

WOMEN AND POLITICS IN
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

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PREFACE

This volume comprises papers presented to the Department of Political and Social Change's fifth annual seminar on Papua New Guinea, held at the Australian National University in May 1984, together with an introductory paper by Professor Maev O'Collins. It brings together contributions by Papua New Guineans and foreigners, politicians and scholars, women and men.

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WOMEN AND POLITICS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA:
EXTERNAL INFLUENCES AND INTERNAL CONSTRAINTS

Maev O'Collins

Ten years ago, as preparations began in Papua New Guinea for the celebration of International Women's Year, there was considerable debate regarding how far women could and should be involved in the political, as well as social and economic, developments which were taking place. Writing on the theme of 'the changing role of women in society', one of the first women graduates from the University of Papua New Guinea noted that the seventh point of the government's Eight Point Plan was 'equal participation of women in all forms of economic and social activity' but that, intentionally or unconsciously, political activity had been omitted (Loko 1974:4).

After outlining the way in which women had contributed to development in both the public and private spheres, and the importance of increasing awareness among all women of the contribution which they could make to national development, she concluded that:

We as the 'educated' sisters must take the initiative and drive to involve our sisters at the village and urban situations in our aims and goals for development (Loko 1974:6).

The involvement of women in political activity has, however, increased very slowly during the past ten years. As the only current national woman parliamentarian, Nahau Rooney, points out in her paper in this volume only three women have been elected to the National Parliament and none at provincial level. There has been a number of women representatives appointed to provincial assemblies and several to local government and town councils. In 1982 seventeen women stood as candidates in the national elections but only one was elected, and that only after a decision by the Court of Disputed Returns. The contribution which women can make as decision makers, particularly at provincial and local levels, has not been fully realized.

...at the local level society is still shaped and determined by conservative traditional attitudes towards leadership and the role of women (Rooney p.46).

The value of a formal political role for women has not as yet been fully accepted, and this is reflected in the lack of any significant support by women themselves for female candidates. However, throughout Papua New Guinea women's influence on public decision making is articulated in many different ways. The Papers by Lisette Josephides and Martha Macintyre illustrate these variations.

In Tubetube, Milne Bay Province women 'traditionally enjoyed a relatively high status within their lineages'. The introduction of new formal political structures has weakened women's position as public decision makers:

..institutionalized local politics in this matrilineally organized community, as it is manifest in ward committee and local council political structures, has removed women from their former seats of power and left them as 'powers behind the throne' (Macintyre, p.21).

In many other societies there is less evidence that women's role as individual or group leaders diminished during the period following colonial intrusion although it is clear that this aspect of women's influence in an apparently male-dominated society has often been ignored or not fully understood by outside observers. In recent years as women have become involved in the cash economy their public roles have also increased, although it may still be newsworthy for a woman to speak on equal terms with men at official functions.

When, for example, a Southern Highlands businesswoman spoke at the opening of the Ialibu telephone exchange it was reported that she was the first woman in her clan to speak at a formal public gathering (Post-Courier 2 October 1980). The desire by women to become more involved in economic activities, and the ways in which women have organized activities as a group are discussed by Wayne Warry in his paper on the Kafaina movement in Chuave. Using traditional social structures and linkages, a powerful network of women's groups has developed. Their potential influence on political decision making has yet to be realized, reflecting that women's roles in highlands societies are still sharply circumscribed by their status in a male world. (See also Strathern 1972 and Launch et al. 1979.)

The belief that women's influence on public decision making would be increased through formal organized group participation and action led in the past to the vigorous sponsorship of women's clubs and associations by government and non-government agencies. Although an overall aim of these clubs was women's development, this was usually seen as related to the domestic and subsistence spheres of activity. Another feature which has persisted is that the new organizational structures ignored existing ways by which women participated in group activities. One former community development officer who had worked with women's clubs considered that the failure of many of these introduced activities reflected that they were out of tune with the life of the community.

One example of this non-Melanesian aspect which mitigated against many clubs' success was the fact that it isolated women from the men of the village, who were almost always the decision-makers (Willis 1975:28).

However, although initiated as a result of external government or church influences, women's participation in formal groups has continued and has formed the basis for national women's organizations. Representatives from existing associations attended the First National Convention of Papua

New Guinea Women held in May 1975 as part of the activities for International Women's Year. Agela Mandie's paper describes the aims and activities of the National Council of Women which was established as a result of this meeting. She notes that women from different provinces look to the council to provide a channel for ideas and activities which would assist women to become more influential in political as well as economic spheres of activity. But she also notes that:

The women's expectations were very great; no one explained the role of the National Council of Women...and the limitations and problems that might be experienced by the council in fulfilling the many and varied expectations were not clear to the women (Mandie, p. 49; see also Bonnell 1982).

A major constraint and source of conflict in the functioning of the National Council of Women has been the apparent social distance between some younger Western-educated urban-based women and their rural counterparts. Access to the formal education system has remained unequal throughout the country and in many provinces there are small numbers of secondary, and even more limited numbers of tertiary, educated women. For a number of women who participate in organized activities there is a feeling of not quite understanding and of possibly being manipulated by the educated few. Different factions have also emerged among those with secondary and tertiary education. There are often assertions that one sub-group is more sensitive to the needs of rural women than another and conflicts between the National Council of Women and some provincial councils have led to breakaway moves to form another organization for women.

Alternative ways of encouraging women's participation have been promoted both at national and provincial levels but there remain unanswered questions as to whether any of these organizational structures are flexible enough to meet the needs of women from different communities throughout Papua New Guinea.

Angry public reactions to various attempts to increase women's participation in political and economic activities often have been articulated by secondary and tertiary educated young men who perceive changes in the rules played by young women as a threat to their own position in society. Evelyn Hogan's paper documents a number of exchanges of letters in the Post-Courier which illustrate that entrenched conservative attitudes to women's roles are not confined to rural village situations. (See also Still and Shea 1976.)

In 1972, when I first commenced teaching at the University of Papua New Guinea, male students frequently complained about women who spoke up in tutorials or who followed the latest dress fashions. They accepted their own right to adopt a western style of life while criticizing their female counterparts for abandoning societal values and community customs.

Throughout the South Pacific similar conflicts exist between those who see the need for more rapid involvement of women and those who reject these attempts or seek to slow down the pace of change. In Fiji, women have moved into the public arena through their participation in non-government

organizations such as the Young Women's Christian Association. Once again this has not been without conflict and suspicion as some older leaders have seen younger women as attacking traditional authority. (See Ameratlal et al. 1975 and Pacific Perspective 11(2), 'Pacific Women on the Move'.)

In Vanuatu, women played a significant role during the period preceding independence and have continued to debate the need for women to become more equal participants in political and economic spheres of public life. In a paper presented by 'the Women of Vanuatu' to the 21st South Pacific Conference, they asserted:

Women have a dynamic role to play in the goals of economic and political independence. They must no longer be denied (Women of Vanuatu n.d.:4).

In examining why women in Papua New Guinea appear to have moved only very slowly into the sphere of public decision making and formal political influence, it is important to begin by questioning the assumption that women played less significant roles as decision makers in the period before colonial intrusion. Attitudes and structures introduced by agents of change from industrialized Western societies have been instrumental in imposing a sharper separation of men's and women's spheres than existed in many societies in the pre-colonial period. The concepts of cooperation as equal partners have given way to concepts of separate development to help women compete on equal terms with men.

As one writer, who has studied women's associations and rural development in Western Samoa and East New Britain, warns:

There is a real danger that in trying to remedy the results of historical processes which have imposed added disadvantages upon islands women, they will be pushed even more firmly to the economic periphery (Meleisea n.d.:60).

Formal education has been seen by both church and government agencies as one means of increasing opportunities for economic advancement. However, in many provinces throughout Papua New Guinea women's access to education remains limited. Functional literacy and non-formal education continue to be out of reach for most of the younger generation of rural women who have never attended formal schools. Debates such as those which took place in this seminar on the influence of women on political decision making do not touch the lives of these women. Nonetheless, the papers highlight the need for those interested in developing appropriate strategies for encouraging greater political participation by women to be aware of the widely differing cultural and economic circumstances of women in Papua New Guinea.

While at the University of Papua New Guinea or in government and non-government agencies discussion continues as to the need for women to be more active in influencing national politics, most women are more concerned with basic rights. This is reflected in the work of the Southern Highlands Council of Women, which published a booklet on 'Rait bilong ol meri' ('Women's rights'). It set out the basic rights of women to have access to

education and health, to come together in groups and to take part in political life as candidates or as voters following their own choice of candidates. In conclusion, the Council pointed out that it did not wish to undermine the status or position of men: 'Tasol mipela i laikim man na meri igat wanpela kain rait tasol' ('However we feel that men and women have equal rights'). It is clear that the desire by women for equal rights to participate in political activities has found different expression throughout Papua New Guinea and the strategies for achieving this goal are as varied as the societies in which women live. For some, informal behind-the-scenes influence on community-level politics is a reality, even if it is unnoticed by outside observers. For others, economic and social pressures are more significant forces in their lives. And, for a few unusual women, the challenge is to gain a greater voice in the changes taking place in Papua New Guinea and participate more fully in the political life of the society.

BULLDOZERS AND KINGS; OR TALK, NAME, GROUP AND LAND:
A KEWA POLITICAL PALINDROME

Lisette Josephides

In 1977 a patrol officer in Erave in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea filed the following report.

If one observes closely the daily routine in the villages one cannot fail to notice that women are the hard working human beings here, while the men sit in their men's houses and discuss fighting and hunting. This they consider a day's labour. A wife, then, can be likened to a bulldozer, while a husband is a gifted king who sits all his life on his throne in the palace. The poor women leave their villages at 7.30 in the morning, taking along a bush knife, an axe and a spade, their netbags and young children. In the garden they cut down bushes and trees, they dig up stumps, make fences, clear away the rubbish and burn it. At about 5.30 in the afternoon they go and dig up sweet potatoes in the old gardens, fill up the netbags and also collect firewood. They carry the netbags on their backs and their infants on their shoulders, piling the firewood wherever they can. When they arrive home they feed the pigs, go to fetch water and return to make a fire and cook. When the food is ready they take it to the men's house, then come back to the women's house and feed themselves and their children at around 9.30 pm. Then they go to bed. This continues until the women die.

Men do not help women with work for the maintenance of the community and the family. Sometimes they go hunting but the rest of the time is spent talking nonsense with other men who come to visit. They just eat what the women provide; they don't work for their food. They say that this is what their ancestors did so they follow in their footsteps. Some add that they bought wives precisely so that they can do the work for them. Also, they expressed the belief that if men worked as hard as women they would not survive very long. It was explained to them that on the contrary they would be taking a lot of exercise and their bodies would become stronger, whereas if they sat around all day they would become weak and die. But in talking to these men it became clear that nothing would change the customs in this area. If men do work they do very little, perhaps an hour's work. If there is a large tree to be cut down in a new garden a wife will call her husband, but the rest of the work is done by her. This is why we can say that women are bulldozers. It sounds very funny but it is quite true in this area (Erave situation report No. 2 of 76-7, paraphrased and condensed).

The officer was a Papua New Guinean man, though from a different area. His superior officer, who was Australian, appended the following comments to his junior officer's report.

As women become more liberated they realise that they are the crutch of society. The situation will then reverse from the present one. In the Kerabi social structure men are the leaders. Because of large migrations of young men the few remaining have had to fill in for them. The society has adapted ecologically. Once large numbers of men were needed for defensive purposes. Now with government protection men are not needed in such large numbers. The men who stay at home are looking after large numbers of women and are perhaps more active than observed by the patrol. The observation of men sitting around men's houses all day talking together, taken with the increased birth rate, indicates that they may have something to talk about (*ibid.*).

The picture painted by the junior officer accords very much with accounts given to me by elderly women in the Sugu Valley area of Kagua, northwest of Kerabi. However, in 1979 women in this area tended to have gardens closer to home and did not absent themselves on a regular basis from morning till late in the afternoon in order to look after the family's subsistence. Yet did this mean that women were becoming liberated and realising that they were the 'crutch of society', in the somewhat unfelicitous expression of the Australian officer? Has contact and inclusion into a nation state led to the political or economic liberation of women? In an attempt to tackle this question I shall give a brief description of traditional Kewa social organisation, then discuss the ideological biases of policies at contact, especially as they expressed themselves in the field tactics of officers who concerned themselves with the political and economic education of the people. In conclusion, I will compare women's position in old and new structures.

Kewa social organisations(1)

Prior to contact Kewa social organization was similar to that of many other highlands groups. The Kewa were horticulturalists and pig raisers(2), living in dispersed settlements rather than large villages. Residence was patrivirilocal, so that the local group resembled an agnatic lineage with unmarried wives, and sisters and daughters who were destined to marry out. Land was in the name of the tribe, in the name of the clan and in the name of individual men. Women normally gained access to it through their fathers, husbands and brothers. The day-to-day productive unit was the household, though some tasks were ceremonially undertaken collectively by the men. Women rarely worked together. The household consisted normally of a man, his wives and children. Co-wives gardened separately and did not pool their produce, except as it was drawn off and used by one man, their joint husband. Sometimes this family was augmented by elderly parents who could no longer look after themselves, or sisters, young brothers and other hangers-on. However these were not stable members

(1) I conducted fieldwork among the Kewa of Kauga, Southern Highlands Province, between 1979 and 1981, with the support of an English Social Science Research Council Award.

(2) I use the past tense; however the description of Kewa society which follows is in the main still true today.

and could not always be depended upon to pull their weight. Between husband and wife there was a division of labour. Husbands were expected to make new gardens in virgin forest, construct and maintain fences, build and repair houses, and plant certain foods that were dubbed male. Women were responsible for the planting of most garden crops, the daily tending, weeding and harvesting as well as the family cooking, house cleaning and child care. In practice men also helped in these tasks, but the domestic domain was formally the province of women. The public domain of group politics and dispute settlement, ceremonial exchange and inter-group relations was the province of men, and open incursions by women were discouraged.

The largest political unit was the tribe. Depending on its size and locality a tribe may have consisted of clans, clan sections and lineages. Elsewhere I have argued that Kewa social groups are dynamic and can be studied only historically as they fused and segmented following warfare and alliance (Josephides 1984). But although the composition of the group changed constantly as a result of fissions and accretions, the ideology of in-group versus out-group remained. This ideology rested on the popularly expressed but in fact untrue premise that male group members were agnates with a common ancestor. While it transformed non-agnates into agnates, agnatic ideology excluded women as constant members and propagators of groups. Group solidarity was male, and group continuity in the male line.

Kewa social groups did not have formal, hereditary positions of political authority but were organized around bigmen who achieved such positions of power because of their own charisma, personal effort, bravery, talents for effective conflict management, and good sense. Nor were such positions sinecures with lifelong tenure. A bigman could lose power by losing support, or by being overtaken by a more effective and able leader. Yet the fact that a bigman could be toppled did not mean that while he had support he could not use his power coercively or exploitatively. But he had to go gently, for hand in hand with the agnatic ideology goes a strong egalitarian ethic among men: no brother can openly claim a higher social status than his brother. What then were the powers of a bigman, and how was the status achieved.

Political idioms

Men gained prestige as warriors and as peacemakers, as strong and indomitable leaders in relations with other groups and as effective social organizers and conflict mediators within the group. The muduali was the fearsome fight leader, while the amoali was the dispute mediator, wealth transactor and initiator of pig kills and other ceremonial events which built up the reputation of the group. The amoali and muduali may have been one and the same, but if they were not the amoali was always the true bigman, while the muduali had no special prominence during peace time.

The idiom by which Kewa speak of politics and of bigmen is 'talk' (agala). A bigman must have talk, good talk which solves problems and straightens out matters. But a prerequisite to having 'talk' is having a 'name' (bi). A man's name is said to be tied inextricably to his group (ruru) and his group's land (su). This ideological constellation of talk-name-group-land discriminates against women who cannot have talk because they have no name, since the name inheres in the land-owning group

of which they are members only by virtue of their link with a man(1). Thus 'talk-name-group-land' is a palindrome which works equally well when said backwards, or from any point to any other point. Any one of its component parts can justify, and be justified by, all the others. They can also be used to justify all sorts of other practices, as we shall see below.

Since positions of leadership are achieved, recognition is of the utmost importance. If women do not get public recognition, then clearly their political power is circumscribed. It may be as well at this stage to define what I mean by political power, and to delineate the field of politics. The ability to speak for the group, to influence and shape group events, to control such events so that one is seen as personifying the group and personally enjoying prestige accruing to the group, this is politics in Kewa society. Political power is built on accumulated prestige, which is won by those whose praiseworthy deeds appear to the public eye. If women act behind the scenes, even if on occasions they have considerable control, they do not appear publicly to be wielding power and therefore they get no public recognition. In a system where power is gained in each individual case through public support and recognition, women who are not publicly active cannot achieve leadership. If the exercise of power is not public, people may not capitalize on it to extend their political advantage. Both social actors and analysts generally acknowledge that women's labour is necessary for men's prestige, though specific cases of men's indebtedness to women may be 'misrecognized', or at least quietly passed over. But the acknowledgment itself reveals what is at issue here: that by their labour women do not normally accumulate prestige for themselves and in their own right. In their introduction to Man and Woman in the New Guinea Highlands, for instance, Brown and Buchbinder tell us that traditionally in the Highlands 'women make an important contribution to the social, economic and political affairs of their husbands' (Brown and Buchbinder 1976:7). Thus women, their interests and social actions are seen relationally to men's affairs, in a world where social affairs are presented as men's affairs. I shall return to the question of women's perceptions of this later.

Achieving status

A Kewa bigman has no inherited advantages except perhaps the ambition to emulate his father if his father was a bigman. The ability to mediate conflicts and keep the community running smoothly is of the first importance. This is an ability which must repeatedly be demonstrated in daily practice. Clearly there is a feedback effect between the acceptance of solutions and the prestige of the man offering them, so that prestige augments exponentially as solutions are accepted, which in turn makes further solutions acceptable. Solutions do not always work because they are inherently good, but because people accept them. People accept such solutions for a variety of reasons and with degrees of wholeheartedness. Because on occasions interests clearly clash, a compromise at best is possible; and compromises are rarely absolutely equally discriminating. The person who has done less well out of the deal will acquiesce if it is clear that given the balance of forces no better deal can be hoped for. A man's sullen acceptance of a raw deal has the added bitterness of being a

(1) Of course in an agnatic situation this is the sort of link that men also have to groups. But the difference is that a father may not cut out his son whereas a husband can divorce and dispossess his wife.

personal humbling by another man who according to kinship ideology is his peer and not his superior. A woman's reaction is uncomplicated by personal competitiveness and wounded pride. Although in a sense women are untrammelled by personal jealousies and aspirations to become formal arbitrators themselves, this does on the other hand mean that they are accordingly less in control of their day-to-day lives as well as their longer term destinies.

One man's pragmatic reasoning illustrates well the position of bigmen. The bigman concerned was a village magistrate (there was no pretence here of separating justice and public administration from politics). My informant said that they supported this man because on the whole he was successful in his conflict management, for which reason some of his 'mistakes' were overlooked. But if he made too many mistakes too consistently they would have to shift their support to someone who provided the best solutions for the group. Since success in this mediating performance was so intimately linked to the mediator's personal prestige, and since this prestige was gained in group-centred social activity, a bigman was successful to the extent that he could persuade people that his interests merged with group interests. Often it was easy for really big men to demonstrate this identity of interests, because in a sense they personified the group. A bigman would organize a major pig kill or reparation payment and be genuinely concerned about its successful outcome and the prestige accruing to the group name, because the prestige also accrued to him personally as the representative of the group. As I found out many times in the field, less prominent men did not have the facility of demonstrating such a convergence of interests, while women by definition were written out of this scenario.

The criteria outlined above make it immediately obvious why women may not attain leadership status equal to men's. They can never personify the group since their relationship to it is considered tenuous, contingent on their marital status. Therefore they have no 'talk', because 'talk' in the political sense is the ability to speak for others. This is then extended to cover 'talk' in the sense of sensible and cogent reasoning, so that a number of further propositions can follow: women cannot think sensibly, solve problems, arbitrate, lead the group in war and peace; organize feasts and exchanges; negotiate land disputes, war compensations, marriage arrangements and exchanges. In this way, then, women's social relationship to group and land becomes the basis for propositions about their abilities; structural relations are used to generate personal dispositions and attributes.

Women, group and land

From the foregoing it becomes clear that an important variable in the discussion of women and politics in the Kewa case is women's relationship to the group and to land. Women do not own land. The term 'own' may seem inappropriate and even ethnocentric when used to describe a clan-based people's relationship to land. However, I intend to argue that 'own' rather than 'control' or 'possess usufruct rights to' conveys more accurately people's perceptions and claims of how land is held. This is actually no finicky, fustian point, because of the very centrality of the question of land in relation to the name and therefore the possibility of political power. Men do not say that they control land and so may dispose

of it as they will; they say they own it, it is theirs, their name is on it as was their father's name before. These cultural idioms do not refer to the possibility of alienation or control, but to an indissoluble relationship. Women are said not to own land, not because they cannot alienate or control it (they certainly have usufruct rights to it) but because their name is not indissolubly linked with any specific plots of land.

To pursue the question of people's relationship to land we must look at the sorts of stable relationships they have to specific land. That is, where do they live and garden, and on what occasions do they move to other lands and gardens. Since residence is patrivirilocal, women move from their father's land to their husband's land at least once in their lives. As a daughter or sister, a girl is considered too immature or too impermanent a resident to have a say in the affairs of her natal clan. As a wife, a woman's residential status in her husband's land is contingent on the stability of the marriage. If the marriage is terminated she will be forced to leave her gardens on her husband's land. Of course she can then go back to her father or brothers, or remarry; some land will always be available to her. But it is precisely these cultural possibilities that encourage the idea that women are sojourners on any land, and that therefore they may not speak for the group. This movement of women on marriage, then, has a detrimental effect (at least ideologically) on their standing in the community. Women are thought to lack a certain quality which fixes men in their relationship to land. Though women have a say in their own marriage and are not normally forced to marry against their will (men say, pragmatically, that a forced marriage will not be a stable one), marriage as an institution has implications which are instrumental in the relegation of women to the periphery of the political unit. It also has implications for the development of women as persons with their own perceptions of their situation.

Women's perceptions and social powers

When questioned outright, women's most consistent response to their peripheral position in political matters is one of nonchalance. They say that politics is the domain of men, that this has been so traditionally and they would not know how to act politically in settling disputes, organizing pig feasts or large exchanges. But although they say this about politics in general and in the abstract, in particular cases where a political decision affects them personally and intimately they will fight it. But they will not fight it on abstract principles, by questioning the men's right to make unilateral decisions. They will particularize, and try to take direct action in the case that affects them. A woman may say that it is men's prerogative to engage in exchanges, but that this particular pig which her husband is now trying to give away is the product of her labour, she must control it or have it to eat. A number of women said to me that men cared for the name (that is, in arranging ceremonial and public events) but women just wanted to eat pigs. Men say the same thing, pejoratively, about women. Yet his attitude of women, even if it were consistent, would make perfect sense in a social structure where women are peripheral to group ideologies and do not have a name.

This attitude is not consistent, however. Women will in general support group events, although they may say that they have no knowledge, no interest and no time for the sort of things that men do. Women can be very self-effacing; on occasions when I have pressed them for stories of the past or of traditional practices they have insisted that they have none to tell, that they know nothing but how to work in gardens. But men can also be self-effacing, especially in dealings with Europeans. I certainly did not notice women behaving in a subservient manner.

How is the power of women to be typified, then? For if we take the point that women are also social actors, and that the social world is the creation of both men and women (Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974), we must be able to present an account of women's contribution to social life that is not merely instrumental in gaining prestige for their menfolk. At the outset, however, I must draw a distinction between 'participation in the creation of the social world' on the one hand, and 'the political power personally to direct and control events or use them to one's personal advantage' on the other. This is clearly an important distinction, but sometimes the two ideas may become conflated. In a paper given to the 1982 Waigani Seminar at the University of Papua New Guinea Angela Mandie considered the Seventh Aim of the Papua New Guinea Constitution, which calls for 'a rapid increase in the equal and active participation of women in all forms of economic and social activity'. After reviewing the extent of women's contribution to the economy, she comments indignantly that women have always participated to the full, and that 'perhaps a ninth point could be added to the Eight Point Plan calling for equal participation from men in this vital area of the economy' (Mandie 1982). The point I want to underline here is that though women may have offered more than their fair share of labour in the development of Papua New Guinea, they have not accordingly enjoyed control. Power is different from participation.

Kewa women do possess powers which their husbands may not use for their own prestige. These are sexual and magical powers, and powers of social non-cooperation and disruption. Both sexes believe that women have strong potions to make men attached to them, and to punish them if they neglect them for another woman. Women do not see these powers as explicitly sexual, since they use magic substances rather than their sexuality. But men stress women's sexuality as being powerful, though enhanced by magic. There is then a disjunction here between how men see women and how women see themselves.

Women may resort to direct action when their expectations regarding their produce are repeatedly frustrated, or when they see their position threatened by a would-be co-wife. On these occasions they may forcibly seize a pig given at an exchange, or they may sabotage their husband's attempts to remarry by holding on to the bridewealth, or making such a row that the would-be bride and her kin take fright. At normal times, women have undisputed rights to their garden produce, which they may withhold from husbands or dependants who are remiss in their duties. But I have never witnessed a case where food was so withheld. Nevertheless, women could take people to court for harvesting their gardens without permission.

Women also have rights in pigs, but these are more qualified. Often they do not include the power of disposal, but rather an entitlement to a part of a pig when it is killed, or part of the return if it is given away.

This entitlement may be dissipated, however, when the provenance of a pig is lost sight of after it has passed through many exchanges. The multiple exchanges on these occasions disguise the link between productive labour and its product (the pig), and transaction itself is presented as creating wealth. Women generally allow pigs to be alienated for the pig kill, which they see as an inevitable fact of life although they also see it as the business of men. They may fight for the ability to fulfill their own obligations on the occasion, but the bulk of the transactions are arranged by men.

Undoubtedly men fear the power of women as owners of magic potions, and as major producers who can disrupt their life in a number of ways. They can make home life uncomfortable, and interfere with their political ambitions by withholding goods and sabotaging their exchanges. However, though this fear may keep men in check it does not make women autonomous political agents. Men may consult their wives at pig kills, and take into account their demands and expectations. But this does not allow women to become publicly political, to build on their advantage in order to accrue prestige and become influential beyond the narrow circle of the household. Though women do have power to influence public events, they do so not through their direct actions but by pushing men. Accordingly, recognition is enjoyed by the men who are the public actors.

Not surprisingly, those of women's powers that may not be used for men's prestige are classed as anti-social or outside the polity, disruptive and therefore by definition not leading to prestige and political power for women. Women's truly autonomous powers are not allowed into the political arena, dominated as this arena is by men.

Effects of contact

The Kewa were one of the last groups to be contacted by colonial administration officers and they were not brought into government control before the early 1960s. Although once started the process of acculturation was very swift, politically and economically the area still lags behind other parts of the highlands which had significant head starts. The Southern Highlands in general is the poor relation, often providing wage labour for development projects in other parts of the highlands and the country as a whole.

In the early days of contact the major task of patrol officers was political education, to prepare people for the new political units planned for them. A concomitant but at first subsidiary task was the introduction of economic projects intended to generate cash and make the area self-supporting. (The fact that the area had been self-supporting before contact and before the introduction of development projects was wistfully acknowledged by some administration officers, but those times were clearly past and only one line of development could now relentlessly be pursued.) In their interactions with the people patrol officers were instructed to be sensitive to the culture and customs that they were about to transform. Clearly, this non-interference in cultural matters could be exercised only very selectively. Such was their concern to observe what they perceived to be cultural conceptions of women that patrol officers addressed only the men. This was a strategy impressed on young officers by their superiors. In one report, the acting district commissioner counseled that patrol

officers ignore women until they have gained the confidence of men, since in the Southern Highlands women 'generally have little standing in the community'. The men's confidence could be gained by the patrol not appearing shabby (for instance, by running out of supplies and having to beg off the people); by talking to the old men and giving them little presents, thus gaining an entree into the community; and by admiring men's ornaments. This, the ADC explained, will give people the chance to get the 'feel' of government officers. After the first gifts and when communication is improved the officers should explain that the government has people throughout the territory 'who in numbers are like the leaves of the trees'; and that if the villagers would like to bring in food 'trade' will be given in exchange. This will eventually lead to the women bringing in the food and allowing themselves to be seen (letter from ADC to Assistant District Officer at Erave, 15 July 1958, accompanying Erave patrol report 3 of 1957-8).

Education in the economics of cash cropping, and generally the production for a market economy, was also directed at the men. Training and support was given to men who showed an interest in trying out some of these new crops and other projects, while women simply offered their labour in the day-to-day tasks involved. One patrol officer outlined his coffee planting project, in which 'the whole community' would work together on the coffee garden of one man, preferably the village constable. His roster programme for this 'community' labour, however, spelled out only weeding and cleaning by the women. At least in this case 'women' stood for the community. But the question of ownership of these introduced cash crops was perceived rather differently. Since patrol officers gave these crops to the men, men could - and did - claim them as 'male' rather than 'female' crops. Though women could sell their pickings and keep the cash, the gardens belonged to men not only because the crops themselves were claimed to be male, but also because the land belonged to men. For the same reason only men now plant large commercial vegetable gardens, and are assisted by agricultural and business extension officers in these ventures, while women market only small amounts of surplus from their domestic gardens.

As the country prepared to move to self-government and independence, political education became again the priority of patrols. Again, efforts were concentrated on the men, the most prominent of whom now filled the new political and administrative positions of village constable and local councillor. Though women turned up to vote for the local councillor and the member of the House of Assembly, and later the member of parliament, they never offered themselves as candidates for these positions. Writing about voting procedures in Mount Hagen in 1963 and 1964, Andrew Strathern (1970) mentions the participation of women. He describes how the conduct of the council elections proceeded from an initial show of hands to a debate which attempted to reach a consensus before the second voting, which was a mere 'ceremony of confirmation'. In a footnote he adds that though women voted also, 'little heed was given to their opinions by men in the debates' (Strathern 1970:553f). Presumably, then, the consensus reached was a male one which overrode women's wishes and discounted their votes; and this clearly questions the meaning of the assertion that 'women voted also'.

Did missions have a more equalizing influence? In principle they were interested in saving both female and male souls, however the example offered by the missionary family stressed different roles and domains for

males and females: women were the housewives and child rearers, men the mechanics and pastors. Catholic priests and nuns, with a few modifications, were cast into corresponding roles. Women did not mediate between humans and God.

Effectively, then, modern economic, political and social developments pushed women further into the home and under the tutelage of their husbands. The comments of the Australian officer quoted in the opening of this paper concerning the role of village men in 'looking after large numbers of women' - with no elaboration of what this 'looking after' entailed - indicated that in 1977 government officials still regarded women as the wards of men. This bias was rationalized as cultural non-interference; yet other forms of cultural interference were freely pursued. There was no coyness, for instance, about officers' attempts to make people 'receptive' to ideas that platform burials were unhygienic, or to instill new needs and therefore create new dependencies on cash crops and other economic developments. In this process, men entered the cash economy and women the subsistence economy, though much of their labour became employed in cash ventures which they did not control.

New political structures offered no openings for women, and in spite of a policy of equal education opportunities for boys and girls the numbers of girls entering the educational system at all levels are still abysmally low. The subject of the Fourth Waigani Seminar in Port Moresby in 1970 was The Politics of Melanesia; significantly, the special problems of women were not mentioned in any of the papers presented (and most of them were concerned with Papua New Guinea). The only specific mention of women was in a footnote, in the article by Andrew Strathern quoted above. Women had clearly not yet been singled out as a group deserving separate consideration, but were subsumed in the category 'local persons' (see, for example, Matane 1970:365). Yet this was misleading, for women were hardly represented in the localization process described for that period.

Political organization and the position of women today

Political organization at village level today may look different from the old village polity, but in reality most of the old divisions and criteria for power distribution still hold. What positions of power exist today? There is the village court magistrate, the local councillor, the provincial member of parliament (MP), the national MP, the local public servant (kiap), the pastor, the catechist, the business man. None of these positions was filled by a Kewa woman in 1981, and no woman had ever presented herself as a candidate. As well, there are the local bigmen who hold no formal government office. The provincial and national MPs are hardly ever seen in the village, and church representatives have limited influence if they are not also bigmen in their own right. The same is true of the local business man.

The man who really holds sway in the village is the magistrate who is also a bigman. His power outstrips that of the bigman who holds no public office, because he has the authority of the government behind him. His nomination to the village court reflects his local prestige; people put forward their most prominent leader, who must have a wider support base than his small lineage. The most important source of power, then, still comes from achieved positions within the local kin-based group. This power

may be formalized in the incumbency of a new administrative position, and thus become consolidated. The way that this position of authority is achieved is the same as in the old days: by resolving disputes and keeping the community running smoothly (and this is why the position of village magistrate is particularly relevant here), organizing pig kills, ceremonial exchanges and compensation payments. A man may still fall in the same way as he rises, although because of his official position his fall may be slowed down by the term of office he still has to run, by which time he may regain some lost confidence. As well, his ability to refer to a power source and legitimacy beyond the village, which villagers may understand imperfectly and therefore control less, adds a significant dimension to his authority. It is not an absolute requirement that such a man have a large number of wives, though more than one is considered 'respectable' if he is not a church official.

In this situation of political and economic continuity despite the many changes, women's positions have hardly altered. Though there has been a growing village involvement in the cash economy this has not turned villagers away from their own gift economy, which continues to reproduce the old inequalities. While men's horizons have expanded both spatially and socio-economically, women's have by comparison become more domestic, as 'domestic' production becomes more differentiated from 'commercial' production. Women may now have recourse to a village court, and girls have the opportunity to receive an education. However, unless productive resources shift, or reforms transform women's relation to land in the village, it is difficult to see how their political participation can be established on a different footing. The ideological/cultural associations linking the chains in the palindrome are deeply ingrained, and are certainly not to be overcome while its basic assertion regarding the ownership of land can be invoked.

Conclusion

I subtitled this essay 'Talk, Name, Group and Land: a Kewa Political Palindrome'. This palindrome represents an ideological construction which purports to account for women's lack of prominence in public affairs. At the same time, the palindrome is used as an injunction against women's participation in this domain. It is a 'just-so' story, however, because in reality political influence is not contingent on actual control of land. But the social fact reflected in the palindrome is that the sort of people who own land are the sort of people who are eligible to enter the political arena. Though the fact that women do not own land does not make them constitutionally incapable of acting politically, it does disenfranchise them on the basis of an ideological construction which is not a true reflection of social practice but is nevertheless important for the identity and continuity of the male-based group. The truth is not really that women are not thought to represent the group because they are not agnates (many male group members are not agnatically related), but because they are women. And because they do not own land men are able to enforce their political domination over them. So women's political subordination has an economic base. In the case of relations among men, however, power differentials do not emanate from unequal access to the means of production, since all men own land. It is rather the other way round. By gaining political advantages over other men in the manner described in the section on 'achieving status', some men acquire a greater facility in

controlling social events and relations; and in this way they exercise some control over the labour of less prominent men.

I have examined the cultural usages of one society in some detail, and isolated the cultural variable on which the subordination of women rested. But this exercise would have restricted interest if it did not encourage some generalizations, however tentative, about the operation of relations of inequality transculturally, and about women's subordination in particular. In conclusion, then, I would like to touch briefly on the possible treatment of comparative materials, and suggest what sorts of generalizations may be attempted using the approach in this essay.

The Kewa are a patrilineal society in which the structurally subordinate position of women is easy to locate. But what about the case of matrilineal societies, of which there is a number in Papua New Guinea? In these societies customary inheritance is through the female line, so that successive generations of men belong to different clans. When a woman marries, her sons will inherit the land of the mother's brother, on which they will eventually live, but their own sons will inherit their wives's brothers' land. The fact that matrilineal systems are often accompanied by virilocality means that daughters also move, to their husband's mother's brothers' land. So it may not be the case that women are physically stable on the same land in the way that generations of men are stable in patrilineal systems. Nonetheless, women have 'the name' in these systems, and their link to land is undisputed. But does this mean that women actually control land, and are accorded 'talk'? The idiom that a man moved to his mother's brothers' land, rather than his mother's land, is telling in this respect.

From discussion with a group of students at University of Papua New Guinea, an impressionistic but suggestive picture emerges of the relationship between institutionalized rules sanctioned by custom and the extent to which in practice these rules may be enforced, or account for social and political action. Students cited examples in two matrilineal societies of men attempting to make decisions about land without consulting women, according to the customary rule, or even against women's wishes. While Trobriand women were said to acquiesce when presented with a fait accompli, their Tolai sisters were more likely to react militantly, taking the case to court or simply sitting down on the land and obstructing transactions concerning its disposal or use. A third matrilineal example presented a different picture. Though the Siuai of Bougainville also inherit land through women, in practice the senior sibling irrespective of sex has the final say in land matters. Women's political prominence varied in these societies, but in no case was it on a par with men's.

The above examples serve merely to illustrate a methodology. Though in a number of societies similar customary rules in respect of a specific social practice may exist, the way the effects of these rules take shape as they concretize into political action may diverge. For an understanding of these divergencies we would have to look at the total operation of cultural systems as evinced in practice itself, and isolate the specific constellation which mediates relations of inequality. In the Kewa case the cultural variable both enforcing and justifying men's domination of women was ownership of land. In other societies this variable may be irrelevant, yet asymmetry still exists. We must then look beyond the variable to its

function in the course of social practice. In my analysis of the Kewa material I arrive at an irreducible socio-economic activity which I see not as culturally relative, but as being present in all societies and ordering power differentials. This is unequal access to the pool of human labour in a community which enables some people to control the labour power of others. Whether the control is direct or indirect, subtle or coercive, partial or complete, overt or covert, enshrined in institutions or practised surreptitiously, it establishes and reproduces relations in which some social actors may exercise political dominance over the community. For Kewa women this control is overt, and they could not overcome it politically without at the same time overcoming it economically. But for Kewa men control is covert and follows on political advantage; therefore individual men can in principle overcome it politically, without revolutionizing the economic base of the society. That women may be able to overcome their subordination on an individual basis while staying on in the community is really not a serious proposition.

WOMEN AND LOCAL POLITICS ON TUBETUBE, MILNE BAY PROVINCE

Martha Macintyre

This paper examines changing female participation in village-level politics on Tubetube, a small island in Milne Bay Province. There are 140 people living on the island in hamlets that usually comprise one or two households. The people there see themselves as 'Bwanabwana' or 'small island' people: a group that consists of about 2,000, inhabiting eight islands and sharing a common language and culture. My data derives from fieldwork carried out on Tubetube during the period 1979-81. I shall not attempt broad comparisons but hope that this case study raises issues that in some ways generate comparisons with the experiences of village women in other regions.

Tubetube society is matrilineally ordered so that social identity, land rights and inherited wealth are transmitted through the maternal line. I shall discuss some of the implications of this matrilineality below; however, insofar as women traditionally enjoyed a relatively high status within their lineages, my general argument may apply to other areas where women held considerable political authority in the pre-contact era. The thrust of my argument is that institutionalized local politics in this matrilineally organized community, as it is manifest in ward committee and local council political structures, has removed women from their former seats of power and left them as 'powers behind the throne'. Formal involvement of women as individual leaders and representatives of their lineages has diminished over a period of a hundred years. State organization of local politics has historically excluded women. Men now mediate all female interests and women are beginning to define themselves, by virtue of their sex, as non-participants in politics as they are currently structured.

Lest this appear too pessimistic an overview, I stress that coincidental with this process there is a growing tendency for many issues to be seen as exclusively 'Tubetube' or 'local' in the strict sense of the term. There is a reluctance on the parts of both men and women to take hamlet or lineage disputes to the local council through the ward committee representative. This strategy effectively conserves what, for lack of a better word, I shall call 'traditional' local political structures. It ensures that in many matters of real importance women retain a measure of power and control over their interests as members of particular lineages. The areas of interest include decisions about marriages, land use and rights, divorces, exchange obligations, and compensation cases for offences that are viewed as coming under traditional or customary law.

Before European intervention, in the forms of colonial administrators and Wesleyan missionaries, the fundamental political unit was the matrilineage or susu. As the word implies (susu being the common Austronesian word for 'breast' and 'breast milk' as well as the modern Tok Pisin term), this group comprised all people who could trace descent from a common ancestress some four or more generations distant. Within a susu,

all members of the senior generation had authority over younger lineage members. Senior women, called keduluma, organized pottery production by the women of the susu. As the islanders depended on trade for much of their staple foods, clay pottery manufacture played an important part in the economy, for pots were the major export item. Before contact with Europeans, gardening was not the major subsistence strategy. Nonetheless, small gardens were essential and women tended these plots and managed the harvest.

There were three major types of inter-island political relations: marriage alliances, trade partnerships, and war or latent hostilities. All forms of relationship interacted and a breakdown of trade or marriage exchanges could lead to war, whilst a war could be appeased and friendly relations could emerge from new trading alliances or diplomatic marriages. Women participated in inter-island politics in various ways, but of particular relevance for any historical discussion of female political roles were the institutions or customs that enabled women to initiate or prevent war raids. These were not in the realm of what is often termed informal or private influence. Women could publicly call for vengeance and offer valuables in return for a warrior's services as avengers of a lineage member's death. As initiators of revenge, they were instigators of war. The payments were important wealth items that could be used in marriage transactions, canoe purchases, compensatory payments and other exchanges. These items - shell necklaces, armshells, greenstone axe-heads and other decorative regalia - were essential prestige goods. A man could not achieve chiefly status without such wealth and the accumulation of valuables as vengeance payments was one important way of gaining prestige. In this way, women were not only directors of political action, but they were also able to promote particular men as leaders.

But female involvement in fighting raids was instrumental in other important ways. As interpreters of supernatural omens, the women of a lineage could actually veto a war raid at the last minute. If, after performing divining rituals, the women of a lineage decided that the heavenly signs did not augur well, then they would insist that a raid be postponed.

In the past, and to a limited extent today, on Tubetube female powers were seen to be supernatural. People believed that women had magic that they could use in pursuit of their political goals. Institutions that enshrined female powers were numerous, but one example will suffice to indicate the ways in which women could intervene in, and influence, men's affairs: the use of the skirt as an instrument of appeasement.

On Tubetube, as in other coastal and island societies in this region, a woman's skirt was a powerful symbol of her potency (Weiner 1977). If a fight broke out in the hamlet a woman could stop it by removing one of her layers of fibre skirts and placing it on one of the participants. So effective was this action that usually a woman simply began to untie her skirt in an ostentatious manner and this was sufficient to quell the conflict. If the man did not cease fighting and struck a person covered by the skirt, his offence was judged as an attack on the woman and she could demand substantial compensation in the form of valuables or pigs.

The same gesture ensured the life of a hostage taken in a war raid and brought back to be killed. If a woman (from any lineage, including that of the avengers) was moved by the captive's cries, she could prevent his or her death by putting her skirt over the trussed-up person. This effectively identified the captive with the woman, so that he or she became an adoptive member of the intercessor's lineage.

Today it is rare for a woman to resort to this measure when intervening in an argument, but it remains a last resort. All adults in the community had witnessed at least one instance of a woman's using her skirt to stop the fight. But the supernatural power that underscored the female role in politics was a woman's potential witchcraft. Fear of witchcraft, or belief in a woman's capacity to sanction through witchcraft, operated as an intimidatory tactic. People hesitated to give offence to anyone who might be, or could call upon, a witch to avenge a wrong. The capacity to inspire fear of dire retribution constituted a powerful weapon. People believed that witches could inflict sickness, sterility and death on their political opponents.

But while these elements of female power cannot be ignored, it must be noted that women's role in lineage politics was extensive and not simply as a negative force. They participated, as owners and managers of wealth, in decision making about land use and inter-lineage exchange. Women owned shell valuables and pigs in their own right. While there is no evidence that they could become chiefs (guyau), they could take on many aspects of the male chiefly role if they were in a lineage that lacked senior men. In such circumstances it appears that sons performed rituals while their mothers were the decision makers. Demographic variations in the small population - for there were never more than 400 people on Tubetube - occasionally required that women became de facto leaders, in the absence of any male of appropriate age.

During the period 1979-81, two lineages were led by women. The women had no brothers and their adult sons deferred to them on all important issues - including their own marriages. These women were forceful and ambitious. Both were extremely hard-working gardeners who organized their children's lives to the extent that they were often judged as harsh and meddlesome by outsiders. Both lineages were wealthy in traditional terms and had access to cash through children who were highly educated and employed in towns.

Even women who did not take on the role of leader could instigate political actions to further their lineage interests. In 1980 there were two cases of litigation involving senior women that illustrate the ways in which local politics operate on Tubetube today. On both occasions the problem concerned rights in a boat. But one dispute was resolved at the local level, without recourse to any legal measures introduced by the state, whereas the other was eventually dealt with before a magistrate in Alotau.

The first case concerned people of two unrelated lineages and the ostensible offence was a breach of customary mourning payments. A widower, Paul*, had married a young woman, Anita, before he had fulfilled his duties

*I have used pseudonyms for all people involved.

in mourning his deceased wife. He owned a motor vessel worth thousands of dollars and his wife's brothers and sisters wanted some form of payment acknowledging their lineage's contribution to the purchase of the boat. Traditionally, husband and wife did not own property conjointly and inheritance was matrilineal. The deceased woman's brother and sister, Reuben and Esther, decided that they would demand compensation in the traditional way - by ceremonially 'shaming' the lineage of the new wife and refusing to leave the village until they had been recompensed.

The lineage in question was one of those with a woman leader, Elizabeth. She had married several times and had a large family. Now a widow, she lived in her village with her adult children and their families. As soon as she heard of the intentions of Reuben and Esther she organized her family and had pigs and shell valuables - the traditional form of payment - ready to give as compensation. When the other lineage entered the village, she defended her lineage, and her daughter's marriage, with vehemence and eloquence that would rival any male orator. Esther and Reuben spoke at length, each one displaying the rhetorical skills expected of lineage leaders, but neither matching Elizabeth's forcefulness of delivery. In this case the outcome was assured from the beginning: a widower should not remarry before all mortuary rituals have been completed. She handed over pigs, shell valuables and finally, under great pressure, gave an amount of money, acknowledging the fact that the boat had been purchased with cash.

The compensation for the breach of mourning customs, and recompense for the loss of the use of the boat, were thus paid in accordance with traditional forms. Both lineages were satisfied that the matter was satisfactorily resolved.

The other case involving rights in a boat was not concluded so amicably and the parties eventually decided to take the matter to the court in Alotau. The dispute in this instance centred on the use of a boat by members of a single lineage. Three sisters, Dorothy, Pearl and Magdalena, had bought a motor vessel with their brothers Matthew and Albert. Albert had married a woman on another island and had left Tubetube some years after the boat had been acquired. As only men sail and manage boats, the two brothers agreed to use the boat for the benefit of their lineage. Matthew was to run it as a passenger and copra boat most of the time but it was agreed that Albert retained some rights in the vessel. He took the boat, ostensibly for a short period, and then refused to return it.

Matthew and the sisters attempted to solve the problem by negotiation, but they failed. They believed that their brother was being influenced by his wife and her family and defined their argument as being between two lineages. When talk failed they took the matter to court. They saw that the argument could not be settled, nor the boat retrieved, because there was no traditional sanction available. In the past such a conflict may have precipitated a raid and the vessel would have been seized; today, the social pressures on any single person do not extend beyond the confines of the narrowly defined community.

There are implications for women in the decision to settle the argument in the formal setting of a district court. Although the women were part-owners of the boat with their brothers they were not able to

represent their own interests in court. Their brother Matthew was spokesman for them because he was able to leave the island more easily and everybody concerned thought that he was more familiar with the intricacies of a formal court. Their perceptions were correct for a number of historical reasons.

Men are more familiar with the systems of litigation introduced by colonial administrators. For years, district officers excluded women from all offices of authority. When local people presented cases to a patrol officer they either spoke through an interpreter or in Motu. Some mission-educated people spoke a little English. Although many women could speak these languages, more men could speak confidently and proficiently and so they were more often in direct contact with the officials of government. Most importantly, women were excluded from the office of village constable, and were rarely used as interpreters. Effectively, women became dependent on their menfolk to mediate their claims and cases with the colonial authorities.

As elected representatives on a council replaced the village constable as representatives of the community to the state, so women were allowed a voice in the new political system. However, they still perceive the ward committee representative as another version of the village constable and believe that women are ineligible for election. During my stay on the island a woman presented herself as a candidate, arguing that there were precedents in national government. She was not elected and many people believed that a female representative would not be acceptable to the district council. Women are thus seen as dependent on men to represent their interests in ways that their ancestors were not.

Traditionally, local politics (in the limited sense of political matters on the island itself) were, and have remained, the province of both sexes as members of lineages. Women recognize that they have less power once a dispute is taken away from Tubetube and are therefore reluctant to pursue litigation through the state system. Sometimes, as in the second case I described, they have no choice, for the dispute is not defined as 'local' once it involves someone living off Tubetube.

There is therefore a tendency for people to restrict dispute settlements to the aegis of the island moot. This institution is an informal court and, within the judicial system, is recognized as the first level of legal dispute settlement. The system of island moots has evolved over a long period and owes much to the old Australian administration of justice. The meetings are held on the beach called 'Bareki' (from 'Barracks' where a patrol officer stayed in a small house built for his visits). The ward committee representative acts as official convenor and recorder; while he can give his opinion, he cannot adjudicate. All those who attend - and it is usually the whole adult community of about seventy people - sit in a circle. Each person who has an opinion on the matter in hand, or a complaint, or a grievance, or a judgement, speaks his or her mind. After all those present have contributed to the discussion, one or two recognized elders pronounce judgements that they believe appropriate. Their views are then discussed until the ward committee representative decides that a consensus has been achieved. By this time a verdict and an appropriate response (in the form of a punishment or compensation) have

been discussed and so the representative merely sums up and pronounces the communal response.

This method of dispute settlement is time-consuming and rarely conforms to legal restrictions of the type familiar to Europeans. People perceive that the aim of a moot is to solve a particular problem by conciliation and consensus. Women, in particular, want to confine litigation to the island and so avert an anti-social breach within the community.

But there is another issue that many older women presented as a justification for opposing formal judicial solutions: the need to solve the real problem in any specific conflict. Most of the older women maintained that any particular argument was usually an instance in a long history of conflict. They believed that justice could only be done if the historical background were understood.

For example, in one case a woman accused her divorced husband of causing her illness by using sorcery. In the course of the prolonged debate, the people participating in the moot decided that while the woman's sickness was an issue, it was simply a manifestation of a much more entrenched problem - the rights of the father over her children. When she had been married to him she had adopted a child. He was very fond of this child and so his relationship with his estranged wife became a battle over the child. Everyone in the community realized that their verdict on the sorcery accusation was merely coping with a minor aspect of the problem. They debated the issue of the child's custody for several hours after they had discussed the sorcery charge. Eventually the case was settled in the woman's favour. All senior people with whom I spoke saw the dispute as one over the child and those who were familiar with the formal courts pointed out to me that in the official system the real, underlying problem would never have been aired. Island moots enable people to range widely in airing grievances. Time is of no consequence and amicable agreement valued more than a just resolution that leaves one party triumphant and the other embittered.

What does this mean for the way women act politically? Those who are lineage leaders tend to see their roles as conciliators and conservators. They resist litigation and try to solve all problems by informal negotiation or propitiation. They are suspicious of the clear definitions of the state system, which they believe disregard the traditional paths of compromise, where time and talk could solve most problems.

It is not a simple matter of female conservatism, nor even that women are intimidated by institutions of the modern state. But there is a continuity of interest in their lives that means their views of the political sphere are more restricted. Whereas men see the whole island community as a political entity, women limit their political sphere to the lineage or the residential unit. This is hardly surprising, given that it is men who attend meetings of district council and who are thus made familiar with the division of the region into island communities of assumed unified interests.

The split on gender lines reveals itself in the ways men and women perceive political action. At the superficial level it sometimes seems that men are progressive and eager to participate in regional projects whereas women are suspicious of change and particularistic in their constructions of events and strategies. Indeed, women do become obstructionist and subversive in their attempts to confine decisions to the island. They are sometimes fatalistic in the face of provincial or district government decisions that affect their lives. For example, when a government decision was made to relocate the primary school, men responded by writing letters of protest, petitioning and confronting their elected representatives. Women, on the other hand, expressed their anger by refusing to send their children to school at all.

Women's impotence in the emergent state political system is a matter for concern. In the case of Tubetube, where women could traditionally own land and represent their own interests (or those of their lineages) in public debate, their absence from the modern arena of politics cannot be explained with reference to a history of political subordination and silence. Tubetube women were not subsumed by male politicking until the period of European intervention.

In 1980, when I observed the confrontation between Elizabeth, Esther and Reuben, I was struck by the women's political skills and the fact that they both spoke with confidence and a self-righteousness based on familiarity with customary law. They knew the customs to which they were appealing. They needed no mediators. Unfortunately, these skills and their prodigious knowledge of local political structures and procedures are becoming narrow in the modern context. So long excluded from direct participation in district politics, they are now often baffled by its procedures and processes. They are overawed by legalities and by narrow definitions of debate. Knowing the realities of their social existence they eschew judgements that do not restore harmony to a divided community. Within the confines of Tubetube, local politics still concerns women just as much as men. The stuff of local politics retains its lineage base and the issues are still those of land, wealth exchange and alliances through marriage. In this realm, Tubetube women remain powerful defenders of their lineage interests.

POLITICS OF A NEW ORDER: THE KAFAINA MOVEMENT

Wayne Warry

Kafaina or Wok Meri (Women's Work),(1) is a social, economic, and political movement created and controlled by women that began in Chuave in the early 1960s. Kafaina women save and lend money so as to build capital to start small businesses that, at least to date, have been managed by men. Kafaina beliefs and ritual stress the value of domestic activities and women's productive ability within the modern cash economy. The movement links thousands of women - and indirectly men - in the Simbu and Eastern Highlands provinces.

This paper compares Kafaina activities to men's individual and corporate behaviour. Kafaina women overcome the dilemma of being female in a patrilineal, virilocal society: powerlessness which results from being a class of disenfranchised individuals rather than true members of a political unit. By forming groups, women gain control over valuables and are able to assert their political identity in a range of everyday affairs within the village. Kafaina women are no longer simply individuals whose marriages provide men with the opportunity to exchange valuables and establish inter-group ties. By forming exchange networks women become transactors who participate in large, public ceremonies (Sexton 1982a; Lamphere 1974). On a societal level, I suggest, the Kafaina movement generates a new model of socio-political relationships that strikes at the heart of the traditional patrilineal segmentary political system.

The Chuave political system

The traditional Chuave polity was the patrilineal clan-village. Despite settlement changes, clan solidarity and agnatic loyalty continue to colour almost every aspect of men's political behaviour. Segments (men's house groups) of pre-contact clans may now reside in separate communities a kilometre apart. Endogamous villages, containing sections of different clans, also exist. Yet the clan continues to be the primary political unit. Exceptions to the rule of virilocal residence are rare - about three per cent. When inter-clan fights occur, agnates residing in separate communities rapidly mobilize for the clan's defence. Voting patterns also reveal great clan solidarity and the clan remains the significant ceremonial unit.

Women retain close ties to their natal clan but when asked about group membership they immediately identify their husband's clan or men's house. At marriage women are often renamed by their husband's agnates thereby signalling, at least in men's view, that a woman's identity is linked to her husband's group. In elections, single women vote overwhelmingly for

(1) The movement is commonly called Wok Meri in the Eastern Highlands and Kafaina in the Chuave and Siane areas. Chuave and Siane women, however, also refer to 'women's work'. See Lorraine Sexton (1980, 1982a).

candidates of their natal group; married women vote for those of their husband's clan.(1)

Chuave ceremonial exchanges are corporate affairs that stress agnatic cooperation. Prestations are displayed and exchanged as corporate gifts; all valuables pass between group representatives who make speeches on behalf of the clan. Ceremonial inflation has greatly reinforced clan identity; feasts and payments that were previously organized by lineages or subclans now require the cooperation of all clan members. Many men feel burdened by ceremonial obligations. They argue that they must contribute - often without any expectations of an equal return - to ceremonies so as to protect the clan's name.

Chuave ceremonies are focused on the present - the size of corporate gifts and the number of guests present reflect positively or negatively on group prestige (Brown 1971). Short or long term imbalances in clan exchange relationships are common, and ceremonies are highly competitive affairs laden with tension. Verbal insults, disputes and physical violence between hosts and guests often occur; clans leave ceremonies when dissatisfied with the size or quality of the valuables they receive (Warry 1980).

Women sometimes act as transactors in small personal exchanges that occur between particular affines or maternal kinsmen. But the emphasis men place on corporate displays of wealth forces women to the periphery of ceremonial life.(2) Today women are no longer prohibited from approaching men's corporate displays, but they rarely receive any public recognition for their contribution to men's ceremonial activities. Even when women contribute net bags or clothing to a bride at wedding feasts, this trousseau - and the bride herself - usually passes between representatives of the bride's father's and groom's clans.

Chuave people also share common beliefs - about the need for law and order, Christian Brotherhood, and the importance of bisnis or developmen - that transcend the parochial interests of clan and village. People do not clearly distinguish between 'business' and 'development'; the terms are often used interchangeably to refer to the wealth and material success that whites possess. Men's business interests endanger clan strength by siphoning off wealth that could be used in ceremonial exchange. Chuave men do not view business men as 'inferior' in any way because they fail to fully participate in the exchange sector (see A. Strathern 1979). Indeed, business and ceremonial activities are regarded as equal, but different, methods of obtaining prestige. But Chuave men do criticize entrepreneurs as self-interested. They argue that

- (1) Women show greater reluctance to vote for candidates belonging to other clans than do men (Warry 1983).
- (2) Chuave clans, like those in Kewa, do not maintain long term, cyclical exchanges with particular groups and I agree with Josephides (1983) that there is a danger in linking the small payments occurring on an everyday basis with periodic corporate prestations. In Chuave, personal exchanges take place without reference to group concerns. But Chuave men insist that any major prestation - for example, those revolving around births, marriages and deaths - must be placed in a corporate context by channelling distributions through group representatives.

as a man's material possessions increase, or as his business grows, so too does the visible distinction between wealth that is 'tightly held' and that which he has given away in exchange in order to build and maintain the clan's prestige.

The creation of modern political units such as council or village court areas has also helped to promote a regional identity, and people accept, somewhat reluctantly, the authority of leaders - magistrates, peace officers and councillors - who belong to other agnatic groups. People believe that, ideally, councils should apportion wealth on the basis of need without considering traditional political loyalties. Schools, roads and aidposts are said to benefit all people. Political rhetoric emphasizes the need for clans to cooperate and stresses the importance of 'working together' for development. Campaign speeches encourage people to ignore ties of 'family and blood' when voting. Moreover, though clan or tribal voting predominates voting patterns show that cross-clan or cross-tribal votes are often critical in determining election outcomes (Warry 1983).

Men fully realize that clan interests endanger regional integration. Their greatest fear, in fact, is that local businesses and the development process in general will be destroyed if tensions between clans erupt into full scale war. Kafaina women - although they clearly identify with male political goals and enjoy clan ceremonies - are often more critical. They suggest that men, because of their membership in patrilineal groups, and despite their domination of modern institutions, have failed to generate local development. They often comment that earlier government officials and councils have failed to bring wealth to their areas and state that they are teaching their menfolk the 'road to development'. Some women argue that a ceiling should be placed on ceremonial payments - particularly brideprice - or that payments should be totally eliminated. More generally women complain that men waste important resources by gambling or buying beer for ceremonial or everyday purposes.

The Chuave political system, therefore, contains two important and related stress lines. First, Chuave men have dual loyalties - their allegiance to agnates conflicts with their commitment to non-agnates belonging to political institutions that have been introduced since contact. Second, men are constantly torn between their need to aid agnates in an inflationary, competitive ceremonial system and their desire to participate in business and development - activities that undercut or override group goals. The strength of the Kafaina movement, I believe, lies in its ability to overcome these contradictions. Kafaina generates cash for business or development through fabricated systems of ceremonial exchange. Furthermore, this is accomplished by formulating a model of inter-group behaviour that stresses mutual aid rather than competitive corporate relationships.

Kafaina: women and wealth

Kafaina is the name for the latest in a series of Chuave women's associations spanning two decades. The existence of nucleated settlements, the introduction of cash crops, and the rise of rural markets may all be regarded as necessary preconditions for the genesis of women's groups in this area (see also Lamphere 1974; Leis 1974). The movement also arose in response to men's domination of modern political and religious institutions

and gained impetus from the specific actions of councillors and mission leaders.(1)

Between five and twenty-six women form a single group. In Duma tribe, after a three year involvement with the movement, just over half of all adult women (over 18 years) were members. Kafaina women are married to men belonging to different lineages who reside together in a single men's house ward and who cooperate in everyday and ceremonial activities (cf. Sexton 1982a). Women commonly use the men's house name to designate their group. Each member has a special cloth or net bag and a ledger or 'pass book' in which she stores and records her savings. These are kept in a separate room or 'bed' inside the Kafaina house. A bosmeri leads each group; her title recalls the bosoi, the earliest government leader in Chuave. A young educated male clerk records the savings. A male 'chairman', who is not usually married to the bosmeri helps organize group ceremonies and accompanies women on Kafaina excursions. Many groups also have a 'cargo boy', usually a man of low status, who performs menial tasks and takes messages between groups. All these men may question, but cannot overrule, the bosmeri's decisions; they may attend all meetings but cannot directly contribute to Kafaina savings.

Women meet twice weekly, at nights on market days. Kafaina women cannot reveal to men either the amount of their savings or the special behavioural prohibitions that members must follow (see below). Savings cannot be used by any woman until the group has completed its work - a period lasting up to seven years. But despite this general regulation women specifically state that they cannot use their money to pay taxes, village court fines, or to contribute to men's ceremonies. Women stress the differences between Kafaina and western banking systems (cf. Sexton 1980). Unlike banks where money is easily withdrawn, Kafaina money is assured savings.

As Sexton notes 'Wok Meri is an organized, collective response by women to the erosion of their economic status in the last fifty years' (Sexton 1980:198). She has demonstrated how women invest far greater amounts of time and energy in subsistence and cash crop activities but receive a disproportionately small share of cash income. I agree entirely with this interpretation: Kafaina women clearly are concerned with seizing control over the tangible fruits of their labour. But I would add that, given the importance of wealth objects in producing political status throughout the Highlands, Kafaina behaviour disrupts traditional male-female power relations.

Chuave women have greater control over the crops they cultivate for domestic purposes but relinquish this control when foodstuffs are used in men's exchanges. Men insist that their wives plant sufficient crops for

- (1) Simbu women first protested their exclusion from government offices in the 1950s (Sexton 1980; Warry 1983). During the 1960s and 1970s women's savings groups, inspired by the actions of Lutheran and Catholic Pastors were known by the names Sunday School, and Meri Songon ('female church leader') (Anggo 1975; Warry 1983). The movement also gained impetus after 1970 when women boycotted the paying of council taxes to protest their exclusion from council offices following the repeal of a regulation calling for the mandatory election of female ward komitis.

household use and for upcoming commitments to their corporate exchanges. Chuave men, like those in the Hagen and Daulo areas are not threatened by their wives' control over the subsistence sector. Men, therefore, view domestic concerns as relatively unprestigious or inferior when compared to their own public activities (A. Strathern 1979; M. Strathern 1972, 1980a).

Likewise, men view marketing as unprestigious and often characterize 'market women' as 'rubbish'. Chuave men rarely question their wives' use of market income. Indeed, they expect women to use this cash to purchase rice and tinned meats or to buy household goods. Coffee incomes are the source of great tension. Men believe that because they own land and plant coffee trees they have full legal rights over this money. But women argue that the labour they invest in coffee production is similar to their garden work; they maintain that there is no difference between the sale of coffee and the sale of garden produce. Men, of course, also use cash to buy material possessions so that coffee incomes, to a certain degree, are an important domestic resource. Male-female work patterns vary enormously in Chuave. Some men refuse to pick coffee at all yet enforce, through verbal or physical coercion, their control over coffee incomes. But some Kafaina women have convinced their husbands to divide coffee plots. Although these women do not own the trees themselves, they fully determine how their income is spent.

The control men exercise over cash is clearly less than that which they had over traditional valuables and, as Andrew Strathern (1979:536) notes, the dilemma men face is in the ideological control over money; that is, in the use of money as a 'power token'. Because cash can be used for a variety of purposes in either the 'exchange' or 'Western' economic sectors, men sharply distinguish between its common and ceremonial functions. Thus, they store cash that is to be used in prestations in banks or in special hiding places in the village or bush. Only men are allowed to create brideprice or other cash payments. Men prefer to use mint condition bills, refuse to fold paper money and arrange cash in specific patterns according to its ceremonial purpose.

Kafaina women assert their political identity by feminizing the ideology of wealth. Elsewhere I have suggested that, in an unconscious yet highly emotive process, Kafaina beliefs and rituals elaborate on the inherent productive ability and danger of women in relation to modern valuables (Warry 1983; see also Sexton 1982a). For example, the Kafaina savings room or 'bed' resembles the space where girls remain throughout first menstruation and Kafaina rituals replicate a girl's emergence from menstrual isolation. Kafaina houses are sometimes built on sites where men traditionally performed pig and general welfare magic. Menstruating women are forbidden from attending Kafaina meetings and women are prohibited from entering gardens for one or two weeks after receiving the most important Kafaina loan from their sponsoring group. Kafaina, therefore, provides institutionalized expression for what Paul (1974:297) has called the 'mystification of [female] biological processes'.

At a pragmatic, conscious level Kafaina women challenge the definition of marketing as an unprestigious activity. Because of male attitudes, the decision to market produce, netbags or clothing is a difficult and politically strategic one for women - one that often corresponds to a woman's decision to join Kafaina. Over 91 per cent of Kafaina women

surveyed (62 of 68) as opposed to 58 per cent of women in general (70 or 120) regularly obtain money in this manner. Everyone views Kafaina and marketing as synonymous. Men complain that Kafaina women spend so much time gossiping and gambling while at markets that they neglect pigs, gardens or domestic duties. Despite this criticism there is nothing to indicate that Kafaina women are lazy. Men, of course, spend large amounts of time at markets, and this criticism, like Kafaina women's complaints that men waste money on beer and gambling, must be seen as a general indicator of the strain in husband-wife or male-female relations.

For Kafaina women, marketing is an important source of wealth and an activity that has both domestic and public meaning. Women save a portion of their income for Kafaina savings or loans, but they also buy food for domestic use from other women in a complex series of transactions. Thus women say that when they go to the market, 'we feed our husbands and children and lift up the name of Kafaina'.

The word Kafaina itself is derived, I believe, from the Siane word kifana meaning stones or coins. Kafaina women's personal savings are commonly coins and not paper money. Women take great pride in noting that the 'ten or twenty toea' earned at markets and placed in Kafaina bilums eventually grows into cooperative savings of as much as K7,000. The major Kafaina payment, which is actually a loan between two separate groups, is a doll constructed from a net bag and decorated as a female child who 'holds' a match box containing a ten toea coin - a sign, women say, that their 'child' also saves money and brings wealth to their group. Kafaina women, therefore, consistently emphasize the value of the meagre amounts of money they control. They seize control over domestic resources and, as I now show, eventually destroy the boundaries between 'domestic' and 'public' power when exchanging wealth with other groups.

Kafaina: fabricated exchange

Kafaina groups form under the tutelage of a sponsor or 'mother' group that is located in a different clan or tribe. After proving they are diligent in saving money, new or 'daughter' groups seek their mother's permission to 'give birth' to their own groups. Women refer to their grandmother, mother, daughters or more rarely to sisters - groups that are sometimes ten of fifteen kilometres apart. Mothers teach their daughters how to save and lend money, gradually reveal to them the behavioural prohibitions that Kafaina women must obey, and encourage them to begin wearing traditional dress. The language women use to describe mother-daughter relationships draws heavily on images of nurture and initially stresses the dependence of daughters on their mother's expertise. As Kafaina groups and savings 'grow' these idioms give way to others that stress mutual aid, respect and the increasing independence of daughters (Sexton 1982a; Strathern 1981).

At a societal level, the Kafaina 'family' becomes a model for regional integration: the mistrust and suspicion between groups that is generated by patrilineal ideology is replaced by cooperation, care and trust commonly existing only between the closest of all biological relations. This model appeals to men and women alike and its male equivalent - the description of government, councils or courts as a 'father' who looks after, protects or punishes people as 'children' - also stresses regional interests.

In about half of all cases, Kafaina groups are created by related women. A member of a mother group approaches a real or classificatory sister or daughter and encourages her to begin a group. But practical considerations - the distance women must travel or the absence of existing groups in certain tribes - are equally important. For example, mother groups often travel along roads searching for as yet untouched Kafaina territory. They simply appear in a village, wait for women to gather, and explain their intention to form a daughter group. If rejected by men, they demand compensation for their journey and occasionally return several times until men say they are 'sickened' by women's demands for a group and agree to allow one to be formed.

Mother-daughter links, therefore, often form between strangers. But even when members are related, Kafaina relationships and exchanges do not simply replicate or revolve around affinal or maternal ties. Rather, fictive consanguineal ties are created - biological mothers, for example, become 'daughters' or 'sisters' in Kafaina contexts (Sexton 1982a). This point is critical, of course, because by creating fictive relationships women preclude men from gaining status when they lend or exchange wealth. Kafaina transactions, then, in no way resemble traditional exchanges between maternal kin or affines and cannot be used by men to gain prestige.(1) When men refuse to accompany their wives on Kafaina visits, they do so because they 'feel ashamed' at having to accept food from non-kinsmen. Conversely, they complain that Kafaina transactions 'change' or 'ruin' (Tok Pisin: senis na paulim) personal exchange relationships.

Mothers and daughters lend each other money during alternating visits lasting about three days. All transactions involve 'new' money; that is, money that is not already a part of Kafaina savings. The receiving group divides payments into equal shares which are placed in women's net bags. Rough equivalence in payments occurs, but daughters are expected to provide some 'profit' to their mother group. Transactions are couched in idiomatic references to the Kafaina doll I have mentioned. Daughters give their mother's 'brideprice' payments. Later, after they have received the 'child' they refer to the loans as traditional 'head' payments. Kafaina mothers say they are 'straightening the road' for the child and, after the 'girl' is exchanged, they say they are giving money to care for, feed and clothe the child.

Daughter groups, therefore, are seen as wife-receivers; mother groups as wife-givers (Sexton 1982a). However, despite these idiomatic references there are clear differences in the flow of wealth at Kafaina and real marriages. Because the doll is itself a payment - totalling as much as K500 - the flow of wealth occurring at Kafaina and real marriages is reversed and a rough monetary balance between groups is established. Thus, Kafaina daughters give 'brideprice' payments and eventually receive cash, in the form of the child, that amounts to slightly less than the sum total of their loans.

Recent Kafaina ceremonies solidify relations between unrelated groups. In 1976, for example, Daulo women held 'washing hands' ceremonies that were attended by groups from throughout the Daulo region (Sexton 1980). Kafaina

(1) The transactions of Kafaina women and Chuave men, therefore, in no way constitute a linked system of prestations such as that found in the Trobriands (Weiner 1980).

women also hold these mass ceremonies, but they have added a series of ceremonial loans that revolve around obtaining special Kafaina decorations and a 'house opening' ceremony that occurs after groups save about K1,500 and build a special Kafaina house - equivalent in size to a small men's house. These events increase the resource-building capacity of groups and initiate a complex network of debts involving hundreds of groups.

All these exchanges involve 'new money'. A single group receives money from many others when it holds a ceremony and repays these debts when the visiting groups, in turn, sponsor events. Decoration ceremonies involve about thirty groups who contribute up to K150 to the host group. House opening ceremonies are attended by as many as a thousand women belonging to more than a hundred groups and enable women to collect up to K1,000. Bosmeris give cash along with paper slips stating whether the money creates or cancels a debt. Guests are given a variety of garden and store foods plus pork or freezer meats. Women perform stylized dances in which they ask to see, hold and feed the Kafaina child. Bosmeris speak about the government's failure to develop local areas and emphasize the value or strength of women's work. They encourage women to guard their savings, work diligently and lift up the name of Kafaina.

The Kafaina cycle ends when women 'wash hands' or 'wash plates' - a ceremony that closely resembles the 'house opening' in size. After this final event Kafaina groups are free to use their money as they see fit - provided that they continue to repay any outstanding loans as specific ceremonies arise. The 'washing hands' idiom is not used outside of Kafaina contexts, but I agree with Sexton (1982a) that it probably is derived from burial practices and should be taken as a metaphor for the end or death of Kafaina activities. 'Washing plates' is a more recent term for this event and when asked to explain it women simply respond, with I might add a certain degree of pride, that it refers to washing plates. Given the use of other domestic idioms - the feeding and clothing of a symbolic child or the way that mothers are said to look after and nurture their daughters - there could be no better symbol for the most important and public Kafaina ceremony. 'Washing plates', then, stands for the value of domestic work. A simple, daily task explodes into a symbol of the cooperative efforts of thousands of women belonging to countless households throughout the Chuave area thereby rendering the distinction between public and domestic power obsolete.

Men argue that Kafaina exchanges are 'false' (giaman) in comparison to their own 'true' ceremonial affairs. Moreover, many men are clearly baffled by these fabricated exchanges which are actually loans of money based on artificial relationships. They state, for example, that women 'call out without reason' (singaut nating) and that, 'instantly' hundreds of women appear who are willing to give money to their wives' group. This is not entirely accurate, of course - much of the money women receive is in repayment for earlier loans. But Kafaina events are very different from men's corporate affairs. Men join together to give away massive amounts of food, money and beer in order to build group and individual reputations. Kafaina women gain public recognition by receiving and 'tightly holding' their wealth so that development and business will prosper. Kafaina ceremonies, moreover, stress reciprocal relationships and the atmosphere at these events is remarkably free of tension. Complaints occur - usually concerning the length of speeches and prestations - but disputes and fights

are totally absent. Kafaina ceremonies are based on mutual aid and cooperation between non agnates or strangers. Men's ceremonial activities, in contrast, affirm the importance of the patrilineal group and inevitably fuel inter-clan competition.

Practical implications

I now discuss some practical implications of the Kafaina movement for male-female interaction considering, where relevant, the movement's political potential. Elsewhere I have suggested that the mystique surrounding Kafaina rituals, prohibitions, and savings, in conjunction with Chuave witchcraft beliefs, reinforces the conceptual boundaries surrounding 'women's work' (Warry 1983). Likewise, Sexton (1980) has suggested that some men view Wok Meri as analogous to their own, defunct, male cults.

Kafaina can easily be viewed as a distinct political sphere. Excluded from modern institutions, women incorporate many aspects of men's political behaviour into the Kafaina movement. Thus, although women cannot become church leaders or directly influence church policy, they do begin all Kafaina ceremonies and meetings with prayers, sing hymns, and sometimes refer to Kafaina houses as churches. Such behaviour incurs the wrath of fervent Christians who say women pray to false idols - the Kafaina doll - in order to make their money grow.

Group decisions are sometimes made by holding formal votes and women also hold courts involving Kafaina laws (Pascoe 1975; Sexton 1982a). Members pay fines for disobeying ritual prohibitions or for openly challenging the bosmeri's authority. Non-members - male and female - can be forced to pay fines for joking about Kafaina decorations or for slanderous remarks about a member's behaviour. Some men simply refuse to pay these fines while others accede to women's demands. Magistrates, of course, refuse to uphold women's right to hear any court cases.

But while there is some analytic utility in describing Kafaina as a conceptually distinct domain, the boundaries between men's and women's work constantly overlap on an everyday basis. Kafaina, after all, is concerned with the allocation of scarce resources, with public goals and with the public behaviour of women. Thus, although Kafaina stresses the value of domestic work, and draws on domestic images, it is not simply concerned with domestic issues.

Most Kafaina visits and ceremonies, like those initiated by men, occur during the coffee season, when people have access to greater amounts of cash. Kafaina ceremonies are more frequent and are often larger in scale than those regularly held by men - though the amount of cash involved, perhaps, is smaller. When their wives are absent from the village men must cook their own food, wash clothes and care for children or are forced to rely on the generosity of non-Kafaina women. Kafaina, then, forces men to assume a greater proportion of domestic work. When Kafaina groups appear in villages work rapidly spreads throughout local communities. Other groups soon appear to make small loans or to enjoy the laughter and camaraderie that are intrinsic to these events. Informal meetings often expand into all night singing sessions involving thirty or forty women who force men to leave the men's house and sleep in other dwellings and

pressure them to contribute money to purchase cigarettes and other store goods.

For major Kafaina cermeonies, men must collect firewood, provide male crops such as sugar cane and bananas, and occasionally kill and butcher pigs for visitors. Bigmen, of course, criticize the husbands of bosmeris and Kafaina chairmen for killing pigs that they feel should be reserved for agnatic exchanges. Leaders and ordinary men alike also remain peripheral to all festivities and transactions; only the Kafaina clerk, who records all loans, plays any significant public role.

Kafaina women attempt to enlist men's support by arguing that their cermeonies and the businesses they will create enhance men's house group or clan reputations. But they add that their menfolk will be ashamed of their behaviour and 'afraid when the amount of Kafaina savings is revealed'. Moreover, women clearly emphasize the need to aid mother, daughter and unrelated groups and thereby equate Kafaina activities with regional goals. Male attitudes towards Kafaina are extremely variable. Some men completely refuse to have anything to do with women in any Kafaina context. And women who wish to join Kafaina are sometimes forbidden from doing so by their husbands. Many Chuave men are clearly engaged in a type of political damage control; by referring condescendingly to Kafaina courts, meetings and exchanges as 'women's work' they attempt to assert the superiority of their own political actions. Kafaina chairmen, clerks and member's husbands, in contrast, often see great value in women's work - not only because they see themselves as future managers of Kafaina businesses but also because they are genuinely 'pro-development' and enjoy organizing and indirectly participating in Kafaina events. Chairmen are seldom government leaders and they use their position to challenge the authority of these officials and constantly defend the importance of women's work in men's house conversations. Some men also explicitly give their wives money so as to escape ceremonial or other agnatic obligations. By 'hiding' their money they hope to participate or contribute to the development process.

Men who allocate cash to Kafaina activities or divide their coffee gardens with their wives have made conscious decisions about the relative equality of their own and their wives' goals. But many Kafaina women's marriages are extremely rocky - quarrels over money or about responsibility for subsistence and household chores lead to bitter, sometimes violent quarrels. Kafaina groups enable women to present a united front in marriage disputes and divorce cases. Marital dissension is the cause of over one quarter of all disputes in Chuave; half of these cases involve violence. Given the frequency of disputes, their potential impact on men's corporate affairs and magistrates' occasional bias in favour of men's individual and corporate rights, any institutional protection of women's rights is extremely important (see also Collier 1974; Josephides 1983; Strathern 1972).

Members discuss marital and extra-marital affairs in Kafaina meetings; women covertly chastise and occasionally band together to publicly berate or attack particular men so as to protest the mistreatment of Kafaina sisters or non members. Women also act as character witnesses for co-members in village court hearings - sometimes while attending courts together in full Kafaina regalia. Kafaina savings are also protected in divorce cases. Women strictly refuse to allow magistrates to include

savings in negotiations involving brideprice repayments and insist that a Kafaina member be allowed to keep her savings upon divorce.(1)

Kafaina, then, has already proven to be a medium through which women can assert their legal or political rights and demonstrate to men that they are competent in a variety of political situations that are normally dominated by men. Kafaina bosmeris regularly make public speeches, make decisions affecting large numbers of women and are accorded a great deal of authority. These leaders are by far the most dominant women at the village level, frequently asserting their right to speak in men's house conversations, defending the value of women's work, and criticizing men for their lack of concern with local development.

Because Kafaina is a rapidly evolving, highly experimental movement its future orientation is difficult to predict. Some older women who are said to be unconcerned with business have used their savings to make traditional ceremonial payments in their own names. Such action is exceptional and I do not believe that Kafaina will be used to challenge men's dominance of clan ceremonies because the movement is overwhelmingly viewed as 'samting bilong developmen'. Kafaina women have also suggested that men should be allowed to keep their own savings bilums. But others argue that men must be excluded, that women should be 'elected' chairman and that women should attempt to manage their own businesses.

The movement, however, is becoming more sophisticated and is clearly gaining strength. Kafaina events generated more cash and regularly involved more women than Daulo Wok Meri activities or earlier Chuave associations. Recent developments have also overcome a flaw in the movement's earlier phases - the lack of an 'infrastructure' that would ensure women continued to cooperate after the 'washing plates' ceremony (Sexton 1982b). The construction of Kafaina houses provides women with a permanent meeting place within the clan or men's house ward. Increased ceremonial interaction between unrelated groups that 'wash plates' at or about the same time may also encourage collaboration between groups in business ventures. Several Kafaina groups belonging to different clans had discussed the possibility of holding joint 'washing plates' ceremonies. And in at least two cases permanent business ties have been established between 'sister groups' belonging to different clans or tribes. These joint ventures - though operated by men - contrast sharply with the entrepreneurial activities men initiate in their own or their group's name.

Kafaina women have yet to challenge directly men's dominance of modern political institutions. Unlike some African women's associations (Hoffer 1975), for example, Kafaina has not served as a political base for the emergence of female politicians, nor do Kafaina women vote together for particular candidates. Indeed, when Ogan Kom, a leader of the Chuave branch of the women's organization Yangpela Didiman stood in the 1980 provincial elections, she did so to prove to women that they were entitled to run - a fact that many women did not understand. She received only 13

(1) I have precise data for three 'Kafaina divorces'. In two cases the sums of money involved were relatively small (K25 and K60). Members compensated the divorcee with 'new money' but retained her savings. The third case, heard in village court, involved K376. Magistrates, somewhat arbitrarily, decided that the woman was entitled to K200 and this amount was 'withdrawn' from her Kafaina savings.

votes. But a few male candidates have specifically attempted to court the Kafaina vote. They have attended women's meetings during elections, promised to obtain government funds to match Kafaina savings, and have tailored their rhetoric to appeal to women's issues - suggesting, for example, that permanent market facilities should be constructed. Kafaina groups have also joined together to apply - through councillors - for government funds. Given these facts and the further evolution of the movement, then, women may indeed come to use Kafaina to exert pressure on government leaders or to launch their own political careers.

What is clear, however, is that Kafaina women have greatly expanded their natural power base - one that, literally and figuratively, they feel 'at home in' - and so have entered public life on their own terms. Men, having acknowledged that women are capable of providing the resources necessary for development, must also accept, at least in part, the model of social relationships that Kafaina ideology pragmatically and metaphorically 'fosters'. In so doing, they are forced to accept the political value of women per se.

Conclusion

I conclude this paper with a final example of Kafaina group behaviour - an event that was beginning to assume the flavour of a Kafaina legend. During a Kafaina visit in Elimbari census division a fight erupted between two clans. On hearing that the clans were mobilizing for a formal battle the women - some thirty individuals - rushed to the scene only to find the two groups approaching each other, fully armed. The women immediately paraded between the opposed forces, began to 'turn heads', danced, and sang to the men asking them not to 'ruin' their work. I am unable to provide details about what happened next other than to say that the groups abandoned their dispute and returned to their villages. The reason they chose to do so, as I was later told by a magistrate who investigated the matter, was that the men, upon seeing the women, felt 'shame' and feared the damage to life and property that would result from the fight.

I do not want to overemphasize the significance of this exceptional event. But it is apt illustration of the potential power of women's groups and of the antithetical nature of male and female corporate affairs. Kafaina women initially gained public recognition as transactors because the fictive exchange relationships they created circumvented or reversed actual ties of kinship and affinity that are the foundation of men's ceremonial life. Whether Kafaina 'kinship' ideology initially emerged to rationalize the exchange of wealth between distant or non-kinsmen or vice-versa is unimportant, for Kafaina groups now regularly lend money to a wide number of groups without reference to fictive ties. But Kafaina transactions do not simply constitute an alternative to men's ceremonial exchanges; they also transform exchange into a medium for development. Men 'waste' wealth in search of political status; women gain status by guarding resources necessary for development. Unlike men's rhetoric, which often pays lip-service to the need for inter-clan cooperation, Kafaina ideology generates a model of socio-political relationships based on mutual aid and trust and solidifies these relations - involving kinsmen, non agnates, and 'strangers' through fabricated ceremonial transactions.

Kafaina is, in a very real sense, politics of a new order. Not only have women developed an institution that partially redresses the imbalance in everyday male-female political relations; they have also created a syncretic movement that promotes regional cooperation and strives to overcome the cleavages that are a natural part of the patrilineal, segmentary political system. The Kafaina movement, therefore, foreshadows a degree of societal integration and cooperative political identity that, I believe, will increasingly emerge throughout the highlands in future decades.

WOMEN AND NATIONAL POLITICS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Nahau Rooney

Women play many roles in various societies. In Papua New Guinean traditional society, a woman is expected to be a wife and mother, a gardener, a food gatherer and a fisherwoman; she must be able to weave baskets and mats, and make bilums; she is expected to take care of day-to-day running of the household. In many parts of Papua New Guinea, too, where the practice of bridewealth or brideprice occurs, women play a very important socio-economic role in the country. The parents and the relatives of the bride expect a good price for their daughter, who after all will be bearing children for the bridegroom's clan.

In many highlands societies where a 'bigman' is expected to sponsor large feasts, or perform moka as in the Melpa of Western Highlands, a woman is seen as an economic asset. 'Bigman' status is judged by the number of pigs a man kills and the frequency with which he sponsors moka. The more wives he has, the more pigs he has to give away; the bigger the network of people he builds, the higher and more renowned his status in the community.

Women in Papua New Guinea are still the main source of labour even to this time. However, the situation has been modified: as in other countries, education has brought a big change in the role of women. Papua New Guinean women today have a wide choice of roles. Apart from being a wife and a mother, women are increasingly challenging the society's traditional image of what a woman may choose to be. In 1980 the proportion of the female population working in salaried jobs was 13 per cent; in the public service women represent 23 per cent of the total workforce.

Since the establishment of the first elected democratic government in Papua New Guinea in 1964, there has been a total of thirty-one women standing in national elections, of whom only three have won a seat in parliament (see appendix to this paper). In 1961 Alice (now Dame Alice) Wadega became the first woman appointed to the Legislative Council. No women contested the elections in 1964 and 1968.

The woman candidates who stood in later elections came from all the regions of Papua New Guinea, from rural and urban centres, and they contested open and provincial seats. With one or two exceptions they stood as independent candidates. They campaigned on social issues relating to women and lack of participation by women in various activities such as economics and education. In general, women candidates had higher educational levels than their male counterparts but, as shown in the results, educational qualification does not necessarily make a successful politician.

Over the last twenty years we have seen very little political advancement of women at the national level. The fact that only thirty-one

have ever stood in national elections, and that only three have made it into parliament, must make us wonder why women are not moving as rapidly as they have been in other male-dominated professions.

On the basis of my own observations and experience, I would suggest several reasons. Being a politician is not just getting into parliament, attending political rallies, expressing one's view on a local radio station, or getting one's name printed in a newspaper. Women tend to place emphasis on small and trivial issues and in doing this we lose sight of our real objectives as policy and decision makers. We focus our attention on the specific needs and problems of women rather than the needs and problems of the community and the nation. Often we are very emotional and exercise little control when confronted with a conflict situation. Very little thought is put into the planning of one's political career and campaign strategy. We often work on our own, perhaps because many people do not have faith in us or do not expect us to be political, which makes it very hard to start as a woman politician. An intending politician must know what she wants before she can organize how to go about achieving this goal. We are not organized in our own thoughts. Finally, traditional expectations about the role of women in the society, past and present, are still against women working in a 'male' profession. Women themselves are the most reluctant and uncooperative in their support of women leaders, as Ruth Yangalio experienced. According to Anne Kaniku: 'During voting many of the women voted with their husbands and would come out of the polling booth saying, "We were with you in spirit but our husbands have forced us to vote the same way as they have"' (Kaniku n.d.).

However, because only three women have been elected to the national parliament, I will restrict my remarks to them. However, at the outset I must say that the two former members of parliament besides myself represented different areas of the country, had their own styles, and championed specific causes in which I had no direct interest. In particular, Josephine Abaijah achieved the leadership of the Papuan people in a way of which I am proud, and I give her full respect. This makes it impossible for me to give an objective academic analysis and I can only refer to her as a colleague whom I sometimes supported and sometimes opposed; we were practising professionals in the same arena.

Miss Josephine Abaijah

Josephine Abaijah was our first woman member of parliament. She was a senior health educator. Prior to her election Josephine had travelled to Australia, Philippines and England, where she had gained further diplomas in health, education and administration. She first entered parliament in 1972 and served two terms, 1972-77 and 1977-82.

During her first term of office Josephine was very active. She focused on the Papuan issue: Papuan land rights; lack of Papuan participation in economic development; lack of Papuans in high positions in the civil service. She claimed that Papuans were being exploited by foreigners, including New Guineans. She wanted independence and political autonomy for the Papuan people.

This conviction led to the formation of Papua Besena - which became a well established political party. In its early days Papua Besena grew like a millenarian movement. I can recall one of her rallies at Kaugere which I attended in 1973 and at which I observed her in action. She proclaimed herself a general; the women present were the army. She made them run and march around the oval in the hot sunshine yelling out 'We are Papuans! We are Papuans!'. I guess it did not matter what other people thought; what was important to her was that the means justified the ends.

The first followers of Papua Besena were men and women living in squatter settlements, such as the Keremas of Kaugere and Badili, the Waningelas of Badili, the Hulas of Koki, the Goilalas and Koitabus of the 9 Mile Quarry and the Sogeri plateau, and the Mekeos of the Hiritano highway. These people represent the various ethnic groups in the Central Province in which Port Moresby, the nation's capital, is located. They have migrated into the city in the hope that they can participate in the economic activities and have access to the social and welfare services of urban development. They saw Josephine's call for Papuan development and Papuan self-respect as a chance to improve their own economic and social status in the urban squatter settlements and in rural Papuan villages.

The Motu were split on the issue. Some supported her; others did not. But those who did not join her did not remain one group: they were split among themselves, making the Papua Besena group the strongest political organization in Papua.

As a politician, she was successful. The government began to take notice of the Papuan issue and lack of Papua development. Strong Pangu stalwarts like Reuben Taureka, Gavera Rea, Sir Albert Maori Kiki and Ebia Olewale began to think about the issue and to pressure Michael Somare. Although none of these Papuan leaders took Josephine seriously nor joined her Papua Besena, their lack of an alternative approach acceptable to Papuans resulted in all of them except Ebia Olewale losing their seats in the 1977 national election.

Her political leadership and ability to organize was clearly shown when, in a by-election for the newly created National Capital District seat in 1975, she defeated Sir Albert Maori Kiki in a landslide victory in which she polled over 13,000 votes and her nearest opponent only 6,000. Her dream was achieved when, except for one seat (Goilala Open), all of Central Province seats in the national parliament were won by Papua Besena candidates in the 1977 national election. For her it was a victory. Although Josephine had eight members in her group and could easily have joined a coalition government, she maintained her principle that the Besena could only join a government or serve in a government with a Papuan as a prime minister.

Of all the political parties, the Papua Besena group in 1977 had perhaps the best educated and most experienced people in parliament. There were three school inspectors, one lawyer, one doctor, and the late Sevese Morea was a speaker who was liked and honoured by both sides of the house.

Josephine Abaijah remained the figurehead leader of the Papua Besena, but she allowed the boys to take care of the day-to-day running of the group. This soon led to an ideological split in the group and in 1980 the

Besena joined with other groups to form a government with Sir Julius Chan as prime minister and Iambakey Okuk as deputy prime minister. Josephine must have been disappointed when she saw those Papuan members selling their principle for a place in cabinet. She withdrew from active participation in the Besena and concentrated on writing a book, which is yet to be published.

In the 1982 national election only three members of Papua Besena were returned to parliament; the other five, including Josephine, lost their seats. If Josephine's ideas and philosophy of Papuan identity and Papuan control had not been shortcircuited by these self-seeking men for a place in cabinet, would she and the other Papua Besena members of parliament have lost their seats in the 1982 election?

With some strong Papuan leaders in parliament today, like former Defence Forces chief, Ted Diro, the present minister for Finance, Philip Bouraga, and Dennis Young, the primary industry minister, is there a chance of a Papuan prime minister? Who knows! We shall leave this to the Papuans to decide.

Meanwhile, Josephine Abaijah does not waste any time. She has organized herself a bank loan and has purchased the largest stationery business in Papua New Guinea, Dwyers Pty Ltd. When asked by the press about her role in the business she was quoted as saying: 'I am only a director and an owner and I am only concerned with the company's policy but I leave the management and running of the business to my managers'.

Mrs Waliyato Clowes

Waliyato Clowes was a 'one-term wonder', so I cannot say much about her. Nonetheless, during her one term of office she made her presence felt and added colour to parliament.

Like Josephine Abaijah she started a political party, known as Panal or Papuan Alliances, which attempted to coordinate all the Papuan members of parliament who were neither Papua Besena nor members of any other political party. Unfortunately Mrs Clowes did not return to parliament in 1982 and her Panal party ceased to exist.

My own story

As for me, I took a different course. I entered national parliament in 1977, but the working environment of politicians and senior public servants was not new to me. My position as a principal research officer in the Prime Minister's Department during the pre-independence and immediate post-independence period gave me inside knowledge of the running of the National Executive Council, ministerial duties and responsibilities, and, most importantly, the preparation and formulation of policies and the process of decision making.

Back in my own home province, Manus, I was involved in the preparation of the Manus provincial government constitution and gained the experience of working in an isolated, small province.

In all of these experiences I was an advisor and a pen pusher; I could influence but could not make decisions. Often I would be very angry at those people who were making decisions when my advice was not taken. Decisions, rightly or wrongly, are the prerogative of ministers of cabinet and members of parliament or of councillors who are elected to the office.

It was the wish to be able to make decisions on issues affecting the lives of the people of Papua New Guinea that forced me to seek elected office. I entered parliament so that I could make decisions affecting the lives of our people. I wanted to participate and contribute towards the building, shaping and the creation of our young nation, Papua New Guinea. I see politics and government as a new career for me, and my role as an elected member is of paramount importance in ensuring that decisions are made in the best interests of the people of Papua New Guinea.

Soon after the 1977 national election I was appointed minister for correctional services and liquor licensing in the first post-independence government led by Michael Somare. It did not matter to me what ministry I had. What was important was the fact that I was a member of cabinet, and that cabinet is the highest collective decision-making authority of the nation.

The effects of large-scale alcohol consumption - car accidents, broken family homes, lack of food and essential family needs - produced a balance sheet in which the government received up to K15 million from revenue deriving from the brewery industry but was spending up to K40 million to provide services that dealt with the problems caused by alcohol. While in the Liquor Licensing ministry, I was able to make amendments to the liquor licensing legislation which banned all liquor advertising, and forced the breweries to market six and twelve bottle beer cartons (before this it was possible only to buy twenty-four bottle cartons, which gave no one an option to buy less). The concept of the community or village club was introduced so that the people can drink in their own community without having to go too far to drink. This was intended to encourage the development of good drinking habits, with drinking seen as a social phenomenon and not an excuse to express one's frustrations and cause problems. I was only too pleased to delegate the responsibility and control of liquor licenses to local authorities. Thus anyone could apply for a license to sell drinks in rural areas, but only if they had the approval of significant community leaders, women and church groups.

The problems of corrective institutions were complicated, and involved other departments, police, courts, judges and magistrates. There were in 1978 twenty-four corrective institutions throughout the country, taking care of over 12,000 prisoners, and costing the government K6 million a year. Soon after my appointment to the ministry, I made a ministerial statement in which I outlined prospective future developments in the corrective institutions system. Unfortunately I did not stay long enough to implement these objectives as I was moved to the ministry of Justice in a cabinet reshuffle in October 1978.

In my new role as minister for Justice I was concerned with the poor image and conflicting role and functions of the ministry. The majority of our people see the Department of Justice as concerned with courts, policemen, and putting people in gaol. That it should provide justice and

uphold the laws of the nation is somewhat lost in technicalities and legalities in the rules and procedures of the system.

I set myself three goals:

- (a) to decentralize the judges so that we could have resident judges who would be responsible for a region. This meant decentralizing and providing legal services which did not exist in most rural areas so that accused did not have to be kept too long in custody and in order to avoid the present expensive arrangements where the judges go on a circuit every two months with a team of counsels. The proposal met with strong opposition from the judges, whose main reasons were that there were no proper library facilities and social amenities available in outer provinces and that they wanted to be closer to their brother judges for continual judicial discussions.
- (b) to help develop our underlying laws, which at this point the foreign judges had refused to involve themselves with. I proposed to introduce 'judges' assistants' who would be appointed in each province by the minister for Justice. If during a national court hearing a matter required traditional knowledge and methods of settling disputes these judges' assistants were to be called upon to give advice to the hearing judge, though the ultimate decision remained the prerogative of the judge. This also met with hostility; the judiciary saw what I believe was a genuine attempt to develop our own Papua New Guinea underlying laws as my undermining their profession.
- (c) to nationalize the judiciary. I knew this was not possible, but I wanted to see some Papua New Guineans serving as judges in the national court and the supreme court of Papua New Guinea - in 1979 there were no Papua New Guinean judges at all.

To my dismay the judiciary objected very strongly to these three aims. This was the start of that conflict between the executive and judiciary arms of the government which led to the gaoling of Papua New Guinea's minister for Justice and the subsequent resignation of the five foreign Supreme Court judges in 1979.

When the smoke of this affair had cleared, and we got back to the business of running the country, it was gratifying to realize that the country had its first national judges and the principle of the independence of the three arms of government, legislature, executive and judiciary, remained stronger than ever.

From Justice I moved to the Decentralization ministry, which had been of special interest to me since the days when I had helped prepare the constitution for the Manus provincial government.

History in Papua New Guinea, however, moves very rapidly and before I could settle into the new ministry I found myself an opposition backbencher. With the Pangu Pati in opposition, my attention was directed more towards party politics and election strategies. It is at election time that being a woman is perhaps most contentious. My achievements and the controversy of my ministry days were not, in fact, election issues in the way I had expected. The biggest challenge came from educated men who

seemed to think that it somehow reflected on their 'manliness' that I, a mere woman, had achieved fame and recognition. It was in this second campaign that the question of whether it was right for a woman to lead became an issue.

In addition, I feel that the 1982 election tested the assumption that there was a significant 'women's vote'. It demonstrated that women vote for their leaders using exactly the same criteria as men; a woman candidate does not attract women's votes simply because she is a woman. It is interesting to note that one of the strategies used by my opponents was to field another woman against me, assuming that this would split the women's votes. However the other woman candidate polled only 100 votes, all of which came from her home village.

On the first count I dead-heated with another candidate; a recount gave him a victory by one vote. Because of the inconclusiveness of the count and the glaring inconsistencies in the counting procedures I believed I had a clear case to put before the court of disputed returns. It ordered a recount, which gave me a victory by twenty-three votes. In all of this, I cannot complain; but it was most gratifying to have the same court which had sent me to gaol now sending me back to parliament.

Despite the little progress women have made in the political arena, we have done remarkably well in terms of policies relating to women and women's advancement in Papua New Guinea during the brief history of women's involvement in policy and decision making.

The second directive principle of our constitution calls for all citizens to have equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from the development of our country: equal pay for equal work. As a result of legislation aimed against bottle feeding, working mothers can take up to one hour per day to feed their young children; the seventh of the government's Eight Aims specifically encourages women to participate in all activities. These are a few examples of things which took a long time to be achieved by women in other countries. With a recent meeting of the National Parliament unanimously supporting my motion that 24 March should be recognized as a public holiday for women, we have achieved yet another step towards mutual respect and understanding of the roles of men and women in our society.

However policies are only good if they are achieved or implemented, and this depends entirely on the resources made available to achieve them.

The analysis of government spending on projects directly benefiting women since 1978 (Nakikus 1982) adequately demonstrates the political reality, that even a single female voice at the ultimate decision-making level will have more effect than leaving decisions in the hands of men. Despite the efforts of female advisors and planners in the presentation of proposals for women's advancement to the National Executive Council, since 1980 spending for women has dramatically dropped.

It is always necessary for there to be committed champions of causes in the cabinet. Much of cabinet time is spent on arguing and debating and sometimes plain old gutsy political in-fighting by ministers determined to get a greater slice of the national pie for their specific interests.

While I was in cabinet, apart from my own portfolio responsibilities and my home province, I was automatically the minister determined to do battle on behalf of women, even on matters which fell into someone else's portfolio. Since 1980, with no woman in cabinet the battle on behalf of women's issues has not been fought and women's projects have suffered under the budget axe.

It is also my belief that matters concerning social justice and welfare have suffered because of the absence of a woman in cabinet. The axing of the Department of Social and Family Services, Community Development, the National Arts School, and the Department of Information and Extension Services, is evidence that men are less concerned with social justice and social equality than women.

What it boils down to is that ministers make financial decisions which affect the whole country. My personal experience has been that the effects of those decisions can be beneficial, or, if the decision makers are corrupt, incompetent or merely ignorant, they can be disastrous for the country. One or two determined voices in a decision-making body can have a very real impact, this is true not only at the national level; in our multi-tiered form of government the opportunities for influence are considerable. It is perhaps at the provincial and local government or community government levels that women eventually may find the greatest potential to influence the society and our place in it. It is at these intermediate and basic levels where the decisions are made as to where schools, aidposts, water supplies, and so on are to be placed.

There are, however, very real problems facing women's representation at these levels: at the local level society is still shaped and determined by conservative traditional attitudes towards leadership and the role of women.

Finally, I must emphasize that there is no special role for women in the political field. Women, just like men, must see their role in a representative position as providing an opportunity to participate in decision making for the creation of a better society. If women find themselves having to fight harder on issues of women's concern or issues of social justice and social welfare, that is because their male counterparts are failing in these areas of development.

APPENDIX

Women Candidates in National Elections1972

Josephine Abaijah (Central Regional)

Theresa Daera (Port Moresby Coastal Open)

Nellie Exon Laurence (Kokopo Open)

Patricia Wilson (Gulf Regional)

None of the women who stood in 1972 had stood in the previous election. Of the four candidates only one, Josephine Abaijah, won her seat.

1977

Rosa Taokiel (East New Britain Provincial)

Nahau Rooney (Manus Open)

Pilicapio Matilda May (Alotau Open)

Leah Elikia (Esa'ala Open)

Grace Pokana (Bulolo Open)

Josephine Abaijah (National Capital Provincial)

Fide Bale (Moreby North East Open)

Freida Lolo (New Ireland Provincial)

Homalen Agnes Kongum (Mendi Open)

Waliyato Clowes (Middle Fly Open)

Of the ten candidates, one, Josephine Abaijah, was seeking re-election; the others were contesting for the first time. Three (Abaijah, Clowes and Rooney) won their seats.

1982

Gagum Kama (Kerowagi Open)

Mon Mek (Kerowagi Open)

Salvina Vadek (Gazelle Open)

Laura Martin (Wewak Open)

Ruth Enda Poio (Enga Provincial)

Elizabeth Buara (Manus Open)

Nahau Rooney (Manus Open)

Pilicapio Matilda May (Milne Bay Provincial)

Dec Tasip (Lae Open)

Josephine Abaijah (National Capital Provincial)

Fide Bale (National Capital Provincial)

Margaret Loko (Moresby South Open)

Rombame Nandi (Ialibu-Pangia Open)

Waliyato Clowes (Middle Fly Open)

Agnes Joseph Koltawati (Angalimp-South Wahgi Open)

Meggie Wilson (Hagen Open)

Lucy Mie (North Wahgi Open)

Thee of the seventeen candidates were seeking re-election. Eleven were contesting for the first time. Only one (Rooney) won her seat, and that following a decision by the court of disputed returns.

THE ROLE OF AN EDUCATED WOMAN IN WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Angela Mandie

In Papua New Guinea there are many different women's organizations - the YWCA, the Girl Guides Association and the National Council of Women, to name a few. There are also many church, government and non-government organizations seeking to help women. These different organizations are trying to help women that come from different traditional backgrounds and vary greatly in their levels of formal education. In Papua New Guinea many women do not have any formal schooling at all; others leave school at grade six, grade eight or grade ten; a few continue on to tertiary institutions such as the teacher's colleges, nursing schools and the universities.

Since the issues relating to the education of women and to women's organizations in Papua New Guinea are so broad and so complex, this paper discusses selectively what a Papua New Guinean woman of the author's formal educational level can contribute and what role she can play in the National Council of Women of Papua New Guinea. However one must not forget that the role played by each and every Papua New Guinean woman contributes a lot to the success and smooth functioning of the National Council of Women. The National Council of Women and the provincial councils of women have been chosen for discussion because I see them as the most important and immediate organizations in which there is a role to play. The National Council of Women of Papua New Guinea was first created about nine years ago to coincide with the UN declaration of the Decade for Women. Later, the government of the day gave some money to start provincial councils of women, thus forming what is now called the National Council of Women. The government created a position in the Prime Minister's Department and appointed a woman to represent the women of Papua New Guinea in line with the seventh point of its eight point plan, which calls for rapid and equal participation by women in the development of the country.

The National Council held its second national convention in Rabaul in 1976. The first national president was elected at this convention. I was present at the convention, and it was the most moving and emotional I have ever attended. The women from different provinces raised their problems and concerns, looking to the National Council of Women as the sole answer to all these concerns and problems. The women's expectations were very great; no one explained the role of the National Council of Women to the women, and the limitations and problems that might be experienced by the council in fulfilling the many and varied expectations were not clear to the women. We were not able to work out the mutual concerns of the women and no solutions were worked out. The women at the Rabaul convention were very good leaders and very experienced in working with other women in the groups that existed before the provincial councils of women were created. Few of them actually came from the provinces they represented: most were either working in the provinces or living there with their husbands. They

were, in a way, selected rather than elected, since there were no provincial councils of women at this stage.

The provincial councils of women were formed after the convention when the women were able to vote for those they wanted to represent them; sometimes they did not elect the women who had worked with the women's groups in previous years. Women who were leaders in one province would not be leaders in another province. The problems of leadership will be discussed below; they created a lot of ill feeling and division.

At the convention there was a major disagreement on the language to be used at the national convention. The use of English was rejected by all the women there. This was an important disagreement: some of us who are used to expressing ourselves and writing in English find it a bit difficult to say all that needs to be said in Tok Pisin or other languages without losing some of the real meaning of what is being said. The debate over language can create ill feelings and disunity amongst women, especially when, as at the national conventions, there are women from twenty provinces and the educated, semi-educated and uneducated are all represented.

The purpose of highlighting the second convention of the National Council of Women is to give a picture of how the Council started and the situation it was in when it was forming. I hope this will give some understanding of the ups and downs of the Council at present.

The National Council of Women was created and initially run by women who were selected by the government. It is, in effect, an office through which the provincial councils of women can present women's problems and other matters concerning women to the national government or to outside aid organizations. It is also the authority which decides who should represent the women of Papua New Guinea in international conferences and meetings.

The National Council cannot exist without the provincial councils. The provincial councils, on the other hand, cannot exist without the different women's groups in the provinces, and the women's groups cannot exist without the individual women who make up the group. The National Council is in effect the provincial councils of women put together. Therefore if the National Council is not recognized by the government, the provincial councils are not recognized either. And if the provincial councils were not affiliated with the National Council there would be no such thing as the National Council.

One could picture the National Council and the provincial councils of women combining to form one flower: the National Council forming the core of the flower while the different provincial councils form the petals and the women of Papua New Guinea form the particles of each petal. The provincial councils have more direct contact with the individual woman and the National Council must have a good communications and coordination link with the provincial councils.

Initially the National Council of Women was run by women who were leaders at the time but lacked a full understanding of the role of the council. They got on with the difficult task of running the organization though they had no guidelines as to how to meet the demands placed on the Council. These women, and the government, saw the Council primarily as the

coordinating and distributing centre for services and development programmes for women. But there was no clear understanding of what manpower and other resources the Council had available to it.

A good example of this was when the government gave the Council an amount of money for women's projects, which was published. No proper guidelines were provided, however, as to how the money should be used. As a result, the money was perhaps not used as it should have been. Some women never got to see the money they had heard about, and this created a lot of ill feelings. Many were disappointed with the Council and some of us blamed the women who were in office at the time. This was nearly the end of the Council.

The National Council of Women is supposed to be a non-government body; this frees the government from any responsibilities even though the Council gets financial aid from it. Women in the provinces do not understand that government funds for women's projects come with little manpower backup to coordinate the distribution and keep accounts of who is getting what. Also, most women do not yet understand that the members of the national executive do not get paid for running the office of the council, which belongs to all the women of Papua New Guinea.

There also seems to be some misunderstanding amongst women about who actually belongs to the National Council of Women. Women in the provinces see the Council as an organization which belongs to women living in the national capital, Port Moresby, while women in Port Moresby see the Council as belonging to the women in the executive positions. Some women who are living outside their own provinces feel left out because they cannot affiliate through the provincial council of the province in which they are living. It is interesting to note that the present national president and members of the executive all live outside Port Moresby, so women in the provinces cannot say that the council belongs to the women in Port Moresby!

Women must understand that the National Council as such has no members other than the members of the provincial councils. Every woman comes from a province and each of us must see ourself as a member of the National Council of Women. Then, as members of the Council, we must ask ourselves how much each of us contributes to its ups and downs. We should not blame individual women who have the courage and willingness to be in an executive position during the Council's down periods.

The provincial councils of women consist of different women's groups and the executives of the provincial councils are supposed to represent the women of the province at the national conventions each year. In some provinces there are some disagreements over who should represent the women of the province at the convention. Some women who were leaders previously, especially in church groups, would not agree to other elected leaders taking over and representing the province. Some church groups, in fact, have used the excuse that the national council is a political body and as such they do not want to be affiliated with it. Some church groups and women's clubs wanted direct affiliation with the National Council without going through the provincial councils, but could not do this because the National Council's constitution only allows affiliation through the provincial councils.

It seems logical to me that all women's groups should affiliate with the National Council through their provincial councils. If all women's groups affiliated directly with the National Council, 500 or more women would have to be accommodated each time the National Council had its annual convention. With such a large number of women the Council would get nothing done; also it would be too expensive to bring every one to the convention given the high cost of airfares.

It is unfortunate that the constitution of the Council is being blamed for some groups not affiliating, when the main problem is caused by the women leaders in the provinces not being able to decide who should be the representative. The National Council insists, rightly, that only provincial councils can be affiliated; women who are not in groups affiliated with the provincial councils thus cannot be on the National Council.

What role can a Papua New Guinean woman with tertiary education play in the women's organizations?

After commenting on the organization and operations of the National Council of Women, this question is difficult to answer directly and simply. It is the responsibility of every Papua New Guinean woman to see that the provincial councils and the National Council of Women operate in the best interests of all women in Papua New Guinea. Those of us who can get first-hand information about the councils should share such information with other women to create an understanding of the functions and roles of the councils. As educated women we can make the National Council known to other women who do not understand its functions. As educated women with an understanding of government policies and bureaucratic procedures, we can provide advice and offer some explanation on what is happening in the country, especially on matters that affect women. The National Council of Women is a modern organization which has to function amidst the other agents and organizations of a very rapidly changing Papua New Guinea. As such it needs educated women as a source of information and advice in order to be able to function. The other women in the Council need to understand and value the contributions that can be made by the educated women and not feel threatened by their involvement.

A communication line needs to be developed between all women, especially between the educated and the majority of women. The educated women in bureaucratic circles should be used to provide information regarding government policies and other matters that effect the lives of women. However women must also understand that the educated women in national offices are there to serve the nation and not women alone.

The main problem that exists amongst women in Papua New Guinea is a communications gap. Somehow civilization or education has created a gap in communication between the women, especially between the old and the young. It is very hard for us educated women to mix in with women in the provinces after being away so long. Those of us who are educated need to bridge the communications gap which exists amongst ourselves before we can ever hope to communicate with other women. The educated women in the provinces and those in the national capital, where policies are formulated and decisions made, need to communicate honestly in order to transfer information to the rest of the women. It would not do much good to anybody if we educated

women gave our own individual interpretations and explanations without confirming what we know with other colleagues, especially when the information can have great effects on the lives of many people. Conflicting information and explanations can divide women and make it impossible at times for the educated to play a meaningful role in women's organizations and help women, especially those who are isolated and disadvantaged. There are a lot of organizaions women can join besides the National Council of Women, and isolated women do not know where to go.

At this point in time women in Papua New Guinea need to develop a very strong sisterhood and a strong feeling of mutual encouragement; we need to recognize the potential and importance of every woman, whether educated or not. There is a lot educated women can do if we are of one mind about what each of us should be doing for the other. The educated need to be informed of what they can do by those who are already working with women, so that they can make meaningful contributions. As educated women we should protect the interests of the National Council of Women and make women understand that the National Council of Women is for all women of Papua New Guinea. The National Council should be the last organization we educated criticize for the sake of it. As educated women we should feel responsible for and involved with the National Council of Women because it is the women's organization that can cater for all Papua New Guinea women if we participate together. Whether we are from Sepik or Hagen or Rabaul, whether we are SDA or Catholic or United church, and whether we are educated or not educated, the fact remains that being a Papua New Guinean woman, each of us is an important part of a petal of that flower called the National Council of Women of Papua New Guinea.

CONTROLLING THE BODIES OF WOMEN:
READING GENDER IDEOLOGIES IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Evelyn Hogan

1975 was the occasion of both Papua New Guinea's independence and International Women's Year. As part of the ideology of the new nation, the Eight Point Plan stressed the need for equal and full participation by women in all spheres of social and economic activity. Yet in Papua New Guinea a man's definition of himself as an independent and politically active person is tied up with his definition of himself as a man as distinct from a woman. With independence, men's assumptions of female inferiority made them seek to monopolize political power and use the introduced institutions of the state to establish male dominance in the new context.

With independence and the assertion of Melanesian cultural identity, modern leaders began to look to the villages and to recreate myths of what life had been like there before colonization. In the village, in her traditional role the woman was valued for her capacity to reproduce and feed her husband's lineage. Her childbearing and gardening capacities were exchanged for wealth and/or other women, and women were expected to value themselves in terms of their ability to bear children.

The idea of women's liberation, which began to spread in the country in the early 1970s, was seen as part of the cultural baggage of the white oppressors; with independence in 1975 men felt justified in questioning the introduction of ideas which would lessen the distinction between men and women. Women who were inclined towards Western liberties were seen not as freely determining their own actions but as being drawn towards white men as their possessions. While Papua New Guinean women saw the issue as a question of two liberations or one, men became concerned about whether Papua New Guinean women belonged to the black man or to the white man.

While some saw the issue narrowly in terms of sexual competition, in broader terms two competing roles for women were being put forward. The white men who had been the administrators of the Australian territory had their own ideas of women's place: Papua New Guinean women were to replace Australian women in the workforce and thus inherit a sex-typed dual occupational structure which had limited many women in the Western world. The young educated women who moved into the urban workforce attempted to create a new emancipated image for themselves. The men greatly resented this new image and attempts by women to take new directions - whether minor symbolic gestures such as shaving of eyebrows, or wearing mini-skirts or jeans, or major decisions such as entering the workforce, limiting the number of children borne, or standing for parliamentary elections.

These issues became the subject of debate in national, provincial and local government assemblies; women were subjected to public harassment; they were brought before judges and magistrates in national, district and village courts; educational institutions of all levels provided forums for

discussion by parents, teachers and students; priests and ministers gave sermons from the pulpits; mass meetings and protest marches occurred throughout the decade.

The concern - sometimes, it seemed, the obsession - was to control the physical space of women, to regulate the access of men to women, to control the productive and reproductive functions of women. The letters to the editor columns of Papua New Guinea's national English-language newspaper, the Post-Courier, became an important vehicle for debate on these issues, revealing the ideological landscape that women were to inhabit and within which they must struggle for a new definition. This paper analyses three debates relating to gender which appeared in these columns between 1971 and 1981.(1)

The banning of mini-skirts

In February 1973 a circular, written in Tok Pisin and signed by Tolai politicians, community and church leaders, was distributed throughout East New Britain. It suggested a campaign in schools against immodest dress. The rapid rise in the incidence of gonorrhoea, syphilis and other diseases among Papua New Guineans was attributed to immodest dress. The circular claimed young men were continually complaining that immodesty in dress was a source of 'temptation and sin'. Men claimed that women who dressed immodestly were looking for carnal pleasures (Post-Courier 27 February 1973).

It might be expected that East New Britain should be the first province where this issue would arise. In 1968 the Mataungan Association emerged as a political movement in the Tolai villages around Rabaul. Mataungans believed that indigenous people should have political control of the province and they challenged the multiracial council as a creation of the colonial administration to give all racial groups a share in local government. They were the first group in the country to demand political independence from the Australian administration. The rise of Mataunganism also reflected and exacerbated traditional clan-based rivalries among the Tolai.

One result of the rise of Mataunganism was that the population was more assertive in defence of traditional values. It also seems likely that some political leaders were using women, especially young women and their dress, as an issue around which to unite a politically divided population. Indeed this is the way educated young women, working and studying in the town of Rabaul, interpreted the circular.

In the 1971 National Census, East New Britain was the only province where 100 per cent of primary-school-aged girls were in school. Girls of the province also approached equality with boys as a proportion of the 10 to 18 year age group attending secondary schools (11.2 per cent for boys compared with 10.2 per cent for girls). From 1971 there was increasing employment of educated Papua New Guinean women as wage and salary earners

(1) The analysis of these debates is part of an unpublished study of all debates relating to gender appearing in the Post-Courier over the decade 1971-1981 (Hogan 1981).

in the town of Rabaul while living in the villages outside of the town boundaries. This phenomenon of young women earning money in town but still living in the village had not presented itself in such numbers before.

Because of the political insecurity associated with the rise of Mataunganism, and with the severe earth tremors of 1971 which were feared to signal the onset of volcanic eruptions around Blanche Bay, some of the Chinese, mixed-race and white population left Rabaul. Continuing high prices for the cash crops of the area - copra and cocoa - and the reduction in the non-black population opened up employment opportunities for national men and women. Several factors encouraged wage earners in Rabaul to remain living in the villages: government employees had no rights to government accommodation if their home village was within fifteen miles of Rabaul; there was a wish to retain rights to clan land by 'sleeping' on it;⁽¹⁾ living in the village means cheap accommodation, and with the excellent road network in East New Britain it is possible to commute to work each day. Many of the young women commuting to town to work in the offices would have been past students of Tavui or Rabaul secretarial colleges. Part of their training was an emphasis on personal presentation - wearing dress and make-up in modern Western style - as a way of preparing for work in the modern sector. One feature of the secretarial role was to act as an 'office wife' (Kanter 1977:89). This role would have conflicted with their traditional roles as wives or potential wives.

Thus there were educated and economically independent women, no longer dependent upon the subsistence and cash crop sector, living in the villages and retaining their right to traditional land - which in Tolai society is matrilineal. This was bound to produce major structural strains for the men, who in a matrilineal society exercise power through the control of traditional shell money wealth, and through fear of magic and sorcery are able to restrict the movement of women within a confined physical space. Self-decoration in ritual ceremonies is meant to signify one's place within a matrix of close relatives. In Tolai society the meri-blouse and laplap for women and the laplap for men have been drawn into ritual ceremonies. This form of dress has become an important symbol of Tolai identity, distinguishing them not only from the white and Chinese populations but also from other Papua New Guineans who come to work in menial jobs in plantations and in the workshops and houses of Rabaul. Young men and women are expected to conform to this identity as a matter of pride.

In response to the circular condemning the wearing of mini-skirts there were three letters from women (Post-Courier 7 March 1973, 28 May 1973, 13 June 1973). One of them, signed 'Four Tolai Girls' (Post-Courier 13 June 1973), had no doubts that the banning of mini-skirts would have wider implications. For its writers, wearing mini-skirts signified that they wanted greater control over their lives. They accused the initiators of the circular of having political motivations - of using the issue of public morality for their own political purposes. They also accused the Mataungans of insulting their sex and wishing to restrict them because the Mataungan office-bearers knew 'that with education of our sex will come emancipation', and 'with education women would be able to judge the

(1) In Tolai language vabat ra pia means literally 'sleeping to guard the soil'. If a descent group claims a particular piece of land, and there is no one there to assert and protect the claim, it will be swallowed up by others (Epstein 1969).

decisions of men'. The three letters from females denied that they were to blame for immorality; they all strongly criticized the dress and behaviour of men, and all mentioned the fear of rape or sexual harassment from men.

The greatest male response to these letters came not from Tolai men living in the province but from Tolai men in other centres (Post-Courier 28 June 1973, 6 July 1973, 11 July 1973). They were most upset by the suggestion that women could have more brains than men: 'Pau Burutu'(1), a Tolai living in Lae, asked 'How large are their (women's) brains?'.

A letter from 'Iou to Pulapa'[sic] contained a powerful concept which deserves close attention. Iou to Pulapa was a nom-de-plume. In the Tolai language lau to pulapa means 'I am Mr Taro Skin'. Unlike the banana or tapioca which has a skin which is distinguishable by its texture before cooking and can be peeled off, the taro has no skin before cooking. Cooking produces a skin or crust which can be lifted off. It is sweet, but not nutritious. The skin is eaten by children but discarded by adults. Iou to Pulapa was thus a metaphor which signified that the writer considered that girls were an integral part of Tolai society but that Westernization was like a cooking process which made them like a sweet skin of no nutritional value, a category apart from Tolai society. In Tolai interaction, terms of abuse or disrespect are not directed at an opponent but are taken upon oneself. Hence, although the writer of this letter said 'I am Mr Taro Skin', Tolai women knew that the term was meant to describe them. Girls who defined themselves in this way would not find Tolai husbands and were fit only for European men; they were to be discarded (Jacob Simet, personal communication). If we combine this concept with the Tolai belief that Tolai are the gunantuna, the 'real people', and that others are somehow less than real, then to categorize oneself as different, and thus be identified as other than Tolai, was damning. These ideas reappeared throughout the decade. If young women categorized themselves as different, they must be 'mad', they must suffer from 'mental disease'; on several occasions they were likened to animals.

This concept of the taro skin is taken from everyday life in the village. Although the writer used English, he used it to express concepts which derived from his environment, not imported ideas. Papua New Guinea men argued that it was not possible to deny such a concept from within a Tolai or a more general 'Melanesian' way of thinking. In a communal society a person's reason for being is completely tied up with clan belongedness. For women, the purpose of life is to reproduce the clan - the husband's in patrilineal society and the mother's brother's in matrilineal society.

Three Mataungan students writing from the University of Papua New Guinea argued that women were not freely determining their own lives, but were blindly following the dictates of Western culture: 'They want to keep on "pleasing" and "praising" the colonial administration without stopping and asking themselves a single question' (Post-Courier 28 June 1973).

Men from other provinces were a little more conciliatory towards the female writers. UPNG students Samana and Bego, from Morobe Province, agreed that 'the politicians...are playing politics' and that it was time 'Papua New Guinea girls spoke up and lived the life they wish'

(1) Tolai language for 'I am not scared'.

(Post-Courier 7 June 1973). However, they considered that one writer had gone too far when she stated that 'Papua New Guinea girls have been treated like "pigs" and "kukaruks" by men for too long' (Post-Courier 28 May 1973). Samana and Bego argued that she was not right in describing traditional practices in these terms. 'She is, in fact, reading her present adopted values into certain aspects of tradition in ridiculing them from ignorance'. They then contrasted the 'value' systems of traditional society with the 'control' systems of Western capitalism, saying that traditional men and women would 'not dream of thinking that one was being used like an animal'. But Samana and Bego argued that the new situation was to be judged differently:

[In] ...the new situation...we swallow everything without question.... The so-called educated women are not being educated but are being "schooled up" and are unconsciously selling themselves to Western Fashion.... We regret to say that some women of Papua New Guinea, especially the "educated" appear to be living not by their own wishes... but by sentimental desires created by advertisements and propaganda (Post-Courier 7 June 1973).

The only letter from an expatriate, a male, was to foreshadow another aspect of the debates over the control of women, which was to be repeated later. This man was bemused by how a people who, within his memory and the memory of those involved in the debates, were wearing no clothes could now be so concerned about the length of the skirts of young women (Post-Courier 17 July 1973). Of course, missionary influence had intervened and this influence had become so firmly incorporated in ideology that practices introduced by the missionaries were now defended in the name of tradition.

When it was possible to identify the province of origin of women who, by their actions, generated debate, or outspokenly participated in it, it was the men of that province who responded most vehemently, for it was 'their women' who were evading control and bringing 'shame' to the province. The greatest male response came not from Tolai men living in East New Britain, but from Tolai men living in other centres. Men living in the province had other means of making their objections known, for example at mass meetings, in village court sittings, and by direct harassment of young women. The letters to the editor column was a vehicle of expression used by people outside their home province as a means of being heard at home. It was also used by people frustrated by a lack of a voice within their own community, to ensure that their protests would be heard nationally. The Tolai girls who wrote to the Post-Courier did so as a means of making their protest nationally. In 1973 they seem to have been rejecting aspects of their role in society: 'We will not be used for trading any more'. But they received no support from the nation they appealed to through the paper, no support from other women, and strong criticism from men. The most powerful ideological concept to come out of the debate can be summed up in the Tolai term Pulapa, the idea that it was Westernization which had produced young women who wished to define themselves as a category separate from their own society.

The issue died down in 1973 and little appeared in the Post-Courier until 1976, when an issue with similar concerns arose.

The long-legged lady debate

The 'long-legged lady' debate started over the issue of public harassment of young women who dared to wear clothes or make-up of Western fashion which caused them to stand out from women who conformed to acceptably modest dress. It developed into a debate about rape and sexual harassment of women both on and off the campus of the University of Papua New Guinea.

In 1976 the context of the debate was Port Moresby, the capital of the newly independent state. Political and economic changes associated with independence led to changes in social relations and in the way people signified their place in society. One example of the physical context of change was that with independence the new Papua New Guinea government moved many departments from offices in the old ANGAU huts in Konedobu to the new multi-storied, air-conditioned and carpeted office blocks in Waigani. In the colonial Konedobu offices dress was fairly casual. Papua New Guinean women office workers wore simple cotton dresses and thongs or even bare feet. Salaries were then so low that Papua New Guinean staff could afford to spend little on clothing. In the new physical environment of the Waigani offices, thongs and bare feet were hardly appropriate. Salaries had steadily improved, and with localization and improved education more young women were promoted. From 1975 female office workers began to wear more expensive, fashionable clothes, high heels and make-up which appeared more suitable in the plush offices.

As noted, women were offered a limited selection of workforce roles, many of which depended more on personal presentation than knowledge and skills. Kanter (1977) has shown that women seeking positions as office workers, especially secretaries, are more likely to be employed if they present a modern 'sexy' Western image. The secretarial colleges prepared young women for this with courses in dress and deportment. Each year, new batches of young female recruits passed through Air Niugini to be trained as air hostesses. This training put heavy emphasis on dress and make-up, and even though there was a high turnover of hostess personnel, the effect was to increase the ranks of young women with a new image, and a new taste for the mobility that came with the experience of air-hostessing. Each year the Miss Papua New Guinea Quest was organized by the Red Cross; this was a chance for many firms and departments to put their secretaries on show, and to have them improve their personal image through competition. Winners of this competition almost invariably received better job offers.

While young women were becoming defined as a category separate from the majority of women in their society, there was no similar trend for men. Except for the body discipline taught to recruits, especially officers, to the Defence Forces (and to a lesser extent the police force), there was no recruitment programme for men which emphasized dress and deportment. Men were judged according to their knowledge and skills rather than their ability to present a 'sexy' modern image.

Many young men resented the change in the image of young women occurring before their eyes. The large increase in the population of Port Moresby, the unequal male to female ratio, inadequate housing, and unemployment created social pressures which also contributed to the hostility and sexual antagonism evidenced in the following debate. Young men who had recently graduated from high school came to the city hoping to take advantage of the benefits they assumed would come with political independence. However many found their education did not assure them employment. On the other hand since young women had a reduced chance of a high school education, there were probably fewer young women competing for the available jobs in the urban labour market. Since married women were often forced by their employer, their husband, or the burden of children to leave their jobs, young single women had the opportunity of moving into these vacant positions. Also, simply because of being young and female, they had advantages over others with the same education and skills in a secretarial labour market that rewarded personal presentation above knowledge and skills.

Young men, in their resentment and confusion about how to relate to this new image of women, subjected them to public harassment when they dared to appear different. This harassment became so annoying that in November 1976 a girl signing herself 'Please Help' (Post-Courier 17 November 1976) wrote asking, 'Right wiseguys, what do we wear?' She said she loved clothes but could not wear what she pleased around town peacefully.

'Long-Legged Lady' supported her, writing a long, vividly descriptive letter entitled: 'PNG males: smelly, loud, drunk, brawling bores' (Post-Courier 25 November 1976). After expounding upon the dress and behaviour of men she pointed out that:

We girls dress nicely, walk attractively, wash ourselves regularly and we don't cause trouble for anyone. We are the efficient, law-abiding half of the country. That's why the men are jealous and make fun of us (Post-Courier 25 November 1976).

She then made the ultimate threat to men: 'When women gain control of Papua New Guinea the men of the country will really know what firm government is and hard work means'.

The letter from 'Long-Legged Lady' drew an overwhelming response. More than 250 letters were received, of which only 17 were published. From this date until the end of my research in 1981 the debate simmered almost without break. The Post-Courier had become an important vehicle for expression on all subjects relating to the control of women.

The message from the 'Long-Legged Lady' was not so much to justify the freedom of women as to say, in effect: we are controlled, we do not cause trouble for society, but we expect the same control which applies to women, to apply to men. In response, men applied a double standard: harmony in society depended upon the good conduct of women, but it was the essence of manhood to be free and active, the controllers of society, and it was not acceptable that they should be told what to do by any 'low down woman' (Post-Courier 8 December 1976).

All contributors to this debate had an urban identity. It is possible to tell where only three of them were from, but even these made no use of the fact that they were from a particular province. All except three lived in Port Moresby. None referred back to some ideal of village life or attitudes to justify his arguments. Only one, who neither agreed nor disagreed with 'Long-Legged Lady' suggested that clothes should be simple, and he wrote from Manam Island, not Port Moresby. All letters from Port Moresby men were totally negative. They criticized what they imagined was worn: 'mini-skirts...see-through clothes, unbuttoned blouses and shirts, shorts (and perhaps no underclothes), and trousers that leave nothing to the imagination' (Post-Courier 8 December 1976). Many hated shaved eye-brows. But in answer to 'Please Help' they made no recommendations about what was suitable dress.

The desires of the men were modern Westernized desires. This was expressed by one letter writer, 'Kentucky', somewhat quaintly as: 'the highest time one has with his jeans are when they have faded' (Post-Courier 2 December 1976). Another wrote: 'If I want to get drunk, or buy an ocean liner or a jet, that's my business' (Post-Courier 8 December 1976). Another appealed to freedom, liberty and the rights of the individual to justify dress and behaviour:

I believe in the doctrine of free will, and therefore any conspicuous or flamboyant garments worn by anyone at all should not be a topic of discussion by any individual, syndicate or organisation.

One does not compare a plutocrat to a poor guy in a free democratic society. He has that special privilege of wearing what he thinks will suit him for the day and above all keep him comfortable.

Whether it is well pressed trousers, long-sleeve shirt and a tie or a mere piece of lavalava around his waist.

It is no concern of the girl next door or the girl outside the Boroko Post Office on Saturday morning to comment or make accusations against him (Post-Courier 13 December 1976) (my emphasis).

In other debates writers used Christian principles and quotes from the Bible to support their arguments, but in this instance not one referred to Christianity in the name of 'tradition'. A significant number were concerned to justify their arguments with some ideal of modern Papua New Guinea society depending on neither Christianity nor village tradition.

The initial letter from 'Long-Legged Lady' described in great detail aspects of dress and behaviour. Anyone living in Port Moresby at the time observed the truth of her description, especially in Tabari Place, Boroko, on Saturday mornings. The description could not be denied; male writers thus saw the need to justify the situation according to some principle rather than simply assert their male supremacy. A confused letter from 'Customsman' concluded, bluntly and clearly:

We reckon the 'Long-Legged Lady' is the wife of a white or a Papua New Guinea girl who has been Europeanised by a white boyfriend or husband.

If this is the case, well keep selling yourself to the whites and never mind what we men do.

We are the owners of this place, the fathers of Papua New Guinea (Post-Courier 1 December 1976).

Others also stated blatantly this belief in male supremacy:

I know 'Long-Legged Lady' is jealous of us males because we can dress rough, get drunk, speak loudly and she can't.

Too bad you were born a woman. You have to do whatever the man says or else. Consider this seriously. There is no way in the world that a piece of skirt will ever rule Papua New Guinea. The kitchen is your permanent office (Post-Courier 8 December 1976).

Females running this place will only create destruction and disaster (Post-Courier 13 December 1976).

The angry girl debate

A few months later, in April 1977, in response to reports of rape and sexual harassment of female students on the campus of the University of Papua New Guinea, 'Angry Girl' compared the dress and behaviour of university men to that described by 'Long-Legged Lady':

The men do not know how to control themselves.... When the truth about men is brought out into the open the truth hurts too much.... Not only do men try to blame the women but they also threaten to rape and kill them.... The university is supposed to be the home of our cleverest young people and one day many of them will go to become our country's leaders. Are we going to be led by these men who behave like animals towards women of their own country? (Post-Courier 27 April 1977).

The university campus debate has been dealt with adequately elsewhere (Sunderland 1977). Hence, rather than dwell on the accusations of the university women, I will discuss the techniques used by the men to discount the women's accusations.

In a period of rapid social change there can be conflict between what is considered 'normal' and what is 'pathological' in the new context. Combined with the introduced institutions of the prison and the asylum there are added repercussions for the labelling of deviance which did not apply in the 'traditional' context. The men who responded to 'Angry Girl' were university students. They were competing for positions in the professional elite. Among them were the lawyers, doctors and psychiatrists of the future. The dialogue between 'Angry Girl' and her male critics reflected a conflict between the 'normal' and 'pathological'. The men produced 'truths' to reduce the threat of an alternative 'truth' from educated women, and to ensure that women would not question male hegemony

in the new context. Unlike the established urban elite, these men were in a competitive position and made no romantic reference to the 'Melanesian Way'; they did not call upon some ideal of village life; some, however, did quote from the Bible to justify their assumptions of male dominance.

The following extract uses a biblical quotation similar to the concept of pulapa, in which women were considered integrated within society before Westernization. In it women were seen definitely as secondary to men:

It could be that your dressing is so conspicuous that it invites attention. Eventually, attention gives birth to undesirable trouble.... I am enthusiastic to preserve the name of our beautiful country. Aren't you?... You are just part of me! You are meant to be protected because a bone of my rib was extracted to form you.... Think twice before you decide selling Papua New Guinea for only 30 pieces of silver (Post-Courier 29 April 1977) (my emphasis).

Another example of the use of the Bible to justify the placing of blame upon women came from a writer who called himself 'Young Owl':

By reading these verses from an old book, the 'Jerusalem Bible', one will understand that the problem of assaulting women is a very old one, and that males alone are not to blame for it, but also the females, or rather our natural beauty, and that also is part of man's natural way of life, and they cannot help it.

The verses are:-

A woman's wantonness shows in her bold look and can be recognised by her side-long glances.

A woman's beauty has led many astray, it kindles desire like flames.

Sin begins with a woman and thanks to her, we all must die (Post-Courier 26 May 1977. The biblical reference was to Ecclesiastes ch. 25 and 26.).

Sunderland (1977) has noted that the part played by Christian dogma in introducing and maintaining ideas of female sexuality as a potentially corrupting force cannot be underestimated as a continuing influence since many educational institutions are run by missions of various denominations. However, in addition to reference to the Bible, and perhaps more important, was the use of the techniques that had been learnt at university - 'Peace Loving Citizen' of the University of Papua New Guinea asked:

...Do you believe everything in the mass media is true?

'Angry Girl' I am not wrong to point out that there were two unskilled and untrained female journalists who interviewed a bunch of female students.

As far as I understand, the actual information the students gave was not released by the Post-Courier, but a theory, legend or

folk-tale popped out of the heads of the two journalists concerned.

This is because they cannot interpret the English language, and they cannot draw conclusions from a speech given in the English language (Post-Courier 4 May 1977).

Through the use of this technique women are caught in a bind. Men have no interest in uncovering information about the incidence of rape and sexual harassment, and when women speak out their word is discredited. Because there is a curtain of silence surrounding individual incidents, women are ashamed to admit it when they are victims. The general population has the impression that the few occurrences they know of personally are part of a rare phenomenon. When women try to reveal the extent of the problem, they are not believed.

In her study of sexual offences and criminal codes Marilyn Strathern (1980) notes that in Western society, sexual intercourse is a symbol of relatedness and affection. On the other hand, in Papua New Guinea sexual intercourse is related to rights and duties. Given the social difficulties male students face:

One big problem is the feeling of unsureness, and the strange feeling one has. At times a student can become very lonely, even though there are hundreds of people around him....

Because of these problems, the students are trying to cope with stress. When a person is hungry, malnourished, anxious or unhappy, under these circumstances he could become mad, otherwise the tension will build up in his body....Some guys get drunk and turn to women (Post-Courier 6 May 1977).

When this is combined with the assumption that women are merely part of men - 'You are just a part of me!' - it is understandable that men should consider it the 'duty' of women to assist them with their 'physical interactions in relation to human needs and desires', especially since their 'dressing is so conspicuous that it invites attention'. To refuse men's needs, and worse, to accuse them of 'acting like animals', is abnormal. This strategy was used by one correspondent:

Angry Girl faces some serious psychological and mental illnesses and my first advice to her is to seek immediate medical advice before it's too late to cure it.

Whatever the Long-Legged Lady said last year only proves that you women do not possess the mental capability and the capacity to tolerate any kind of issue (Post-Courier 6 May 1977).

Another student noted that because female students responded to the problems of university life by becoming unhappy and depressed, they had 'actually been admitted as mental cases' (Post-Courier 6 May 1977).

Despite the problems women faced because of the 'human needs of men', they must not tell and thus destroy the 'image and fame' and the 'respects that we have by our people and our government' (Post-Courier 6 May 1977).

No matter what women at the university suffered at the hands of the men, they had to keep quiet about it in order to protect the good name of the university:

Angry Girl, how disgraceful it would be for the whole world to know about the university, and the government, not being capable of educating our primitive men to a respective (sic) stage, (who is, and what is primitive) (sic) (Post-Courier 18 May 1977).

There was also repetition of the idea of the dependence of women upon men, as part of an overall image: 'And do you know what, you are and will be part of it, I think the only way to exclude yourself is to migrate to another planet' (Post-Courier) 18 May 1977).

Apart from the accusations of mental illness, the only way for men to come to terms with the fact of these assumed dependent and subordinate women speaking out against them was to accuse them of becoming too Western:

You have been brought up and developed into a Western stereo-type who has been brainwashed in the Western world. You have no human intelligence to be able to create and invent things from the sources you have. That's what you are. An animal of the rare species. I pity you, you poor animal (Post-Courier 6 May 1977).

The debate was notable for the absence of any sophisticated ideological principles to temper the racism and chauvinism of the male writers. There were none of the ideologues - the priests, politicians and lawyers - who were to take some part in later debates. The letters had been written by young men who had been through the education system to the extent they were able to communicate clearly in English. Perhaps their feelings of antagonism came from fear of competition, in a tightening job market, with women who had not only developed a more modern style of personal presentation but who had, by receiving a university education, put themselves in a position to compete with men in terms of other requirements of the workplace.

Why concentrate on debates about the personal presentation of young women? It is because of the importance of the control of bodies. In the transition from a non-capitalist subsistence mode of production to a capitalist mode the very rhythms of wage-earners' bodies have to be manipulated. Instead of working to changes in weather or to the requirements of the gardening cycle, the worker has to work to a clock. In the village a woman's work is adjusted to her menstrual cycle, in the urban work-force the existence of her cycle is denied (Foucault 1977, 1978) argues that industrial society has a problem integrating the time of the individual into the 'production apparatus'.

Between each point of a social body, between a man and a woman, in a family, between teacher and pupil, between one who knows and one who doesn't, there pass relations of power which are not the pure and simple projection of the great sovereign power over individuals; rather they are the mobile and concrete ground upon which that power comes to be anchored, they are the conditions of the possibility for its functioning (Morris and Patton 1974:70).

The issue is not only control of the sexuality of women, but a competition between two roles for women. It is important that men control how women perceive themselves as sexual partners of men, because it is through these relations of sexuality that men appropriate the productive and reproductive uses of women.

Issues relating to the control of the personal presentation of women reflect certain geographic, social, economic, and political factors. Both changes in personal presentation and the response to these changes are related to women's reproductive and productive functions. The Western clothes and make-up young women wear are part of the fashion engendered by the urban experience. In the village self-decoration signifies one's place in the internal order of society; it is not to make a person stand out or be alluring. When women are exchanged in marriage they represent their close kin relatives (Strathern 1981). When a young unmarried woman fails to conform to the personal presentation acceptable to the particular society she comes from, she is seen as defining herself as a category apart from that society. During the 1970s there was an increasing number of young educated women. Many of these women wanted to signify that they were educated and different from the women in the villages. The changing image of these women produced the debates on the wearing of mini-skirts, the plucking of eyebrows, wearing make-up, perfume, or wearing men's jeans.

It has been argued that in Papua New Guinea, rather than an inevitable absorption of the pre-capitalist subsistence modes of production into the capitalist mode,⁽¹⁾ the two modes continue to exist side by side. A consequence is that the ideological elaboration of the two modes co-exists. The 'long-legged lady' debate illustrates one aspect of the conflict between the ideologies of rural-based peasant economy and the urban wage economy, and the contradiction within the consciousness of individuals straddling the rural and urban economies.

The two debates on the issue of the personal presentation of young women represented a purely ideological dialogue. In the debate on adultery, discussed below, we see the repressive institutions of the state used directly to control young women.

Adultery - 'the married man and the single girl affair'

In August 1977 new laws on adultery and enticement were proposed by the Law Reform Commission. Under the pre-existing law, adultery was an offence under the Native Regulations (Papua) and the Native Administration Regulations (New Guinea) and applied to 'natives' only. The provisions of the regulations were that:

A married man or woman who has sexual intercourse with someone of the opposite sex other than his or her spouse whom they know to be married are liable to the following maximum penalties: six dollars [Australian] or imprisonment for six months. A court may order that the offender pay a sum not above two dollars in compensation to the aggrieved spouse (husband or wife) in lieu of

- (1) While acknowledging the argument that there is more than one pre-capitalist mode of production, for the purposes of this analysis distinctions between pre-capitalist modes are less significant than the great differences between the capitalist and pre-capitalist modes.

other punishment. The only person who can lay a charge under this offence are the spouses of the husband or wife with whom the adultery took place, or in their absence his or her nearest relative (Strathern 1980b:8).

One method of determining what should be in the new legislation was to draw upon the knowledge of anthropologists who had been working in Papua New Guinea. Marilyn Strathern was asked to devise a questionnaire to be sent to two hundred anthropologists and to prepare a report on her findings. In her report she summarized the respondents' findings, and outlined possible areas for reform. She pointed out the difficulty of devising a law to account for the cultural diversity in the country, and for the different circumstances within which an act might be committed.

If an enemy commits adultery with a wife of a particular clansman, the whole clan will record it as an offence against them, though the offender's clan may have quite contrary feelings, and outsiders be indifferent.... Moreover, in evaluating certain offences in the abstract, people may make normative statements of the kind, "Adultery is bad; we kill adulterers". However, an offence never occurs in a vacuum, and is generally judged according to the cause and provocation which gave rise to it ("She was adulterous because her husband was neglecting her - let them sort it out themselves") (Strathern 1980:10-11).

Another difficulty of devising a law dealing with adultery is that in Papua New Guinea the offence generally has much wider repercussions than it does in Western societies. Apart from its private implications, adultery is often of considerable public significance, and, with few exceptions, requires some form of judicial (or political) resolution (Strathern 1980). Because of these difficulties, Strathern recommended that the offence of adultery be left to local dispute settlement methods or village courts (ibid.:24).

In 1977 a series of nation-wide meetings was held by the Law Reform Commission to gather current opinion on the question of adultery. It was noted by the Law Reform Commission that 'young people were conspicuous by their absence' at these meetings. It could also have been that only those wanting a strict code attended. Hence, despite the diversity of practices throughout the country and regardless of the variety of circumstances surrounding individual acts of adultery, some very conservative opinions were expressed, and when the new law came into practice it provided for K200 compensation to the offended party or six months jail for each offence. The law was to apply to all: male or female, national or expatriate. It was recommended that 'strict rules of evidence should not be applied' (Post-Courier 1 August 1977) (my emphasis).

The new legislation was passed in 1977. In 1979 the issue of adultery hit the letters to the editor columns of the Post-Courier. It became the 'married man and single girl affair'. What started the debate was the fact that by September 1979 there were between seventeen and twenty-one (one letter writer claimed twenty-seven) young women in the Popondetta gaol for

the crime of adultery. Francis Cumberlege, the Archdeacon for the Anglican Diocese of Popondetta described the conditions of their imprisonment:

In the female compound there are now 17 women, two of whom have babies with them (recently there were 21 women). These women are all in for adultery. They live in a building approximately 24 feet by 21 feet, and they have seven beds only, and one toilet and one shower inside the building. Nearly all the women have very young children outside. Because of the family situation and the anger of the former wife, these women know their children are not being properly cared for and they worry all the time.

Many of the letters questioned why it should be that only young women were gaoled and not men. Of twenty-two letters published on the subject between 27 August and 4 December 1979, seventeen were from women and only five from men. The debate was essentially a conflict between married women and single girls. Ten of the letters were from married women and six from single girls (in one case it was not possible to tell whether the writer was married or not). Five were from married women writing from National Capital District and five from provincial centres. The six letters from single girls were all from provincial centres.

Commenting critically on imprisonment as a punishment for adultery, Brunton said

It is noticeable in urban areas that many adultery cases brought in the lower courts involve lower income earners, or urban villagers. It is rare to see upper income earners bringing this action. These people tend to seek out Welfare or Legal Aid advice.

The main concern of income earners in the urban areas is the custody of the children of the marriage and maintenance payments to enable the wife and children to survive. Clearly if the errant husband is in jail, he cannot be paying maintenance to his wife and children (personal communication, Brian Brunton, 1979).

The fact that so many girls were convicted of adultery in Popondetta did not mean that there was more adultery there; as several correspondents pointed out, it meant that the married women of the town had a champion for their cause in the local magistrates, and the law was so flexible in its application of the rules of evidence that young women were being convicted without consideration of all the relevant evidence. From the response of married women in various parts of the country, many faced problems of husbands 'fooling around'.

The letters from single women were from small provincial centres, in which, because of the nature of small towns, they were more likely to be brought before the local courts than in larger cities. The single women were directly threatened by the vengeance of married women. Many of the letters from single women asked the married women not to blame them but to blame their errant husbands: 'Teenage Office Worker' from Lae wrote

I don't want any women to come my way. Get on your husbands and

not us young girls, OK? Do you trust your husbands before getting on us youngsters? I'd rather say the first person to be blamed should be your husband.

Even if you really trusted your husbands in the past, that's the past. These days he is not honest to you and I'm telling you the truth (Post-Courier 17 October 1979).

An important factor in adultery by married men was their mobility. They had cars; they had jobs which took them to other provinces and other countries. In contrast, women were in the house with young children to care for, probably also breast-feeding and because of the post-partum taboos on sexual intercourse practised widely throughout the country, denying their husbands sexual access. But wives also complained of the willingness of single girls:

There are some girls who are very well aware that the man they are trying all kinds of techniques on is married with children, yet they don't seem to care. They even pretend to be friends with the innocent wife until such time as the husband sends the wife to the village. Then they move in and take over (Post-Courier 18 September 1979).

The anthropologist Marie Reay has suggested (personal communication 1983) that when young girls know what their future prospects are with husbands who will treat them poorly, they spend their few teenage years before marriage having the only 'good time' they are likely to have in their lives. Ronald Berndt (1962) has said of the Fore of the Eastern Highlands that because of their low status, women exercise the only power they have - the power to 'pull' other men and make their wives jealous.

The response of married men to the accusations of married women was very slight, compared to the response of single men to the accusations of single women evidenced in the earlier debates. Marriage is so encased in a disproportionate balance of power that married men were complacent about the complaints of women and saw no need to respond. The way the adultery laws operated, the revenge of married women was directed not upon their offending husbands but upon the single girls exercising their only, but false, freedom.

The gaoling of many young women was the result of a considerable change in the commonly accepted meaning of the word adultery. In traditional society adultery was a wrong committed by married women. As evidenced by the letters, the single women in gaol had children by the men with whom they were being charged of having committed adultery. Were they, then, adulterers or second wives? Were there economic reasons for the emergence of what was, in effect, polygamy? Most of those in the city were only the first generation to have left the village. They had rights to clan land in the village and some felt a responsibility to use this land for fear of losing their rights over it. There were economic reasons why some men wished to have a wife in the city, to contribute to the urban income by working and to look after his personal needs thus making him a more productive unit of labour, and to have another wife in the village to

look after his rural interests in the subsistence mode. For some women, also, it was perhaps better to share with a co-wife a husband with a secure position in the urban economy than to marry a man of low income and insecure position in the urban economy.

Conclusion

By choosing to analyse only three debates I have limited the conclusions I am able to draw. If I were to cover the whole range of debates from the commercialization of the body in nude advertising, through prostitution, brideprice and contraception, to women in the workforce, the contradictory position of women in relation to the two coexisting modes of production would become more apparent. However the debates have illustrated that with Westernization and urbanization an incomplete control by close kin over women is exerted in matters of personal presentation and sexual access. Sexual harassment and adultery are matters arising out of the desires of men, for which women may be blamed: through their 'immodest' dress they are a source of 'temptation' and 'sin'; through their power to 'pull' men they can commit adultery. In an economy where the non-capitalist subsistence mode of production continues to exist to the benefit of the capitalist mode of production it is important that a high proportion of the population continue to accept its traditional roles. This produces tension for all members of the society dependent upon the labour of young women, arising from the fear that with education young women will no longer accept their traditional role.

As the debates show, young women were eager to abandon their traditional role and enter the urban workforce. However, the roles allowed them in a rigidly segmented workforce were limited. They found employment in a restricted selection of categories: teaching, nursing, clerical and secretarial.

The debates revealed conflict between structurally identifiable categories. Because of their tenuous position in the urban economy, young educated single men who were either unemployed or employed in lowly paid clerical or technical positions were hostile to unmarried, educated young women in the workforce who would not accept them as marriage partners, and to married women who would take 'their jobs'. Married women were suspicious of single educated women, who they feared were competing for their husband's affections and financial security. There were also natural alliances between certain groups. Because of their positions in separate segments of the workforce, young educated women and married men - both national and expatriate - with secure positions in the urban economy have structurally complementary roles, at least until the young woman becomes pregnant and leaves the workforce.

Additional specific tensions arose out of what men perceived as a fundamental flaw in women's place in the modern workforce. Men were particularly critical of what appeared to be a trivialization of women's role when women copied Western fashions. This perception by men of the shortcoming of women's place in the Western economy gave rise to one of the most powerful concepts to come out of the debates - the Tolai term pulapa - the idea that Westernization is like a cooking process which produces a category of young women who are peripheral to their own society, who have abandoned the roles of substantial importance accorded to them in

traditional society for a 'liberation' which has brought them only a limited and partial role in the capitalist economy.

Just as the liberation promised to men through political independence has been a partial liberation, heavily circumscribed by the dependent status of the Papua New Guinea economy, so too the liberation promised to women is not only severely restricted by the mystification of traditional village life - the Melanesian Way - but is also limited by the forms of structured inequality that are part of women's participation in the modern wage labour force.

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