Isaac Pawa with elders of his clan, dressed for dancing at Uiaku, December 1982. (J. Barker)

Gertrude Seyo and Prisca Rairiya of Ganjiga Village painting tapa cloth, 1982. (J. Barker)

Chapter 6

FROM BACHELOR HOUSE TO YOUTH CLUB: A CASE STUDY OF THE YOUTH MOVEMENT IN UIAKU AND GANJIGA VILLAGES, ORO PROVINCE

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Introduction

I conducted fieldwork in Uiaku and Ganjiga villages for twenty months in 1981-83, some six years after the first youth club was formed in the area. The club was portrayed by its sponsors as a recreational outlet for the young people in the village and as a means for channelling energy into community projects and preparing youth for adult responsibilities. The youth club has been most successful in the areas of organized sports and parties for the young people. But the larger aims have not been met. For the most part, the youth club remains a name only. Towards the end of the fieldwork, a newly arrived priest established a youth fellowship group with much more limited aims than the youth club, but which appeared to be receiving more consistent support.

The aims of this paper are, first, to explore the social circumstances into which the youth club organization was introduced in Uiaku in the late 1970s. I shall describe the traditional form of adolescence in Maisin social structure and show how this has been

altered in ninety years of contact with outsiders. In my view, conditions were favourable to an experiment with youth clubs in the mid-1970s. By the early 1980s, however, the Uiaku-Ganjiga club was undergoing a number of severe trials and tribulations. A second task, then, is to ask the question:

Why is it that, with so much evident local good will, the youth club in Uiaku has so far failed to 'take'?

Part of the answer is that the youth club seems to promise much more to the Maisin than it can possibly deliver. It draws attention to the young people of the village as at once the solution to and the cause of larger economic and moral problems. My research suggests that the youth club will be successful only when the Maisin can reformulate the organization within the routines, requirements and aspirations of village society as a whole. The beginnings of such a process of local innovation may be taking place through the medium of the village church.

Before embarking on these larger tasks, it is first necessary to give a brief description of the Maisin people and to outline the activities of the youth club in Uiaku and Ganjiga villages.

Setting

The Maisin people live in a series of beach villages along the southern shores of Collingwood Bay in Oro Province, Papua New Guinea. One of several small socio-linguistic groups living in Tufi District, the Maisin today have a rural population of about 1,200. About 500 more former villagers live away in urban centres. The Maisin are hunters, fishermen, gatherers and gardeners who for some time now have supplemented these traditional subsistence activities with cash and commodities earned from sales of tapa cloth designed by village women, and remittances sent home by working relatives.

The first recorded outside contacts with the Maisin took place in the 1890s when government officers, missionaries, prospectors and traders began to make their way up the northeast coast of New Guinea. In 1898, the New Guinea Mission of the Anglican Church of Australia established its district headquarters at Wanigela, a village a few miles to the north of the Maisin. Two years later the administration district station was built some twenty-five miles further to the north at Tufi, near the tip of Cape Nelson. The Maisin were forcibly 'pacified' in 1901 by the irrepressible C.A.W. Monckton. A few months later, the Anglicans built a church and school in the largest village of Uiaku. Regular baptisms began in 1911. Today virtually all adult Maisin have been baptized, and most are second and third generation Christians.

For almost eighty years, the Maisin villages have been well-integrated into the colonial and post-colonial economic and political order. Leaving the villages to take up work elsewhere has long been a normal experience of Maisin men and, more recently, women. Such introduced institutions as village churches, community schools, councils, church councils, mothers' unions, co-operatives, and youth clubs have become accepted and important components of the local social order. Many of the changes usually associated with 'westernization', however, are absent from Maisin villages. Dwellings are still built entirely of bush materials, most women continue to cook in clay pots, and reciprocity forms the main mode of commerce. In part this has to do with the isolation of Collingwood Bay from urban centres, roads and major air and water routes. The rural Maisin today live in an economic backwater in which, with the exception of tapa cloth, almost no cash crops are produced. But the pristine charm and tidy freshness of the villages owe at least as much to the pride Maisin have in their cultural traditions and concern for the quality of life of their communities.

As in most parts of Melanesia, relations along the lines of kinship and exchanges are of central importance to the rural Maisin in their daily lives. Relatives work together, share food freely with each other and, at times of formal exchanges pitch in to help participants with money, food or traditional wealth items. The Maisin stress the requirement of respecting and listening to the elders. Generally speaking, however, they prize egalitarian values. Those men who become leaders in the community do so not simply by inheriting a position or because of educational advantage, but because they prove themselves to be at once generous, co-operative and articulate: embodiments of the chief Maisin virtues.

The Goropi Youth Club

The Goropi Youth Club of Uiaku and Ganjiga villages was formed on 4 June 1975 (Goropi is the original name of the Uiaku neighbourhood). The immediate spur to the creation of the club was an announcement over Radio Northern that the then Northern Province (now Oro Province) would soon be introducing youth clubs. A teacher in Uiaku, Neville Tarawa, asked some village boys and girls if they would like to have such a club. The idea turned out to be a popular one. A meeting was called to decide on the form the club should take. A married high school graduate in his twenties was elected the first chairman and spokesman for the club and two single young women were nominated treasurer and secretary. A committee composed of youths representing different parts of the two villages was elected. The youth club was underway. In early 1977, the founding chairman's half-brother returned to Uiaku after several years working in Port

Moresby and took over the position of leader. He was still responsible for the youth club at the time of my fieldwork, although he had turned thirty and had a growing family of his own to care for. A second club for village youths, the Goropi Sports Club, was formed on 22 August 1981. The village councillor for Uiaku was asked to be patron and chairman of the new organization, but the details of youth activities of both groups were left mostly in the hands of the youth club leader and another educated married man of about the same age.

Responsibilities in the clubs are formally shared between the secretary-treasurer (now one office) and the committee, with the two young married men acting as advisors. In practice, however, the 'advisors' initiate and direct most activities and take charge of club funds. I was told that this is a matter of necessity as few office-bearers are willing to put much energy into organizational duties.

The youth clubs in Uiaku and Ganjiga, then, have consistently been the responsibility of high school educated, married men in their late twenties and early thirties. These men, like the present councillor in Uiaku, spent several years outside of the village in schools and employment before returning. To a limited extent, their education and experience separates them from other villagers. They form the youngest members of an educated clique which generally is entrusted by less educated villagers with managing village-level 'corporations' such as the church, the school and the co-operative store.

At the time of my arrival in Uiaku, the Goropi Youth Club had been in existence for more than six years. During this period clubs had also been formed in the Maisin villages of Sinapa, Airara and Yuyayu, effectively embracing the entire population. I have only a passing acquaintance with these other clubs so I will confine my discussion to the two clubs in Uiaku and Ganjiga.

The youth and sports clubs differ in a few respects. The formal membership of the youth club includes all of the unmarried 'school leavers' while sports club membership is limited to those who sign up and pay one kina each year in dues. Further, the youth club possesses no constitution, unlike the sports club. Finally, there is the obvious specialized function of the sports club. Club members have access to soccer uniforms and relatively new equipment, purchased from the dues and donations. The differences, however, are greater on paper than in reality. The youth club and the sports club contain the same leaders and virtually the same active members so it seems appropriate to treat them as the same organization.

The Goropi youth clubs are formally part of a District Youth Council in Tufi District (zone 1) with an overall chairman and co-ordinator. Beyond the district level, it is linked to provincial and national organizations. I was told that these higher level organizations require certain small dues and that these were paid up. Over the years, leaders and some office holders in the Goropi club have attended a few district and provincial meetings and workshops. However, beyond the co-ordination of district sports events, the larger organizations appear to have had little direct influence on the Goropi clubs and I know of no direct inputs from the outside in the forms of suggestions for projects, rules or funds that have affected the local organizations.

Activities and aspirations

Many criticisms were directed at the youth club during the time of my fieldwork, but no one ever suggested that the club be disbanded. The villagers agreed that the club was a good idea and potentially an asset to the community, but most people said that the club was not working as it should. There were sometimes sharp disagreements over why this was the case. Some people blamed the old people for not allowing their children to participate fully in the club; some questioned the sincerity of the leaders of the youth club; were they really trying to help the youths or only enjoying a rare chance to exercise power? Finally, some villagers blamed the youths themselves for having abandoned the values of the past, for having become 'lazy' and 'big heads'.

I found that few Maisin, even the leaders and the loyal members of the club themselves, had very clear ideas of what the youth club was actually supposed to do. The youth club had no constitution, or written mandate and it conducted its business separately from other village organizations. The village council committees, church council, mothers' union, and other organizations, held periodic meetings that were open to and heavily attended by all of the community. But the youth club leaders and committee tended to organize the youth activities outside of the community's gaze. This fuelled the suspicions of adult villagers that the two young married men leading the youth club were using the young people to their own advantage. Most of the villagers were unaware of the activities and the goals of the club and this retarded the formation of a village consensus on the youth club and the young people in general.

Despite such ambiguities, it can be said that the Maisin as a whole have three common expectations of the youth club. These are as follows: first, they expect the club to provide a recreational outlet for the young men and women of the village, in the forms of organized sports and parties; secondly, they expect the club to

direct youthful energies into useful work that benefits the community; thirdly, they expect the experience of being involved in club activities to inculcate desirable moral values among the youth.

The youth club has had its clearest success in meeting the first goal. As one of the managers pointed out to me, the youth club provides 'a good way of getting the boys and girls together'. Indeed, the youth club provides almost the only venue in the village in which large numbers of youths may get together.

Sports are the most regular of the youth activities. Most of the money the youth have collected through donations and earnings has gone into sports equipment and soccer uniforms. Sunday afternoon is a time reserved for youth sports. A net is strung between coconut trees on the mission station for several hours of volleyball. This is followed by a soccer game in the unrelentingly hot sun on the grass field before the school buildings. Organized relays and games among the youths are a major component of village church and national holidays. But the most exciting events by far are the infrequent sports competitions between different villages. Preparations often begin weeks beforehand. Young people and their parents alike gather food to take or give to guests and the lucky youths who have been selected for the teams exercise and practice each morning. These events are well-attended by all villagers and are followed in the evening with a feast shared by villagers and their guests and a stringband party, often lasting all night, with its opportunities for romance.

Adult villagers fully support these recreational activities. They form the main audience at the games, they prepare food and often accompany their sons and daughters when they travel to another village to participate in a match and they provide shelter and food for the guests who come to Uiaku. Yet the adults' participation in these various activities is peripheral. The organization of events, coaching and refereeing are left in their entirety to the leaders of the youth club. With the exception of canoe racing, a sport now rarely practised, the contests are entirely Western to the point that they are even conducted in English. For the most part, adult villagers are only the audience for these activities. In no other area has the youth club been so successful at establishing itself as a specialized organization.

Mention should also be made here of youth activities in the village church. A fellowship group of young people was organized in March 1983 by a newly arrived priest who had had experience with youth groups in New Britain. The fellowship group was not part of the youth club and did not possess a formal committee organization, but simply gathered at the wish of the priest. At first participants

met once or twice a week at his house to sing gospel songs accompanied by guitars. Later he began to involve them in church services as servers and a hymn group. During the same period he encouraged the election of two single young men to the church council. The priest also told me of his plans to involve the young people in projects to raise money in support of the work of the village church. He was anxious to give the young people a high priority in his ministry but at the same time was concerned that he not usurp the place of the youth club.

It seems curious that the Maisin tend to take the recreational and church activities of the youth (the areas of greatest success in organizing youth activities) largely for granted. Young people, youth club leaders, parents and village leaders all emphasized to me the real or potential importance of the club in community work. According to a former secretary-treasurer of the club:

> When the boys and girls finished grade 6 they just stayed in the village not doing anything; so they came up with the idea of forming this club to help the people (personal communication).

The club resolved to lend its help to the people in three ways: first, by hiring itself out at fifty toea an hour for tasks such as building houses and hauling canoe logs from the jungle; secondly, by fetching water and firewood for the old and infirm in the village; and thirdly, by forming a separate work team on community work days when villagers engage in shared labour on collective projects such as caring for cash crops, cutting the grass on the mission station, repairing school buildings, and so forth. One of the youth club leaders told me that the club had had a decided impact on community work habits. The adults also formed work teams, but they organized themselves according to their place of residence in the village. In contrast, the youth work team embraced the entire community, thus eliminating the possibility of rivalries between village factions.

Yet the contribution of the youth club to community activities remains more a promise than a reality. Villagers give various reasons for this, some of which I listed above: the youths are lazy, their leaders inefficient, and so on. But disagreements within the club itself would appear to be the immediate cause. Resentment soon paralyses the club when the more conscientious members notice that several of the individuals who regularly show up for sports and parties are conspicuously absent when it comes time for work. There have also been differences over the management of club money by the leaders. On several occasions during my fieldwork club members and their parents privately and publicly accused the leaders of using these funds for their own purposes (the combined savings of the youth

and sports club in June 1983 was approximately 280 kina and I was told that 200 kina of this money had been given to the club by wantoks from Port Moresby). In addition, the concern with money may have poisoned the relationship of the youth club with part of the community. A retired teacher in Uiaku said of the youth:

> Individually they do not help the community. When we say we will hire the youth to do the work, they do help. They help on community work days. But if they see a person working, they do not join in.

The expectation that the youth club should implant the moral values of the community in the young people is the source of the most heartfelt disagreements between villagers. This debate results not so much from what the youth and their club do or do not do, but more from differences in opinion as to what the youth today are and what they should be. These differences of opinion ,in turn, point to more general concerns among the Maisin about the present economic difficulties they face and their future as a community. I will deal with this dimension of the reception of the youth club in the latter part of this paper.

The community and the youth club

The Maisin universally recognize the potential value of organized youth activities as contributions to the quality of life in the villages: providing recreational activities, supporting the church, contributing to community projects, and instilling the values that make the settlements pleasant and supportive places in which to live. Yet the youth club and its leaders have, from time to time, been the subjects of acrimonious debate. The club has so far failed to make a significant contribution to community projects and has been torn apart by internal quarrelling, usually over money.

The most disturbing difficulties have been those instances, fortunately rare, in which the youth as a group and the community have found themselves locked on a collision course. Such a situation developed in the late months of 1982. In October, at the end of Sunday service, a time usually reserved in the church for announcements, a retired teacher blasted the children and teachers of the community school for not exercising more restraint and discipline. Then he invited the congregation to consider the results of such early slackness among the school-leavers:

> You youth! You do nothing! You don't come to church properly or do the work properly; you just go place to place. Like the flying fox, you hang around all day and go around at night.

The young people were stung by this and other intemperate remarks. Within a few days the leader of the youth club let it be known that the young people were considering a 'boycott' or 'strike' of an upcoming church festival as retaliation. This threat provoked another outburst in church the following Sunday and the Uiaku village councillor hastily called a meeting to discuss the matter. He was successful at cooling tempers. He pointedly told the young people that there was no room for 'boycotts' in the village: they would soon be married and what would happen to their families if they decided to go on a strike because of some argument? He did not want to hear these words again. Then he harangued the villagers for being out of touch with the youth and urged that regular meetings, such as this one, be held to discuss problems. Although the immediate outcome of this dispute was happy one, it seemed to take out what little steam there was left in the youth club at the time. The club became moribund for several months. Its dispirited leader told me several times that he wanted to be released from his responsibility but could find no replacement.

Given the general wish of the Maisin that the youth club be successful, why has it had so many problems? I have touched upon many of the immediate reasons in this section. But when removed from their historical and social contexts, such reasons tell us little about the underlying problems and prospects of the youth club.

Having outlined the aims, activities and problems of the Goropi Club, we must now turn to larger questions: what do the Maisin expect of their young people? Can the youth movement as it is presently organized in Uiaku and Ganjiga be reasonably expected to meet these aspirations?

A history of Maisin adolescence

(This analysis is based upon informant testimonies and government and mission archival materials. A fuller analysis with detailed documentation can be found in Barker 1985a.)

We can better understand the Maisin's response to the youth club by first considering the sociology of adolescence. In Maisin society, as in all varieties of human cultures, the period of maturation falling between puberty and marriage is socially conditioned. From the perspective of individuals, the movement is one from childhood and dependence on adults to adulthood with its

attendant responsibilities. From the perspective of the overall society, adolescence marks the point at which older family units begin to divide into new units, or to transform into more complex wholes, or to disintegrate and be replaced by new units. As Fortes (1958:1) says, 'a society is a social system, that particular social system, only so long as its elements and components are maintained and adequately replaced'. The biological events of birth, puberty and death are of crucial importance to any society for they force transitions in the makeup of actual human groups. The study of the social conditioning of birth, puberty and death reveals to social scientists processes of social reproduction (see Weiner 1976).

The experience of adolescence in Maisin society has been complicated over the past eighty years by many introduced forces: schools, migrant labour, and Western commodities, to name three important ones. But the basic experience of the young people who stay in the villages today is remarkably similar to what it was in the past. This is because the processes of social reproduction in Maisin culture continue to be based upon ties of kinship, exchange obligations and subsistence activities. Each child is born a member of a resident patri-clan; he or she is soon acquainted with a dense and often overlapping network of nearby cognatic kin to whom they can turn for help and to whom, in turn, they are encouraged to be helpful. Toddlers learn the importance of reciprocity as they carry plates of cooked food between the houses of relatives in the evening; later they become involved in the formal exchanges that mark their own and others' life transitions and which signal moral status. Finally, every child observes and imitates the basic tasks that support the domestic unit and, ultimately, life itself: gardening, fishing, cooking, weaving mats, hollowing canoes, and so forth (Tietjen 1984). Social adolescence is the time when a person first begins to assert his or her presence as a kinsman and potential affine, as someone who meets the moral obligation to exchange, and as a man or woman who is capable of working hard to support their own family.

In this section I will first describe the lives of youths in the period before the Second World War, as this is remembered today by the old people. I will then analyse how the basic pattern of transition through adolescence has been complicated and transformed by colonial and post-colonial forces.

The Maisin distinguish three large stages of maturation. A boy is known as teiti at birth, ififfi from puberty and tamati when he marries. A little girl, morobi, becomes a susuki at the onset of menstruation or when her face is tattooed, and marries as a sauki. These terms describe statuses as much as biological states. It is not uncommon to hear a man of around sixty refer to males under forty

as 'little boys'. Nor is it improper; for full social adulthood comes only after a man and woman have raised a family and proven their ability to work hard and meet exchange obligations. Typically they reach this stage when their own children start into adolescence.

Most Maisin adults would appreciate the sentiment expressed by the English poet, John Gay:

> Youth's the season made for joys,
> Love is then our duty.

Tales of the beauty and adventures of young men and women are the stuff of many Maisin myths and legends. Delightful reminiscences of youth's excitement fill the evening chatter as villagers visit each other after a day's work. Not infrequently, middle-aged or older informants would interrupt some plodding interview I was conducting on kinship or a similarly dull subject to tell me of the real fascination of their early years. 'When it was the time of moonlight, we would dance', one elder said to me:

> You have just come and so you think Uiaku is like this. But if you had come before I don't think that you would stay in your house. You would watch us dancing until day break!.

Traditionally, and still today, the period between puberty and marriage (usually occurring in an individual's early to mid twenties) was the time of the greatest freedom in the life-cycle. Old enough to be free of full dependence upon parents but too young to take on the diverse responsibilities of marriage, boys and girls were allowed a few years to develop and explore their newly found strength and erotic urges. As in many coastal Melanesian societies, adolescent boys usually left the houses of their parents to live together in a bachelor house. Premarital sex was expected and at least tolerated, if not always approved of by parents. Decorating themselves in their most beautiful ornaments and feathers, the young men and women joined in dances on moonlit beaches, engaging together in mangu via (beach play). That night or the next day some of the boys and girls might arrange liaisons, often employing a younger brother or sister as a go-between.

The tryst usually took place in the girl's house. This always involved a touch of adventure, for her parents would be sleeping nearby. One elderly man shared some recollections:

> Some parents were kind when you climbed up to the girl or she pulled you up [into the house]. Others would talk until you came down from the house and stopped.....When you go into the house, you must be careful not to make noise so that they don't know you are there. You should wait through the first, next, next and next rooster [crowing] and then you can go. It is morning. But if they know you are there, it is no good. They will talk or they will chase you and you won't sleep with the girl. They may not chase you, only make a fire and walk around. This is frightful and so you come down.

One of the narrator's former girlfriends, now in her sixties, was listening and chuckling during this account. She told him, to everyone's delight: 'when you were young you used to jump down and they would chase you from the house'!

Maisin remember their youth as a time in which they developed strong, joyful friendships, uncomplicated by kinship standing and exchange obligations. Individuals found in their youth the greatest opportunity in their lives to push and develop their abilities, to explore the limits of the physically possible and socially acceptable, to begin establishing a reputation as an artful hunter, a smart dancer, a skilful gardener, or a consummate trickster.

This period of life, however, must not be characterized as a 'busting loose' - a last fling before taking up the responsibilities of adulthood. The whole system of child rearing and maturation into adulthood was directed, as Dorothy Lee (1959:29) puts it in a description of Tikopia, 'toward increasing interdependence and socialization, instead of toward personal self-reliance and individuation'. Many, perhaps most, of the activities of young people in the traditional society were imbued with cultural and social significance. Part of the reason for the initial move of the boys into a bachelor house, for example, was to separate them from the polluting effects of their mothers and sisters. The need to protect one's strength from the weakening effects of the other sex, and of sex itself, was a lesson the Maisin brought from the past when young men had to be prepared at any time to defend their village from enemies. The chief occupations of youths also reflected their integration into the larger social system. They worked hard: making gardens, beating sago, manufacturing tapa cloth, fishing and hunting. And today it is such moments of routine hard work in the pleasant company of a close friend that most adults recall first when asked to describe their youth.

The care and socialization of young children was largely the responsibility of their parents and close kin. When a boy or girl entered puberty, however, his or her proper socialization into the customs and organization of the society became the concern of a wider range of adults. The start of adolescence was marked by puberty rites and exchanges. These were most elaborate in the case of first-born children, involving the preparation of huge quantities of food and the exchange of traditional wealth items between the 'mother's side' and the 'father's side' of the child. The wealth was placed on or beside the decorated youth, perhaps symbolizing the unity of the two sets of kin in his or her person. Other puberty ceremonies were simpler. On an appointed day, boys were quietly decorated in insignia owned by their patri-clan in the privacy of their own hamlet. Girls underwent a period of seclusion to have their faces decorated in elaborate tattoos. They would proudly emerge four to six weeks later, dressed in their clan insignia for a small feast in their honour. Thus made beautiful and enclothed in the markers of their elders' wealth and power, the youths were now considered ready to participate in the 'beach play' and to sleep together.

A wide circle of kin and potential affines took an interest in the courting behaviour of young men and women. The Maisin traditionally practiced 'sister exchanges' in which one group would engage an unmarried daughter or sister to another group with the promise that sometime in the future they would receive back a woman for one of their unmarried boys. Adults scrutinized the work habits of their prospective sons and daughters-in-law before entering into such arrangements. Once engaged, the boy and girl were then expected to work for their respective in-laws for several months to a few years before the actual marriage was recognized. Even unengaged youths were drawn into exchange obligations. It used to be the custom that when a boy wished for a long term relationship with a girl he would give her father an article of wealth (usually a shell valuable) in exchange for the right to sleep with her. This was often a prelude to marriage. After marriage, such shell valuables formed the heart of the bride price. Through social mechanisms such as these, young men and women were gradually drawn into the social networks and responsibilities that would frame their adult experience (This is not to say that the young people always obliged their parents. Several celebrated battles took place in the past when an engaged girl eloped and her enraged kin tried to take her back from her in-laws).

Adolescence was the time of greatest personal independence in the traditional life-cycle. The experiences of adolescence, however, tended towards increasing social interdependence, leading young people towards full adulthood. This was a gradual process. Early

marriages were frequently unstable. Many of the men and women I interviewed for a village census in 1982 had gone through three or more unions before settling down with one partner. After the stable marriage came years of hard work in the garden and increasing involvement in formal exchanges. Usually it was around the time that their own first-born sons and daughter were entering adolescence that a man and woman became adults in a full social and political sense, exercising a degree of influence in the collective activities of the village.

Changes in the experiences of adolescence

The biblical author of Proverbs 22 says: 'train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it'. This well describes one of the prevailing assumptions in colonial attempts to reform Melanesian societies. By transforming the education, aspirations, loyalties, and experience of the children and young people of the indigenous societies, government officers and missionaries sought to inculcate, through a gradual evolution, major changes in Papuan values and ways of life.

One of the first of the administration's actions in Collingwood Bay was the ending of tribal warfare. Raiding and warfare had provided some of the main proving grounds for young Maisin men. The colonial administration had new purposes for them. Only a few years after establishing the new regional peace, the officers were strongly urging single Maisin men to sign on as indentured plantation and mine labourers to work mostly at the eastern end of Papua. At first the villagers were not interested; but by 1920 it had become the norm for young men to spend from eighteen months to several years away at work as labourers before returning home to their villages to marry and raise families. My census in 1982 showed that all of the men of Uiaku and Ganjiga over fifty years of age had worked outside of their village for periods of their bachelorship, usually as plantation workers.

One further government initiative especially affected the village youths. In 1926 the then Resident Magistrate, W.R. Humphries, introduced the game of soccer throughout Collingwood Bay and arranged for an annual series of competitions between different villages. Humphries held the view, common at that time, that the suppression of warfare had induced a dangerous state of lethargy in Melanesian males that threatened their physical health (see Wetherell 1977:205-215 for an interesting description of colonial ideas on the relationship between sports, warfare and depopulation in Melanesian societies). And so soccer was introduced with 'the object of providing the natives with some new interest in life' (Humphries 1927-28). Whether because it provided them with a martial outlet or

it was simply enjoyable, soccer proved immensely popular among the local people and is still the favourite sport in Tufi District. Greybeards in Uiaku relate with much pride the details of their victories in the 1930s when their team consistently won the district pennant. These early soccer teams were the direct ancestors of today's youth club.

The mission's early influence on the young people was more direct and ambitious than that of the government. The leaders of the Anglican mission held relatively liberal attitudes (for their time) towards the indigenous culture. They wished the Papuans to convert to Christianity and recognized that this would entail the abandonment of several ancient customs; but they wanted conversion to proceed in a way that would not cause schisms in the villages between Christians and pagans nor would encourage the people to abandon the positive aspects of their village life for some version of European living. In this case philosophy merged with necessity, for the missionaries had neither the staff nor the resources to enforce their version of Christianity upon the people. The strategy they chose was to work through the children: to concentrate on schooling, ensuring that the young people grew up accustomed to the routines of Christian worship. the outlines of Christian belief and the regulations of Christian living (Wetherell 1977 examines these themes at length; see Barker 1985a for a detailed analysis of missionary activities among the Maisin).

The village schools gave the mission and government authorities a base on which to further their influence in local communities. Around 1920, some of the young Christian men in Uiaku were organized by white missionaries into a church council and charged with the task of regulating the conduct of new Christians. Ten years later, the administration formed its own village councils, drawing on the same group of men, and gave them the responsibility of announcing and defending government policies to less-educated villagers.

Prior to 1942, these and related changes appear to have combined to lessen the power of traditional leaders and the importance of the patri-clans in Maisin society. Large-scale feasts and dances became rarer and the initiations of boys other than first-borns came to an end. Some of the young men gained a new influence through their acquisition of European goods and money by means of plantation labour and their sponsorship by the mission and the government on village councils. Important as these changes were, however, they appear to have been absorbed into the development cycles of the society. The movements to and from the plantations became a regular feature of a young man's growing up. This often meant that marriage had to be delayed, but the old marriage customs continued to be observed. The young leaders were granted general authority in those areas of life

that were of direct concern for the mission and the government, but all young people continued to respect the ultimate authority of village elders in matters affecting the clans, such as marriages, divorces, disputes over land, and death rites (Barker 1985b).

The changes that followed the end of the Second World War have been of much greater import. Because of their long association with the Anglican Church and access to relatively good schools, the Maisin were in an excellent position to benefit from the expansion of education and employment opportunities that took place in the 1950s and 1960s. The process of out-migration that began with the enrolment of four Uiaku boys in Martyrs' High School in the early 1950s had its own momentum. The first generation of high school graduates went on to gain government and business jobs and started to send remittances home.

The Maisin workforce of today could accurately be described as 'elite'. It includes doctors, dentists, nurses, teachers, businessmen, priests, and some highly placed civil servants (see Carrier 1981 for a comparative discussion of an 'elite' workforce). Remittances helped pay the school fees of later generations of siblings and other relatives when it was their turn to begin high school. Those who did not achieve grades high enough to qualify for high school went to vocational schools or were helped by their wantoks in town to find employment. Girls did not have as early an entrance into the high schools as boys, but many of those who did not themselves gain higher education and employment married Maisin men who had and so also moved out of the villages.

The outflow of young from the Collingwood Bay area was sudden and massive. Out of a total population of 481 in Uiaku and Ganjiga in 1982, only seven men and sixteen women were between the ages of thirty-one and forty (5 per cent of the total), and many of these had only recently returned to the villages, usually to care for aging parents. Uiaku experienced the greatest exodus of the Maisin villages. Somewhat fewer young people left Ganjiga and the smaller communities in southern Collingwood Bay (see table 6.1)

TABLE 6.1: AGE DISTRIBUTION IN UIAKU AND GANJIGA, 1982

	Males			Females			
Age Group	Uiaku	Ganjiga	Sub Total	Uiaku	Ganjiga	Sub Total	Total
70+	7	7	14	6	4	10	24
61-70	21	5	26	21	6	27	53
51-60	12	10	22	17	6	23	45
41-50	12	9	21	12	14	26	47
31-40	2	5	7	12	4	16	23
21-30	11	7	18	8	14	22	40
11-20	27	27	54	25	30	55	109
0-10	32	31	63	46	31	77	140
Totals:	124	101	225	147	109	256	481

Source: Census conducted by the Author.

In a report on labour migration among the Yega of Oro Bay in the mid 1960s. Dakeyne (1977:157-158) summarizes the pressures and inducements experienced by villagers which led them to favour the economic strategy of a semi-permanent export of labour:

> First, there is a desire to conform to an already established pattern. The desire for money and what it can buy and for experience of life outside the village are strongly reinforced by friends who come home for holidays smartly dressed, bringing presents for all their relatives and friends, telling exciting tales of their doings in the outside world and having cash to spend in the local trade stores. Secondly, there is the influence of older relatives whose unskilled labour now yields so small a return that they no longer reckon it worth while to go away to work; instead, these older villagers live, at least in respect of imported commodities, on the gifts of money and goods sent to them by the younger men working for cash wages away from the village.

The combined effect of all this on Maisin society was to profoundly transform the cultural institutions of adolescence. Many customs simply disappeared and other became rare, all the victims of a lack of participants. Some of these customs had been opposed for years by the mission. That the Maisin would persist with them for so

many years in the face of opposition speaks to their importance and popularity. At the time the customs were abandoned, ironically, the missionary opposition had almost completely died away.

The last reported mangu via 'beach play', took place around 1963; the custom of sister exchanges had been abandoned a few years before this; the puberty ceremonies for first-born children and girls' facial tattooing were postponed and often never done. The result was that the villages became much duller places for the few young people who stayed behind. But even when moonlit dances along the beach and puberty ceremonies were still common, they must have appeared dull in the eyes of the young people bedazzled by the towns, and they must have held less weight than the promise of increasing access to money and commodities for those adult Maisin who encouraged their children to leave the villages. Today many Maisin express regrets about the passing of these customs but there has been no move to restore them.

Perhaps the most important of the changes affecting young people in the 1960s and 1970s was a transformation in their elders' expectations of them. Children had always been important economic assets for their parents: a child could be given in adoption to affines in lieu of brideprice; marriages of children helped to forge politically important exchange links; and children provided support when parents reached old age. But now these expectations were overlain with another: one's child should go to high school and acquire a good job so as to support his parents with money and store goods. I was curious to know how strong this attitude was, so in 1983 I asked about sixty parents in Uiaku and Ganjiga if they wanted their children to go to high school and, if so, why? Everyone I spoke to hoped that their children would have secondary education. With only a few exceptions, people told me that this would be good because then the children could 'send money to the village' (see Carrier 1981 for a cogent analysis of a similar situation of labour export on Ponam Island in Manus Province).

Not all of the young people left Uiaku and Ganjiga during these years and, as time passed, some of those who had gone out returned, usually to care for their aging parents. In its essentials, life in the villages carried on much as it always had: people made their gardens, fished, and hunted. They could now afford nylon fishing nets, better tools and new clothes; and this made their lives a little easier while not greatly changing things. But there were at the same time more subtle changes occurring in village society. After the Second World War the number of years children spent in school increased and the quality of the education they received improved (see table 6.2). A good education, of course, provided a major basis for the entry of the Maisin into the elite job market.

The Maisin naturally thought that knowledge gained in school could also indicate how the local economy might be improved, and so villagers increasingly turned to the high school graduates living in the community for guidance in the management of village corporate activities: cash crop projects, the tapa cloth business, the school, and so on. The new managers, in turn, tended to speak in favourable terms about the various changes that had allowed them to enter high school in the first place. And so the new economic situation began.

TABLE 6.2: MEAN EDUCATION OF VILLAGERS IN UIAKU AND GANJIGA

Birth Decade	Age in 1982	Men	(N)	Women	(N)
-1911	71+	2.4	14	2.4	26
1912-1921	61-70	3.5	26	2.7	23
1922-1931	51-60	3.8	20	2.9	20
1932-1941	41-50	5.4	21	3.3	23
1942-1951	31-40	6.6	7	4.1	14
1952-1961	21-30	7.0	18	6.8	19
Working Children:*		10.1	59	8.1	53

* This category also includes non-working children married to working individuals. It was not possible to secure accurate figures on the ages of individuals.

Source: Village Census by the Author.

As we shall see in the next section, villagers have discovered that 'education' has more than one aspect. Those who spend years absorbing school lessons learn correspondingly less about the ways of their fathers and mothers. Moreover, they may come to look down on the conventions and necessities of village life. Thus the basis was lain in this period for tension between 'ordinary' villagers and those with more schooling. This tension began to erupt into open disagreements when the national economy began its downturn in the mid to late 1970s.

Dakeyne (1977:161) warned in 1967 of a danger of 'creating an over-supply of well-educated but unemployable young people'. This is what has been happening in Maisin communities through the late 1970s and early 1980s. The quality of community school education has improved immensely in the last twenty years. But today there are far fewer places in the high schools available to the Maisin than there were a decade ago, and those who graduate from high schools have no guarantee of finding employment. The decline of Maisin enrolments in

the high schools is the result of improved education elsewhere in Oro Province and attempts on the part of education officials to balance regional access to the schools. There is no evidence that Maisin scholars have become any less competent through the years. The job possibilities for grade 6 'school leavers' are even bleaker. As a result, the number of youths remaining in the villages or returning after a stint in high school and looking for work has increased considerably in the past decade. In my 1982 census of Ganjiga and Uiaku I found that 109 people, or 25 per cent of the population, were between the ages of eleven and twenty (see table 6.1).

The Goropi Youth Club was formed at the historical point where the flow of young people to the high schools and urban jobs began to perceptibly slow down.

Attitudes towards the youth and the youth club

The creation of the Goropi Youth Club in Uiaku and Ganjiga occurred simultaneously with several other crucial changes in the circumstances of the Maisin. The challenge faced by the club is not simply to establish a new community organization catering to the young people, but also to address the concerns Maisin villagers feel about the youth and the future of their society in the light of recent changes in the economy.

Let me first stress again that the youth club has been very successful in providing for the recreational needs of young Maisin villagers. Sports, stringband parties, and gospel sing-alongs are popular activities in the villages, as fully accepted today as the mangu via was in the past. If the youth club activities were confined to only these areas, there would be little to write about. But the sponsors of the club have larger ambitions for the organization and ordinary villagers also express greater hopes from time to time.

These ambitions and expectations have been enormously complicated by the economic reversal the Maisin have experienced in recent years, in common with many Papua New Guineans. Remittances and returns from the sale of cash crops and tapa cloth seem to be getting smaller even as the prices for store goods rise. Villagers frequently complain that they can no longer meet the costs of supporting the local priest and paying government taxes. The Maisin feel that someone must be at fault for this troublesome situation and so, in turn, they criticize allegedly indifferent government and church officials, unresponsive politicians, and selfish local leaders. But the most obvious and easily available target for blame is the last generation of young people to graduate from the community school - those who did not get into high school.

The disappointment many villagers express about today's young people frequently merges with ambiguous feelings about some of the characteristics adopted by those who have been successful in the towns. Adults encourage their children to do well in the classroom and, indeed, transfer some of the blame for a child's inability to achieve high enough grades to get into high school upon his or her parents (the reasoning is that the parents were not 'strict' enough). Yet many villagers express dismay about what they consider to be typical attitudes held by those who have attained a superior education. One of my informants, herself a former teacher and women's welfare officer, told me:

> Education is growing and the young people go out into town. When they come back they don't listen to their parents. They learn good things but also bad things from other boys and girls from town. So they don't do or teach the good things to their parents. So they don't respect their parents. In the old days, they would scorn a boy or girl who does rotten work (and) point out a boy or girl who respects the parents and are learning to do the work well. Everyone was here. But now they go out and the example is gone. That's why I say they are bad.

Younger people as a whole are frequently lumped in with those who have been to high school, together receiving casual abuse. They are blamed for letting down their relatives by not working hard enough to get into high school; they are sometimes accused of being 'big heads' who are 'too proud' to listen to their elders; they are said to be 'lazy' and unwilling to contribute to village projects (which then fall apart). In sum, they easily become scapegoats for the various troubles that afflict the community. The anger that flashed when the youth club threatened to boycott a church festival was itself the product of countless small slights of the youths by their elders.

It may be that the young people of today are less hard-working and co-operative than their parents were. I cannot say. They impressed me, however, as pleasant, respectful and industrious individuals, especially compared to Western adolescents. The real problem, in my opinion, is this: Maisin are looking for tangible reasons for the economic reversal of the past few years and youth are the most obvious target. But the fact is that Papua New Guinea could not sustain the rate of growth it enjoyed in the 1960s and 1970s; there is little or nothing that the youth or any other Maisin could do to stop and reverse a trend that has been affecting the entire country and, indeed, the entire Third World. The older villagers

criticize the youth for being too much like villagers and therefore unable to land jobs in the towns but, at the same time, for being 'too educated' and therefore out of touch with village moral values.

The youth club itself provides an even more convenient target for this type of contradictory reasoning. Much of the allure of the club, for both rural youth and their parents, comes from its association with the National Youth Movement, particularly youth activities in the towns. The urban elite provides the role models for the leaders and the membership. In my conversation with the club leaders and thoughtful members I was continually struck by their use of phrases indicating very high, if vague, goals for the local association. They stressed such things as 'development', 'leadership', 'self-reliance' and 'helping the people' without attempting to spell out what these ideals might mean in the village context. There is, of course, nothing wrong with such ideals in and of themselves, but they seem to promise much more than the youth club can reasonably deliver. This leads to disappointments. Without clear targets for 'development' and 'self-reliance', spurts of youth club energy have been easily stymied by quarrels arising over what is to be done with money so raised or about the members who do not work. It is a situation that inevitably leads adults and the youth to question the sincerity of their leaders.

The irony is that these same villagers who criticize the club and its leaders are also the ones who insist that the educated young married men in the village take responsibility for youth activities. While there is little doubt that the leaders contribute to the difficulty of their situation, it must be remembered that their situation is a difficult one to start with.

If the youth club fails to live up to the hopes of the villagers, it also occasionally offends the moral values that Maisin most stress. The devaluation of the traditional way of life is not a matter of deliberate action on the part of the youth club, but rather a by-product of the tendency to model youth activities on urban counterparts. Kinship relations, reciprocity, and subsistence tasks are largely irrelevant to the youth programme, a point that was made clear to me when one leader attempted to explain why the club was formed in the first place:

> The young people leave school and do nothing but garden with their parents all the time. They don't try to extend their knowledge. We thought that with the youth club they could retain the knowledge they gained in school.

The aim here is unquestionably a legitimate one. But in the context of a small village society it places the youth club in a tricky position.

The first problem is that several of the youth activities take place outside of contexts familiar to older Maisin or accessible to them. Parents naturally feel anxious when they do not have a clear idea of what their children are up to. This anxiety is demonstrated most clearly in prevalent ideas about premarital sex and pregnancy. I was told by older folk that in the past unwanted pregnancies rarely occurred because a boy always gave the father of his sweetheart a shell valuable before he slept with her. The assumption here would appear to be that the situation was approved and controlled by the adults. Today, on the other hand, this custom has lapsed and boys and girls arrange their own liaisons privately, often at stringband parties. The result has been, in the popular view, an epidemic of pregnancies among single girls.

Half a dozen young women I knew of in Uiaku and Ganjiga had given birth out of wedlock. Their children were accepted and loved, but they were not allowed to move with their mothers when they married. The babies 'belong' to her patri-clan when no husband comes forward to pay brideprice. There is no way of knowing whether unplanned pregnancies really have become a modern epidemic or represent a case of historical amnesia. One of the youth leaders that I interviewed was keenly aware of this problem. He told me that:

> When [the club] started the older people thought that it was a waste of time. But it was not explained to the parents. Parents grumbled because sometimes children were working too hard. They were also worried because the club gave boys and girls too many chances to get married (i.e., have unplanned pregnancies).

He said that most parents now approved of the youth club, but he admitted that there were still some people who did not understand its aims and activities.

The second problem is that youth leaders and their followers sometimes display a disrespect towards village society that annoys older people. The main difficulty is that the Maisin traditionally have stressed the deference that is due to elders. They find the claims made by the club leaders on behalf of village youths awkward to accept. The duty of young people, I was told again and again, often by adolescents themselves, is to obey and help their parents and relatives. When the club strikes an independent course the parents may be affronted (as in the case of the proposed boycott)

for this goes against a long tradition of respect. Again, it is easiest to criticize the leaders. 'The boys and girls want to work,' one village woman told me, 'but their leaders are not good'.

But there is a real edge of arrogance to some of the attitudes youth leaders reveal to the villagers. They speak of 'helping the people', but do not consider how the full involvement of older villagers might improve youth activities. They concern themselves with developing the disciplines and skills young people learn in school, but do not appear to believe that there is much of use the young people can learn from ordinary village people. The main nurturing base of the youth movement in Uiaku and Ganjiga must be the local community, yet the club leadership seems unable to recognize and to act upon this reality.

The Goropi Youth Club of Uiaku and Ganjiga, therefore, faces considerable obstacles in moving beyond the organization of recreational activities for village young people. I do not want to leave the impression that a permanent state of animosity exists between the youth and villagers or that the club leaders are enemies of the traditional social system. Far from it. As one of the youth leaders said to me in a different context, 'In Uiaku every man must work hard in the garden to feed his family'. The young people and the club leaders, like other villagers, spend the bulk of their time and energies engaged in subsistence activities, meeting exchange obligations and caring for their kin. Youth club activities form a minor part of their lives. The tensions I have analysed here might best be described as tendencies that rarely burst into open disputes but, at the same time, undermine attempts to form a viable youth organization in the community.

The tensions that become visible in villagers' responses to the youth club are also apparent in the context of other village corporate activities. The young people today face pressures and problems unknown to their parents when they were of the same age. But these pressures and problems are not something unique to the young people. Ultimately they must be related to the most intractable difficulty of Maisin society: resolving the contradictions between the inherited values of a small-scale subsistence existence and the requirements of participation in the nation state and the world economic system.

Conclusions: problems and prospects

My main interest in this case study of the Goropi Youth Club has been to explore the reasons why the club has not yet been able to become fully established in the community. I reached the following specific conclusions.

First, the club has been very successful in arranging recreational activities for the young people and this probably is the main basis of its continued support in the villages. Secondly, the sponsors of the club along with villagers have harboured larger ambitions and hopes for the club. These are vaguely formulated but mostly tied to the aim of increasing the economic prosperity of the society by emulating the urban elite. Not only have such goals not been attained, they have contributed from time to time to tensions between village youths, adults and the club leaders. Thirdly, the failures of the youth club are related to specific weaknesses of the organization itself: the setting of goals that are exceedingly vague and, upon closer examination largely irrelevant to village realities, and the autonomy of the youth organization from village corporate activities. Finally, the weaknesses of the youth movement in Uiaku and Ganjiga generally reflect the ambiguous position of young people in Maisin society today. There are far fewer opportunities open to young people outside of their own villages than there were even a short time ago. Remaining in the community, somewhat stigmatized as 'school leavers', they are caught in a double-bind between their parents' desire that they go to high school and gain jobs (requiring them to leave the area and to abandon the way of life, and many of the values, of village society) and their parents' suspicion that the very education that might allow them to migrate alienates youth from the values that make village life successful and pleasant.

This analysis of the youth movement in Uiaku and Ganjiga contains two themes which, when given in the forms of propositions, suggest ways the movement might develop in the future. The first proposition is that from the time of first contact with Europeans, succeeding generations of young people have been at the spear point of change in village society. The generations of the first pupils to attend village schools, the founders of the village councils, the educated urban elite, and the present-day youth club members have successively faced each other in the village context as elders and young people. This brings us to the second proposition: the local changes that have occurred in Maisin society have been gradual and cumulative. The mode of change is one which has allowed for the continuity of the basic social forms and values of

the past (kinship, exchange and subsistence activities) while responding to and incorporating the opportunities and demands of the present.

What do these propositions suggest for the future of the youth movement in Uiaku and Ganjiga? I think that they first of all caution us not to be too quick to dismiss the movement because of its present-day weaknesses. According to archival records, the mission and government councils introduced into Uiaku in the 1920s and 1930s were also initially of small consequence for the community. But they set the stage for the acceptance and great expansion in influence of village corporations in the years following the Second World War. The stumbling movements of the youth organization today may be preparing the way for more important changes, as yet unknown, in the future.

Yet the outlook for the youth club in its present form does seem unpromising in some ways when compared to the innovations of the past. For example, the youth club does not have the considerable amount of outside encouragement, supervision, instruction and resources that the councils enjoyed in the past. Given the economic difficulties Papua New Guinea faces today, this situation seems unlikely to change in the near future. Secondly, whereas the earlier initiatives undertaken by young members of the community aimed at specific reforms in the entire society, the youth club for the time being supports a vague rhetoric and caters for the most part to the needs of the young people. Finally, the club takes urban counterparts as its model and this, along with the narrowness of its membership base, makes it somewhat marginal in what is still essentially a subsistence society in an economically isolated part of the country. Should a large-scale development project start in the Collingwood Bay area, the youth club might soon find an important niche in mediating the adjustment of the rural society to the sudden influx of money, goods and jobs - changes that would have the greatest immediate impact on youths. But in the present circumstances, the youth club seems destined to remain in stunted growth.

The internal reform of the local youth movement is an important option. There are indications that such reform may be underway. In the incident of the threatened boycott described earlier in the paper, the village councillor urged that the young people and villagers meet together at regular intervals. This was also proposed at several other village meetings, although at the time of my departure it had not been acted upon. A more promising development would seem to be the creation of a youth fellowship group under the village priest. An older man and neutral in village politics, the priest is able to avoid many of the

suspicions that have made life difficult for the young married men leading the youth club. The young people are able to remain involved with the community while forming a separate group by coming together under the umbrella of the village church. And the church, which is very respected in Maisin villages, gives the youth fellowship group a respectability and legitimacy that the youth club cannot easily provide. The fellowship group was receiving strong and consistent support from the young people in the village during the last months of my field research, in contrast to the uneven response to the youth club.

If the present trends continue it appears that the Goropi youth and sports clubs will continue to provide a welcome recreational outlet for the village young people. But the youth of Uiaku and Ganjiga will also be drawn into the church fellowship group and, through it, to a larger corporate role in the community. The goals of the youth movement will accordingly be more modest, but also more attainable: organizing sports and parties, helping in church services, and helping in church fund-raising projects and village celebrations. Most importantly, should such reforms continue, the activities of youth associations will be gradually incorporated into the developmental cycles of the social system, thus ending the alienation young people have experienced in recent years.

Given the importance of the church in mediating the relation between the Maisin and Europeans in the past, it seems entirely appropriate that it provide a place within which Maisin young people and their parents can come to terms with the problems of the 1980s.