben should allow Petrus to get on with the business of serving his people. Even many of those who voted for him are now charging Ben with blocking development by keeping Petrus embroiled in court disputes. They see the court case as vexatious and divisive, citing that Ben's appeal alleges that Petrus is not Duna or from Kopiago – that he was not therefore residentially qualified to stand. Even Ben's most ardent supporters acknowledge that Petrus was born

at Kopiago, maintains a house at Aiyuguni and that both his parents are from and continue to reside within the Kopiago Basin. As the appeal process drags out, Ben's support is waning. Several men and women who voted for Ben in 2003 have informed me that they will not vote for him if a by-election takes place. They feel that a by-election would see Petrus returned with an even bigger margin, or in the event that Petrus was not allowed to contest it, they fear the seat would be returned to the Huli, to the detriment of the Duna people.

## CONCLUSION

For people at Kopiago, Petrus's electoral success is held to derive from, and at the same time signal, the ongoing need for Duna unity. By coming together and effectively preselecting the candidate of their choice the Duna found a way to legitimately overcome their electoral disadvantage with respect to the Huli. With only two Duna candidates in a field of twelve, it was always the case that the Huli vote would be spilt clearing the way for a Duna candidate to claim the seat.

Doubts may certainly be cast about the number of votes secured by both Petrus and Ben, but even without the additional votes they would have still run first and second respectively. Indeed, after the North and South Koroba ballot boxes had been counted they were both within reach of the leading Huli candidate – Father Mattius Olape. At that point in the count Fr Mattius had 3657 votes, while Petrus and Ben had 1039 and 1441 votes respectively, with what should have been 10,000 Duna, Hewa and Bogaia votes to come. Assuming that the Lake Kopiago votes were split between the two candidates and that Petrus received 75% of the Auwi/Logaiyu votes, Petrus would have secured somewhere in the order of 7000 votes while Ben would have gained around 5500 votes, placing both well ahead of Fr Mattius who in the end gained 3730 votes.

The implications of the 2003 Koroba-Lake Kopiago polls are significant for future PNG elections, especially in electorates which span ethnic or cultural groupings. To date, candidate numbers have increased with each national election meaning that candidates have been elected with smaller and smaller margins over time (Reilly 2002; May 2003b). This in turn has encouraged fragmentation within local groups and generated election related violence (Standish 2002a; May 2003b). In 2002, 2878

candidates contested the PNG National Elections with an average of 26 candidates per seat (Standish 2002a:28). Under the Limited Preferential Voting System however, successful candidates will need to rely on much larger support bases and will need to work together with other candidates (Reilly 2002:139) in order to secure preferences in much the same way as Petrus Thomas did in 2003. By preselecting the candidate of their choice, Duna within the Koroba-Lake Kopiago electorate reversed the nation-wide trend which has seen a proliferation of candidates and thereby ensured the success of their chosen candidate and their people. This election has shown that under the Limited Preferential Voting System language-based ethnicity may come to play a more significant role in PNG politics. The question is will this induce stability and make for good governance.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>19</sup> This figure and those that follow have been calculated from the 1990 census figures and the 1980-1990 population growth rate of 1.9% per annum. They bear little resemblance to the most recent PNG census figures or the number of people listed on the Common Roll, which are both grossly inflated (see Haley 2002)
- <sup>20</sup> Although the Duna and Bogaia speaking areas of the Sub-District were derestricted in 1964, the Hewa speaking areas were not derestricted until 1971.
- <sup>21</sup> Such beliefs are common throughout the wider region. Robbins (1997:41-48), for instance, notes that Urapmin read moral status from the skin, whereas Ballard (2000:210) notes of the Huli that “the moral order of [their] society is held to register on the ‘skin’ of the land.”
- <sup>22</sup> Another of the candidates contesting the Koroba-Lake Kopiago seat publicly raised concerns that this “radio network” could be misused during the election to “exert other pressures during polling” (PNG *Post-Courier*, 7 June 2002, p.5).
- <sup>23</sup> Extracts from this letter were published in the PNG *Post-Courier*, 14 June 2002, p.3.
- <sup>24</sup> It should be noted that all previous attempts to commercially grow coffee at Kopiago have failed due to the remoteness of the area. It is also well outside the altitudinal limits at which vanilla will bear. As proof of his claims that he would bring both wealth and development, Ben Peri flew in several bags of vanilla seeds and a coffee processing machine supplied by his Malaysian contacts whom he claimed would develop the Kopiago area by “helping” people cut down the forest and clear new bush gardens to plant the coffee and vanilla.

# WHITE HORSE 27: THE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN OF BARI PALMA

**ABBY MCLEOD**

This paper analyses the national election campaign of Bari Palma, a candidate in 2002 for the Kerowagi Open electorate in Simbu Province. Ultimately, Bari Palma was unsuccessful in his bid to win the seat polling 1839 votes, or 2.3% of the 81,107 votes cast, and finishing 14th in a field of 28 candidates. Nevertheless, Palma's pursuit of votes in the general election is of interest both as a detailed example of one individual's campaign and as a demonstration of broader trends in contemporary PNG politics. Dubbed "White Horse 27" by his people, Bari Palma – Kerowagi Open candidate number 27 – utilized Labour Party ideology to appeal to the hard working people of his tribe, referred to as 'white horses' on account of the heavy white coffee bags that they carry on their heads over rough terrain. At the individual level, Palma stood out for his strong commitment to party politics and his initial reluctance to participate in tribally based 'Highlands style' politicking. While attempting to distance his campaign from local politics, Palma's campaign fuelled tensions within his own tribe and became embroiled in the corrupt electoral politics that he sought to oppose. It thereby illustrates the pervasiveness of tribally based politicking and corrupt electoral practices in the highlands.

Despite the abundant literature on PNG elections, accounts of individual campaigns are few, with published works focusing largely upon national, regional, provincial and electorate overviews (Hegarty 1983; King 1989; Saffu 1996; Standish 1983, 1989, 1996, 2002b) as well as particular issues such as violence (Dinnen 1996, 2001), women's participation (Sepoe 1996, 2002) and electoral systems (Reilly 1996). From these studies, much has been gleaned about prevailing trends and processes in PNG electoral politics, but the voices of those attempting to counter such trends remain largely silent. This paper attempts to redress this imbalance by describing and analysing at the grass-roots level an individual campaign

which both challenges and confirms dominant discourses about elections in PNG. While Palma was ultimately unsuccessful, it is significant that, despite his understanding of PNG electoral politics, he chose to pursue his campaign in a manner which held little promise of reward.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Most of the observations upon which this paper is based were made during the three-weeks preceding the commencement of polling in Simbu Province and in the days after polling began (June 3<sup>rd</sup>- 23<sup>rd</sup> 2002). During this period, I spent two weeks living among members of the Bari tribe at Ganigle (alongside the Highlands Highway) and one week in 'traditional' Bari territory on the south side of the Wahgi River. Data was gathered primarily through participant observation, engaging in daily conversations about the impending elections, attending evening vigils in the local campaign house, holding focus groups, documenting campaign speeches and travelling to other places along the campaign trail. I also conducted two structured interviews with Bari Palma in order to gain detailed information about his political aspirations and campaign strategy. Back in Australia, I maintained weekly contact with Bari Palma during the counting period in order to follow his progress and document relevant events. In addition to the detailed information gathered during the 2002 elections, while living among the Bari during 1999 and 2000 I learned much about Bari politicking, as the coming 2002 elections were frequently discussed. It would be remiss not to note at the outset that I was previously married to Bari Palma and that my presence in Simbu during the elections inevitably influenced his campaign and my subsequent rendering of it.

## **PAPUA NEW GUINEA ELECTIONS**

Since the first national election in 1964, PNG elections have been keenly observed, documented and analysed by foreign and local commentators. In reflecting upon the first four elections, Hegarty (1983) noted that while secessionist movements had abated by 1977, few other changes in electoral politics had occurred: political parties remained of slight importance, clan mobilisation continued to be the primary means of obtaining candidate support and voters harboured ongoing expectations of material

gain. Similarly, in 1996, Saffu noted that, "... despite an undoubted rapid social change over the period, continuity in electoral behaviour, rather than change, has been the more striking feature" (1996: 3).

In concluding his survey of the 1992 national elections, Saffu asserted the continuity of two primary features of elections in PNG: the relative unimportance of political parties and the local character of electoral politics (1996: 41). He argued that voter choices were determined primarily by the evaluation of candidates' attributes, including their social networks and ability to deliver material rewards (Saffu 1996: 4-6). Some ten years later, Standish also noted that political parties did not play a significant role in the 2002 elections and that electoral politics continued to be local in nature (Standish 2002b). As argued by Standish, however, it no longer appears "that elections in Papua New Guinea continue to be free and fair" (Saffu 1996: 41; Standish 1996, 2002b).

The 2002 National Election was widely hailed as the worst election in the country's history (Standish 2002b). The government's plan to limit voting to one day was not realized in many parts of the country, the common roll was sullied by ghost names and the notion of a free and fair election became farcical in the face of mass vote buying, the restriction of candidate movement, the stealing of ballot boxes and voting at gunpoint. Such problems were most clearly manifest in the Highlands region, where "gunpoint democracy" (Standish 1996, 2002b) reigned supreme in Southern Highlands and Enga Provinces, but also in Western Highlands and Simbu Provinces. In the wake of voting, tribal warfare erupted throughout the region and the votes of Southern Highlanders in six of eight electorates were declared void.

In Simbu Province, the political trends observed by Standish (1976, 1983, 1989, 1996, 2002b) continued, with localised campaigning, bloc-voting, feasting and the distribution of cash as the favoured methods of rallying support, alongside tampering with the common roll, vote splitting, the restriction of candidate campaigning and the pervasive threat of violence. Delays in voting were experienced throughout the province, ballot papers were stolen, police were absent from polling booths, counting was suspended on several occasions and election related violence resulted in as many as thirty deaths (Standish 2002b). While the Simbu vote was accepted as legitimate by the government, the electoral process was far from democratic.

While 2873 candidates contested the six open seats of Kundiawa, Sinasina-Yonggamugl, Kerowagi, Gumine, Karimui and Chuave, only 41 candidates contested the Simbu Regional seat. Of all Simbu candidates, only 43 were female, constituting a mere 1.5%. In Kerowagi district, 29 males contested the seat of sitting member John Kamb, down from 35 candidates in 1997, only four of whom recontested. Of those 29 candidates, three were from the Bari tribe, including Bari Palma.

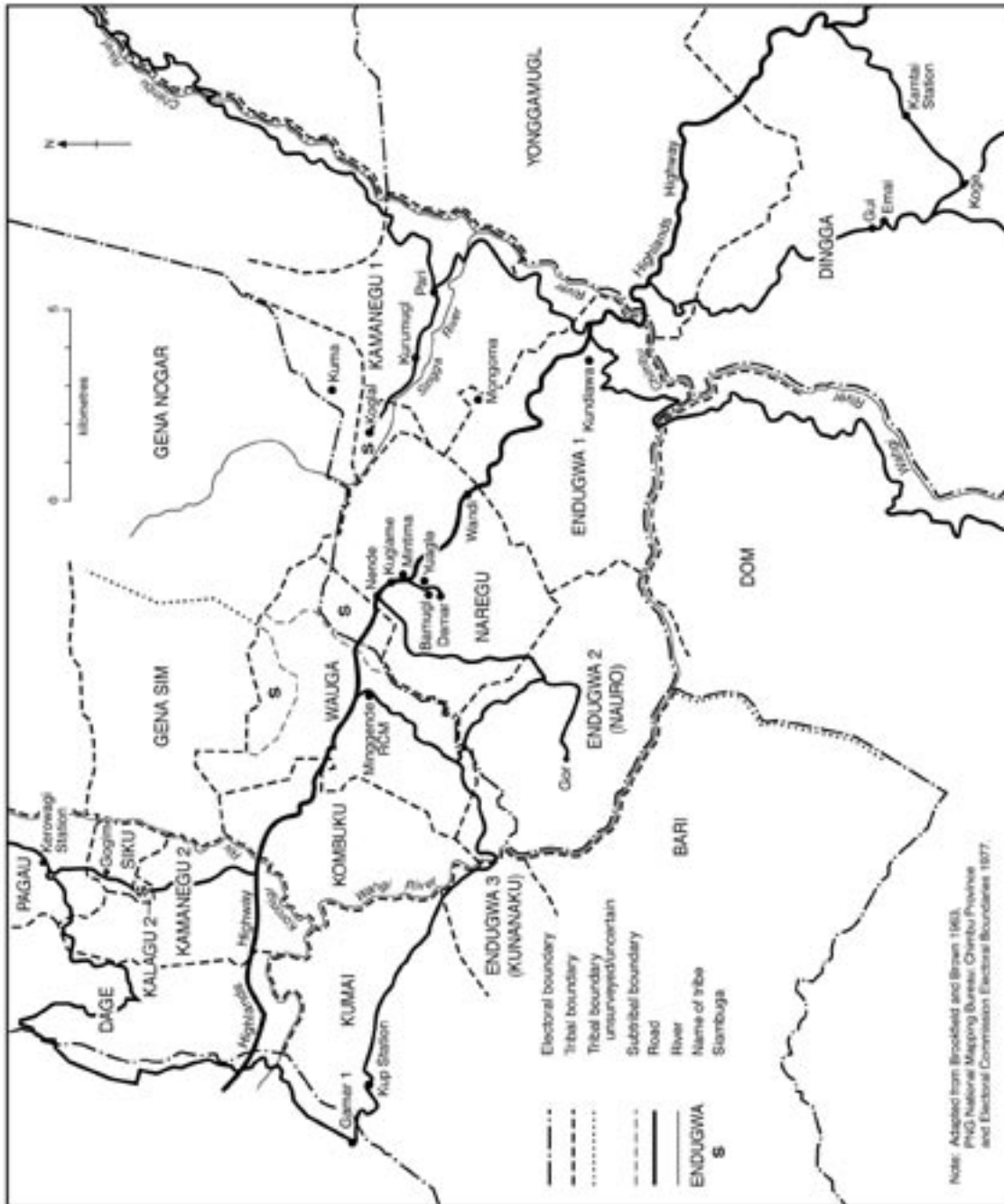
## CANDIDATE PROFILE

The Bari tribe (referred to by Kuman speakers as Bandi) of Kerowagi District (Kup Sub-District) has approximately 4,000 members, all of whom speak a dialect of Kuman known as Kora. The majority of Bari reside on the south side of the Wahgi River, sharing tribal boundaries with the Dom, Yuri and Endugwa 3 (Kunanaku) tribes (see Map 1). The Bari tribe comprises two phratries, Bari One and Bari Two, which together include some 12 clans, each of which is further divided into sub-clans and men's house groups.

Bari Palma, otherwise known as Ignatius Moli Palma, is an agnate of the Nimaikane clan (Kulame Gauma sub-clan) and a member of Kumandikan men's house (see Figure 1). In addition to those Bari who live south of the Wahgi, many Bari have migrated to areas alongside the Highlands Highway and to Kundiawa town. A large group of Nimaikane migrants live on land purchased from the Dage tribe at Ganigle, close to the Western Highlands border. Members of Bari Palma's family occupy both 'traditional' Bari land alongside the Wahgi and new land at Ganigle, thus he has strong support in both areas.

As a child, Palma benefited from the strong emphasis that his mother, Bari Tine (now deceased), and father, Moli Tetor, placed upon education. Palma's school fees were met largely by his father's coffee plantation wages which enabled him to attend Kulame primary school and Kondiu Rosary Secondary School. His excellence at school was rewarded with a scholarship to complete his senior schooling at Kerevat National High School and he later undertook odd jobs in Australia to support himself while undertaking a Bachelor of Business at the Queensland University of Technology. Upon receiving his degree in 1998, Palma returned to PNG where he worked with the Investment Promotion Authority in Port

# MAP 1: BARI TERRITORY



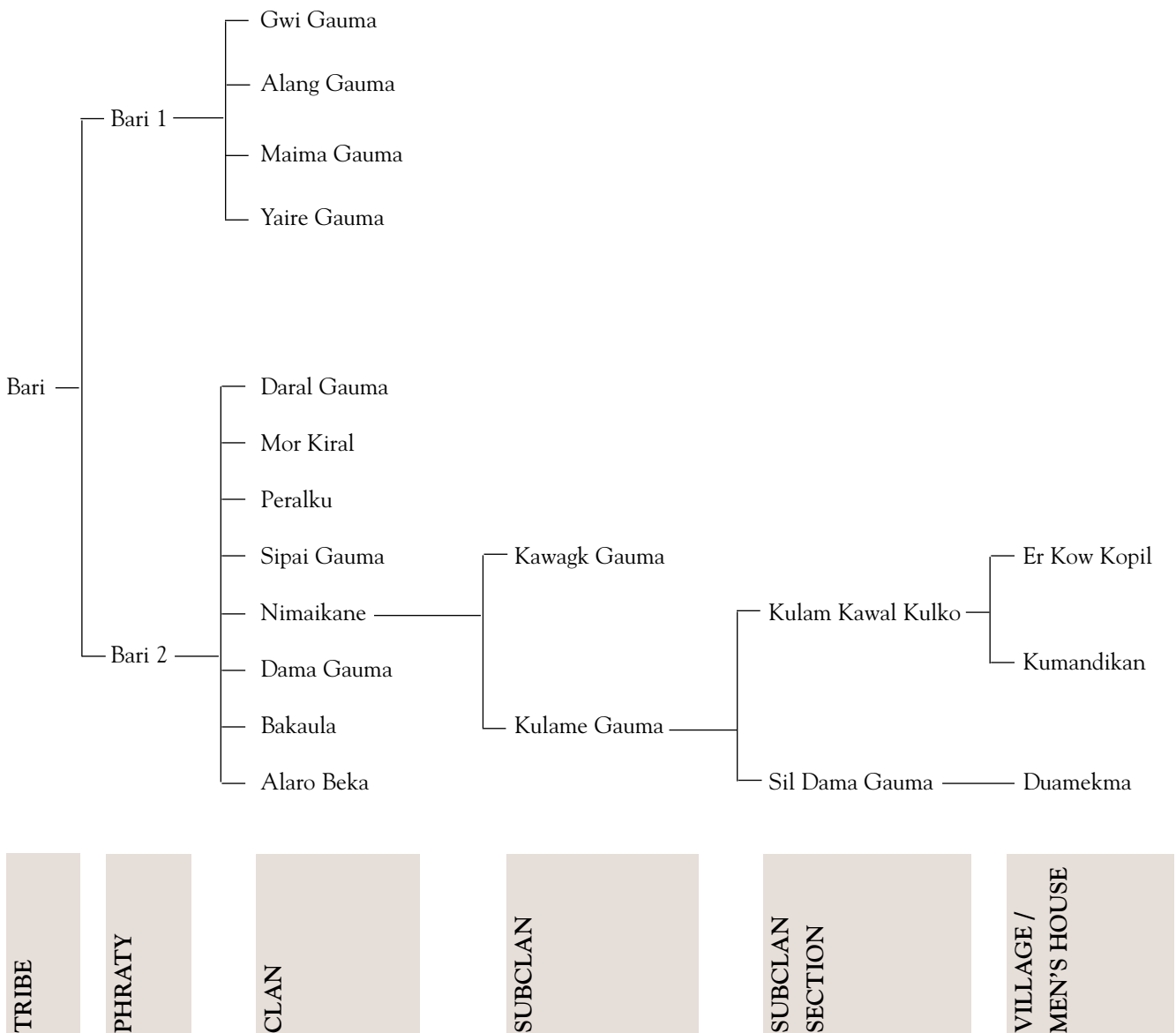
Moresby. In 1999, he accompanied me to Simbu to help me with my fieldwork and develop his family's coffee holdings. In mid-2000, he returned to Port Moresby where he operated a security business before moving to Goroka to try to forge business links with Australian coffee exporters.

At the time of the 2002 elections, Palma was approximately 30 years of age. He was divorced, but it was popularly believed that he was still married, a belief that was easily sustained by the fact that it is not uncommon for Simbu husbands and wives to live apart while one partner works in another region or country. As having an expatriate wife both demonstrated and elevated Palma's social status, it was in his

strategic interests not to reveal his divorce and he did not do so. Palma had strong support from both his immediate family and men's house group, and significant financial support from his adoptive mother who was the primary sponsor of his campaign. In addition to the support of kin, Palma formed a small campaign team of four men, all of whom were chosen for their public speaking abilities, their popularity and their previous campaign experience.

In an interview about his desire to become a member of parliament, Palma claimed that his primary motivation was to bring services such as roads, housing schemes and basic development to his people. On a personal level, he said he wanted to utilise the power and money that

Figure 1 – Bari tribal structure (with clan level detail for Nimaikane)



he would gain as a politician to create business opportunities and build himself a permanent home in his natal village. Palma identified his main weakness as a candidate as a lack of funds but he claimed that his strengths were his education, his genuine love for his people and his strong commitment to fighting for their rights.

## CAMPAIGNING

Bari Palma's campaign officially commenced in late September 2001 when campaign houses were built at Ganigle and Kumandikan village. During this period, Palma resided in Port Moresby, attempting to raise funds for his campaign. After lodging his nomination fee and announcing his candidature with the PNG Labour Party in April 2002, Palma went to Brisbane to try to secure funds from the Australian Labor Party (ALP). While he did not receive any money, the ALP generously printed Palma's campaign posters and stickers. Upon returning to Simbu, Palma undertook two weeks of intensive daytime campaigning, delivering campaign speeches in markets and other public places throughout Kerowagi District.

From this point onwards, ably assisted by his campaign team, Palma campaigned during the evenings at men's houses throughout the district. Palma was typically accompanied by numerous young Nimaikane men and women, most of whom walked, while Palma and his men travelled in a small Suzuki that they had borrowed for the campaign. While Palma forbade the killing of pigs early in his campaign, at many men's houses Palma arrived to find that a pig had been killed or that lamb flaps were cooking. On all occasions, Palma took with him tea and coffee supplies, and occasionally lamb flaps. In addition to travelling to other areas, invited guests travelled to Ganigle to hear Palma's campaign. On these occasions, Nimaikane women sat through the night providing tea, coffee and sweet potato, and entertaining guests with campaign songs which extolled the virtues of Bari Palma (McLeod 2002).

In the weeks immediately before the election, daily Simbu life was taken over by election mania; Kundiawa was transformed by posters and public rallies, utility vehicles traversed the Highway carrying supporters broadcasting or singing campaign songs over megaphones, people donned 'traditional' finery and danced in public spaces, and the haunting

sounds of men crying 'poo oh' (a traditional call known as *kaman kaku sungo*) echoed throughout the valleys. Despite much underlying tension and suspicion, the pre-voting period was largely festive, with people sitting '6 to 6' (a local expression for 'all night') in campaign houses discussing strategies, singing campaign songs and discussing the opportunities that they would gain should their chosen candidate win.

Of the 29 candidates for Kerowagi Open, the three men from the Bari tribe were Bari Palma (PNG Labour Party), Manfred Sipai Kale Nolkua (Independent) and Nobert Alua Ole (People's National Congress Party). Both Palma and Ole had announced their intention to stand for the 2002 elections in 1998, sparking four years of protracted debate between the two men and their respective sub-clan groups. The political aspirations of Nolkua, however, were voiced only during the run-up to the nomination period and came as a surprise to many. All three men belong to the phratry Bari Two, with Palma and Ole being members of the Nimaikane clan (albeit from different sub-clans) and Nolkua being an Alaro Beka clansman.

While Palma and Ole had long voiced their political aspirations, many suggested that Nolkua's nomination was lodged in an attempt to vote-split, that is, to limit the votes of Palma and Ole by expanding voter choice. Despite Nolkua's claim to possess a genuine desire for a political career, people believed that he was reacting to the death of one of his clansmen, who was killed by a Nimaikane man during intra-tribal warfare in 1997. The nomination of three men caused great internal tension among the Bari tribe and elders urged the 'brothers' to co-operate, not compete. It was argued that one Bari representative was better than none, particularly since the Bari were yet to gain representation in parliament. Nevertheless, all three men remained committed to contesting the Kerowagi Open seat.

Throughout the pre-election period and after voting, tension between the two Nimaikane candidates, Ole (Kawagl Gauma) and Palma (Kulame Gauma), was manifest in threats and actual incidents of violence. While my closer association with Palma's people may have affected my interpretation of events, it did appear that the majority of overt antagonism arose from Ole's 'camp'. Indeed, almost daily meetings were held among Palma's people, with elders and Palma frequently reiterating the need to avoid fighting. Unfortunately, a number of violent incidents arose, beginning with the firing of a 'warning shot' at Palma

during campaigning within Bari territory. The shooter, a leading Bari mercenary, later admitted to having been paid K50 by Kawagk Gauma tribesmen to fire the shot at Palma to restrict his movement during the campaign period. Over the following months, many physical fights ended in bloodshed and subsequently in small compensation payments. In attempts to keep their name clear, Kulame Gauma tribesmen and women reported several incidents to the Kerowagi police.

During the weeks immediately before polling, while I was at Ganigle, Kawagk Gauma tribesmen frequently fired 'warning' shots at Palma's supporters, cut down the banana trees of a Kulame Guama elder and threw stones at voters singing campaign songs in support of Palma. Indeed, during the closing of the campaign house at Ganigle, women and children were urged to move away from the celebration area as Kawagk Guama men were hiding close by, armed with guns, sticks and stones. On my final night in Simbu, a number of Kulame Gauma men visited the house in which I was sleeping, asking permission to borrow my host's gun, as Kawagk Gauma men were preparing for warfare.

Palma's broad strategy was to campaign widely, delivering speeches in a mixture of his local language, Kora, and pidgin. While some criticized him for using pidgin, Palma told me that he felt limited by Kora, as he was unable to easily express many of the concepts that he wished to talk about in that language. To broaden his voter base, Palma tried to engage the support of council candidates who represent smaller segments of the population. Believing that councillors would subsequently persuade their people to vote for him, he urged potential councillors to obtain 'labour party endorsement'. Palma claimed that as the Labour Party was a people's party, it had to gain support from the bottom up, hence the importance of enlisting councillor support.

Palma considered his voter base to be primarily Bari, Kulame Gauma sub-clan members living at Ganigle, members of the Dage clan Mulwaku and members of the Nauro tribe living at Bualkap on the Kundiawa/Kerowagi District border. In keeping with his commitment to break with tribally based Highlands politics, however, Palma campaigned widely throughout Kerowagi District in Sambuga, Wauga, Gena, Nagenku, Kunanaku, Dage and Greigu tribal territories. Palma justified this approach by claiming, "They are playing village politics and will only secure votes in their area. I

am playing national politics." This approach met some resistance, however, and in some instances, upon entering the base vote areas of other candidates, Palma and his supporters encountered road-blocks manned by men with guns, bush knives and stones.

While Palma certainly spoke of his personal attributes, his campaign speeches centred primarily upon his membership of the PNG Labour Party and his commitment to its policy. Palma's posters and campaign stickers proudly bore the Labour Party name, an association that was clearly absorbed by supporters who incorporated Palma's party affiliation within their campaign songs. In addition, Palma's English language sticker, 'Don't let them buy your vote', appeared in the most unlikely places, including on people's foreheads. Although he received no actual financial support from the party, Palma argued that, unlike independent candidates who had limited and uncertain financial resources, party affiliated candidates had greater potential to deliver material benefits to their communities.

Much of Palma's campaigning was dedicated to disseminating Labour Party information, which he skilfully associated with local history and mores. For example, Palma noted the long history of ALP development in Australia, stating that ALP governments had prevailed throughout much of Simbu's period of Australian colonization when people had access to education and health – a somewhat falsified history given the short period that the ALP was in power during the 1945–1974 colonial period. He therefore forged a link between the Labour Party and Simbu ancestry, utilizing phrases such as 'Yumi mama papa blo labour pati' (we are the mothers and fathers of the labour party) and 'nau Labour pati em i olsem haus man blo yumi, yumi no wan clan o wan tribe moa yet' (now the Labour Party is like our men's house, we are no longer clansmen and tribesmen).

Subsequently, Palma emphasized the idea that, for government to be effective in PNG, it is necessary for people to vote on the basis of policy, rather than on the basis of tribal loyalty and goods received or promised. During interviews, Palma claimed that it was essential to challenge the way people vote, thus a major part of his campaign involved teaching people to vote individually, regardless of a candidate's tribal affiliation. After one campaign speech within Bari territory, feisty debate ensued as people discussed how to organize their clan vote. While most people claimed that they would vote as a clan for the strongest Bari candidate,



others said they wanted to vote as individuals with free will. However, a woman who had travelled from Barawagi highlighted the difficulty faced by voters attempting to exercise free will. In Palma's absence the woman asked me to tell him "If police are tight, tell Palma I'll vote for him, but he must understand that I am in John Kamb's base and it will be hard if there are no police".

Unlike other candidates, Palma did not challenge the claims of individual candidates during campaign speeches, but he utilized the corruption of various People's Democratic Movement (PDM) candidates and ex-parliamentary members to bolster the image of the Labour Party. In comparing the two parties, Palma used the renowned corruption of Pias Wingti and the locally rumoured corruption of sitting member John Kamb to typify PDM as a capitalist party committed to the interests of the elite. In contrast to PDM, he outlined the working class roots of the Labour Party, arguing that it was a party committed to the needs of the grass roots population and to the abolition of corruption.

In his attempt to forge an association between the 'working class roots' of the PNG Labour Party and the 'grass roots' existence of the Bari, Palma emphasized the relative lack of development in their area. Historical antecedents of this sentiment may be traced back as far as the 1940s when Patrol Officers noted that the tribes to the south of the Wahgi were underdeveloped (Downs 1940) and to the 1960s when Bari attempted to join Kundiawa District. Throughout the election period, group sentiments of neglect were voiced in election songs, one of which commented on the fact that other candidates travelled in expensive cars while another likened the Bari to 'white horses'. Palma said the Labour Party could provide a solution to the problems of the Bari and that as grass roots people they would be understood and represented by the Labour Party.

Throughout his speeches, Palma claimed to be one of the founding fathers of the PNG Labour Party, noting that he had sat with the leader, John Paska, during the drafting of the party's policy and that he had consorted with ALP officials in Australia. In order to assert the strength of his candidacy, Palma emphasized a number of aspects of his own personal history and experience. First, he asserted that while he was a highly educated man who had travelled widely, he had grown up in Simbu, understood his people and was committed to their wellbeing. Second, he highlighted

his educational and occupational record, emphasizing his Australian higher education, the fact that his degree was in international business and his experience in working with the Investment Promotion Authority. These characteristics, he claimed, were fundamental requirements for modern parliamentarians, who have the responsibility of improving the country's economy and developing positive relationships with dignitaries from the English-speaking world. Unlike many candidates, Palma did not draw heavily upon Christian rhetoric or his Catholic background, though he said that '*God bai tokim yu husait bai win, na em bai blesim yu saPOS yu putim rait man igo insait*' (God will tell you who will win and he will bless you if you put the right man in parliament).

Palma's association with Australia formed a key aspect of his campaign, an association that was inevitably lent credence by my presence in Simbu during the election. Not only did he claim an ability to be able to communicate with Australians on account of his time spent in that country, but he also claimed that he was 'opening the road' for other Bari to go to Australia. This was readily absorbed by Palma's supporters, many of whom told me '*yu wet, taim Palma i kamap memba, mi bai go pas long Australia*' (you wait, when Palma becomes a member I'll be the first to go to Australia). While he did not overtly state that he would fund such trips, it was certainly assumed that this was the case and many young men eagerly spoke of finding work on farms in rural Queensland. Despite this strong emphasis upon his Australian connections, Palma also emphasized his Bari roots, stating "I am a true Bari man, my name was Iggy Palma but I changed it to Bari Palma because I want to represent my people".

Palma emphasized the existence of a written Labour Party policy and long-term plan, claiming that many other candidates lacked a clear policy. Palma spoke of four key issues, namely:

- 1) Free education – Palma stated that this was the '*mama lo*' (mother law) of the Labour Party, and claimed that although the PDM made similar promises it had no long-term plan, unlike the Labour Party.
- 2) Free health – According to Palma, a major Labour Party goal is to provide free hospital care and fully functioning free Aid Posts.
- 3) Improved living – Palma claimed that the Labour Party strives to assist people

in developing permanent housing, proper toilets, easy water access and improved roads by 2015. Here he played particularly to the female vote by emphasizing the hard work of women who walk long distances to get water and who cook on the ground.

4) Import substitution – Palma drew upon his experience at the Investment Promotion Authority to emphasize the need to substitute expensive imports with locally produced goods. He noted the rising cost of imported rice and the ease with which rice can be produced locally, as has recently begun at Kondiu Secondary School.

People seemed rather taken with Palma's 'party message' and appeared to forge a sense of group identity as newly incorporated members of the Labour Party. This sentiment was manifest in the various songs composed about the virtues of the Labour Party and in frequent comments such as '*yumi ol mama papa blo Labour Pati*' (we are the mothers and fathers of the Labour Party). Party politics, as explained by Palma, was contrasted with 'Highlands style' vote buying and one man told me 'The real meaning of the word politics is lie. Palma isn't doing politics, he's just telling us about his policies. There are no lies in the Labour Party.' However, despite the overt curiosity in, and support for, the notion of 'party politics', entrenched practices are hard to challenge, as evidenced by an elderly man's jovial yet serious comment: 'Palma, your politics are good, but the other man gave me beer and my stomach is full!'

While Palma's campaign was comparatively inexpensive, his primary sponsor told me that she spent K11, 000 (c. AUD \$ 4300) on campaign costs such as lamb flaps (an imported meat product that is widely consumed in PNG), tea, coffee, milk, sugar, petrol, kerosene and small payments to his campaign team, in addition to lending him K4, 000 for other campaign related expenses. As well as the money spent by his sponsor, Palma used approximately K6000 of his own funds. In breaking with the Highlands tradition of vote buying, however, Palma offered neither pigs nor money to potential voters. When asked why, Palma said:

I am moving in a different direction. I think that we are moving into a new century and a lot of educated people are starting to realise that buying votes is corruption at the campaign level, which goes all the way to the national

parliament and to all levels of government and organizations. So I stop it here, during the campaign. I'm getting the message clear to the people.

Despite his strong anti-corruption stance, Palma and his close supporters told me that, in Simbu, clean candidates do not win and that on this basis some minor infringements of democratic procedure were warranted. Many were carried out by Palma's supporters and were not endorsed by Palma himself. A major effort to assist Palma's campaign was made by a close agnate who enrolled to work on the census so that he could enlarge Palma's base vote. He told me that he achieved this by adding the names of multiple wives for each registered male, by adding false names and by registering names at more than one location. In this fashion, he claims to have doubled Palma's base vote. This was confirmed by one young male, who told me that his name was registered at Kumandikan village in traditional Bari territory, at Ganigle and also at Mulwaku. He then stated that he and many other young men planned to vote first at Kumandikan, after which they would run to Ganigle in order to vote again. Despite the falsification of the common roll, many people complained that their names weren't on the roll – an ironic twist given that for approximately 4, 000 Bari, 5, 600 Bari names were recorded on the common roll.

Behind the scenes, Palma's key supporters tried to secure deals with other candidates, a move that became increasingly necessary as other candidates threatened Palma's base vote. Three key attempts were made. First, after receiving a leg of pig, a candidate with a small base vote agreed to give his votes to Palma if he wasn't doing well. Second, after receiving the backside of a pig, a candidate agreed to interrupt the movement of a primary competitor and subsequently split his base vote. Third, a regional candidate was asked to convince his supporters to give their open vote to Palma, if Palma would also convince his supporters to give their regional vote to that candidate.

In the final days before Thursday 20 June, the designated polling day for Simbu, Palma and his people held minor feasts in order to celebrate and bless the closing of his campaign houses at Ganigle and Kumandikan. As Palma had expressly requested that no pigs be killed in relation to his campaign, the closing of the campaign houses provoked vigorous debate among his near kin. Palma resisted the killing of pigs mainly to avoid future debts, but also to emphasize the message that voting was about

policy, not material gain. Nimaikane elders, however, claimed that since independence pigs had been killed during political campaigns and that to break with tradition would cause bad luck. Furthermore, they stated that many of Palma's avowed supporters wanted to kill pigs for him and that to deny them their right to do so would cause offence and ill will. On this basis, Palma allowed the campaign houses to be closed with small celebrations.

On Friday 14 June, the closing of Palma's campaign houses began at Ganigle. Mulwaku clansmen (Dage tribe) killed nine pigs and one goat, with 11 pigs being killed by Bari tribesmen. In typical Simbu fashion, Nimaikane elders and younger men directly associated with Palma's campaign gave public speeches before 77 neatly arranged piles of pig, sugar cane, bananas, cooked root crops and greens were distributed to designated guests. The majority of guests were from the Bari and Dage tribes, but guests from other tribes including Kumai, Gena and Sambuga also attended. Following the distribution, much dissatisfaction ensued over recipient choices, as many people felt that they had supported Palma yet received inadequate recognition. This was quickly rectified as Palma's close family members sacrificed their food in order to satiate the dissatisfaction of outside voters. A particularly unusual feature of the distribution was the significant distribution of meat to young, rather than old, men. Upon noting this change from the usual norms of Simbu meat distribution, I asked an old lady what was happening, to which she replied: "We're giving meat to the young men because if police presence isn't strong they'll mark all of the ballot papers and use force if necessary."

Five days later, on Wednesday 19 June, the Kumandikan campaign house was closed with a celebration attended primarily by Bari tribesmen and women. On this occasion, some 20 pigs were killed, most of which were given by Bari. In addition, five cartons of lamb flaps were cooked and distributed. No arguments followed the distribution of food. In fact, as many guests later suffered from diarrhoea and people were unable to eat the large portions of food that they had received, it was believed there was an overabundance of food symbolizing excess wealth and hence indicating Palma's success in the elections. While Palma remained optimistic about his chances of winning, he realistically noted that he faced significant competition from the sitting member, John Kamb, who had apparently spent a large amount of money on his campaign, and from Alphonse Morial Willie

and Tom Kulag, both of whom had large tribal support bases with the Gena and Dage tribes respectively. Despite Palma's pragmatism, spirits ran high in anticipation of voting the following day and both adults and youth danced through the night to the sounds of PNG reggae.

## VOTING

On Thursday 20 June, polling commenced in Simbu. Despite incessant rain and pervasive low cloud, the Bari maintained confidence in the government's commitment to one-day polling and spent the entire day awaiting the arrival of their ballot boxes by helicopter. On that evening, news came from Bualkap that an anticipated 1,008 votes for Bari Palma had been lost because that the rest house at which people were supposed to vote was not registered. This dampened people's spirits, as did the fact that the pig meat put aside the previous day for the polling officers had begun to rot.

On Friday 21 June, the rain stopped and, upon hearing that people had voted elsewhere in Simbu, the Bari ignored the local prophet's claim that voting would not occur until the following week and idly passed another day anticipating the arrival of their ballot boxes. On Saturday, frustrations began to run high as people started to suspect that something was amiss, or rather, that a Nimaikane man had been successful in his attempt to bribe a pilot to divert his helicopter and prevent other Bari clans from voting for Ole and Nolkua. Apparently, there was only one helicopter in operation. On Saturday afternoon, Palma discussed the option of going to the Kerowagi Police Station with Nolkua's supporters to obtain the ballot boxes, but they failed to reach an agreement. At this point, we began the journey by foot to Mingendi, passing through the territory of rival candidates with no ill consequence. Upon catching a bus from Mingendi to Ganigle, we heard of several alarming events that had transpired during voting in Ganigle and consequently spent the evening trying to devise a plan of action.

That evening we learnt the details of three events, none of which would work in Palma's favour. The first event involved voting at the Moruma rest house to which Nimaikane men and women from both Kulame Gauma (Palma) and Kawagk Gauma (Ole) belong. Apparently, there were no police present at the polling booths. 1700 ballot papers were issued to Moruma One rest house, when the

real population of the rest house was about 500 people, around 300 being Kawagk Gauma and 200 being Kulame Gauma sub-clan members. Supporters of Ole arrived heavily armed with semi-automatic weapons and took charge of the polling. The number of young Kawagk Gauma men at this rest house significantly outnumbered the number of young Kulame Gauma men who therefore felt that they had no choice but to comply. The armed Kawagk Gauma men gave 200 ballot papers to the people of Kulame Gauma, all of which were then marked in Palma's name, while the remaining 1500 papers were marked in Ole's name. The earlier agreement between Kawagk Gauma and Kulame Gauma men that the ballot papers be evenly divided between Palma and Ole had been broken and cost Palma an anticipated 550 votes.

In addition, Palma lost a significant amount of anticipated votes from Ganigle rest house, particularly those of the Mulwaku clan (Dage Yogmbo tribe). Two ballot boxes designated for the Mulwaku clan were diverted by another non-Bari candidate whose supporters marked the ballot papers in his name. While Mulwaku clansmen went to Kerowagi and demanded ballot papers to make up for those stolen from them, they were given only 300 papers which they marked in Palma's name. The anticipated number of votes from this rest house however, was approximately 2000. In addition, at Kunabau rest house, where Palma had been promised approximately 1000 votes, he received only 30–40 votes, as the local candidate and his armed supporters had been at the polling booth. Unfortunately, people's newly gained commitment to Palma and the 'party' was subsumed by enforced tribal allegiance and foul play.

On Sunday, having spent the entire night planning the rectification of Palma's failing situation, we left Ganigle for Kerowagi at around 5:30am. Upon arrival, Palma learned that the ballot papers for Bari One had already been released. He did, however, retrieve the ballot papers for Bari Two, which he took in the car to the border of Bari territory, accompanied by a presiding officer. With the presiding officer and a number of supporters Palma then went towards the rest houses at which Bari Two members were to lodge their votes. Before reaching the rest houses, however, Palma and his companions were held at gunpoint by the supporters of another Bari candidate and only a small number of ballot papers was allocated to Palma. Once again, Palma fell victim to gunpoint democracy.

## RESULTS

After repeated delays in the counting of votes for Simbu Province, Simbu seats were declared between 23 and 26 July. While sitting member Louis Ambane regained the Simbu Provincial seat, all the sitting members for the open electorates failed to be re-elected. In Kerowagi Open John Kamb ran a close second to Alphonse Morial Willie, who won with 16.1%. Of the seven Simbu seats (including the Provincial seat), three were gained by members of the National Alliance (Provincial, Kerowagi, Sinasina-Yonggamugl), one by a People's Democratic Movement (PDM) party member (Kundiawa), one by a National Transformation Party member (Chuave), and two by independents (Gumine and Karimui-Nomane).

Of the twenty-nine contenders for the Kerowagi Open seat, the three Bari candidates did not fare especially well, though they did not do badly either. Manfred Sipai Kale Nolkua achieved the highest result, coming sixth with 4.8%, while Nobet Alua Ole came eleventh with 2.9%. Palma closely followed his clan brother, Nobet, with 2.3%, relegating him to fourteenth position. Palma's plans for a Labour government were far from realised, with only one PNG Labour Party candidate (Western Province Provincial) being successful in the entire country.

While the declared results clearly highlight Palma's defeat, the daily readings of the results as they were declared provide more detailed insights into Palma's successes and failures. Throughout the counting period in Simbu, on a daily basis, I observed the results mounted as they were mounted on the internet and maintained contact with Palma who was staying in Kundiawa in order to monitor the count. When votes appeared besides Palma's name, I was able to confer with him to ascertain where they had come from, on the basis of his knowledge of which boxes were being counted each day. Significantly, at least half of Palma's 1839 votes were obtained from rest houses that Palma did not consider part of his base vote. Conversely, few came from members of his own tribe, Bari, because they were stolen by a more successful Bari candidate. Given that Palma distributed neither cash nor material goods, it can be reasonably concluded that votes for him from the members of other tribes (particularly those boasting their own candidates) were in part cast on the basis of Palma's proclaimed policies.

## DISCUSSION

In situating Bari Palma's 2002 election campaign within the broader context of PNG electoral politics, both unique and commonplace characteristics are revealed. Palma's candidate profile, his campaign and voting in his area, confirm and challenge dominant discourses about electoral politics in PNG. Unfortunately, because of the lag in the publication of materials about the elections, the most comprehensive data relates to the 1992 elections (Saffu 1996).

A comparison of Palma's candidate profile with the demographic characteristics of 1992 National Election candidates, reveals that Palma's biographical details both conform with and deviate from the average demographic of PNG's emergent political elite (Saffu 1996). Palma is male and like the majority of candidates he occupies the 30-39 year old age bracket (Saffu 1996: 12-13), albeit at the lower end, thus rendering him a relatively young candidate. Unlike most other candidates (94% in 1992), however, Palma was not married at the time of the election, nor did he have children (Saffu 1996: 15). As previously mentioned, while it was commonly believed that Palma was still married at this time, the most significant consideration regarding the marital status of candidates is presumably the presence or absence of affinal networks (and hence a broadened support base) which were in any case absent given Palma's marriage to a non-Papua New Guinean.

Like other candidates (64.9% in 1992), Palma claims to attend church at least once a week (Saffu 1996: 16) and his educational attainments are consistent with the increasingly educated nature of the emergent political elite. Interestingly, while voters told me that they have always placed an emphasis upon the importance of educational achievements, in 2002 they appeared to have raised their expectations to include an interest in the relevance of each candidate's disciplinary background to the pursuit of politics. In this respect, Palma's background in international business was seen to be more relevant to politics than a competitor's PhD in the biological sciences.

Unlike his candidate profile, Palma's campaign strategies contrasted greatly with those of his competitors. From the outset, he spoke against vote buying and campaigned beyond his immediate base vote areas. Most obviously, Palma's strong emphasis upon party

alliance and his strategic integration of Labour Party and local history set him apart from other candidates who relied primarily upon self-promotion. Palma avoided immediate vote buying, but like others he made promises of future material reward, albeit by evoking the ability of parties to deliver greater material rewards than individuals.

In comparison to many other campaigners, Palma employed a somewhat didactic approach, drawing upon his understanding of politics, business and development to highlight his ability to contribute to long-term national level change for all Papua New Guineans, as opposed to short-term material gain for his immediate kin only. In addition, in acknowledging the cleavage between individual and group rights and obligations, Palma conducted voter education, drawing a strong correlation between the secret individual ballot and the flowering of democracy and subsequently of social and economic gains.

Ultimately, while Palma strove to make a clean break from the traditional style of politics, as voting preceded it became clear that the strategies that he had chosen were not winning strategies in the social context in which he was operating. Consequently, despite having commenced his campaign with strategies that distinguished him from other candidates, Palma came under increasing pressure to make deals that were undemocratic and significantly at odds with the ideology to which, I believe, he was genuinely committed.

Despite professing an allegiance to Palma, voters both within and beyond his base vote areas conceded to the pressures of 'gunpoint democracy' and cast their votes to other candidates. Upon the completion of voting, many supporters expressed sorrow at having been forced at gunpoint to vote for other candidates and felt that they had failed Palma. Conversely, Palma's supporters voiced pride in the non-corrupt nature of his campaign and praised him for "running a clean race".

Elderly people, in particular, noted that in previous times, clansmen and sub-clansmen supported one another, relating the fact that two men from one clan (Nimaikane) and three men from one tribe (Bari) had contested the election to the breakdown of group solidarity and the development of fighting within the tribe. While they did not directly correlate the rise of capitalism and individualism with this change, they did note that there is an increased tendency among young men to aspire to leadership and its attendant power, factors

that they believe impede group solidarity. Fortunately, despite obvious tensions between the three candidates, Bari animosities did not escalate into full-scale warfare and the death of tribesmen, as in other areas. However, these animosities inevitably ingrained tensions existing between the small social groups to which each man belongs.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In examining the election campaign of Bari Palma, I have sought to provide insights into the dynamics of campaigning at the grassroots level. Furthermore, I have attempted to provide an alternative to the perspective that inevitably arises when similarities and differences between candidates are compressed into typologies of candidates, campaign strategies and voting behaviours. Much of the foregoing analysis confirms that many of the characterizations made by political scientists since independence are still applicable. In addition, however, it attests that a “new breed” of leaders in PNG is attempting to affect social change via Western democratic procedures from within an environment in which “traditional” modes of power broking (via the distribution of wealth) continue alongside the increased use of firearms and voter intimidation.

Bari Palma’s campaign is testament to this change, providing both insights into the existence of forward-thinking youthful leaders and the resilience of Papua New Guinean political traditions. While truth remains in the statement that “continuity in electoral behaviour, rather than change, has been the more striking feature” (Saffu 1996: 3), the voice of Bari Palma (and presumably those of others) suggests that, while changes in political behaviours may not yet be systematically occurring, a small number of Papua New Guineans are attempting to challenge dominant trends in the struggle for a more socially and economically prosperous PNG. Ultimately, one can predict that the demise of ‘gunpoint democracy’ and the emergence of ‘free and fair elections’ will take years to achieve, if at all. It is comforting, however, to recognize that despite prevailing political trends, young Papua New Guineans are seeking alternative pathways to power in which corruption, dishonesty and violence have little place.

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