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MISSION STATION AND VILLAGE: RELIGIOUS PRACTICE AND REPRESENTATIONS IN MAISIN SOCIETY

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With few exceptions Melanesians have adopted Christianity remarkably quickly. Students usually attribute this to Melanesian "pragmatism:" for example, the desire to acquire superior technology, knowledge and power from Europeans, or to end local hostilities (Forman 1982:89ff; Hogbin 1958). Studies of conversion, however, dwell on moments of transformation and disruption, on initial conversions and outbreaks of "cargoism." What light can an analytic focus on pragmatism and practice shed on the neglected topic of long-term accommodations to Christianity? If Melanesians initially preferred mission practice over Christian theology, how is this preference reflected in the emerging "practical religions" of Christian communities? And what are the implications of a reshaping of the practical world for Melanesian understandings of themselves, of Christianity, and of the larger world from whence Christianity came?

In this chapter I examine the practical environments of an Anglican mission station and the surrounding village of Uiaku on southwestern Collingwood Bay in Oro Province, Papua New Guinea. I suggest that: (1) the mission station and village form distinct and incongruent practical environments; (2) both environments persist with support from the Maisin, who move easily between them; (3) the environments therefore should be regarded as complimentary aspects of one society; (4) the biculturalism of Maisin society complements wider hegemonic structures in Papua New Guinea; and (5) Maisin talk about the relation between the station and the village reveals on another level their attempts to reconcile their cultural identity with their involvement in the dominant political and economic system of Papua New Guinea.

The analysis has four stages. First, I examine how mission practices hastened the Maisins' entry into the colonial system. Following this, I describe Uiaku society in the 1980s, focusing on the practical dichotomy between village and station activities and their associated values and orientations. I turn in the third section to Maisin representations of the station-village relation. I identify and discuss three permutations — an exchange

relationship, the station as model for the village, and the village as model for the station. The concluding discussion focuses on two questions arising from the analysis: how Maisin biculturalism is sustained, and possible directions in the station-village relationship.

THE MISSION STATION

Mission stations spearheaded Christian expansion in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Stations served as base camps for the evangelization of the pagan countryside, housing European missionaries, their indigenous assistants and native boarders, and providing support services: stores, plantations, and workshops; senior schools, teacher colleges, and theological schools; clinics and hospitals. Stations also served as boot camps for new Christians: places where novices could receive an intensive introduction to Christianity away from pagan influences (Beidelman 1982; Fountain 1969,1971).

Most students of mission stations stress their importance as instruments of acculturation. Guenther (1977:457), for example, describes them as "sample communities" — "condensed replicas or versions of the society which they represent." Such communities intensify certain Western values, institutions and contradictions. Comaroff and Comaroff (1986) argue that while missions in southern Africa differed in their notions of Christianity and attitudes to Western industrial society, their practical labors drew upon a common set of largely unconscious orientations and values drawn from their European background. Africans living at and near stations gained practical acquaintance with the ideological premises of the mission (and colonial) system by rearranging their lives according to the mission clock, by adopting the division of labor of the mission farm, and by accepting the authority of the written word. Stations, then, were the scene of a "subtle colonialization" in which Africans internalized habits of everyday life compatible with the impinging colonial order (Comaroff and Comaroff 1986:2).

Yet mission stations were not just instruments of change, they were also social systems in their own right (Beidelman 1982; Tippett 1967). Often stations dissolved into the surrounding Christianized societies once the missionaries departed. In a few cases, however, like Metlakatla in British Columbia and some "industrial" stations of the south Pacific, they became Christian communities (Barnett 1942; Heise 1967; Wetherell 1973). Although stations received their initial support from metropolitan churches, they depended upon local support to survive. Over time, some stations were reshaped by their supporters. Etherington (1976) and

Strayer (1978), for example, show how African refugees who settled at mission stations gradually assumed leadership of the emerging communities, forming a "new African culture" at once indigenous and Western (Strayer 1978:159). Burridge (1973:206) describes another permutation in which Aborigines in northwestern Australia incorporated mission stations into their nomadic social patterns of "walkabout." Indigenous peoples have thus sometimes developed mission stations into new communities and innovative forms of social organization. While the mission station at Uiaku has been an acculturative force, we shall see that it has also provided the seeds for a new kind of society.

The Anglican Mission in Uiaku Village

Anglican missionaries arrived in Papua in 1891. After establishing a base on the high plateau of Dogura, overlooking Bartle Bay, the mission gradually expanded along the northeastern coast of Papua, from East Cape to the (then) German border. The philosophy of the mission was a peculiar mixture of Anglo-Catholic conservatism and highly romanticized views of indigenous village societies. Hostile to the secular trends in European industrial society, many mission spokesmen thought they saw in Papua village life the simple values of medieval Christendom (Barker 1979:133-37, Wetherell 1977:127-30). Some argued that the church and the Papuans had a natural affinity for one another. In the words of Henry Newton, the church in Papua "is not to be a body distinct from the native life, but rather one that permeates the whole by its influence. The Mission has not come... to change native life into a parody of European or Australian civilization" (Newton 1914:251).

Culturally tolerant in philosophy, the Anglicans resembled other European missionaries in practice (Barker 1987).[1] Few of them investigated the Papuan customs they admired in the abstract. Anglican policy instead stressed conventional church teachings on the liturgy, Bible, sacraments and marriage; church discipline; and education in the "3 R's" and basic health care. A range of commonsense orientations to the world grounded these policies in routine mission practices. Some missionaries realized that mission stations could be useful vehicles for transmitting such basic orientations into native life. For example, one priest suggested in 1929:

> All the regulations and rules of the station should be formed with one clear purpose in view — the fostering of a *christian habit of life* (*sic*). In this scheme, insistence on punctuality and alert obedience (the spirit of 'work when you work' — 'Do it heartily' etc.) would naturally have a special emphasis (Gill 1929, original emphasis).

Anglican stations were modest by Papuan standards. Short on money and staff, the mission depended on villagers for building materials, labor, and food.[2] Nevertheless, the stations served as examples of Western society for the isolated Papuans of the northeast coast. In the church and classroom, villagers learned their first crucial lessons concerning the ways of the Europeans and thus entered the colonial order.

The Maisin villages lay only 80 kilometers to the west of Dogura and received periodic visits from the missionaries through the 1890s. In 1899, the mission built a regional station at Wanigela on the west side of Collingwood Bay. Two years later, Percy John Money, the lay missionary in charge at Wanigela, purchased a block of land near the center of the largest Maisin village of Uiaku, and began constructing the station. He used bush materials for most of the buildings and hired Maisin laborers, but he clearly had Western designs in mind in laying out the mission complex. The station grounds were rectangular, marked off from the surrounding village by a fence. Around the perimeter, Money built a church, classroom, houses for the station teachers, and a house for himself. Photographs taken at the time reveal that the original station varied little in design from that of the 1980s. In form as well as function, the station was an alien social system implanted in the heart of a traditional community.

Non-Europeans manned Uiaku station for most of its history: at first Vanuatu and Solomon Islands teachers and later Papuans from older parts of the mission.[3] The teachers carried on the routine work of the mission, teaching and preaching on the station and in the villages. The district missionary made the 12 kilometer trek from Wanigela at least once a month to administer Communion, marriages, and baptisms, deal with disciplinary problems, and inspect the teachers' work. The Melanesian missionaries muted the incongruities between station and village in several ways. First, the Melanesian teachers shared many cultural traits with the Maisin, including a profound respect for magic and sorcery. They also became deeply involved in local exchange networks. Further, the white missionaries did not trust the Melanesians with station boarders, so children continued to spend most of their time when out of church and school with their own people. The poverty of the mission further muted the incongruities. The teachers received support from the mission and so had to depend upon the sympathy of villagers for garden land, for food, and for labor in maintaining station buildings. The station began as an alien institution, but it was not imposed upon the Maisin in any simple sense; without the support of the villagers, the station community would never have survived.

The mission made slow but steady progress. Teachers reported steady

attendance at the church and in the classroom during the first decade. The first baptisms took place in 1911 and by 1920 the majority of the younger population of Uiaku had become Christians (Barker 1985a:107). The new Christians lived amongst their pagan neighbors with few signs of tension. The missionaries at Wanigela often wondered about the sincerity of Maisin conversions. Mission log books from the early period contain a litany of complaints: Christians attending pagan death rituals, divorcing legally married spouses, or, even worse, taking second wives. Indigenous rituals and attitudes towards marriage did gradually change, but Christian teachings were often minor factors (Barker 1985a:325-32). Evidently, Maisin Christians did not feel that what they learned on the station required a sharp break with established village ways.

But Maisin did understand that their support of the mission entailed a radical change in relations with the outside world. At the time of European contact, the Maisin were the most feared raiders on Collingwood Bay. In early 1901, government police brutally "pacified" Uiaku by shooting dead three men (Monckton 1922). With this demonstration of strength, leading men became village constables responsible to the Resident Magistrate at Tufi, the government station sixty kilometers to the north. In succeeding years, both missionaries and government officers were careful to maintain distinctions in their work among the natives, but it is clear that they regarded each other as useful allies. Indeed, William MacGregor, the first Administrator, originally invited the Anglicans into Papua to complement government efforts at controlling and "civilizing" the natives (Barker 1979:33-34). The Anglicans assisted in expanding the hegemony[4] of the colonial regime in two ways. First, they helped to create a pliant work force for the emerging industries of the Territory. Second, they helped to internalize and legitimate the colonial administrative system by introducing village-level organizations based on Western models.

As I noted earlier, the Anglicans romantically wished the Papuans to remain villagers living in Christianized traditional societies. Yet the mission provided the means for many Maisin to make the transition from the village into the colonial economic system. An ability to read and write simple English and to perform calculations became important over time as clerical and then administrative positions opened to Papuans. But at least as important as the content of education, was the form of instruction in the village schools and churches. Maisin students and catechists were exposed to a novel system of authority, one based upon absolute principles rather than reciprocity: the authority of the teacher to order rote learning and to inflict punishments more or less at will, the rigid schedule of classes and services, the division of people into different Standards

(grades), and so forth. Prior to the Second World War, the station provided boys with a preview of the discipline they would experience on plantations and in mining operations and, for a few, in the mission or government services. Following the War, the Anglican church established one of the first highschools in Papua. Maisin boys attended the early classes and were well placed when important government and business positions opened up for indigenous people in the period of decolonialization in the 1960s and 1970s. By 1982 a third of the Maisin population had permanently migrated to urban areas of the country, most taking well-paying positions of doctors, dentists, civil servants, businessmen, and teachers (Barker 1985a:128-31). Remittances in cash and store goods had become an essential part of the local economy. Most of the migrants, like the remaining villagers, kept their connections to the Anglican church. Indeed, six Maisin from Uiaku had become priests.

While assisting the Maisin to enter the Territorial economy, the mission also brought the institutions of the hegemonic order into the village. The Maisin, like most other Papuans, recognized no formal positions of leadership at the time of contact. Their villages were multinucleated settlements, made up of several localized patriclans. Polities above the level of hamlets were unstable, fluctuating according to the skills of influential men and contingencies that made some groups allies and others enemies. This system was unsuitable for indirect rule, and so the colonial authorities developed village-level authorities and polities, at first constables and later councils. The mission introduced the basics of the new political order into Uiaku. The church and school provided the important first lesson by serving all villagers regardless of their kinship affiliations and alliances. In the early 1920s, the mission organized the first village-level council in Uiaku to handle church affairs. The government followed soon after with its own council, made up entirely of young Christians. These early councils had limited impact. But following the Second World War the Maisin enthusiastically embraced village-level organizations. They became involved in a series of attempts to establish successful cooperatives in the area and to raise funds to build a permanent church at Uiaku (Barker 1985a:131-40). New village committees handled school matters, developed local artifacts for trade, and promoted women and youth activities. These village organizations belonged to larger regional and national bodies. By 1982, they had become the major political arena in Uiaku (Barker 1986).

The Maisin today are unequivocally Anglicans. Several generations of children have gone through the village school and have been baptized in the church. Meanwhile, the Anglican Mission has become an independent and almost entirely localized national church. The Maisin have had their own priest since 1962, and the parish is self-supporting. Since the early

1970s, the government and villagers have shared responsibility for education. The station, long supported by Maisin taxes and labor, has ceased to be a foreign institution. As we have seen, it has been a crucial agent in adapting the local community to the national order. Yet it has not been absorbed into village society as the early Anglican missionaries expected. Nor has the village society taken on the cultural qualities of the station. A large measure of the original incongruity between the station and the village remains. No longer external and impinging, this incongruence forms an important dynamic in modern Maisin society.

THE STATION AND THE VILLAGE IN UIAKU

In the early 1980s, the "ethnographic present," about 1200 rural Maisin lived in four communities along southwestern Collingwood Bay. The villagers are far from markets and, although they depend upon remittances from employed relatives for school fees, taxes, and some commodities, they meet most of their material wants by subsistence gardening, fishing, hunting and gathering, and by utilizing local bush materials. Each community has a church and the two largest, Uiaku and Airara, also have village schools offering education up to Standard six. Villagers continue to refer to the area surrounding churches and schools as 'mission stations'. And they usually call the national clergy and teachers 'missionaries' (using the English term).[5] My observations and analysis here are confined to Uiaku, but much of what I say here holds true for the other communities as well.

After some eighty years of association, the village and mission station in Uiaku are aspects of a single society. Yet they retain much of their original incongruence. The village connotes received traditions for Maisin while the station represents the values and aspirations of the outside European world. The contrast between the village and the station recapitulates in concrete form a basic tension in Maisin historical and social experience.

To say that the village connotes tradition is not to imply that there have been no important changes in village society or even that villagers are unaware of such changes. There is little if anything in village life that has not been touched by its integration into the larger society of Papua New Guinea, from the clothes worn, to the design of houses, to language.[6] Yet in its basic orientations, the village speaks to Maisin of "custom." Village life is oriented primarily by kinship and affinal relationships, by ceremonial exchange obligations incurred through the life cycle, and by the cycle of subsistence activities and informal exchanges. Introduced elements are important and influential, but the people tend to place them in a matrix

of relationships and practices which they attribute to their ancestral past (Barker 1985a).

The station has also changed in important ways. There are now two distinct kinds of 'missionary' — clergymen and teachers — where before teacher-evangelists combined both roles; villagers play a larger participatory role in setting policy in the church and school than before; and the station has come to form the main venue of political activities for the villages and the region. Yet villagers are not entirely anachronistic when they refer to the church and school as the 'mission station'. The station stands apart from the village not only physically, but also in its symbolic orientations which are clearly Western. The continuing incongruities between the station and the village freeze the two localities into archetypical opposites: the "modern" versus the "traditional," the "Western" versus the "native," and the "Christian" versus the "pagan." From a historical viewpoint, the station and village are intertwined components of a single society. When viewed ethnographically, however, they reveal distinct practical orientations that suggest they are best understood as sub-cultures.

There are clear spatial dimensions to the demarcation between station and village life (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 1986). Like other Maisin settlements, Uiaku is composed of a series of hamlets along the coast. Most of the hamlets are contiguous, their boundaries marked to the knowledgeable by a tree or stream bed. Three hamlets, which I was told are more "traditional," form separate units off the main village path. Each hamlet is made up of a cluster of houses occupied by members of one or two patriclans. Villagers keep the area around their houses entirely free of grass. The houses unevenly surround a cleared area which, in some of the higher ranking clans, forms a plaza in which feasts and dances may be held. Village patterns, then, reflect kinship and to some extent inherited rank.

The station forms a large rectangular block of land located between two hamlets near the physical center of Uiaku. Station buildings include the school, the church, houses for clergy and teachers, and a shelter for meetings. The house for the priest is especially large, as he is expected to host many non-Maisin visitors to the village. Although made primarily of local materials, and built by local people, the station buildings follow urban models.[7] They are arranged around the edges of the station, connected by broad straight avenues. Low stick fences and crotons, maintained by the school children, complete the image of orderly neatness. A large grassy field takes up the center of the station and serves as a site for school assemblies and for community sports. The spatial organization of the station reflects its specialized functions and public nature.

The spatial regulation of the station is complemented by strict

temporal regularity. Each day is divided by the ringing of a bell placed near the church. There is a bell for Matins, to call children to school, for the Angelus, to dismiss school, to announce church services, and to celebrate Evensong. No such regimen is observed in the village, where activities proceed according to cycles based upon subsistence needs, exchange obligations, and personal whim. As I discovered while waiting hours for village meetings first to convene and then to disperse, a sense of time scarcity is far less developed in village affairs than on the station (cf. Smith, chapter 8).

Daily activities mark another dimension of incongruence between village and station. Maisin spend most of their time engaged in labor intensive but non-specialized subsistence activities outside of the village. There are some cooperative endeavors such as beginning a garden and building a house, but mostly men and women work on their own and in domestic groups. Infants enjoy a similar autonomy. They wander around the village and in the garden, usually under the supervision of older siblings. Children learn mostly by watching and imitating their elders. Public gatherings in the village are irregular, centered around life transitions, such as marriages and puberty, and crises, including major accidents, sickness, and deaths, which are usually attributed to sorcery. Such gatherings are always arranged on kin and affinal lines and frequently involve exchanges. Individuals and work groups sometimes call on ancestral spirits to help in some endeavor such as catching pigs or chasing away the spirit of a recently deceased person. And people say that spirits and ghosts attack individuals, at which time the stricken person may seek one of the local healers (Barker 1989). There is no public worship or propitiation of spirits.

The teachers and clergy, on the other hand, instruct students and the congregation in the classroom and in the church, activities which require a high degree of specialized training. Children are discouraged from playing on the mission station; the only recreation that takes place there is organized team sports after school and on Sunday afternoons. Scheduled public events, usually connected to some aspect of the church year, are also organized on the station by teams coming from different parts of the community — no clan or kinship divisions are recognized. And, of course, interactions with the divine take the form of public Christian worship at regular times. The priest conducts a relatively ornate (High Church) service that is disciplined and somber — there are no surprise intrusions by God. The incongruence in the activities of station and village goes further, because neither in the Uiaku school nor in the church has there been much effort to accommodate the local culture. Both schooling and church services today are conducted almost entirely in

English.[8] In neither case is much village input expected or sought. By the same token, the Maisin regard the mission staff, including the priest, as strangers who have no business poking their heads into village affairs unless invited to do so.

There are also significant differences in the economies of the station and village. The villagers received occasional gifts of cash from working relatives or through the exchange network in the village, but they rely primarily on subsistence activities for their survival. The situation is reversed for the staff, who rely upon money for much of their food, but supplement it with food from their own gardens and with gifts from the villagers.

The village and station differ, finally, in their forms of authority. Influence in the village finds its basis in notions of seniority, personal power, and reciprocity. In village gatherings, the senior members of the high ranked clans are formally respected by other villagers and allowed to speak first. Actual influence in village affairs, however, is more or less earned through a man's or woman's ability to gather and distribute food, money and goods, and to speak well for their factions. Like other Melanesians, Maisin have nary a good word for people who appear to them to be greedy, secretive, bossy, overly rich, or in some other way non-reciprocal. Such people are seen as prime targets for sorcerers, and may well be sorcerers themselves. Leadership in the village, then, is situational and contingent — so much so that it is often hard to distinguish between the leaders and the led. The political process involves much gossip and much negotiation.

The priest and teachers are obvious figures of authority within the confines of the classroom and the church. Their authority to speak and advise is non-reciprocal and originates from outside of the village. Similarly the station is formally governed according to explicit rules set down by the church constitution and by the Department of Education, and subject to only limited negotiation with the villagers.

The village and station, therefore, differ along several important dimensions: spatial and temporal relations, activities, economics, and assumptions about authority. We would seem to be dealing with two cultural systems.

Villagers often speak of the station and village as two distinct societies inhabited, respectively, by foreign 'missionaries' and village people. One friend advised me to take pity on the poor 'missionaries':

> They are station people. They follow the time and they do their things on time. As a village man, I eat breakfast when I want. Or I make my garden or go fishing. It is not like [the] mission staff. They cannot just

> run off. That is the greatest difference. If the station people use their money unwisely they have to pray that people will help them. We in the village just need to look for food and anything we can collect will do. For the mission staff, it can be hopeless (recorded in 1983, in English).

This perspective celebrates the power of the villagers over the station staff, but it is misleading in two respects. First, it ignores that the village has become increasingly oriented towards the cash economy in recent decades and, because of this, increasingly dependent on the station as a point of entry into the national education system and to jobs. Second, it ignores the reality that not only the staff but villagers spent a not inconsiderable part of their lives engaged in station activities and submitting themselves to station discipline. My friend, for example, attended the village school in his youth, went to high school and the church teachers' college, and then became a 'missionary' teacher in another village before returning to care for his ailing father. Along with his village activities, he spent some time each month collecting stewardship funds in the village in support of church work. Maisin can oppose the station and the village as cultural patterns but they can hardly reject one for the other. To do so would mean rejecting part of themselves.

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE VILLAGE AND STATION

The village and the mission station in Uiaku exist in an ambiguous relationship. They are mutually dependent aspects of Maisin existence, domains of a single society, and yet they concretely represent opposed and exclusive practical environments. This potential exclusiveness is continually overcome in numerous small ways: teachers make gardens and enter local exchange networks, for example, and villagers rebuild their houses to conform to station styles. Maisin sustain and for the most part seem comfortable with their biculturalism. Yet at times they speak of the station and village in ways that highlight the potential tension between an indigenous tradition and an introduced modernity. The ways Maisin speak of the relation between the mission station and the village, and between 'missionaries' and 'villagers', are of special interest for they reveal how the people are attempting to reconcile their cultural sense of themselves with the demands and opportunities they are experiencing and seeing on the periphery of the world system. In this section I shall report on how villagers represented this relationship in general discussion during community meetings and in a series of structured interviews I conducted on Christian ideas and practices in 1983.

Missionaries and Villagers as Exchange Partners

The Maisin most commonly contrast themselves with other socio-linguistic groups along Collingwood Bay and with their own 'missionaries', the teachers and clergy living on the station. They tend to picture missionaries and villagers as living very different types of lives, but nevertheless morally linked through enduring exchange relations (cf. Schwimmer 1973:77-81). An elderly church councillor, for example, explained to me why villagers support mission staff: "They are not from here. They came from another place to help us. So we must also help them.... They are teaching our children, so anything that they need or want for their work or the mission station we must give as payback." Such 'payback' may include food, labor, materials, companionship, and, especially since Uiaku became part of a self-supporting parish in 1975, a relatively large sum of money in clergy wages and church materials as well as school supplies.

My informants were clear that each side had something different to bring to the exchange. An elder in the neighboring village of Sinapa, told me, [The clergy] "perform the service and see sick people. They pray for all and give the Holy Sacrament." In return, as it were, the clergy receive material support from the villagers. As in most Melanesian societies, these exchanges are not simple business arrangements. They are means of creating, manipulating, and monitoring social relationships (cf. Kahn 1986; Weiner 1976). I found that many Maisin rationalized paying stewardship in support of the clergy, attending church, or bringing food to local teachers as types of prestations. At a church council meeting, for example, one man argued:

> If nobody goes to church the priest wastes his time. So you must think that when the priest starts to work to go and attend church first and then come back to do your own work. When the attendance is down it shows that we hate the priest and the deacon. If we want them to stay we must show the sign by attending.

By the same token, 'missionaries' are expected to reciprocate by doing their jobs well, visiting with villagers, and contributing to village events. But many villagers complained that as wages have risen, and the teachers and clergy have become less dependent on local people, the 'missionaries' are not always meeting their reciprocal obligations. One elder told me: "In the old days the teachers always shared their things with the village people. Their wives would always go into the village to cook. Now they only stay on the station." Consequently, villagers are also doing less for the teachers.

For many villagers, particularly those who have lived in Uiaku most of

their lives, the ideal relation between 'missionaries' and villagers should be one of balanced reciprocity. They express this state in the term *marawa-wawe*, a word that suggests peace, friendliness, and moral equivalence (Barker 1985b:283). Feasting is a particularly potent index of *marawa-wawe*. Thus several informants stressed feasts taking place on the mission station as representations of the ideal relation of village and station: "On big days like St. Thomas [the annual patronal church festival in Uiaku] all of the people go in and help the missionaries." Traditionally, the inter-tribal feast marked the culmination of a series of exchanges leading towards balance between the sides, to *marawa-wawe*. The church feast similarly marks an enduring peaceful relationship between mission staff and villagers. But it (potentially) unites all the factions of the village in one exchange — something that never happens in village society. At the same time, the idiom of exchange between village and station confirms and preserves the separation of the two spheres.

Most villagers I interviewed presented an image of the station and village linked in a reciprocal relationship. Yet Maisin leaders rarely mentioned this image in public speeches. Both station and village people most often evoked it when discussing church or school matters, usually to chide one side or the other for not meeting their obligations. This representation was obviously well-known and accepted, and it probably did not require much airing. It appears to have provided a basis for the two more elaborate representations I discuss next. In both of these latter constructions, spokesmen transformed an external relationship between two autonomous and distinctive orders into an internal relationship that defined the whole Maisin community.

The Station as a Model for the Village

As a newcomer to Uiaku in 1981, I was presented with a very different image of Maisin society. My first acquaintances were high school graduates. Mostly in their 20s to mid-40s, they had returned to the village after working for several years in well-paying professions in the towns or in government service in rural areas. Many spoke fluent English. They were now expected by their less educated neighbors to serve the community by supervising local associations and economic projects (cf. Carrier 1980).

When I arrived in Uiaku, many of the villagers were occupied with preparations for St. Thomas Day, the annual patronal feast in the parish. My first language teachers, both high school graduates, were very involved in this event and, I soon discovered, in no less than five village committees. When I asked them about their committee work, they described the village as a well-regulated corporation. They listed ten organizations. Most of these, such as the Local Government Council committee, the Parents

and Citizenship committee, and the Uiaku Business Group, belonged to the 'government side' of Uiaku. The Church Council and Mothers' Union were the main organizations on the 'mission side'. 'Village side' activities, not under committee control, included subsistence activities, crafts, customary ceremonies, and exchanges. According to my informants, villagers maintained a rigorous schedule of council and church work days, when the entire community turned out to labor on various community projects and repairs on and off the mission station, interspersed with work days for the Mothers' Union and Youth Club. With Sunday reserved for worship and community sports, there were only two days left when all villagers were free to pursue their own as opposed to the common good.

I soon discovered that this description told me far more about what the educated faction would like Uiaku to be than about what actually took place. My informants' depiction of village organizations resonated with a larger set of public representations embracing the relationship between mission station and village. In these representations, the station figured prominently in two ways. First, educated villagers often explicitly identified themselves with station personnel. For example, when asked about the duties of the clergy, an educated villager who had previously worked as a manager on a government oil palm project told me:

> They should make sure there is Christian living in the community — no fighting. The Church should control the disagreements in the villages. They should try to gather the people as one and bring back those people who have fallen away. They should visit the sick people regularly and find out the needs of the people. Most of all they should educate the people to know the Church, what it is there for, and how it came to be. This means they have to know Christ Himself — to be a witness.

This informant and many others said virtually identical things about the duties of village councillors, church councillors, and Mothers' Union members: in short, about all leaders. Those who have education and possess specialized skills tend to assume management positions in the village organizations, usually with the backing of less well-endowed villagers. These new "managers," however, have limited powers. Villagers imagine the role of their educated members as analogous to the missionaries: those who have education must 'help the village' rather than work for themselves. Young leaders are more than regulators, they are educators. Indeed, this was a role many Maisin fitted me into as well. The leaders also worked the analogy, but placed greater emphasis on the inherent authority of their offices.

The mission station figured in such representations in a second way.

Certain common communal activities on the station, notably church celebrations, served as models of the type of moral order many Maisin said they would like to see in the village. The notion that the station might serve as an exemplar of a better moral order derives in part from mission teaching, but also arises from the desires of villagers to rise above local factionalism, based in part upon clan affiliation, in order to build a stronger community. I recorded several speeches at village meetings in which leaders manipulated church images to build community solidarity, arguing that such solidarity was fundamental to the economic salvation of Uiaku. In the following passage, the village councillor stands up to harangue the villagers about their community duties:

> In the old days on St. Thomas [the church festival] all the people in the village worked together. They hunted and fished and cooked together. These days at St. Thomas only a few people go fishing and hunting, and only a few people cook in the station. In the old days people worked together and helped each other. But now people always argue and do things the way they want to do them. So now if there is work to do one will go and the other will do as he wishes. When your time comes you start arguing or gossiping about other people. When the [Local Government] Council committee announces that there is work to be done, you get your knife and axe and go to the garden. It is always that way. When the Council committee says there is work to be done, you get your fishing nets and go and do whatever you want to do. So you must know who is making it bad. It's you! You are the ones spoiling it. It's you, not the others! It's you who put the Council committee, Youth and Board of Management. You must listen to them! That is the "legislation." You elected them as leaders and they are the ones who will tell you to work (translated from a recording in 1983).

The councillor passionately repeated and emphasized his points for about twenty minutes. Several elders and educated leaders followed, somberly confirming this unhappy picture of a village falling apart and warning of the consequences of 'selfishness'.

I witnessed many such speeches, made primarily by younger educated managers. These representations clearly emphasized the station side of the village-station relationship. One might suspect that the leaders wished to replace the village's egalitarian exchange ethic with the hierarchical singular authority style of the station. This interpretation, I think, would be quite wrong. These men clearly wanted to be seen as new types of leaders, but they were not Western democrats. Their notions of leadership, authority, and work, although based on station images, also

embodied village ideals. This point can be illustrated by a careful unpacking of the speech segment reported above.

In painting his dismal picture, the councillor subtly reconstructs and merges traits associated with the village and the station. He directs his ire towards those who do not participate in community projects. In a station idiom, such persons are disobedient, they refuse to obey the 'legislation'. The image also resonates with village-oriented values. As Burridge (1965) and many others have shown, most Melanesians abhor those self-willed individuals who drop out of exchange and kinship obligations. At best, Maisin regard them as 'rubbish' or 'crazy'; at worst, they suspect them as sorcerers. Against such individuals, the councillor presents the image of the patronal church feast, St. Thomas Day. This also resonates with both station and village values. As I noted above, the St. Thomas feast reminds Maisin of the large inter-tribal feasts of the past and provides an important occasion for groups to demonstrate their unity and prowess in providing food and valuables and in performing the old dances. St. Thomas is also a major day in the church calendar, usually marked by a visit from the bishop and a major church service. The ceremonies that take place on the station that day indicate the devotion of the whole community to Christ — their *unity* in Christ. The councillor identifies a successful St. Thomas feast with successful work in general, notably that work carried out by village committees. The overall implication of the speech is the committees and their leaders combine station and village orientations and values. On the one hand, they embody the cooperative ethic of the village feast; and on the other, they represent the authority of 'legislation' and singular authority (exemplified in the person of the missionary-priest-teacher).

The representations discussed in this section express a sentiment that Maisin society should more closely approximate the station. They do so not by dismissing village practices and orientations, but by appropriating them and representing them as embodied in station institutions and structures of authority. What I am suggesting, in other words, is that the managers take the station as a model for Maisin society, thus obviating the distinction between village and station. The result is a picture of Maisin society as a highly rationalized organization sustained by a "traditional" egalitarian and cooperative ethic. Although articulated mostly by an educated minority, it is an image that most Maisin find congenial and plausible. I never heard anyone protest or contradict those who made this kind of argument in public or in private. Indeed, many expressed opinions that this was the way things should be. As the councillor's speech indicates, however, this solution to the opposition of village and station has been hard to make into reality.

Village Traditions as a Model for the Station

I became aware of a third set of representations only towards the end of my fieldwork, as I learned more of Maisin traditions. Village clans, as I noted earlier, possess and embody what Maisin regard as unchanging traditions. Traditions take both oral and material forms. Although all villagers are aware of and respect traditions, only a few elders possess detailed knowledge. But this knowledge is not limited to village matters. It serves as a unifying framework for the village and station domains. Significantly, the most articulate spokesmen of Maisin traditions have been closely associated with the station and the church for many years, often as church councillors and as former 'missionaries' (teacher-evangelists) themselves.

I begin with the oral traditions. In the beginning, most Maisin clans emerged from under the ground at a site in the Musa Basin, about 70 miles to the west of Uiaku (cf. Williams 1930:154). Each clan, in possession of its distinguishing emblems (*kawo*), then fought its way through enemy territory to Collingwood Bay. Maisin elders tell their stories for drama and to back claims to land and influence. There is much disagreement concerning the relative truth of different versions. There is less debate concerning a fundamental opposition drawn in the oral traditions between the two ranks of clans — the *kawo* and the *sabu*.[9] Most elders speak of the higher ranking *kawo* as peace-makers who sought alliances with other tribes through inter-marriage and feasting. They led the *sabu*, 'care of them', and could command their labor for feasts. The *sabu*, on the other hand, are said to have been the chief warriors. Both raiding and feasting were presented as complementary modes of clan interactions; but the legends also indicate that the violence of the *sabu* was tempered by the diplomatic efforts of the *kawo*: hence the superiority of the latter.

Local historians present the story of arrival of the Anglican missionaries in terms of this hierarchical structure. The missionaries take the role of *kawo* while the Maisin are *sabu*. A retired mission teacher in Uiaku told me of his grandfather's meeting with the first missionaries: "When the missionaries... came to this place they made friends with Wanigera [as *sabu* warrior leader]. Before that time there was no peace." In this and other stories, the clans are pictured as being in a continual state of enmity with each other and outside enemies. Like the *kawo* clans, the missionaries mediated between separate and mutually suspicious groups.[10]

Although only a few elders could tell me about the arrival of the missionaries, many villagers pictured 'missionaries' and villagers in their daily relations along the lines of *kawo* and *sabu*. Informants, for example, frequently stressed the clergy's role as peacemakers during times of tension (a role, incidentally, that the present mission staff and its pred-

ecessors have avoided according to available evidence). Exploring this relation further, I asked thirty villagers what they saw as the greatest difference between the heathen and Christians. The answers showed little variation. Heathen were said to be quick-tempered, violent, selfish. One villager said: "Their lives are the same. The Christians have a different name. There are wild pigs in the bush and there are village pigs. The village pig is like a Christian; it is looked after by a man who washes and feeds it. The bush pig must find food on its own." *kawo* and missionaries alike were said to 'look after' the *sabu* and villagers, to give them advice and spiritual food, and to domesticate their violent propensities.

Such representations serve to reduce the foreignness of the missionaries. Other comments I recorded suggest that some Maisin also saw Christian teachings reflecting a deeper indigenous tradition. One man in his 40s told me: "Before we were taught that all of the traditions came from the hole [i.e., the original time]. But now we know that they come from God." His point was not that Maisin traditions are wrong, but that the ancestors, being 'ignorant men' (*toton tamata*), possessed only a partial understanding of the truth of things. All of those I interviewed affirmed that God was present in Papua before the mission arrived, even if the ancestors had but a dim awareness of him (cf. Smith, chapter 8). Missionaries brought the truth of the Bible, a truth which, so some informants said, clarified traditions. Consequently, as a Maisin church deacon told me, "If a thing is good, the people will carry on doing it. If it is bad, the missionaries keep on talking and the people give up this thing."

The physical church forms a second point of unity between tradition and Christianity for many Maisin. Father Kingsley Gegeyo, an Anglican priest from Uiaku, pointed out to me:

> ...if anyone came here and spoke against Christianity everyone would fight to protect it. They believe it is the seat of our survival.... It becomes something they value very highly. They take it as the most necessary part of their community and survival. It's not like the government. It doesn't come and punish and order. [The] church is something that belongs to them. And it doesn't hurt them — it gives them a sense of protection.... If someone tried to take the land away from the church they would get very angry. That is [the] physical value of the church: sacred land to them.

This statement touches on themes mentioned by several of my informants. Let me take just the last point, the notion of sacred land. In what sense is the church 'sacred land' for Maisin villagers?

To answer this question we must return to the traditional *kawo* clans

and the intertribal feasts for which they were responsible. Such feasts were always held in the clearing of the *kawo* clan's hamlet. In the center of the clearing, the villagers constructed a small house composed of emblematic materials (*kawo*) that were the exclusive property of the host clan. Only the *kawo* leaders could order such houses to be built, and then only for feasts. During the feasts huge piles of taro and other foods were given to guests and the dancing extended over several days. The feast hut (*kawo va*) symbolized the traditions, the cultural identity, and ultimately the power of the clan.

Inter-tribal feasting declined and disappeared completely in the years following pacification. In the past a man proved his mettle in warfare and in exchange activities, but by the 1950's younger men became more concerned with attracting money to their villages. The Church Councils and women's organizations formed a new basis for the local concentration and control of labor in the co-operatives. Indeed, it is clear from informant testimonies that many people then, as today, associated material prosperity with a Christian identity. They identified the quickening of local economic activity with a vigorous local church.

Towards the end of the 1950's the villagers decided to put their energies into building an iron-roofed church, partly in hope that the Mission would give them their own priest and partly to mark their new status as full Christians. They also made a statement in a traditional idiom: "All of the clans brought their emblems and put them around, making a big fence. They said that they were building God's *kawo va* 'feast hut'. God had given the emblems to the people and so they had to give what they had back to God for His *kawo va.*" This sacrifice of the symbols of clan identity to the church was an indigenous innovation. The church became "sacred land" in a way analogous to hamlet clearings. But whereas the symbols of ancestral identity appeared only periodically in the hamlets and marked clan boundaries as well as unities, the "*kawo va*" of the mission station is a permanent feature embodying the collective identity of the Maisin and indeed, as is often pointed out in sermons, the whole of Christendom.

The elders who reflect upon the traditions of their clans, and who attempt to construct a historical memory for their communities, often spoke to me along the lines outlined here. They sometimes aired these representations in public meetings where they were listened to with respect. These images, like the other permutations, stress the need for solidarity and cooperation in the village, and take the feast as the central symbol of this ideal. But the village and its customs forms the ultimate foundation. And because of the basis in eternal tradition, such representations imbue the station and Christianity with some of the same timeless

"mythic" qualities.

CONCLUSION

To recapitulate: Mission stations were originally established in Maisin villages as bases for teachers and as cultural enclaves in which Christian values could be taught and demonstrated. Secreted within regular station activities were a number of practical orientations which over time hastened the Maisin's integration into the emerging politico-economic hegemony of Papua New Guinea. Although all Maisin are today Christians, and although the mission has become a national church, the station remains a distinct entity within Maisin society. Its distinctness from the surrounding hamlets is signalled in several practical ways: differences in lifestyles, typical activities, temporal and spatial relations, and so on. I suggested that Maisin participate in both environments and thus the station and the village are domains within a single society. Maisin representations of the relationship between station and village recognize the incongruities but attempt to place them within a larger framework. I discussed three distinct sets of representations. The first presents the relation between village and station in terms of exchange, ideally of balanced reciprocity. In the second, the station is used as a "model for" the desired moral order in the village as a whole. And, finally, a third set of representations subsumes the station within Maisin traditions.

The analysis raises several interesting problems of interpretation. By way of a conclusion, I shall briefly address two of these: How is it that the Maisin are able to support a distinctly village culture given their long-term and heavy involvement in the station and, beyond it, the larger economy and society of Papua New Guinea? And, what are the implications of the different village-station permutations for the future of Maisin society?

David Laitin's (1986) recent study of Christians and Muslims among the Yoruba of Nigeria provides an intriguing answer to the first question. Laitin points out that most Yoruba hold two distinct and incongruent cultural identities. They are members of a church or mosque, and they are descended from certain ancestral cities. Although religious affiliation provides abundant potential for political manipulation, the Yoruba consider their religious differences to be without political significance. Instead, they organize themselves in terms of descent from the ancestral cities, although few people still live in these rural centers. Laitin explains the situation in terms of hegemony. When the British established control over Nigeria, they co-opted the rulers of the ancestral cities as proxy "chiefs" in a system of indirect rule. This strategy established the cities as a

privileged domain from which political symbols could be generated and disputed. The ruling elite who succeeded the British continue to exploit the same symbols. The religious subcultures are non-hegemonic but pose no challenge because they are not utilized politically. The contradictions between religious and hegemonic values remain tacit. The Yoruba simply are not concerned with them.

Although the Maisin situation is somewhat different, a similar argument can be made. The Maisin participate in two incongruous subcultures, represented locally by the village and the station. In Papua, unlike Nigeria, the colonial administration established "indirect rule" through *introduced* institutions, notably mission and government posts and village councils. For the rural Maisin, the station has over time developed as the privileged locus for the production of political symbols within and between communities and the state. It is part of the hegemonic system. The values and orientations of the village subculture are distinct from the station, but because Maisin do not recognize these differences as politically relevant, the village system does not directly clash with the station system and what it represents. The potential for the political manipulation of the incongruous aspects of the rural situation is there; but it remains tacit and undeveloped.

This line of interpretation can easily be extended to the ways in which Maisin rationalize the relationship between the village and the station. Although each rationalization is distinct, each accords a superior position to the 'mission' and 'missionaries' side of the relation. In the first, the 'missionaries' give knowledge and peace; in the second, they offer a highly bureaucratized model of social organization; and in the third, they provide a sacred center for community. All of these rationalizations recognize the mission station as the locus of political symbols. They are highly compatible. The village subculture provides political symbols in a much more constrained way: in uniting clan against clan in bridewealth or sorcery disputes, for example. But whenever such disputes threaten to get out of hand, leaders inevitably draw again on the hegemonic symbols of village unity centered on the station. I have never heard a Maisin, including the elders who are the most knowledgeable about village traditions, suggest that the station be done away with, replaced by village values. This should not be surprising. The majority of Maisin, after all, have been Christians since the early 1920s.

I saw no indication that Maisin regarded these different interpretations of the relation of station to village as alternative political programmes. People never compared them, and often the same people employed one or another at different times. There was, however, a general correlation between a person's age and experience and the ways he or she saw the

village-station relationship. Older and less educated people tended to rationalize the relationship in terms of the morality of exchange and the sacred qualities of identification with the center of the community. Younger and more educated people have clearly internalized more of the hegemonic values associated with the station. But even those heavily involved in promoting government and mission 'side' activities say that there must be a 'village side' as well to perform traditional ceremonies and deal with kinship and exchange obligations. While the society is clearly undergoing progressive secularization, I see no reason to suppose that a distinctly Melanesian village society will disappear in the future. The challenges of the past to the village way of life were in many ways more severe than those of today. The Maisin have successfully developed a bicultural society that allows them to have something of two worlds.

The findings of the present study, like other recent sociological reappraisals of missionary institutions, bears important implications for future research into religious innovation among newly Christian people. At first blush, the Maisin might appear to present a simple case of attempted "Christianization" — the imposition of Western forms of worship upon an indigenous people. The apparent indifference of the people to these forms, and their continued adherence to many old customs and values, would seem to imply that Christianity is but a veneer, a superficial covering over the "real" Maisin culture. On the other hand, one might also see the Maisins' strong support of the church and their heavy involvement in the larger society of Papua New Guinea as an indication that the village subculture is at best a residual "survival," soon to disappear as the Maisin totally acculturate. Yet such interpretations would involve serious misreadings of the mission history of the region and, more importantly, a misconstrual of Maisin attitudes. The Western nature of the local church is precisely what makes it a potent symbol for the Maisin. The Maisin and many other "conventional" Christians of the Third World take their adherence to Christianity and the new ways they see it representing very seriously, but they do so in their own terms (cf. Strathern 1984:33) . As ethnographers we need to give our informants' involvement with Christianity the serious attention that, from the indigenous point of view, it seems to deserve. Otherwise we will continue to produce ethnocentric understandings of indigenous Christianity, even if fashionably critical of "missionization."

NOTES

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1. Rowley (1965:138) notes that the early missions to Papua and New Guinea shared "a broad but suggestive similarity of technique largely made inevitable by the nature of the task [of evangelization]." Mary Huber (1988) has recently written a book exploring the contradiction between ideological aspirations and practical necessities among Roman Catholic missionaries in the Sepik area. She does not, however, address the significance of such contradictions for emerging indigenous Christianity.
2. The New Guinea Mission of the Anglican Church suffered throughout its history (as the successor church does today) from the rather tepid support it received from the home churches in Australia and England. This lack of financial stability may well have limited the influence of the church as much as the mission bishops' liberal philosophies of evangelization (see Barker 1987; Wetherell 1977).
3. The first Melanesian teachers made their way into the New Guinea mission from the sugar plantations of Queensland. For many years they formed the major part of the mission staff (see Wetherell 1977:chapter 3). An Australian priest made Uiaku his base in 1917. Unable to abide the Maisins' penchant for pigs and drumming, he fled in 1920 (Barker 1987:77-81).
4. Following David Laitin (1986:183), I define hegemony as "the political forging — whether through coercion or elite bargaining — and institutionalization of a pattern of group activity in a state and the concurrent idealization of that schema into a dominant symbolic framework that reigns as common sense."
5. When the government took over schooling in the early 1970s, the people of Airara elected to have the classrooms and teachers' houses built on the outskirts of their village, away from the church. They continue to refer to both the church and the school areas as 'station', however.
6. At contact the Maisin built small enclosed sleeping platforms on high posts, using the verandahs underneath for cooking and socializing. They abandoned these at the urging of government officers in the 1920s and 1930s for the rectangular, windowed houses now commonly found throughout coastal Papua. Maisin switched from tapa cloth to European clothes in the early 1960s and today wear tapa only on ceremonial occasions. The effects of 80 years of village schooling are apparent in the number of loan words from the "church language" of Wedau at Dogura that have been incorporated into the language along with Hiri Motu and more recently English and Tok Pisin. Many of these changes are obvious and recognized by Maisin, who occasionally discuss their relative merits over the old ways. But many, perhaps most, changes are subtle and difficult to identify, particularly when the influences have been other Papua New Guinean people and Melanesian missionaries (cf. Chowning 1969). I would therefore argue that Maisin assumptions about traditions — that they are unchanging and essential — should be understood as an ideology, not as proof of cultural continuity or "reproduction" (cf. Carrier and Carrier 1987).

7. Some Maisin had worked for periods as carpenters and they applied their skills to station buildings although not to their own village dwellings. In 1981-83 the only iron-roofed dwellings in Uiaku were two teachers' houses on the station. In 1986 one villager with much financial support from relatives working in town began to build a semi-permanent house in the village.
8. This has been the case even though a translation of the service into Maisin was prepared in 1920. Part of the problem is that few of the teachers and clergy stationed at Uiaku have had the time to learn Maisin and for many years the Church discouraged establishing clergy among their own people. In 1986, a Maisin priest began to work at Uiaku. Although he delivered his sermons in Maisin, he still spoke the service and the lessons in English, which at least half of the congregation cannot understand. When asked about this situation, Maisin say that as long as they cannot agree on an accurate translation they would rather leave the liturgy and readings in a more respectable "church language."
9. On this point of history, as many others, Maisin were not in complete agreement. Some clan members in Ganjiga maintained in 1986 that the difference between *kawo* and *sabu* clans was limited to ceremonial rank; both types of clans were traditionally violent. This was a minority view. One man in 1983 argued that *sabu* actually ranked higher than *kawo*! I found no one else who suggested this construction.
10. Kahn (1983), Thune (1981), and Young (1977) also report oral traditions in nearby Massim societies which credit missionaries with transforming a Hobbesian state of war "of all against all" to an ambience of brotherly peace.