

## MICRONATIONALISM IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA\*

One of the most remarkable aspects of social and political change in Papua New Guinea in the late 1960s and early 1970s was the proliferation of spontaneous local movements, differing in their origins and specific objectives but sharing a broad concern with the achievement of economic, social and political development through communal action. Some of the movements emerged from a background of local cult activity; others were established ostensibly to organise local opposition to particular policies of central government but came to assume wider objectives; still others were specifically motivated by a desire to achieve development through local community action; a few emerged to press for a geographically more broadly based regional autonomy.

In an earlier paper (May 1975) a preliminary attempt was made to provide a brief survey of the more significant of these movements and to place them in some sort of social, cultural and historical perspective. The term 'micronationalism' was introduced in that paper to describe a varied collection of movements which displayed a common tendency, at least at an ideological or psychological level, to disengage from the wider economic and political systems imposed by colonial rule, seeking in a sense a common identity and purpose, and through some combination of traditional and modern values and organisational forms, an acceptable formula for their own development.

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\* This chapter brings together material from the introduction and conclusion to *Micronationalist Movements in Papua New Guinea*, published as Political and Social Change Monograph 1 in 1982.

In employing this term to describe so disparate a group of movements it was our principal intention to draw attention to the convergence in objectives and organisational style of movements with often widely divergent origins and in particular to emphasise their common tendency towards disengagement or withdrawal (but not, as a rule, formal secession) from the larger, national community. Although most of the movements described possessed a loosely defined ethnic base, many of them cut across linguistic and tribal boundaries and few placed much emphasis on ethnicity, some even specifically seeking a multiracial membership; for these reasons (and also because 'ethnicity' is at best a slippery concept,<sup>1</sup> especially in the culturally complex situation of Melanesia) we avoided the term 'ethnonationalism', which has been employed by some authors to describe somewhat similar movements in other countries.<sup>2</sup> We also rejected the term 'primordial' (Shils 1957), which has been attached to comparable movements in other new states but generally seems to imply greater internal coherence and intensity than most Papua New Guinea movements have possessed; similarly, terms such as 'communal association' and 'voluntary association', used to describe groups in Asia, Africa and Latin America, seemed to suggest more clearly defined membership and organisational structures than was the case with movements we described for Papua New Guinea in 1975.

An anatomy of micronationalism is attempted below; for the present, the essential characteristics of the movements we have described as micronationalist might be summarised: (1) membership is based on community or region and is typically fairly loosely defined; (2) objectives are universalistic but place major importance on broadly based and generally egali-

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<sup>1</sup> For some cautionary comments on the use of this term see various papers in van den Berghe (1965), especially that by Mercier; Connor (1973); Cohen (1978). Also see Heeger (1974:88-94).

<sup>2</sup> And by at least two authors (Premdas 1977 and Griffin 1975) in reference to movements described in May (1982).

tarian 'development'; (3) ideologically (if not always in practice) emphasis is on achieving objectives through communal self-help, rather than through dependence on that colonial creation, 'the state'. It is in this last sense that we speak of 'disengagement' and 'withdrawal' (and by implication distinguish micro-nationalist movements from pressure groups and political parties<sup>3</sup>). At the same time, although we have included in the category 'micronationalist' some movements which might be described as 'separatist' (see below), micronationalism does not imply political separatism in the usual sense of that term (cf. Griffin 1973, 1976; Premdas 1977; Woolford 1976:chapter 11); nor does political separatism necessarily imply micronationalism.

By way of further clarification it might be useful to say what we have not included within the ambit of micronationalism. We have not included relatively narrowly-focused interest groups (such as farmers' clubs and cattlemen's associations), whose membership tends to be restrictive, whose objectives tend to be specific, functional and individualistic, and whose activities are primarily concerned with access to government services. We are not concerned with political parties<sup>4</sup> (though the fact that some micronationalist movements have sponsored electoral candidates does not disqualify them from our definition). Nor are we looking at 'cargo cults'.<sup>5</sup> More tentatively, we have sought to con-

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Wolfers (1970) and Stephen (1972) both of whom included the *Mataungan Association* and Napidakoe Navitu in their surveys of political parties.

<sup>4</sup> For a comment on the definition of political parties, with reference to Papua New Guinea, see Wolfers (1970).

<sup>5</sup> 'Cargo cults' might be broadly described as movements which seek to achieve a substantial increase in material welfare ('cargo') through mystical or quasi-mystical means (cf. Jarvie [1963:1]: 'Cargo cults are apocalyptic millenarian movements, primarily of Melanesia, which promise a millenium in the form of material and spiritual cargo'). Outside the more precise anthropological literature, however, the term has been attached loosely, and often pejoratively, to a variety of spontaneous local movements, many of which have had little to do with cargo expectations narrowly defined (cf. Walter 1981). The extent of a link between cargo cult

fine the term to movements which extend beyond the level of a single village or clan, thus excluding the numerous small 'village development associations' which have sprung up (partly in response to government stimulus) since around the mid 1970s. (Information on grants approved by the Office of Village Development up to 1978 suggests that there were probably well over a hundred such organisations scattered throughout the country towards the end of the 1970s.) Finally, though they are closely related to the micronationalist phenomenon, we have excluded from our definition ethnic and regional associations formed amongst urban migrants.

In retrospect, 'micronationalism' may seem an overly dramatic term to use in the description of the local movements we have identified, especially in a country which has displayed the high degree of political stability which independent Papua New Guinea has; nevertheless the term has gained some currency and we will continue to use it in this volume as a convenient umbrella, albeit one which casts a wide and perhaps poorly defined shadow.<sup>6</sup>

### **The emergence of micronationalism**

Before European contact Papua New Guinea's population consisted almost entirely of small, largely independent communities of subsistence cultivators. Within these communities social, political and economic relationships were generally close and fairly well defined. Between them, notwithstanding some extensive trading networks and enduring political alliances, relations tended to be limited.

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and micronationalist movement is a subject to which we will return.

<sup>6</sup> Gerritsen, also writing in 1975, used the term 'dynamic communal association' in reference to at least some of the movements included in our 1975 survey (contrasting such community based organisations with "class" based interest associations) (Gerritsen 1975:14). More recently, Walter (1981) has used the term 'community development association' in a similar context.

Under the impact of missions, traders and colonial administrators the situation gradually changed. As tribal fighting diminished and as plantations and commercial and administrative centres were established people began to move outside traditional tribal boundaries and to take up wage employment in the colonial economy. Later, encouraged by the colonial administration, rural villagers turned increasingly to cash cropping, producing mostly export crops whose income provided the means with which to acquire the goods and services of the modern sector and sometimes also to buy into traditional systems of status attainment. In time cooperatives were introduced as a method of promoting collective local enterprise and steps were taken to foster individual and group enterprises in secondary and tertiary as well as primary production. As in other parts of the developing world, a growing proportion of the population shifted at least temporarily to towns where they became wage earners or used established networks of kinsfolk to stay on as *pasindia*.<sup>7</sup>

Politically, the colonial administration sought to foster participation in the imposed system through local government councils at the local level and through a systematic programme of political education to reinforce the introduction of Westminster style political institutions at the national level.

The early relationship between the colonial regime and its subjects was, however, essentially exploitative. Traditional villagers and those on the periphery of the colonial society sensed an inability to bridge the gap between their own situation and that enjoyed by their colonial masters; this in turn generated a sense of deprivation and frustration which manifested itself from time to time in spontaneous local movements which sought, through a variety of means, to remove the blockages to the people's enjoyment of material wealth and power. Usually such movements were mystical and millenarian in nature but sometimes too they expressed themselves through acts of defiance

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<sup>7</sup> From the English, *passenger*; hence one who is 'carried', dependent.

against government and mission. With rare exception the colonial regime regarded such movements, loosely lumped together under the term 'cargo cults', with suspicion and hostility and frequently they were repressed under the various regulations which prescribed against illegal cults, illegal *singsing* and spreading false reports.

As in other parts of the Pacific, the experience of the Second World War stimulated the growth of spontaneous local movements seeking change: it demonstrated the vulnerability of the colonial regime, it diminished at least temporarily the status inequalities between colonisers and colonised, and for many Papua New Guineans who came into contact with large numbers of people from other parts of the two territories for the first time it brought a vague sense of national identity. It also helped to produce a number of men with a broader world view and better understanding of the process of modernisation than their elders, some of whom returned to their villages after the war with ambitious plans for social, economic and political reorganisation and improvement for their people through communal effort.

Despite the fact that many of these movements displayed a fairly high degree of economic pragmatism and political moderation (even though a large number expressed opposition to incorporation in local government councils), official attitudes towards them remained, at best, guarded. Other observers, however, recognised in their objectives and organisation a change from cargo cult to political movement, a shift 'from religion to pragmatism, from myth to self-help'.<sup>8</sup>

The record of these early postwar movements was generally disappointing. Some degenerated into a pattern of behaviour reminiscent of prewar cults; others simply fizzled out as expectations failed to materialise and popular support gradually dissipated. The histories of the two best documented movements,

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Belshaw (1950), Bodrogi (1951), Guiart (1951b), Lawrence (1955, 1964), Worsely (1957), Mead (1964) and Cochrane (1970). The quotation is from Cochrane (1970:157).

that founded in Manus by Paliau Maloat (Schwartz 1962; Mead 1956, 1964) and that formed in the Papuan Gulf by Tommy Kabu (Maher 1958, 1961; Oram 1967), are illustrative of a general pattern.<sup>9</sup>

Paliau, a former policeman, came back to Manus at the end of the war with plans for a comprehensive social, economic, political, religious and cultural transformation. His 'New Way' (*Niupela Pasin*) envisaged a break with traditional social organisation and religion, the construction of new villages, a programme of organised communal work and saving, and the establishment of schools, councils and village courts. The movement also sought to bring together traditionally conflicting tribal groups within the Manus Province. It sought cooperation with government but was antipathetic to the missions. In 1947 and again in 1952 supporters of Paliau were caught up in cargo cults which emerged in the area in competition with the Paliau movement. These cults involved expectations of a 'Second Coming' of Christ, destruction of property, and cemetery rituals; cultists had visions and experienced 'shaking'. Paliau resisted these manifestations of cargo cult but as prophecies went unfulfilled he was able to capture most of the large membership they mobilised. At its peak the Paliau movement had about five thousand supporters (around a third of the total population of Manus) and included several of the province's 25 language groups. However, with the establishment in 1950 of the Baluan Local Government Council (of which Paliau became president) and with the general failure of the Paliau movement to fulfil its economic objectives, the movement began to decline from around the mid 1950s, though Paliau went on to become a member of the House of Assembly and gain the respect of the colonial administration.

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<sup>9</sup> For accounts of similar movements in other parts of Melanesia in this period see Guiart (1951a) on the Malekula Native Company (Vanuatu) and Cochrane (1970) and Keesing (1978) on the Marching Rule (Solomon Islands).

Tommy Kabu was another whose wartime experiences inspired him to reorganise his people to improve their welfare and status. Like Paliau, Kabu was a former policeman. On his return to the Purari delta after the war Kabu set up a movement, known as 'the New Men', whose principal objective was to further the economic development of the area on an autonomous, cooperative basis. Traditional customs were rejected; new, decentralised, villages were built; produce associations were established with a view to marketing sago and copra in Port Moresby, and a *kompani* was formed and some shares issued. Income from produce sales was to be divided between returns to producers on a cooperative basis and investment in new undertakings. The movement brought together villages from several language groups and Hiri Motu, the *lingua franca* of Papua, was adopted as a common language. For a while the movement 'suspended' Australian administration in the area, establishing its own police force and village courts and organising military style ceremonies, but this was quickly and peacefully stopped by the government. Within a few years, however, it was clear that the economic programme was a failure; the intertribal *kompani* collapsed, though several supporters of the movement went into individual business ventures; and around the mid 1950s the movement seems to have faded out.

Another well documented movement, which emerged a few years later provides something of a link between the early post-war movements and those which sprang up in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The Hahalis Welfare Society was created in 1960 as a breakaway from the East Coast Buka Society established a few years earlier. The East Coast Buka Society was formed by traditional leaders in opposition to the introduction of local government councils and cooperatives; when the majority of its members was persuaded by the government to support the council, the Welfare was set up on the initiative of some younger villagers to continue the resistance and pursue development instead through local communal action. Its broader aims have been de-

scribed as being to integrate the whole community as a productive unit; to invest the group's income in an enterprise in which all would share equally; and to establish a relation of mutual respect and assistance between traditional leaders, the younger men and women with education, and government-appointed officials (Rimoldi 1976:2). Although there seems to have been a millenarian streak in the movement's activities during the early 1960s, the Welfare had a firm business orientation, being involved in copra and cocoa production and marketing, trade stores, trucks, road building and a credit union. Its leaders expounded a communalistic social philosophy – the most publicised aspect of which was the Hahalis matrimonial clubs, or 'baby gardens' – which incorporated both traditional and Western elements. In 1962, following a decision not to pay annual head tax, there was a violent confrontation between the government and the Welfare, which resulted in the arrest of the movement's leaders, John Teosin and Francis Bagai, and almost 600 supporters, most of whom were released after a court appeal. Subsequently Hahalis supporters resumed the payment of taxation and the government left the movement pretty much to itself. With the construction of a road across the island in the early 1960s, the provision of a high school, and improvements in government services, some rapprochement was achieved. In 1966 the Hahalis Welfare Society was registered as a private company. While shareholders provided a membership core, its adherents were said to comprise half the population of Buka in 1973 (that is, half of about 25 000) (Oliver 1973:153) and some villagers on northern Bougainville. Since then, and especially since the death of Hagai in 1976, the Welfare seems to have gone into decline, though it supported Bougainville separatism in 1975 and cooperated with the provincial government in the latter part of the 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For a more detailed account of the Hahalis Welfare Society see Rimoldi (1971, 1976), Hagai (1966), Kiki (1968:chapter 7) and Oliver(1973). [A more recent publication is Rimoldi and Rimoldi (1992).]

During the 1960s and early 1970s there was a pronounced acceleration in the pace of social, economic and political change in Papua New Guinea. Amongst the important elements of this were a marked increase in the absolute level of Papua New Guinean participation in the cash economy, a belated – and correspondingly rapid – localisation of the bureaucracy, and a conscious effort on the part of the colonial administration to promote a sense of national unity. Inevitably, the structural adjustments which accompanied these developments created tensions in the society and the rapid movement to self-government and independence in the 1970s served to focus these tensions, much as Geertz had described in his much quoted study of primordial tendencies in new states (Geertz 1963; also see Ake 1967).

This reaction took different forms. Some groups, displaying a higher degree of continuity with historical antecedents, turned to a mixture of mysticism and modern business aspirations, with varying degrees of antipathy towards government; these groups might be loosely described as marginal cargo cults.<sup>11</sup> Others emerged as organised opposition to existing or proposed local government councils or to large scale development projects in the area, but came to assume wider objectives. A third type of response, probably the most common, was the formation of what might be termed self-help development movements. These typically drew their membership from a small number of clans or villages and their broad and often vaguely expressed objectives were to achieve social and economic improvement through communal effort. A few groups, for whom questions of political status seem to have been particularly important, sought to mobilise a broad regional consciousness as a basis for demands for greater autonomy. The following paragraphs briefly describe some of the movements which were active during the 1970s, using the categories suggested above. But as we have argued earlier, these categories are fluid; indeed what is interesting about

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Guiart's description of the Malekula Native Company (Vanuatu) as being '*en marge du* "Cargo Cult"' (Guiart 1951a).

the movements which proliferated in the late 1960s and early 1970s is not so much their differences as their convergence, over time, on similar objectives and behaviour.

### **Marginal cargo cults**

Amongst the movements which came into being in the early 1970s two attracted particular popular attention because of their large scale, broadly-based membership, and their association with movements in which mystical practices designed to increase money or improve material conditions played an important part. These were the Peli Association and the Pitenamu Society.<sup>12</sup>

The Peli Association was established in 1971 in the aftermath of what was described at the time as one of the biggest and most explosive cults in the country's history. It quickly gained massive support throughout the Sepik provinces but following a split in the leadership and growing disillusionment amongst its members, it declined. Before its decline the Peli Association had successfully contested a national election and by-election and had taken faltering steps towards the establishment of orthodox business enterprises.

Pitenamu first came to public notice in the same year. Having its origins in the Morobe highlands and, like Peli, strong links with earlier cargo cults in the area, the movement soon won widespread support throughout the province. Although it is sometimes difficult to disentangle Pitenamu's more 'secular' from its more 'cargoistic' elements, like other micronationalist movements it expressed a clear demand for greater political autonomy – reflected in antipathy to local government and in its early self-identification with the Pangu Pati – and for economic development, to be achieved through communally supported

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<sup>12</sup> Detailed studies of the Peli Association and the Pitenamu Society are included in May (1982). [On the Peli Association, also see Gesch 1985.]

modern business enterprise. By 1976, however, the movement was in a state of decline with little to show in material terms other than a small shareholding in a foreign-owned company.

Another movement with strong linkages to an earlier cargo cult is the Tutukuvul Isukal Association (TIA) of New Ireland (though TIA in its present form might more properly be regarded as a self-help development movement). In the early 1960s there was unrest in the Lavongai Council area on New Hanover and extensive government action was taken against tax defaulters. Then in the 1964 national elections people in the area insisted on voting for 'Johnson of America' and after the election about K1000 was collected to pay for the United States' president's fares to New Hanover, where it was hoped he would set up a new administration. The Johnson Cult, as it became known, was led by young but uneducated villagers. It had no specifically cargo philosophy and emphasised work rather than ritual; between 1965 and 1967 there was some organised communal planting of coconuts as a cash crop. However, its main objective was to get rid of the Australian administration and to bring in the Americans as a means of improving the welfare and status of the people. The movement quickly attracted several thousand supporters in southern New Hanover and on the mainland of New Ireland. Its members refused to pay council taxes and boycotted government cooperatives, and there were violent confrontations with government field officers (Billings 1969). In an attempt to divert the people's energies along more profitable lines, in 1966 TIA was formed as an 'investment society' by an expatriate catholic priest at Lavongai. The Association received strong support from the cultists, as well as from opponents of the cult, and by 1967 had collected K12 000. Initially it sought development through communal copra production and development of unused land (*tutukuvul i sukal* may be translated as 'stand together and plant'); subsequently it acquired a freezer, a small sawmill, workboats, and in 1977 three plantations. In 1968 a TIA candidate easily won the national election in the

Kavieng Open electorate. Payment of local government council taxes was a condition of membership of TIA; however, many members were antipathetic to the council and this antipathy seems to have increased after 1975 when university students from New Ireland worked with the movement during a university vacation.

### **Local protest movements**

Several of the more prominent micronationalist movements of the 1970s had their origins in organised local opposition to government policies. Amongst these may be listed the Napidakoe Navitu of the North Solomons (Bougainville) Province, the Mataungan Association of East New Britain, the Nemea Landowners' Association of the Central Province, the Koiari Association of the Central Province, the Ahi Association of villages near Lae, and the Musa Association of the Northern (Oro) Province.<sup>13</sup>

The establishment of Napidakoe Navitu was the outcome of a series of public meetings held at Kieta in 1969 to protest the government's proposed resumption of Arawa plantation and press for a conference on other land problems associated with the Bougainville copper mine. Subsequently it represented the people of Rorovana and Arawa villages in an unsuccessful legal action against the government's resumption of land and in the successful negotiation of compensation. Navitu, however, assumed objectives beyond the immediate issue of land. Its main aims were said to be the economic, social and political development of Bougainville, political autonomy, and better education; a supplementary list of objectives included the unity of all racial groups and political and religious bodies on Bougainville, promotion of traditional culture, maintenance of respect for marriage and the stability of the family, early self-government, and

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<sup>13</sup> Detailed studies of Napidakoe Navitu, the Mataungan Association, the Nemea Landowners' Association and the Ahi Association are included in May (1982).

the nomination of candidates for election to the House of Assembly. The Navitu also became involved in business enterprises, though these did not prove to be particularly successful. Support for the movement, which initially came almost entirely from the Nasioi people, grew rapidly; within 12 months it claimed 6000 members from 116 villages in the Kieta District (Middlemiss 1970:101) and support cut across linguistic and religious divisions.

Napidakoe Navitu was generally hostile to the government and it saw the Kieta Local Government Council as 'dominated by *kiaps* [government field officers]' (Middlemiss 1970:101). Expatriate domination of local business enterprises also came under fire. The movement was critical of many aspects of the mining project on Bougainville, especially the share of profits retained locally, but did not oppose the mine or the operating company. Increasingly the Navitu became an advocate of Bougainville secession and a supporter of a referendum on the issue of separatism. By the early 1970s, however, other developments in Bougainville – particularly the emergence of a more broadly-based Bougainville nationalism – and internal dissention began to undermine the political significance of Navitu; it also suffered an economic decline.

The Mataungan Association was founded in the same year as Napidakoe Navitu. Its formation came after a series of public meetings organised to protest the government's decision to form a multiracial local government council on the Gazelle Peninsula. The Association's interests, however, soon spread to a range of other issues, including land matters, economic enterprises, education, and the preservation of certain aspects of traditional Tolai culture. Opposition to the proposed multiracial council was expressed through mass meetings and marches and a partially successful attempt to have the council elections boycotted; subsequently Mataungan officials seized the keys to the council building and there were physical attacks on a number of Tolai leaders who supported the multiracial council, result-

ing in the arrest of several Mataungan Association executives. After the council was elected, Mataungan supporters refused to acknowledge it and instead of paying council taxes paid equivalent amounts to the Association, which in due course set up its own 'council', the Warkurai Nigunan. They also boycotted the council-run Tolai Cocoa Project. In 1970 the Association's patron, Oscar Tammur, presented a submission to the Select Committee on Constitutional Development calling for an independent government for the Gazelle Peninsula and threatening that 'the Association and its followers would break away from the Territory of Papua and New Guinea if its wishes were not satisfied' (Select Committee on Constitutional Development 1971:3).

The government's initial reaction to the Mataungan Association was a show of force. Large numbers of police were flown in and some villages known to be sympathetic to the Association were raided. A Commission of Inquiry into local government and other matters in the Gazelle Peninsula was set up in 1969, but its report did nothing to ease the situation. Eventually the government acceded to demands for a referendum on the council issue but the Association refused to accept the government's condition of a secret ballot. A further attempt to settle the issue by negotiation between the Association and several prominent Tolais (the Warmaram group) also failed. The Gazelle Local Government Council was suspended in June 1972. Three months later, in what was generally regarded as a victory for the Mataungan Association, the government introduced legislation designed to create 'a new type of local self-government for the Gazelle'.<sup>14</sup> The legislation provided for a trust to manage the property of the council and for the recognition of three groups: the Warkurai Nigunan, the Warbete Kivung (a group of Tolai who have refused to participate in local government since its inception) and the Greater Toma Council (comprising groups loyal to the Gazelle Council, who had held informal elections towards the end of 1972). These groups,

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<sup>14</sup> *House of Assembly Debates* (HAD) III (8):1011, 29 September 1972.

to be represented on the executive of the trust, were given power to tax registered members and the executive of the trust was given responsibility for deciding on economic and community projects.

Mataungan Association candidates successfully contested the 1972 and 1977 national elections and held senior portfolios in both the coalition governments of Michael Somare and of Julius Chan. From an early stage, too, the Mataungan Association was involved in economic enterprise, establishing a market (in competition with the Rabaul Council's market), and acquiring interests in plantations, cocoa and copra marketing, trade stores and a tavern. In 1972 a New Guinea Development Corporation was registered, with authorised share capital of K250 000, to carry on the Association's business activities.

Mataungan Association leadership came mostly from young educated Tolai and support for it cut across traditional intertribal enmities. In late 1973 an official estimate of Mataungan Association supporters on the Gazelle Peninsula was 15 000; the Mataungan Association became a movement of substantial political importance locally and the Development Corporation, for a while, a successful model of local capitalist enterprise.

The Mataungan Association was a source of inspiration to a number of individuals and groups with feelings of grievance against the government and a desire to see economic, social and political development take place through local community action. Amongst movements which acknowledged the influence of the Mataungan model were the Kabisawali Association, the Boera and Hiri Associations and Komge Oro (see below).

The Nemea Landowners' Association emerged in 1970 near Abau in the Central Province to express dissatisfaction both over land alienation in the area and with the government's closure of the Cloudy Bay Local Government Council. Its members sought to form their own 'government' and to achieve economic and social development in the area, with financial assistance from the central government. Two smaller movements appeared in the same district at about the same time. The Wake Association

was formed ostensibly, like Nemea, to secure registration of tenure over tribal land, though clearly it was strongly motivated by a desire to counter Nemea influence in the area. The Ganai Association, whose establishment probably also owed something to Nemea activities, was set up to oppose prospecting and timber exploitation in the area.

Demands for a separate local government council and for compensation for tribal land taken over by the Papua New Guinea Electricity Commission appear to have motivated the formation in 1973 of the ethnically-based Koiari Association. The Koiari, who occupy the foothills of the Owen Stanley Range behind Port Moresby, also voiced general aspirations for local social and economic development. In 1973 a deputation from the Association, accompanied by the regional MA, Josephine Abajjah, presented a schedule of demands to the Electricity Commission; the Association secured the promise of a road link to Koiari villages and in 1976 the Koiari were given their own council. Subsequently they received a substantial cash compensation.

The Ahi Association was established in 1971 following release by the government of an urban development plan for Lae. The Association, which represented five peri-urban villages, was created in the first instance to prevent the imposition of town plan proposals which were considered contrary to the interests of the villages and to take up claims against the government for compensation in respect of alienated land. A compensation settlement was negotiated in 1974 and funds received were subsequently invested in the purchase of a large commercial building complex in Lae. Other social and economic ventures included the construction of a market and the establishment of a provincial cultural centre. The Ahi Association also provided a means of political expression for these peri-urban villages.

The Musa Association comprised people of several tribes in the upper and middle Musa River area of the Northern (Oro) Province. Its formation in 1975 appears to have been prompted

by local opposition to a government decision to dam the Musa River and relocate the affected villages. However, the movement declared its main objective to be communal economic development. To this end it collected subscriptions which were used to finance the establishment of a wholesale store and to start cattle projects in the area. Leadership of the movement came primarily from older villagers, though the Association was assisted by a young educated 'adviser'.

Two other local protest movements merit brief mention. The Purari Action Group was established in 1974 by a group of young educated Gulf Province people in Port Moresby to organise opposition to a large-scale hydro electric project in their province.<sup>15</sup> In opposing the scheme the Group called for 'alternative development on a more realistic scale, based on agriculture and farming' (Pardy et al 1978:216). The West New Britain Action Group emerged about the same time to protest against development projects in that province based on resettlement of migrants from other provinces. Unlike the local protest movements already mentioned, however, neither the Purari Action Group nor the West New Britain Action Group appears to have extended its activities beyond the immediate objective of protest.

### **Self-help development movements**

While a number of the movements which began ostensibly as movements of local protest subsequently adopted broader objectives of autonomous local development, many of the movements which emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s were established specifically to pursue development through communal action (though, to complete the circle, some later acted as local protest groups).

One of the most prominent of these was the Kabisawali As-

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<sup>15</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the Purari issue see Pardy et al. (1978) and Kairi (1977).

sociation. The aims of the Kabisawali movement, as stated by a supporter (Mwayubu 1973), embraced political, economic and social aspirations:

First it's a move to tell the government and the leaders we do exist as it seems we have been overlooked for any development. Secondly to fulfill the meaning of the Association broadly speaking, wants to run its own affairs like running the Tourist Industry with hotels and tourist amenities. It wants to revive the islands happy life with festivals and traditions without too much of a loss to the western world.

In 1972 supporters of the Association established a Kabisawali People's Government. The following year Kabisawali candidates contested the Kiriwina Local Government Council elections and having won a majority proceeded to dissolve the council, a move which was tacitly accepted by the central government. The movement's business activities have included involvement in trade stores, trucks, road building, tourism, artefacts trading, and a variety of more ambitious projects. Following the Mataungan model, a Kabisawali Village Development Corporation was established in 1974 to undertake business and other activities, including traditional *kula* exchanges, artistic and cultural activities, and promotion of youth and adult education. Compared with other self-help development movements, relatively little emphasis was placed on subsistence agriculture. From about 1975, and especially following the imprisonment of the movement's effective leader, John Kasaipwalova, in 1977 on a charge of stealing funds allocated by the National Cultural Council, Kabisawali declined as a popular local movement and its organisational centre of gravity shifted, for a while, to Port Moresby and Lae. In 1973 Kabisawali's successes prompted the movement's opponents in the Trobriand Islands to form a rival organisation, Tonenei Kamokwita (TK), with similar social and economic aims but without Kabisawali's hostility towards the central government.

The other conspicuous followers of the Mataungan-Kabisawali model were the Boera and Hiri Associations, and Komge Oro. The Boera Association was established in 1972 at Boera village near Port Moresby to promote village development on a self-help basis.<sup>16</sup> The main initiative for its formation seems to have come from young university graduate, former public servant and Pangu Pati chairman, Moi Avei. The Boera Association subsequently extended its activities to other nearby Motu villages and a larger, ethnically based, movement, the Hiri Association, was formed. Later a Hiri Village Development Corporation was set up to manage the organisation's economic interests, which included passenger motor vehicles, trade stores and an artefact and local fabric fashion shop in Port Moresby. The Hiri Association had little success with its business activities and from about 1976 support for the movement gradually fell away.

Komge Oro claims to have been formed in 1969, consisting mainly of people of the Binandere, Aega, Chiriwa and Biage groups in the Northern (Oro) Province. (Komge is an acronym from the five rivers in the region and *oro* is the Binandere word for the traditional men's house). However the movement did not attract public attention until 1974 when it successfully organised local opposition to a proposal to establish a large timber processing plant in the area.<sup>17</sup> As stated by its principal spokesman, John Waiko:

. . . *Komge Oro* and its members are committed to pursuing cultural, social and economic activities based on village community initiative, and to developing resources with village leadership . . . The emphasis is placed upon subsistence living as a basis for self-reliance, and the acceptance of cultural activities that are bound up with that way of life. Any other innovation, be it in the form of technology, crops or techniques, must be geared towards supporting and improving the subsistence basis rather than distort-

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<sup>16</sup> For an analysis of the impact of the Boera Association on the village people see Moi (1979).

<sup>17</sup> See Waiko (1977).

ing or replacing it with a cash economy. [Waiko 1976:17-18]

Under the guidance of two vocational school graduates, village pig and poultry breeding centres were established and village youth clubs were organised to help clear and plant gardens large enough 'to hold ceremonies not only within a village or a clan but beyond the tribal and indeed the regional level'; appropriate technology was to be promoted, small village industries established, and a village barter system encouraged (Waiko 1976). Waiko was also reported as saying that members hoped that Komge Oro would be a springboard for the mobilisation of the whole Northern Province, 'leading the people towards true self-reliance and control over their own destiny' and called on the Province's trained leaders throughout the country to 'come home'.<sup>18</sup>

One of the Northern Province's trained leaders, senior civil servant Simon Kaumi, did return home in 1974 after being suspended for making public attacks on the government. Kaumi became patron of another local self-help development movement, the Eriwo Development Association. The Association, formed in 1974, expressed antipathy towards the central government (Kaumi was reported<sup>19</sup> as saying in 1975 that if Papuan separatism failed his people would try to set up a 'Northern Province Republic') and to local government councils (the Eriwo established their own 'council', named Bubesa). Soon after the formation of the Association, a wing of it, adopting the bold title of 'Papuan Republic Fighters' Army' and led by Kaumi, seized an expatriate-owned plantation and occupied it in the name of the Association. Plans were subsequently announced for village redevelopment, cattle projects, supermarkets, and tourism development on the seized plantation. The central government responded by negotiating the purchase of the plantation for the

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<sup>18</sup> *Post-Courier* 12 August 1974. For some critical assessments of the Movement see Yaman (1975).

<sup>19</sup> *Post-Courier* 16 January 1975.

Eriwo people, but the development plans were never fulfilled and popular local support for the movement dissipated.

Another self-help development movement which achieved some prominence in the early 1970s is the Damuni Association of the Milne Bay Province. [The Association is described in detail in May (1982).] The Association was created by prominent councillors in the province in the late 1960s following rejection by the commissioner for local government of proposals for council involvement in certain business interests. Through an associated company, Damuni Economic Corporation Limited, the Association acquired plantation interests in copra and cattle, and a freezer. In 1975 the movement's leader was elected to the National Parliament. Since about 1976, however, this movement, too, seems to have been in a state of decline.

On Goodenough Island in the Milne Bay Province three communally-based self-help movements appeared at about the same time. The Kobe Association, formed around 1970 on the initiative of an expatriate schoolteacher, sought to promote self-reliant development but was also an outspoken critic of government policy generally and local government council activity specifically. The Island Development Association, set up in 1971 by Goodenough Islanders working in Port Moresby, had similar aims but was stronger in its criticisms of central government, local government and expatriate business, its president at one stage threatening to chase government personnel and expatriate businessmen from the island (Kaidadaya 1974). In 1974 a third organisation, the Aioma Association, was established along similar lines. None of the Goodenough movements, however, appears to have been very active.

Amongst a number of smaller self-help movements which sprang up in the Central and Milne Bay provinces the Hood Lagoon Development Association is notable primarily because it was the subject of a pamphlet circulated by the government in 1976 as part of its Government Liaison (political education) Programme (Office of Information 1976). The Association,

established in 1974, mobilised communal labour and capital for a self-help development effort which included road construction and the purchase of a truck and freezers to facilitate the marketing of fish in Port Moresby.

Self-help development movements were slow to emerge in the highlands but by the mid 1970s there were several, mostly small, local movements. One of the larger and more successful of these was the Piblika (or Pipilka) Association. The Piblika are an ethnic group, comprising a number of clans which claim common ancestry, in the vicinity of Mount Hagen in the Western Highlands Province; they number about 6000. Formation of the Association followed a meeting in 1974 organised by a local bigman in an attempt to bring an end to a long period of tribal fighting in the area (Timbi n.d.; also see Mark 1975). Having succeeded in engendering a sense of Piblika solidarity, the bigman went on to suggest that the Piblika combine in a joint business venture. Initially trade stores and a petrol station were mentioned, but following advice from two young educated Piblika men then in Port Moresby more ambitious plans were formulated. In 1975, having raised K11 000 from members and with a government loan of K212 000 the Piblika Development Corporation acquired a local plantation which the government had purchased from its expatriate owners. Aided by unusually high coffee prices in 1976-77, the group repaid its loan within a year, declared a 100 per cent dividend to its shareholder members, and proceeded to purchase another, smaller plantation, make a substantial downpayment on a large motel in Mount Hagen, and purchase several trucks to be used mostly for coffee buying. There was also talk of establishing a special fund to provide loans to member clans for village development. Until 1977 the enterprises were run as before by European managers with plantation labour mostly from outside the province. In that year, however, inter-clan disputes led to the subdivision of the large plantation and its partial reorganisation on a smallholder basis.

### **Regional separatist movements**

Opposition to existing local government councils and general antipathy to central government characterised many of the movements which have been described in the foregoing paragraphs. In a few instances such autonomist sentiments expressed themselves through the creation of what might be termed regionally-based separatist movements. In describing these movements as 'separatist', however, it should be said that, with the possible exception of the North Solomons, what the movements seem to have been after was not secession (which except for the North Solomons was not a practical option) but recognition by the national government of specific regional interests. The threat of separatism, in other words, was probably more strategic than real – even though not all the supporters of 'separatist' movements appreciated such a distinction. The two most commonly cited examples of separatist movement are the North Solomons (Bougainville) and Papua Besena.

The existence of a strong separatist sentiment in Bougainville was evidenced at least as early as 1968 when a group of Bougainvillean leaders and students, meeting in Port Moresby, called on the government to hold a referendum to determine Bougainvillean feeling towards separation. This request was not granted but the issue remained a lively one and in 1973 a Bougainville Special Political Committee was established, under the chairmanship of university graduate Leo Hannett, to help define Bougainville's political aspirations and act as a pressure group for political change (Mamak and Bedford 1974:22). The committee brought together traditional leaders and young educated Bougainvilleans, including MHAs, presidents of local government councils, representatives of non-council areas and outlying islands, and representatives of the Hahalis Welfare Society, Napidakoe Navitu and the Mungkas Association (an urban-based association founded by Bougainvillean students in other provinces). After protracted, and often acrimonious, negotiations

with the central government, an interim district government was established in 1973 and a provincial government (the first under the new constitution) in 1976, the latter, however, not before frustrated Bougainvilleans had made a symbolic unilateral declaration of independence for the 'North Solomons Republic'.<sup>20</sup> Although North Solomons nationalism in the 1970s had much in common with the micronationalist phenomenon described in this paper, it was much more a coalition of political forces at a point of time than a coherent single movement. Moreover, while the movements described as micronationalist were characterised by a package of broad social, economic and political objectives, North Solomon's nationalism appears to have had the specific objective of political separatism, and with the granting of provincial autonomy the 'movement' lost its coherence.

Papua Besena emerged in 1973 under the leadership of Josephine Abaijah MRA, in opposition to the Australian government's commitment to granting independence to a unified Papua New Guinea, and with the stated aim of liberating Papua not only from Australian colonial rule but also from domination by New Guineans.<sup>21</sup> But apart from the broad objective of 'liberating the minds of the Papuan people', the aims of Papua Besena were vague and sometimes apparently inconsistent. Papua Besena claimed to be a Papua-wide movement with supporters in all the Papuan provinces. Lacking a coherent organisational structure, it chose to work with and through a number of Papuan organisations with similar objectives. (These included the Social Workers' Party of Papua New Guinea, the Papuan Black Power Liberation Movement, the Papua Group, Simon Kaumi's Papuan Republic Fighters' Army, and the Koiari Association.) But in fact the movement drew most of its support

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<sup>20</sup> The most comprehensive account of the North Solomons nationalism in the period to 1974 is that of Mamak and Bedford (1974). Also see Griffin (1973, 1974, 1976), Hannett(1975) and Conyers (1976).

<sup>21</sup> The Papua Besena movement is examined by McKillop in May (1982), and also in Daro (1976).

from villages in the National Capital District and Central Province and served, primarily, the interests of an educated elite. In March 1975, six months before Papua New Guinea's independence, Papua Besena staged a unilateral declaration of independence, but no attempt was made to take this declaration beyond the symbolic act and in 1977 Besena candidates successfully contested the national elections. The movement's 'parliamentary wing' subsequently became part of a highlands-dominated coalition which, following a vote of no confidence against prime minister Somare in 1980, formed the new government.

A rather different sort of separatist movement was the Highlands Liberation Front (HLF).<sup>22</sup> It was set up towards the end of 1972 amongst students from the (then) four highlands provinces at the University of Papua New Guinea with the principal aim of liberating 'all highlands people from white and coastal domination in the public service, private enterprise and the armed forces'.<sup>23</sup> As well as demanding the appointment of highlanders to senior administrative positions in the central government, it advocated a high degree of political decentralisation and a majority local equity in all business enterprises in the highlands; there was talk of establishing a highlands development corporation to control tourism and to establish small businesses. Acknowledging inspiration from the Mataungan Association and Napidakoe Navitu, the HLF supported economic development through local community efforts and economic self-sufficiency, was concerned with adult education, and identified with traditional social forms. In 1972 a model village project, initially designated 'HLF Demonstration Village No. 1', was established at Olu Bus in the Western Highlands Province to give practical expression to the self-help philosophy of development (see Kaman 1975; Reay 1979). The HLF claimed to have the support of about one thousand highlanders in the public service and tertiary institutions and from several highlands members of par-

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<sup>22</sup> The HLF is described in detail, by Standish and Mel in May (1982).

<sup>23</sup> *Post-Courier* 28 November 1972.

liament but it failed to attract a significant following in the rural villages, remaining essentially a movement of the educated elite, and by 1976 was moribund.

On a smaller scale, the Wahgi Tuale was created in the Western Highlands in the early 1970s to press for a separate province in the Wahgi-jimi area. The Tuale appears to have been a loosely structured organisation with both local bigmen and university students occasionally acting as spokesmen. At least some of the latter, including Philip Kaman, the founder of Olu Bus, seem to have seen the Tuale as a potential self-help movement with broad social and economic goals. Other, less articulated, movements emerged at about the same time to press for separate provinces within the existing West Sepik (Sandaun), Eastern Highlands and Morobe Provinces (May 1975:40).

Two associated developments of the late 1960s-1970s which were clearly related to the micronationalist phenomenon merit a brief note. One was the emergence of ethnic associations amongst urban migrant groups (see Skeldon 1977). This did not occur in Papua New Guinea on the scale it did in parts of post-independence Africa and Latin America, and the objectives of such associations were generally confined to a limited range of welfare and sporting activities. The other concerns the establishment of at least one regionally-based women's movement. The movement, best known by the titles Wok Meri or Kafaina had branches throughout the Chimbu Province and in the Eastern Highlands. It had much in common, ideologically and organisationally, with the micronationalist movements described here (see Munster 1975; Anggo 1975; Sexton 1980; Warry 1987).

### **Micronationalism and government policy**

It has already been observed that the historical attitude of colonial governments towards spontaneous local movements was one of suspicion and hostility. Apart from the facts that they

frequently followed practices unacceptable to officialdom and that their leaders were often suspected (sometimes with good reason) of exploiting their followers, such movements were commonly regarded as a threat to the authority of government and church. Official policy towards them was at best neutral and more often actively repressive.

By the 1960s government policy had become rather more tolerant but movements were still seen primarily as a source of local disturbance and a potential threat to the orderly progression to self-government and independence as a united country (cf. Rowley 1969). As late as 1971 an official review of the political education programme in Papua New Guinea recommended that the recent development of micronationalist movements such as Napidakoe Navitu, the Mataungan Association, and the Papuan Front organisation must be resisted and countered, and the same year Papua New Guinea's deputy administrator told the House of Assembly that separatist movements would be discouraged no matter who started them.<sup>24</sup> A particular source of concern was the frequent opposition of micronationalist movements to local government councils and refusal by their members to pay council taxes. It was this more than anything else which prevented the Australian administration from taking a more sympathetic attitude to the movements and it was this which led to the early violent confrontation with Hahalis and the Mataungans.

The accession to power of a national government, following the country's third general elections in 1972, produced a more substantive shift in attitudes and policies. In 1975 prime minister Somare wrote in his autobiography,

During recent years one of the most important developments in Papua New Guinea has been the emergence of spontaneous efforts by village and ethnic based organisations encouraging self-

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<sup>24</sup> *House of Assembly Debates* 11(17):123, 20-24 September 1971.

reliance. The government recognises the importance of [such] groups. [Somare 1975:139]

In relation to individual movements, the new government displayed a willingness to negotiate at ministerial level and to make settlements (as it did with the Mataungans, Kabisawali, Ahi, the Nemea Association, the Koiari Association and, eventually, the North Solomons) to meet the circumstances of particular situations. It also provided a good deal of financial and technical assistance to particular movements.

In the area of national policy making, a specific commitment to decentralisation and self-reliance was embodied in the Eight Point Plan announced by the government in 1972, and the potential importance of local movements as a means of implementing the Eight Aims was recognised in a number of policy decisions which gave positive encouragement to local groups. The most important measures in this context were the creation in 1974 of a Task Force on Village Development (initially headed by Moi Avei, the organisational force behind the Boera Association), whose purpose was to assist village groups, and the establishment of a Village Economic Development Fund to provide grants for village group (but not individual) projects. Village groups also received assistance through favoured access to the Rural Improvement Programme,<sup>25</sup> through the establishment of a Plantation Redistribution Scheme, the administration of which favoured village groups, and through grants from the National Cultural Council to support local cultural projects. Development Bank lending policy was also revised to favour village self-help movements and requests from them for technical assistance were received sympathetically. Other relevant measures included the introduction of village courts and the establishment of experimental *Komuniti Kaunsil*

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<sup>25</sup> Note, however, the comment of Colebatch (1979:120), that 'few of the local development associations appeared as [RIP] project sponsors'.

in Kainantu (Uyassi 1975; Mogu and Bwaleto 1978; Warren 1976) and, under the North Solomons provincial government, of village government (Anis 1976; Connell 1977) as alternatives to local government councils.

In 1974 Papua New Guinea's Constitutional Planning Committee gave consideration to the possibility of making special provision for local movements within the constitution. But while welcoming the growth of associations spontaneously formed by the people outside the framework of local government it was 'unable to foresee a situation in which these bodies might act as the main link between the national government and village people'; the Committee, however, expressed the belief that 'such bodies should seek representations on district-level [i.e. provincial] assemblies' (Constitutional Planning Committee 1974:10/3).

There is little doubt that the Somare government's more sympathetic attitude to local movements encouraged their proliferation. At the same time, it seems likely that the shift in government attitudes and policies to local movements did something to modify the micronationalist response. It is arguable that the government's apparent sympathy towards micronationalist movements enabled it to divert the energies of at least some potentially troublesome movements into social, economic and even political activities which accorded with the changing priorities of the government and so incorporated them into the system. In this way, paradoxically, the government may have contributed to a decline in micronationalism.

### **An anatomy of micronationalism<sup>26</sup>**

#### *Objectives*

The objectives of micronationalist movements reflect the circum-

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<sup>26</sup> This section draws on material presented in a preliminary form in May (1975, 1979).

stances of their origins. For the most part they were broad, ambitious and ill-defined. This is only slightly less true of the comparatively sophisticated movements whose objectives were spelt out in corporate charters than it is of the marginal cargo cults, and it is a generalisation which applies both to village level organisations and to regional movements like the HLF and Papua Besena. Nearly all the movements were 'universalistic', embracing a package of political, economic, social and cultural objectives. Even those such as the Mataungan Association, Napidakoe Navitu, and Wahgi Tuale, which began with fairly narrowly political aims, soon acquired economic and cultural objectives; and the majority of those, like Damuni and Piblika, which saw themselves in narrow economic terms had a clear political aspect.<sup>27</sup>

If one can distinguish a common primary objective it is that of material improvement through the mobilisation of local resources. In those movements with a more coherent ideology (principally those with young educated leadership) there was a general emphasis on improving subsistence living, but most movements aspired to take over expatriate plantations and businesses and most were quick to take advantage of government assistance through financial and technical support; indeed probably the most successful of the movements were those, like the Mataungans, Ahi, and perhaps Damuni, which managed to invest in fairly large-scale capitalist enterprises.

The demand for material returns, however, cannot be interpreted in simple economic terms. The desire for improvements in subsistence living and for success in modern business was motivated also by considerations of status: micronationalist groups were anxious to demonstrate that they could achieve for

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<sup>27</sup> McSwain (1977:183) makes the general comment on the people of Karkar: 'One of the important differences [between the Karkar and Europeans] was the Karkar merging of economic, political and educational institutions into one generalised social system oriented towards the traditional value of local communalism as against European specialisation and compartmentalism'.

themselves what government had failed to provide for them, and the takeover of foreign-owned plantations and businesses was probably as much a symbolic assertion of independence as an attempt to secure monetary returns.<sup>28</sup> Indeed it is perhaps only in these terms that one can account for the continued existence (for a time, at least) of movements whose performance, in material terms, was so poor.

Amongst social objectives, special importance has frequently been attached to education, including adult education, and to providing useful occupations for the already large and potentially politically significant group of school leavers, though few seem to have achieved much in this regard.

Although the movements were essentially modernising in their outlook, most also emphasised traditional values and some, such as Kabisawali and Komge Oro, actively sought to maintain traditional social and cultural forms.<sup>29</sup> In this they differ fairly sharply from most of the earlier postwar movements. In part the emphasis on traditional values and forms is a symptom of withdrawal<sup>30</sup> and in part it reflects a genuine desire to cull the best from both traditional and Western cultures; but also it represents a manipulation, conscious or unconscious, of traditional cultural symbols to legitimise the activities of movements whose main objectives and organisation were foreign to the traditional culture and whose leaders frequently lacked status within the traditional social framework.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> For an interesting critique of the materialist interpretation, from the viewpoint of a missionary discussing cargo cults, see Heuter (1974).

<sup>29</sup> Adas, in his study of 'millenarian protest movements', observes similarly that 'prophetic ideologies are normally eclectic both temporally and culturally' (1979:114).

<sup>30</sup> Compare Jarvie's comment, in relation to the revival of old customs by cargo cults: '... the revived culture is a symbol reminding people of a time of freedom or happiness when there were no frustrations' (Jarvie 1963:12). Similarly Smith (1979:176-179) sees 'ethnic nationalism' as a romantic reaction to the centralised, modernising state.

<sup>31</sup> In his analysis of the leadership of millenarian protest movements

In this context, it should be observed that the various participants in a movement may interpret the objectives of the movement quite differently. Studies of Peli and Pitenamu (in May 1982) illustrate how spokesmen for movements can exploit ambiguity in their pronouncements, presenting the movements for the most part in modern, secular terms but at the same time tapping the rich vein of magico-religious explanation which moves many of their followers. Griffin (in May 1982:135) suggests that Lapun may have acted similarly. Leach (in *ibid.*:284-285) similarly comments on the differences between Kasaipwalova, and other Kabisawali leaders and followers in the interpretation of that movement's broad aims.<sup>32</sup>

### *Leadership and organisation*

In the majority of the movements described here (and in May 1982), initiative and leadership came mostly from the younger, better educated and more sophisticated members of the community, though in several cases their main function was to help articulate demands already expressed by village leaders and to provide the organisational impetus of the movement. Just as in the immediate postwar period new movements were frequently initiated by men whose outlooks had been widened by their wartime experiences, so in the late 1960s and 1970s several micronationalist movements were launched by university students or recent graduates who returned to their village or dis-

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Adas (1979:112-119) distinguishes between, at one pole of a continuum, 'displaced indigenous leaders', who 'emerge as defenders of the customary, precontact cultural order' and respond to well-established models of behaviour, and at the other, 'men of low birth' who have no established place in either the precolonial or the colonial order but whose exposure to both allows them to act as 'cultural brokers' and who draw on both for their ideologies, leadership styles, and modes of organisation.

<sup>32</sup> Lawrence comments similarly on the Yali movement (1964:255): '... in 1945, when Yali tried to introduce a programme that did not include ritual activity... the people distorted his propaganda... it had to be made consistent not only with their economic and sociopolitical aspirations but also with their intellectual assumptions'.

strict to work with their people. This educated group brought with them a mild radicalism and an ideology which placed emphasis on self-help and political decentralisation. Frequently, too, (self-help notwithstanding) they brought a greater awareness of the possibilities of government assistance and a knowledge of the means by which access is gained to it. Young men like Kasai-pwalova, Kaman, Mel, Awei, and Waiko owed their leadership largely to their effectiveness as brokers between village people and a central government anxious to encourage local development initiative. (Compare Enloe 1973:162.)

There may also be something of relevance to Papua New Guinea in the observation of Ake (1967:97) that in the social transformation brought about by modernisation, 'Those obliged to leave their folk culture may become lonely and insecure and inclined to doubt the meaning of their new life', and that such loneliness and insecurity 'tend to breed alienation and extremist political movements'. Though micronationalism in Melanesia has seldom taken the form of 'extremist political movements', for the educated elite, participation in micronationalist movements has probably been motivated often by a felt need to justify themselves to themselves and to their village peers.

The outstanding exceptions to the generalisation of youthful, educated or sophisticated leadership are those movements like Peli and Pitenamu, which we have categorised as marginal cargo cults. In these, as in earlier cult movements, leadership has usually been vested in personal charisma or believed 'special powers' rather than in educational qualifications, experience of introduced institutions, or leadership within a traditional social context, which have generally been slight. And in the Peli case, at least, there is an illustration of the division, observed by several students of cargo cults (for example Thrupp 1962, Talmon 1966), between a prophet-leader (Yaliwan) and an organiser-lieutenant (Hawina).

Sometimes, as in the case of the Mataungan Association, Kabisawali, Komge Oro and Wahgi Tuale, the initiative of young

people resulted in clashes between the younger activists and traditional leaders. In no case, however, can a movement be explained simply in terms of a conflict between young radicals and old conservatives;<sup>33</sup> while the Mataungan case study provides perhaps the best illustration of the general complexity, all movements have found some support amongst the older people (frequently deliberate efforts have been made to involve traditional leaders in the movements' activities) and many have found opponents amongst the young.

With regard to the general membership, a common characteristic of the movements is the looseness of their organisational structure. Most had some sort of executive, though the members of this seem more often to have 'emerged' or to have been self-appointed or chosen by the leader or patron of the movement than to have been the product of a formal election. Commonly these executives were dominated by one or two individuals who acted as spokesmen for the movement. The majority of movements had a formal membership core defined by fee paying or shareholding, but records were not always rigorously maintained and non-contributors were not necessarily excluded from the movement's general activities. Papua Besena, in fact, specifically rejected any idea of formal membership or organisational structure and deliberately kept no records. In some instances a broader membership was defined by ethnic or regional boundaries: in a loose sense all Piblika people were regarded (or at least, at the outset were regarded) as 'members' of the Piblika Association, all Koiari were regarded as 'members' of the Koiari Association and all Papuans as 'members' of Papua Besena. But movements were seldom overtly exclusive and even those which appear to have had a distinct ethnic basis might admit

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<sup>33</sup> Pye (1962:22) argues that 'sharp differences in the political orientation of the generations' are typical of 'transitional politics'. In the Papua New Guinea context, Townsend (1980) posits 'difference in the attitudes of the generations' as explanation for the contrasting post-colonial reactions of 'disengagement' and 'incorporation'.

outsiders even occasionally, Europeans.

In most cases the movements drew most of their energy from a small number of activists, usually recruited by the founder and sometimes, as in the Pitenamu case, held together by preexisting interpersonal ties. Next to these was a larger group of members with a fairly strong psychological and sometimes financial commitment to the movement. In most movements, and especially in the marginal cargo cults, there was then a still larger group of 'supporters', who may or may not have been fee-paying members, whose attachment to the movement was tenuous; they were there either through communal pressures to conform or because, while not really expecting much of the movement, they did not want to miss out if it did somehow succeed – as many Peli supporters expressed it, '*mipela traim tasol*' ('we are just giving it a go').<sup>34</sup> These floating supporters accounted for a large part of the membership claimed by movements at their peak (and in the cases of Peli and Pitenamu the numbers were considerable) but they were quick to let their membership lapse when it appeared that the material returns were not quickly forthcoming, and this largely accounts for the apparent instability of so many of the movements.

What does not emerge from the case studies is a clear picture of who joined and who did not join micronationalist movements. Worsley (1957) and others have commented on the strong integrative aspect of popular mass movements in Melanesia. Morauta (1974) on the other hand argues that such movements may link people across villages but divide them within villages. Walter (1981) takes this latter view further, seeing cult movements, and by extension 'community development associations' (roughly equivalent to our micronationalist movements) as movements of small men against traditional leaders. The data provided by the studies in May (1982) suggest that both

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<sup>34</sup> Compare Bailey's (1969:chapter 3) distinction between 'core', bound to a leader through multiplex ('moral') relationships, and 'following' whose attachment is transactional.

Worsley's and Walter's interpretations oversimplify. Micronationalist movements – even those with a specifically ethnic base – seldom if ever united all of the people within the group, and many, like the Mataungan Association, Kabisawali and Nemea, were highly divisive. Nor is there conclusive evidence for the view that micronationalist movements were revolutionary within their own smaller societies: not only did many micronationalist movements make deliberate efforts to involve traditional leaders (Kabisawali and TK actually coming together in their support for establishing a council of chiefs), frequently leadership came from people who either possessed status in traditional terms by virtue of 'special knowledge' or 'powers', or (like educated elites) had other avenues to status achievement.

Finally with respect to organisation, micronationalism in Papua New Guinea was overwhelmingly a non-urban phenomenon. The urban ethnic associations which have been so prominent in Africa, Asia and Latin America, had some counterpart in Papua New Guinea (Skeldon 1977); but, with the possible exception of the Mungkas Association (an organisation created by young North Solomons people living outside their province), their social and political significance was slight. Apart from these, nearly all the movements were rurally based. The obvious exception is the Ahi Association, which however represented the interests of peri-urban villages against urban intrusion. Possible exceptions, also, were the two regional separatist movements. Papua Besena, while seeking a rural base, drew much of its support from an urban elite and from villages close to Port Moresby; similarly, although the HLF earnestly sought a rural base, it remained, by Standish's account, a movement of the urban-based elite (see Standish in May 1982).

### *Strategies and achievements*

It is more difficult to generalise about the strategies by which

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<sup>35</sup> Compare Pye's comment (1962:24), that the 'functionally diffuse character' of groupings in the transitional political process 'tends to force each

micronationalist movements pursued their broad objectives,<sup>35</sup> and about their achievements, than it is to generalise about other characteristics. In part this reflects a fundamental contradiction inherent in the concept of withdrawal from the political system: the more positively movements 'withdraw' from the larger system the more inevitable it becomes that they will attract the attention of government. Sometimes this led to confrontation, but more often it attracted the sympathetic concern of the central government, a concern which few micronationalist leaders seemed willing to reject. Thus, paradoxically, the ultimate effect of withdrawal was often to foster accommodation between the movement and the state and eventually to bring about a degree of incorporation. With these qualifications in mind, some common patterns may be discerned.

As we have argued above, the philosophy of micronationalism, while fundamentally a revolutionary philosophy, is one of withdrawal or disengagement rather than of active confrontation. Consequently, the movements discussed here typically tended to reject the institutions of the imposed system – government, mission and, to a lesser extent, private business – rather than seek to capture them (possible exceptions are, again, the HLF and Papua Besena) or deliberately enter into conflict with them. Some confrontation, however, was inevitable, especially in the early years of the period when the colonial government often regarded such deviant behaviour, particularly refusal to pay local government council taxes, as a threat to its authority and responded repressively. The histories of Hahalis, the Mataungan Association and Kabisawali all contain instances of violent clashes with central government, and in the mid 1970s clashes with Papua Besena and the Eriwo Association were avoided only by considerable tolerance on the part

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group to develop its own ends and means of political action, and the relationship of means to ends tends to be more organic than rational or functional'.

of the central government.

A particular aspect of the micronationalist withdrawal was the general antipathy, and occasional open hostility, which movements showed towards local government councils. In a few instances such antipathy was bound up with, or became bound up with, local political differences; Kabisawali provides the most obvious example. More often it was a fundamental aspect of the micronationalist outlook. Local government councils were commonly seen more as survivals of colonial administration and agents of a distant and impersonal central government than as custodians of village interests. To many village people they were the most tangible element of an imposed system which had undermined traditional social and political structures and, having imposed taxes, failed to deliver the hoped-for material benefits of development.

In several instances micronationalist leaders sought to use their local support base to gain election to the national parliament – though, as the Peli case illustrates, without necessarily accepting the rules of the parliamentary game. Mataungan Association leaders stood successfully as Mataungan candidates in the national elections of 1972 and 1977 and in the East New Britain provincial elections of 1977, and unsuccessfully in the 1981 provincial elections. Papua Besena leader Abaijah became a member of the House of Assembly in 1972 and the movement subsequently mobilised support in Central Province provincial elections and scored a notable success in the 1977 national elections, which however it exploited in an unlikely coalition with highlands-dominated parties. Prominent members of Napidakoe Navitu, Peli and Damuni also contested elections successfully, and some others, notably Stephen Ahi and some of the ‘young radicals’ of the early 1970s, did so unsuccessfully. Apart from these, the HLF claimed support from the United Party and the National Party; the Nemea Association and Pitenamu both identified themselves with the Pangu Pati, and in 1973 the short-lived Social Workers Party listed amongst its

objectives 'support for the Free Papua Movement and for the liberation struggles of the Mataungan Association and Kabisawali People's Government'. There was even an idea, which seems to have had some currency amongst educated spokesmen for movements in the early 1970s, that micronationalism might be used as a basis for political action at the national level (in 1977 John Kaputin was quoted as saying that, 'Development groups and not political parties should organise Papua New Guinea's Government'<sup>36</sup>). For the most part, however, micronationalist movements chose to operate outside existing formal political institutions and independently of political parties, and where micronationalist spokesmen were elected to parliament, the tendency (with Peli the notable exception) was for them to become incorporated into the larger system and to act largely independently of their micronationalist origins.

On the economic front, most movements were ambivalent. Despite the common ideological emphasis on self-sufficiency and subsistence, movements were active seekers of financial and other assistance from government and many of them took over expatriate plantations and businesses; on the other hand the frequent commercial failure of trade stores, trucks and other businesses can be largely attributed to a lack of commitment to orthodox business methods.

Conceptual problems aside, measurement of the achievements of micronationalist movements is made difficult both by lack of information and by the fact that the generality in which most movements described their aims makes it difficult to evaluate the extent of their successes even in terms of their own stated objectives (and this itself is a dubious criterion). Nevertheless a few generalisations can be offered.

The first is that micronationalist movements were remarkably successful in quickly bringing together groups of people as

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<sup>36</sup> *Post-Courier* 16 March 1977. A similar view was expressed to me by John Kasaipwalova in 1975. Also see the comment by Nemea leaders in 1974 (quoted in May 1982:183).

members and supporters, groups which in many instances extended across tribal and linguistic divisions and prevailed over traditional enmities. They were also notably successful in raising funds from supporters and in many cases pursued successful applications for financial (and in a few instances technical) assistance from the Development Bank, VEDF, Plantation Redistribution Scheme, and other sources. As against these achievements, in the majority of cases the initial enthusiasm was shortlived; few self-help movements were able to sustain the active interest of members for more than three or four years.<sup>37</sup>

The apparent falling away of support for the movements might be explained by several factors. In most cases, it would seem, support declined because the movements failed to fulfil the expectations which they generated; this will be discussed further below. A more fundamental failure is suggested by Gerritsen's comment (1982:326), made in relation to Damuni but applicable, eventually, to several movements: 'there was no real mobilisation of people in any activity (other than joining) and thus no broadly-based developmental endeavour'. Paradoxically, another major reason for decline in support was the early success of some movements in achieving limited objectives. This applies particularly to the smaller self-help groups whose immediate objectives centred on, for example, buying a truck or boat or freezer, or taking over a local plantation: once the immediate objective of the group was achieved, enthusiasm waned and the commitment necessary to keep the project going proved difficult to sustain. Other reasons for decline (which relate to the common importance of individual leadership) have been departure of the initiators of the movement and loss of momentum through internal dissention. Interestingly, considering the history of cooperatives (Singh 1974), misuse of funds by movement leaders does not seem to have affected movements on a large scale.

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<sup>37</sup> Compare this observation with the comments of Wilson (1972) on the performance of village industries.

The achievement of micronationalist movements in relation to broad social and cultural objectives appears to have been modest. A few initiated adult education programmes. Some may have encouraged an interest in their traditional cultures but of three proposed cultural centres for which government funds were allocated to self-help movements (Kabisawali, TK and Ahi) none materialised.<sup>38</sup>

Few of the movements admitted political objectives. Of those which did, Kabisawali and the Nemea Landowners' Association both proposed to establish their own autonomous 'governments' and both did (after a fashion), though neither seems to have been very effective. Several, like the Mataungan Association, Napidakoe Navitu, the Ahi Association and Komge Oro, were concerned to protest particular local issues, and seem to have been fairly successful in persuading the first Somare government to accommodate their demands. Where micronationalist leaders attempted to use the movement as a support base in seeking election to the national parliament the results were mixed (see below); whether, as the Constitutional Planning Committee (1974:10/3) suggested, provincial government provides a more effective stage for micronationalist politics remains to be seen.

We have suggested above that a major reason for decline in micronationalist movements was their failure to fulfil the expectations which they generated. Often the expectations of supporters were unrealistic; they expected radical transformations in village economy and society when, by their nature, the most that the movements could offer was a modest improvement in village conditions. But equally, few movements returned to their supporters, in terms of continuing material benefits, as much as their supporters had been encouraged to expect.

Concern for improving subsistence living (including the introduction of appropriate technologies) generally produced more

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<sup>38</sup> This is perhaps not quite fair in the case of Ahi. A Morobe Cultural Centre was established in Lae – but only with substantial initiative from sources outside the Ahi Association.

rhetoric than action. Komge Oro, which placed particular emphasis on this aspect, planned village pig and poultry breeding centres and sought to organise village youth clubs to clear and plant communal gardens, but these projects do not seem to have made much progress. Olu Bus established a pig-breeding waste-digester project but the project was heavily dependent on the encouragement of a Canadian volunteer and when he left the project ran down.

Business ventures, especially takeovers of expatriate enterprises, were probably more successful; however most seem to have suffered from deficiencies in managerial competence, due in part to the inexperience of local managers and in part, as we have already suggested, to ambivalence about pursuing development through orthodox Western methods (Kabisawali providing an instructive case study). Where existing outside management was retained (as, for example, in the case of TK and Piblika) the record seems to have been better, but even then performance was often disrupted by conflicts over the direction of control. In the specific instance of plantation takeovers, poor performance by local groups threatened the viability of the government's Plantation Redistribution Scheme, which was suspended in 1980.

An alternative 'development' strategy was investment outside the group (for example in real estate or company shares). In general this yielded steady but unspectacular returns; but while it proved a useful way of generating income, especially for groups (like Napidakoe Navitu, the Mataungans and Ahi) close to urban centres, it was a dubious form of self-help.

It might be argued that outside observers are prone to overestimate the importance of material returns, that for most village people what was important was the demonstration of their ability to organise a coherent movement, and that the takeover of foreign-owned plantations and businesses was, as we have suggested above, as much a symbolic assertion of independence as an attempt to secure monetary returns. But this

provides little consolation either for those responsible for distributing government resources to micronationalist movements or for a number of sympathetic observers who regarded such movements as potential vehicles for social change in accord with the government's eight aims and five national goals and directive principles.

At a more abstract level (not reflected in movements' own definitions of their objectives) it might be argued that substantial positive achievements of micronationalist movements lay in their contribution to a shift in development initiative from the centre to the village, their influence in the move towards political decentralisation (see, for example, Constitutional Planning Committee 1973a:A/4) and in helping to bridge the growing gap between a largely urban-based elite and the predominantly rural masses.<sup>39</sup>

### *Explaining the micronationalist phenomenon*

Granted both the similarities and the differences which are discernible in the movements which proliferated in the 1960s and 1970s, two important questions are posed: (1) Why did the movements emerge on this scale when they did? (2) How are they to be placed in the broad process of political and social change in Papua New Guinea?

#### *(1) The question of timing*

We have already suggested that the movements which sprang up in the late 1960s and early 1970s had precursors amongst the spontaneous local movements which appeared from time to time throughout Melanesia since European colonisation (and perhaps before), but that the increase in what we have termed 'micro-nationalist' activity coincided with a marked increase in the pace of modernisation and of political development directed towards

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<sup>39</sup> On the last point compare Wallerstein (1960) and Ake (1967).

the establishment of a unified, and unitary, independent state.

It was inevitable that modernisation, and especially the indigenisation of the political and (to a lesser extent) the economic system, should stimulate the growth of political, social and economic organisations.<sup>40</sup> And the great diversity of traditional cultures and the lack of obvious major social or economic divisions at the national level provide strong reasons why such mobilisation should have taken place predominantly at the local level. Further, the fact that Papua New Guinea achieved independence without significant resistance from the colonial power probably acted against the growth of strong nationalist movements,<sup>41</sup> and tended to direct energies towards more parochial concerns. Even at the height of nationalist feeling at the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG), for example, it was reported (Morgan, quoted in Davis 1970:291) that

... integration has been surprisingly poor. No genuine attempt has been shown in learning about and understanding a person from another area ... Tribal bias and snobbishness is prevalent.<sup>42</sup>

It was equally inevitable that the increased pace of development would leave some groups feeling relatively disadvantaged, frustrated or threatened; for these groups the formation of movements with ethnic or regional boundaries and emphasising group identity and self-determination was a natural, and a historical, reaction.

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<sup>40</sup> For an interesting discussion of the effects of 'size' on political activity, see Dahl and Tufte (1974, especially chapter 3).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Mazrui (1970:56): 'Until the recent interest in large scale mining enterprise, Australian indifference denied New Guineans even the advantage of a shared anti-colonial resentment'.

<sup>42</sup> Six years after Davis wrote, of thirty-one student groups affiliated with the University's Student Representative Council eleven were university-wide sporting clubs, fourteen were provincial associations (Central Province Students Association, East Sepik Students Society, etc.) and five represented sub-provincial regional groups; the remaining group was an association of (non Papua New Guinea) Pacific Islands students. Ballard (1976) has also commented on student parochialism at UPNG.

### *Micronationalism in Papua New Guinea*

The variety of responses in the 1970s compared with earlier periods can probably be explained in terms of greater complexity of the society in the 1960s and 1970s, increased involvement of Papua New Guineans in government and the cash economy, and growing sophistication amongst both rural villagers and an educated elite which was able to act as broker between the village and the centre.

Hegarty (1973:440), following Geertz (1963:120), has suggested a more specific explanation of the surge of micronationalism in the early 1970s:

One of the characteristics of the period of transition to independence is the rapid formation of political groups and movements. An awareness of the imminent withdrawal of the colonial power develops, movements – some with formal organisation, some without – begin to make demands of government on a wide range of issues. Communal groups with only vague and unspecified economic objectives tend to proliferate. Minorities fearful of their vulnerability at independence seek constitution or political safeguards . . .

Certainly the well publicised approach of self-government and independence must have sharpened the sensitivities of groups which felt disadvantaged, frustrated or threatened. The Nemea Association, and on a rather larger scale Papua Besena and the HLF, were specifically concerned to define their rights and secure their positions before the departure of the colonial government; in several instances (including Napidakoe Navitu, the Ahi Association, MODIPE, Papua Besena, the Nemea Association, the Purari Action Group and the West New Britain Action Group) fears of large scale immigration were a particular source of insecurity and a stimulus to ethnic or regional solidarity.

In looking for more particular reasons for the growth of these movements, another factor of obvious importance is the intellectual climate of the period. Already in the latter part of the 1960s there was some questioning in Papua New Guinea of the domi-

nant development strategy, endorsed in 1964 by a visiting World Bank team, of concentrating resources in areas of expected greatest short-term productivity, and at the University of Papua New Guinea (created in 1966) students were being introduced to critiques of capitalist, urban-oriented development and to theories of small-scale socialist development with Tanzania and China as models. There is some evidence of a growing concern with self-reliance and decentralisation in papers presented to the fifth Waigani Seminar, on rural development, in Port Moresby in 1971 (Ward 1972) but at the following year's seminar, which was dominated by the presence of Lloyd Best, Rene Dumont and Ivan Illich, these principles were swept forward on a wave of popular enthusiasm. (See May 1973.) After the seminar the Students' Representative Council endorsed a proposal by its president, John Kasaipwalova, to set up a student vegetable garden and pig farm beside the campus (a garden project was commenced but it was shortlived) and in 1972 and later years, encouraged by their university supervisors (who gave course credits for 'action research' in rural areas during vacations), a number of students returned to their villages to initiate or assist local development projects. In 1973, as an outcome of a workshop of students, staff and recent graduates of UPNG, the Melanesian Action Front was established, with a manifesto which emphasised equality, self-reliance and village development. The following year a joint staff-student Development Investigatory Group was established at UPNG with a view to supporting student involvement in village development projects. Many of these efforts produced more enthusiasm than action but they exercised a lasting general influence over village development in a number of areas.<sup>43</sup> Somewhat ironically these 'radical' influences were complemented by the propaganda of the retiring colonial administration, which emphasised the importance of self-reliance as a precondition of effective political independence (Parker 1971).

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<sup>43</sup> For a more detailed description of the mood of this period, see Ballard (1976) and Standish (1982).

The principles of small-scale development and self-reliance were further endorsed in 1972 by a visiting United National Development Programme-sponsored team which reported on development strategies for Papua New Guinea (Overseas Development Group 1973). Following this, in December 1972 chief minister Somare announced his government's 'Eight Aims for Improvement', which included decentralisation of economic activity and (national) self-reliance.

It may be argued that the announcement of the Eight Aims, and subsequently the embodiment in the Constitution of a sympathetic 'Five National Goals and Directive Principles', merely gave official recognition to already prevalent sentiments and provided no clear basis for action. However Somare recognised the potential importance of local self-help movements as a means of implementing the Eight Aims and in a number of policy decisions his government gave positive encouragement to them (see above).

Finally, the apparent success of some of the early movements encouraged the growth of others. This happened in two ways. On the one hand, groups in one part of the country emulated movements which appeared to have succeeded elsewhere. Thus, for example, in the early 1970s a number of the young radicals were strongly influenced by the example of the Mataungan Association: Kasaipwalova's Kabisawali Village Development Corporation was closely modelled on Kaputin's New Guinea Development Corporation, as was Avei's Hiri Village Development Corporation, Waiko's Komge Oro, the (Goodenough) Island Development Corporation, and a number of other village self-help charters. In a more general way, the Mataungan example also influenced the leaders of both the Nemea Association and the HLF (and possibly others) and there were various supportive contacts between all these movements, and between Papua Besena and the Koiari, Eriwo and Nemea Associations. On the other hand, the success of one group – especially in gaining access to government assistance – some-

times prompted a competitive (one might even say defensive) reaction from other groups in the area. The outstanding instance of this is the TK reaction to Kabisawali; the establishment of the Wake and Ganai Associations in the Abau area and the proliferation of local ethnically-based movements in Manus (Pokawin 1976) provide others.

*(2) Rot bilong development*

We have already observed that several commentators saw in the movements which emerged in the early postwar years a shift from cargo cult to secular development movement. This view received 'official' endorsement when in 1972 the administrator of Papua New Guinea, Mr L.W. Johnson, went so far as to suggest that cargo cults might be dying out and being replaced by economic development associations.<sup>44</sup> Some, more specific, saw the postwar movements in political terms as evidence of an emerging anti-colonial nationalism.

Such comments suggest two, related, questions. First, what sort of a link is there between micronationalist movements and cargo cults? Second, does micronationalism represent a passing historical phase, an element perhaps of transition from colonial to new-state politics, or is it a reflection of more fundamental aspects of Papua New Guinea's changing society?

*(i) The cargo cult connection*

The data presented in May (1982) leaves little doubt that there is some continuity between the movements we have described as micronationalist and those earlier movements (and some

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<sup>44</sup> *Post-Courier* 14 January 1972.

<sup>45</sup> A definition of 'cargo cults', and a comment on the usage of the term, is offered in note 5 above. Also noted is Walter's (1981) objection to the term. It is not our intention here to debate the semantics of the cargo cult literature; however, as Strelan (1977:11) argues, cargo is an inadequate translation of the Pidgin term *kago*, and in the following discussion we will use the term in the broad sense elaborated by Strelan (*ibid.*): 'Cargo cults have to do with Melanesian concepts of power, status, wealth, and the good life'.

contemporary movements) loosely referred to as cargo cults.<sup>45</sup> The link is most obvious in cases like Peli, Pitenamu and TIA where there is a direct historical connection between prophet-led millenarian movements promising some form of *kago* and more recent secular movements pursuing 'development' through more or less conventional means. But even in the more obviously 'modern' movements, with educated leadership and impressive corporate charters, there are clear similarities of objective, organisation and strategy with the more 'primitive' cult movements.<sup>46</sup>

These similarities of form reflect fundamental similarities in the nature of the movements. In a review of the literature on cult movements, for example, Lanternari distinguishes four aspects of 'nativistic and socio-religious movements': religion; search for cultural self-identity; acculturation, and the psychological aspect (the last being expressed in such terms as 'deprivation' and 'crisis') (Lanternari 1974:487).<sup>47</sup> All but the first of these is equally pertinent to micronationalism, and in the more recent movements 'development', or more narrowly *bisnis*, has in effect become a substitute for religion. The basis of this coincidence has been suggested by several writers who have seen cargo cults, rightly, as a particular form of a more general class of revolutionary social movement. Hobsbawm (1959), for example, places 'millenarian movements' in the middle of a hierarchy of social movements ranked 'in order of increasing ambition', but observes:

The essence of millenarianism, the hope of a complete and radical change, in the world . . . is not confined to primitivism. It is

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<sup>46</sup> Gerritsen similarly sees his 'dynamic communal associations', as 'the spiritual if not the lineal descendants of the cargo cults', even to the point of describing the Mataungan Association as 'the heir to earlier cargo cults' (1975:8-9, 14, 18).

<sup>47</sup> Comparable lists of the 'characteristics' of cargo cults are presented and discussed in Stanner (1953), Hogbin (1958), Hobsbawm (1959), Mead (1964), Jarvie (1964), Brown (1966), Talmon (1966), and elsewhere.

present almost by definition, in all revolutionary movements of whatever kind . . .<sup>48</sup> [ibid.:57]

In an otherwise not particularly illuminating paper on the explanation of cargo cults, Inglis (1957) also hints at the continuity between cults and modern development movements when she suggests that cults might be arranged on a scale according to degree of sophistication, 'And by sophistication, in this context, I mean the capacity of the natives to understand what kind of effort will enable them to gain their ends' (ibid.:249-250). Similarly Brown (1966) distinguishes between cults and secular movements but observes that cults may alternate with secular movements and that 'Movements which are practical both in their ends and in their means may incorporate the sort of false beliefs which are common in cults' (ibid.:161). (See also Wallace 1956; Brookfield 1972; Stephen 1977; Adas 1979.)

At the risk of oversimplifying an extensive and often subtle body of scholarly writing, one might summarise the relationship: both cargo cults and micronationalist movements have their ori-

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<sup>48</sup> Hobsbawm suggests three main characteristics of the 'typical old fashioned millenarian movement in Europe': 'First, a profound and total rejection of the present, evil world . . . Second, a fairly standardised "ideology" of the chiliastic type . . . Third . . . a fundamental vagueness about the actual way in which the new society will be brought about' (1959:57-58). Being essentially revolutionary, however, millenarian movements are easily modernised or absorbed into modern social movements. Once so transformed or absorbed, Hobsbawm argues, they normally retain the first of these characteristics (rejection of the present order); abandon the second at least to some extent, substituting a modern, generally secular, ideology; and add a superstructure of modern revolutionary politics (ibid.:59). In the Papua New Guinea case, it might be argued that in the 1970s political responsibility was already being transferred from the colonial government to 'the people' – but without a corresponding transfer of economic power, and that in consequence what was added to the armoury of local mass movements was not a superstructure of revolutionary politics but one oriented to 'development' through a combination of modern *bisnis* and a somewhat romanticised ideology of communal self-help.

gins, at least in part, in a sense of relative deprivation, whether in terms of material goods, status, or political power;<sup>49</sup> both seem to occur with greatest frequency in periods of rapid change; and both, in seeking ultimately to remove the blockages which prevent their supporters from enjoying those things of which they believe themselves to be deprived, do so, in varying forms and to differing degrees, through 'withdrawal' or 'disengagement', redrawing the world, as it were, within their own perspective and on their own scale.<sup>50</sup> With regard to modern movements, it is this tendency to withdrawal which principally distinguishes micronationalist movements from, for example, pressure groups or political parties.

Within this framework, what differentiates micronationalist movements from cargo cults is essentially their reliance on a secular rather than a magico-religious world view and their use of 'modern' means over ritual. This is not, however, to draw too sharp a distinction. As we have already implied by the use of the term 'marginal cargo cult', the dividing line is not always precise.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, it requires a certain amount of ethnocentricity to believe that because the behaviour of recent movements corresponds more closely than that of cults to economic and political norms familiar to Western trained observers, there is necessarily a greater 'rationality' on the part of the mass of support-

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<sup>49</sup> The concept of relative deprivation is explored in Aberle (1962). Note, however, Aberle's warning that analysis in terms of deprivation does have 'a certain excessive flexibility. It is always possible after the fact to find deprivations' (1962:213).

<sup>50</sup> Compare Aberle (1962:214): '... the deprivations which form the background for the [millenarian movement] not only involve the sense of blockage... but also the sense of a social order which cannot be reconstituted to yield the satisfactions desired. The millenarian ideology justifies the removal of the participants from that social order... [It] justifies withdrawal, and that is its functional significance'.

<sup>51</sup> Stent (1973:2), in proposing a definition of cargo cults, has some interesting comments on what, in the Papua New Guinea context, is and what is not a cargo cult.

ers, to whom the rituals of business organisation and parliamentary politics may be no less exotic than those of 'money houses' and 'memorial gardens', and for whom expectations about material returns may be no less unrealistic.<sup>52</sup>

Nor do we support the view that cargo cults are on the verge of extinction. With increasing sophistication amongst village people it is to be expected that economic development associations, self-help movements, and suchlike 'modern' organisations will be seen as more potent, more officially acceptable and more fashionable than movements which begin from a magico-religious world view (even the leaders of Peli and Pitenamu vigorously denied charges of cargo cultism). But the magico-religious world view is a persistent one. Lawrence wrote in 1964 that 'many natives in the southern Madang District seem to have accepted development as a potentially satisfactory alternative to cargo cult' (1964:274); in a preface to McSwain (1977), however, he acknowledged that cargo belief had not disappeared with economic and sociopolitical development, adding that 'cults as such are relatively unimportant. What is important is the general condition of cargoism, which is interwoven with everyday events . . . the distinction between religious and secular may have little meaning for [Papua New Guineans]' (McSwain 1977:xii-xiii).<sup>53</sup> Moreover, whether or not we can expect some decline in magico-religious thinking, both cargo cults and micronationalism derive from similar feelings of deprivation, frustration and insecurity, and so long as the underlying social and economic forces which

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<sup>52</sup> On the subject of 'rationality' in relation to cult behaviour see Jarvie (1964:chapter 5), Jarvie and Agassi in Wilson (1970), Brookfield (1972:chapter 13), and especially Adas (1979:160-164).

<sup>53</sup> Lawrence has further elaborated his 1977 comments in Lawrence (1982). Similarly see Strelan (1977:10): 'Cargoism in Melanesia is endemic; it exists even when and where there is no overt cargo movement or cargo activity'. McSwain (1977) and Stephen (1977) are amongst others who have recently documented the coexistence of cultic and secular beliefs and social action.

<sup>54</sup> Similarly, see Gerritsen (1975:8-9).

generate these feelings continue to operate, such movements will continue to appear.<sup>54</sup>

*(ii) Nationalism and micronationalism*

This brings us to the second of the two questions posed above, namely that concerning the relationship between the movements which proliferated in the 1960s and 1970s and the emergence of a broadly based nationalism.

Amongst those who saw a transformation in cargo cultism in the early postwar years, many interpreted the change in terms of a shift from cult to political movement. Worsley, for example, wrote:

... we have seen a general trend in the development of the cults away from apocalyptic mysticism towards secular political organisation, a trend from religious cult to political party and cooperative . . . We are, in fact, witnessing the early stages of formation of national groupings in Melanesia. [Worsley 1957:231, 254]

Worsley referred to such groupings as “‘proto-nationalist’ formations of a transitional kind’, endorsing Guiart’s earlier description of movements as ‘forerunners of Melanesian nationalism’ (Guiart 1951b; Worsley 1957:255). Similarly, Lawrence (1955:20; 1964) referred to cargo cult as ‘an embryonic nationalist movement’, and Mead (1964:197) commented that ‘Whereas cargo cults had become endemic in the New Guinea area, political movements were epidemic in the immediate postwar atmosphere’. This interpretation of events was shared by such other prominent and enlightened observers of the Papua New Guinea scene as Belshaw (1950), Bodrogi (1951), Hogbin (1958), Rowley (1965), and Brown (1966).<sup>55</sup> Indeed Hogbin (1958:232) warned that ‘The governments of Melanesia may in the future

<sup>55</sup> It was not, however, universally accepted; see, for example, Stanner (1958) and Jarvie (1964:61). A more recent critic of the hypothesis is Smith (1979:chapter 2).

find themselves confronted with a Mau-Mau cult or . . . with a serious attempt to obtain political independence', while Rowley optimistically saw 'The solution . . . being worked out largely through the extension of the Local Government Councils' (1965:186).

Developments in Papua New Guinea in the 1970s could have been interpreted as supporting such a viewpoint: at a superficial level, micronationalist movements proliferated in the period leading up to independence, and in at least some respects (the emphasis on communal self-help, local political autonomy, and traditional values, for example) most did express an emerging Melanesian nationalism. More specifically, in several instances movements confronted the colonial government or had prominent members contest elections. There was even the suggestion that micronationalist movements might provide a basis for political action at the national level, which suggests that some people within micronationalist politics saw the movements in proto-nationalist terms, and in 1973 the Pangu Pati, the leading nationalist political movement in the country, invited representatives of movements to the Pangu Pati Congress.<sup>56</sup> Thus, Grosart argues (1982:174,149) that Mataunganism was both a nationalist and a micronationalist movement, Adams (1982:240) attributes to the Ahi Association 'strong nationalist sentiments' and Gerritsen describes the ideology of Damuni as "'early independence" nationalism' (1982:311).

As against this, however: first, the spread of micronationalist movements, and the form they took, can be explained (as we have attempted above) in other terms, relating more to 'primordial' differentiation in the period leading up to, *and in the period following*, independence than to an emerging pre-independence nationalism; second, rather than metamorphose into segments of a fully-fledged nationalist movement, the tendency was for micronationalist movements simply to lose

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<sup>56</sup> David Hegarty, personal communication, 1976.

their initial impetus and dissipate their support. The possible exceptions to this latter generalisation were the Mataungan Association and Papua Besena, both of which participated successfully in national politics; but even these two movements remained essentially local or regional in their orientation. And the idea of a pan-micronationalist group in national politics was never made operational, and was effectively rejected in 1974 by the Constitutional Planning Committee, of which the North Solomons' John Momis and the Mataungan Association's John Kaputin were prominent members. Thus, without denying that an emerging broader Melanesian nationalism may have been one element of the micronationalist phenomenon in the 1970s, and bearing in mind also that a period of colonial struggle might have brought micronationalist movements together in a more concrete way than in fact occurred, the general conclusion must be that micronationalism in Papua New Guinea cannot be seen simply as a transitional phase of 'nation-building', but rather reflects the continuing strength of localism, regionalism, and ethnicity in Papua New Guinean society. To the extent that micronationalism in Papua New Guinea was a revolutionary force, in other words, the micronationalists sought their new order not so much in the overthrow or capture of the colonial regime, as Worsley and others seem to have anticipated, as in withdrawal from it.

Going from the particular to the general, in retrospect the view expressed by Worsley and others might be seen as belonging to a more general school of thought, dominant in much of the 'development' literature of the 1950s and 1960s, which saw political and social change as an *evolutionary* process in which particularisms like micronationalism and ethnicity inevitably gave way in the face of emerging nationalism, and in which (in some formulations) social class superseded ethnic and local divisions as a fundamental basis for political organisation.<sup>57</sup> But

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<sup>57</sup> For a recent formulation of such an 'evolutionary' viewpoint, with

the tendency to regard micronationalist and similar movements as a feature of transition, by aggregation, from tribal societies to an integrated nation-state underrated the persistence of ethnic and regional divisions, not only in the new states but in the longer established states of Europe and North America as well. In Africa, Asia and Latin America micronationalist-type movements have not disappeared, despite the frequent efforts of independent governments to eliminate them, and in Europe and North America there has been a resurgence of what Birch (1978:331-332) refers to as 'minority nationalist movements'.<sup>58</sup>

Reflecting the historical facts, from the 1960s a number of scholars rejected the evolutionist idea of 'nation-building',<sup>59</sup> arguing not only that (in the words of Melson and Wolpe 1970:112) 'communalism may . . . be a persistent feature of social change', but that

To ask whether new national identities will replace or be built upon existing 'primordial' identities is to miss the point that these 'primordial' identities are themselves in the process of being created. For many of the same factors generating national identities . . . are generating sub-national identities as well.  
[Weiner 1973:253]

This view was well elaborated by Heeger (1974). In non-Western societies, Heeger argued (*ibid.*:5), 'Social change, far from being inevitable and ultimately modernising, is sporadic, erratic and unpredictable in its consequences'. In much the same terms as Shils (1963) had employed a decade earlier, Heeger characterised 'underdeveloped societies' as highly segmentary ('segmented by region, community, kinship and the pace of social change', *ibid.*:23) and their politics as amorphous and inherently

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specific reference to Papua New Guinea, see Townsend (1980). Townsend sees 'the present disengagement in some rural areas' as 'a transitory phase' (*ibid.*:16), preceding eventual incorporation into the world system.

<sup>58</sup> Also see Smith (1979) and Gourevitch (1979).

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, Wallerstein (1960), Geertz (1963), Connor (1967-68,

unstable, being held together at the centre by a tenuous cohesion of political elites.

Much of the 'post evolutionist' writing on political and social change in new states has drawn on experiences in Asia and Africa, and this has influenced the respective emphases which different authors place on such questions as ethnicity, stability and the role of elites. But the general emphasis on the persistence of segmentary elements in the political process, and on the importance of understanding these elements if one is to comprehend the nature of political and social change, has an obvious relevance for Papua New Guinea (and one which Papua New Guineans have not been slow to realise).<sup>60</sup>

## **Conclusion**

What, then, is the likely future of micronationalism? If the analysis of Heeger and others is broadly correct – and I believe it is<sup>61</sup> – then we may expect to see movements of this type playing a continuing role in the expression of regional, communal and ethnic elements in Papua New Guinean society. Obviously their future form and activities will depend largely on the way in which the country's political and social institutions develop. Of particular importance will be the institution of provincial government: in part at least, the introduction of provincial government was seen by its proponents as a means of containing the centrifugal tendencies which micronationalism seemed to present; in fact, however, provincial government may provide a favourable environment for micronationalist movements – especially in view of the decision in several provinces 'not to have' political parties in provincial elections.

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1971-72), Roth (1968), Melson and Wolpe (1970), Enloe (1973), Heeger (1974), Birch (1978), Smith (1979).

<sup>60</sup> See, for example, Somare (1970).

<sup>61</sup> For one thing, it helps explain the non-development of a coherent national political party system.

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It must remain a strong possibility that micronationalist movements will turn increasingly to more conventional methods of political and economic activity and thus be gradually incorporated within the system, at the provincial if not at the national level. Equally plausible, however, is that micronationalist movements (and also perhaps cultic movements) will continue to emerge, sporadically, as a form of protest amongst groups who consider themselves relatively deprived, slighted or threatened.

For the country's political leaders the central problem will continue to be much as it has been over the past decade or so, namely one of minimising the unproductively disruptive effects of movements locally while maximising their undoubted potential as innovative indigenous responses to political and social change.