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November 1978

Number 22

Institute of Applied Social and Economic Research
P.O. Box 5854, Boroko, Papua New Guinea.
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Introduction

Beliefs about the nature of traditional Melanesian politics and society are inscribed in the Constitution of Papua New Guinea and form a regular part of political debate. They are frequently expressed under the general label 'the Melanesian way', which stresses obligations to kinsmen (wantok) and a slow process of consultation and compromise leading to consensus among the clan or village group. Leaders may emerge for particular activities and functions but in general - a few notable examples of hereditary chieftainships notwithstanding - the societies have been characterised as asephalous (literally 'headless'), that is, lacking recognised central leadership or any form of 'state'. Social prestige and political leadership are said to be based upon achievement criteria rather than upon ascribed characteristics.

This paper is a preliminary exploration of some common conceptions of traditional Melanesian political culture, examined in the particular context of Chimbu Province in the central highlands area. The central highlands cover the area west of the Daulo Pass - which appears to be something of a cultural watershed - and include Chimbu and the Western Highlands, the area opened up for colonial rule by Jim Taylor in 1933. Interpretations of the pre-colonial past will be juxtaposed with the conceptualisations used by contemporary politicians. For shorthand purposes, the general construct of a basically egalitarian society, which governs itself by means of group consensus but allows a limited role for leaders who arise in open status competition, will be called the 'Big-man' Model.

The 'Big-man' Model

The 'Big-man' Model was first developed by anthropologists working

My field work concentrated upon contemporary politics at the provincial level, and upon social change in the Chimbu Province (previously known as the Chimbu District). I was based in Mintima village among the Naregu clan for thirty months during the years 1972-77. I thank the people of Mintima and the politicians and officials of Chimbu for their co-operation and hospitality. I am also grateful for financial assistance provided by the University of Papua New Guinea, the Australian National University and the Papua New Guinea Institute of Applied Social and Economic Research. My thanks go to Professors Brown and Strathern and to Dr Reay and others for comments on an earlier paper (Standish 1976a) which canvassed some of the issues raised here. The structural weaknesses and surface blemishes are my own.
in the 1930s among coastal and island groups, and followed recognition by the Germans of prominent leaders among the Tolaì of New Britain (Salisbury 1964) and the study of the Meke, Roro and Tröbriand chiefships of Papua (Seligman 1910). These findings influenced the appointment of the first village officials, but as several writers have pointed out, some of the early appointees lacked any traditional authority. Indeed, in some coastal areas the appointment of village officials was known to be inappropriate, in that they were exceeding legitimate behaviour and becoming despotic. Certain pre-war findings then influenced the colonial policy of establishing elected local government councils. In 1938-39 Oliver was conducting research among the Siau of southern Bougainville Island. His report (1955) came to be regarded as the classic depiction of a Melanesian 'Big-man', a term Oliver himself did not use. His interpretation was based largely on the activities of one leader, Songi, who attracted some at least of the members of his group, rather than merely taking over leadership of an existing body of people. Oliver's description was important in the argument of one of the most influential articles on the subject, that by Sahlin (1963), which contrasted Melanesian 'Big-men' with the chiefs of Polynesia. After examining much of the Melanesian literature, Sahlin proposed an 'ideal type' of entrepreneur who manipulates men and wealth to obtain social credit and prestige, a 'centre man' or 'man of renown' who rises above his competitors to exercise greatest influence over the affairs of his public. The model is one of leaders attracting followers, who move with a degree of choice. The mobility of lesser men who joined up with dynamic leaders became part of an important debate in the 1960s about the significant kinship rules surrounding the nominally patrilineal clans of the highlands.

In particular, the openness of social structure among the Bena Bena (who live east of the Daulo Pass) led Langness, in writing about traditional political organization for Papua New Guinea as a whole, to stress the variability of the size of the "polity" (1973: 143). 

Impermanence of membership at almost all levels including the clan, and rapidly fluctuating alliances of both individuals and groups, appear to be among the distinguishing features of Melanesian political organization; provided, of course, the question is not begged by defining political units in terms of permanence in the first place. (Ilaqun 1973: 151)
He argued that the build-up and break-down in accordance with the issues and activities is not according to segmentary lineage principles but in terms of self-interest and past obligations.... (Langness 1973: 152).

Exaggerated statements have been made with respect to leadership in earlier times. According to Brown (1963) and Salisbury (1964) either anarchy or despotism prevailed. But, along with the impermanence of viable political units, a relative lack of authority and a virtually universal lack of centralized authority were characteristic. Such authority as does exist is most often based on personal ability, not on inheritance, descent or supernatural sanction. Leadership is usually achieved, almost never ascribed [here he cites six 'apparent or real exceptions'] but being the son of a big-man, the eldest of a number of brothers or some other such thing can confer advantages. . . . Leadership is achieved through personal charisma, by accumulating wealth in the form of pigs and other material goods that can be used to aid others thus placing them under an obligation, sometimes by the possession of specialized knowledge, or through sheer physical power and the ability to direct warfare. (Langness 1973: 153)

He cited Read (1959), who argued that volatile ('hot') men who achieve prominence through physical strength and coercion are less successful than the more temperate manipulators of men and wealth.

If a group is strong it is also good. People respect it and are eager to join and be identified with it . . . .

A leader remains a leader only for so long as he can successfully dominate others, either through his ability to help them or to maintain their respect. If he fails in an undertaking his followers are quick to shift their loyalties to others. There are always competitors for power and influence. In so far as leaders do not control land, water supplies or other natural resources; cannot call upon supernatural sanctions to back up their authority; do not regulate subsistence; and have little in the way of special skills or knowledge, their followers are never very numerous. There is a limit to how many people, over time and in space, can be recruited and satisfied simply through personal strength, charisma and limited material donations. The pattern of leadership and authority is related to the small size of the political groups that act and to the impermanence of membership. (Langness 1973: 154)

This provides a useful working version of 'Big-man' theory, taken here as an 'ideal type' in the Weberian sense.

Perhaps partly because leadership has been seen as open to competition, in which all men may participate, and is thus meritocratic, a number of
Papua New Guineans who have been highly educated in the Western system have grafted onto the 'Big-man' theory a notion of communalism and egalitarianism. Two senses of egalitarianism are used in this discussion — equality of opportunity, and also a society which in practice has few socio-economic inequalities. They may point to clan ownership of land (which nonetheless is usually gardened individually) as an example of communalism. Their societies may indeed be egalitarian; or as upwardly mobile individuals they may have a motive in stressing achievement criteria; or indeed they may have been influenced by outsiders with a simplistic view of the Melanesian societies surrounding the colonial cultural enclaves.

What is important to our present discussion is the usage now made of statements about society and leadership, not as necessarily accurate descriptions of social reality, or even as ideological statements in the Marxist sense which serve to support the existing power structure. My ultimate concern is rather that these are ideological statements which purport objectively to describe society but in fact project it as their proponents feel it should be.

Contemporary ideological statements

Egalitarian sentiments are entrenched in the main ideological statements of the National Coalition government led by Michael Somare since 1972. Its 'Eight National Aims' announced in early 1973 include the following points:

- More equal distribution of economic benefits, including movement towards equalisation of incomes among people and toward equalisation of services among different areas of the country;
- An emphasis on small-scale artisan, service and business activity, relying where possible on typically Papua New Guinean forms of business activity;
- Government control and involvement in those sectors of the economy where control is necessary to achieve the desired kind of development. (Lepani, 1976)

Other points include a 'rapid increase in the proportion of the economy under the control of Papua New Guinean individuals and groups' (my emphasis), 'decentralisation of economic activity, planning and government spending', 'rapid increase in the equal and active participation of women in all forms of economic and social activity', and an 'increas-
ing capacity for meeting government spending needs from locally raised revenue'. This last point may conflict with the requirement for an increase in national control of the economy. The programme, and the difficulties encountered in it, have received a frank and detailed analysis by the Director of the National Planning Office (Lepani 1976).

A more personal statement came in 1975 from the then Vice-Chancellor of UPNG, Dr Gabriel Gris, who is now (July 1978) Director of the Office of Implementation, Department of Decentralisation. He said that

It is a sad fact that Papua New Guinea hopes piously that the existing capitalististic institutions will enable it to attain its communalistic goals. Any serious reflection will reveal that use of capitalististic institutions to attain communalistic goals would be extremely difficult if not impossible.... (Gris 1975: 135)

I am not by any means suggesting that the form of communism or socialism adopted elsewhere would be appropriate here. I am suggesting, however, that the basic ideological framework already exists in the Papua New Guinean social setting and that the basic values already exist in our societies, and they should be the foundations for our institutions, both old and new. Essentially I am saying that our peoples are communalistic and communalism is the basis for our traditional way of life. Our values therefore must be communalistic. (Gris 1975: 137)

His views on the relevance of communalism and group ownership were shared by some expatriate academics and governmental advisers (e.g., Fitzpatrick 1975). Gris's faith in social engineering was also manifest in the approach of the parliamentary Constitutional Planning Committee of 1972-74 (Standish 1974). A leading figure in that committee, John Kaputin, was Minister for Justice when in 1974 he outlined the need for legal reform to remove socio-economic inequalities, particularly expatriate privilege, from the then self-governing state.

The truth is that law has been used throughout the ages as an instrument of domination and oppression by the ruling classes. The law does not stand as a set of neutral principles to guide men in dispensing justice. It has created, consolidated, and perpetuated class privileges. It has denied opportunities to certain groups of people. And it has heaped humiliation on the poor and the oppressed. ... In this country the law was an instrument of colonialism and a means whereby the economic dominance of the white man was established over us. ... Numerous legal restrictions stifled our initiative in economic, social, and other areas of change. ... For, as we have seen, the law has not merely reflected inequality, but it has also created it. (Kaputin 1975: 4-5)
The Preamble to the Constitution of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea was passed in August 1975 by a Constituent Assembly comprising elected parliamentarians. It states, *inter alia*, that the people

- pay homage to the memory of our ancestors - the source of our strength and origin of our combined heritage
- acknowledge the worthy customs and traditional wisdoms of our people (Papua New Guinea 1975: 1)

and that they assert

- that all power belongs to the people - acting through their duly elected representatives
- that respect and dignity of the individual and community interdependence are basic principles of our society
- that we guard with our lives our national identity, integrity and self respect
- that we reject violence and seek consensus as a means of solving our common problems
- that our national wealth, won by honest, hard work be equitably shared by all. (Papua New Guinea 1975: 1)

The Constituent Assembly proclaimed a series of National Goals and Directive Principles, calling for 'integral human development', which required, in part, that

- everyone be involved in our endeavours to achieve integral human development of the whole person for every person and to seek fulfilment through his or her contribution to the common good;
- development ... take place primarily through the use of Papua New Guinean forms of social and political organization. (Papua New Guinea 1975: 2)

The second aim concerned 'equality and participation', and among other things stipulated that

- active steps to be taken to facilitate the organization and legal recognition of all groups engaging in development activities; and
- means to be provided to ensure that any citizen can exercise his personal creativity and enterprise in pursuit of fulfilment that is consistent with the common good, and for no citizen to be deprived of this opportunity because of the predominant position of another. (Papua New Guinea 1975: 2)
The third aim concerned 'national-sovereignty and self-reliance', and called for

- our leaders to be committed to these National Goals and Directive Principles, to ensure that their freedom to make decisions is not restricted by obligations to or relationship with others, and to make all of their decisions in the national interest; and

- all governmental bodies to base their planning for political, economic and social development on these Goals and Principles. (Papua New Guinea 1975: 3)

In order to help ensure the concurrence of national leaders (as defined in the Constitution), a Leadership Code forbids them any ties of ownership with expatriate business interests, and requires them to declare their own and their family's assets annually to the Ombudsman Commission.

These constitutional aims and the National Coalition's development programmes are posited as conforming to Papua New Guinean values. After an examination of leadership, power and social stratification in the central highlands area — where one-quarter of the country's population of nearly three million lives — this paper will return to some of the issues raised by the Preamble to the Constitution.

Chimbu leadership

Chimbu is the most densely settled province in Papua New Guinea. Approximately 200,000 people live in its 2,500 sq. mile area, some 190,000 of them in the northern half of the province, living between the altitudes of 4,000 and 8,000 feet. Sweet potato is the staple food and is also grown for the pigs which are central to Chimbu ceremonial, political and religious life. In the last two decades the cultivation of a permanent tree crop, coffee, has increased pressures on land as well as providing the main source of cash income for Chimbu farmers. In the northern area, which I call the 'Chimbu cultural area' (i.e., with its southern border the Wahgi River watershed) there are some cultural variations but a fair degree of ecological and social homogeneity.

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1 For a comprehensive study of man and the Chimbu environment, and development issues in Chimbu, see Howlett et al. (1976)
There are 13 languages in the province, 6 of which cover 80 per cent of the population. The largest, Kuman, is spoken by 80,000 people.

The largest political unit in the Kuman language area is the tribe, usually comprising several exogamous clans of average size about 600 (Brown 1971). Tribal groups which share a common myth of origin may combine for large ceremonial exchanges such as the pig festival (bugla-yungu), and for warfare. Sometimes allied clans are paired and then they usually act together in units known as phratries, but these alliances should not be regarded as permanent. Indeed, the clan is the largest unit which generally recognises the same political leadership, and within which there is usually no armed warfare - although individuals and even men's house groups may occasionally express their conflicts with unarmed clashes or perhaps fighting with sticks. The clan is the unit 'bundling' the land to which individuals have usufruct rights. Below the clan are sub-clans which are the largest unit impinging everyday on the lives of the Chiribu people. Sub-clans may in turn be comprised of smaller units, sub-sub-clans, men's house groups and so on, until the true blood line of agnostic lineage is reached. However, the minimal political unit which concerns me in this discussion is the sub-clan.

In tok pisin, contemporary Chiribu generally use the words lida man (E. leader) or het man (E. headman) to describe men having political authority. Big pela man can refer to any prominent man who may have achieved renown for his wealth, as in modern business activities, but has no political stature. I use the English word 'leader' rather than 'Big-man' or the various Chiribu names for men of authority. 1 Although

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1 English speakers often use the word 'chief', a term I avoid using. Mintima people use the general term yagi kande (E. 'Big-man') for prominent men in the village these days. Yagi wagai (E. good man) is used for someone who is a good man, whose talk is sound, and is a solid citizen. Diragi pondo refers to a man of wealth, particularly shell valuables and feathers. Pondo eremungo is someone with lots of businesses, producing things which can be eaten (including vegetable foods, pigs, cash crops). I did not elicit (without specifically requesting it) the term Brown cites, yomba pondo, which she defines as 'man big' as in many other New Guinea societies' (Brown 1963: 5). Yomba refers to the tree that symbolises the strength of the clan, a branch of which is carried by very prominent old leaders (such as Dama of Womai) on certain occasions. Yomba can be taken to mean 'the people', or man, pondo means 'big' or 'huge' according to Milles (1969). (Milles does not list the term yomba pondo.) Bergmann says the preferred term for 'leader' among the Kuman is yomba singiyonge, with yagi kande used from Naregu westwards (personal communication, May 1978).
certain sub-clans may tend to dominate clan affairs, there is some competition between leaders of different sub-clans for pre-eminence in the clan. Similarly, leaders of the different clans in a tribe are likely to compete with one another for the greatest renown, as indeed they do with leaders of other similar tribes in their known area. Before effective pacification in the late 1940s, there was an uneasy condition of alertness against the ever-present danger of warfare, and alliances were constantly varying as relationships between members of neighbouring groups varied. It was a warrior culture, but a man was valued if he had many friendships and exchange relationships - the latter often based upon kinship - outside his group, as these would all contribute to the security of the group in the times of armed conflict which were inter-pressed among the times of peacemaking and ceremonial exchange.

In describing the Chimbu political system, Brown noted that leaders had a role in inter-group relations (Brown 1963: 5), but she argued that 'the co-ordination of small group leaders in joint action is not automatic. This is especially so when there is no tradition of succession or stratification of subgroups' (1971: 216). In her principal article on politics, she said that tribal leadership changed in a generation from the absence of any fixed authority ('anarchy'); to a system of government-appointed village officials giving officials the opportunity to dominate ('satrapy') (Brown 1963: 3).

She went on:

The stratification by rank or authority described in some coastal communities is unknown in the highlands ... (Brown 1963: 4)

and mentioned that persuasion is required to drum up participation in group activities.

There are no traditional fixed office-holders responsible for specified tasks. Both leaders and the activities they lead are variable .... There were no titles or distinctions of prominence .... We can recognize certain qualifications for leadership, but there is almost equal opportunity for every man to attain these qualifications. There are no hereditary positions, and few hereditary advantages. (Brown 1963: 5)

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1 Earlier in areas near the Kundiauwa government station, set up in 1934, which is still Chimbu headquarters.
Yet she continued immediately:

A man needs garden land, clumps of nut pandanus trees, and pigs in order to participate in the competition for prestige. Garden land and trees are inherited, but can also be obtained by gift. Early census reports found that only about half of the men were married, yet the food production and pig raising of a wife are essential to participation in exchanges, and this is the avenue to social importance. (Brown 1963: 5)

She maintained that 'Big-men' have a wide range of social connections, they 'adopt' youths, whom they then help with their bride prices, have resident male followers and so on, all of which implies at the least a strong, apparently well-entrenched patronage system. Although she said leadership competition was a 'free-for-all', she also said:

A young man may take over his father's exchange relationships, but he must become a big man on his own; if he is not vigorous in participating in exchanges, making speeches and honoring obligations, he does not attain the recognition his father had, and some other member of the group becomes its accepted leader. (Brown 1963: 6)

On the question of transferring credits and obligations from father to son,criper, in his study of the politics of ceremonial exchange, reported that by the time a man dies of old age he effectively has no assets—land or pigs—because he has transferred them to his sons (Criper 1967). We have noted Brown saying that there was no automatic advantage accruing to the sons of the previous generation of leaders, and she noticed no rule of succession. Indeed, she said that the prominent men I knew [iu Naregu] had all achieved their positions by their own efforts. However, in two neighbouring tribes, the most powerful leaders had passed on their influence to their sons. Yet the situations were very different. Siune was a traditional Big Man, who as luluai in the 1950s built a large coffee plantation. Kerenga, his son, was elected councillor but never had his

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1 Luluai: government-appointed headman for a clan. Sub-clan leaders were allocated a more junior position, tutul. The kiaps (patrol officers) tried to appoint men having authority within their own groups, who would organise weekly work-days (e.g., on the roads) and resolve minor disputes within the group (the latter role having no basis in law). Larger disputes were referred to the kiaps, frequently after passing through the filters of police and government interpreters. The latter often became quite influential through controlling access to the kiap, and were able sometimes to act as if in his name. The appointed village official positions (i.e., luluais and tutuls) were abolished in the Waite Census Division, which includes the three tribal groups (Kameneu, Endugwa and Naregu) with which I spoke most often, when the Waite Native Local Government Council was established in 1959.
father's influence. Kawagl had been a very powerful man and had brought Father Schaeffer [sic] into the area. He became a hangman at the Catholic mission and passed the luluai-ship to his son, Asiwe. (Brown 1971: 218)

She went on to describe the second luluai to be appointed in Naregu, Kondom Agaundo, as 'a government supporter who introduced a more modern style of leadership by his own economic enterprise and organising group activities' (Brown 1971: 218).

Brown's field work was based in the Burukngaumo clan of the Naregu. In 1971 a university student in his thirties from the neighbouring Kamanegu tribe argued in my politics class at UPNG that Brown's version of Chimbu leadership was inaccurate. In pre-colonial Chimbu, he argued, leadership passed from father to son. (He was not himself the son of a leader!) He said that leaders were despots, who could enforce their will through their benchmen, and even order the killing of those who displeased them. This statement contrasted dramatically with the perceived 'Big-man' Model' of highlands leadership and obviously warranted further attention. I am not an anthropologist, my main task having been to observe the interaction between local and national politics. But in early 1973 I did frequently ask how leaders were chosen in the old days, which are within the memory of men then aged sixty years. Apart from a few case studies, my material is mostly in the form of statements of principle, as was the ideological statement of my student in 1971. I recognise that many of the men spoken to, both today's middle-aged leaders who operate in the introduced institutions and the older generation of clan leaders in the villages, have an interest in arguing that leadership was indeed hereditary in order to legitimate their own and their sons' future political and economic prominence.

It is difficult, over forty years later, to reconstruct how pre-colonial Chimbu leaders gained their prominence. Oliver pointed out the difficulty he experienced in Bougainville, fifteen years after pacification, in obtaining consensus as to who had been leaders in the previous generations. He had asked directly about how leaders were chosen, and was told they were the sons of mumi (E. leaders), although some clearly were not.

1 Care was taken to try to ensure that kinship terms used were precise, as with 'son', 'father' and 'brother', because Chimbu speakers have a tendency to use these terms in their classificatory rather than their biological sense as in English. I may not always have succeeded in this aim.
'Then why do you say that a mumi must be the offspring of a mumi?', I asked.
'You do not comprehend', I was told. 'So-and-so had many fathers and mothers, and they all helped him become a mumi'. (Oliver 1955: xix)

Needless to say, he dropped that line of approach, but at least Oliver had perceived a degree of consensus on who were the real mumi. Brown suggested that the only way to check assertions of a hereditary system would be to follow the descendants of past leaders, rather than to work backwards from present-day men of ambition whose motives and incomplete knowledge might distort their descriptions of their own genealogies. Reay, however, showed (1959: appendix) how much the biological lineage can vary from the version given by well-meaning informants. For present purposes, with my principal interest being in statements of ideology, I must rely on generalised rules as given by well-meaning informants, bolstered where possible with examples. I set out here for evaluation the material gathered, in the hope that it stimulates further study.

My question concerned who were leaders and how they were chosen in the past, and what their roles were. I also asked whether clan leaders were stronger after pacification under the colonial patrol officers or before contact. A subsequent question, dealt with later in this paper, asked if leaders in pre-colonial times had any sanctions to enforce their will within the group. In the first instance, my interviews were conducted in the Kamanegu, Endugwa and Naregu tribes near Kundiawa.

At Kurumugl, a Kamanegu said that

there were luluais for the three main groups [clans and paired clans] in Kamanegu, who were outspoken men. They were closely related, and born leaders. They got all the people together and the tribe was very strong [in warfare] .... It's hereditary leadership here. Siume [the man referred to by Brown 1971: 218] was a prominent leader; he was made luluai by the government.

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2 The answers to this question will be discussed elsewhere.
3 A series of discussions with groups of leaders of these three main tribes in Waiye was held in January and February 1973, with translation direct from Kuman into English by university students Leo Kaubaal and Frank Mondo (to whom I am truly thankful). The extracts given here are notes taken from the translation; the interviews were taped. I collected subsequent statements about leadership using cok piain, which required using an interpreter from the local area (who was double-checked by the audience) when talking with old men.
He was a very strong leader; we would follow him when he chose to make feasts, or to fight. Siune's parents were leaders — his ancestors. His grandfather by the same name had two sons, Waim and Girai. Siune was the son of Waim.¹
Fr Schäfer saw his prominence and made him bosbot.²

Other Kamanegu leaders (at Mogoma) stated that their pre- and early contact leader had been Kiiagenem, 'but he passed it on to Ande Siwi (later a councillor) because the other men were too old at the time the kiape first came'. Kiiagenem then helped Ande in dispute settlement (kor, E. courts) in the clan. At Ega a respected Kamanegu leader said:

A luluaia's family were more familiar with the problems of leadership, and so when he died one of his sons, his elder sons, would get the leadership position.

Asked how he got the leadership position, the reply was:

He must be a strong warrior or fighter, and very rich, with five wives and many pigs and on very good terms with the rest of his people. When the kiape came they selected those who were prominent and strong to carry out their commands [to become luluaia].³

Among the Endugwa people at Korndo, a famous leader said that:

In the old days there was a leader like a centre-post in a house. Leadership passed from father to son, until the Administration came in. The Administration is now the centre-post.

At Guo another old Endugwa leader said that his prominence went back to the pre-colonial era, the 'times before':

¹ Rev. W. Bergman, who was for thirty-four years a Lutheran missionary to the Kamanegu tribe, writes that Siune's father was a prominent leader. As Brown noted (1971: 218), Siune's son, Kerenga, became councillor. He was regarded as one of the dominant group in the council. Kamanegu held spectacular mourning rituals for him, with a large funeral ceremony which was widely attended. Kerenga's successor to the councillor's post was a namesake and relative of old Siune, perhaps a father's-brother's-son's-son. Although not regarded as possessing great traditional authority, he was nonetheless elected council president in 1975, and appointed chairman of the Chimbu Yomba Corporation in 1974.

² An informal recognition of leadership by early kiape and missionaries before the luluaia/tultu system was formalised.

³ Early patrol reports indicated that occasionally officers felt that previous patrols had been 'duped' as to the real authority of the nominee for village office, or perhaps that men had been chosen in return for unspecified services rendered.
I was strong before the white men came. Taylor gave me a bosboi ring and I was still leader after that. My father was a leader and it was passed on to me. After being made bosboi I helped the Administration on patrols. If we saw fighting we would break the weapons and burn them.

In Naregu I explored Kondom's background (cf. Brown 1971 and 1972), when talking to a leader at Wandi village.

My father was stronger than Kondom's. The kiape indentified the old leaders who were just as strong as my since .... When people were consulted they chose the outspoken old leaders, with ancestors who were leaders. They were the ones with influence who were followed. But now some councillors are very young and they are not followed; they don't work, but drink and chase women. If a young man is elected and is on the council and his father was a leader, then people will still respect him because [his authority] is inherited. If he is from a rabis [E. rubbish=insignificant] family, the people will not listen to him. People are not interested in his own success. Kondom's father was a brother of my father; because Kondom's father was young, my father became the leader. Their [common] grandfather led the people in fighting, he was the spokesman.

Finally at Suar a middle-aged Naregu councillor, Ambane, spoke of his father, Ti, a lululu who had preceded him as leader for the clan.

Before contact, leaders were so strong that they were always listened to and obeyed. But when he became a bosboi he was on the go all the time and didn't have time to control his own line.

I asked if leadership was passed from father to son in the old days. The old lululu replied:

I can recall about three generations; we passed on leadership from father to son and now I'm getting old and passing it onto Ambane and my other son.

Kondom's father was thus the grandson of a leader, and Kondom was of a prominent lineage. As Brown said (1967), Kondom was brought up by his matrixin (Siambugla) after his father's early death. Some Siambugla still claim him as their son. But a fifty-five-year-old Naregu from outside Kondom's Pentaugu clan recalls his own father describing Kondom's father (Agaundo) as being a really prominent leader. Certainly Brown indicated that Kondom had become a lululu and was an extremely wealthy man by 1945, when he was in his mid-twenties. He must have acted quickly to have done this under Administration influence, which largely lapsed during the war years. When Kondom was accidentally killed in August 1966 he was succeeded as councillor by his brother, Wagire. Some of his many sons have attained considerable prominence in contemporary business and to a lesser extent political prominence.
Obviously, these are strong statements of the principle that hereditary factors are important in the emergence of leaders. These statements are presented, as they were collected, at face value. There was no checking with informants outside the immediate circle of close relatives and companions who listened to each conversation. Interestingly, similar statements are summarised in the reports of kiasps who engaged in some - necessarily rushed - social anthropology during their patrols through the Chimbu cultural area in the early 1950s. In other words, there has been considerable continuity in the statements of principle about leadership selection over the last twenty years. Even at the very local level of the Nazegu sub-clan among whom Brown worked, for as far back as people can remember leadership has stayed within a few lineages. It is surprising that Brown did not explore the concept of hereditary leadership further, even if only to dismiss it.

Equally clearly, factors other than hereditary advantage were also important in the emergence of leaders. As stated to me in 1973, they included being of the right age (maturity), and possessing fighting prowess, oratorical skills and wealth (which in turn meant pigs, and wives to garden to provide food for the pigs). The basic characteristic that emerges is 'strength': a leader must be a 'strong man' (cf. Read 1959). Several of the old leaders boasted of their feats, both as warriors and as peacemakers. In one case there is independent testimony in the 1933 patrol report of Jim Taylor. When Taylor's contact patrol reached the Chuave area it was guided through hostile warriors by the great leader Dama of Womai in Sina Sina, who could safely travel well beyond his own Tabare tribal area. Dama himself, now aged about seventy but still physically powerful, was renowned even in 1933. He says that when Taylor first heard of him he asked to see him; then when Taylor met him he stood out so clearly that Taylor could call his name. This, in previously uncontacted territory with no common language, is quite a story. Dama and his household speak in awe about Dama's father, a great leader with many pigs and workers, whom they link directly to the clan's myth of origin (cf. Strathern 1971). Dama himself was the youngest of five sons and prides himself on his wealth, generosity and fearlessness in making both peace and war. In early 1977 he said that his brothers (who died recently) 'were fighters at the time of war. I'm the surviving one. They were real fighters'. He said that the group had assessed the brothers' performance for a few years after his father's death, and he (Dama) was chosen to be the leader despite
his relative youth. By that time he was helping the kisap and had attracted many women. Dama said in early 1977:

I was a 'Big-man' because my father was a 'Big-man' before me [and] I also came up and proved myself to be a leader in my own right .... Each clan segment has its own leaders. Ours comes from the ancestors - it follows the bloodline directly, and we always choose the strongest of the sons.

Bergmann summarized his lengthy observation of the Kamangu by saying that the one or two real 'chieftains' or 'leading persons' of the clan are fairly old. Particularly individuals with special talents emerge for various functions, such as oratory, dispute settlement or trade. He argued that:

Leadership is not just inherited, so that it would go on from father to son, but is [sic] has of course certain influence, that means: Sons of influential men have a better prospect of becoming leading men than sons of mere common men. But is is not inheritance alone which makes them chieftains, etc. It is very well possible, that the sons of the present leading men will not be the leaders of the coming generation. (Bergmann 1971-72: III: 86)

He then mentioned the need for wisdom, bravery and skill in warfare, and luck (e.g., in trading and hunting), oratory, judgement, skill in the accumulation and manipulation of wealth - especially valuables and wives - and finally, experience. A composite picture has emerged.

The expressed Chimbu view (as outlined earlier) is not dissimilar to that described for Mt Hagen Muowaam society by Bergmann's Lutheran missionary colleague, Dr G. Vicedom. After a decade of colonial contact, Vicedom wrote that clan leadership stayed within certain families (Vicedom and Tischner 1943-48: 2), just as my Chimbu informants had claimed. Reay noted expressions of the same ideology among people who occupy the Wahgi valley between Chimbu and Mt Hagen. This theory of succession is one which operates simultaneously with achievement criteria similar to those noted in Chimbu. Most frequently, if the son of the previous leader is unsuitable (especially because he is too young), leadership will pass to a sibling of the outgoing leader. She argued that there is a named leadership position, that there are specific roles to

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1 Reay 1959; Dr Reay, personal communication, 1978.
be performed, and that there is a rule of succession. Strathern has said that these elements are the three requirements for hereditary chieftainship.\(^1\) Reay said that because according to ascription criteria several men might be eligible (and have been groomed) to succeed to leadership, this allows competition to develop. Vicedom reported the same pattern in the Hagen area, and we know this happens in Chimbu between sub-clan leaders competing for pre-eminence in the clan. So both hereditary and meritocratic systems are operative and it might be said that there is a whole 'stable' of horses from which one can be chosen for the 'course'.\(^2\) This assessment is compatible with Strathern's material on the Medlpa people (who are Vicedom's 'Mwowamb'). Strathern compiled data in 1964-65 for ninety-seven 'Big-men', in fourteen clans. Men he described as current 'major Big-men' are three times as likely to be the sons of 'Big-men' as the sons of 'ordinary men', while for 'minor Big-men' the chance was fifty-fifty (Strathern 1971). He said that in pre-colonial times the lineal advantage was likely to have been greater (1975: 371). Strathern emphasised the managerial or 'director' role of a Hagen leader in creating his predominance, and said that while a 'Big-man' can start his sons off well (with valuables, wives, and exchange partnerships); 'a son must be a good manager and speaker on his own account if he is to become a big-man' (1971: 211).

However, Strathern played down the hereditary elements in highlands leadership, noting discrepancies between observers' opinions of 'how the system really works' and participants' maxims about it (1973: 370). Like Brown and Criper, he stressed the 'Big-man' characteristics whereby a leader partly attracts and thereby creates some of his own public, or polity.\(^3\)

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1 Professor Strathern, personal communication, 1976.

2 Dr Reay, personal communication, 1978.

3 New recruits would require garden land. Chimbu groups today are more concerned over their land shortages than in the past. While certain landholders in the Wahgi Valley are allocating land to settlers from elsewhere in Chimbu (Ploeg 1975), these are notoriously unstable and expensive semi-commercial arrangements. The people involved keep their ties with their agnates. In general, land pressures are now probably such that a leader in most of the Chimbu has no spare land under his control which he could allocate to recruits. Agnates are strengthening their ties with their clans now, sometimes returning home after lengthy residence with other clans, and also sometimes because of warfare, in order to retain access to land (cf. Meggitt 1977).
These three observers minimised the agnostic nature of the patrilineal clan, stressing the number of movements in and out by persons who are not clan members by descent (who in Chimbu total from 10 to 20 per cent). In fact, Criper—following earlier work by Power (1964)—even denied the existence of exogamous patrilineal clans, preferring to discuss groups in terms of their functions, such as ceremonial exchange (Criper 1967: 331–37). Strathern, Brown and Criper all stressed recruitment of followers as an important part of a leader’s rise to renown. But this process was not emphasised by early missionary observers.

I believe it may be significant that these three anthropologists conducted their first major field work during the second decade of the Pax Australiana in their specific areas, as did Oliver. In pre-colonial times refugees were common. They were neither voluntary recruits nor automatically recognised as members of the clan. Many stayed on and were accepted, just as clanspeople accepted the orphaned children of their own daughters who were not strictly clan members either. If they were eventually accepted as members of the clan as a whole, they nonetheless stayed with their particular friends within the clan. They became part of the sub-clan that took them in, but were not free-moving agents delivering political support. It is hard, from a present-day perspective, to see these processes as being voluntary or optative. Indeed, if they were, it would not be surprising to hear, as Oliver (1955: 406) noted, that the refugee (recruit?) ‘is not allowed to forget his desertion’. In periods of preparedness for war, the faint-hearted would not have been welcomed. Clan loyalties were matters of life and death, and not to be taken lightly. Using Meggitt’s metaphor, in the watchful days before pacification the society as a whole, with all its component political units, was under pressure, in a systolic phase (Meggitt 1971) more often than not.

After pacification, particularly for those groups which were thereby relieved from the pressures of expanding neighbours, there was something of a diastolic phase, a period in which to relax. Within the Hagen clans, the flood of shell valuables brought in by the Europeans rapidly undermined the pre-eminence of the leaders and their control over their people through marriage payments, etc. (Vicedom and Tischner 1943–48: 2). A host of men became wealthy by trading with the Europeans, then brought pigs from further afield, and so broke what could, with little exaggeration, be
called an oligopoly of dominant leaders. No longer was their clientele captive. With pacification, warfare was no longer a force keeping men within their clan boundaries. They could wander far afield, seeing their affines and other friends. No longer was warfare an arena for competition for renown and ultimately political authority. No matter how violent, football was a poor substitute for the ritual excitements of life-and-death battles. Men's competitive energies were converted into a more individualistic struggle for modern and traditional wealth, in the hope of thereby gaining renown. During this process, the control of shell valuables and flow of pigs was partly lost, and the centripetal forces which kept clans together because of the perennial state of incipient hostilities also weakened. All in all, at the time when these three workers were in the field the clans as corporate units must have appeared weak, relative to their condition before pacification when great strength was needed for survival.

In the 1970s land pressures and fears of shortage arising from cash cropping and population growth (Neggitt 1977), a general loss of earlier optimism for an exciting new life in the modern economy (Kerpi 1976), combined with a growing sense of insecurity in the period of mass education, and also political decolonisation (Standish 1973), have all increased social tension in the highlands. Despite the government's best efforts, from 1972 to 1977 there was a great deal of large-scale clan warfare in a significant return to old ways. My own work indicates that the resurgence of warfare was promoted by clan elders. Politically, it not only promoted these men back into political prominence, but it also reinforced the clan as a political unit to an extent probably far greater than that which had existed in the early to mid-1960s.

When its very existence is in peril, in a state of war or near-war, a society is dependent upon its leaders for survival. The group pulls together, and tightens itself into a coherent force. It needs the best leadership it can muster and must follow that leadership or face extinction. This is not a situation which allows rivals the luxury of competing for followers in a state of 'anarchy', but one where the group needs leaders and will find the best available, to perform essential roles.

Roles and powers

There were definite roles that had to be performed by leaders within
Chimbu sub-clans and clans. They were discussed by the leaders in 1973. The first mentioned was deciding when to hold a pig ceremonial, particularly the final killing. Such a decision depends on many contributors, and must be the result of consensus. Secondly, there was a diplomatic and representative role in dealings with other groups. Thirdly, the leaders argued that the decision to fight or to make peace rested with a few men only. Many incidents might provoke a fight, but fighting required preparation and had certain ritual elements— which usually meant that it was not spontaneous. It was—if possible—suppressed close to a pig festival. A fight leader might not have an active political role in matters of peace, but a political leader might well be a 'general' in charge of overall strategy, and peacemaking. As a fourth role, a political leader was responsible for maintaining harmony within the group. The former luluai Ti explained his role as follows:

There was sort of 'court' system then and I was the authority on the court. If we won a fight and expelled the other group, I would tell them [the other side] not to worry, we would have a big food exchange festival. I would lead them [my people] in these things. Now you call this sort of thing 'court'. Before, we had consensus [katangiunge]. If there was a row, we would tell the other side to pay compensation. If he refused, the injured party would start a fight again and then I'd go in and settle the dispute. I had my 'number two' [deputy] and others under me, when I was leader. The leaders underneath me said to people that they could not check [defy] the leader's talk. If there was a war in progress then we could not fight inside our own group because we could not respond to the outside situation. So if there was a fight internally we had to use compensation. We had 'lieutenants' in other lines, who would listen to [follow] the leaders' points and not argue with his talk.

Others also said the leaders did not wait for consensus, but merely 'bossed the men like soldiers'. Particularly,

'People in the leader's own group might disagree, but they would follow. The sub-group of a leader's assistant follows this minor leader, rather than the clan leader. In general, the leader just told people, but did not ask for consensus. If the majority agreed, they followed.'

The image of Read's 'autonomous' leader, as found with the Gahuku Gama, appears opposite here (Read 1959). Several men spoke of the inspirational role of leaders (especially in battle).
The missionary-anthropologist Nilles argued that 'There is also some degree of central authority invested in one or two leaders' (1950: 27). He mentioned the role of dispute settlement, especially by the new village officials, and said

They are not paid for their occupation, but are in most cases free from ordinary work which is done for them by their fellow clansmen. Their opinion and advice is sought in any important matter concerning the whole clan. However, the strong democratic feeling of the people would prevent them from becoming real dictators. (Nilles 1953: 21)

Again, this kind of interpretation differs from that of the Chimbu student in 1971, who argued that leaders were feared, with tough henchmen who would exercise the penalty of sudden death upon an opponent within their own clan. None of the leaders interviewed in 1973 mentioned this spontaneously, although several boasted that they had been feared. One Kamanegu said that if there was a bully within the clan he would be beaten up by the henchmen, on the leader's command. 'It was like a police force.' Schäfer's 1938 article described Kavagi, a Chimbu 'despot' who had a violent temper and frequently fought members of his own group and had killed two of his own wives in fits of rage (Schäfer 1975). Kavagi nonetheless maintained political influence within his group, as is supported by Nilles, writing some years later.¹ Kavagi was cited by Salisbury in the 1964 article on Chimbu despotism which criticised Brown's 'anarchy' argument. However, much better evidence is available.

Dama from Womai in 1977 spoke frankly of his father killing members of his own group. He named one man murdered in a house-fire deliberately lit by his father, an incident which Dama himself had witnessed. Such a killing may have been to exterminate an alleged witch, or to save the group from the displeasure of the ancestral spirits if the moral code had somehow been broken, especially during time of war. Whatever the reason, these killings do not seem to have deprived him of his power. Indeed, he may have ruled despotically, and maintained his dominance principally though fighting prowess (cf. Watson 1971). Other prominent men who had killed

¹ In passing, we can mention that Kavagi's son, the ex-uluiui Asiwe, is now a member of the Interim Simbu Provincial Government.
within their groups became refugees, at least until the danger of reprisal wore off and compensation could be organised. Frequently men who attached themselves to government and missions in the early colonial days were refugees for one reason or another. They used the new institutions brilliantly to return to eventual dominance within their own group or in a few cases their adopted group. Two such men are the Premier and Deputy Premier of Chimbu Province today.

The strongest statement received about Chimbu despotism comes from Bergmann, who said that while it did not occur among the Kamanagu:

but more with some of the neighbouring tribes, it was more or less customary that, when leading people wanted to get rid of friends or enemies, they did not kill them themselves, but had other men, - we may call henchman, - who did the job for them. If such a chieftain for some reason or other did not like some persons - perhaps one had a nice young wife he wanted to have or whatever the reason may have been, - then he gave a sign to one of his men, perhaps only with a twinkle of his eye; but his man understood the hint, and after a short while such a man was dead. In this way many people were murdered. I have known chieftains who had killed more than 100 people in this way. But they themselves were highly esteemed, not because they were liked by the others, but because they were feared. Nobody dared to contradict them, because they feared to incur the chieftains' displeasure. (Bergmann 1971-72: I: 195)

Such behaviour is very hard to reconcile with a 'Big-man' courting popularity, or indeed anything except a very powerful despotic state. Not all these killings were inside the clan or tribe - they included murders and deaths inflicted in battle. Bergmann said that of 259 adults baptised at Du, the men accounted for 867 killings, 424 having been committed by four men over several decades.\(^1\) He said that the names of those claimed to have been killed were given, and the tally collected by evangelists using broken sticks.\(^2\) Some exaggeration is possible, if unlikely. However, if only 10 per cent of this figure related to killings within the group, Chimbu leaders were powerful indeed. Yet the political structure could not be called a 'state', if for that we require a centralised authority over and a monopoly

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\(^1\) Rev. Bergmann, personal communication, 1978.

\(^2\) Figures quoted by Frerichs (1969: 60), taken from confessional records from Sina Sina area which have since been destroyed (Rev. Bergmann, personal communication, 1978).
of coercion within a defined territory. As we have seen, leadership matched
the segmentation pattern, with rivalry between heads of sub-clans (and
cuckles common between members of the same family). Sometimes, as Bergmann
himself noted, leaders themselves were killed when they were accused of
witchcraft and of harming the welfare of the group (Bergmann 1971-72:IV:30-31).

It is clear from the evidence presented that the techniques of
leadership within clans and more particularly sub-clans varied from concili-
ation, compromise, persuasion, inspiration and bargaining, to threats and
sheer brute force. Probably the style varied according to the occasion so
generalisations are impossible. There are certainly some continuities in
Chimbu political culture, including admiration for a fearless man who, no
matter what the odds, will tackle strong opponents, sometimes head-on with
spectacular displays of anger, sometimes with guile and the sweetest sophis-
try. Today's Chimbu leaders use every political trick imaginable to man.
They can display a quite unabashed insensitivity to any apparent hypocrisy
or self-interest and they can move suddenly from private bile to public
deferece. In other words, comparing today's political style with earlier
descriptions (Schäfer 1975; Bergmann 1971-72), Chimbu leaders remain
masters of rhetoric and manipulation. Even the wildest and most socially
disapproved behaviour can bring its reward in increased renown for the fire
in its perpetrator's belly.

Social stratification

In its simplest meaning, stratification refers to strata or 'layers'
of people grouped into categories which are recognisable as holding in common
similar degrees of social, economic and political status. The categories may
be visualised as forming a hierarchy. The members of each may well be aware
of the status and economic differentials between their own level and others.
They may or may not regard the situation with equanimity, or act as a group.
In a class society the economic barriers may operate for generations, but
sometimes they can be crossed and personal achievement lead to upward mobility.
In a caste society, status is ascribed at birth and social mobility is, at
least in theory, impossible.

In the highlands, many observers have noted an implicit or explicit
hierarchy of social and economic status levels. Brown first pointed out
that few differences are obvious with boys, and then continued:
Chimbu have no ranking system for men but recognize as the lowest status 'rubbish' men or 'nothing' (yogo) men—most of whom have failed to keep a wife, but in any case they produce little and take only a small if any part in exchanges or distributions. No more than 10% of the men would be so classified. The majority of men produce adequately for their family needs and meet their obligations in exchanges and distributions—I call these 'ordinary' men. The category includes young married men who may later become prominent....

['Prominent' men] ... are more active and productive than the average .... Such men would have had at least two wives in earlier times.... Nowadays they may employ workers. Perhaps 20% of the men are 'prominent' ....... Chimbu do not make a clear and consistent distinction between this status and a higher one. They may call any prominent man a Big Man (yamba pondo), especially if he is in the speaker's own group. However, it seems more in keeping with Chimbu behaviour to distinguish a status of Big Man as those, perhaps 5%, one or two in each sub-clan, who are more than prominent, who often make speeches ... initiate important tribal and clan enterprises and whose disapproval is likely to stop any plan from being carried out. (Brown 1971: 216-217)

Brown pointed out that the 'rubbish men' might be 'attached dependents of big men or of their kinsmen and have no independent household' (Brown 1972: 41). These descriptions still hold today. Nilles argued that they were usually physically or mentally handicapped.1

'Rubbish men', frequently men who have no wife or have never held a wife, may also have been lazy and inactive. Such people were noted in Kuma society, too (Reuy 1959). Vicedom called them 'slaves' (1943-48: 2) and stressed the permanence of their dependence. In this sense they are lower than clients, even lower than 'poor' or worthless men. They are in effect bonded to their masters. Strathern argued that such terminology is too dogmatic and perhaps culturally bound.2 He said that Vicedom's picture is close to that of a class society' (1971: 205), but Strathern gave figures.3

1 Personal communication, 1976.
2 Personal communication, 1976.
3 From Vicedom's data on number of wives, Strathern calculated that about 15 per cent of men (the polygenists) could be classified as 'Big-men', 70 per cent (with one wife) as 'ordinary men', and 15 per cent (those without wives) as 'men of low status'. Determining status by such simple criteria is admitted to be very much a rule-of-thumb process.
extracted from Vicedom's census data giving ratios of low status, ordinary and 'Big-men' similar to Brown's for Chimbu. Strathern then went on to quote Vicedom as saying that 'slaves can be born from any class'.

This observation [said Strathern] sharply modifies the picture of inherited social status ... [so that] Vicedom's account of stratification may be a little over-rigid. In particular his choice of the term 'slave' ... may be too dramatic .... The term 'bondsman', like 'slave', also implies a degree of coercion and rigidity in the relationship between big-men and their supporters which is hard to demonstrate from actual cases. (Strathern 1971: 205-6)

It may be that here Strathern was confusing the categories of 'rubbish men', who are immobile and dependent, with valued and useful supporters who could contribute to both a clan's strength and a leader's renown. In this context, Oliver's findings are relevant, in that he, too, used the word 'slave':

Moreover, each principal mumi is said to have had several 'couriers' and 'legs' who were in fact slaves, either captured in battle or bound to service though having sought asylum with him .... It is said that a master was privileged to beat or kill his slave without restraint of any kind.
(Oliver 1955: 419)

As a minimal conclusion, we can say that, in widely separated locations in Melanesia, wealth and social status, and indeed also the degree of political equality, varied substantially from individual to individual.

There have been several attempts to evaluate the nature of a 'Big-man's economic ties with members of his group. As Connell pointed out (1977), the exchange system involved essentially the manipulation of credit. In the Hagen area, Strathern noted that the 'Big-men' had 'almost a monopoly over transactions with pearl shells' (1976: 278-9). Thus trade routes for some key items were not open, and nor can it be asserted that a wide range of trade routes on the ground prevented the emergence of ascribed leadership (cf. Brunton 1975). Similarly, in the Wahgi and Chimbu, great disparities in the ability to obtain, accumulate and manipulate the use of shell valuables afforded considerable social power to the prominent men. These valuables were part of marriage payments, for example. A leader would have control over certain plans of members of his group, and by his contributions to their bride-wealth payments keep them economically indebted and also politically obligated. Much of the leader's capital was thus invisible but nonetheless effective.
According to Salisbury (1962: 93), in the Siane area of Chimbu the number of pigs claimed far exceeded the total available. In a sense, then, the whole society was 'overdrawn', with the leaders controlling credit – particularly in shells.

Surplus production above subsistence requirements is used in the highlands for exchanges, and the extent to which leaders gain political kudos for organising this, varies. In Chimbu exchanges, individuals make their presentations to individual partners. By contrast, in the Hagen area the leaders present the pigs, shells and so on (in the name of their group) to their partners, who are their counterparts in other groups. These men in turn spread the valuables around within the recipient group, and reinforce their leadership in that way (cf. Criper 1967). There is perhaps a stronger 'extractive' element in the Hagen system than Chimbu, but it is never as great as that in Tolai, where, Salisbury wrote:

A 'big-man' drumming up contributions to a clan project may easily 'con' twenty 'small men' out of their returns from years of work. Half of their savings, in any case, will go to rich men at their death. (quoted in Strathern 1975: 369)

The highlanders' mode of building up economic resources and hence social and political capital was not as spectacular, but economic extraction was real nonetheless. One only has to mention the work parties organised by leaders who provide a token payment of a vegetable meal after a day's work, or their denial of compensation when their livestock damages the gardens of lesser men, to make this point.

At first contact, leaders stood out with their finery, their healthy bodies and proud stature. 'They eat pig every day', people said of them (Vicedom and Tischner 1943-48: 2). Although they did less garden work, and were accorded deference, their houses and general mode of living were similar to those of other people. Economic differentials are much more visible these days, with the introduction of cash crops, permanent-material buildings and large visible possessions such as motor cars. Frequently, a highlands leader organises pooling of capital from his group for a nominally collective business. The enterprise usually becomes known as his and thus eventually becomes the individual possession of a rural capitalist. Land tenure may also become individualised (Finney 1973; Gerritsen 1975; McKillop 1976). The scale of some enterprises in private ownership is large by the standards of any society.
One contemporary Chirambu politician, Liamakey Okuk, owns inter alia a K50,000 coffee factory. He told me he was helped by a K50,000 loan from the government-owned Development Bank; the government does not seem to be inhibiting the growth of private wealth in any way.

In January 1977 Liamakey Okuk took part in a revealing debate on development strategies which was organised for their provincial government members by Chirambu university students. The topic concerned the rightness of promoting the improvement of rural lives, as against helping 'black capitalists'. On that occasion, Okuk said:

The government wants us all to be equal. I don't believe in this. If I 'represent' Chirambu, or Matthias [a successful businessman who had bought a large trade store in the neighbouring province], then the name of the whole Chirambu is uplifted. We are all happy with this. You young kids talk about capitalism. The previous speaker said there were class differences - some people up high and others down below. But where is this different? Communists want equality, but I don't believe this has been achieved. You say that the provincial government can tax businessmen like Anton Aba. If you do this, the prominent men will see their business ruined, and decide to stop their activities and do nothing, except take part in fights.

Should we be mere labourers? I am a businessman, not a priest, and I don't throw away money freely. But in Papua New Guinea we have the wapentok system, whereas whites keep their resources within their immediate family. We give to our in-laws, and our matrikin and our classificatory brothers; and there are always compensation payments to be paid. Every day I am approached, 'Just K2 for a bride price?'. This happens to me - not to you - and others are all like priests who are poor and have no funds. We are not all priests, but no man in Papua New Guinea is so big that he can run the whole country. Their relatives always pull the 'Big-men' down to scale.

Should we Chirambu be dominated by the other provinces next door? They are all capitalists already. If we Chirambu were just to keep on performing the drudgery and hard work for others, then that would be a disaster.1

Several concepts were utilised in this brilliant speech. Firstly, the appeal to Chirambu dignity, and secondly, the notion that the stature of the whole group (in this case the whole province) would be raised by the activities of a few entrepreneurs. Thirdly, businessmen were argued to be generous and supportive, with a cultural 'leveling' effect in operation. This in a sense

1 Field notes, Standish, 12 January 1978.
was a distortion of traditional values, because little men in contemporary
Chimbu get much less 'spin-off' from the activities of a modern capitalist
than from those of a prominent leader in their own sub-clan. Probably no
more than twenty Chimbu businessmen in the province run modern, viable
businesses that are profitable enough to yield, say, K10,000 per annum.
If they employ, say, twenty men each, the total of 400 employed throughout
the province is minimal compared to the benefits accruing to the
followers of the many hundreds of Chimbu leaders. The arguments do, how-
ever, strike a chord with Chimbu listeners. This is an example of the
ideology of the 'Big-man' system being used to justify a phenomenon which
is a quantum jump in scale beyond anything pre-existing in Chimbu society.

Present-day Chimbu businessmen/politicians are masters at the art
of manipulating their creditors, be they Papua New Guinean, European or
Chinese, official or private. Men manage to mobilise huge sums for their
political purposes. In Chimbu per capita income was about K75 in 1977
(including salaries of public servants and other urban workers). Incomes
for rural adults are frequently as low as K4 p.a., probably less in the
Karimui. Yet six younger candidates admitted spending sums of K5,000 to
K12,000 while campaigning for the National Parliament in 1977. One candidate
in Chimbu told me he had spent K20,000. In Chimbu the total expenditure
(mostly in poor rural areas) must have averaged nearly K2 per voter.

Attempts were made to graft this kind of expenditure into the
traditional exchange system (Standish 1977, 1978). The politicians -
mostly young businessmen - gave money to local leaders, who then gave
parties for their group, distributing pigs, whole carcasses of beef, and
dozens or even hundreds of cartons of beer (sometimes called 'small pig').
New obligations were thus created. In some instances the gifts appeared
to have influenced the votes, which were usually delivered in clan blocks.
The overlapping membership of the political and economic elites of Chimbu
does not at the present time indicate an egalitarian society, although
competition for political office, with all the opportunities nowadays
available to incumbents, is very intense. We are seeing here an escalation
of pre-existing differentials in wealth, which may become entrenched as
limited opportunities for advancement in business are closed.
Contemporary Chimbu politics

In the old days wealth alone did not 'make' a leader. Both Bergmann (1971-72) and Criper (1967) distinguished between wealth and 'real' political authority. It can be argued that today's often educated young politicians are striving to establish new leadership criteria, and they also bridge the borders of traditional politics and create new political publics. In 1972 the campaign for the province-wide 'regional' seat in the then House of Assembly was argued only partly in terms of party and policy. These elements were present, as was a keenness to impress with their forcefulness and their modern education. The angriest and most vocal man, Iambakey Okuk, won (Standish 1976c). By 1977 many of the younger candidates were successful businessmen. In 1972 some Sina Sina businessmen polled very poorly (Kaubaal 1976), but the key issue was not whether they were businessmen. The voting related to the fragmentation of clan voting (and vote-splitting) and the failure of youth to manipulate exchange relationships with the older clan leaders. Those younger men from Chimbu who were successful in the 1972 elections quickly established large modern businesses, usually with some sort of quasi-communal ownership. They appointed local leaders as directors but kept effective control in their own hands. They had, however, created an obligation in the older leaders, who lacked money and modern skills, and could not repay them in kind. They spent heavily on beer and beef for parties, not having traditional wealth such as pigs of their own (bought-pigs lacking full prestige value). Thus they became generous, as a Chimbu leader traditionally should. They were attempting to legitimate, in terms of a vision of Chimbu political culture, their holding prizes won by a combination of persuasion, energy, luck and shrewd usage of the rules of the ballot.

Today's young Chimbu politicians consciously express the hereditary ideology, as well as exhibiting the styles and modes of Chimbu political culture. Thus Iambakey Okuk, who claims his father was a Kamanegu leader who had fifteen wives, asserts, 'I was born to be a "Big-man"'. 1 Okuk denigrates his most fearless and dynamic young Chimbu rival by saying 'He's not the son of a "Big-man"'. Many other young men attempt to legitimise their ambitions with appeals to the renown of their fathers. Okuk himself did not kill any pigs during the 1975 Kamanegu festival, but reports that

1 The Australian, 23 May 1978.
his step-father killed many. He has contributed massively to quasi-traditional presentations made by his step-father, and has cultivated older leaders throughout Chimbu with his own lavish hospitality. I have seen him greeted with exaggerated deference by prominent clan leaders twice his age. Because of their conspicuousness, younger Members of Parliament would be unwise to take part in clan warfare (although police action has not stopped some of their older colleagues), but they can find ways to behave assertively and show the fearless courage and strength so admired in the highlands. Again, Lambakey Okuk has aggressively criticised the Somare government in long speeches in Chimbu, and more than once attacked the Prime Minister to his face. Okuk was dismissed from the ministry in 1976 after a month-long tirade against the Prime Minister for demoting him. During the 1977 election campaign his strongest jibe, broadcast repeatedly over loudspeakers in Kundiawa township, was that his main opponent (the man who replaced him in the ministry) spent his time 'washing Michael Somare's underpants'. This fearless campaign style could be described as a new way of winning renown as a warrior. The younger politicians of Chimbu use their education and new political techniques, but they deliberately act within tactically useful versions of the old style of Chimbu politics. This should not surprise observers familiar with the political style of Sukarno in Indonesia; and it is a pattern also found in Ghana (Price 1974), which speaks for the usefulness and resilience of traditional political culture.

The strongest manifestation of traditional Chimbu political culture is the kinship system. Clan and tribal loyalties were of prime importance in directing voters during the 1977 elections, and remain the principal political resource available to skilled manipulators. Clans can be mobilised, and they are. A shrewd leader can gain the friendship of key figures in various kin groupings, and thus ensure support. This is a patronage system on a large scale. Very few eat the leader's pig, more manage to drink his beer, but by allocating his valuables well and occasionally 'delivering the goods' (in the form of roadwork funds or an extra schoolroom), a local politician can stay on top.

The incumbent politicians share a common interest in survival, just as, objectively, the poorer men share a common interest against the waste of their taxes by politicians. While Chimbu people carry in their minds and can readily outline the kind of hierarchy of wealth and status which Brown described, they do not see themselves as 'little men' having a common interest which horizontally crosses the vertical lines of political segmentation.
Villagers express resentment at the arrogance of leaders who refuse to pay compensation, and who conspicuously flaunt their personal consumption of government resources. They will say with resignation that 'objectionable behaviour is the fashion of the "Big-men"'. Few members of the politicians' own groups will criticize them, as that might even be regarded as a mild form of treason. Thus ethnicity inhibits class consciousness, as Lamb (1974) noted in Muranga, Kenya. They are locked in by their clan loyalties, and obliged to defend their own man if someone from a rival clan attacks him. (Indeed, the ties of kin have supernatural sanctions, which can be enforced upon the living by the spirits of the deceased ancestors.) ¹ Today's leaders have strengthened clan consciousness, which is for them a sound political tactic. Competition between groups is essential to highlands political cultures (Kerpi 1976), and this helps explain why several attempts to create pan-highlands political action have failed in the recent past (Standish 1976b). Despite the dynamism of highlands leaders seeking to build such 'road-based entities, the problem - as with most political institutions introduced in the colonial era - is that people's basic loyalties go the strongest primordial units, the clan and the tribe.

Conclusion

The arguments of this paper have strong implications for the type of society emerging in the new state of Papua New Guinea. 'Political economists' are examining the penetration of capitalism into the country during and since the colonial era, but the analysis of political culture is just as important. Indeed, the two approaches complement each other, showing the way the continuity of past modes of behaviour can allow a receptive environment for alien modes of production. One trap that some neo-Marxists appear to have fallen into in some African studies is to attribute far too much of contemporary social and economic inequality to imperialist economic penetration, ignoring or minimising the fact that...

¹ The supernatural sanctions which Oliver said (1955) could be invoked by the Siuai muui have often been ignored in the subsequent literature. Lacey (1973: 20-1) found that ritual knowledge conveying 'power' was an important part of leadership, and was transmitted from father to son, among Enga people west of Mt Hagen.
pre-colonial society was often highly stratified. The scale and visible wealth of modern material culture may be new, but that need not mean that people are unused to great disparities in wealth as measured in the valued resources of any particular society and its technology at any point in time. In this, the Papua New Guinea highlands are not unique in recent experience.

A political culture cannot be studied without having clear concepts of the structures of the component groups. Repeatedly the argument of this paper has turned upon the importance of traditional kinship structures. In the central highlands the clans are particularly large and strong, but they are important in the local-level politics of all parts of Papua New Guinea. There are signs that during the authoritarian heyday of colonial rule, clan structures and indigenous leadership were undermined. In recent years they have experienced a resurgence sometimes expressed in the newly revived practice of warfare. There appear to be signs that earlier anthropological descriptions were strongly influenced by powerfully expressed models taken from other societies, not least in the debate over the patrilineal clan.

Watson argued:

the prevalent patrilineal ideology has frequently, and, so it appears, sometimes erroneously been translated into a strictly patrilineal sociology; or else the observed discrepancies are pushed and twisted in an effort somehow to explain and justify the divergence while keeping the model. (Watson 1964 13-14)

It is my contention that the latter occurred with Criper's functionalist interpretation of his Upper Chimbu material. Brown accepted the principle of the patrilineal clan, and noted the numerous exceptions to the stated principle of patrilineage, but did not integrate these elements in her description of competitive leadership on the 'Big-man' Model. In particular, we need more information on leadership in the sub-clans, where a man first becomes a leader before competing with others in the clan and beyond. Important evidence might be obtained by examining the part played by non-agnates. The role of recruits, as faction members or tied followers, could be significant. To be socially and politically valuable to leadership aspirants, such men must be more than mere 'rubbish' men.

The central core of the 'Big-man' theory is the open nature of the competition for leadership, which is achieved on merit rather than ascription. In the highlands, manifestations of operative hereditary principles have been
identified in several areas, and practical demonstration shown not only of
the mechanics of advantage for members of certain lineages, but also
several instances of succession. 'Hereditary advantage' is perhaps a better
term for the findings presented. If there is no requirement for a strict
rule of primogeniture before we use the term 'hereditary', then adequate
evidence has been presented to argue that hereditary elements are strong in
the emergence of leaders, as well as meritocratic factors. Purists may prefer
a concept of 'lineage advantage'. While there may not always be a named
formal office, every sub-clan and clan does act as a corporate unit, and there
are political roles to be fulfilled which encompass these whole groups. The
'Big-man' Model does not fit, with the key reasons being the strength of
kinship groupings in the Chimbu (and westwards), established authoritarian
behaviour patterns, and substantial - and accepted - inequalities of wealth
and status.

These highlands findings are not unique in Melanesia. Hau'ofa
cited nineteen instances of hereditary leadership scattered throughout
Papua New Guinea. To these can be added several more, including the hered-
ditary chieftainship (Sana) in the Murik Lakes, a position to which Sana
Michael Somare succeeded with great media fanfare in January 1975 (Somare
1975). Hau'ofa argued that

there is a range of leadership structures in the
[Melanesian] region manifesting all degrees of relative
ascription and relative achievement. (Hau'ofa 1975: 335)

Perhaps Chimbu, Kuma and Mwombw, too, fit slightly nearer the ascription
side of this spectrum. Hau'ofa may provide the key to the discrepancy
between my findings (those of a non-anthropologist), and those of Brown and
Criper. He suggested that:

... partly because of the influence of certain key articles
(e.g. Sahlins 1963; Barnes 1962) there has been a willingness
to seize too readily upon a dominant descriptive paradigm so
that much of the field research and literature on social
systems in Papua New Guinea has been biased from the beginning
.... What some anthropologists have probably done is to understate
the hereditary elements they found, or to have been so firm in
their belief that such elements were absent that they failed
to see them all. (Hau'ofa 1975: 334)

Brown completed her main field work before the two cited articles were
published, but Hau'ofa's general point stands. There is more than a
**Prima facie case** for re-examining the 'Big-man Model', both in general and in particular instances such as Chimbu.

The roles and powers of leaders in the pre-colonial societies of Melanesia were substantial, although they were obviously eclipsed during the period of alien rule when the existing polities were overwhelmed by the larger centralised state. The 'Big-man Model' stresses accommodation within the group. So, too, does Prime Minister Somare in describing his own political methods (Somare 1975). But in the highlands, and in some coastal and island areas, too, there were powerful sanctions available to leaders or the group as a whole. The necessity for survival helped ensure compliance to social norms within the group (no matter what sort of behaviour was legitimate with men or women from other clans). A contemporary Westerner might describe pre-colonial societies in Melanesia as somewhat authoritarian. In certain highlands area, including Chimbu, despotism was well known. An authoritarian colonial administration was superimposed upon the existing political culture, and in some instances they proved quite compatible and mutually reinforcing. An authoritarian style is not uncommon with contemporary politicians, be they at village, provincial or local government levels, and 'the insolence of office' is now part of the inherited bureaucratic style.

Such authoritarianism often enabled the perpetuation of those privileges that were enjoyed by the pre-colonial leaders. In the highlands, the degree of differentiation in wealth and social status appears to have been relatively high, but not uniquely so. Stratification existed but was not rigid. As Keesing noted in the highlands, 'Big Men become bigger and more solidly institutionalised' (1976: 354) with high population densities and increased production. His conclusion was that 'the gulf between [the 'Big-men'] and the ordinary man widens, so that incipient class systems begin to appear' (1976: 354). Although social differentiation is not explored fully in this paper, the phrase I have emphasised is (although imprecise) one which can just be defended from the evidence.

Work at present under way indicates that classes in the highlands and elsewhere in Papua New Guinea are no longer in the formative stages but are fairly readily indentifiable. It should be noted that they existed

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1 See, for example, the forthcoming collection edited by Professor Rex Mortimer.
in an extreme form during the colonial era. Over one per cent of the Papua New Guinea population is expatriate still. Europeans are a highly visible and wealthy minority, and provide an example of affluent lifestyle which influences the expectations of the national elite. The artifacts of modern industrial society can often be converted into prestige possessions in Melanesian society. Theft is a growing problem as is class behaviour such as street violence, attacks on cars, etc. Such tensions are inevitable with rapid modernisation. To sustain its position of privilege, the elite often calls for more repressive police measures rather than examining the inequalities that contributed to the emergence of social conflict. The colonial legacy is many-faceted, but authoritarianism in Melanesia has not necessarily been a colonial import.

If a political ideology is out of step with the values most deeply held by the members of a society, then in so far as political activists use that ideology as their guide they may have little success. Of course, an ideology can be a statement of intent, leading to no action but merely serving to bolster the morale of a political or economic group. Yet even this limited function requires the ideology to have some semblance to reality.

An important test of the egalitarian intentions of Papua New Guinea's National Parliament was scheduled for the meeting which commenced on Monday 22 May 1978. Despite the reservations of his People's Progress Party coalition partner, the Pangu Party Prime Minister had recently obtained endorsement in Cabinet of his plans to introduce modifications to the national Leadership Code. These are aimed at curbing the influence of foreign capital, and require about one hundred key people - ministers, statutory appointees and senior public servants, and also the Leader of the Opposition — to divest themselves of all business interests, or resign their positions. This requires a constitutional amendment with a two-thirds absolute majority on a vote in Parliament taken in two sessions of Parliament separated by at least two months. Many parliamentarians were businessmen before election to Parliament, and with few exceptions those who were not soon became so. The 1978 Leadership Code is a testing issue for all parties.

The terms of the debate emerged soon after the Prime Minister's sudden announcement of his proposition on 3 March 1978. In Kundiawa a
demonstration was quickly organised to protest about the proposed changes, and to reject the Interim Simbu Provincial Government's reported endorsement of them. One man saw the issue in these terms:

This new proposal by Somare is nonsense? They want leaders to be men who have no business, to be 'rubbish' men. That is not our way. You can see from his business if a man is dynamic. You look up to men of wealth. I am not a poor man; I don't hide the fact, and you respect me for being a prominent man. This idea of Somare is not our custom, at all.1

The gathering endorsed these sentiments. The speaker, who on 2 May 1978 was recognised as Leader of the Opposition (heading a new grouping called the People's United Front), was Iambakey Okuk. The Prime Minister on 21 March 1978 told Parliament:

Some people have said that successful politicians must be successful businessmen first. I do not believe this at all. My career in politics is not dependent on any business activities of mine and the same goes for most, if not all, of my colleagues. Even those who were successful businessmen before they went into politics have succeeded as politicians because they were able to appeal to the people and convince them that they would work for the people.... This is the real meaning of the big-man in Papua New Guinea. The people support the big-man because they know he will help them, not because he is grabbing things for himself.2

These competing conceptions of leadership, related as they are to some of the themes of this paper, have not been put to the test in a parliamentary vote. A number of Members criticised the proposals,3 and on 25 May 1978 Mr Somare himself said that 'Parliament is in a somewhat volatile state at present'. He said that he felt that if he went ahead with the proposals he would lose, and so in the interests of political stability he withdrew them for further consideration.4

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1 Personal communication from an eye witness. (The extract is a summary, translated from tok pisin.)

2 National Parliament Debates, 21 March 1978. (Quotation taken from text released by Prime Minister's Office.)

3 Post-Courier, 25, 27 March; 14, 20 April; 1, 5, 15, 19, 22 May 1978; Australian Financial Review, 10 March 1978.

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It appears that the search is under way for a national ideology, the need for which has long been apparent (Sundhaussen 1977). Obviously Papua New Guinea has diverse cultures, and extreme generalisations should be avoided when analysing traditional Melanesian politics. It is regrettable that in their search for national identity Papua New Guineans will not receive much assistance from the social sciences literature. Perhaps, as Michael Somare has said, Papua New Guineans themselves now have the chance to take the country back into the mainstream of its own history.


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