The Community Corporation in Papua New Guinea

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Introduction

A shorter version of this paper was presented at a seminar at the Institute of Applied Social and Economic Research on 14 October 1976. As a result of the stimulating discussion after the seminar we have made some changes in the paper. However, the major points to emerge from the discussion are not incorporated in the paper and we feel they should be mentioned at the outset.

Naturally enough most of this discussion focussed on group ventures in the current situation. Our concern in the paper is mainly with group ventures in the colonial situation although we do generally imply that our study has a contemporary relevance. Although we have done research on groups in the current situation, we could not draw any firm conclusions. In this regard the main points to emerge from the discussion were of great interest. Some people pointed out that groups are now better treated by several government instrumentalties and indeed are often given preference over individuals. It was suggested that, compared to the colonial period, this showed a dramatic turnaround on part of government. But, and somewhat in opposition, other people argued that these groups were often 'fronts', as it were, for big men and, increasingly, for members of the 'elite' who give their ventures a group appearance in order to meet formal government requirements for preferring groups. In a somewhat similar vein one commentator said that even where group ventures start out as 'genuine', the forces making for capitalist individualism are such that the group element is manipulated and destroyed through prominent members using it for their personal advancement. Here, clearly, is a rich and complex field that needs much further research.

In its broadest sense, this paper is concerned with the political economy of Papua New Guinea as it is affected by the impact of colonialism and capitalist penetration. Within this context, the focus of interest is on group economic ventures. Our concern is to confront the common assertion that these ventures are doomed always to fail. In maintaining that these groups do, in fact, have a significant potential for development, we shall show how this potential has been obscured by narrow and repressive treatment...
from governments; further, academics have looked at group ventures from limited perspectives and they have often arbitrarily dismissed the potential importance of these group ventures for Papua New Guinea.

He will also be concerned to counter or at least qualifi the sanguine reliance on 'Papua New Guinea ways' as somehow leading to a natural form of group or communal development—a reliance that is perhaps found in the fifth National Goal of the Papua New Guinea Constitution where it calls for 'development primarily through the use of Papua New Guinean forms of social political and economic organisation.'

The recent emergence of a great number of group ventures signifies a contemporary relevance for this study.

The nature of this paper demands that we trespass across several defined academic boundaries and we are reminded of Clifford Geertz (1963.xviii) that in our excursions,

An adequate understanding of the new countries of the 'third world' demands that one pursue scientific quarry across any fenced-off academic field into which it may happen to wander.
The pre-colonial economy

Generally, literature on pre-colonial economies has viewed traditional economic systems as marked by 'economic stagnation'. This point of view is blind to the history and the internal dynamics of pre-colonial societies. A recent corrective emphasis in economic anthropology has enhanced theories of 'underdevelopment' and this contribution has been well and critically summarized by Clammer (1975). We have, in particular, drawn on the work of E. T. Turner (1972) dealing with the relations between economic factors and structures of kinship. Very generally, we will tend to emphasize the importance of economic factors in traditional society and in the impact of capitalism against the more conventional focus on kinship structures. We do not deny the importance of kinship but we see it as being subject to manipulation and alteration in the contexts of changing economic circumstances.

The scope of this paper will not allow for extensive anthropological descriptions of the variations between different village societies in New Guinea, but it is possible to discuss some general features of pre-colonial traditional societies that are important to our analysis.

The clan was the largest social unit and this was, in general, exogamous. Within the clans were lineages, composed of family groupings. Agriculture was the main economic activity, often with additional pig husbandry. There was usually a sexual division of agricultural labour, but tasks could be done by individuals or collectively, depending upon what they were. Cultivation and maintenance of gardens were the tasks of individuals but collective work parties were used where they were necessary or sensible such as with clearing, fencing, house-building and canoe-making. Labour was not simply an economic activity but also a social one where returns were seen in the context of the total social grouping. Usually families had at least usage rights to land for cultivation and enough labour for production.
Exchange was a major medium by which individuals became prominent in traditional society. The big men of traditional Papuan New Guinea societies were the organizers of much exchange and were especially prominent as organizers of and financiers in ceremonial prestations. Inter-group exchange was often closely associated with the gaining and maintenance of power by leaders. The position of big men is generally said to be achieved rather than ascribed arising from personal qualities and successful competition in the exchange network. But in a considerable number of Papuan New Guinea societies leadership was ascribed and, more generally, there is ample evidence that 'in many societies the heir to a rich man was in a favoured position' (Epstein 1973:85). Strathern's figures on the Hela (1971:210) suggest that 'major' big men had a three to one chance of being the sons of big men and the chances of 'minor' big men being the sons of big men were almost equal. Strathern (1971:213) also notes that it appears that the eldest sons of big men did have the best chance of becoming big men.

The big man maintained his position through the deployment of wealth. He held no specified office or leadership over particular numbers of followers. Management, rather than normal domination, characterized his relationship with his followers. However, he was often the repository of political, legal, military and moral authority and, further, he controlled the 'banking and credit' facilities of the group. These functions had all been means of amassing support. The status position of the big man had been restricted to a degree by the limited availability of goods (so that he had displayed consumption patterns similar to those of his group), by the visibility of accumulated goods and by traditional sanctions such as sorcery, which tended to work (when used by the underprivileged) against an individual becoming too rich or powerful. Nonetheless the big man was significantly predominant and since his achieved leadership was largely based on his personal and exchange ties there was, on his death, a group crisis and resulting instability in its relations (Collins 1966:169). Generally, the exchange relationships between groups
were rather fragile, for the individuals and groups in an exchange were not necessarily related to each other beyond the big-man cluster. Networks established by the big man, to an extent, freed him, in contrast with the ordinary man who was confined to his affines in economic relations.

It is important to note that group structure in Papua New Guinean society has never been as precise as in Africa, although the African model has sometimes been applied here. But the African case may have been 'over-structured' (Balandier 1970:69, Alavi 1973:31). To start with a probably extreme case, Classe (1965:28) takes note of the flexibility of corporate structure in her description of the huli of the Southern Highlands. She notes:

There are no corporate descent groups in which membership rights and duties are ascribed solely as a consequence of descent, as among Fuga. Nor are there corporate units, ostensibly aquatic, but actually based on patrilineage and other principles. Instead group membership is an achieved status that can be acquired by any member of a corporate stock. It follows that every man is eligible for membership in a number of groups.

Strathern (1972a:97) warns that group membership among the huliya is a complex idea:

For hagen it is more appropriate to think of clan group membership as defined by a number of factors, not all of which may be present to an equal extent in every case, and to recognise that in a small number of cases a man’s affiliation may be uncertain, either in the sense that he keeps up a dual affiliation or that his allegiance to a group is weak.

Strathern lists as important factors co-residence which he sees as conducive to participation and cooperation within the group: demonstrating identity through participation in moke exchanges; land rights; and contributions to traditional payments. Structural flexibility of
highlands societies has also been described by Langness (1964) who noted considerable freedom with respect to social relations in highlands societies in general. Saulhoff too (1972:556) notes in relation to her Huang data that even when an ethnographer is expecting such irregularities as 'structural looseness', it comes as a shock to find in New Guinea the degree of lack of consensus concerning the group to which an individual belongs. She points out (1:72:561) that highly flexible social systems may permit the individual to manipulate the system to suit his own needs. In his discussion of 'structural looseness' Du Toit (1962) mentions that for the north coast area the feeling of a village community becomes more important than the sense of kinship, so that relatives who leave the village may become only of secondary importance, while village members, even if only vaguely related in the traditional sense, become the group of major concern. With regard to land, the major factor of production, Crocombe and Lid (1:71:301) say in relation to the basis of land holding groups that the major principles on which land holding groups were formed were descent, locality, and participation in common activities. Generally, it is now a commonplace that the ideal or jural rules of kinship structure in Papua New Guinea rarely correspond to the looser, more complex reality.

In later sections of this paper we consider the relation between traditional society and capitalism so far as this is relevant to the community corporation and its setting. In these sections we will try to show that colonization involves using the economic basis characteristic of lineage society to establish the conditions of transition to capitalism' (Durée and Rey 1973:147). There are many aspects to this but in the context of the community corporation, we shall emphasize mainly the formation of the peasantry and in this the argument has been already put by Kowlett (1973). She sees a peasantry in the Gordon area emerging on the basis of traditional relations yet the resulting situation tends in her view to undermine these relations. Our argument could be seen as similarly oriented.

The community corporation

Somewhat in contrast to this orientation and to typical patterns of capitalist development, the rational goals in the Papua New Guinea Constitu
tion stress 'integral human development', equal opportunity for all citizens to participate in development, the maximization of the number of citizens participating in the processes of development. Self reliance is also stressed: "the stated aim in the fifth Goal is development 'primarily through Papua New Guinean forms of social, political and economic organisation'. Following from this it is stated in the directive principles that there must be 'a fundamental re-orientation of all major institutions in Papua New Guinea'. A more recent statement on communalistic activity has been made by the Prime Minister (1.75.110):

The House agreed to the [Eight] aim although there was some criticism of the equalisation of incomes and government control themes as being 'communist'. The extent to which we should move towards equalisation of incomes and limit the possibilities of an individual accumulating personal wealth from his own endeavours has been raised again and again as a fundamental issue. It is difficult for national leaders to resolve this for many of our societies place high value on both individualistic entrepreneurial activity and communalistic sharing. As Chief Minister, I have constantly directed that institutions promoting Papua New Guinean business activities should concentrate their efforts on supporting representative communal groups rather than individuals.

Peter Worsley (1.73.287) writes cogently of populism and the Third World that

...in reality, few of the Third World states have seriously put populist notions into operation internally. Rather more have talked populism, but only a few experimented with communitarian agriculture and participatory 'self-help' schemes.

The serious implementation of developmental ideas as expressed in the Eight Aims and National Goals requires a radical overhaul of existing structures which have been imposed by colonialism and which help to maintain for Papua New Guinea a neo-colonial status. Talk of popular participation in Papua New Guinea has been quite vague and ill-defined. Griffin (1.73.44) gives an example in describing Homis's response to an
artok on the wanitok system by an expatriate: 'Father Inomis rose to point out that what was needed was an indigenous form of commercial organisation which would find a place for the wanitok system and would not merely follow western methods'. Griffin says (1973:48) that in the discussion that followed the virtues of the wanitok system were extolled, but that little was said of its possible faults. Usually such debate follows only vague directions with little attempt to discuss how such a system could be implemented. In an academic context, Newman (1976) discusses the strengths and the weaknesses of the wanitok system but his analysis ends up being little more specific. Thus he says (1976) that the wanitok system 'is consistent with all the basic objectives of the Light Point Improvement Plan'. It is important that if popular development is to occur it must be stated with more surety and with detailed and explicit policy guidelines. Ulufa'alu (1975:12) spells out the kind of problem experienced in the Solomon Islands: he says that 'real development' is occurring where land has been alienated but on customary land development is retarded because '...there is a war path where individualism and communalism meet in a severe battle over who is to rule. This uncertainty as to who will win at the end paralysed development among the indigenes'. In the general developmental context, Stavenhagen (1973:314) points out that:

It is becoming clear that community self help which contributes effectively to economic and social development can only prosper if accompanied by profound transformations in the social and economic structures of the countries involved, by regional and national planning, and by large scale investments in the backward areas.

For in Papua New Guinea some 110 expatriate plantations have been taken over, mostly on some sort of group basis. Other group ventures seem to be increasing in number as well and we will mention some examples towards the end of this paper. In the present context the 'community corporation' is a particular form of group economic venture and probably a common one.
In using the term, we mean 'corporation' to be taken in the broad sociological sense recognizing that some community corporations are legally incorporated as well. Although the community corporation often relies on traditional relations for delimiting membership and for some organizational aspects, it also involves additional formal organizational aspects that distinguish it from the 'traditional' situation. As we shall show later, it is of special importance that leadership roles tend to be more formalized and that members participate in production for the venture on a more formal and sustained organizational basis than that found with group work in the traditional context. We have been able to locate only four detailed case studies of the community corporation and these studies are summarized in the Appendix. In terms of member participation in production, the Lwandle and Nk'bulu cases described in the Appendix are strong but Nap and Shewes are less strong.

For reasons similar to those just outlined, we would distinguish 'group' ventures based on the big man cluster as described, for example, by Finney (1973) and W.L. Epstein (1968). We will consider this sort of venture in more detail later. In terms of putting the community corporation in context we should mention here that we see it as a minority form and a beleaguered one. The predominant response of traditional society, or perhaps of the 'Papua New Guinea way', to capitalism seems to have been the big-man cluster and general 'peasantization' - in short, individualization rather than strong communal ventures. The evidence from the Tolai (Epstein 1968, 1972) and from around Goroka (Finney 1973) is that a big man will manipulate and use his exchange ties and the resources of his support group to help set up the venture but he will work towards exclusive control of it and will seek to put distance between himself and traditional group ties. A broadly similar picture has been described among the Orokaiva by Crocombe (1967) and Ostermeyer and Gray (1967). The seed of this sort of development from the traditional context has been acutely described by von Fleckenstein (1975 59) in his case study of a 'group' cattle project in the Eastern Highlands. 'Peasantization' and the breakdown of traditional ties have been
more generally... if more suggestively rather than exactly described by Beckett (1971) among the Mac Inga and by Houlett (1973) for the Goroka area. Work-in-progress by Fitzpatrick and Neisbrot at the University of Papua New Guinea seeks to show that land tenure has become much more 'individualized' through the combination of traditional factors with those introduced by colonialism.

We also distinguish the community corporation from the 'dynamic communal associations' as Gerritsen (1975) calls them, such as the Labisarawi Village Development Corporation and the New Guinea Development Corporation, in that these associations appear to lack that participation of the membership in production which marks the community corporation. On the same basis the community corporation can be distinguished from the co-operative society; although some community corporations adopt the co-operative form, co-operatives in Papua New Guinea almost exclusively confine their activities to the marketing of crops produced by members individually and to trade stores.

The colonial environment

In this section we argue that the colonial administration contained and restricted group ventures and encouraged individualization at the expense of enduring group organization. Firstly, however, we consider the failure of colonial efforts at compulsion in the setting up and operation of group ventures.

'State plantations'. In 1894 Sir William McGregor, Papua's first administrator, attempted to introduce a policy which he saw as designed to induce political and economic advance. The form it took was a 'native regulation' which enabled magistrates to compel Papuans to grow coconuts. Lieutenant Governor Murray later refined this approach with the Native Plantations Ordinance which was introduced in 1916 and under it Papuans could be made to work without pay on communal 'native plantations'. This was seen by Murray as an economic and agricultural 'reform' but he enforced it with punishment and threats of punishment. The Native Plantations Regulations of 1926 set the required period of work at sixty days a year for able bodied people.
The ways in which Murray saw the 1918 Ordinance as bettering the lot of Papuans are put by Miles (1956:324):

It was to be partly educational, but it was to bring tangible economic benefits; it was to enable natives to pay the recently introduced taxes and to give them the means to raise their standard of living....Briefly the ordinance empowered the Lieutenant-Governor either to declare Crown lands native reserves for the purpose of establishing a plantation or with the consent of the owners to establish plantations on native land [in practice most were established on 'native land', but how consent was won is not stated]. The crop was to be shared between the cultivators and the government. The proceeds from the government's share were to be paid into the Native Education Fund while the natives' share was to be divided among them, usually according to the number of days worked.... The penalty for breaches of the Ordinance was fixed at a fine of £2 or three months' imprisonment.

In some cases special legislation was passed to compel people to carry the produce of these communal plantations over long distances. As Crocombe (1964) and Power (1:74:214-16) have shown, these plantations were not a financial success and the returns to the 'natives' were meagre - compulsion was at the same time alienating and all that kept the plantations going.

The encouragement of capitalist individualism. Apart from native plantations, some encouragement of community planting of coffee soon after the Second World War (Shand and Straatmans 1974:20) and the dubious example of co-operatives (which we consider later), the colonial administration promoted development on an individual basis, first through encouraging the formation of a 'yeomanry' (see, for example, Harding 1971:192) but mainly and more recently by helping the big peasant or the 'rural entrepreneur'.

The existence of the big man entrepreneur in traditional society is seen as preadapting such society to capitalist development. Relying again on Strathern's description (1:72b:3(5)), we can see that in the face of new
opportunities big-men begin to innovate, using their support sets when

...if instead of gathering supporters to help with ceremonial exchange, they do so to raise money for a vehicle or to begin a 'middleman' coffee buying business. Even in these cases the level of analysis at which one identifies change as occurring needs to be pinpointed. Men who use kinsfolk to support them in a new enterprise are both innovating and dependent on traditional ties to implement effectively their innovation.

But in the official view these traditional ties must be discouraged basically because they led to distributive demands (Andrews 1975:10, McKillop n.d.:8). Barth (cited in Feldman 1969:97) describes the position in the general context of the entrepreneurial model:

The occasional need for repudiating relationships points to possible connections between entrepreneurship and factionalism or social stratification. Both these forms of social division imply limitations on discontinuities of obligation and commitment. They are thus social barriers which may give strategic scope to certain sorts of enterprise, and may even be generated by the entrepreneur when the advantages he gains outweigh the cost of repudiating present relationships.

As Strathern points out (1972b:372), the Papua New Guinean entrepreneur may lose support in his community by running his business according to the rules of profit making.

Supporters may expect to be given credit in return for their assistance in financing. The entrepreneur if he is bent on profit making will turn to external agencies such as the Papua New Guinea Development Bank, and following this, 'he may possibly begin to remove himself as a leader from his own rural community and change from a nascent big-man to an incipient capitalist' (Strathern 1972b:372). Government lending is a well recognized method of lessening reliance by the entrepreneur on traditional ties. Government extension activity is another method and we will illustrate this briefly with the case of coffee. Extension policy demanded individual ownership of coffee land and efforts were concentrated on relatively few
large scale producers. McIllopp (n.d.:8) says that government policy in the early 1960s was concerned with individual land tenure and a small class of purposeful elite farmers capable of responding to the opportunities opened up to them. Groups were thus discouraged but it is of course true that many group applicants put forward nominees in order to satisfy the requirements of the gatekeeper (that is, the requirements for assistance and loans to the individual), but the continual offerings of services to the nominee on an individual basis has an important bearing on his relationships with the group. In the early stages, project receipts are paid to the nominee applicant giving his control of distribution which is normally managed to his advantage. (McIllopp n.d.:14)

Anton Bloeg (personal communication, February 1972) has said in relation to his work on the Nolins Oil Palm Project that official approval was only given for settlement by an individual and his immediate family. Groups and partnerships were discouraged. Officials from the Lands Department were most anxious that a settler not use his own bank account monies for acquiring his oil palm block or for building a house as they were concerned that him may have contributed to the account and this could give them a traditional claim on the property - instead only Development Bank loans could be used. The Papua New Guinea Development Bank policy has been to give loans on an individual basis (McIllopp n.d.:11).

Barry Shaw of the Bank has recently said (personal communication, July 1976) that many loans now go to groups but many of these groups are small partnerships. He also advises that past bank policy has been affected by the attitude of kiape, business development officers and agricultural extension officers processing loans in the field, that only individuals were 'legal'. Some large groups have been dealt with through a representative but this brings up the problems mentioned earlier (McIllopp n.d.:14).

Traditional society and more specifically those who are left behind are not quiescent in the face of this sort of development. Demands for distribution continue to be made and sorcery is seen as a sanction against businessmen if distribution seems inadequate (Finney 1973:114;
Andrews 1975:104, 112). Traditional ties may indeed predominate in the end: the crisis that attends the death of a big-man in the traditional context which we described earlier can carry over into the new setting and result in the dissolution of his business (Finney 1973:102. Epstein 1972:56-57).

**Co-operatives.** 'Colonisation...contained every expression of communal life and every action that seemed to limit or threaten its grip, irrespective of the forms of the native political society and the colonial regimes that organised their domination' (Balandier 1970:160).

The co-operative was basically a device used for containing group ventures. It represented a response of the colonial administration to an upsurge of group economic activity after the second world war:

> The war's disruptive impact and its demonstration of European technical achievement on a colossal scale had evoked a new ferment amongst Papuan peoples which could be dangerous or beneficial, according to the channels into which it was directed. Tactically the Administration's assistance [with co-operatives] was designed to guide political forms of resistance into proper channels. (Legge 1956:218)

An apparent example of this is the Tommy Kabu movement officially labelled a 'cargo cult'. It aimed at a certain degree of independence from the colonial administration. The administration began to intervene in the movement's affairs and found among the people, as it was put by the Department of Education (1951:211),

> ...instead of a ready acceptance (which it was reasonable to expect) the reaction was one of surprise that the Administration should interfere when there was already a man completely capable of managing their affairs.
The government managed to slow down activities of the movement 'until a co-operatives officer was free to assist' and all important activities were suspended, awaiting the long delayed arrival of a co-operatives officer (Mhaher 1961:77 77. Generally, co-operatives were 'sold' to villagers by officials emphasizing that incorporation as a co-operative was the way to legal recognition and credit (Interview Acting Registrar of Co-operatives, September 1971).

In terms of making profits, co-operatives in Papua New Guinea have generally failed (Committee of Enquiry into Co-operatives 1972:22; Division of Co-operative Development 1974:24).

The official view of co-operative failures...is that misappropriation of goods and funds is the main cause; this cause is to be found in the social environment in which co-operatives operate. The paradigm case is of the co-operative store manager giving stock to 'relatives'. (Fitzpatrick 1975:282-83)

On the contrary we would argue by way of the following quotation that the cause can be traced to official action. This quote relies on the Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Co-operatives (1972)

The [Co-operatives] Division seems to have a control syndrome. The co-operative is an alien institution which requires new skills for its successful operation. Given a commitment to co-operatives, an initial lack of skills on the part of the people means that much of the work is done by government officers. This, in turn, leads to a large investment in government staff — one officer for every two co-operatives operating — and to a continuing dependence on this assistance, with the result that even now the Division 'in effect makes most major business decisions for Co-operative Societies' and does much of the more routine work for them. This investment and involvement tends to make success mandatory, as a Registrar has put it, 'by registering a society, the onus is placed squarely on the Government to do everything possible to ensure that it does not fail'. To loosen control — or even to commence to do so — is to risk failures.
Hence a comment within the Department of Business Development that 'these co ops have been going for more than 20 years. How much longer do they need to be spoon fed?' (p.55) (Fitzpatrick, 1:75.279-80)

The obvious way of breaking out of the syndrome just described is education of the people in the requisite skills, yet (and perhaps indicatively) the commitment of the colonial administration to 'co operative education' has been slight (Singh 1974.182 190).

There are several possible examples of the effects of officially constrained co operation'. Bryant Allen (1975.24 25) has noted that members of the Peli Association were alienated from co-operatives because co-operatives were seen as involving Europeans telling the people what to do. Ryan (1963) has described the Tauripi Association in the Kiupi area and it can be seen as another example of how a movement was taken over by the Co-operatives Division and how this contributed to its failure. An originally dynamic and enthusiastic venture, it was pushed by officials into extended association with other groups. Later attempts to return to smaller units more in tune with traditional economic units were thwarted by officials refusing to give permission for withdrawal. McSwain (1970a, 1970b) describes the failure of the Karhar Island co-operatives, which were superimposed in 1:52 over already existing independent attempts at economic development. She emphasises that stock in-trade in the stores had only a 'distributive' value. She claims that failure in part sprang from a confusion between 'tradiotional' values and the profit motive. There is another possible explanation, that the people did understand the distinction, but were alienated from the co-operatives and so made the best out of it by effectively distributing the assets. Schwartz's description (1966-67) of not his interpretation of co-operative activity on Manus tends to support this latter view.

Official blocking of group ventures. We now turn to some more direct, usually ad hoc ways in which group ventures were constrained or suppressed.
One particular piece of oppressive labelling has been the 'cargo cult'. We have already noted the labelling of the Temne Kuku movement in this way. 'Cult' leaders were frequently prosecuted usually for 'spreading false reports' (Rowley 1972:179).

Wolters (1971-72) asserts that a power to declare cults illegal in Papua was used indiscriminately to the effect that movements that were the products of tough and innovative, if sometimes misguided, indigenous leadership were suppressed and 'in short, leadership as a relationship between a capable Papuan of ambition and his followers was abolished...'. The Paliau movement based on Manus was also labelled as a 'cult'. The local government council form was used to contain this movement. Moreley (1970:155, cf. Rowley 1972:179 n.26) notes how 'hostile' officials used this form to split the followers of the movement and thus were successful in weakening it.

Crocodile (1971a:103) describes the official opposition which confronted the Era Farm Mechanical Project - one of the case examples of a community corporation described in the Appendix.

The participants were mountain dwellers and had no land suited to mechanical cultivation. They therefore purchased unoccupied land from a local group in the Larkham valley, with governmental approval. It was later discovered that the land had previously been bought by the government. Government land in the area was mainly leased to foreign plantation operators and, owing to what appear to me to have been fallacious assumptions about the capacities and 'proper place' of New Guinea villagers, the government would not give the mechanical farming group any secure title. They were in fact under periodic threat of eviction. There was considerable conflict between officials directly concerned with the project, who were extremely sympathetic and some more senior officials, who were decidedly hostile. After years of uncertainty the project was formally denied the use of adjacent unused government land for a cattle and coconut enterprise, and was given only an annual permit to occupy what it was currently using. Foreign planters in the area were given extensive government local finance for development but the mechanical farming group was not. With such serious operational frustrations it is surprising indeed that the project survived at all.
Reay (1969:66) has suggested that the wish of the Tabgi people to have a large coffee co-operative was not granted by the administration because this might put expatriate coffee buyers in the area out of business and adversely affect the confidence in the administration of investors in the area.

Direct legal restrictions were also of some significance. Section 5 of the New Guinea Companies Act did, until the early 1960s, prohibit the incorporation of a company for most purposes unless two-thirds of the members were 'British subjects' and New Guineans did not come within that category. This restriction was to keep out other foreigners and was not explicitly aimed at New Guineans at all (Wolters 1975:143 44) but it is indicative of the 'proper place' of New Guineans. Added to this was a prohibition which made participation in profit-oriented group activity illegal if more than twenty people were involved and if the group were not legally incorporated. This effectively made New Guinean group ventures illegal.

A similar prohibition exists today in section 14(3) of the Papua New Guinea Companies Act. It seems never to have been directly enforced but it did and does have an effect. First, loans to a group whose members are in breach of this sub-section cannot legally be recovered and so this is a rather obvious disincentive to lending to such a group. Secondly, the Secretary for Law at the time, in an interview on 21 September 1971, said that he had advised the government extension officers responsible for 'business development' that they could be committing the serious offence of conspiracy under the Criminal Code if they assisted groups whose members were in breach of sub-section 14(3). The head of the Department of Business Development probably in reference to this sub-section warned an officer who assisted the Duang Maxi Truck group 'that the operation of Duang Maxi Trucks may be considered illegal and that if a prosecution is made he [the officer] cannot expect departmental support' (Andrews 1975:148).
There were and are many other legal restrictions on group ventures but it would be disproportionate to detail them here. A particular case may convey the general idea. This case (Public Solicitor's File W413) involved the purchase by the people from the surrounding area of Tulu and Havalen plantations in 1957. Title to the plantations could not be legally transferred to them as unincorporated groups yet a drawn-out shuttle of the matter between various government departments did not result in the discovery of a suitable legal form of incorporation. When the matter was last checked in October 1971 the people still did not have title to the plantations.

Recent laws have somewhat relaxed these various legal restraints. The Companies (Amendment) Act of 1974 has made things slightly but not considerably easier for companies whose members are Papua New Guinean. The Business Groups Incorporation Act and the Land Groups Act both of 1974 provide for the incorporation of 'customary', 'business groups' and 'land groups'. A considerable number of group ventures are now incorporated under these laws.

The Academic setting

In criticizing 'evolutionary theories' of development, Lloyd (1973:68) notes that with them;

A greater concern is shown for the internal structure of the traditional society, at an early stage of development, than for its relationship with the external environment. Change is seen as deriving from processes within the structure rather than as a response to environment and demands. The study of the development of traditional into modern society takes precedence over an examination of the conflict between the two.

Thus Epstein (1972:46) sees 'primitive capitalism' and the prominent position of the Tolai-big-man as somewhat naturally leading to the emergence of the modern entrepreneur.
The big-man took to new economic opportunities like a fish takes to water. It was in his own interest to explore new fields of profitable activities so as to enhance his own status and prestige. In doing so he did not only increase his own wealth but helped to raise the standard of living of all his followers.

But it seems that distance is eventually placed between the big-man and his followers.

Some of the more efficient ngala [big-men], such as for instance Todungan of Kofitok, were quick to realise that joint ownership of capital assets, such as trucks and copra driers, was a different matter from ownership of land. Accordingly there has been a noticeable trend away from large corporate, towards smaller partnerships or individual ownership (Epstein 1972:51).

In fact Epstein has repeatedly asserted (e.g. 1:68:52-53, 70) that the individual entrepreneur arises out of the unsatisfactory nature of traditional based group organisation thus involving the advent of a new stage ('investment period') of development. The external environment is hardly considered at all. This orientation seems to fit her personal prescriptions (1972:50):

...'the egalitarian philosophy underlying the big-man system militates against the establishment of a hierarchical structure in business organisation which is essential for success in business ventures [our emphasis].

It should be mentioned that Salisbury's main work on the Tolai (1970) resulted from research carried out at about the same time as Epstein's. Salisbury does take considerable account of the wider environment and perhaps as a result (but it is difficult to say because Salisbury is vague in this context) he sees the group as having a strong and legitimate continuing function (1970:270-76).

In a similar vein, Finney (1973) sees Gorokaq society, especially the big-man system, as 'preadapted' to capitalism (1973:x-xi). Finney does
mention factors from the external environment and he does occasionally and briefly mention conflicts between 'business leaders' and the people, but his dominant concern is 'entrepreneurship' and how it smoothly emerges from the traditional setting. He assumes that it is the only significant form of Gorokan development and he disregards 'mere examples of clan business or communal enterprise' (1:73.107). In the early stages 'business leaders' relied on their groups for contributions. The resulting demands are distributive and had for business so the leader puts distance between himself and his group, bands together more with fellow 'business leaders' and obtains support from them. For Finney this simply, and 'probably represent[s] different stages in the evolution of Gorokan capital formation practices' (1973.77).

Crocombe's interesting survey of group ventures in the Pacific area (1:71a) evaluates 'success' in commercial terms and on that basis he mostly finds internal group organization wanting. Elsewhere but in the same context and with emphasis on the unsatisfactory nature of traditional based group organization, he makes the striking point that:

The immediate transition from corporate action based on traditional types of organisation (which were adapted to serve very different ends) to corporate action aimed at maximum production, may be too difficult for the essentials of one inhibit the essentials of the other. Thus there may be a case for having a phase of peasant proprietorship during which the basic behaviour and thought patterns associated with corporate action of the traditional kind are modified.

Such a 'phase' may indeed be an 'infinite pause' or represent 'terminal development' as Howlett (1973) has suggested.

Examples could be multiplied but we hope that those we have discussed are the most significant. The short point is that the 'internal' academic perspective described in our earlier quotation from Lloyd (1:73.66) sees capitalist individualism and the creation of a peasantry as arising somewhat naturally out of the traditional setting out of its strengths or its
inadequacies or out of a combination of the two. Although such a perspective is important, it is a distortion unless these developments are also seen very directly as a product of the wider colonial environment. In that broader view it can be seen that enduring group organization is repressed or controlled in the colonial situation.

Internal organization

Studies of group ventures usually put the main emphasis also on internal aspects and "failures" of groups are characteristically described in such terms. Emphasis may be placed on traditional animosities among members, personality conflicts, leadership crises, peculation, inefficient management, too much credit given to members and inability of people used to traditional relationships to discern and meet the new needs of market relations. Another preoccupation is with lack of written records. (This may have some significance but it is generally overlooked that people in the past have been able to retain detailed memories of significant exchange transactions.) What we briefly consider in this section are some aspects of internal organization that are usually overlooked in studies of group ventures.

Information about the aims and aspirations of members of group ventures and about the general ethos of the venture is particularly scant. One aspect of the necessity to include this emphasis in future studies is described well by Lantzer (1972:33) in another context where she says, "The ways in which members idealise their groups and their beliefs in social unity are important for an understanding of the kinds of processes they seek to create."

In some cases in Papua New Guinea, it is possible to see a cohesion that is born of people who face outside opposition. Part of the ethos is then an affirmation of unity and identity against external pressures. The Long androva and Lap cases (see Appendix) illustrate this and some of the larger scale movements fit this ethos such as the Hataungan Association, Makaitis Welfare Society and the Yeli Association. One of the few cases where any
attempt is made to discuss the internal objectives and ethos of a movement is the description of the Olu-bus experiment, a self-help communal development project near Limin in the Western Highlands. The description is supplied by the leader of the project Philip Kaman (1975). Both this description and the one following on Boera come from people who are much concerned with ideology and it is not clear to what extent the description fits the aims and aspirations of members generally. Olu bus is a comprehensive, intentional community and its creation involved a radical reorganization of traditional society. The problems that induced these changes were

social, political and economic, artificially created for us by white imperialists interfering with our way of life. I can say this without reservation. . . . the white colonial administration, the white planters and the white missionaries constantly put pressure on the village people and bothered them so much that we almost lost faith in ourselves and thought we were second rate human beings or animals. (Kaman 1975:20-22)

Kaman says that coffee growing for the majority of the people in his area was actively discouraged through the white Highlands Farmers and Settlers Association members pressuring the Department of Agriculture officers to halt their coffee growing programme. These factors as well as an unsuccessful tea growing project made the people begin 'to realise the need to organise themselves and to learn to be selective and critical of anything being imposed upon them from outside' (Kaman 1975:31).

Mobilization of the Olu bus people, says Kaman (1975:31), took the following directions:

a) people were encouraged to come and live in a centralized settlement;

b) membership preference was given to the immediate clan, and then to others outside.

c) each household was given a bank passbook and a target to save 4500 between December 1971 and the end of 1974.
d) no individuals were to run retail shops in the vicinity of Glu bus;

e) collective farming was to be undertaken and for the good of the community individual holdings were to be released;

f) business ventures were to be communally operated;

g) an adult literacy programme was to be introduced and undertaken voluntarily;

h) schooling of the children was to be sponsored by the community as a whole;

i) opportunity of participation was to be increased for women;

j) consumption of alcohol was to be restricted mainly to special occasions approved by the community;

k) decisions were to be reached on a basis of consensus.

A board of directors was appointed. There were sixteen members, three of whom were women. Directors were responsible for decision making, programme initiation and implementation, backed by the general consensus. The board worked with the rest of the members. In a list of achievements up to 1975, Luman gives the mobilization and participation of the people precedence in importance over economic factors. He says (1:75:38), 'I desire a type of society which places human beings first and money second'. Glu bus receives considerable aid from outside from the Wahgi Council, the Rural Improvement Programme, the Department of Business Development, the Western Highlands Area Authority, and some technical assistance as well as help with community education from the University of Papua New Guinea.

Glu bus is an ambitious and radical project. Many of the original ideas have been modified - for example an attempt to institute pay for individual effort has been made. The official view now is that Glu bus is a 'failure', but the reasons given for this are varied and it has not been possible at
this stage to form a true picture of the present situation.

Another case of aims and ethos being articulated by a participant is the Koera Association as described by Moi Avei (1976) - a participant in and leader of this group in the Central Province. The activities of the group are partly economic oriented with involvement in passenger trucks, trade stores and fishing. There is a strong ideological and cultural emphasis as well. Avei indicates the directions which the movement is taking in the forms of collective struggle, collective sharing and collective celebration. More routine forms of the Association are the day to day village work programmes, community cricket matches, and the village cinema on Saturday night. More generally there is an emphasis on community education, based especially on community participation. This community education is seen as a political act, and it is concerned with all aspects of life, 'as much concerned with eating fish as with going fishing'. Avei speaks of conflict as well as consensus within the movement, but he sees these in a dialectical sense, as having a function of giving the movement life and vitality - 'without the frictions there is no movement'. It is interesting to note how Avei emphasizes the fact that while people were working together to achieve a particular aim, the Association has run smoothly, it is only when the aim is achieved that quarrels start over distribution.

Loyalty of people is often seen as something that may decline through particular characteristics of a group. Turner (1976) speaks of failure of group loyalty as being a major problem of co-operatives (Singh 1974), but sees not to say that it is hard for people to remain loyal to something with which they cannot identify. We have already tried to make this point in the context of co-operatives. Interviews with members of the Chimbu Coffee Co-operative and a former secretary of the Co-operative, Vincent London, in June 1973, bring a new light on the related argument that 'the people had inflated expectations'. In regard to this venture, people did have inflated expectations, but these were generated by co-operatives officers who were selling shares and trying to make the venture a success from the administration point of view. Vincent London and several members
alleged that people were told by one officer that if they showed their membership cards they would be able to have free rides in co-operative trucks and aeroplanes.

Another aspect of internal organization that we suggest needs more attention is that of member participation. We have earlier emphasized the importance of participation in traditional organization and we have distinguished the community corporation as a form largely in terms of member participation in production. The evidence does tentatively suggest that group ventures will prove economically viable where members, or a significant number of them, participate in production for the venture. The ventures described in the Appendix appear to have been and to remain economically viable but the significance of member participation varies among them. As we mentioned earlier Langandrowa and Mabula are strong cases where most of the members participate (and they are both in the same area) Irap and Iwoave are less strong but with a large number of members participating.

A perhaps related aspect of internal organization is the importance of leadership. We saw earlier that businesses of the big man variety can lack longer term stability and dissolve on the death of the big man/leader. Some studies of community corporations have placed emphasis on the importance of particular leaders (Wilson and Garnaut 1963:121-22; Macgregor 1971:15) but it is perhaps significant that there have been leadership changes in all four community corporations described in the Appendix (but the role of leadership in Mabula is not so strong) and in all cases the venture has survived, admittedly not without some trauma in the case of Irap. Perhaps member participation in production and some degree of formalization in the organization have a stabilizing influence and serve to an extent to de-personalize or institutionalize leadership.

Further research

There are other instances of group ventures that could possibly support these arguments. Many of the groups now taking over plantations are
operating them and engaging in production on a communal basis. We list here some further examples of apparent group ventures taken from the work of the Village Development Task Force; although most of these ventures are fairly new and we know little about them there are some indications that they may be relevant to the community corporation perspective.

In the Northern Province there are:

**Lumotu Oro Incorporated** - set up with general aims to encourage cultural, social, educational and communal activities, to promote technical improvements and village industries, and to allow the people of the area access to their primary resources, while protecting them from foreign exploitation.

**Kiovo Development Association** - with the general aims of improving the social and economic condition for the people through village resettlement, stores and transport services.

In the Western Highlands:

**Molika Resettlement Scheme** - to improve living conditions through self-reliant activities, for example, piggery, community centre and water supply.

In New Ireland:

**Kolombi Association** - which has established a village market, built two boats, collected several thousand kina, and applied for a loan. Activities aim through collective support, to improve living in the villages, to assist families with finance and labour, and to provide savings and loans service.

In the Central Province:

**Kola a Development Group** - with a general aim of promoting development.

**Kima Landowners Association** - aims to encourage village development programmes, to promote harmonious and productive land use, provide welfare services, and engage in business activities for the general benefit of the members.
Gebadi Village Group - a group of five villages aiming to buy tractors and trucks to improve farming methods and marketing conditions.

Nubuna Association - these people wish to establish a rubber-processing factory.

In the Southern Highlands:

Nom Association - non-profit oriented group which seeks to improve village life with village level economic enterprises, for example, a trade store, and projects, such as piggery and digestor system.

Tari Peoples' Association - aims to create better marketing and transport services, and to provide a peoples' savings and loans service.

Conclusion

We have tried to show that, at least in the colonial situation, group ventures are beleaguered. The response of traditional society - and perhaps of 'the Papua New Guinea way' - in this situation tends more to the promotion of capitalist individualism and the creation of a peasantry rather than to enduring group ventures. Yet there are elements in traditional society that have served and continue to serve as a basis for group ventures. In particular the community corporation combining traditional and new elements of organization and involving its members in production may be a particularly resilient form of group venture. We do not argue that in terms of any development strategy the community corporation is an answer in itself. Rather, we have suggested that for it and group ventures generally to form a sound basis for development, wide-ranging changes are needed in the current legacy of the colonial situation.
Appendix: case studies

Irap Mechanical Farming Project

Sources: Crocombe and Hogbin (1963) and Crocombe (1971a)

The Irap mechanical farming project was initiated by a man called Jumbuk in about 1951, after he had been away from his area for some time working in the police force. In 1952 he resigned from the force and returned to Irap. Capital was raised from the sale of vegetables and individual contributions were recorded. In five years with contributions from about 41 villages with a total population of some 2,000, Jumbuk had raised about £43,144 (Crocombe 1971a: 182). The contributing villages have been described in three categories:

a) the 'core' villages which initiated the project, raised most money and participated most in production.

b) 'supporting' villages situated further inland which participated to a smaller extent.

c) 'peripheral' villages whose financial contribution was regarded as a loan rather than investment.

The participants were mountain people and thus did not have suitable land for mechanical cultivation. With approval of the government they purchased land from the Gabsonhek people of the Markham Valley. Then the group was subjected to severe government obstruction, as we have described earlier. They could not get secure title, were threatened with eviction and eventually were given only an annual permit to occupy the land they were currently using. While white planters were given government loans, the Irap project was not (Crocombe 1971a: 183).

Tractors were bought and a trade store was opened almost from the beginning. When repayment was offered to the peripheral villages for their
loans many refused as they preferred to remain associated with the project. One village (on the ground that it was the home of one of Mumbuk's forebears) saw its contribution as a donation.

Almost certainly counter obligations have been set up by the grant of this assistance, but these will be handled within the context of other rights and obligations and are no doubt best left to the people to work out, as only they are aware of the total complex of transactions within which these are fitted (Crocombe and Hogbin 1963:12).

Five trustees, including Mumbuk, were appointed group representatives in 1950. A document incorporating a form of constitution was signed by people from the villages which initiated the scheme and these were seen as the people with the voice in the project. It is understood that this document was not officially recognized by the administration. The leadership has emphasized new forms of work organization. There was a hierarchical organization of management but managers consulted with workers before making a major decision. There were frequent meetings of the core membership. It seems that Mumbuk had no claim to traditional rank, and other possible links between the traditional leadership system and that of the project were not explored by Crocombe and Hogbin. The work force totalled some 400 and 100 were employed per day on a roster basis. A small proportion of the workers worked fairly regularly but the population of the project camp fluctuated continually. Many people have had little formal education and there was little specialization in the labour force. Returns to labour were flexible in that the workers sometimes received reduced amounts when large expenditures were to be met and, although Mumbuk received more than the others, there was no appreciable difference in his life style. While Mumbuk was undoubtedly a man with significant leadership qualities the group did not collapse when he left, although some division resulted.

Crocombe (1971a:186) says that the group 'has now been formalised as a marketing co-operative which transports and sells the individually produced coffee and tobacco of its members'. Perhaps this suggests
that member participation in production has become less significant. Hartmut Holzknecht advises (October 1970) that when he last visited the project in 1973 some community-based work appeared to continue but on a much reduced scale. He suggests that the policies and actions of the Lands Department which we described earlier could be responsible for this.

As Crocombe and Bogbin point out, Iram is not an isolated instance of successful economic group enterprise in Papua New Guinea. Crocombe (1971a:185) lists five factors which he believes have contributed to the success of Iram:

a) the project was not on the participants' traditional land. He makes the interesting remark that:

I know of no major successful group enterprise in the Pacific which is on the lands of a participant sub-group. I know of many on other lands (1971a:185).

b) the project followed a model of organization

c) there was a sufficient degree of cultural coherence.

d) there was a strong persistent collective motivation.

e) there was a large number of people anxious and able to participate.

*Mbuke Plantation*

Sources: Crocombe (1965), Crocombe (1971a) and McCree, or (1971)

The purchase of Mbuke plantation partly resulted from a trend observed by Crocombe (1965:7):
Few Europeans are interested in acquiring such properties [small or remote plantations], and prospective vendors must look to indigenous groups and individuals.

More directly it can be related to a drive for economic development first expressed in support of the Paliau movement and later the formation of a co-operative.

The group was, in formal terms, highly organized. Personal leadership was played down and leadership by committee emphasized. There was a high turnover in offices of leadership to give members a chance to hold office. An annually rotating management committee was set up. Work organization was highly organized. Members were paid according to production. The number of bags of copra brought in were recorded and this was used as a basis of later payment. Firemen were paid a fixed rate by each labourer per bag of green copra. Management costs were low, the manager receiving only a token wage and the directors no honoraria. Participation in labour was voluntary, and some would have liked more work. The normal work force on the job had been about 35 and the total adult male population was 115. Usually labour rotated about every three months. Additional income was earned by making copra from individually owned trees, sale of shells, fish, canoes, pottery and handicrafts.

The importance of equality and participation were recognized when the Mbuke people rejected the idea of running the project on plantation lines with members providing a monthly paid work force and with an annual distribution of the profits. People felt that the sense of participation would have been lost as there were not enough jobs for all members to be employed. Secondly, they did not want to give too much power to management (Crocombe 1965:14).

A few individuals favoured redistribution of land when the loan was paid off, but the large majority opposed this. Other problems had been encountered for example, the confusion which resulted from conflicting advice and assistance of some co-operative officers (McGregor 1971:46).
Again in 1969 the M'buке people felt that the co-operative had too much control over their venture and in September 1969, the co-operative society divided into the M'buке Consumer Co-operative Ltd and the M'buке Co-operative Plantation Ltd. Despite these problems, as well as changes in leadership, M'buке has survived successfully.

Langaンドロ ва Plantation

Source: McGregor (1971)

Langaンドロ ва, like M'buке, has brought material benefits to the people since resettlement. The M'buке people who were poor and landless were greatly affected by the Balang movement. After a split within the movement in 1950 the supporters of Balang's rival, Lukas Chauke, wished to leave and earn a cash income if they could obtain land. After many delays Langaンドロ ва was eventually subdivided and the people applied for blocks.

The Administration intended each block to be worked individually by the lessee, but Lukas and the M'buке that had always intended the land, if they obtained it to be worked collectively by the group (McGregor 1971:3).

Except for purposes of identification, the land is worked communally and the division into blocks disregarded. By June 1958 some 260 people had left for Langaンドロ ва. Copra production began in July 1957. The M'buке rejected formal co-operative principles of organization and adopted their own form of organization, selling directly to the Copra Marketing Board. Group cohesion seems to have been strengthened by hostility to other groups and problems encountered with the administration while trying to obtain land (McGregor 1971:2:3). Agriculture is based on the effective integration of communal and individual work activity. Copra is gathered communally at appointed times but individual gathering is allowed at other times. For communal tasks such as clearing and replanting it is compulsory for the whole community work force to assist. These tasks have not been neglected.
The Mouk strongly distrusted co-operative societies 'and this dislike is intensified by their sense of group identity and independence' (1971:5).

Business organization is complex and the Mouk people decide what individuals receive and how the payment is to be made. McGregor says (1971:14):

'The most significant aspect of the type of business organisation is that the Mouk people run it and own it and feel wholly responsible for it'.

(This may be contrasted with the early feelings of the M'buke people who felt that the co-operative was not controlled by them.) Communal work is organized by the management. Generally there is a high degree of organization with fifteen formal leadership positions. The leadership and guidance of Lukas Chaulka is stressed by McGregor (1971:19) but recent communication with Michael Cholai (17.8.76) reveals that the strong sense of participation and identity persists despite a change of leadership.

**Movaee Sawmill**

Source: Wilson and Garnaut (1963.74.166)

The Movaee Sawmill is a large business located about 100 miles west of Port Moresby. Movaee generally refers to a large complex of two villages, Heavala-Keatoare.

In 1948 the Heavala people were committed to the idea of a sawmill, partly stimulated by the idea of the Toaripi Association. In 1949 the Heavala Co-operative Society was formed and it had begun to ship copra to Port Moresby soon after formation. There was $41,200 in its account. Following numerous setbacks and discussions the two villages decided that their best chance to set up a sawmill was to amalgamate.

It was not until June 1963 that the mill was installed and ready for production. By 1966 the Movaee Co-operative Society had 414 members.
There were four directors from Hevalu who did not take management as seriously as the three directors from Ekatoare. In general the focus was on Andrew Hasu (from the latter), a determined and dynamic leader, and on the co-operatives officer.

In terms of its organization the venture consciously departed in many ways from traditional forms. The Board of Directors was formally constituted and the power of management was particularly emphasized. The frequent presence of the co-operatives extension officer doubtless promoted compliance with formal organizational aspects. Samson Kaipu advises (August 1976) that the mill currently employs about 100 people and the composition of this work force changes considerably. He also advises that workers usually come from the 'member villages. Most workers are formal members of the co-operative. Matters affecting the workers are discussed with them before management makes a decision.

The project has seen much conflict and many difficulties and there has been a degree of lessening of participation because of the wide powers employed by Andrew Hasu and the co-operatives officer. Andrew Hasu identified with the 'European' way of doing business and thus in many respects has cut himself off from the group. However in many ways the people have exerted choice in their own output and manner of production, especially logging. Log supply is in fact a major production bottleneck. Logging pay is on a piece-work basis and labour at the mill and the logging area, as well as casual labour, are paid by the day.

Kaipu has also advised that the mill has survived management changes and is still functioning successfully. Although this project for several reasons has experienced considerable difficulties, tension and imposition of outside control, the Hevalu people feel that the project is theirs and that they are able to participate.
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