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CHAPTER SEVEN

"We Are *Ekelesia*": Conversion in Uiaku, Papua New Guinea

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The Maisin people of Uiaku village, in Papua New Guinea's Oro Province, have been Christians since the early 1900s. The New Guinea mission of the Australian Anglican church settled New Hebridean and Solomon Islander teachers in the village in 1901, and after 1911 large numbers of the villagers began to accept baptism. A Papuan priest has performed services in the church since 1962 on the site of the first mission station. All but a handful of villagers have been baptized and received a Christian name, attended school and worshiped in the church, and contributed labor and money to the upkeep of the priest.[1] Six Uiaku men have entered the priesthood, and many more villagers have worked for the church elsewhere in Papua New Guinea as nurses, medical orderlies, and teachers.

If conversion is understood simply as a change in religious affiliation, the Maisins' conversion lies far in the past. The church has long been an important and accepted part of their lives. But if conversion is understood in a broader sense, as a transformation of a people's cosmological and moral assumptions as they move from a localized "traditional" religion to a universal "world" religion, then one must say that the process is still continuing. Scholars approach conversion in this broader sense from different points of view. Some begin with missionary activities and would agree with Beckett (1978:209) that "Christianity in the South Seas must, in the final analysis, be understood in terms of colonization" (cf. Beidelman 1982). Others start with the modalities of conversion itself: the dialectic or dialogue in a converted community between introduced and received ideas and values (e.g., Kaplan 1990, Macintyre 1990). A third possibility is to start with the perspectives of converts on their own conversion (e.g., Thune 1981, Young 1977).[2]

These three perspectives are not mutually exclusive. In this essay I draw on each for insights into the significance of Maisin Christianity and the conversion process. As an agency of change the Anglican church in Uiaku has furthered colonial and postcolonial incorporation by equipping the Maisin for work in governmental and church bureaucracies and by introducing key Western values and forms into the heart of the community. As we shall see, the long-term engagement of the clergy with the Maisin has produced an anomalous result that neither party could have anticipated: the continuing coexistence of two social environments, the mission station and the village. The mission station *looks* like an imposed Western institution run by foreigners, while the village looks like a pristine, traditional society. In reality they are separate domains or subsystems of one society. All Maisin participate in both domains. I examine these domains in the first part of this essay.

The two social environments yield two variations on the conversion process, which I examine in the second part of the essay. The station, intimately associated with the outside economic and political culture of Papua New Guinea, generates a modality of "external conversion" that at time seems like straightforward acculturation. The village, rooted in exchange and subsistence activities, generates a modality of "internal conversion" in which people adjust preexisting moral assumptions and cultural elements to new situations and challenges. The wider historical process of Maisin conversion, then, has developed two dimensions by virtue of the practical routines and dualism of the colonial situation. Although all Maisin participate in the two modalities, they rarely perceive any contradiction between them because the social environments in which the modalities are embedded usually address distinct concerns and form autonomous aspects of local existence.

It is important in these preliminary remarks to clear up a possible misunderstanding. Although the station and the village would seem to oppose the requirements of a "world" religion against those of a "traditional" religion, Maisin do not and cannot convert from one to the other because they are involved in both environments. In addition, Christian elements are important in both domains and in both modalities of conversion. Indeed, they form flexible tools used by Maisin to deal with their rapidly changing world.

The indigenous perspective that I consider in the last part of this essay is the most concrete and in many ways the most interesting. It is expressed in a public commentary made by a Maisin leader that links the formation of a village cooperative society in the 1950s with the people's acceptance of Christianity. The rhetoric of conversion, of which this commentary is an example, reconciles external and internal conversion,

producing a powerful statement of the moral significance many Maisin find in the church. But, given the inherent incompatibilities of the station and the village, and of external and internal conversion, reconciliation cannot actually occur but can only be acknowledged rhetorically. Although the rhetoric presents a positive image of past conversion, its message to present-day Maisin is one of tragic failure.

My analysis, then, is of Maisin conversion from three related points of view; I gradually narrow the analytic focus, discussing first the mission agency, then local experiences of transformation, and finally the rhetoric of conversion. Along the way I discuss several theoretical approaches that influence my approach. In the conclusion I offer some general comments on the political aspects of the Maisins' conversion and on the relationship between hegemonic structures reflected in the station and in external conversion and consciousness.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MISSION STATION AND VILLAGE DOMAINS IN UIAKU

Uiaku consists of two beach villages, separated by a broad shallow river, on the southwest shores of Collingwood Bay in Oro Province in northeastern Papua New Guinea. In 1981–1983 there were about 500 Maisin in Uiaku and between 250 and 300 more who had migrated to work elsewhere in the country. The local economy depends on the subsistence activities of gardening, gathering, fishing, and hunting, and people make extensive use of local trees and plants in their material culture. Far from markets and roads, the Maisin have had little success in producing cash crops. They have developed a small market in distant urban centers for their beautifully designed tapa (bark) cloth. They receive most of their cash and commodities, however, as remittances and gifts from employed migrants.

Uiaku is divided into eighteen contiguous hamlets, each occupied by one or two named patriclans and patrilineages called *iyon* ("divisions"). The Maisin distinguish several levels of iyon on the basis of shared putative patrilineal descent, origin and migration stories, village lands, and various emblems (*kawo*), which may include tapa cloth designs, songs, names, ritual prerogatives, and respected birds and plants. Some Maisin claim that the iyon also own garden lands; but in practice minimal lineages control and pass on land.

Because of extensive outmigration, Uiaku's population has been shrinking, but it remains one of the largest communities on the northeast coast. Its size and its accessibility made it an early target of missionary efforts. In the early 1970s the national government assumed control of

education and the teachers' salaries. Villagers bear almost all other expenses and requirements of the local church and school. The station and the hamlets continued to coexist in the 1980s as two distinct social systems rooted in different histories and economic systems.

The Anglican Mission and Colonial Incorporation

I begin this analysis by exploring the contribution of the Anglican mission to the Maisins' incorporation into the wider politico-economic structures of the colonial order. Similarly, Jean and John Comaroff (1986) in a masterful essay have explored missionary activities among the Tshidi people in southern Africa. They argue that the missionary enterprise needs to be studied on two levels. At the level of manifest events and actions the motivations and the consequences of Methodist missionary initiatives, and of Tshidi responses, were variable and indeterminate: "the missionary project was everywhere made particular by variations in the structure of local communities, in the social and theological background of the evangelists, and in the wider politico-economic context and precise circumstances within which the encounter took place." At another level, however, the missionaries were able "to exert power over the common-sense meanings and routine activities diffused in the everyday world." By participating in the mission routines, the Tshidi gradually internalized "a set of values, an ineffable manner of seeing and being" that laid a conceptual basis for their "incorporation into the industrial capitalist world" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1986:1–2). At the level of practice, then, the missionary enterprise induces a generic, cultural patterning.

The Anglican mission in Papua never attained the proportions of Methodist organization in southern Africa, but the Comaroffs' insights are still applicable. The Anglicans began work on the northeast coast of Papua in 1891, a few years after the annexation of the territory by Britain. Shortages of cash and staff retarded the mission's expansion and left the missionaries dependent upon local villagers for much of their support (Wetherell 1977). In addition, the Anglican leaders were hampered by ambivalence about their work. They expressed admiration for village life and showed a marked reluctance to interfere directly with native customs. The Reverend Henry Newton, for instance, wrote in 1914 that the church "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).

Yet this sentiment was not accompanied by systematic study of village societies or by more than a piecemeal development of mission policies on

culture. Local missionaries might share the views of their leaders, but they had to work out their own approaches to the customs they found in the districts. The poverty and vague policies of the mission in combination with staff turnover, differences in personal approaches, and the varying responses of local peoples made for a high degree of flux in the early years of the Uiaku mission. (For a detailed study see Barker [1987].)

The Anglicans did make an impact on local societies through their routine work. Most of their efforts were geared to reproducing in Papua the liturgy, institutional structure, religious programs, educational system, and discipline of the home church. Maintaining the infrastructure to support this work occupied the rest of the missionaries' and teachers' time. The mission followed a common pattern of expansion (see Heise 1967). The Anglicans gradually built a network of district stations, headed by white priests, and substations (village schools and churches), run by non-European teachers. Although they were small affairs constructed from bush materials with the aid of villagers, the substations were still discrete "model communities" that reproduced and exaggerated the routines and values of the home churches (cf. Guenther 1977: 457). Creating a separate environment within village societies seemed the best way to impart to villagers, particularly the young in schools, what one missionary called "a christian habit of life" (Gill 1929).

Although the missionaries sometimes clashed with villagers and government agents, forming one point of what Burridge (1960) calls the colonial "triangle," they facilitated the incorporation of villagers into the colonial system in three main ways. First, the presence of missionaries and teachers in the coastal villages undermined resistance to the colonial administration. Second, the local school and church provided villagers with some preparation and a resource for employment in the territory. Finally, the mission stations introduced elements of the colonial hegemonic order into the village itself.

Many Maisins were willing, and often eager, to participate in the developing colonial system. From the start of the Uiaku mission, teachers reported consistently strong attendance at the church and school (Barker 1985a:100). By 1920 young unmarried men routinely left the village after finishing school to work for one or more eighteen-month stints as plantation hands and mining laborers. Others left for even longer periods, joining the government police force or the mission as teachers. In 1942 the administration conscripted all able-bodied men for the brutal Kokoda campaign against invading Japanese forces. When the war ended, the administration and mission rapidly expanded educational facilities and occupations for native peoples in the territory in preparation for eventual

independence. The Maisin were well positioned to take advantage of the situation. Many of the postwar generation went to high school and then landed permanent, well-paying jobs as teachers, civil servants, businesspeople, doctors, nurses, dentists, and priests. By the time of independence in 1975 the export of elite and expert labor had become a bulwark of the local economy (cf. Carrier 1981).

The mission station was also a conduit for certain Western institutions and practices. As was the case with many multinucleated coastal societies, Uiaku at the time of European contact was not a single polity but was made up of shifting alliances formed around various rising and falling big men and war leaders. The mission provided the basis for a sense of wider community unity. The church and school served the entire community regardless of loyalties and divisions. The first church council, set up around 1918, was composed of representatives from each hamlet. Following the Second World War the Maisin began experimenting with cooperative societies and cash cropping, inspired by a mission-sponsored cooperative elsewhere on the coast. By 1982, Uiaku boasted nine organizations serving a variety of needs including maintaining the church and school, running a community store, and organizing youth sports (see Barker 1986).

The Village and the Station

Drawing on Bourdieu's (1977) idea of *habitus*, the Comaroffs imply that by regularly participating in mission routines converts internalize the commonsense culture of its Western inventors. In Uiaku, however, the mission's social system has not replaced or absorbed the indigenous social system (cf. Bond 1987, MacGaffey 1986). In the early 1980s in Uiaku, two social systems coexisted, with incongruous practical environments, which the Maisin distinguished as the "village" and the "mission station." The Maisin have for some time participated in both practico-moral environments and internalized their variant values.[3]

The village is home to "tradition." Each hamlet is made up of two or more uneven lines of houses facing a bare earth plaza. Men build their houses near their birthplaces. The spatial divisions in the villages thus mark genealogical connections and distinctions that Maisins believe date from the original emergence of the people from the earth. Historical memory is evoked by emblems, place names in the bush, and migration stories and genealogies, all owned and defended by the patriclans and lineages. The elders, particularly those belonging to the upper-ranking kawo clans, possess the greatest knowledge of the traditions and so receive the greatest respect from the villagers. They speak first on formal

occasions, resolve or mediate disputes, and possess the knowledge in some cases to strike others through sorcery. The rhythms of village life are equally localized. Time in the villages flows according to the rhythms of subsistence gardening and frequent exchanges of food and valuables to mark births, marriages, and deaths. Although the village has undergone many changes, it continues to embody the values and practices of the pre-European past.

Villagers continue to call the central block of land originally purchased by the mission the "mission station" and to refer to the indigenous clergy and the government-employed teachers as "missionaries." This is not as archaic as it might seem, for the station continues to reflect the orientations of its founders. The station buildings are organized into a large rectangle around a grassy playing field. Wide, straight avenues, bordered by croton hedges (maintained by school children), connect the buildings. Temporal regularity parallels the spatial organization. A bell beside the church divides each day into periods. It rings to mark school hours; to signal the Angelus every noon; and to call the people to matins, evensong, and Sunday services. One normally enters the station to engage in a specific activity (religious instruction, choir practice, school, organized sports, and so on) for a specific amount of time under the direction of a specialist. The language of the station is English (in 1982 neither the priest nor two out of the three teachers could speak Maisin).[4] In the church and classroom the clergy and teachers are figures of authority who announce and enforce nationally mandated rules and regulations. They are also professionals: the teachers receive a wage from the government, and the clergy are supported by the villagers. Although their spouses make gardens in land donated by villagers, the "missionaries" depend heavily upon purchased commodities for survival. In several respects, then, the station reflects its historical roots and reproduces key practices and orientations of present-day urban society in Papua New Guinea.[5]

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

> They are station people. They follow the time and they do their things at time. As a village man I eat breakfast when I want. Or I make my garden or go fishing. It is not like . . . 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.

This perspective celebrates the power of the villagers over the station staff, but it is misleading in two respects. First, it ignores the fact that the village has become increasingly oriented toward a cash economy in recent decades and depends on the station for entry into the national education system and thus for jobs. Second, it ignores the fact that villagers spend a considerable amount of their lives engaged in station activities. My friend, for example, attended the village school, went to high school and the church teachers' college, and then became a teacher before returning to care for his ailing father. Besides participating in village activities he spent some time each month collecting stewardship funds in the village to support church work. And he occasionally gave the Sunday sermon. Like other leaders of village organizations he periodically acted as a "missionary" himself.

PATTERNS OF CONVERSION

Although the establishment of the mission station in Uiaku followed typical church practice, the continued coexistence of station and village subsystems in Maisin society well after the end of the missionary period is an anomaly, unintended by the missionaries and the Maisin. The dual environment of Maisin life gives rise to distinct patterns of transformation. Anthropological approaches to conversion elsewhere are useful for analyzing Maisin transformation but need to be adapted to the special circumstances of the Uiaku case.

Humphrey J. Fisher (1973, 1985) and Robin Horton (1971, 1975) have exchanged views in the journal *Africa* on two theories of conversion to world religions, characterized by Fisher as the "Juggernaut" of Islam and Christianity and the "Phoenix" of resurgent indigenous religions. I refer to them as "external" and "internal" conversion, respectively.

Fisher argues that the broader worldview of an incoming world religion gives religious conversion an unstoppable momentum. He defines three stages: quarantine, mixing, and reform. During the quarantine stage the missionaries of the new religion attract only those people already estranged from their community. At first this small group maintains the imported religion in a pristine form, unaffected by the influences of the surrounding community. Gradually, however, more local people seek membership in the new religion, often attracted less by its precepts than by its association with outside sources of wealth and power. At this "mixing" stage the new converts do not renounce their former ideas and ways of life but hold them to be broadly compatible with the introduced religion. Over time the doctrines and orientations of the world religion increasingly make themselves felt as people become more famil-

iar with them and aware of possible contradictions with their present life. A period of conscious reform may then fellow. Fisher acknowledges that Islam and Christianity in Africa have been reshaped by local cultural, economic, and political conditions; but he also insists that the ways of life of African converts have been reshaped by the key doctrines, dynamics, and practices of the world religions themselves. Viewed from the position of the African convert, this is a theory of external conversion (Fisher 1973:31; cf. Berkhofer 1965; Burridge 1978; Laitin 1986:23–38; Nock 1933).

Horton, in contrast, develops a theory of internal conversion: "the crucial variables [in conversion] are not the external influences (Islam, Christianity), but the pre-existing thought-patterns and values, and the pre-existing socio-economic matrix" (Horton 1975:221).[6] He bases his approach on two assumptions,

> first, that where people confront new and puzzling situations, they tend to adapt to them as far as possible in terms of their existing ideas and attitudes, even though they may have to stretch and develop them considerably in the process. Second, that where people assimilate new ideas, they do so because these ideas make sense to them in terms of the notions they already hold. (Horton and Peel 1976:482)

Horton suggests that traditional African worldviews are "two-tiered," with local spirits underpinning the microcosm of the subsistence community and a distant supreme being underpinning the encompassing "macrocosm." The relative development of the microcosm or the macrocosm depends on whether people are more involved in local community or cross-community relations (as in long-distance trading). Colonization drew rural Africans into the affairs of a larger society in which the familiar, local spirits no longer seemed credible, and they began to develop the preexisting concept of a supreme being. In his provocative "thought experiment" Horton (1971) says that this basic transformation in African cosmology "might well have occurred in some recognizable form even in the absence of [the] world faiths" (Horton and Peel 1976:482). The Africans were highly selective, taking from Islam and Christianity only those ideas that fit in their preexisting cosmology. The world religions are "catalysts," stimulating and accelerating changes that are "in the air" and triggering reactions in which "they do not always appear among the end-products" (Horton 1971:104). Although I know of few anthropologists who have directly adopted Horton's ideas, many would be sympathetic to his stress on indigenous cultural structures in conversion (e.g., Hefner 1987, Hughes 1984, Kahn 1983, Morrison 1981, Schwimmer 1973, Schieffelin 1981).[7]

Horton (1975) insists the two theories are incompatible, but they share a number of striking features: notably the Weberian emphasis on the transformation of converts' worldviews from localized and largely tacit cosmologies to more universal, coherent, and consciously ordered conceptions of the divine. Moreover, both approaches view conversion as a unitary process. The difference between them would seem to be one of emphasis, as indeed Fisher (1985) suggests. More recently, also drawing upon Weber, Laitin (1986:24–29) has developed a model that simultaneously considers theological orientations, the practical organization of the religion, and the cultural and social conditions of the converts' lives.

Another possibility, however, is that internal conversion and external conversion are determined in large part by the practico-moral environments in which conversion takes place. Indeed, I shall argue that both types of "conversion" occur in Maisin society as variations within the larger historic conversion process outlined in the first part of the paper. In the station domain, conversion has a strong "external" character, to the point that the Maisin in this context appear to be acculturating. In the village domain, conversion has an "internal" quality, drawing upon received notions. The Maisin as a whole experience both types of transformation; but, limited to the distinct orientations and issues of the different domains, the processes rarely come into conflict.

External Orientations in the Station Domain

From the mission station, Uiaku appears a Christian community. The church is its largest building and the site of its largest celebrations. Villagers devote a considerable amount of time, labor, and money to the upkeep of the station and its staff. People grouse about this or that group of villagers not meeting their share, but nobody questions the obligation of Christians to support the church. The church is the outward face of Uiaku. Important visitors, such as bishops and politicians, stay on the mission station. The most spectacular feasts and traditional dances take place on the station on the saint's day and Easter; in addition, regional sports meets are held there, and women's church groups from regional villages gather at the station for meetings.

The village organizations provide the most interesting evidence of external conversion. Historically rooted in and borrowing from the authority of the church, their stated aims have a reformist bent: to encourage church attendance, to comfort the sick with prayers, to develop cash crops, to involve young people in community projects, and so forth. As customary occasions for political maneuvering—bride-price negotiations, puberty ceremonies, death rites—have declined with outmigration and increasing involvement in the cash economy, the organizations have

become the major locus of village politics. All of the leading men and many women have served as committee members and as leaders in the organizations (see Barker 1985a: Ch. 5).

When a man becomes a church councillor or a woman the head of the Mothers Union, they do not forget the values they learned growing up in the village. But they also grew up attending school and church and model their roles (if not always their moral attitudes) on the teachers and on their ideas of Europeans. Like the "missionaries," the committee leaders assume a singular authority to judge what is best for other villagers and to order certain work done. One man, for example, described the church council in this way: "The councillors do the same work as the government, except they work on the mission side, telling the people what work needs to be done." Other informants added little: "They tell the people to work when anything is needed in the church." As better-educated migrants return to the village, after several years of employment, they gravitate to—and are pushed toward—leadership positions in village corporations, where they can, in a popular phrase, "help the villagers." Some leaders build and take advantage of networks with regional and national organizations in which they find people of similar education and experience. During October and November 1986, for example, a delegation of the Mothers Union flew to Popondetta, the provincial capital, for an annual conference; the youth club hosted visitors to discuss future regional games; a village councillor lobbied the provincial government to invite a timber firm into the Collingwood Bay area; and a retired dentist organized a welcome for a visiting World Health Organization team operating a project on the station.

But this picture of rampant Westernization is misleading when applied to Uiaku as a whole. Indeed, from a number of standpoints the eighty-year attempt to plant Christianity has been an abysmal failure. Only a small minority of Maisins—mostly women and children—regularly attend church services; few individuals have more than the vaguest notion of church doctrine; most villagers are firmly convinced of the reality of local bush spirits and sorcerers; and individuals frequently disregard church strictures on marriage and divorce. The village organizations, too, although run by villagers, tend to be ineffectual when they turn their attention to the village; instead they concentrate on the school, the church, and other public institutions.

Perhaps the Maisin are at the "quarantined" or "mixed" stage of conversion in Fisher's model, rather than the "reform." But these terms also are unsatisfactory. The Maisin are very much involved in the station. They want their children to attend school and to find good jobs, they desire a suitably impressive church and other public institutions, and

they hope that participation in village organizations will attract government and business money to the region. The station reflects the desires and energies of villagers as much as it does the structures of the outside world. For their collective advancement in the outside politico-economic system, the Maisin are quite willing to reform, to obey the authoritative voice of the priest or teacher, and to adopt new bureaucracies. But the concerns of the station domain have little direct relevance to the subsistence cycle, the experience of sickness, or the attack of a ghost. The ideas and routines of the station domain seldom mix in with those of the village because there is no need for them to do so.

Internal Orientations in the Village Domain

The most consequential restructurings of cosmology and morality since the Anglicans set up their base in Uiaku have taken form in the village domain. But these changes are hard to detect not only because reliable historical sources are rare but also because the ideas and structures in question continue to look "indigenous"; one must have a considerable familiarity with the culture before internal modifications are recognizable.[8] The Maisin case poses an additional problem: villagers talk about their customs in ways that mask the nature of change. The nature of this masking, however, is revealing. On the one hand, Maisins often insist that their customs are unchanged from the time of creation. On the other, they credit missionaries with making fundamental changes in the very bases of the community. These apparently contradictory statements are complementary aspects of a single ideology that legitimates change within ostensibly unchanging moral truths. The ideology is a product of the internal modality of conversion in Uiaku. It is generated from the two related tendencies discussed by Horton: the tendency of people to try to comprehend new things in terms of what they already know; and the tendency of people to assimilate new ideas into preexisting frameworks.

The first tendency is apparent in Maisin notions of cosmology. The Maisin assume that Christian figures exist in the same cosmos as the more familiar entities of the microcosm. One informant told me: "Before the time of the missionaries the people did not know of God. But God was in the place. There was no word for Him." Others told me that the ancestors were *toton*, "ignorant," until the missionaries came to tell them about the people and truths in the Bible. Like many other Melanesian Christians most Maisins accept literally the events and persons they hear of in the church (Ryan 1969). And, as Horton's theory suggests, they understand Christian cosmological notions in terms of what they already know of the invisible world. A few people told me of their encounters with Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and Jacob's ladder in dreams when they were ill

and how these experiences led to their recovery (much as a father or mother appearing in a dream may signal a return to health). Other informants speculated that God may be responsible for major natural disasters, such as typhoons and the disastrous 1951 eruption of Mount Lamington (cf. Schwimmer 1969), which (much like a sorcerer) He administers as punishments on local peoples.

Horton's theory also suggests that the emphases within a cosmology shift as the social contexts of peoples' lives widen. Here, too, the Maisin evidence is supportive. Oral testimonies show a clear decline in villagers' interactions with local spirits over the past eighty years. For example, people no longer make sacrifices to ancestral spirits before beginning a garden or engaging in a communal hunt. Villagers also say that sorcery is not the problem it was even a decade ago. I never heard a Maisin dispute the reality of the spiritual forces of the microcosm. But people do say that the power of God is greater, and if one has faith one need not fear the wrath of ghosts or sorcerers (cf. Tonkinson 1981:260). Several people also suggested that the recent dead, all Christians, now obediently follow the priest's suggestions at their funerals and go to heaven without pestering their remaining relatives (cf. MacGaffey 1986:170). Over the years, then, experience with the spiritual forces of the microcosm has diminished, but this trend has not led to the rejection of the received cosmology (for more detailed studies see Barker [1983, 1990a]; cf. MacGaffey 1986). In thinking about spiritual powers in the Christian macrocosm, the Maisin have had to stretch their received assumptions about them. This adjustment has not been minor, but at the same time it has affirmed the truth about the essentials.

Maisins say, however, that manifestations of God are rare compared with those of local spirits, ghosts, and sorcerers. Unlike the microcosm, where personal experience is an important source of knowledge, the macrocosm is revealed primarily through church teaching and the *giu* (authoritative advice based on sacred knowledge). The giu is the basis of the authority of the "missionaries" (the clergy and the teachers on the station) and, by extension, those villagers who serve on community organizations. It is their knowledge of greater things, acquired primarily through the ability to read and to write, that gives them authority to speak of wider "truths."

Although the knowledge of God and the Bible might be beyond the ken of most villagers, the role of the missionary is accessible. Villagers assimilate the missionary's function within their received notions of morality. They often speak of the relation between the missionaries and themselves as an exchange: the "missionaries" give church services, perform baptisms and marriages, pronounce the giu, and educate the chil-

dren in return for attendance, labor, food, and wages. This mind-set becomes apparent when one side or the other feels that obligations are not being met. For example, after a period of sparsely attended services, one church councillor made the following speech, identifying attendance as a kind of prestation:

> If nobody goes to church the priest wastes his time. So you must think that when the priest starts to work in the church 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.

The "exchange" ideology reinforces the differences and complementarity of the two sides. Each brings distinct things to the exchange. And, as is often the case where exchange items are not identical, there is a strong element of asymmetry and hierarchy.

Maisins often say of the missionaries: "They take care of the people." They say the same of the relationship of parents to children, older to younger siblings, and senior to junior lineages. The key prototype for the missionary-villager relationship, however, is the symbolic opposition between the two types of patriclans, *kawo* and *sabu*. Kawo are higher-ranking clans that possess a number of ritual prerogatives, including the right to speak first at gatherings and to hold feasts and dances in their hamlets. Associated with several kawo clans are a number of lower-ranking sabu groups. The sabu have fewer ritual prerogatives than the kawo—for example, they cannot beat drums or hold feasts in their hamlets—but they do have one definitive right: to begin fights with enemies. Kawo and sabu are in a permanent asymmetrical alliance. Maisins say that the kawo "look after" their sabu. They temper the warrior group by forging alliances between groups through feasting and exchanging. The sabu reciprocate by providing their kawo "older brothers" with food and labor at feasts. The sabu must show "respect" for their kawo. If they do not, the kawo will be unable to establish and maintain conditions of peace and amity in the village and beyond, for they will be unable to sponsor feasts. The state of "amity," *marawa-wawe*, is clearly the ideal. Because tribal warfare lies so far in the past, we cannot take the above description as evidence of the way precontact Maisin society really was. But these historic memories survive today and form a kind of "social science" that Maisins use to make sense out of the dynamics between "villagers" and "missionaries" (cf. MacGaffey 1986).

As it is with parents and children, and kawo and sabu, so it is with missionaries and villagers. Here is a typical description of the duties of

the clergy: "They bring the Bible and give good giu [here meaning religious instruction or advice] to the people, pray for the sick, and tell the people not to do bad things." Many villagers credit the priest for stopping fights in the village.[9] The Maisin sometimes make the same contrast between the Christian people of the present and the "heathen" people (*eteni*) of the past. "The heathen village is different," one man explained, "because they have no giu [i.e., Christian knowledge]. If they want to do anything they can. They will not respect you. They will put you in a bad place and kill you. Christians welcome you, put you up, and give you food." Like the young child, or the angry sabu, the heathen have little moral conscience; they act without constraint. To employ a Freudian idiom, the Maisin treat the kawo, elders, parents, missionaries, committee leaders, and Christians as instances of the controlling superego; sabu, junior siblings, children, villagers, and pagans constitute the untempered forces of the id. The "ego" oscillates between these extremes, but ideally it is in a position of social amity, suspended between the social good and personal interests.

Villagers often credit or blame the missionaries for ending particular customs (for example, betrothals and selfmutilation in mortuary ceremonies). Yet there are problems with taking such statements at face value. Not only is there little evidence of missionary opposition to all but a handful of practices, but few villagers agree or even seem interested in the list of customs the mission may have opposed. The Maisins' conception of change is better understood within the moral framework I have been outlining, as a tempering of the energies of an inferior by a moral superior. One informant described conversion in this way: "When the first [missionaries] came, they wanted the people to stop all the customs that they had brought to the place and to join the mission in 'amity.' The people were really ignorant so they kept on. Now they know and have left those bad things. . . . If the thing is good, the people will carry on doing it. If it is bad, the missionaries keep on talking and the people give up these things." The description is one of pruning away the bad to leave only the good. There is change, but there is also a deeper, enduring truth, the "good" that people continue.

Rather than adopt the framework of mission Christianity, then, the Maisin conceptualize church teachings on cosmology and the moral order in terms of received ideas. In so doing the Maisin must stretch their understandings of familiar concepts. *Marawa-wawe* ("amity"), for instance, probably once meant no more than a temporary condition of balanced exchange between groups. But today Maisins often use it as an equivalent to the Christian notion of universal brotherhood under

God. Similarly, sorcery has not disappeared from the community, but the Maisin speak of it as a form of personal sin (*rature*, or "telling lies") that inevitably rebounds on the sorcerer (Barker 1983).

These conceptions of "missionaries" and "villagers" form an ideology that partly masks and distorts actual change in several ways. First, the ideology greatly exaggerates the impact of missionaries on Maisin society. To hear villagers talk about how missionaries stopped particular customs and prevented fights, one would never realize that European missionaries actually spent little time in Uiaku in the past (and that they are long gone), or that the teachers and present-day station staff participate minimally in village life. As I have tried to indicate here, "missionary" denotes a more general category of moral relation; a "missionary" represents the voice of conscience. Second, the ideology masks various economic and political conditions that impinge on and force adjustments in village life. It perceives such forces and their effects in ways that confirm itself and gives the impression that the cosmology and moral order are continuing even as their manifest symbols and practices are dramatically modified.

Once I became aware of this "change in continuity," I began to find it everywhere: in notions of sickness and sorcery, marriage practices, and women's facial tattooing (Barker 1983, 1985a, 1989; Barker and Tietjen 1990). Mortuary exchanges especially are a prominent instance of the accommodation of the ideology to change.[10]

Mortuary rituals were easily the most elaborate religious activities of the contact culture. Missionaries wrote about their violent aspects, about weeping women gashing their foreheads and breasts with sharp rocks. The Maisin credit missionary opposition for the ending of these and many other practices. In fact the opposition was sporadic at best, and most of the offending practices continued well after the population had converted. To the extent that we can reconstruct the colonial history of the rites, their modification has been haphazard, with villagers leaving out at different times a certain exchange, type of apparel, or ritual act (most of which were never opposed by the mission). By the early 1980s the sequence of the death rites bore a family resemblance to the one described by missionaries in 1904, but it was much simplified and incorporated an unadorned Christian burial rite at its center.

As in other kin-based societies, a death in Uiaku incurs long-term exchanges and obligations. The most important are between the deceased's kin and affines. In the early 1980s mortuary exchanges still absorbed substantial time, labor, and goods. When a married adult died, the surviving spouse left her or his house to stay with an affine. The kin of the deceased destroyed the couple's house and gardens and distributed the

property and food among themselves. The widow or widower was at first immobile, kept hidden behind a sheet of tapa in the relatives' house. Gradually, the affines reintroduced her or him to normal routines: the bereaved was fed various foods, taken to the bush to relieve her- or himself, given a garden knife, taken to church, and so on. This stage was followed by a period of light mourning, lasting weeks to several years, in which the mourner allowed her or his hair to grow unkept and uncut, grew a beard (if a man), wore dark clothing, and avoided public gatherings. Other villagers might join in if they felt close to the deceased. Eventually, the kin and affines of the mourners set a time for a *roi babasi*, or a "face cleaning" ceremony. The affines cut the mourner's hair, decorated him or her in new tapa and ornaments, and presented gifts of tapa cloth, pots, mats, and food. Ideally, these gifts balanced the things taken at the time of death. The final ceremony strongly resembled traditional puberty rites. Now the widow or widower could remarry.

Such was the situation in 1981–1982. But many people were expressing unhappiness with the rites. They complained that because the roi babasi was not prepared quickly enough, people remained in mourning too long. Villagers also complained that affines rarely gave as much to surviving spouses as they took at the time of death. These grievances had clear economic roots. First, mourning obligations had become a public nuisance. An untimely death can knock out a long-planned church festival, sports meet, or development project. Those involved in the death must donate labor and food to the mortuary exchanges. Others are afraid to participate in the festival (and certainly to dance) for fear of offending mourners. When two people died just before the bishop and a regional member of parliament were to arrive for a festival in Uiaku in December 1981, the organizers were nearly driven to distraction negotiating for the mourners to be "cleaned up" so that the people could dance. Second, the Maisins' uneven incorporation into the cash economy had made it difficult to balance the exchanges. People who have worked or who have relatives in towns have more money and more possessions. When a relatively well-off person dispenses property at a death or as the organizer of a roi babasi, the other side often cannot balance the exchange.

These may have been the underlying causes of the Maisins' complaints, but the villagers did not refer to them in explaining their problems. Instead, they held that the mortuary exchanges posed a moral issue. The lack of balance indicated that people were being "greedy" and were not in "amity." Even though the forms were being observed, people sensed that custom itself was being violated.

Their objections began to increase in 1980 after a young boy died. His

family had recently returned to Uiaku after his father resigned from a management position on an oil palm project. The grieving parents surrendered most of their goods to the wife's people and went into mourning for almost two years. Several enraged kinsmen claimed that the wife's people had become too greedy for the property of these people and too lazy to help end their mourning, and so the bereaved stayed too long in their unhappy condition. The church deacon, who was a Maisin man related to the mourning parents, and several other villagers took these arguments further. They argued that amity between villagers should be a feature of the death rites from the start rather than a final goal. The critics took the opportunity of a funeral for another youngster in September 1982 to point out that *marawa-wawe* (amity) not only was the customary goal of the rites but was also in accordance with the church teaching that people should love and support their brothers and sisters. Most of the people at the funeral agreed and left the bereaved household in possession of its property and gardens. In addition, three days after the death the respective affines took the husband and wife out of mourning with small ceremonies, thus drastically curtailing the mourning period. Most of the funerals I witnessed later, in 1983 and 1986, followed the abbreviated pattern.

Two related points are significant in this example. First, Christian ideas were important in making these modifications possible. But, as Horton might argue, people were able to accept the Christian teaching on universal love because they had assimilated it into a received notion of social amity based upon an ideal of balanced reciprocity. The related point is that this transformation in the death rites, important as it was, did not involve the adoption of Western-style funeral rites. People operated within what they already knew, especially their collective memory of "tradition." I strongly suspect that an anthropologist working in Uiaku ten years from now will be told, as I was in the early 1980s, that the death rites she or he observes "come from the ancestors." And, of course, in a sense they do.

The external and internal orientations examined here are best understood as aspects of a larger conversion process emerging from the historical particularities of the Maisins' colonial situation. On the one hand, Maisins are involved in regional and global ideologies and politico-economic systems through the church and the school, and the village committees modeled after them. On the other hand, Maisins continue to look to received identities and traditions in their local world to find an authoritive basis for governing community life. Thus all Maisins participate in the macrocosm and the microcosm, and all engage in station and

village activities and ideas that together influence the overall direction of conversion. Understood in this way, Maisin conversion cannot be adequately understood in unilinear terms as either capitulation or resistance. Instead, we must view the Maisin as active participants in a much more complicated and ambiguous conversion process, participants who draw upon a variety of old and introduced tools to refashion themselves in a more complex world.

THE RHETORIC OF CONVERSION

So far I have considered conversion as an aspect of colonial incorporation and as a process of social and ideological transformation. In this section I turn to the ways in which converts themselves talk about conversion, how they construct rhetorics of transformation within more diffuse religious discourses. Robert Hefner's study of the Islamization of Besuki in eastern Java is helpful. He notes that "in all religious and ideological discourse there is a dual economy of knowledge, in which explicit doctrinal knowledge is informed by and mutually informs a less discursive, tacit knowledge constructed in a wider social experience" (Hefner 1987: 55). The key difference between traditional and world religions is not rationality per se, as a strict Weberian might have it, but the characteristic social organization in which each develops a distinctive voice. Embedded in small-scale communities, in which spiritual knowledge is woven into the fabric of everyday life, traditional religions are relatively silent, supported by tacit moral and cosmological assumptions. In contrast, "world" religions are more explicit and ordered; they "provide the discourse for the elaboration of a secondary moral and ideological identity beyond that given in the immediacy of local groupings." World religions may form "a kind of secondary community built above and between those given by local social circumstances" (Hefner 1987:74–75).

Hefner's two-tiered model of religious discourse fits the case of Uiaku. Although the station and the village are not discrete religious orders, they do represent different levels of social organization. External conversion addresses the "secondary community" that links Uiaku with other people in Papua New Guinea; internal conversion draws on the "local social circumstances" of received culture. As Hefner's study shows, the two tiers may coexist for long periods in a community. Both can flexibly be drawn upon to make sense of increasingly complex social experiences. But as people are drawn into the larger culture of the surrounding society and struggle with difficult questions of self-definition and cultural legitimation, the contradictions between the two levels of community

come to the fore. This experience of the secondary community challenges tacit assumptions about morality and cosmology—"shakes the foundations"—and so brings these assumptions into conscious discussion.

The representation of conversion I examine here is an example of such a reconsideration of moral assumptions and identity emerging from a sense of moral crisis. In June 1983 a meeting was held in Uiaku to discuss the latest closing of the cooperative trade store. Several men alluded to the origins of the society that had run the cooperative. Among those who spoke was a man whose father had opened the first village trade store in 1946. He began:

> When people got married and grew up, they did what their fathers taught them. They had their own kawo. When they built the church, they all put their kawo into the church for God. No one held theirs back. No clan got it back. When I was a small boy, I saw them break the spear and club and end fighting [between the clans]. They did this because the missionaries came and wanted peace. It was the sign. They told us to live in amity. . . . You must all know this and not be confused. We must follow the right way. We are *ekelesia* [Christians]. We are leaders. We are government. We look after our own place. We do all of the work.

He ended by quietly reading out a list of the first shareholders of the cooperative society, most of them now dead.

This commentary was unique, but it drew on events and themes familiar to the audience. It is best understood as "transitory ingenuity" (MacGaffey 1986:62): an attempt to find meaning in a difficult situation by improvising a plausible rhetorical structure. In the following analysis, I want to show that this sort of rhetoric is unrealistic and problematic for the Maisin. To do this, I first need to put the commentary in context by examining the historical background of the cooperative society, its association with the church, and its utility to Maisins as a symbol of conversion.

Inspired by the Christian Socialist movement in Australia, the Reverends James Benson and A. Clint set up an experimental cooperative at nearby Gona village in 1946, the first in Oro Province (Dakeyne 1966). The missionaries hoped cooperatives would simultaneously improve the material conditions of villagers and deepen their understanding of Christian teachings through the discipline of daily prayer and regular work. In 1948 a Maisin returned from the Gona cooperative bearing seed rice and new ideas. He called a meeting of clan allies, who had traditionally formed rival factions in Uiaku. Together they proclaimed a new era of peace and prosperity at the meeting, ritually breaking a spear and club. Members of the Uiaku-Ganjiga Christian Co-operative Society then

planted the rice and other cash crops, selling the first harvest to the missionaries at Wanigela.

The mission soon abandoned its Gona experiment and interest in village cooperatives, but the Maisin continued their cooperative activities with what several observers felt was religious fervor. "All the peoples of Collingwood Bay," wrote a worried Patrol Officer Bell,

> are very co-operatively minded and have been ever since the war. The failures they have had in the last few years have in no way deterred them. They have seized upon co-operation as a means towards an end, a complete new order, by which they will advance both economically and socially. Any attempt to talk them out of this immediately breeds suspicion in their minds and they imagine they are being robbed of their chance of advancement. (Patrol Reports 1955)

What particularly concerned Bell and his brother officers was the "communalism" of the cooperatives: the idea that "all participants were supposed to work at the same time and to undertake whatever work was allotted to them by the group leaders, and benefits derived were to have been shared equally" (Crocombe 1964:29). But not all men gave as much time to the plantations. And what was to be done about those who donated land? The Maisins temporarily overcame those obstructions when they organized a cooperative to build an iron-roofed church, the first in the district. After the missionary in Wanigela agreed to take care of the books, the villagers raised funds through selling copra and then purchased sheet iron and church fixtures from centers up the coast. The venture was successful. Bishop George Ambo, the first Papuan bishop, inaugurated Saint Thomas Church in 1962 and installed the Reverend George Nixon Simbiri as Uiaku's first priest.

At other times, however, society leaders kept cooperative monies in jars hidden away in their houses. As officer Bell observed, the native-run cooperatives discouraged individual entrepreneurship. And theft by the leaders was a real possibility. In 1952 and again in 1962 government agents disbanded unofficial societies and distributed the hoarded funds. In 1962–1964, the government sponsored its own cooperative society in Uiaku, providing training and occasional supervision for the participants. Around the same time, Uiaku began to suffer from extensive outmigration and a steep decline in coastal shipping, which together put an end to cash cropping. The society store has survived, but its survival is very shaky. It now depends entirely on monies sent to the village by migrants and on the occasional government grant. As incoming funds ebb and flow, so do the fortunes of the store. It was closed through most of 1982–1983.

The cooperative society seems an unlikely candidate for an image of conversion given its repeated failures and its relative lack of importance in the local economy. The Maisin do not need the society store; they can and often do buy goods much more cheaply at stores near the regional airstrip in Wanigela. Yet most meetings I attended in Uiaku dealt in one way or another with the problems of the store. It soon became clear that the villagers treated the society less as an economic problem than as a moral issue. Talk about the store ran in predictable channels. Some people looked for scapegoats: they called the educated younger men running the store "big heads," too lazy to take care of the books and responsible for siphoning off the store's funds; they accused the storekeepers of secretly extending credit and giving goods to their kinsfolk; and they warned young women not to tempt the storekeepers into sexual encounters and thereby weaken them. The society leaders in turn admonished villagers to avoid rumor mongering, because such gossip drove good storekeepers from their jobs. The store acted as a magnet for many of the tensions, suspicions, and open conflicts in the community.

I suggest that the cooperative society carries such moral weight precisely because for the Maisin it is a powerful symbol of conversion, of movement toward a "new order." Part of the society's symbolic strength comes from its close association with the key symbols of hegemonic power: business and money. Throughout Papua New Guinea, rural peoples see the development of locally controlled businesses as the road to economic salvation, a view that politicians enthusiastically reinforce. As studies of the so-called cargo cults show, "bisnis" has a strong ideological message for many Melanesians; it carries a notion of moral equivalence with Europeans and the ability to exercise power over their own lives (Burridge 1960). The commentary we are examining develops these notions of external conversion in such phrases as "We are leaders. We are government. . . . We do all of the work." The speaker claims autonomy for the Maisin, perhaps defiantly, but in terms that accept the external hegemonic culture of state authority, governmental bureaucracy, organized labor, and, by implication, money.

The society also gathers symbolic strength from its association with the village church. In the commentary the church does not participate in external conversion, linking the Maisin with the outside system, but instead is assimilated to received moral values within a process of internal conversion. The commentary refers to an actual event at the consecration of Saint Thomas church in 1962. As the bishop's party approached the church, they found it surrounded on three sides by a low fence of crisscrossed sticks. The different trees making up the fence were kawo, emblems of the clans, linked together in a sign of unity. In building this

fence, Maisins had symbolically transformed the mission station from a foreign social order to a village center; these kinds of emblems had hitherto been set up only on feast days in the central plazas of the higher-ranking clans. In effect, the Maisin converted the mission station into the village and thus encompassed external conversion within the idiom of internal conversion.

This event forms the rhetorical core of the commentary. The Maisin had accepted baptism and the presence of the mission, of course, decades before the cooperatives and the new church. Older Maisins are aware of this, but the postwar events strike many of them as marking much more of a transformation, a movement toward a new order. The commentary begins with the asymmetrical reciprocity between missionary and convert that makes peace possible. By insisting that all of the clans gave their emblems to the church and that none took them back, the speaker suggests that the clans sacrificed their different identities for a higher unity, a more general state of "amity" that embraced the entire community. His reading of the names of the original shareholders suggests that the giving of shares to form the cooperative society was also a sacrifice for a higher unity. This unity, in turn, made the society prosperous and gave Maisins their church. The speech thus interweaves themes of internal conversion with those of external conversion: leadership (of committees), government, work. A condition of dependence and difference becomes one of empowerment where the opposition between missionary and villagers is obviated. Amity, equality, collective empowerment, and prosperity are all conjoined in a single powerful statement identifying the society and the church within conversion. This is the full meaning of "We are ekelesia" (ecclesia): we have become the church.

I suggested earlier that the commentary represented "transitory ingenuity" and that it was problematic. It is ingenious in the way it is fabricated from certain key events and symbols. For many Maisins the society is a mirror of their moral condition. Its failure reflects their own moral collapse. Speakers at meetings contrast and reinforce this negative image with a positive one of the society at the time of its founding. Such representations of conversion can take on the quality of charter myths. Especially interesting is that the Maisin leaders speak of the fortunes of the society with images of conversion drawn from both external and internal processes, suggesting that those were once (and can be again) reconciled.

The commentary is problematic in that it portrays the society's relations with the outside world as being governed by village morality. This is clearly mistaken. This image of conversion encourages the Maisin to think the failure of the society reflects their own moral failure. This is

similar to the situation of the death rites described earlier. And, as in that case, leaders at the meetings admonish the people to be respectful of the leaders ("missionaries"), to stop rumor mongering, to live in amity, and so forth. The rub is that the moral order of the village has little relevance to the fortunes of the society and other business ventures. A variety of extrinsic economic forces conspire to undermine the society's success. The ingenious rhetoric of conversion considered here might make Maisins feel good about the "new men" of the 1950s but it makes them feel bad about themselves in the present.

CONCLUSIONS

I have presented Maisin conversion in this essay from three related points of view. First, I examined the contribution of mission Christianity to the people's long-term incorporation into the colonial and post-colonial system. As the Comaroffs (1986) suggest for the Tshidi, the most systematic and influential controls of the mission enterprise were the routines of teaching, preaching, and setting up a supporting infrastructure. The founders of the mission foresaw a village-based Christianity following the forms of the medieval church. This has indeed developed in Uiaku, although not quite in the way that the early church leaders imagined. Village society is still distinctly "Melanesian," rooted in subsistence production and kin-based exchange, and it has also remained distinct from the station establishment, which finds its roots in Western culture. To see the station as a foreign imposition, however, would grossly misrepresent the situation. A presence in Uiaku for more than eighty years, the station continues with the participation of Maisins in the church, in the school, in work committees, and in raising funds. It connects Uiaku into a larger network of education, jobs, government, and capitalism, and it brings these forces into the heart of local experience. The relation of village to station is the long-term product of interactions between Maisin and outside agents, one that could not fit the expectations of either. Uiaku society, I would suggest, has a dual culture that has to be understood in the context of a multicultural Papua New Guinea.

Conversion may also be understood as an ongoing process for the converts themselves. Examining the situation in the 1980s, I have suggested that the Maisin today experience two modalities of conversion corresponding to the two practical environments in which they conduct their lives. While engaged in the church, the school, or the village committees, they experience "external conversion," a process that reforms or remodels local ways according to imported values and orientations. Ex-

ternal conversion draws from the hegemonic culture of the country (and its former colonial masters) and emphasizes bureaucratic rule, singular authority, and obedience. While engaged in subsistence activities, exchanges, or rituals, Maisins experience "internal conversion," an ongoing modification of preexisting traditional elements. Internal conversion is harder to detect because much of local cultural understanding is tacitly shared and because the Maisin explicitly credit missionaries and their successors with changing their society. As their mortuary exchanges show, however, the Maisin make sense of the action of these outsiders and manipulate elements of the received culture by projecting a strongly held moral ideology. This ideology sees "missionaries" as superior but reciprocal players interacting with villagers in a relationship that clarifies and enlarges the understanding of tradition. In the village domain, then, Maisins experience conversion as change within an enduring tradition. Both the external and internal modalities contribute to the overall historical process of conversion in which all Maisins are involved.

Finally, I examined the rhetoric of conversion as a discourse about the nature of community. Taking a cue from Hefner's (1987) study of the conversion of Javanese Hindus, I suggested that the external and internal dimensions of conversion relate to two different levels of social structure, which in turn correspond to the distinction between "world" and "traditional" religions. Through the process of external conversion, the Maisin identify with the common interests, forms, and political values of the larger community in Papua New Guinea. Through internal conversion, they attempt to harmonize the present conditions of their lives with their understanding of received morality. Much of the time they experience no conflict between these two perceptions of community. Indeed, they provide Maisins with flexible cultural tools for dealing with an increasingly complex world. But there are exceptions, triggered by difficult endeavors such as the cooperative society. On the one hand, the society is the epitome of engagement in the external cash economy and bureaucratic system. On the other hand, Maisins perceive the act of cooperation itself as part of inherited village morality. These two discourses inform each other in representations of the happy days of the 1950s, when, so it is said, success in one domain lent itself to success in the other: the people were united in "amity" and the society was a booming success.

Maisin commentaries on conversion present the church and the cooperative society together as the embodiment of that success, the mark of the "true" conversion of the people. But if this unity did come about it was temporary and fragile. Its representation in the present is mythic and perhaps overly wishful: for village morality has at best an indirect influence on the success or failure of business ventures. The main effect

of such representations of conversion is to make villagers feel at once frustrated and guilty. The engagement in Christianity and commerce certainly at times "shakes the foundations" of the village moral order. But, for the moment, the Maisin are left with no clear alternatives to their dualistic environment.

Clearly the introduction of Christianity in Uiaku has been inseparable from incorporation into larger political and economic systems. The support of the station and the moral ideology linking villagers and missionaries indicate a general acceptance of the hegemonic system, even if the villagers do not entirely understand it. In Uiaku, unlike in southern Africa, where missionization was more thorough and oppression is institutionalized, discourses of protest and resistance have not taken discernible shape, either in organized Western forms or within seemingly apolitical symbolic forms (cf. Comaroff 1985). Rural Maisins often do express resentment about the lack of economic development and opportunities in their area. But they are as likely to blame themselves as to look to causes outside the community (cf. Smith 1984, 1990). In contrast, Anglican Christianity has been partly assimilated to village ways and may even give new life to old values. The situation resembles that described by Laitin in his model of hegemony and culture among the Yoruba. Laitin argues that in a multicultural society a cultural subsystem may become hegemonic, defining the commonsense symbols and issues of the larger political and economic order, the domain of political power. Other cultural subsystems "do not necessarily threaten the political order," although they may "hold within themselves the sources for counter-hegemony" (Laitin 1986:181, 182). This latter development, of course, depends on historical circumstances and the sense Maisins and other political actors make of them.

Conversion, then, often has the kind of dual economy observable in Uiaku, where people are able to cope simultaneously with two or more practico-moral orientations to the world. The overall direction of a people's conversion depends upon the precise mix of local and extra-local elements present, however, which in turn depends upon the contact situation and the authority of mission and colonial bodies. Among the Maisin, indigenous ideas and values may have maintained a greater social presence than in many other instances of missionization because of the relatively benign attitudes of the Anglicans, limited economic intrusion (no land alienation, for example), and the diffuse nature of the pre-contact religion. Such conditions do not hold everywhere and may even be rare. Converts in southern Africa, for example, were often required to live in mission-directed communities separate from their pagan kin; Native Americans for the most part lost their lands; and Polynesians found

their overt politico-religious hierarchy a vulnerable target for external challenge. The peculiarities of the Maisin case, then, should not be overgeneralized. My theoretical point, however, is that conversion may have two faces: one turned inward, toward the microcosm of the local community, and one turned outward, toward a people's differential involvement in the macrocosm. This point, I think, can be explored elsewhere.

External and internal conversion differ not only in modalities but also in content. External conversion deals in bureaucracies, rules, and roles. Internal conversion is rooted less in activities than in consciousness of cosmological notions and moral orientations. This difference in content may help to explain how Maisins engage simultaneously in both types of conversion without experiencing sharp contradictions. One may *act* like a "missionary," for instance, but rationalize one's actions in terms of village morality. Anne Marie Tietjen's study of the moral reasoning of male leaders and nonleaders in Uiaku is revealing in this regard. Adapting psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg's model and test of moral reasoning to Maisin society, Tietjen found that all of her respondents placed a strong ideological emphasis on reciprocity and equivalence, regardless of differences in education and experience outside the village (Tietjen and Walker 1985). Village morality, then, along with basic cosmological notions, is highly flexible and adaptive. Maisins draw upon it to make sense of the mission station and outside world and to make them more or less tolerable. If the material conditions of Uiaku change drastically, as they no doubt will once a major forestry company begins operations in Collingwood Bay, support for the station will probably weaken as villagers put their energies into activities with higher apparent returns. But the people's characteristic moral and cosmological ideas will probably continue in new and developing forms. The situation is reminiscent of MacGaffey's comment on the duality of Kongo society: "whereas in political and economic reality the bureaucratic sector dominates the customary, in popular consciousness the indigenous cosmology retains its primacy because only in the customary sector are [the people] at home" (MacGaffey 1986:248).

NOTES

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1. The exceptions in 1982 included one old woman who had never attended school and several young children in polygamous families. The Anglican church baptizes infants except in disapproved marriages. Older unbaptized children are usually baptized upon completing school.

2. By drawing on these three perspectives I do not mean to slight others. Some anthropologists have recommended approaching conversion in terms of the dialogue or encounter between missionaries and converts (Burridge 1978, Clifford 1980). Others have analyzed the differing conversion experiences of women and men or the young and old (Comaroff and Comaroff 1986, Jolly and Macintyre 1989). Psychologists, historians, sociologists, and theologians also have distinct approaches (see Rambo [1984] for a summary of the literature).

3. For a more detailed analysis of the village-station relationship in Maisin social practice and ideology, see Barker (1990b).

4. I was surprised to find in 1986 that the newly arrived Maisin priest continued to conduct services in English even though a Maisin translation existed. He did, however, deliver the sermon in the vernacular.

5. Many older Maisin also refer to urban centers as "stations."

6. Geertz (1973) originated the term "internal conversion" in his study of the "disenchantment" of modern Balinese religion. Although set in a Weberian framework, Geertz's general perspective is compatible with Horton's (cf. Hefner 1987, Laitin 1986).

7. Horton has provided the most theoretically explicit analysis of internal conversion, but he has intellectualist predecessors. In Melanesia the most influential has been Peter Lawrence. Lawrence (1964) understands so-called cargo cults, for example, as extensions of traditional magico-religious beliefs into new circumstances and has argued that Christianity and other Western influences have barely touched the deep-seated assumptions of indigenous worldviews. For a critique of Melanesianists' analyses of indigenous Christianity, see Barker (1992).

8. The Melanesian literature has tended to treat village societies as autonomous wholes unaffected by outside political and economic forces. Excellent critiques are presented by Carrier and Carrier (1987) and Howard (1983).

9. In the two years I have worked in Uiaku I have never seen a non-Maisin venture into the village to stop a fight. When I asked the village priest about this, he told me that the intrusion of a stranger into village affairs would be strongly resented. Maisin statements about modern "missionaries," as about past ones, should be considered ideological constructions that reveal more about Maisin notions of change than about actual behavior.

10. I have discussed changes in Maisin mortuary practices at greater length elsewhere (Barker 1985b).

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