

Problems of Rural Development in Kilenge, Papua New Guinea

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INTRODUCTION

Recently independent Papua New Guinea shares many of the features characteristic of other developing nations: reliance on foreign aid² to sustain government expenditure, rapid population growth, limited industrial enterprise, considerable cultural diversity, few skilled indigenous personnel, and growing regional disparities in income and education and services.

However, Papua New Guinea is fortunate in that it lacks the extreme poverty which troubles many Third World regions. Its population density is relatively low, and the people are largely self-sufficient in food production. In contrast to many former colonies, urbanization has proceeded at a fairly slow pace in Papua New Guinea, and village peoples have

1. As always, I am greatly indebted to my husband, Martin Zelenietz, for the valuable insight which has helped to refine my arguments. Additionally, I must thank Len Gertler, Nicholas Pano, Sally Lerner, and Simon and Rita Saulei for comments and encouragement, both in good measure. Finally, I cannot forget the help and kindness of the people of Ongaia who give it all meaning.

2. According to the National Public Expenditure Plan (P.N.G., 1978), some 40% of the operating budget is financed by a direct grant from the Australian government.

clung tenaciously to traditional practices and beliefs. While wage labour migration is a common enough phenomenon, it tends not to result in a rapidly growing urban population: in a process of circular migration, migrants return to their home villages after a few years of work in town (Grant and Zelenietz, 1980). These features, including a renewable resource base of considerable potential, enhance the possibility that Papua New Guinea may establish some level of self-reliance if population growth can be controlled. But the government must also attempt to raise the level of income-earning exports significantly if the importation of foreign aid is to be reduced.

To attempt to relieve some of the country's problems and ensure a moderate level of economic growth, the government of Papua New Guinea has adopted a policy for rural agricultural development (P.N.G., 1976; 1974). The concern with rural development is not entirely new; it characterized administration policy under the Australians as well.³ However, despite repeated, and often intensive, efforts to bring development to village people, the expansion of cash crop production has been quite limited in many areas. While many Highlanders have profited substantially from their crops of coffee, tea and pyrethrum (Moulik, 1973), coastal peoples have often shown a considerable reluctance to

3. In 1965 the World Bank prepared such a development strategy for Papua New Guinea (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 1965).

increase their production of cash crops (Harding, 1971).⁴

In this paper, I will examine some of the reasons for the lack of development in one area of the province of West New Britain. Perhaps this analysis, illustrated by several case studies of failed development projects, will demonstrate the onerous task confronting development planners and others who hope to see Papua New Guinea develop to the point where it can be assured of some degree of self-reliance while offering its people an improved standard of living. In the concluding remarks I suggest that careful planning and the consideration of local needs, desires and aspirations might avoid, remove or undermine impediments to development in this region.

DEVELOPMENT IN THE KILENGE AREA

Kilenge⁵ is the coastal area of the north-west tip of the island of New Britain (see Map 1). The Kilenge people, some one thousand in total, inhabit three contiguous villages: Ongaia, Portne, and Kilenge. They are relatively self-sufficient swidden horticulturalists, cultivating their crops

4. I must note, however, that the Tolai of East New Britain have attained a relatively high level of development. While much of their success results from entrepreneurial activities, they also produce much of the cocoa grown for market (Epstein, 1972).
5. The research for this paper was carried out in the village of Ongaia, in the Kilenge area of Papua New Guinea, from March 1977 until January 1978 with Martin Zelenietz (McMaster University).

of taro, yams, sweet potatoes, manioc and bananas on the slopes of Mount Talave. Primarily the Kilenge see themselves as gardeners (farmers), but they also fish and hunt, and they keep domestic pigs, dogs and fowl.

Because they have been in contact with whites since the turn of the century, the processes of induced change are not new to the Kilenge. Various central governments have introduced new political institutions and leadership roles. The Germans initiated the process whereby New Guinea villagers participated in the broader economy by imposing a head tax. During World War II the Americans stimulated economic aspirations by flaunting their fantastic technology and wealth. The administration has consistently encouraged cash crop production. In the Kilenge area, such economic influences have resulted in large scale planting of coconut trees.

COPRA PRODUCTION

Most villagers have ready access to cash only through the production of copra.⁶ Almost everyone owns, or can collect from, several coconut trees. Through copra production anyone can earn an income because the processing requires little skill or technology.⁷ However, when we consider the size

6. A few villagers are employed by the local mission, and others receive small irregular remittances from relatives working in town. There are also infrequent opportunities to earn some money carrying goods or copra.

7. All that is required for splitting the coconuts is a bush knife and a sharpened stick. Drying the nuts is only

of the community (about 200 households), and the number of mature coconut trees in the area (a minimum of 30,000),⁸ we see that relatively little copra is marketed.⁹ Annually thousands of coconuts are left to rot, and by all accounts the potential copra resources are grossly under-exploited. One reason for such limited production may be the fact that people have minimal cash needs: they are required to pay low annual taxes (\$10 per adult male) and public school fees; they buy utensils, soap, razors, clothing, and tobacco; they buy luxuries such as rice, tinned fish, flour, tea and sugar. Their gardens produce enough to feed everyone, and cash is needed only for the 'extras'. Consequently, a family can easily manage with the cash earned from the manufacture and sale of a fairly small amount of copra, perhaps fifty pounds a month (an investment of ten to twelve man-hours of labour). There is little incentive to produce more than is necessary, and people certainly find no intrinsic satisfaction in producing copra.

lines of trees for their children or grandchildren.

slightly more complicated. In good weather the copra may be sun/air dried on a rack outside the house. In inclement weather, or for large quantities of copra, a drier can be used: it consists of bamboo or wire racks over a wood fire.

8. The most recent census of coconut trees to which we had access (the Patrol Report of 1966) indicates that there were approximately 20,000 bearing and non-bearing trees in the area. Based on planting rates and the average number of trees owned per family, our estimate is a conservative attempt to update the earlier figures.

9. We lack accurate figures on the amount of copra sold, but would estimate that it is not likely more than 200 tons per year, including that produced by the mission.

Large-scale copra production did not really begin in Kilenge until the 1950's and 1960's, when the Paramount Luluai¹⁰ of the area, a powerful leader now dead, ordered all men to plant lines of coconuts. This leader was a very progressive man, concerned with village development, out to impress the administration, and determined to make the people participate in cash cropping. He told people where to plant their trees, without regard to who owned the land to be planted, and he forced them to get rid of their domestic pigs until the seedlings had properly taken. But now that this powerful man is dead, people worry about the ownership of their coconuts: to whom do the trees rightfully belong? (To the men who planted them, or to the owners of the ground?) Because of this insecurity of title, there is little effort to clear between the plantation lines, or to regularly collect from the trees. With the Paramount Luluai gone, and with a subsequent lack of effective leadership in the villages, people are under no pressure to plant new lines of trees for their children or grandchildren.

Erratic shipping has always been a problem for Kilenge copra producers.¹¹ Until recently when a shipping line

10. Such leaders were appointed by the Americans and Australians immediately following World War II. Zelenietz is currently preparing a doctoral dissertation in which he analyses contemporary problems of leadership in Kilenge.

11. In the 1960's, Burns Philp scheduled a ship to stop at Kilenge at six week intervals. Patrol Reports show that the Captain was reluctant to call at Kilenge

began to stop regularly, there was often no way to get copra out to the market. Several times people heeded calls from Mission and government personnel and village leaders to produce copra, then watched it rot on the wharf awaiting transport that seldom came.

Most people dislike copra production. When the Germans first visited the area in the 1890's, they took men away to work in the copra plantations of the Gazelle Peninsula, engendering a resentment which still lingers. Villagers not only associate copra production with the unpleasant memory of forced labour, but they also begrudge the time it robs from the highly valued garden work. People will make copra only if they need money, or if it is business day and they are required to work for their group. Only a few villagers are large-scale producers, and while their fellows may hold them as exemplars of ideal behaviour, few people really envy the hours put in shelling and breaking nuts, and tending the drying fire.

World market prices also affect levels of copra production. When the market price is high and stable, people will produce copra; when the price drops to low levels, production is dramatically curtailed. Lows have a lingering after-effect: even once prices recover, production tends to

because of the small amount of copra to be loaded. The same reports note that the Kilenge were loath to produce copra because the ship was an irregular and infrequent visitor.

remain at a low level for some time.

The Kilenge rarely save cash earned through copra production; instead they spend it within a few days at local trade stores.

While many stores and small businesses have set up operations in Kilenge, few are entirely successful. In fact, only one, a trade store operated privately by an immigrant to the Kilenge area, seems to produce any profit. The others, set up by 'business groups' under a government scheme aimed at village development through cooperative enterprise, have probably served more to discourage development than to direct it. The 'business group' is a classic example of a good idea that went wrong.

BUSINESS GROUPS

The Paramount Luluai organized the first business group in the Kilenge area in the early 1960's. It was a cooperative, called the Society, designed to market copra and to acquire goods, or 'cargo', for sale in the village. All the men of Ongaiia and Portne villages joined.¹² The Society is still functioning, but it has never been very successful. Several times it has been on the brink of bankruptcy, and only hasty refinancing has been able to save it. There is no

12. Most men of Kilenge village chose not to join because they had a tradestore in their village through which they were able to market their copra.

evidence that the business makes any profit, despite the volume of its transactions and its high prices. No dividends have been paid to members in years. Its account books are a disaster, and there is much local speculation that the storekeepers are taking the profits off the top in high salaries.

In the early 1970's there was another round of business group formation, this time with the administration encouraging kinship groups to pool their labour and resources to increase production. The government hoped that such cooperatives would reduce tensions over land use for cash cropping, since group-owned land could then be planted with group-owned, instead of individually-owned, crops. Additionally, joint savings might lead to capital formation and potential reinvestment in new village endeavours. The villagers of Ongaia formed two groups, loosely based on kinship lines. Each group set up a savings account for the proceeds from copra sales, built a copra drier, and set about producing copra. Member-families donated nuts and labour to the processing effort. Proceeds from the copra sales went directly into group coffers. As each group built up substantial savings, it aspired to open its own trade store. In neighbouring villages, several groups started stores (with the financial aid of kinsmen working in town),¹³ but in Ongaia

13. In Portne, a village of the same size as Ongaia, seven kin-based business groups were organized. However, by 1977, four of the groups had failed totally and their

neither of the groups was so successful. People became discouraged when they continually contributed to group efforts, but got nothing in return.

For the business groups which operate trade stores in other villages, the economic situation is precarious. Members make copra to sell in order to buy goods for their stores. The goods are then available for sale to the whole community; no special discount is arranged for group members. When the cargo is sold, the members make more copra to buy more goods. The process is endless: make copra, buy cargo, make copra, buy more cargo. The observer asks himself: where is all the accumulated capital going? It appears that it is, quite literally, eaten up. Storekeepers are giving goods or money away; there is never any true profit. In the lingua franca (Neo-Melanesian Pidgin) any gross receipts are called 'profit', but proceeds are seldom sufficient even to meet expenses. Perhaps the pricing of goods is inadequate to cover costs. At any rate, none of these group-owned stores seems to make money, and the members are locked into a never-ending cycle of production without capital accumulation. Why do they keep producing, even if only at a fairly low level? They do it for the prestige which accrues to those who own a trade store. For the Kilenge, a trade store is a symbol of success, even if it sits empty without stock for eight months of the year. People see

members had joined the three remaining groups.

stores as one of the greatest accomplishments of the white man's culture; stores owned by Europeans are always full of cargo. Anything one could ever want can be found in the trade store. For the sake of their trade store, people are willing to work for no profit, although not often enough to substantially increase village production.

In the village of Ongaia, the two business groups lack trade stores. Members feel the shame of being left behind by other villages which already have several trade stores operated by business groups.¹⁴ They accuse their sons and brothers working in town of being tight-fisted and failing to contribute the needed capital for the opening of a store. However, it is not through want of trying that capital accumulation has failed in Ongaia, but through the foibles of particular individuals, and unfortunate twists of fate. A few years ago, Ongaian men working in Vunapope and Rabaul decided to pool their money to finance a trade store in the village. Each fortnight they contributed money from their pay; the senior man of the group handled the collection. About a year later, men in the village asked for the money because they were ready to start the store. However, the

14. The Society trade store sits on Ongaia land and is more or less controlled by Ongaians. However, it is seen as 'belonging' to all of its members, and thus is not 'Ongaian'. It is not properly 'of the village' although it is 'in the village'. There was an abortive attempt in 1977 to purchase all the shares owned by non-Ongaians so that the village could at last have its own store.

freezer and fishing net, and planned to make its fortune by marketing the deep-sea fish its members would catch. Unfortunately, this dream also turned into an expensive nightmare when the boat motor broke down and the parts to fix it were not readily available.¹⁵ To add insult to injury, the group dissolved during our stay in Ongaia, amidst allegations of theft and corruption. One man, echoing the whispered concerns of many, left the group saying he was tired of constantly making copra for the group and never getting anything back for his effort; he took with him ten sacks of marketable copra and kept the profits as payment for his labour.

Indeed, there seems to be little incentive, other than the shouted orders which are commonplace on business day,¹⁶ to work for the business groups. Men, women and sometimes children, contribute labour and coconuts, but get no material return: no discounts at the trade store, no dividends, no capital accumulation which can be put to a useful purpose in a productive investment. The potential for capital accumulation, increased production, and concerted group effort toward development, which the administration foresaw for the

15. In the brief period while the motor boat was operative, the freezer broke down and several catches spoiled before they could be shipped to market.

16. The former Paramount Luluai established Thursday as "business day", a day when people would work for the Society or smaller business groups, but not for individual profit.

business groups, has fizzled in Kilenge. Men who are seriously intent on economic development in the village have started their own copra enterprises, either as individuals or as a small group of siblings, and have abandoned the business groups as a hopeless waste of effort.

ALTERNATIVE CASH CROPS

On several different occasions there have been well-intentioned attempts to reduce reliance on copra as the only cash crop. New crops have been introduced in an effort to diversify, but have had a startling lack of success. The three case studies which follow illustrate the problems.

Cocoa

In the 1960's the administration tried to encourage the planting of cocoa (cacao). Agricultural representatives gave people seeds and advice about how to tend the plants. However, in the first season a disease attacked the bushes, and many of the plants died. Pigs uprooted and destroyed bushes planted near the village. People never planted new cocoa because their fellow villagers were not willing to fence the omnivorous pigs¹⁷ (regardless of repeated rulings by the Local Government Council requiring the enclosure of domesti-

17. When pigs are fenced they have to be given more food since they are unable to forage during the day; people are reluctant to create extra work for themselves by restricting the scavenging activities of their pigs.

cated pigs).

Also, there were problems with the planning of the cocoa project. No provisions were made to establish a fermentary in the area, despite the fact that cocoa beans cannot be marketed until they are processed. In fact, villagers informed us that the agricultural officer had begun the project on his own initiative, and his superiors subsequently castigated him for poor planning.

Chili Peppers

In another development project in the mid-1970's, the agricultural officer distributed seeds for chili peppers with assurances that people could earn almost \$3 for a small bag of the sun-dried product. The plants required little care, and could be planted in gardens with other food crops. Consequently, many families joined the project and planted the peppers. When the first crop matured and dried, some villagers took the peppers to the agricultural extension officer at Cape Gloucester, the government station. He told them he would have to find out what to do with the product; since he had been given no directive to purchase the peppers, he would have to check with headquarters before acting. Villagers returned home with their bags of peppers. After having gone to the trouble of planting, harvesting and processing the new crop, they were greatly disappointed and angry to learn that there was no way to market the product.

This episode severely undermined faith and confidence in the agricultural officer; most people will no longer believe a word that he tells them, nor are they willing to participate in any projects which he initiates.

Betel Nut

In one of the few indigenously-organized projects to develop a new cash crop industry, several villagers decided to market betel nut. In Lae city, where there is a constant demand for the stimulant, a seller can get a good price for fresh betel. Once shipping from Kilege to Lae became regular, several men went to town to sell their betel. Their kinsmen and neighbours also cut betel so that there would be plenty to market, and everyone might be able to earn some easy cash. But, when the vendors returned, they had little cash in their pockets; they had spent the proceeds of all the sales. Those who had sent betel for sale gained no monetary returns for their efforts. Villagers were disillusioned. They are now convinced that the only way to receive money from the sale of their goods is to go to Lae to sell the betel nut themselves. Unfortunately, the high price of passage on the ship makes individual marketing junkets impractically expensive. Thus, the potential of a highly lucrative crop is stymied by the logistics of marketing and the inherent corruption potential of the kinship networks.

From these examples we see that problems of plant disease, marketing, processing, and village custom have differentially contributed to the failure of various attempts to introduce new cash crops and new institutions for production into the Kilenge area.

OTHER DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

Most of the time, energy and money invested in attempts to develop the Kilenge area has been aimed at potential cash crop industries. However, there have been sporadic efforts to stimulate development by other means.

Craft Production

For a brief period in the mid-1970's village artists were able to market their crafts in a scheme organized by a local entrepreneur. Earlier visits by anthropologists and museum personnel collecting ethnographic specimens convinced villagers that there was a demand for their artifacts. The enterprising businessman encouraged his kinsmen to produce art objects, and carried them to town for sale. There is some question as to whether the artisans were ever reimbursed for their labour. In any event, the entrepreneur took ill, and attributed his ailment to sorcery employed by villagers jealous of his successful salesmanship. Fearing his life, he stopped marketing local artifacts, although he frequently claims to be contemplating renewed action. Con-

sidering the quality of local craftsmanship and the growing market for 'primitive' art, there may be great potential in the development of a craft industry in Kilenge.

Village Market

In 1976 the Catholic Mission at Kilenge set up a 'market' where villagers could sell surplus produce on Saturday mornings. The Church believed that villagers would be able to earn some cash by selling to government employees at the hospital, school, and perhaps even to those at Cape Gloucester, eighteen miles away. Vendors paid a small stall fee which went into a village fund. Unfortunately, the market failed to live up to its promise. Purchases by outsiders were minimal, and villagers ended up selling to each other; cash simply circulated within the village, and no new capital was received. The market, which villagers saw as a visible symbol of urbanization and development, was unsuccessful. In April 1977 the priest dismantled the stalls to re-use the lumber for other purposes and the market ceased to function.

Animal Husbandry

The Mission has the only commercial pig herd in the Kilenge area. Very few villagers raise pigs for sale at market. The demand for pork is high in the urban areas of Papua New Guinea where a large pig can fetch as much as

\$300. However, traditional attitudes toward the use of pigs prevents most people from attempting to market their animals. Pigs are essential objects of prestation and exchange in traditional activities. While they may be individually owned and tended, kinsmen have a claim on their ultimate use. To offer a pig for sale in the market is to deny one's obligations to one's kin which few men or women will do. Even a lucrative market has not resulted in a re-evaluation of priorities.

At one time the Mission tried to initiate a cattle project in Kilenge. The priest planted special grass and beans for fodder, and purchased wire for fencing. He expected people to keep their pigs out of the pasture area, and requested help with the fencing. When pigs uprooted all the beans and people neglected to build the fence, the priest withdrew his financial and moral support for the project. No cattle came to Kilenge, but a small herd is thriving at the patrol post at Cape Gloucester.

WHY DOESN'T DEVELOPMENT WORK?

The general consensus of opinion of villagers, Mission and government personnel, and visitors to the area is that the economy of the Kilenge villages is static. In a Papua New Guinea electric with the idea of development, Kilenge

goes nowhere. Cajoling from Mission and government personnel convinces villagers that they should blame themselves for lack of progress. But previous efforts to 'develop' seem to have sapped people's desire to try again, and have resulted in a latent cynicism which may be difficult to overcome.

Virtually every week at one of the village meetings, the local government councillors or village elders harangue the people about the need for development,¹⁸ for business. There is evidence of great concern to 'bring the village up', and councillors frequently issue orders to villagers to produce copra to make money. Even the organization of the work week reflects dedication to the principle that village people should contribute to development: Monday is set aside for unpaid government labour,¹⁹ and Thursday is 'business day' for copra production for the business groups. However, despite the talk, and regardless of the organization of the work week, copra production remains at a low level, and lit-

18. In Pidgin, 'developmen' is almost purely economic (see Counts, 1968), although it may be seen to result in social or political changes. While villagers may see development as inclusive of social as well as economic services, they perceive their own role in the process primarily in terms of productivity. Although in the most general sense, I see development as an attempt to improve the standard of living in such a way that it becomes self-sustaining, I have tended to follow local parlance in the use of the term in this paper.

19. As Fisk (1975) indicates, this contribution to the national economy should not be underestimated.

tle is done to improve the economic base of the village.

The observer must ultimately ask himself: why do people talk so much about development, as if they truly craved it, set aside two days for government and business work, create 'business groups' and other organizations to stimulate production, yet, at the same time, seem to dislike 'business' work, neglect their coconut plantations, and never succeed in raising their production beyond a minimal level? The answers to these questions should become clear in the discussion which follows.

PROBLEMS WITH IMPLEMENTING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN KILENGE

DELIVERY

As is so often the case in planning, many problems arise in program implementation at the local level. In Papua New Guinea, personnel sent to local patrol posts may have little training or experience. Often they find themselves quite overworked or unable to deal with traditions very different from their own. They may lack the information, equipment and goods which they need to adequately fulfil their duties. Any shortfall experienced in project implementation reflects on the local representative personally and on the government in general, but it is the local officer who becomes the most

obvious culprit in the eyes of local people. Villagers are often unaware of the problems which the development and agricultural officers face, and they are unknowledgeable about the chain of delivery of which local representatives are only the terminal link.

Many of the projects which local government representatives must implement require an infrastructure which is missing at the village level: transport to market, developed technology, and expertise. The institutional outlets which are available are frequently unreliable. In a most notable example, administration officials repeatedly encouraged Kilenge people to deposit their savings in the bank branch established at the patrol post at Cape Gloucester. Occasionally the bank representative would come to the villages to collect peoples' savings for deposit. When queried about the infrequency of his visits, he responded that he came only when there was insufficient cash in the till to cover government workers' paycheques. If people wanted to take money out of the bank they had to make their way the eighteen miles to the patrol post; on arrival at the station they often discovered that the bank had no money to give out because it had disbursed all of its cash to honour the paycheques of government employees. Needless to say, the Kilenge retain little faith in the legitimacy or reliability of such institutions.

All told, the delivery of programs and plans at the local level is probably the weakest link in the development planning process in Papua New Guinea. Combined with local customs, inadequate infrastructure can frequently become an intractable barrier to the forces of change and development.

VILLAGE TRADITIONS

Anthropologists who studied Pacific cultures often remarked that Melanesians were perhaps the primitive world's best business men, people who could turn a profit on any transaction. There was speculation that Melanesians would make fine entrepreneurs because they had such a firm grasp of market principles. However, observations have not always borne out the optimistic predictions. Traditional market principles still operate in many parts of Melanesia, including the Kilenge area, but they have not been transferred to the realm of the cash economy. The same men who were great successes in traditional exchange networks have often proven inadequate entrepreneurs.²⁰

In traditional exchange networks, wealth was not normally amassed to be held for lengthy periods; it was rapidly redistributed. In distributing wealth through ceremonies or gifts, the 'big man' (Sahlins, 1963) could accumulate debts

20. But see Epstein (1972) for an example of a relatively successful transformation among the Tolai of East New Britain, something of an exception to the generalization.

for future repayment, as well as intangibles such as prestige and respect. Wealth was for investment in consumables, intangibles and promises. The power of wealth was not in the owning, but in the giving (Mauss, 1970), for by giving the owner forced other people to acknowledge his superiority. Thus, wealth was constantly in circulation in most Melanesian communities; every man was in debt to some people while a creditor to others.

When Melanesians, for example the Kilenge, enter the cash economy, they carry with them many of these traditional ideas about the utility and the function of wealth. They accumulate capital, invest it in a business, but then proceed to utilize the investment for consumption and the accrual of prestige. The assets of the enterprise may be distributed in the same manner as traditional wealth, with a promise to repay (although at no definite time) and the tacit acknowledgement of the superiority of the entrepreneur. While traditional wealth exchanges generated further wealth transfers and the giver eventually received his due return on goods given, in monetary exchanges the obligation to reciprocate has proven less powerful. This may be due partially to the type of products involved in distribution via the new enterprises: these products are often utilitarian goods, such as foodstuffs, utensils and clothing. Traditionally, a kinsman would freely provide another with whatever food or other utilitarian items he needed; such a

gift between kin incurred no debt. Thus, the modern definitional problem for the entrepreneur and his kinsmen becomes 'what is the nature of this gift: is it utilitarian/non-debt creating, or wealth/debt-creating?'²¹ The businessman who distributes free food and other products to his kin may hope for, but cannot be certain of, later reciprocity. Unwilling to deny his kinsmen access to the goods he controls, the storekeeper can never break even on his sales. Rather than utilize his capital to create more capital, he disburses it in favour of non-capital productive returns.²² In order to keep the enterprise functional, the owner must constantly contribute his own labour to produce new capital to invest in his business. Eventually he tires of the ceaseless and unprofitable labour, and the business lapses. It is a common enough pattern, and a problematic trend in Kilenge.

Many of the reasons for the failure of agricultural and/or business development are to be found within the village, particularly in the lack of incentive for progressive endeavour, and in the beliefs which relegate such activities

21. Even the distinction between utilitarian objects and wealth items can be blurred, as is the case with carved bowls from the Siassi Islands. Such bowls figure in most exchanges of wealth, but are also essential vessels for the serving of food. Thus, although an object may have utility, it may also be classed as a wealth item.

22. Levy (1953) discusses various problems of capital formation in non-modern societies.

to second-class status. In Kilenge, the only respectable work is garden work. Through the production of food, men and women earn the respect accorded adult members of society. Garden work is a duty, an obligation, an onerous task, but also a pleasure. On the other hand, the production of copra has few merits in traditional terms. It is menial labour, with no redeeming social value other than the money it earns, and it is still viewed as an irksome task which whites imposed on native peoples. Copra production is boring and tiresome work which gives no satisfaction. Furthermore, the prices received for copra are out of the control of the worker who is at the mercy of the market (or, more immediately, of the agency which markets his product).

Traditional work patterns require seasonal pooled labour and cooperative effort. Kinsmen and neighbours help each other in the tasks which require intensive labour, such as the clearing of new gardens. As conjugal pairs, men and women form integral mutually-dependent labour partnerships. However, the labour requirements and practises of copra production have not conformed to the customs of garden work. Copra production is usually the business of either an individual or a nuclear family. It can be an inherently anti-social, anti-community endeavour, as it isolates the worker interested in cash acquisition. Only since the introduction of 'business groups' has copra production been transformed into a potential group enterprise, but even cooperation has

not significantly altered attitudes toward the production of copra, nor the amount produced. Perhaps people learned to see copra production as an individual or nuclear family business in the years before business groups were organized. The initial enthusiasm for the cooperative effort of business group production dissipated as it became obvious that the business group organization consumed resources but never produced anything. People were willing to participate in cooperative garden work because in that effort they received returns for their labour: food, respect, conviviality, and the reciprocated labour of other participants. But, in contributing his labour to group copra production, the worker never gets equal returns; his input is always greater than what he can expect to receive.²³ A man's incentive to produce for the group is limited by the perceived return for labour invested, and his incentive to produce for himself or his family is limited by the perceived cost of such anti-social activity and the perceived loss of time for leisure or other pursuits.

It is also clear that traditional kinship obligations have a significant impact on the incentive to increase production. Throughout Papua New Guinea, the phenomenon of the 'wantok system' can dampen the enthusiasm for development.²⁴

23. Men complain that they work hard and diligently while others around them 'goldbrick'. In non-traditional work groups the standard of individual production eventually becomes that of the least productive member.

Your wantok has the right to ask you for aid, and you have the obligation to give to him if you are able. The proceeds of labour should be shared with kinsmen or wantoks who are in need. No man who has more than he needs for his own immediate requirements could conceivably deny a kinsman in need. If he were to do so he would lose his self-respect, and people would complain of his miserliness. In traditional times this network of obligations served an essential purpose: it guaranteed an equitable distribution of food and goods, especially in times of need. It meant that your kinsmen were obliged to look after you, and you them. When applied to the new cash economy, the wantok system operates much the same way. A man who makes copra and collects his earnings is subject to the requests of kinsmen. If he has any surplus money, he is obliged to share it. People see little incentive to produce extra copra because the earnings from it will have to be distributed among needy kin, with the extra labour invested for nought. Furthermore, needy kin incur no true debt; although they may be politely requested to return the aid at some point in the future, they are under no obligation to do so. Kinsmen should share their goods freely and not expect to be fully and equitably reimbursed. Even a hard worker finds it difficult to accumu-

24. The concept of relatedness implied in the wantok system includes and assumes obligations to kinsmen, fellow-villagers, fellow-clansmen, and those who speak the same language.

late capital because he may be required to reinvest any savings in non-productive gifts to kinsmen.

For the operators of small businesses, the problem is compounded. Kinsmen may walk into a trade store and request gifts from the storekeeper. The storekeeper faces the dilemma of having to choose either to be a social outcast among his kin by refusing a legitimate request for aid, or to become a failed entrepreneur by acceding to the endless demands. It is not easy to run a business; the social bind makes it difficult for native people to operate successful enterprises in their own villages.

Furthermore, under the guise of the wantok system, much theft and corruption go unpunished. Unscrupulous men can steal from their kinsmen with impunity. Manipulation or improper dispersal of resources frequently frustrated efforts by groups of kinsmen to accumulate capital. However disgruntled, kinsmen do not complain openly about such flagrantly unsociable behaviour as the misappropriation of group funds. Charges are very seldom brought to the police because no one wants to be responsible for sending a kinsman to jail. While there are other means (such as sorcery) through which cheated individuals can bring justice to bear on thieves and scoundrels, one unfortunate experience can disincline men to re-attempt a pooling of capital. Because they fear they will be cheated of their money, people find

it difficult to cooperate in order to accumulate the capital necessary to finance the development of the village.

Sorcery is another practice also contributes to the inability to accumulate capital and to initiate or sustain successful enterprises. Throughout Papua New Guinea, it is the tool of jealous and envious men. Those who succeed in business may become prey to the anger of jealous men who often employ sorcery to defeat a rival. Any unusual illness or death in the family of a successful man can be attributed to the workings of envious men, and may discourage the entrepreneur from continuing his financial pursuits. Fear of potential illness or death through sorcery serves as a disincentive to increase production beyond the minimal level necessary for immediate cash needs. It also may limit innovation in new and potentially high-status enterprises; many men are reluctant to put themselves into the entrepreneurial spotlight where they become visible targets for sorcery attack.

Local patterns of consumption and investment are not very conducive to development. People produce copra to earn cash to buy consumables. They save little of the cash earned in the village, and invest only a minimal amount of the privately-earned cash in capital-productive enterprises. If cash is 'invested' in anything, it will be in items for use in traditional practices.³⁵ When people invest cash in trad-

itional exchange networks, the returns will only be intangibles such as prestige. They expect returns in kind for traditional items, such as pigs given in ceremonial exchanges, but minor items, such as garden or purchased food, do not engender debts. The principles which govern traditional exchanges are not directly applied to cash transactions. Only traditional wealth can create a truly obligatory debt, and thus ensure a return on investment. People will not attempt to accumulate large sums of money to invest in village exchanges because there is no guarantee whatever that the money will be returned. Villagers use money only to buy goods for personal use or for investment in the accumulation of prestige during ceremonial cycles where they do not expect a tangible return (Zelenietz and Grant, no date). In contrast to the situation in other areas of Papua New Guinea, cash is not even an essential part of the brideprice payment in Kilenge. Where cash is included in a brideprice, it is seldom a large amount, and, because of the nature of the transaction, it cannot engender a debt.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Kilenge villages lack the progressive leadership required to stimulate development. Until 1973, one determined leader had managed to motivate people to plant and harvest coconuts, produce copra, build the government road, and try new crop experi-

25. For example, rice, tea and sugar may be purchased for consumption during ceremonies.

ments. But, since his death, no effective leaders have emerged. Through forcefulness and his ability to inspire fear, the old leader could make people produce copra even when there was no guaranteed market for their product, present leaders cannot increase production despite improved marketing opportunities. The Kilenge themselves believe that a lack of strong leadership prevents development in their area. Their philosophy is that people have to be pushed (by a leader) to work for the improvement of the village. It seems unlikely that a concerted effort toward village development can begin unless effective leaders arise to direct the activities. Traditional patterns of leadership in Kilenge differ from the usual Melanesian ones where leadership status is almost wholly achieved. In Kilenge, leadership positions are ascribed, and continuing insistence that the leaders come from the proper ranks, as well as that they be of a certain minimum age, means that the range of leadership candidates is severely restricted. Fear of sorcery also hampers the activity of potential leaders who generally take a low profile and seldom make serious attempts to consolidate their positions. Without strong leaders to ensure that people devote additional labour to cash crop production and other forms of rural development, the village economies remain static.

THE ROLE OF RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION

To this point I have mentioned wage labour migration only in passing, yet its role and influence in village development warrants brief discussion.²⁶

Wage labour migration from Kilenge began as early as the turn of the century when the Germans were seeking workers for their plantations in the Gazelle Peninsula (Rabaul). There were relatively few volunteers in the early days of recruitment, but, as villagers became dependent on steel tools and enamoured of twist tobacco, cloth and tea, more men were tempted to migrate. Contracts lasted two or three years, with the bulk of the pay given at the termination of the work period. Migrants returned to the village laden with gifts for their kinsmen.

After the Mission established a post in Kilenge in 1929, most migrants were recruited to work at the Mission headquarters at Vunapope. The missionaries encouraged wage labour migration as a way to civilize the native, to make a Christian and a hard worker of him. Native peoples saw it as a means of gaining access to Western goods, especially tools and tobacco; villagers encouraged single sons to migrate because they depended on remittances for cash to pay taxes.

26. See Grant and Zelenietz (no date) for an analysis of wage labour migration from the Kilenge area.

After the Second World War the contract system ended, migrants became responsible for housing and feeding themselves and they found it increasingly difficult to save. Rabaul replaced Vunapope as the focal point of migration because the Mission couldn't compete with the high wages and the opportunities for experiencing urban life offered in town.

For the past twenty years, 20% to 42% of villagers have been absent from the village of Ongaia at any given time. In 1977, our census of the village indicated that 35% of all productive adults,²⁷ and 43% of all the productive adult males, were absent, most for purposes of wage labour. Most of the migrants are young single males; women migrate much less frequently and for shorter periods. Almost all of the men residing in the village migrated at some time in their lives; the average duration of a migration was six years, although most migrants return sporadically for visits. Circular migration is the norm in Kilenge: migrants leave with the intention to return to the village. Very few villagers leave permanently.

Why do people migrate? Most analyses of wage labour migration situations tend to stress the economic aspects of the phenomenon. However, it can be demonstrated that, for

27. Productive adults are defined as men and women who have finished primary school, and are able to contribute to their household's production.

the Kilenge urban migrant, wage labour is barely a paying proposition: he spends as quickly as he earns. Remittances of cash and goods seem to have been declining steadily since the mid-1960's yet, despite the lack of economic return, parents still countenance migration. Migration behaviour has become an accepted social tradition for the Kilenge: a rite de passage for young men. It keeps young men busy whereas in the village their labour is often superfluous. Wage labour teaches them the value of work. In town a man must work to eat. More importantly, it enables older men to control the younger men since the length of a man's sojourn in town is determined largely by his elders. Older men encourage youths to migrate, then, berate the returning migrants for their ignorance of village customs and traditions. Finally, urban migration may serve a latent function in that it limits overcrowding in the village and restricts pressure on resources.

In many native communities, returning migrants play a significant role in social change and in village development. This is not the case in Kilenge. Urban migrants often return with skills and expertise which could contribute to village development. But the traditional social order limits their contribution: only senior men have the right to speak at public meetings and to lead in village affairs. Villagers ignore any suggestions for development made by recently returned migrants because the proponents are seen

as too young and unwise to give advice. Since migrants are rarely able to accumulate savings, they are seldom in a position to individually finance their own projects. Thus, their ideas can never bear fruit.

The only positive developmental function which may be attributed to urban migration in recent years is that decreased remittances have necessitated a certain level of copra production. Years ago, sons would send cash to cover annual tax payments and school fees in the village, but today villagers must manufacture enough copra to sell to pay their taxes.

COMMENTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Why do the Kilenge talk so much about development, but do so little to bring it about? They are pragmatic people, not given to supporting cargo cults or other non-empirical means to achieve their goals, yet they have not managed to significantly improve their standard of living or their level of production for export. They share the ideal of wealth and success through 'development' (the message of the administration), but they do not believe that the ideal can be easily transformed into reality; certainly their previous attempts to accommodate the transformation have had little result other than disillusionment and cynicism.

At this point, it may be pertinent for us to ask ourselves whether the Kilenge really need economic development. After all, it can be argued that they have limited cash needs, that they are relatively self-sufficient (so that more cash cropping would simply increase their dependence), and more importantly that there may be little moral justification in expecting them to increase their labour in production of goods which are luxuries for foreign markets. But, by the same token, we have to remember that this is the twentieth century, and Papua New Guinea is an independent country which is striving for some measure of economic self-reliance. We cannot turn back the clock so that people in the village can return to a state of "primitive affluence" as it has been called (Clunies Ross, 1971; Sahlins, 1972). The Kilenge are not willing to give up their steel axes, cotton clothing, imported tea and sugar, hospital, mission, or school. They have come to regard some of the artifacts and concepts of Western culture as their own. If they hope to keep such paraphernalia, they will have to help their government pay the costs. Unless cash crop production, light manufacturing (crafts), or animal husbandry can be stimulated at the village level in areas like Kilenge, Papua New Guinea can never pay its way in the world without a substantial reduction in the living standards of its people.

The failure of efforts of the past decade to bring development to Kilenge have frustrated and alienated villagers

who participated in ill-fated projects. Men who planted cocoa and chili peppers, or produced copra which they couldn't market, believe that they have wasted their time. They feel that government representatives have lied to them or tricked them, and they will not be fooled again by promises of wealth and success. Thus, new development projects may have been undermined before they can even be drafted, let alone implemented. Villagers now distrust the very possibility of village development. Past disappointments have led many to be fatalistic: their villages are going, and can go, nowhere. It is obvious that, unless the administration takes definite positive measures to try to improve this scenario, the Kilenge people cannot hope to contribute to the development of Papua New Guinea.

Although there are several recommendations that can be offered to development planners who wish to initiate action in the Kilenge area, past failures will be difficult to overcome, and it will take patient and dedicated local officers to convince villagers to pay more than lip-service to the need for development. Several of the recommendations which follow may also be applicable to other areas of Papua New Guinea.

PRE-PROJECT EVALUATION

Before proposing any local development scheme, planners and researchers should visit the community to ascertain local needs, local preferences and the capability of local government representatives to implement programs, given the resources they have at hand. They should design projects for each particular local context: unless properly adapted to needs and capabilities, a project has only a limited chance of success. Planners should explore alternative strategies for development where 'tried and true' methods have failed. The techniques and concepts of social and environmental impact assessment could prove to be valuable pre-planning tools for development planners.

EDUCATION

There are many ways in which a development workshop program could be a useful planning aid. Many villagers are not aware of ^{the} implications of development. In a workshop forum, they could discuss with government planners issues of concern. Why does Papua New Guinea need development? Why have previous efforts to develop the Kilenge area failed? What are the impediments to village development and how can they be overcome? How can development be better suited to village conditions? How can the symbols of development (such as the trade store and the market) be distinguished from the process of development itself? The workshop could provide

training in useful skills. Officials could educate villagers for self-help projects, and inform them of alternative technologies which are simple, available and inexpensive enough to be appropriate for village use. Innovative suggestions from villagers for projects which may have economic potential should be encouraged. A forum for meaningful discussion of the issues and problems of development could help villagers to understand their present dilemma, and might provide a foundation on which they could build a viable structure for their own village development.

Sorcery, the wantok system, consumption practices, rapid population growth, and the lack of leadership may continue to obstruct attempts to develop the village. But an effective workshop might be able to disseminate information which could encourage initiative and gradually overcome some of the internal limitations to development.

PERSONNEL AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Government personnel should be well-trained and equipped to supervise projects. They should be carefully chosen for their assignments, because particular personal and cultural characteristics may create special difficulties for them in some locales; for example, coastal peoples tend to regard Highlanders with suspicion and distrust. Personnel native to an area may, however, experience local unwillingness to accept their expertise in important matters; the native son

seems less wise in the eyes of his kin than does the stranger. Thus, the effective development officer must be 'distant' enough so that he is credible, but not from an area so distant that he seems foreign and foreboding.

Success may well be frustrated unless infrastructure and support systems are available during the implementation of projects or plans. ~~projects will be frustrated~~. Projects should be small-scale and simple, so that elaborate coordination and processing are unnecessary and marketing facilities will be readily accessible.

There should be some revision of existing credit schemes for village development. In the past, business groups had little difficulty in securing loans to open trade stores, while more innovative projects could not be financed. Credit officers should carefully assess the market potential for any project (especially new trade stores, given the record of existing enterprises) before approving financial assistance.

POST-PROJECT ASSESSMENT

Within a year after a project begins, and at frequent intervals throughout the duration of the plan, planners should make an evaluation of the progress of the scheme. They should re-evaluate the viability of the project and determine whether they can alleviate any problems, or make

any improvements. An attempt to coordinate future projects with existing ones is essential if rural development is to be an integrated, long term process. Finally, frequent visits and discussions with government planners can provide a means whereby villagers have an input into development programs; it also guarantees that the planners will be aware of the real problems of implementing their ideas at the local level.

Of course, in encouraging the development of cash cropping or other industries in Kilenge, government officials must be cautious not to let food production fall, for if local communities lose their self-reliance in food production then 'development' will prove ultimately self-defeating. The purpose of development is to augment local and national revenues, not to replace food self-sufficiency with greater dependence on purchased goods.

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