CUSTOMARY ILLUSIONS

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CUSTOMARY ILLUSIONS:

LAND AND COPRA IN LONGANA, VANUATU

Ву

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A Thesis

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Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

McMaster University

August 1981

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (1981) (Anthropology) TITLE: Customary Illusions: Land and Copra in Longana, Vanuatu AUTHOR: Margaret Critchlow Rodman, B.A. (Goucher College) M.A. (McMaster University) SUPERVISOR: Professor M.C. Cooper NUMBER OF PAGES: xiv, 354

ABSTRACT

Dimensions of meaning associated with social differentiation among Melanesian peasant producers are explored in this study of customary land tenure and copra production in Longana, Aoba Island, Vanuatu. The notion of "customary illusions" -- mystifications experienced as true -- is developed to highlight suppositions, expectations and ideals formed in association with traditional land tenure and production for the market. My thesis is that these illusions represent ambiguous but meaningful fragments of complex reality. I use customary illusions as a relativistic device to focus on the whole of the problem of understanding Longanan peasant cash-cropping.

The holistic approach I follow interrelates phenomenology, political economy and empiricism as complementary lenses for refracting meaning. The dissertation is based on twenty-eight months field research in 1978-1979 and 1969-1971. It begins with examination of consequences of the colonial history of Vanuatu as an Anglo-French Condominium for retention of customary land tenure and adoption of copra as a peasant cash-crop. I explore ni-Vanuatu illusions of independence amidst

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dependence and of inalienability of land amidst its alienation as products of the colonial experience. Next, the flexibility of traditional land tenure is investigated phenomenologically through the ambiguity of illusions linked with Longanans' experience of place. This flexibility is both an asset and a liability, ensuring that no one is landless but also allowing 5% of the landholders to control 31% of the plantation land.

Inequality arising through land tenure flexibility represents differentiation within the peasantry as a class. Empirical analysis of plantation land distribution and copra sales suggests consequences of this inequality with particular attention to a class category of "big peasants," relatively wealthy, large landholders. Risks and costs that the copra market imposes constrain all producers' agricultural decisions so that, for example, they do not increase production in response to rising prices. Yet, through bargaining with buyers over terms other than prices, Longanans assert some control over market exchanges and affirm their own illusory independence. In sum, the dissertation seeks to enrich understanding of peasant producers' behaviour by analyzing the meaningful ambiguity of our illusions about them, and theirs about themselves.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the many people who have helped me to research, analyze and write about Longanan land and copra. I owe my deepest thanks to my husband, Bill, my most loyal supporter and my most cogent critic. For his gentle gifts of enthusiasm and wisdom, I shall always be profoundly grateful.

I am endebted to Matt Cooper for his rigourous yet supportive supervision of my graduate programme at intellectual breadth and depth of his McMaster. The approach to anthropology continually challenged and helped to refine my ideas. I am also grateful to the other members of my supervisory committee, David Counts, David Damas, and Peter George. Their ability to work together with cheerful patience and to offer prompt, constructive criticism has made completion of 'the dissertation a pleasant and efficient process. Two earlier members of the supervisory committee also deserve acknowledgement: Peter Stephenson, now of the University of Victoria, offered amicable and lively criticisms of the proposed dissertation that helped me to develop the notion of customary Denham, now of Dartmouth College, illusions; Woodrow

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assisted greatly in designing the dissertation research. Phil Howarth, of the geography department at McMaster, gave helpful advice concerning the interpretation and use of aerial photographs in mapping landholdings. I thank Nancy Kent and Ilene Millington of the McMaster Word Processing Centre for their careful preparation of this manuscript.

In Vanuatu during 1978-1979, I incurred many debts of gratitude. First and foremost, I thank the people of Longana, and especially the residents of Waileni. They welcomed our family with warmth; their guidance and cooperation ensured the success of my research. To Mathias Tariundu I offer special thanks for his willingness to share his knowledge, for his skill as a teacher, his concern for our welfare and, above all, for his friendship.

I also wish to thank the following people and organizations in Vanuatu for their help: David Browning, who was the British District Agent in Santo; Enid Burman of the Bureau of Statistics; the staff of the Central Planning Office; Kirk Huffman of the Cultural Centre and his wife, Claudia; M. Gely and Peter Olsen of the Service Topographique; and, especially, my ni-Vanuatu brother, Douglas Malosu, of the Department of Agriculture. I am grateful to Anne Dunbar for generously sharing portions of her fieldnotes on inter-island transport. Joel

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Bonnemaison, director of ORSTOM in Vila, and his wife, Martine, deserve warmest thanks for their unstinting hospitality.

I acknowledge with appreciation the financial support of McMaster University. The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada generously funded my doctoral studies for four years, including a year of field research in Vanuatu. I am deeply grateful for their sustained assistance.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Land, copra and custom were dominant themes in the colonial history of the New Hebrides; they remain crucial concerns as the republic of Vanuatu redefines indigenous traditions in shaping the country's future as a small Pacific nation independent of Britain and France.* In part, this dissertation explores how the colonial past and the distant presence of the world copra market constrain current cash crop production in Vanuatu. But the dissertation also focuses on the power that ni-Vanuatu producers exert over their own, much smaller, world. Their power, rooted in the experience of place, is sustained by the flexibility of customary land acquisition, land use and agricultural production. I argue that from the vantage point of the world in which the economy of Vanuatu is set, on the one hand, and the world of the ni-Vanuatu copramaker, on the other, explanations of the meaning of land tenure and copra production are "customary illusions,"

^{*}The New Hebrides gained independence in July 1980, and became the Republic of Vanuatu. Citizens of the country are known as ni-Vanuatu.

partial truths given the weight of tradition. The dissertation points to the truth in apparently contradictory customary illusions as a path toward holistic understanding of the nature of ni-Vanuatu copra production, marketing and plantation land-holding within the broader historical, political and economic context in which ni-Vanuatu concerns with land and copra are situated.

In the first part of the introduction, I show how the dissertation differs from yet builds on some recent anthropological approaches to the analysis of peasant producers, especially in Melanesia. I then introduce the theoretical orientation of the dissertation which draws together phenomenology and political economy, modes of analysis that seldom articulate in ethnography. I suggest that customary illusions formed in the experience of the social world surround ni-Vanuatu cash-crop production and land tenure. Customary illusions arising from observation of social forms also colour analysts' interpretations of traditional land tenure and peasant producer behaviour. My thesis is that customary illusions should not be dismissed false; instead, they represent fragments of complex as reality. Investigation of the partialness and partiality of their meaning can help us to understand the consequences of customary behaviour within chains of historical causation. The notion of customary illusions is simply a

point of view, a relativistic device to refocus anthropological attention on the whole of a problem. In this case, the problem concerns dimensions of meaning associated with Melanesian peasant production for the market.

In sum, the view taken here looks outward from an indigenous society toward its external influences, following a kind of internal perspective that "has yet to be provided with much flesh in detailed analysis and research" (Fitzpatrick 1980:1). As the section on method later in the introduction indicates, this study is grounded in detailed research that adds flesh to the skeletal studies preceding Fitzpatrick's own major contribution. To borrow an equally meaty metaphor from the other side of the conceptual flock, I hope that this dissertation as ethnography also provides the kind of "complex specificness" that presents "the sociological mind with bodied stuff on which to feed" (Geertz 1973:23).

Melanesian peasant production

The nature of the peasantry as a class and a culture is conceptually difficult to grasp, and controversy has marked its definition in the social sciences (Kroeber 1923; Redfield 1956; Wolf 1966; Foster-Carter 1974). Marx downgraded the importance of

understanding the peasantry, for he felt its existence as a class was doomed historically by the rise of the industrial state. Chayanov's theory of peasant economy (1966) provided a framework for social analysis at the level of individual family farms. His work also suggested that the peasantry was not a form of incipient capitalism; instead, the motivations of peasant producers were oriented toward securing subsistence rather than making a profit.

Chayanov's work has been especially influential in anthropology (e.g., Kerblay 1971; Sahlins 1972). His view that peasant economy is based on the intensive use of family labour to sustain self-sufficient farm households is implicit in many anthropological definitions of the peasantry. For example, Wolf defines the peasant unit as both a productive organization and a unit of consumption; the peasant's holding is both an economic unit and a home (1966:13). But like peasants, "tribesmen" or "primitives" may be self-sufficient cultivators. The crucial distinction between them lies in the character of their involvement with a larger society. Peasants are rural cultivators whose surpluses are appropriated by a controlling group of outsiders. The dominant group uses part of the peasantry's surplus to "underwrite its own standard of living" and redistributes the rest to compensate other groups in society (Ibid.:4). Thus the

peasantry is kept "at arms length from the social sources of power" (Shanin 1971:14-15). Such a broad definition of peasantry glosses over a wide variety of regional differences between groups of peasants traceable to the consequences of different historical processes. Nevertheless, the definition does provide a useful starting point for examining a distinctive kind of social organization.

Differentiation occurs within peasantries as well between them. In the dissertation, I examine as differentiation that is occurring among ni-Vanuatu peasant copra producers. Similar processes have been investigated in related contexts. For example, the commercialization of peasant agriculture in Africa and its implications for differentiation within the peasantry as a class have been well documented (e.g., Arrighi and Saul 1973; Gutkind and Wallerstein 1976; Stavenhagen 1975). The containment of the peasantry through conservation of traditional societies to serve metropolitan interests in colonial situations also accepted as inhibiting differentiation is and transformation of the peasantry (Amin 1974; Barratt Brown 1974; Kay 1975; Meillasoux 1973). In comparison, analysis of differentiation within a peasantry and of containment through customary systems is lacking for the Pacific. With few exceptions (e.g., Cooper 1979), anthropologists have

not written on the topic; the interest of politial economists in the region also is rare and recent (Fitzpatrick 1980). To the best of my knowledge, no one previously has linked ethnography of differentiation in a Melanesian peasantry with historical consequences of colonialism, as I have tried to do here. In this sense, the dissertation is an original contribution to peasant studies generally and to Pacific anthropology.

A brief review of anthropological studies of peasant production in Melanesia suggests the place of the dissertation in the areal literature. As early as 1955, anthropologists in Melanesia displayed interest in the adaptation of traditional economic activities to cash crop production (Belshaw 1955). Through Salisbury's study of the Siane (1962), consequences of the introduction of steel tools for the transformation of traditional subsistence horticulture have become well known. More recent research has examined problems encountered in adapting traditional agricultural systems to meet the needs of Pacific urban food markets (Brookfield 1969; Fisk 1978; Lasaga 1972). While these kinds of studies necessarily take into account linkages between food-producing communities and the markets they serve, anthropologists studying Melanesian cash crops such as copra or coffee often choose an internal, decontextualized focus for explaining production.

early 1970s, Pacific anthropologists Bv the correctly categorized cash crop producers as peasants, not tribesmen (Finney 1973b; Howlett 1973; Meggitt 1971); but few researchers in Melanesia dealt seriously with the historical processes through which this transformation was Salisbury (1970) was exceptional in using occurring. history as a mode of explanation rather than merely as a setting of the ethnographic stage. For those who focus upon entrepreneurs (e.g., Epstein 1968, Finney 1973a; Strathern 1972) or, more generally, on individuals (e.g., Moulik 1973; Shand and Straatmans 1974), how, why and when people participate in cash cropping are questions analyzed with little, if any, consideration of the broader context of production.

The terms under which Melanesian peasants choose to participate in cash cropping and the terms that the world market and a legacy of colonialism dictate to them are considerations crucial to assessing involvement in a cash economy. Producers indeed may enjoy many options in making decisions about when to produce, how much to make, and where to sell; no doubt the personal skills of a big man may enable him to recognize and exploit new opportunities. But too often individuals are seen as prime movers. Finney's statement that individual Gorokans embody "an entrepreneurial drive behind ... the whole course of

economic change" illustrates this approach (1973<u>a</u>:107). Too often, anthropological accounts reflect an "implicit yet basic assumption that the emergence of the peasantry nationwide can be described adequately in terms of big men bursting into bourgeoisdom" (Fitzpatrick 1980:111).

A holistic approach

Explaining the choices an individual makes regarding participation in a cash economy requires a holistic approach. Heider comments that the strength of a holistic viewpoint "lies in its treatment of culture as a complex rather than as a simple system" (1979:52). Where cash cropping is concerned, such an approach must go beyond the confines of the subject's culture without leaving that The analysis must be selectively broadened culture behind. and deepened to include considerations often accepted as external to anthropological investigation.

For any study that tries to articulate a small group of people with a larger present and past, decisions about where to draw boundaries in research and analysis are selective and subjective responses to particular situations. But this is true of all ethnography, as Wagner stresses in <u>The Invention of Culture</u> (1975). Geertz emphasizes this point in his iconoclastic comment that all ethnographies are fictions in that they are "something fashioned" (1973:15). In fashioning this dissertation and drawing its boundaries, I have tried to accept the "different weightings given to external theory, internal 'understanding' and synthesized system as a set of partial contributions toward comprehension of the whole truth" (Brookfield 1973:15).

More specificially, I have sought to provide the kind of contextualized approach that Lasaqa argues would be useful to other Pacific islanders for understanding development and change. He states that, "a deeper analysis of the viewpoint of the local people set against the realities of the modern world is obviously a line of inquiry that should be developed further in the future" (1973:311). I have tried to follow Lasaqa's advice while remaining wary of the emic/etic dichotomy implicit in his juxtaposition of local ideas as "set against" actions in the outside world.

The fallacy of dichotomizing idea and action long has constrained anthropological studies. Expressed as an opposition between cultural and social systems, one element always has tended to dominate the other: "the lesser term tends to drop out as a dynamic factor, and we are left either with an omnibus concept of culture ... or else with a completely comprehensive concept of social structure" (Geertz 1957:33). In the structural-functional model, as

Barth (1966) points out, the constraints on social process were moral norms that were believed to be logically prior to social process, but whose link with the regularities of social life was not dealt with adequately. Similarly, Holý (1976) argues that the major failure of the structuralfunctional model was its inability to treat the relationship between structural forms and actual behaviour as problematic.

The problem of interpreting new data gathered in Melanesia in the late 1950s and early 1960s confronted anthropology with some of the consequences of its positivist assumptions (Barnes 1962). The demise of African models in the highlands of New Guinea freed Pacific anthropologists to examine "the explanation of the actual behaviour of living individuals" (Holý 1976:114). Since the mid-1960s, anthropologists have begun to emphasize conceptual distinctions between what Keesing calls "the world of our subjects and the pattern of events and transactions in which they engage" (1971:125). This need not imply the persistence of a rigid dichotomy between idea and action; rather, such distinctions can serve as ordering devices, encouraging conceptual precision and clarity. The contributions of Keesing (1971, 1975) and Scheffler (1965, 1966, 1973) to problems of Melanesian group formation testify to the fruitfulness of clearly differentiating groups from categories and social structure from cognitive systems. Yet, I feel, to regard the relationship between cultural and social systems as truly problematic one must accept as fundamentally artificial the separation of the "world of our subjects" and their actions.

The recognition that actions in some sense are part of culture is anthropological commonsense, although the signficance that is attached to this point varies widely within the discipline (Leach 1976:9-16). Clearly, not all behavioural regularities are part of culture (Schneider 1968:1-5), but neither is there an opposition between action and culture (Silverman 1971:8-9). Cultural forms interrelate through social action. If culture is seen as context, in Geertz' sense of a "fabric of meaning" or "webs of significance" man has spun, then social behaviour is the substance of which cultural symbols are made. Thus, "to rework the pattern of social relationships is to rearrange the coordinates of the experienced world" (Geertz 1973:28).

For anthropologists like myself who are reluctant to separate the world of their subjects from behaviour, a range of alternatives exists for deeper contextualization of analysis in experience. Two of these approaches -- one through phenomenology, the other through historical materialism -- are, at first glance, antipathetic.

Phenomenology is "egological" in that personal experience is its primary datum (Luckmann 1978:8). The subjectivity of that experience gives meaning to the world. Performance of the <u>epochē</u> means "bracketing" the world as an object and seeing it through the act of experience. The <u>epochē</u> transcends and brings freedom from the pregiven world of naive experience so that, Husserl wrote, "I stand <u>above</u> the world, which has now become for me ... a phenomenon" (1970:152).

In contrast, historical materialism sees human history as a process grounded in the needs of men. Ultimately, modes and relations of production shape the course of history. Through production men appropriate and transform nature "within and through a specific form of society" (Marx 1973:86). In this way, "men developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life" (Marx 1970:37-38).

Within anthropology, phenomenology and Marxism are apparently divergent approaches. While phenomenology has been modified for use in the social sciences and Marxism has been adapted for application to the subject matter of anthropology, each perspective has remained isolated from the other.¹ Some anthropologists make a particularly sharp distinction betweeen phenomenology and historical materialism. For example, O'Laughlin asserts that "phenomenological approaches that begin with the existential situation of the subject clash with Marxist methods of cultural interpretation" (1975:348).

Such a rigid opposition between phenomenology and historical materialism is not necessary. To the contrary, "a promising symbiotic relationship is in principle possible" between the two schools of thought (Kohák 78:167). Sociology has incorporated the contributions of neo-Marxism and critical theory, toward such a synthesis, but anthropology has been slow to display an interest in drawing together phenomenological and Marxist approaches along these lines.²

A shared emphasis on experience in the world as the starting point for analysis links Marxism and phenomenology in the social sciences. For both, human consciousness is subsumed in social existence. Marx's assertion of the ultimate determinacy of the mode of prodution is quite compatible with, although obviously different from, the phenomenological lifeworld, "a realm of practical activity, which, from the first, is endowed with human signification" (Schutz 1978:128).

То summarize the section so far, understanding Melanesian peasant producers and their differentiation requires a context broader and deeper than most anthropologists employ. The appropriate breadth and depth of a holistic approach to this problem is a subjective and situational question, but so too is the delimitation of more traditional anthropological research and analysis. In seeking to explain local attitudes as well as external factors, one must reject a persistent anthropological dichotomy between idea and action. Social behaviour is part of culture, however conceptually useful artificial separation of these components may seem. The experienced world of culture is created through social relationships. Two paths, among others, provide anthropologists with ways of more deeply contextualizing their analyses in experience: phenomenology and historical materialism. On the surface, these are opposed approaches to the meaning of experience, for phenomenology starts with, and constantly returns to, the individual while historical materialism regards historical consequences of social life as the determinant of individual consciousness. Yet, the two perspectives have been linked in the phenomenological Marxism of European critical theory, and their opposition in anthropology is neither necessary nor reasonable.

In using phenomenology and political economy as complementary ways of looking at land and copra in Vanuatu, I am advocating a holistic approach far less ambitious than phenomenological Marxism. I have not tried to merge the approaches, nor is the analysis Marxist two or phenomenological in any strict sense. Chapter 3 does offer phenomenological interpretation of landholding, but а elsewhere in the dissertation phenomenology and political economy are implicitly interchanged as different lenses for looking at the same past and present. My use of political economy is not Marxist, although Marxist influences are evident. I take political economy to mean analysis contextualized in the specifics of political, economic and social changes that are part of integrated world sequences of historical causation (Gutkind and Wallerstein 1976:7-8). The justification I have offered for linking phenomenology and historical materialism is fundamental to the way I have inter-related the political economy of Vanuatu and the experience of ni-Vanuatu lifeworlds.

Customary illusions

The signification of practical activity is the substance of customary illusions. Specifically, the customary illusions I examine concern suppositions, expectations and ideals formed and expressed in the context of peasant production and land tenure.³ Some of these illusions are part of ni-Vanuatu tradition; others belong to outsiders who seek to understand customary landholding and cash crop production. Since customary illusions can be held equally by ni-Vanuatu and by those who study them, there is a certain ambiguity concerning "point of view" built into the concept. This is intentional for the ambiguity itself is meaningful; we partake of their myths and they of ours.

On the surface, production of a cash crop seems hardly the stuff of myth. Customary illusions are not mythical stories explaining how things came to be; they need not be communicated in words at all, and when they are verbalized their expression often is partial. But customary illusions associated with land and copra are myths, in the same Saussurean sense that there can be grammatical rules for wearing clothes (Leach 1976:10-11) or that myths can be objects such as French wine, the brain of Einstein, and the sweat that is characteristic of Romans in films (Barthes 1973).

Customary illusions bind the phenomena of subjective experience to historical causation in symbolic, incomplete and ambiguous ways. Illusions grounded in production do this in a particularly compressed fashion that can be summarized thus: Through production men transform nature into history. Through myth they transform history into nature. Myths associated with production, then, create the illusion that nature is unchanged and unchanging despite the social transformation of nature through production. So, customary illusions formed in the context of production are very basic and very dense with meaning. They are, of course, mystifications, but they are <u>experienced as true</u> in social life; as such, customary illusions contribute to shaping social action. This view of the place and significance of customary illusions integrates Marx's treatment of the fetishism of commodities in <u>Capital</u> with Barthes' ideas on myth in his essay, "Myth today" (1973).

Marx recognized that commodities embody a fetishistic spirit by virtue of "the peculiar social character of the labour that produces them" (1954:72). In producing commodities the individual's labour becomes clearly social only through the act of exchange, at which point a relationship is established directly between the things exchanged, and only indirectly between the producers:

> A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour ... there it is a definite social relation between men, that assumes in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things (Ibid.:72).

Thus the "products of men's hands" no less than the religious products of men's thoughts appear to lead a social existence of their own.

Marx's interest here lay in explaining the illusions of the monetary system through description of the forms under which commodities are produced. As such, his passages on the fetishism of commodities can be read as an effective destruction of the false appearances that commodities create as products of labour; "the general result of Marx's analysis is to reveal the absurd, ridiculous nature of those spontaneous representations made by people living in market societies" (Godelier 1977:158). Clearly, such illusory representations would be a poor starting point for analysis which must instead begin with historically constituted social reality (O'Laughlin 1975:348). Yet Marxist anthropologists have been too quick to discount the meaningfulness that lies in the ambiguity of illusions that people take upon themselves as truths.

Customary illusions arising from production, like commodity fetishism, are "social hieroglyphics" in Marx's sense. We must try, as Marxist anthropologists emphasize, "to get behind the secret of our own social products"; but we must also remember that even when we try to dissipate "the mist through which the social character of labour appears to us to be an objective character of the products themselves", the fetishism <u>remains real</u> for the producers (<u>Ibid</u>.:74). This persistent illusion of reality is born of a naturalization of the products of labour such that, for example, proportions in commodity exchange

appear to result from the nature of the products ... These quantities vary continually independent of the will, foresight and action of the producers. To them, their own social action takes the form of the action of objects which rule the producers instead of being ruled by them (Ibid,:74-75).

Ultimately, the illusion of the monetary system is that gold and silver do not represent a social relation between producers; they are seen instead as "natural objects with strange social properties" (Ibid.:82).

The process of naturalization that Marx described as disguising the social basis of commodities in production is one of myth-making. Production transforms its own preconditions "from natural into historic determinants, and if they appear to one epoch as natural presuppositions of production, they were its historic product for another" (Marx 1973:97). Myth creates the illusion that history has again become nature. For Barthes, this is "the very principle of myth: it transforms history into nature" (1973:129).

Myths, of course, have a historical foundation; they do not evolve from the nature of things. Myth is a semiological system, not a factual one, but because the intentions of myth are naturalized, myth consumers can innocently mistake the semiological system in myth for an inductive one. Thus for the naive consumer of myth, "the signifier and the signified have, in his eyes, a natural relationship" (<u>Ibid.</u>:131). This is not to say that the intentions of myth are hidden: "myth hides nothing and flaunts nothing: it distorts; myth is neither a lie nor a confession: it is an inflexion" (<u>Ibid.</u>:129).

The signifier in myth is ambiguous because it is both meaning and form.⁴ The ambiguity inherent in myth means that one can focus on either meaning, or form, or both at the same time. To illustrate this point, Barthes uses the example of a cover photo of Paris-Match showing a black soldier in French uniform saluting the tricolour. If one focuses unambiguously on the meaning which fills the form, the signification becomes literal: the soldier is a symbol for French imperialism. If one clearly meaning from form, then the distortion distinguishes becomes apparent. The signification of the myth isdeciphered: the black soldier is an alibi of French imperialism. The myth is demystified.

Both of these types of focusing are static, and both destroy the myth. A third type of focusing accepts ambiguity and thus experiences the myth as "at once true and unreal." Focusing holistically on the signifier means responding to the dynamics of the myth; thus, "I receive an ambiguous signification: ... I become a reader of myths. The saluting black is no longer an example or a symbol, still less an alibi: he is the very <u>presence</u> of French imperialism (<u>Ibid.</u>:128). For the reader of myths, the image of the soldier is "frozen into something natural" (<u>Ibid.</u>:129). The picture seems to be a natural foundation for what it signifies: "<u>it is at once true and unreal</u>" (Ibid.:128, italics added).

Customary illusions associated with production are myths that I have sought to demystify and denaturalize through historical explanation of their social basis. But, for myth consumers as for commodity producers, analytical explanation does not remove the reality of the illusion. Therefore, I have also tried to be a myth-reader, seeking to enrich our understanding of how a group of peasant producers behaves by accepting the truthful ambiguity of our illusions about them, and theirs about themselves.

Methods and chapter summary

The group of ni-Vanuatu landholders and copramakers who are the subject of the dissertation are residents of Aoba island in the northern part of the archipelago. My fieldsite was the hamlet of Waileni in the Longana district of Aoba's southeast coast. My husband and I have lived with the people of Longana twice: for sixteen
months betwen 1969 and 1971, and again for ten months in 1978-1979. The first period of fieldwork was important in many ways to the second. In 1969, I accompanied my husband to the islands for his doctoral research. This was my introduction to anthropology -- I had a B.A. degree in political science -- and experience gained during that trip allowed me to carefully design my own research.

Methodologically, my research objectives were to use political economy, phenomenology and empiricism as complementary discovery procedures for investigating cashcrop production and landholding in Longana. In other words, I set out to employ these three ways of looking at the world as different lenses for refracting meaning rather than as mutually exclusive perspectives. Throughout the dissertation, I describe the kinds of data and methods of analysis I have used as I introduce each topic. The data I examined through the approaches of political economy and phenomenology are hard to condense, but I have tried at least to show the empirical basis for my conclusions, and to allow others to evaluate the validity of mγ interpretation through data presented in the appendices. I will attempt here to summarize briefly the approaches I have used, as well as the topics I have covered, in the chapters that follow.

The organization of the dissertation reflects the research design of the field project. I begin, in chapter 2, with the colonial history of the New Hebrides for three first, to explain the consequences of reasons: joint French and British rule for land in Vanuatu and for ni-Vanuatu attitudes toward land; second, to describe the conditions under which copra became a peasant cash crop in islands, conditions that continue to affect copra the production and marketing; and third, to suggest that throughout the colonial era ni-Vanuatu retained considerable control over their own insular worlds. An independence amidst illusion of dependence has characterized islanders' dealings with outsiders, and this illusion in turn reinforced a belief in the fundamental inalienability of land in Vanuatu.

In chapter 3, I narrow the focus and adopt a phenomenological viewpoint; I examine the subjectivity of the experience of place as a way of understanding ni-Vanuatu land tenure. The data on which I rely in this chapter include taped interviews, walks through the forests and plantations of Longana with informants, and a journal record that suggests the texture of daily Longanan life. In the chapter, I show that the inevitability and inseparability of Longanan place and parenthood are customary illusions nurtured by the flexibility of land tenure. A few people with a knowledge of places and the skill to use that knowledge turn this flexibility to their own advantage and gain control over relatively large areas of plantation land.

The fourth chapter is an empirical analysis organized around a map of Longana landholding. This map was the linchpin of the research project. Before departing for Vanuatu, I obtained RAF aerial photographs of the research area. I then used these photographs as the basis for a map of all the plantation land in the district, a process I describe in chapter 4.5 Of the 969 people resident in Longana at the time of our research, 140 were plantation landholders -- that is, individuals who controlled access to peasant copra plantations.6 The 307 parcels of land that these individuals controlled make up map 3. In chapter 4, I discuss the consequences of flexibility in customary land tenure for the distribution of plantation land as these consequences are expressed in the map of Longanan landholdings. The map itself is a customary illusion, an analyst's frozen and naturalized image of a dynamic reality. The map suggests one dimension of the effect of cash cropping on Longanan landscapes, namely, the unequal distribution of land that provides a basis for differentiation of the peasantry.

fifth chapter brings a different empirical The perspective to social relations expressed through land, stressing the economics of production rather than the geography of land distribution. Here I examine cash crop production, with particular attention to the social relations of production and their implications for access to plantation land. Analysis of the incomes Longanans earn from copra shows that the few individuals who control the largest plantations earn at least four times as much from copra as the average producer. The chapter explores why this differentiation of income distribution is occurring and how it relates to other producers' access to land. Flexibility of access to land for copra-making is shown to be an illusion masking consequences of the concentration of control over land in the hands of a few Longanans.

In chapter 6, I return to political economy as a means for understanding the conditions under which Longanan peasants participate in the copra market. Small-scale producers are shown to bear a large share of the marketing costs involved in the chain of copra prices between Longana and the Marseilles market. The price of copra fluctuates widely on the world market and ni-Vanuatu producers can neither affect nor predict the prices their copra will command. Plans for a copra stabilization scheme in Vanuatu were predicated on the assumption that producers would increase the amount of copra they made if they were assured of price stability, but my analysis of producer behaviour suggests this is an illusion. In the short term, at least, Longanan copra-makers do not respond to price increases by increasing production. Inelasticity of labour supply in the upper price ranges suggests that for Longanans, like other peasants, prices above a certain threshold are not a crucial consideration in production decisions.

I conclude chapter 6, by examining what factors other than price affect large and small peasant producers' marketing decisions. Large producers have more options, but all Longanan copra-makers enjoy an illusion that seems true to them of control over the terms of copra sales. As in the earliest days of Vanuatu's colonial history, an independent spirit and a skillful zeal for bargaining characterize ni-Vanuatu interactions with outsiders who extract the products of local labour or, in the past, who extracted the labour itself.

In the final chapter of the dissertation, I summarize the conclusions drawn in prior chapters and build on these conclusions in discussing their broader implications for understanding customary land tenure and peasant production. I examine custom itself as an illusion that encloses Longana's island world, concealing and disguising the local society's articulation with the larger system that contains it. Such an illusion of immutable custom surrounds the manipulable flexibility of traditional land tenure and presents inequality of control over plantations as legitimate. Yet customary land tenure and the illusions accompanying it also preserve some freedom for Longanans to act as if they were independent of the larger system that created and continues to sustain their position as small peasant copra producers.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

With independence on 30 July 1980, the archipelago Captain Cook first called the New Hebrides became the Republic of Vanuatu. The country's new official name is really an old one, for Vanuatu represents the "land which existed from time immemorial to the present and into the future" (Taurokoto 1980:11). The land remains: an illusion of immutability in an island world transformed since Quiros' first sighting in 1606.

European discovery of Vanuatu initiated changes laden with consequences for ni-Vanuatu views of land as a symbol and as a resource. In this chapter, I suggest that the history of changing linkages between Vanuatu and the joint colonial powers of Britain and France created conditions whose consequences are expressed in several ways important to this dissertation. First, Vanuatu's colonial past has moulded ni-Vanuatu concerns over alienated and customary land discussed in chapters 3 and 4. Second, economic history of European involvement in the islands has shaped the organization of ni-Vanuatu copra production and marketing analyzed in chapters 5 and 6. Third, the history

of interactions between Europeans and ni-Vanuatu suggests that islanders have had both a self-image and a reputation as active bargainers in dealings with outsiders. Despite economic dependency and political containment, ni-Vanuatu were not meek recipients of the dictates of colonial powers, nor are they passive pricetakers in a global marketplace. This theme of the customary illusion of ni-Vanuatu independence, or power over their world, runs throughout the dissertation.

Vanuatu

Vanuatu is a chain of approximately eighty islands scattered in a Y-shaped configuration more than 800 kilometres long. The archipelago lies between 13° and 22° south latitude and 166° and 170° east longitude. Most of the islands are small and many are isolated from each other by open sea. The total land area is only 11,880 square kilometres, and the ten largest islands make up almost 90% of that area (see map 1).

One of these larger islands, Eromanga, was the site of the earliest major extraction of natural products from Vanuatu. As the sandalwood resources of Polynesia and Fiji dwindled, the southern islands of Vanuatu attracted white entrepreneurs. In 1825, Peter Dillon discovered abundant,







ERROMANGO

TANNA

<u>MAP 1</u>

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VANUATU

accessible stands of sandalwood on Erromango, but abandoned his find because of uncooperative natives. In 1840, a Sydney businessman set up a sandalwood depot and factory on Aneityum (Brookes 1969:32), and sandalwood hunters frequented other islands in the south.

During the same period, Presbyterian missionaries and representatives of the London Missionary Society began to settle in the southern islands. In part, the martyrdom of John Williams twelve hours after he landed on Erromango in 1839 prompted the influx. The reputation of sandalwooders as ruthless representatives of European culture also encouraged the extension of mission influence in Vanuatu. Missionaries sought to eliminate the "evils" of the sandalwood trade. They demanded British regulation to protect not only the natives from the sandalwooders, but also to protect themselves from the natives.

Initially, the ni-Vanuatu had refused to assist in the extraction of sandalwood and periodically attacked work parties. By the 1840s, however, islanders were willing to trade, if only on their own terms. In other respects, animosity toward foreigners remained, and violent outbreaks were common. Shineberg argues that:

> The evidence seems clearly to show...that the islanders played a very lively part in their relations with the Europeans and that they endeavoured to turn

the coming of the white man to their best possible advantage by acquiring the desired goods, by using their vessels as a means of travel and, where possible, by obtaining their assistance to pay out their enemies (1967:215-216).

The sandalwood trade familiarized some ni-Vanuatu with Europeans, but the vast majority either were unaffected by the trade because of the limited distribution of sandalwood in the group, or experienced the effects of European contact only indirectly in the form of epidemics of new diseases. However, the presence of missionaries and the concomitant intervention of rival imperial powers greatly increased the intensity and extensiveness of European influence in the lives of ni-Vanuatu. The labour trade in the latter half of the nineteenth century further increased contact between Melanesians and whites. and exacerbated problems that led in 1906 to the establishment of the Anglo-French Condominium.

Production requirements of Australian plantations initiated and sustained the labour trade. Melanesians served primarily as a source of cheap labour for Queensland planters although some islanders went to Fiji and elsewhere. The labour trade strengthened linkages between western and indigenous Pacific societies. White interest in the islands no longer focused on extracting natural products which required a modicum of cooperation from relatively few natives. Instead whites sought to extract the labour power of islanders: "labour under the system was a commodity and since it was impossible to draw any distinction between the labourer and his labour power, the natives were in essence treated as commodities" (Grattan 1963:469).

Between 1869 and 1906, more than 60,000 Pacific islanders were brought to Queensland (Scarr 1968:2). Vanuatu was the first source of labour, and Australia's concern with assuring British control over Vanuatu was related to the fact that the archipelago provided at least one-third of all the island labour for the Queensland canefields (Parnaby 1964:203). In the early years of the trade, recruiters concentrated on the southern islands, where sandalwood traders had familiarized natives with whites and the goods they provided. However, the high demand for labour soon sent recruiters to other islands within the group and later to the Solomon Islands.

By 1882, the demand for labour far exceeded supply, and prospects for extracting additional increments of labour from insular Melanesia were bleak. Earlier in the trade a degree of Melanesian ignorance of the terms of recruitment had served recruiters' requirements of acquiring a full boatload of labourers at low cost. Later recruits tended to demand more trade goods and to be fairly

selective about acceptable labour vessels and destinations. Not only were recruits more difficult to attract, a smaller pool of labour was available for recruitment. Depopulation in the islands was believed to be severe, due primarily to the spread of European diseases (see Rivers 1922). Approximately half of the recruits to Queensland signed on for a second term (Corris 1970:52). But the numbers of islanders already in Queensland, together with declining populations in Melanesia meant that the quantities of strong young men needed for the canefields were no longer forthcoming. Yet Pacific island labour still was crucial to the sugar industry, and the trade continued, despite protests from humanitarians and white sugar workers, until the economics of Australian sugar production dictated an end to the plantation system at the turn of the century (Rodman 1977).

The labour trade had implications for Vanuatu's colonial history on several levels: the relations between ni-Vanuatu, interactions between ni-Vanuatu and whites, and dealings between Britain and France. First, labour recruiting affected relations between ni-Vanuatu. The presence of traders and missionaries encouraged migration from inland "bush" settlements to the coast. In a sense, the Melanesian frontier was circular, for it followed the islands' coastlines. Rather than push the physically and

culturally formidable frontier inland, traders and missionaries called the natives to the frontier. Colonialism's penetration in the islands, as elsewhere in the Pacific (Fitzpatrick 1980, chapter 2; Cooper 1979), was weak. For colonial administrators, entrepreneurs and evangelists, the task became one of holding down the territory so as to contain and control, yet preserve, indigenous societies. Inland, beyond the beach frontiers, ni-Vanuatu pursued traditional, if rapidly changing, ways of life and maintained a customary illusion of their own independence.

sea reinforced an Migration to the indigenous dichotomy between coastal and bush peoples (see Bonnemaison for further implications of this dichotomy). 1974 Paradoxically, social space became more fragmented as communication between Europeans, coastal villagers and the hinterland increased (Bonnemaison 1980). Often, coastal people could control the supply of European goods to inland groups and the supply of labourers to recruiters (Scarr 1967a:17). In this way a few ni-Vanuatu began to control the access of other islanders to resources in a pattern now expressed through inequality of income and manipulation of access to plantation land (see chapter 5).

On a second level, labour recruiting influenced relations between ni-Vanuatu and representatives of the

European cash economy that colour modern indigenous responses to the copra market. Ni-Vanuatu bargained with sandalwood traders and, later, with recruiters to obtain what for the natives seemed favourable exchanges. As in today's copra market, the islanders could not substantially affect the price their product commanded, but they could affect other aspects of the transactions. Ni-Vanuatu quickly learned that by withholding the commodity white buyers desired -- whether that was sandalwood, copra or labour -- they could command access to the exchange goods they wanted and control others terms of trade (see chapter 6).

labour trade had many other important The consequences for relations among Pacific islanders and with whites that are described elsewhere (e.q., Brookfield 1972; Corris 1970, 1972; Grattan 1963). In particular, depopulation in some areas caused abandonment of land once claimed and used by the living. This, when combined with coastal relocation of inland people, meant major redistributions of land and population on some islands, as well as frequent land disputes. Further, the quantity and distribution of European tools, guns and other items in the islands greatly increased during the labour trade. Metal tools quickly replaced stone implements creating a technological revolution that reduced labour time required for subsistence activities. Ni-Vanuatu also used the new tools, as well as some of the time they made available, for copra production. Finally, the labour trade greatly increased ni-Vanuatu perceptions of alternative places to work and live (Bedford 1973); customary circuits of mobility were reinforced and elaborated by a new awareness of a broader world (Bonnemaison 1978; Chapman 1977).

On a third level, consequences of the labour trade were expressed in relations among the Europeans who brought Vanuatu under colonial rule. In the 1860s, whites began seriously to cultivate small plantations in the islands. The continued presence of planters and missionaries was important for the establishment of colonial control in Vanuatu and for the consequences of the development of that control.

At first the amount of land foreigners cultivated was relatively small. As in Fiji, planters initially sought to provide cotton for British markets suffering from shortages during the American Civil War. After 1880, the primary crop became copra, supplemented by coffee and cocoa in some parts of the archipelago. As in Queensland, a shortage of labour was a major problem for planters. Island planters were confronted by declining local populations and increasing difficulty enticing workers, as well as by competition from recruiters for available labour. In addition, plantations within the group never were as popular with ni-Vanuatu as Australian and even Fijian destinations.

Planters' complaints and missionaries' objections to the perceived evils of the labour trade encouraged its regulation toward the end of the nineteenth century. Paradoxically, this regulation constrained the growth of British settlement in Vanuatu, for a license became necessary for British ships to recruit labour for plantations within the archipelago. After 1874, no licenses were available for a period of fourteen years. Although some British planters recruited illegally and others employed men recruited by other nationals, the restrictions on acquiring an already short supply of labour forced all but a handful of British planters to abandon the islands before 1880. In addition, the situation provoked some Tanna and Efate planters to petition the French for annexation during the 1870s.

Although Australian sugar interests opposed the development of British settlement and commerce in the islands, political control of Vanuatu by a rival nation would inhibit the expansion of Australian economic activities in the area. British missionaries' opposition to the growth of French land claims reinforced Australian concern about French involvement in Vanuatu. From 1878 through the establishment of the Condominium, "a policy of 'joint minimum intervention' by Britain and France proved increasingly ineffective as their citizens fought a commercial war on the land" (Brookfield 1972:43).

Between 1880 and 1890, French holdings in Vanuatu In 1882, John Higginson founded the expanded rapidly. Compagnie Calédonien des Nouvelles-Hébrides (CCNH, later reorganized as SFNH [see table 1]), and within two weeks he had purchased seven-eighths of the property of Vila planters as well as large holdings on Santo, Malekula and other parts of Efate (Morrell 1960:201). In 1889, J.G. Paton, a Presbyterian missionary, catalysed formation of the Australasian New Hebrides Company, whose "main objective was to ensure that France did not gain an economic stranglehold on the New Hebrides that could be used to justify a claim for political control" (Thompson 1971:38). The company, later to become Burns Philp New Hebrides, heavily subsidized by the Presbyterian was Nevertheless, by 1905, CCNH "owned" more than Church. 7,770 square kilometres of land, or more than 55% of the total land in the archipelago. Little arable land remained to alienate, British law continued to inhibit settlement, and the financial resources of the Australasian New Hebrides Company proved no match for those of the French

TABLE 1

REGISTERED LAND IN THE NEW HEBRIDES

19 MARCH 1976

	Hectares
Total area of New Hebrides Registered land Unregistered land	1,188,166 236,421 951,745
Registered land	
British: individuals companies churches/missions British government Land Trust Board	7,062 11,197 10,728 211 6,403
French: individuals companies churches/missions SFNH French state	50,231 44,726 1,581 59,197 21,985
Municipalities Joint Administration	15 530
Native ¹ Native reserves ²	9,997 12,558

1land held by virtue of custom. 2land set aside by Joint Court for use by indigenous people of the area concerned when ordering registration of title in favour of non-natives.

Source: British National Service 1976:9.

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government and the Banque de l'Indochine that sustained CCNH.

As a result of the failure of British nationals to acquire and settle land, Britain was able to maintain a stalemate with France only by establishing merchandising and trading interests in Vanuatu, and by politically impeding French efforts to dominate the islands. British missions ceased to be deeply involved in economic activities and concentrated instead on such concerns as education and health, to control and develop the people on the land rather than the land itself. The fact that the leaders of the ruling Vanuaaku Pati primarily are Britisheducated is a consequence of the nature of British articulation with the islands.

The ni-Vanuatu were courted by both sides of the dual government. In the process the languages and religions of the colonizers further divided the already insular, fragmented indigenous population.

The presence of two governments, with their associated missions, facilitated containment of indigenous societies in Vanuatu. The societies necessary for reproduction of the labour force for which the colonial state hoped, thus were kept in isolation from, or at odds with, each other through language, religion and politics. In three-quarters of a century, the Condominium created new horizontal divisions and reinforced old ones, fostering an illusion common in colonialism that unity of the territory requires the presence of the colonial state (Chandra 1980:281). National unity now is one of the most critical problems facing an independent Vanuatu. Paradoxically, although mission and state tried to eradicate certain island traditions, the containment of indigenous societies often strenthened a local sense of unique identity expressed through a distinctive pattern of kastom 'traditional ways'. Colonialism emphasized and maintained local differences in tradition while leading ni-Vanuatu away from a customary way of life. Kastom has been a national rallying point since the early 1970s, but loss of knowledge of traditions combined with the diversity of kastom colonialism nurtured are important contributors to the problematic nature of kastom which Tonkinson recently has explored (n.d.[b]).

A second major legacy of the Condominium has been the problem of alienated land and a related concern with preserving customary land. In fact, land problems led to both the Condominium's creation in 1906 and its dissolution in 1980. From the beginning, both French and British attempts to cultivate land claimed in the late 1800s were frustrated by unresolved disputes between rival Europeans, and between whites and ni-Vanuatu. Lane reports that "by 1906 there were claims to more land than existed" (1971:257). The Anglo-French convention of 1906 provided for a Joint Court to hear civil and land cases. But when the court began work in 1910, it clearly lacked adequate jurisdiction or powers of enforcement. Pending land surveys, acquisition of sufficient personnel, and creation of appropriate legal machinery, the Joint Court delayed hearing cases until 1927. By 1968, most old claims had been registered: alienated land comprised about one-fifth of Vanuatu (see table 1).

> The Court gave a legal imprimatur to an arrangement whereby land acquired in dubious circumstances was passed to the European purchasers with indefeasible title. This arrangement is now bitterly resented, for although in many cases it is admitted that some land was sold, or rights given to work it, the alienation of large areas which were not, and have not been, cleared simply is not recognized by New Hebrideans. (The Protection of "Native" Interests in Applications for Registration of Title before the Joint Court 1976).

Scarr comments that "land, more than anything else is the plane of conjunction between economics and politics in contemporary Melanesia" (1967<u>b</u>:171). The importance that ni-Vanuatu attach to their land and its alienation is evident in the issue of land in politics. In the 1960s, land became a rallying point for the coalescence of previously disparate ni-Vanuatu loyalties in demands for independence.¹ On the eve of independence, the issue of alienated Fr^ench land contributed to Santo's attempted secession.²

With reference to Papua New Guinea, Olewale has noted "to my people land is more than a factor of is more than an object to be sold" production. It Olewale's statement is equally true of ni-(1974:43). Vanuatu feelings for the land. Consequently, ni-Vanuatu did not perceive agreements to yield blocks of land to Europeans, whether or not registered in the Joint Court, as Under the Vanuatu Constitution adopted in legitimate. 1979, "all land in the Republic belongs to the indigenous custom owners and their descendants" (cited in Regenvanu 1980:71). However, mechanisms have yet to be devised for the complex task of returning alienated lands to the rightful owners, and expatriate holdings remain temporarily in the hands of the Minister of Lands (Sampson Ngwele, personal communication 1981).

Aoba

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In comparison with Santo and other islands where large expatriate land claims have provoked strong

indigenous reactions, alienated land has caused little dissension on Aoba. Yet in 1964, the 44 European claims to Aoban land lodged in the Joint Court totalled 24,644.67 hectares.3 Aoba, located in the northern part of the archipelago, is about forty kilometres long and slightly more than ten kilometres wide at its broadest point (see The island is one of a chain of eight active map 2). volcanoes in the archipelago (Warden 1970); the central caldera rises to a height of about 1,300 meters with permanent cloud cover above about 450 metres. Expatriate land claims easily totalled more than all of the island's The history of Aobans' contact with Europeans arable land. suggests why so many land claims have had so little effect on the local people.

On 23 May 1768, the first European to land on Aoba, the explorer Bougainville, was greeted with a volley of stones and arrows (Beaglehole 1934). From that encounter, Aobans gained a reputation among whites for intractability that was to grow and to accompany the islanders through independence in 1980. As W.E. Giles, a passenger aboard the labour recruiter <u>Bobtail Nag</u> commented in 1877, "The Aobamen as regards treachery, savage dispositions and barbarous customs...do not shew well, being if possible worse in these respects than the natives of any other island" (Scarr 1968:71). Allen found evidence of eleven



MAP 2

AOBA

violent clashes between Aobans and labour recruiters between 1870 and 1890 (Allen 1968:31). For example, one returned labourer murdered six crewmen of the labour ship Mystery in 1878 (Scarr 1968:73). Aobans associated with the labour trade also were responsible for attacks on in 1865, Patteson "nearly lost his life Anglican priests: at the hands of an infuriated man, who attacked him because relative had been carried off by a labour vessel" а (Montgomery 1896:240-241); then, in 1906, Charles Godden was slain by an Aoban who had come home from a Queensland plantation.

Some violent episodes involving whites and islanders are remembered in Aoban stories such as the tale of Tarituri, a chief so angered by the death of his son, for which he blamed Queensland life and whites in general, that he swore to kill the next ship's crew that called at his passage on the southeast coast:

> Then after a while a big ship from Queensland arrived and a boat came ashore...Tarituri sent his boys out and they killed the whole crew -- [two] white men, some natives from Tanna and other places, Aneityum, Maré, Lifu...They took the bodies to Tarituri who shared them among other chiefs to eat. He gave one to one chief, one to another, and he kept the two white men for himself to eat...

> So they ate the men and later a warship came. I think it was a time of bad weather and the sea was rough along the [southeast] coast, so the warship anchored

on the other side... The soldiers came ashore...they chased everyone they could Some men escaped into the bush. find. Some were caught and the soldiers tied them up. Some the soldiers shot and killed...They burned a lot of villages, but they never reached Tarituri's station... The soldiers went back aboard the warship and then the ship sailed around to the [southeast] side and fired at the coast Their shots broke big with its big guns. branches off the banyan at Losaraisese. And the shots smashed a special big stone hole i n i t called with а Rain used to collect malongaitaributogi. in that hole, but they smashed it. (translated from a taped interview in Bislama).

Despite Aobans' reputations for violence, white traders had settled on the island by the 1870s.⁴ By the 1880s, large European claims to Aoban land already existed. For example, in one deed dated 21 February 1880, Louis Armstrong transferred to John Williams eight miles of frontage along the lightly populated southwest coast of Aoba to a depth of four miles inland, an area of more than 8,000 hectares. This deed was transferred in 1896 to the Australasian New Hebrides Company, which, as Burns Philp New Hebrides, later filed the claim in Joint Court. By 1964, the Joint Court had yet to resolve the claim to this parcel of land and many others like it pending survey of the claims. Aoban antagonism toward surveyors had convinced government officials not to proceed with this

work until the court was ready to process the claims in the mid-sixties.

While Burns Philp never attempted to use most of the 8,000 hectare property, other European land claims had more impact on the local people. In 1901, the priest Charles Godden established his headquarters at Lolowaimasara on Aoba's eastern tip. Subsequently, the (Anglican) Melanesian Mission filed a claim to more than 1,100 hectares at Lolowaimasara, or Lolowai, as the mission station came to be known. The boundaries of the mission holdings were altered in 1966 after cement markers placed by a government surveyor revealed that the official boundary of the claim was much further south than the mission or the islanders had believed. The mission was willing to allow Aobans to use the disputed land and no further problems developed.

In contrast to the mission and Burns Philp cases, a third land claim initiated conflict between Aobans and whites that was to last thirteen years. In 1899, Burns Philp bought and registered title in Fiji to about 800 hectares of Aoban land on the northeast coast adjacent to Lolowaimasara. In 1913, Burns Philp filed claim to this land with the Joint Court, and in 1960, the firm leased the land to an Australian who developed the property as a cattle ranch and lived on a small adjacent freehold plot. In 1966, Burns Philp hoped to register title to the claim which was still pending in the Joint Court. The survey necessary to register title was completed early in 1966. Then in October 1966, Aobans began removing concrete survey markers and fences at the southern boundary of the claim which they felt encroached on native holdings. A series of meetings followed in which the Aobans were united in their determination to regain their land. As one participant said, "we knew that to do this we had to have lots of people involved -- if one of us was imprisoned, we all would go to jail. They couldn't throw us all in prison."

European individuals and firms generally have been unwilling to defend portions of their claims to Aoban land in the face of native opposition, but the Burns Philp dispute was an issue that continued to mobilize East Aobans through the 1970s. A portion of the claim reverted to Aobans in 1973, but when the resident Australian wanted to sell his remaining leasehold and freehold in 1975, Aobans again objected, saying the land must return to them. From then until the Australian finally departed in 1979, Aobans demanded that he leave the island.⁵ They sporadically killed his cattle, tore down his fences and robbed his store.

By the mid-1970s, Aobans were highly politicized -the ruling Vanuaaku Pati originated at Lolowai in 1971 --

and the land dispute with the Australian appeared to take on significance as a symbol of the problem of alienated land throughout the group. Aoban control of the island assumed particular importance. Vanuaaku Pati flag-raising in east Aoba, talk of passports for island entry and exit, and increasing insistence that outsiders' access to the island required the permission of local leaders characterized the period. Even ni-Vanuatu were expected to seek permission to visit the island, as an indigenous Minister of Posts and Telegraph found to his chagrin in 1978; he arrived at Lolowai to announce the gift of a new wharf through Australian aid and was run off the island.

Fundamental differences between ni-Vanuatu and European concepts of land tenure (see chapter 3) in part account for the apparent paradox that, while so much Aoban land was alienated on paper, Aobans have been little constrained by white landholders. Except for mission land and the Australian's disputed claim no east Aoban land was effectively beyond the control of islanders by the 1960s. To Aobans, land not used by white owners was available for indigenous use, whether the European never activated his claim, abandoned it after a period of use, or used only a portion of his claim. By 1978, Aobans argued that European titles had no security; if alienated land was not sufficiently beneficial to local people it could be

reclaimed. Thus, for example, Aobans tolerated mission claims to land at Lolowai so long as the mission seemed adequately to serve the community. Yet when the possibility was raised of downgrading the mission hospital to a clinic, Aobans noted that the mission never had purchased the Lolwaimasara land. They talked of taking back more mission land. While this threat may prove to be an empty one, it is not without precedent, as the case of the Australian cattleman demonstrates.

Crocombe comments that "I have seen numerous examples in both Polynesia and Melanesia where the greatgrandchildren of the donors of the land proudly point out that the church land is theirs" (1974:6-7). He suggests that those who remember and express such claims "derive prestige and some personal satisfaction from this symbolic right" (Ibid.:7). But Aobans' determination to reclaim land when they no longer perceive material advantages from tolerating its alienation suggests more than the presence of a passively symbolic relationship between ni-Vanuatu and the land that outsiders hold. Although an Aoban who buys land from a neighbour enjoys secure tenure (see chapter 4), Aobans act as if outsiders' rights to land always are secondary to their own. Allen makes a similar observation with regard to west Aoba. He reports that the willingness of one important man to sell land to the government for a

school "caused a furore throughout the whole island, with leaders from all districts converging on the offending man's village, where they told him in no uncertain terms that in dealings with foreigners...there was no such thing as local, much less individual, autonomy" (1969:40). The pre-independence position of the Vanuaaku Pati which held that land throughout the group always had been and continues to be held by ni-Vanuatu also indicates the depth of indigenous feeling that island land is inalienable from islanders.

Longana

Longana is a district about eight kilometres long and three kilometres wide in Aoba's southeast quadrant. The ravine of a relatively large creek bed forms the district's southwest border. Most of the inland boundary is vaguely defined by the tops of the secondary volcanic cones forming the island's spine; but where Longanan cultivated areas border other settled regions, district boundaries are carefully marked. Longanans consider themselves to be an autonomous group distinct from other Aoban districts. Slight differences in dialect and custom differentiate Longanans from their neighbours, but the entire eastern half of the island shares a language and a matrilineal kinship system that contrast with patrilineal, linguistically distinct west Aoba.

European land claims have had little impact on The mission claim to Lolowai and the Longanan land use. claim disputed with the Australian both encroach on the district, but Longanans simply have made gardens in portions of the alienated land that traditionally were theirs.6 Three other parcels of land were alienated in Longana, and one old application claiming 2,000 hectares of Longana land was abandoned as part of a Joint Court judgement in 1967. At the same time, applications for two small claims were approved, granting Société Comptoirs Français and Burns Philp, respectively, title to two properties at the Boiboi anchorage. Longanans not only use but also claim ownership of this land that is included in plots 117, 127, and 134 on my land use map (map 3 discussed in chapter 4). Similarly, a small (about .5 hectare) plot sold to a trader in 1964 currently is claimed by relatives Some question the the deceased Longanan vendor. of vendor's right to have sold the land; all agree that when the purchaser failed to use the land, the property reverted to its customary owners. A heated land dispute has ensued over the identity of the proper customary owners.

No whites have lived in Longana since 1960 when the last resident expatriate trader left the district; but

early in the twentieth century, Longana was a popular site with traders. At several places along the Longana coast a sequence of traders, including one woman, spent a few years. They operated small stores exchanging such items as tinned fish and calico for coconuts. Longanans murdered at least one Englishman and one Frenchman at Boiboi anchorage, but in general islanders enjoyed the opportunity to transform coconuts into consumer goods at trade stores. By the 1920s, traders were willing to pay cash for coconuts and a new era for Longanans began.

In the early 1900s, the Longanan population was concentrated in the lower hills and coastal region of the district's southwest sector. The coastal plain of fertile mollic andasol soil is broadest in the northeast half of the district, but the population in this region had died out, perhaps as early as the eighteenth century.⁷ Endemic raiding prevented Longanans from using land so far from their settlements except for occasional hunting or saltcollecting expeditions. Some villages included as many as two hundred residents, for many Longanans preferred to live under the protection of a powerful chief in what one missionary described as "the days of never ending revenge" (Webb 1922).

By the 1930s, Longanans were aware of alternatives to dependence on the protection of strong leaders. The

Melanesian Mission developed Lolowai into its headquarters for the northern New Hebrides in 1936, providing health care and educational facilities to neighbouring Longana as well as to islanders throughout the group. In contrast to other denominations, Anglicans tolerated many customary activities, including the killing of tusked pigs in the graded society fundamental to east Aoban political leadership.⁸ But missionaries were not tolerant of the endless cycle of Aoban raids and retribution.

In 1932, Liu Taburingi, a Longanan chief renowned for his violent deeds, avenged a death by sending his warriors to shoot a young man. The resident missionary at Lolowai requested government assistance and twelve policemen (six British, six French) soon arrived from Vila. This event marked the first time in Longana that the government intervened to punish the murder of a native, and the first time any Longanan was imprisoned:

> Before that the government would send warships only when a white man was killed here. When a white man was killed, the warship would come, the soldiers would come ashore and burn houses and shoot some Longanans. But they didn't take any of us to jail (translated from a taped interview in Bislama).

Taburingi and two of his warriors were sentenced to fiveyear prison terms. Only the old chief outlived the sentence; the young warriors died in Vila jail.

Taburingi's imprisonment signalled the pacification of Longana⁹. Although violence, vengeance and murder continued to occur occasionally in outbreaks reminiscent of the old days, offenders were arrested, tried and imprisoned. The Condominium, while never efficient in dispensing justice, effectively stripped Aoban chiefs of their right to use violent self-help with impunity to redress grievances.

In 1932, just after Taburingi went to jail, an Australian arrived to live at Boiboi. Like his predecessors at the site, the Australian was a trader, but, unlike earlier residents, he was not content simply to buy coconuts or the fresh coconut meat known as green copra. Instead, he encouraged Longanans to plant coconuts for commercial copra production. He taught many Longanans how to smoke dry their copra. He organized the construction of a road from Boiboi to Lolowai to facilitate copra export. Instead of taking local labour from the island to produce copra elsewhere, as first the labour trade and then island planters had done, the trader applied local labour to the production of a local product for export. The trader bought Longanans' copra and they spent the money at the
trader's store. The trader's boat brought new stock in for the store and took copra off for sale to the large export houses, especially Burns Philp who owned the land where the trader lived.

The emergence of peasant copra production in Longana, as Howard has observed for Ghana (1980), was made possible by retention of traditional land tenure. The colonial containment of societies kept a protective distance between planters and indigenous copra producers. European planters could not generally reduce peasant holdings below the size needed for subsistence and "coerce a labour force into being" as capitalist sugarcane farmers were able to do, for example, in Columbia (Taussig 1978:66). Instead, expatriate planters in Vanuatu never cultivated much of the land they alienated and eventually encouraged the development of peasant copra production.

The collapse of the copra market as part of the world-wide depression in the 1930s led expatriates like the Australian trader in Longana to extract coconuts produced by local labour without having to maintain the labourers themselves. Planters dependent on imported Tonkinese labour during this period found themselves heavily in debt (Gardissat 1980:33). Many turned from copra to cattle to reduce labour costs, or placed greater emphasis on the trading rather than the plantation aspects of their enterprises, thus allowing peasant production of copra to develop. By encouraging ni-Vanuatu to make their own copra, expatriate entrepreneurs passed some of the risks on to peasant producers and reduced their own costs. Traders doubly ensured recapture of the producers' surplus by purchasing peasant copra and by running stores where sellers spent their copra incomes. While traders assured the peasantization of ni-Vanuatu, they in turn were under the economic control of large firms like Burns Philp with strong metropolitan interests.

In this way, Longanans were introduced to a system of marketing copra that, for the island producer, had changed little by 1978.10 As chapter 6 shows, Longanans still are unable to influence the rate they receive for They still are dependent on expatriate their copra. exporters like Burns Philp and on the shipping services that such firms control. Longanans still spend much of their copra incomes at stores similar to the old trade stores in size and in the range of goods sold. Yet, both in 1978 and in the early days of cash-cropping, Longanans were able to act as an independent group to bend expatriates' actions to islanders' wills. For example, when local chiefs decided the trader's liquor sales were causing an increase in violence, they organized an effective boycott of his store and refused to sell their

copra to him until he agreed to stop providing liquor to Longanans.

Longanans still produce copra in much the same way, and from many of the same trees, as they did before World War II. With the encouragement of the resident trader, islanders began to plant coconuts systematically in the 1930s. In the populated region of the district, coconuts were planted in fenced gardens where they continued to grow after the food crops in the garden were exhausted. Today, Longanans describe the extent of a plantation in this part of the district by the number of "fences" it contains, although the original garden walls may be reduced to a scattering of mossy stones camouflaged in the green plantation floor.

With the advent of cash-cropping, some Longanans began to leave villages in the southwestern hills and establish new settlements on the previously unpopulated coastal plain. Here a few men of high rank and substantial political influence were able to purchase large areas of land, stake claims on the basis of distant relationships to ancestors of the extinct coast-dwellers, or simply seize control of land and establish plantations far larger than those of ordinary men (see chapters 3 and 4). In turn, these plantations have nourished a trend toward greater inequality in the distribution of Longanan income from copra, such that wealth is concentrated increasingly in the hands of a very few Longanans (see chapter 5).

In 1978, 979 Longanans lived in the district. As William Rodman has described elsewhere (Rodman 1973), lines of religious affiliation had segregated the population into two semi-autonomous sectors by about 1920. The villages highest in Longana's southwest foothills became followers of the Churches of Christ and forswore pig killing, kava drinking and dancing, traditions that Anglican converts in the district retained.

When William Rodman and I first conducted research in Longana for sixteen months from 1969 through 1971, our census showed a total district population of 768, of which 463 were Anglicans, 280 belonged to the Churches of Christ and 25 were Seventh Day Adventists who lived in three hamlets surrounded by Anglican settlements. We took another census as part of the ten months of fieldwork we conducted between August 1978, and May 1979. This census enumerated a total population of 979 divided as follows: 343 Churches of Christ, 59 Seventh Day Adventist, and 577 The latter, adherents of the Melanesian Mission, Anglican. were the research population for the fieldwork on which I have based this dissertation.

I chose the Melanesian Mission sector as the research population because these were the people who knew

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me best from our earlier fieldwork, and because they were felt these were most accessible. I the important considerations for the kind of work I would be doing, which required, first, that I ask sensitive questions about land ownership and incomes, and, second, that I be able to walk the boundaries of landholdings. I gathered substantial data through taped interviews and land surveys with Longanans who were Seventh Day Adventists and affiliates of the Churches of Christ, so that I am reasonably confident the research results represent Longana generally. In some respects the analysis in the dissertation applies more broadly; I use "east Aoba", "Aoba" and "Vanuatu" as geographic referents in the text to imply appropriate levels of inclusiveness.

The research population was divided among 42 hamlets in 1978 following a pattern of small, scattered settlements common in the northern islands. An average of 13.73 people lived in each hamlet; 72% of the hamlets had fewer than 16 residents, 87% had fewer than 26 people, and only 2 hamlets contained more than 40 people (see figure 1). Waileni, the largest hamlet, with a population of 68, was our fieldsite in 1978-1979. We selected the hamlet in part because of our personal friendship with its chief, Mathias Tariundu, with whom we worked in 1969-1971. Further, the size of the settlement and its proximity to FIGURE 1. HAMLET SIZE, LONGANA 1978



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other hamlets in the densely populated southwest of Longana promised to make access to informants easier than at Navonda, site of our previous field research.

Navonda also was Peter Lovell's fieldsite when he conducted research in 1976-1977 on Longanan kinship. His recent dissertation skillfully untangles the complex web of relationships woven by bonds such as matrilineal moiety affiliation, dai 'blood or substance', and reclassification of affines at marriage (Lovell 1981). Marital status, age and moiety affiliation are important variables affecting the organization of production and access to land discussed later in the dissertation. All Longanans belong to either the Mwerambuto or Tagaro moiety. Table 2 shows the distribution of moiety affiliation among male and female Longanans in 1978. Further, the table includes a breakdown of the population by marital status. Figure 2 compares the population pyramid based on our 1978 Longana census with a pyramid for all of Aoba using data collected in the national census January 1979. Table 2 and figure 2 provide demographic background for the conceptual dimension of Longanan land tenure that is the subject of the next chapter.

TABLE 2

LONGANAN MOIETY AFFILIATION AND MARITAL STATUS BY SEX (1978)

Research population:

male:	308
female:	269
total:	577

Moiety affiliation

	Male	Female		
Tagaro	166 (54%)	140 (52%)	306	
Mwerambuto	133 (43%)	120 (45%)	253	
Missing cases	9 (3%)	9 (3%)	18	
	308	269	 4	

Marital status

	Male		Female		
single	193	(63%)	140	(52%)	333
married ¹	98	(32%)	98	(36.5%)	196
widowed	4	(1%)	20	(7%)	24
separated	8	(2%)	6	(2.5%)	14
$cohabiting^2$	5	(2%)	5	(2%)	10
	308		269		

¹bridewealth paid ²bridewealth not paid



FIGURE 2

POPULATION PYRAMIDS FOR AOBA AND LONGANA

Source for Aoba data: Bureau of Statistics 1980<u>a</u>

CHAPTER 3

A WORLD OF VALUES, A PRACTICAL WORLD

In his overview to <u>Land Tenure in the Pacific</u>, Crocombe speaks of the accretion of rights to any piece of land as being like an iceberg. Only a small portion of the mass of rights appears above the surface at any time and "as soon as the visible part melts away or breaks off by non-use or absence or inadequate defence, it is replaced by the next highest claimants in the supporting structure" (1971:17). Yet, as Crocombe recognizes, the analogy is too rigid.

A metaphor more appropriate to the physical and social climate of the tropical Pacific might be that of the dense canopied forests from which islanders carved land claims with their labour. At any point in time a single patch of forest earth supports layer upon layer of growing things, from the ferns of the shady floor to the tallest banyan. We can classify these layers into hierarchies, horizontally segmenting and ordering what the eye experiences as dynamic chaos of overlapping growth. Yet, should one tree fall, a new configuration emerges as other plants compete for and fill the available space.

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Anthropologists encounter a similar situation in trying to categorize customary land rights: the presence of interests, dynamic layers of rights that simultaneous coexist with regard to a single land parcel. Since the early 1960s, anthropologists have stressed the importance of analyzing indigenous notions of land tenure without inappropriately invoking European jural concepts (Bohannan 1963; Gluckman 1965; Lloyd 1962; Pospisil 1965). Yet generally they continue to approach the problem of specifying simultaneous interests in land by defining the language of classes of rights in European jurisprudence, classes of rights that are hierarchical segments of a land tenure system (e.g., Epstein 1969; Lundsgaarde 1974; Walter 1978).

While <u>de jure</u> categories may be useful organizational devices for description, they also may be misleading and artificially systematic. Specification of an ideal hierarchy of such rights as sovereignty or encumbrance may fit uneasily with behavioural patterns evident in access to land. In fact, fluidity itself may be a defining characteristic of land tenure in some societies, and land -- not law -- may be the relevant focal point. In man-land relations such as those Roy Ellen describes for Nuaulu that are typified by their fluidity there may be no "legal theory" nor a "unitary concept of property" (1977:67). Instead, the practical aspects of land distribution take priority and a "theory" of land tenure simply "justifies or validates the practical requirements of land appropriation" (Ibid. :67).

is not to say that patterns of land This distribution and rules of land tenure are dichotomous. As Scheffler (1965), Keesing (1971) and others have recognized in the context of Melanesian group formation, the dichotomy between ideology and behaviour is a false one (see chapter 1). Cultural categories do not assign members unambiguously to groups. Nor can cultural rules be deduced simply from behaviour. Instead, social structure is emergent from a transactional process. As Scheffler emphasizes, "the introduction of norms or rules into social transactions is a form of social action in itself. Norms are not just static ideological entities ... they are also strategic resources in the process of social organization" (1965:292,294).

Rules of land tenure are one kind of strategic resource in interactions between people about access to land. But such interactions, in contrast to those associated with kinship and descent, also involve the land itself. Understanding land tenure, I suggest, requires understanding interactions between individuals and the

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"subjectivity" of their world in a phenomenological sense. This is a world of experience: "in the most ordinary terms, when we focus on experience we are not focusing on some vacuous interiority but on a lived act which includes its object. That object is not a mere appearance but reality entering experience -- our world as experience" (Kohák 1978:51). In other words, being a Longanan is inseparable from Longana itself; the place is also its people. In Husserl's terms, this world is at once "a world of values" and "a practical world" (1907:93).

starting point, then, for discussing The land tenure in this chapter will be a concept of place, rather than the concept of property fundamental to most land tenure studies (e.g., Crocombe 1974); for place, in the sense of lebenswelt can encompass land and people as part of a single whole, articulating categories and groups, ideas and action in what Buttimer calls the "dynamism of lifeworld" (1976).¹ In the second part of the chapter, I define landholding and suggest the kinds of experiences through which Longanans establish their places in the district. The processes of learning one's territory, investing labour in land and participating in funerary ceremonies all create ties between particular Longanans concerning certain places. Kin-based rights selectively validate most ties to land, but land also can be sold or

given as compensation for contributions to funerary feasts. A Longanan's right to land is inalienable, but his claim to any particular piece of land can be won or lost through his actions.

Recognizing a paradox of guaranteed access to land and insecurity of tenure is fundamental to understanding the dynamics of Longanan land tenure. Every Longanan must have a piece of land as a natural consequence of his or her parentage, yet children may lose access to their own father's plantation. The second section of the chapter introduces this paradox which is further analyzed in the final section. The inseparability of place and parentage is shown to be an illusion, yet it is a deception maintained through Longanans' experience.

The last section of the chapter explores the realm of the Longanan world that maintains the illusion of synonymy between Longanan person and Longanan land while fostering insecurity of land tenure and inequality of access to land. This is the domain of experience Longanans known as <u>gaindumu</u>, knowledge of ties to land that is a mode of evaluation and a means of explanation. <u>Gaindumu</u> is crucial to understanding how Longanans control land distribution.

In a society where anyone has rights to many more places than he or she could potentially use for subsistence or small-scale copra production, the actual distribution of control over land is a highly selective process. Men who know the <u>gaindumu</u> of most Longanan land monitor this process. They manipulate it as well. They are knowledgeable about the basis of peoples' ties to land in the present and the past; their knowledge is also know-how, the ability to gain or maintain control over land in social interactions for the benefit of others and for their own ends.

A Sense of Place

Land and people share in each other in the symbols of many Pacific cultures. Notably, Labby's (1976) analysis of the Yapese dialectic between people and land serves as a prototype for investigating why land assumes a particular kind of cultural importance. Within Vanuatu, Rubenstein (1978) discusses the relationship of personal identity to place in chapter 5 of his dissertation. Following Layard (1942), Rubenstein suggests that on Malo "men and land are said to share 'blood' "(1978:175; see also VanTrease 1975); personal essence and identity are thus infused into the land. No longer simply a thing, land becomes a place. Relph comments that "a place is not just the 'where' of something; it is the location plus everything that occupies that location seen as an integrated and meaningful phenomenon" (1976:3). For humans at least, space is lived: "We do not grasp space only by our senses ... we live in it, we project our personality into it, we are tied to it by emotional bonds: space is not just perceived ... it is lived" (Matoré 1962:22-23 cited in Relph 1976:10). In the languages of both east and west Aoba (see Allen 1969:132), the word for place (<u>vanue</u>) can refer to the island (<u>vanue</u>), the district (<u>loloevanue</u>), the hamlet (<u>tokagi vanue</u>), or to someone's piece of land (<u>mo</u> <u>vise vanue</u>).² <u>Vanue</u> is not land (<u>tano</u>); it is lived space in which place and people are part of each other.

The island is a Longanan's place in the world. A Longanan who travels to Santo or Vila greets any Aoban he meets with the Bislama phrase, <u>man ples</u>, a welcome to a person from his home area (Camden 1977:85). Aobans share pride in the specialness of their sacred island '<u>ure gogona</u>', a place set apart from other islands by the customs of its people.³

Yet, as I suggested in chapter 2, Aoban social space has been fragmented traditionally and as part of the colonial process; territorial loyalties are narrowly focused. Aobans have tried with little success to nurture a sense of island-wide political identity through institutions such as the Aoba Local Council in the 1960s. As Tonkinson (n.d.[a]) astutely observes, <u>kastom</u> 'traditional ways' may draw ni-Vanuatu together -- as, for example, when Aobans created a Council of Chiefs to codify and enforce customary law in the late 1970s -- but, as the Council soon discovered, <u>kastom</u> can also be very divisive if treated in any but a vague way.

Longana, more often than Aoba, can act as а political unit although local interests of particular hamlets and leaders frequently complicate and impede decision-making at the district level. Longanans think of themselves as sharing a territory not only with other living residents but with the memory of their ancestors and the future of their children. One way to grasp a territory and give it meaning is through naming places, so that space becomes "a mosaic of special places, each stamped by human intention, value and memory" (Buttimer 1976:283; see also Hallowell 1955:184-202). Every hamlet, hill and creekbed in Longana is named; parts of hamlets, a tree on a hillside, a stone in a creek frequently may be places in themselves and bear their own names.

Longanan place names blend the mythic past, human past and present. Some places bear names that relate to such mythic events as the transformation of a man into stone, or take their names from spirits believed to dwell there. Other places are named for the gravesites of well-remembered men, leaders in war or in the graded society. Some place names change as the occupants of the place change, and the few hamlets with biblical names are simply the most recent examples of the dynamics of place naming.

A few places in the district retain names that Longanans attribute to Takaro, a culture hero who gave his own name to one of East Aoba's moieties and who was the first to name Longanan places. The district itself takes its name from the stone Tagaro used as a pillow the first night he slept on Aoba. For Longanans, the myth that recounts Tagaro's naming of places is important; it is a myth every Longanan knows and the first story told to a visitor from another island -- or an anthropologist -- who wants to learn about Longana. The myth is <u>gaindumu</u>, an indigenous mode of evaluation that in this usage means the myth offers an explanation of Longana as a place, and so of Longanans as a people.

A person's place in the narrowest sense is his or her hamlet. A new hamlet is ceremonially settled into the ground, rooted through a ritual of <u>tokatoka vanue</u>, 'seating the place' which is characteristic of the "implantation" of traditional territory common in Vanuatu (Bonnemaison 1979). However firmly rooted, hamlets are impermanent. Between 1970 and 1978, Longanans established several new settlements and abandoned several others. Further, the population of any hamlet constantly fluctuates; married couples visit in-laws in another settlement, young people sleep over with friends for a few days or camp out away from the hamlet in the shelter of a copra dryer.⁵

Changes in hamlet composition are a measure of changes in the relations among settlement members. Birth, marriage and death account for the most abiding changes. Teenagers' schooling outside the district routinely affects hamlet composition. Occasionally a married couple separates or a quarrel between neighbours causes one party to the dispute to move out of the hamlet. But the continuation of the hamlet as a settlement depends on the place itself. Spirits and poison can quickly transform a hamlet into a site of evil and illness, for a place can be poisoned as easily and effectively as person.⁶

It is in the hamlet that a Longanan dwells far more than in the house where he or she lives. Longanan culture and environmental adaption are evident in house structure, especially in the design and construction of a men's clubhouse (<u>na gamal</u>) (cf. Heider 1979:51-53). Impermanence is a characteristic of Longanan building materials and houses; short-term residence is characteristic of the

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houses' occupants. Houses made of bamboo and leaves deteriorate within a decade in Aoba's climate. Longanans will abandon one house and build another, trade houses with a brother, move out of a house into a kitchen, or transform a kitchen into a house for teenagers. Houses are patched with bits of other houses. The whole building may be moved a little in the repair process, as I discovered in 1978 when I found some houses were almost, but not quite, where I had mapped them in 1970. Like the occupants themselves, walls, roofs, doors and shutters often move between houses. Usable materials are recycled and included in "new" houses so that, in a way, houses link both people and other houses over time.

Place is intimately bound up with land, not with buildings. Over and over again, Longanans stressed to me the inseparability of being a Longanan and holding land: "In Longana everyone <u>must</u> have a piece of land. There can <u>never</u> be a Longanan who has no land" (translated from a taped Bislama interview). Every adult Longanan male must be a landholder. Women can hold land, but generally do not do so; instead, in the shadow of her male siblings a woman holds a place for her sons, as her daughters will hold places for their sons. Generally, only women without brothers and some widows hold land in their own names. A landholder's name is identified with his place. Longanans say the land is "in his name," that he "holds" the land or that it is "his place." But land is not like other possessions. A distinction is made between possession of things that move or grow, such as trucks, animals or gardens under cultivation -- e.g., <u>bulengu</u> <u>rivurivu</u> 'my (planted) garden' -- and other possessions, including land -- e.g., <u>nongu tano</u> 'my land', <u>nongu talu</u> 'my (unplanted) garden'. Socially, a landholder is not alone in exercising rights to a piece of land as he may be, for example, in owning a canoe. He is rather the preeminent rightholder for the time being, the tallest tree in a forest of growing competitors.

A landholder is a person who controls other people's access to a piece of land. The extent of his individual power as a landholder depends on only two things: the landholder's own personality, and the relative influence of his closest kinsmen.⁷

Some landholders share decision-making responsibilities with junior siblings, are generous in allowing others to cut copra or make gardens on the land, and plan current land use with a view toward the welfare of their children and grand-children. Other landholders strongly assert their wills, claiming large amounts of land, selling their land -- or even other people's land -- and pocketing the money, narrowly restricting access to the places under their control. A man's <u>doridori</u>, his 'way of doing things' or his 'public demeanor', is his own, and Longanans accept the uniqueness of each individual's personality. But shame is a potent weapon in small communities. Most men want to be thought of as good, responsible landholders and they behave accordingly.

Siblings often cooperate as a landholding unit under the guidance of the senior brother (tokagi 'elder'). Any major decisions require the assent of all the brothers. The land is not divided among the brothers. Instead, access to land is shared among the siblings and their households on the basis of need. Each brother's power to control access as a landholder is tempered by the influence of his siblings. The most powerful landholders in Longana are those without living brothers; often such men are older, politically important men of rank whom other Longanans are very reluctant to gainsay.

Even Longanans without rank and with little influence over the actions of others must have the opportunity to hold land, if only as the most junior sibling in a landholding unit. Landlessness is culturally impossible in Longana because having a place (<u>vanue</u>) is as natural and inevitable as having a father and mother. The symbolic association of land with parentage is strong throughout Vanuatu: "land to ni-Vanuatu is what a mother is to a baby" (Regenvanu 1980:67). Every Longanan potentially has land through his or her father or mother, a birthright that may or may not be exercised. In anger, one Longanan may shout at another, "Where is your place? Do you have any land here?" To the recipient of the insult, the meaning is clear: Does he have a father? Does he have a mother?

The inseparability of place and parentage is illustrated in the concern an informant exhibited when he told me of a false rumour that one Longanan had no land:

> I was told, 'We are all Longana men, but there is one of us who has no land at all --Jack.' He has no land at all. Someone told me, "We all have land, everyone of us, but Jack has nothing."

> I was worried and I asked a lot of questions. I asked, "His father wasn't a longanan?" They told me his father had been a Longanan, but Jack himself had been born on the other side of Aoba. Then a man from here adopted Jack and brought him to Longana.

> But what I don't understand is why Jack didn't get any land through his father and didn't the man who adopted Jack have a place of his own or what? They told me Jack had no land at all! (Translated from a taped Bislama interview)

The emphasis in this passage on being a Longanan and thus a landholder is strikingly similar to comments Silverman cites regarding the equation of landholding and belonging to a place. His analysis of Banaban identity with Ocean Island suggests that strong ties to place can survive even physical absence from the homeland:"Being a Banaban entails having Ocean Island land, and having Ocean Island land is generally taken as presumptive evidence of being a Banaban. Even with regard to a person whose descent is obscure, if one asks, "Is he a Banaban?" one may meet with the reply, "He owns land on Banaba, doesn't he?" (Silverman 1971:185).

The insult -- Where is your place? -- that impugns a Longanan's parentage has a different impact when levelled at a non-Longanan. It is a way of rudely suggesting that the outsider go back to where he or she belongs. A woman from another island who had remained in Longana for eight years after her local husband's death complained to me about the insecurity of placelessness:

> I never ask for help. I know there would be talk if I asked for help. I keep to myself. I keep quiet. They can never say I have taken cabbage from their gardens, from anyone's garden. I never take coconuts from anyone else's trees. I keep quiet and never ask for things because I am afraid that if I asked for things there would be talk. And I worry about people talking about me because, you see, I am alone. I am using my husband's land but he is dead.

> I just live ... If I weren't careful people would talk about me. They would say, "Where's

her place? She has just come to stay with us. She has no coconuts that really belong to her." (Translated from a taped Bislama interview)

This outsider realized that she could have ended her insecurity by remarrying a Longanan. When a woman marries, her husband replaces her father as her guardian and provides her with access to land, just as her father did while she was single. A married woman's place is her husband's place, and women without husbands need Longanan fathers or Longanan sons to secure their position in society.

In view of the interweaving of place and fatherhood, illegitimate children can face a difficult future. They have no socially recognized Longanan father, and their having a place depends solely on their mother's access to land. Any child is of its mother's <u>duvi</u> 'line', and this shared substance can bind the illegitimate child tightly to the mother's family. He or she may be raised in the mother's mother's household as a kind of little sibling of his or her own mother's brothers and sisters. While such a child may still be liable to insults and shame about the lack of a father, he or she is less likely to suffer from the lack of a place if strong ties are established with his or her matrilateral kin. Adopted children acquire a new father and a new place. Such children are supposed never to learn the fact of their adoption or the identity of their original parents. A child who discovered his true parentage could lay claim to his biological parents' land. On the other hand, a child who is known to be adopted could be insulted, shamed and his landrights challenged by other children and close relatives of the adoptive parents. An adopted child, without his or her knowledge, effectively relinquishes forever the land of his father and mother; instead, the adopted child and his or her future descendants are grafted onto another family and another place.⁸

Acquiring land

The places that become a Longanan's during a lifetime are numerous and varied, and the relations between people joined by places are complex and everchanging. Every place in Longana is identified with a chain of individuals in the past, with a network of potential claimants in the future, and with one individual (or, less often, with siblings acting as a unit) in the present. What it means to hold a place, and how a Longanan becomes a placeholder are the subject of this section.

A ten-year-old boy led me through a plantation around a garden to a rocky creekbed. He pointed out the sights along our route. Some could have been boys' landmarks anywhere: the best mango tree, the place where the girls change clothes for swimming, a pool with freshwater prawns that are fun to catch. Other things the boy brought to my attention revealed to me unexpected dimensions of the meaning of place to a Longanan child. Every place was not only humanized with a name, but identified with an individual. As is common in Melanesia, every fruit tree belongs to its planter, as does every coconut outside of a plantation. Particular women own pandanus trees scattered along the banks of the creek. Every cow and every pig has an individual owner, and some of the pigs have names. Every garden belongs to an individual, including a few childrens' gardens that are tiny replicas of their parents'. The fact that these places are the domains of particular individuals is not unusual; the point is that a ten-year-old child's world includes a detailed individualizing of places and owners. He knows his territory in terms of its individual owners, as well as in many other ways.

A place can be very small. My young guide pointed out to me a hole in one of the boulders that fill the creekbed. The hole is about twenty centimetres across and perhaps twice as deep; it belongs unequivocally, to one old man who favours it as a source of drinking water. The child did not know why the hole belonged to the old man -the owner later told me he had inherited it from his mother's brother -- but the boy knew he could not drink there without the old man's permission.

As a child, such a boy becomes deeply familiar with the land in which he runs free. While girls are kept close to homes and gardens where they help with younger children and domestic chores, boys from the ages of nine or ten through the teenage years range over a territory much broader than that of most adults'. Adults need a practical reason to go someplace -- to talk to someone, to find a pig, to work in a garden. Boys are the only members of Longanan society who can simply go where they like for almost any reason, or for no reason at all.

Boys learn their territory and its owners well enough that as adults they can discuss the boundaries of a place from memory and they can learn new boundary lines from a verbal description. As adolescents and teenagers, boys are not yet landholders. They are dependent on their fathers and other close kinsmen for access to coconut plantations and those few boys who make their own gardens must ask a landholder's permission. Yet these boys are not placeless like the widow from another island quoted earlier. To the contrary, most of Longana is their place. By learning the territory these boys are preparing for selectively exercising some of the many ties every boy has to a variety of Longanan places through a variety of kinsmen.

When a Longanan marries, he or she is said to be sesea, an adult who knows right from wrong. Adults are responsible for themselves and responsibility includes providing one's own food and income. At marriage, or in anticipation of marriage, a man begins to use some plots of land frequently. He begins to establish his presence in particular places with his labour, making copra in a plantation, clearing a garden for himself, perhaps interplanting a little cocoa among his father's coconuts. Every Longanan adult has a variety of places in different, parts of the district. He may have a taro garden high on the foothills of the volcano, a lowland garden, and several small parcels of plantation land scattered in different He acquires control of these places first through areas. use, and generally he seeks the right to use a place from his closest kin: his father and his mother's brother.

Longanans say that the right of a man to his father's land and to his matriline's land are, and always have been, equally strong. A man's right to his father's land is based on bonds of dai 'blood' that unite a father with his sons and daughters. A person's right to his mother's land is through <u>duvi</u> 'line', membership in a matriclan that is a descent category, not a corporate group (see Lovell 1981, chapter 7).

By virtue of his or her parentage, a Longanan can also claim land held by each grandparent. If someone clearly has strong rights to <u>his</u> parents' land, then they must have had equally strong claims to each of <u>their</u> parent's land. Similarly, siblings of a parent are a potential source of land because they share one mother and/or one father with the parent. Such reasoning based on filiation can extend through one parent-offspring dyad after another to link a Longanan, however circuitously, to almost any piece of land in the district.

Although a Longanan can claim land through his father, mother, father's father, father's mother, mother's father, and mother's mother, as well as all their siblings, no Longanan expects to control land from all these sources. Rights to land in the abstract are meaningless; they become meaningful only in use. Land tenure in Longana is not a system of rights expressed in action, but a process in which actions are selectively validated by rights. It is because of this selective validation that land tenure practices can change substantially while the ideals of land tenure remain the same (Crocombe 1971: 15).

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Men and women can broaden, reinforce and even create claims to land through investment of their labour (see chapter 5). But using land to which one has rights, even through such close kin as one's father and mother, is not sufficient action to ensure continued access to that place. In fact, someone can gain control over access to a particular place without ever investing his labour in the land.

The bongi cycle of funerary ceremonies is crucial to the distribution of Longana land. When a Longanan dies, the pulsating wails of grieving women draw people quickly to the hamlet where a death has occurred. But if the deceased was male, many of the most important participants in the events that follow death already are present, for a man's brothers and sons often share his hamlet and his During the next hundred days of mourning and land. dead man's spirit is said to feasting, the hover possessively near the upper branches of his trees while, below, his brothers supervise the apportionment of his land.

Longanans gather together for funerals and for the <u>bongi</u> feasts held at five-day intervals that culminate in the largest ceremony of the cycle on the one hundredth day.⁹ At a <u>bongi</u>, as at such events as a wedding or court, Longanans verbally stress the importance of coming together

and helping each other. They speak of moiety and line members' obligations to one another, of the importance of humility (<u>landobiti</u>) in oneself and of respect (<u>landomava</u>) in one's attitudes toward others.

Yet people interact at a bongi first and foremost as individuals, not as group members. A bongi marks the death of an individual and it is fundamentally as individuals that Longanans compete for a share in the places a dead Longanan relinquishes. One individual's death is another individual's opportunity to secure access to land and to establish himself as a landholder who access of others. controls the The tension between individual self-assertiveness in action (tartarane) and an espousal of effaciveness (landobiti) in principle serves to temper open displays of selfishness. At the same time, a verbal atmosphere of equivalence and communality can disguise and conceal acts of individual self-assertion, even greed.

A dead man's brothers and children are the main protagonists in a <u>bongi</u> funerary cycle.¹⁰ The siblings of the deceased and the siblings who are his progeny engage in antiphonal gifts of services and payments. Food, mats, kava, and pigs flow back and forth between representatives of the deceased's line and his offspring. For both parties to these exchanges, the expenses of hosting a bongi are

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heavy and the assistance of more distant kin to provision the feasts is essential. Yet such assistance is cautiously solicited or accepted. Should the closest kinsmen of the deceased find themselves unable to repay donors by the time of the hundredth-day celebration, those who contributed large amounts of kava, or perhaps a cow or tusked boar, can demand a piece of the dead man's land as compensation for their gift.¹¹

Brothers of the deceased and their household members usually can welcome the help of other uterine kin of the dead Longanan. Such brothers generally are older men themselves with adequate reserves of pigs and mats, and with a network of exchange relationships that serves as a line of credit. For the sons and daughters of the deceased, bongi expenses can be a greater burden for three First, as younger Longanans they often possess reasons. and have access to smaller amounts of traditional wealth in the form of mats, pigs and food than their father's Second, as offspring of the deceased they have siblings. more expenses than do his uterine kin, for they must also pay all of their father's outstanding debts of pigs, mats Finally, as their father's heirs they must or money. validate their birthright to his land with gifts of pigs to his brothers or else forfeit their claim to the land forever.

is symmetry in the bongi prestations There of The former is a contribution from holata and vulungatu. the children of the deceased to their father's siblings at the funeral; the latter is a gift of pigs from the siblings the deceased to his children at the hundredth-day of ceremony. With holata payments of pigs, children of the deceased return their father to the people of his line. Vulunqatu draws the father's spirit down from the trees he has been guarding since death and allows them once again to bear fruit. Both vulungatu and holata are part of a symbolic displacement of one landholder at death and his replacement by living Longanans who carve out their claims individuals from the places that belonged to as the deceased.

Vulunqatu is necessary to ensure the fertility of the land one holds. Holata is necessary to hold the land at all. Every child who wants a share of his father's land must give pigs as holata. The number of pigs is not one's contribution specified; rather should be in proportion to one's resources. Offspring of the deceased must exhibit a clear interest in claiming part of their father's land through gifts of holata pigs. The more claims that are pressed, the more pigs a child must give to secure part of his father's land.

A child who is absent when his father dies and does not come home to contribute <u>holata</u> pigs loses all rights to his father's land. A child who is too poor to compete with his brothers in giving <u>holata</u> pigs often will acquire a smaller portion of land than his more affluent brothers. A child who is too young to participate fully in <u>holata</u> can be outmanoeuvred by older siblings and forfeit rights to his father's land (see examples in chapter 4).

Even the youngest children of the deceased cannot expect help from their father's brothers, whom they also call "father". From the moment of a man's death, his brothers hold his land. They make no payments to establish this control. Every child who contributes <u>holata</u> pigs reduces the amount of land that the brothers of the deceased have inherited, although that loss is compensated with pigs. Nor can a child expect assistance freely given from his own <u>duvi</u> members, for these are the individuals who stand to profit by gaining land if they are not repaid with mats and pigs for their contributions to the bongi.

A woman's <u>bongi</u> cycle is structurally identical to a man's series of funerary ceremonies, but the implications of her death for the distribution of land are relatively slight. A woman rarely acts as a landholder, so her death is not usually an occasion for the transfer of control over land. A woman and her children are both in some ways junior cross-sex siblings in a sibling set generally dominated by her brothers who share the same <u>dai</u>, <u>duvi</u> and sex. The dual sexual identity that a sister's son has by virtue of being linked to his mother's brother through his mother tends to make a sister's son deferential to this mother's brother (Lovell 1981:000). Senior members of the sibling set must look after the welfare of their sisters' children who often become holders of 'line' land themselves only after the mother's brothers' deaths.

At a woman's bongi, holata flows from her father's line, and her husband's line if she was married, to the brothers, sisters and mothers who were the closest duvi members of the deceased. The recipients of holata respond the hundredth day after her burial by drawing the on woman's spirit down from the trees of her line's land with vulungatu payments to her father and husband. The exchanges are more clearly a reprise of the themes of groups giving and receiving that run throughout a wedding ceremony than are the exchanges at a man's bongi where land is at issue. The atmosphere of communality is sustained in part because of a Longanan woman's structurally linking position between two groups, but also because individuals have relatively little to gain or lose at a woman's bongi. The feasts are smaller. The expenses for brothers and There is little likelihood that fathers are less onerous.
<u>bongi</u> hosts will have to repay contributors to the ceremonies with gifts of land, and there is little opportunity for distant relatives to gain personal control of land through the generosity of their <u>bongi</u> gifts.

Some Longanans have amassed large landholdings by investing heavily in <u>bongi</u> ceremonies with the express intent of acquiring land. The hosts of a <u>bongi</u> can reject the offer of such a large contribution if the <u>bongi</u> expenses are within their own means and if their land is small. But if, for example, the deceased left many debts of pigs from his participation in the graded society, a wealthy man's offer to pay those debts may be irresistible to the heirs. For those who cannot meet their economic obligations in any other way, the land itself becomes an item of exchange.

When land is used as a commodity it circulates within the same sphere of exchange as pigs.¹² Pigs should be given as <u>holata</u> to compensate large contributors to a <u>bongi</u>, just as children of the deceased give <u>holata</u> pigs to compensate their father's siblings for the loss of their land. In the past, a warrior gave <u>holata</u> pigs as compensation to his victims' families, and the custom remains a mandatory practice following a murder, accidental homicide or death by poison. In any of the manifestations of holata, land may be offered as a substitute if pigs are

Although the value of pigs currently is low unavailable. relative to land -- which yields valuable coconuts and is perceived as being in short supply -- living Longanans do hold land won as compensation for war deaths. Even when land values were lower, pigs were the preferred commodity holata compensation payments. When land was for substituted it could not be called holata, but was given instead to prevent what is known in Bislama as toktok behain, the complaints and disparagement of participants that follows unsatisfactory resolution of any Longanan event.

As a commodity, like pigs, land can be sold. That its sale is discouraged is a very recent consequence of cash-cropping, as the next chapter explains, not of any belief in the inalienability of the land itself. Many Longanans own land bought with pigs, mats or cash. Some even have traded land for kava. Land that a Longanan purchases is as much under the landholder's control as land acquired by virtue of a brother's death or as compensation for contributions to a bongi. In each case, the land passes at the landholder's death to his siblings and to those of his children who make holata at his bongi.13

<u>Bongi</u> payments and land sales provide a kind of lateral flexibility that redistributes Longanan land across the duvi and dai boundaries that channel land transmission

between generations. Another kind of flexibility in land transmission arises from the paradox that having a place is every Longanan's birthright, but even those who reaffirm their claim to a father's land through payment may lose their land.

Children who donate holata pigs to their dead father's siblings are supposed to receive control of their father's portion of land, but they may be denied their father's land in spite of generous holata payments. Α widow is supposed to be allowed continued access to her husband's land, but in fact she may find herself prohibited from using even palms she and her husband planted. As the concluding section of this chapter will show, men of knowledge who are also skilled at talking strongly and persuasively can exploit those who are unwilling to defend their land claims or who are less capable speakers in their own defense.

Knowledge and Place

The meaning of land tenure lies not in an array of rights; it arises from lived experience, from the "crucial personal significance of the ties that a person establishes with a context recognized as uniquely 'his'" (Kohāk 1978:81). In Longana, gaindumu is the vehicle for

communicating the existence of these bonds and for realizing them in action.

<u>Gaindumu</u> traces the customary pathways that connect living Longanans, through their kinship and deeds, with their forefathers and with the places of their world. <u>Gaindumu</u> is knowledge born of experience. As such, it tends to be the property of older men, but it is not secret knowledge. Like most things in Longana, <u>gaindumu</u> can be learned by watching and listening. Some young men learn the <u>gaindumu</u> that can bind them securely to the places in which they want to establish themselves. But many others do not learn enough to secure a claim in the face of competition from older men who know more of the past and present ties to a piece of land and who are skilled in the verbal expression of those ties.

A change in the experience of place is a natural part of aging and one would expect an old man's knowledge of his world to be deeper and richer than a boy's. As an example of <u>gaindumu</u> in the context of land, compare an old man's knowledge with the young boy's tour of his territory I described earlier:

As we traversed his land, the old man showed me a nut tree his mother had planted, a stone whose evil power must be neutralized with leaves before crossing a creek, the palisades of his natal village that had taken root and

now reached the top of the forest canopy. He showed me a ravine named for the blood of pigs that a legendary leader Like the child, the old man emphasized had killed. landmarks identified with individuals. But in contrast to the child, many of these individuals were dead or were magical or mythic beings. Further, the old man knew all the names of the places we passed near, and why they bore their particular names. He knew who had held the land for generations and could explain why he was the several current landholder.14 In Longana, the more one knows and can express to others about one's place, the more it is one's own through experience and thus one's own by right.

Gaindumu is a very complex core of meaning in Longanan culture that is more than a distillation of past experience in a living present. For outsiders, gaindumu is not easy to think about, for it blends what we tend to artificially isolate as the world of values and the practical world. Gaindumu is a contextual standard of evaluation, a measure that can blend correct behaviour and historical truth. Because gaindumu is born of experience, it is situational and many aspects of Longanan life have their own gaindumu which may be quite distinct from the gaindumu for land with which I am concerned here. There is, for example, a gaindumu prescribing and evaluating the behaviour of wives. There is a gaindumu that serves as a

kind of blueprint for the construction of a men's clubhouse. A man's <u>gaindumu</u> explains his personality to himself and others. Each place has its own <u>gaindumu</u>, just as each person does. A person's <u>gaindumu</u> involves his place and a place's involves its people. A place's name, its past holders, events that occurred there, the web of people connected to it through kinship, use and payment all contribute to its meaning.¹⁵

The domain of <u>gaindumu</u> that concerns knowledge of the meaning of places is the living history that integrates all the aspects of place I have discussed in this chapter. It is the essence of Longanan land tenure because it combines all of the ways of establishing personal ties to a place in a specific spatial and temporal context. <u>Gaindumu</u> and the skill to use it are at once Longanan land tenure's greatest element of flexibility and its strongest propensity for rigidification of landholdings.

<u>Gaindumu</u> is the scale by which Longanans weigh the relative merits of peoples' land claims, but the evaluation is highly selective. Men who know how to argue, exhort and persuade can use their knowledge of the meaning of places as an immensely effective strategic resource. As Weiner comments regarding Kiriwina use of knowledge about land as a means of argumentation, "a man's memory makes him strong" (1976:42). Knowledge of places is a cognizance of choices. The more a person knows about places the greater is the range of options at his disposal. He may use these options to his own advantage, for example, to demonstrate the weakness of a rival's claim. Alternatively, he may use <u>gaindumu</u> to establish the claims of those who cannot speak persuasively in their own right, such as an orphaned child.

Fundamentally, acquiring land in Longana depends on knowledge of places and an ability to use that knowledge. Those with knowledge and a talent for speaking have the power to acquire and retain large portions of land. Longanans with less knowledge and skill with words cannot circumvent the logic of those who know <u>gaindumu</u>, nor are they willing to challenge men of such influence without a strong prospect for victory. Words can be action in this context, action more effective than the gift of a <u>holata</u> pig or the cultivation of a garden on one's father's land. One Longanan told me how a man was deprived of his father's land through manipulation of gaindumu:

As they began to celebrate the <u>bongi</u> [the brothers of the deceased] began to talk: "Oh, that's <u>our</u> land. It's not your's, son, you don't have the right to it."

They said things like, "The land belongs to my line. You have no right to the land." The child [who had paid <u>holata</u> pigs] couldn't say anything more. I mean, some men like myself and some others would say, "No. I must take

that land because it belonged to my father." But if a son is ashamed or he hasn't got a lot of knowledge, that's it. It's all over. (translated from a taped Bislama interview).

Parentage and place are intertwined but neither is inalienable. Lovell has argued that even the bonds of maternal and paternal substance that link Longanan parents and their children can be severed. The fundamental relationship of genitor/genetrix-offspring is alienable (Lovell 1981, chapter 6). Likewise, the birthright that Longanan children have to their father's land by virtue of the very fact of their parentage can be transferred or even lost.

The inseparability of parentage and land is an illusion; but it is an illusion that highlights the essence of Longanan land tenure. Being a child of Longanan parents and having a place are experienced as inseparable, for no Longanan's ties to places in the district all can be cut. But any Longanan may lose any of his claims to the land of The experience of the inalienability of his closest kin. parenthood or place is real even if no particular relationship to a parent or place is inalienable. To return to the analogy with which this chapter began, a son who fails to gain control of his father's land is like a sapling whose growth is inhibited by the shade of taller trees. He is still a Longanan and he must have a place,

perhaps a corner of his father's brothers plantation. The equivalent birthright of all Longanans to land in the district tempers the acquisitiveness of articulate men who may control far more land than most Longanans because they know the meaning of places.

CHAPTER 4

MASTERS OF TRADITION

The flexibility that is an asset of traditional land tenure also can be a liability. A customary illusion of immutable tradition can conceal options for redefining and redistributing landrights in response to demographic changes or new land uses; the same illusion of unchanging can shelter those who use knowledge and customs persuasiveness to gain land from other potential Unwritten traditions -- such landholders. as the assumption that every Longanan must have land -can protect the weak from the more powerful; but the flexibility of customary tenure also allows influential men who are masters of tradition to exploit those who do not know, or will not express, their rights to land.

In Melanesia, access to land always has depended in part on a person's position in the community. When powerful warriors seized the land of their followers in the past, Longanans say their forebears could not protest for fear of losing their lives along with their land (Rodman 1979). Leaders in the past and in the present are seen as naturally eminent by virtue of their achievements; they

are, in Longanan estimation, the tallest trees in the forest of men. But, because a warrior's domain was a product of his personal influence, for those who outlived such a man the hope remained of reclaiming land from the warrior's heirs. By 1978, no leader had the power of life and death over his supporters. Yet when an influential man sold land that people agreed was not his to sell, no one was willing to confront the powerful culprit with the impropriety of his action. Further, prior claimants to land usurped by a knowledgeable, persuasive man now stand little chance of regaining their territory. Unlike a warrior's gardens, the coconut plantations of today's landholders do not yield to fallow and forest.

Coconuts have transformed Longana's landscape in the past fifty years, yet cash cropping has required few revisions in the principles of land tenure. People selectively follow traditional patterns in acquiring plantation land. The key to understanding the changes coconut production has made in landholding is the flexibility of land tenure itself. The consequences of Longanan land tenure principles for landholding in a milieu of cash cropping arise from the same flexibility.

In this chapter, I examine flexibility and inequality in the distribution of control over plantation land. The first section of the chapter defines landholding

in a cash cropping context. Three consequences of plantations for customary land tenure are introduced. First, as in the Solomon Islands, Longanans in the 1930s and 1940s were able to plant palms which were "generally considered 'improvements' and the property of the improver or his heirs rather than of the holder of the title to the land" (Scheffler 1971:288). But investment of labour no longer guarantees a tree planter or his heirs control over Second, land used for coconuts coconut palms. is not available for gardens. A growing population and an increasing reliance on cash incomes has encouraged Longanans to plant more and more coconuts. What Brookfield calls the "tolerable distance" (1971:227) to gardens has increased, dependence on garden produce has declined, and Longanans, like many other Melanesians, perceive garden land to be in short supply.

A third consequence of coconut production has been to intensify the impact of inequality in land distribution. Cash cropping has tended to concentrate control over coconut-bearing land in the hands of a very few Longanans. The second part of the chapter explores this inequality as a product of flexibility in patterns of land acquisition and as a basis for differentiation among Longana peasants. While patterns of <u>access</u> to plantation land shift continually, patterns of <u>control</u> over land are less fluid. As Crocombe notes, Melanesian land tends to be controlled customarily by older men and to change hands mainly at death (1978:7). Inheritance thus is a testing point; for the heirs of large landholders it is "a test of the ability of emerging dominant class elements to reproduce and consolidate their positions" (Fitzpatrick 1980:126).

At any point in time one can examine how land is distributed among living landholders, those who control access to particular pieces of land. A map of the distribution of coconut plantations among Longanan landholders in 1978 is the core of this chapter (see map 3). An enlarged portion of the map is used to explore the connection between landholding and residence (maps 4 and 5).

Mapping Longanan plantation landholdings was a major objective of my field research. Aerial photographs taken by the British government in 1972 were enlarged five times to provide the basis for a land tenure map with a scale of 1/5000. I then superimposed acetate sheets over the photographs and composed the map on these. A few informants became very skilled at interpreting the aerial photographs.¹ Together we learned to recognize the banyan trees, creek beds and the narrow bands of undergrowth that often occur at boundaries. The patterns made by rows of coconut palms provided further clues to land distribution,



and the palms themselves often could be counted in the enlarged photographs. With a stereoscope I was able to compare landmarks on the overlapping pairs of original photographs with the two-dimensional enlargements.

supplement and crosscheck identification То of landholdings made with aerial photographs, I walked as much of the district as time and terrain allowed. I was able to walk at least part of the boundaries of nearly 300 out of 314 plantation plots. The accuracy of the maps I made on foot was greatly improved by the work of a survey team generously loaned me by the Condominium government. The traverses of the district that I made with the team provided axes against which to plot land boundaries. This was especially important in the southwest part of the district where plots were so small that visual identification of boundaries from the photographs was very difficult.

The map that resulted from the fieldwork, (see map 3) like the concept of place in the preceding chapter, is a lens that refracts an image of reality. The map is a customary illusion, a picture that stops the motion of land distribution at one point in time. That picture changed as the map was being made, and it will have changed even more by the time this dissertation is returned to the Longana people. The map is as accurate as I could make it, but its

purpose is not to provide precise information on land boundaries.² The map is not a land registry but an analytical tool, a picture of a pattern of land tenure expressed on the ground.

Plantations and Ownership of trees.

In the days before cash-cropping, a coconut palm was a tree like any other. Trees belong to the person who plants them and to those among that person's heirs who know of and claim their kinsman's trees. As is common in Melanesia, planting a tree conveys ownership by virtue of an investment of labour. Weeding, or even discovering and harvesting a volunteer sapling similarly signals possession. Today a coconut palm by the roadside may yield a drink for a thirsty passerby in the same way as picking a ripe mango may appease a traveller's hunger. And like other trees, most coconut palms are owned by their planter and his or her closest heirs. In other words, coconuts along a public road are a common property resource when used for drinking, while other palms as sources of food and copra are private property.

But the apparent continuity between past and present with regard to ownership of coconut palms is deceptive; the trees now are inseparable in terms of

ownership from the ground in which they are rooted. The holder of the land owns coconut palms, not the person who planted them. There is seldom a conflict today between planter and landholder for two reasons: first, little planting continues because most suitable land already has been filled with palms; second, the planter and the landholder generally are the same person. Yet there is evidence in ongoing land disputes and in the complaints of the disenfranchised that the separation in principle of planters' and landholders' rights was -- and is -- conflict laden.

Today, people without direct claim to a piece of land may be allowed to garden there, but they will not be permitted to plant coconuts. In the past, landholders were not so cautious and people with usufruct rights sometimes left a legacy of palms to which they claimed ownership in abandoned gardens. Resolution of the conflicting claims of planters and landholders was situational and depended in part on the personalities of the disputants as well as on the context of the claims. But in the long run, the effect of coconuts on principles of Longanan land tenure has been to weaken the investment of labour as a criterion for ownership and strengthen the equation of palms with the land itself as capital under a landholder's control. Intensive cash-cropping seems not to have led to a greater emphasis on individual rights in Longanan land, for individuals are traditionally sanctioned as landholding units. But copra has encouraged increased specification of individuals' rights vested in <u>places</u> in contrast to property rights that arise from <u>production</u>. The adaptation of Longanan land tenure so that palms have become part of place has arisen from peoples' awareness of the long lifespan of coconuts, of their commercial value and of the fact that coconut palms preclude other land uses.

For Longanans, as for other Melanesians, merging control over land and over palms into control over a plantation generates enough security to sustain peasant cash-crop production (Shand and Straatmans 1974:145). As Fitzpatrick observes, traditional practices allowing someone to use another's land generally do not extend to cash-cropping. Further, in Papua New Guinea as in Longana, "the custom of separating rights in land from rights in economic trees, so as to allow of property in the fruits without affecting rights to land, does not appear to extend to cash-cropping" (1980:107).

Plantation land disputes are of two kinds: conflicts over boundaries and arguments over who has what rights to the territory <u>per se</u>. In 1978, both kinds of disputes could be catalyzed by coconut planting as well as by coconut production (see chapter 5). A person who plants coconuts where others feel he or she has no right often finds the sprouted coconuts uprooted. Border conflicts may be fairly quickly resolved if both parties seek an end to the conflict. A walk along the boundary with an influential and knowledgeable man, a few notches blazed in trees, and verbal promises to abide by the renewed boundary markings may settle the issue.

Disputes that concern control over a whole piece of land, not just a boundary, are more serious for planters of palms. It is in these disputes that planters who are less able than others to defend themselves publicly lose access to plantations and forfeit control over land for future generations. Widows today are among the few Longanans who may lose access to the coconuts they have planted. The brothers of a woman's deceased husband can refuse her access to land her husband controlled, even to land she planted with her husband. Refusal of access is justified in terms of the woman's improper behaviour as a wife, perhaps her unfaithfulness to her husband, her laziness or her greed. Women in these cases are not punished like ordinary offenders; they are vehicles for the transmission of land between generations, and sometimes a prohibition on land use, like a birthright to land, can be passed from Such disenfranchisement is rare; the mother to child.

seriousness of the phenomenon lies in its effective permanence. In the three instances of which I am aware in which a woman living today was stripped of her right to land she had helped plant in coconuts, the prohibition extended to her offspring. Even one woman's grandson still cannot use, much less control, land to which he has a more direct right by kinship than the two current landholders, who ironically are a widow and her son.

As I noted in chapter 3, I use the term landholder to gloss the person or persons who control the access of others to a piece of land; sometimes two or more individuals -- almost always a parent and child or siblings -- exercise this control. A more precise denotation for landholder would be a "landholding unit" which may be composed of one or more landholders; the map of Longanan plantation land in fact reflects a division of territory into such units. Control over some of the plots is shared by brothers, fathers and children, or occasionally by a mother and her son. Between senior and junior siblings, or between parents and offspring, the transfer of control may be sudden, occurring only with the death of a landholder; but often the transfer is gradual as, for example, a father increasingly leaves more decisions about access to the plantation to his son, or gives him control over a particular piece of land.

Some old men write or taperecord a will stating their wishes regarding distribution of their land, but wills frequently are countermanded in the competition to control land that follows a man's death. Gradual transfer of control over plantation land is more effective than a will in ensuring that a selected heir actually will inherit the land. As medical standards improve, Longanans live longer; yielding control of land to middle-aged sons or brothers becomes an option seldom available in the past. The productivity of plantations no doubt is improved when control can pass to younger producers rather than remaining in the hands of non-productive landholders (Crocombe 1975:8-9).

Cash-cropping has both broadened and narrowed the control Longanans exercise over their land. While usufruct rights have been restricted to exclude non-landholders from planting cash crops, membership in landholding units has broadened. Many Longanans who would have had to await a senior landholder's death as a prerequisite for controlling land in the past now exert at least some control over the plantations they share with their father or their elder brothers.

Subsistence production

Longanans distinguish between gardens and garden land. The former (<u>rivurivu</u>) is a garden under cultivation. The latter (<u>talu</u>) is fallow or potential garden land. <u>Rivurivu</u> always are individually owned. The land from which gardens are cut usually is individually controlled, although siblings may share in its control.

The land use unit for subsistence production is the household -- generally a married couple and those of their children who are old enough to work. The consumption unit supported by a garden includes children too young to work and often one or more people too old to provide any or all of their own subsistence. For example, in Waileni hamlet which was my fieldsite in 1978-1979, seven households depended exclusively on the labour of a husband and wife, while in six households adolescent children helped work the Two widows looked after their own gardens, one gardens. alone and one with much assistance from two teenage sons. Two other old women living without spouses were dependent on their married sons, daughters and grandchildren for food, and ate most meals with the household whose garden was provisioning them at the time.

Longanans cultivate taro gardens in the cool damp climate of the inland hills. They say that native taro (<u>Colocasia spp.</u>) once grew well in the Waileni area which

is only about two hundred metres high, but now small black insects eat taro planted there. Gardens in the drier coastal area produce the yams (<u>Dioscorea</u> spp.) and bananas (<u>Musa</u> spp.) that, with taro, were traditional staples in the Aoban diet. Gardens also yield kumara, manioc, island cabbage, Fijian taro, and a variety of other introduced vegetables (see Bonnemaison 1974:190-210 for a detailed study of Aoban garden cultivation).

Longanans are swidden cultivators who generally burn off land for gardens when the dry season is welladvanced so that yams can be planted in the period from September to November. For maximum yields, taro and kumara are planted in the wet weather of January and February, but they and other crops except yams also are planted at intervals of several months throughout the year. Yams and other crops require more clearing of the garden site than taro, which can be planted among burned trees. Although many of the crops in coastal gardens can be grown in hill swiddens, they are secondary to taro cultivation there and are planted only on the periphery of the taro patch.

According to the Longana agricultural officer, both coastal and inland gardens are best maintained under a seven-year fallow cycle. One planting yields a year's harvest for most crops with bananas and manioc continuing to produce for two or three years. Ideally, the land should then be left alone for seven years; often Longanans return to recultivate a garden site at shorter intervals -perhaps two or three years, but there is as yet no evidence of soil degradation. The people recognize that gardens cut from primary forest are more fertile than those reclaimed from secondary undergrowth, but there is little forest left in Longana to clear and what remains is remote, steeply sloped or otherwise marginal for gardening.

Coconut plantations are like living gardens in the sense that they are the product of a person's labour. But palms differ from other garden crops in that they have commercial, not just subsistence, value and they occupy the land for seventy years of more. Like gardens, they tend to be controlled by individuals; but unlike gardens, ownership of the trees is inseparable from control of the land itself. People who are allowed to make copra, like people who are allowed to make gardens, are not necessarily in charge of the land they use.

When Longanans began planting coconuts for copra, land was abundant. The northeastern half of the district was uncultivated and the land available for gardens in southwestern Longana was sufficient for the population. The landholding map shows that plantations in the northeastern portion of Longana are larger blocks of land than are plantations in the rest of the district (see map

3). In chapter 2, I described the migration to the northeast coast that followed pacification in the 1930s. At that time a few Longanans easily established claims, through purchase, use or distant kinship, to large tracts of bush which they cleared and planted in coconuts. These men retained garden land near their previous inland homes. With coastal resettlement, the old garden sites were supplemented with gardens cleared and planted in areas closer to the new hamlets.

Although the lowland areas of northeastern Longana are not suitable for taro production, they are favoured for both gardens and coconuts. But coconuts displace gardens. Not only are coconuts a long term crop, they reduce soil fertility to the extent that garden crops cannot be interplanted under mature coconuts in Longana. As cash cropping has increased, the amount of land available for gardens has decreased so that by 1978, the only reserve of lowland garden land in Longana remained in the foothills near the Longana airstrip.

Garden land surrounding the airstrip provisions not only nearby residents but also those who live in the southwest sector of Longana who have no place to garden near their homes. As cash cropping gained popularity in the 1930s, people with the right to garden in the southwestern lowland areas no longer focused their

activities on staple food crops. Instead they began to plant coconuts in their gardens; yams and bananas became almost a catch crop, a harvest of less importance than the longer term prospect of copra-producing palms.

Increasingly, young coconuts growing in stonefenced enclosures marked abandoned garden plots. The coconuts promised wealth, but they also precluded further cultivation of the land. The distances people travelled to reach their gardens increased as one small fenced plantation after another filled the area nearest By 1978, some Longanans controlled no settlements. They relied on the reserves of potential garden land. large coastal landholders who allowed them to plant gardens in the airfield region. Some landholders were generous in granting access to gardeners, but others were not. Longanans with little garden land expressed concern for their future food supply.

The hamlet of Waileni is located in the heart of the part of Longana where small plantations began replacing gardens before World War II. Very little garden land is available in the Waileni area.³ Yet despite their concern about garden land shortages, residents favour planting what little garden land remains in coconuts. Pigs that forage in the area devastate the few gardens that are made. Out of 68 people in Waileni only two widows made gardens near

the hamlet. All other householders cited the damage pigs cause as their reason for not gardening near Waileni. When coconut planting was part of gardening, plots were carefully fenced wherever pig damage was likely. But today neither the gardens nor the pigs are adequately fenced. Longanans' unwillingness to invest labour in constructing and maintaining garden fences, or in fencing and feeding pigs, suggests that they are less deeply concerned about a shortage of garden land than at first appears, at least for the present.

Predictably, as Longanans earn more money from coconuts they become increasingly dependent on cash to purchase food. So long as the price of copra is high, most Longanan households can supplement the food they grow with food they buy. Nine households in Waileni had only distant taro gardens and so relied very heavily on rice, tinned fish and other storegoods.⁴ A low copra price can cause real hardship for such people. As Longanans continue to plant coconuts throughout the district they reduce their agricultural options. Self-sufficiency no longer is possible for many families. They must rely on cash earned from coconuts to purchase food. The price of copra is volatile and only control over ample coconut resources can provide security for those who are dependent on cash incomes. Yet, as the next section shows, most Longanans

control little land. Those with the largest garden resources also are those with the most plantation land and the largest incomes.

Plantation land distribution

In 1978, Longanans expressed concern over perceived shortages of garden land, although they took no action to remedy the situation. But their first concern was with the availability of plantation land. As early as 1970, they spoke anxiously about shortages of copra producing land for the growing population. At that time, Longanans tried to preserve shared access to plantations in the present to protect their childrens' future. Further, sale of land to non-Longanans became socially unacceptable, and land sales between district residents were discouraged (Rodman 1979). The most prominent spokesmen for these measures to protect future generations of Longanans were influential men who already had acquired large plantation holdings -- partially through purchase -- and who would share access to their land but would not share its control.

The difference between access and control is an important one in Longanan land tenure. As chapter 5 explains, access to copra is flexible; Longanans generally are able to make as much copra as they want. But those who control little land are dependent on the acquiescence of other landholders to their requests for access to coconuts. The map of Longanan plantations (map 3) illustrates the inequality of control that underlies flexibility of access, and that is fundamental to the differentiation occurring among peasant copra producers.

The map shows all the coconut producing land in Longana distributed among the 140 landholding units that controlled plantations in 1978. This land was divided into 307 parcels; an additional seven parcels were contested, bringing the total number of coconut-bearing plots to 314.

314 Longana plantations

My analysis of plantation land distribution concentrates on the research population defined in chapter 2, namely the 577 adherents of the Melanesian Mission. Data collection and preliminary analysis, however, did include all plantation landholders.⁵ Before narrowing the discussion to focus on the Melanesian Mission sector, I offer an overview of the characteristics of land tenure based on the 307 parcels of plantation land controlled by undisputed landholding units in 1978.

The average Longanan coconut plantation is controlled by a married man in his late forties. He controls the land as an individual rather than sharing authority over the plantation with his siblings or children, even those with liberal access to the plantation. He is generally the oldest male sibling in the family. The average landholder controls two plots of palms and he lives in one of these plantations. The two plots total two and a half hectares. One plot probably came to him from his father who is no longer alive. The other plot may have been passed to the current landholder through his mother's line; it is almost equally likely that he purchased one plot of land.

Behind this picture of the average landholder is some variation in the pattern of land distribution. Figure 3 shows the distribution of plantation land plots among landholders by year of birth.⁶ Although 45% of the landholders were between 40 and 54 years old in 1978, 21% were in their late fifties or older. Much less variation is evident concerning the marital status of landholders, for married Longanans controlled 255 of the 307 plots. Young single men held 24 parcels of plantation land, widowers controlled 7 plots, and widows administered 8 plantations.7 Land was very evenly distributed among Longanan moieties in 1978. Members of the Tagaro moiety held 129 plots, while Mwerambuto moiety members controlled 125 plots.⁸

FIGURE 3

DISTRIBUTION OF 307 PLANTATION LAND PLOTS AMONG LAND HOLDERS BY YEAR OF BIRTH

1978

No. of Plots



22 Missing Cases

Individual control of plantation land predominates, and no evidence exists that this is a departure from past tradition or a trend toward "Europeanization" of land tenure. In principle, as I showed in chapter 3, individuals -- not groups -- acquire and hold plantation land. In practice, 271 plots, or 88% of Longana's plantations, are held by individuals who alone control access to their land. Of the 36 cases of shared control over plantation land, 29 involve either siblings or parents and children.

Landholders often are in positions of control over land by virtue of seniority. I was able to collect information regarding sibling order for 245 plots. Of the 234 plots held by men, 136 plantations were controlled by the eldest living male in a sibling set; 50 additional male landholders were the only surviving members of a sibling set. Data on sibling position was available for 11 of the 19 plots held by females in 1978. Three were controlled by eldest living siblings and 7 other landholders were single children (see table 4). Thus, 80% of the plantations for which data was available were under the control of the senior or single member of a sibling set.

Most landholders do not have living fathers. Only 33 of the 249 plots for which this data was available were controlled by individuals whose fathers were still alive.

TABLE 4

FREQUENCY OF ELDEST AND ONLY SIBLINGS

AS LANDHOLDERS

(307 PLOTS)

	ELDEST SIBLINGS	ONLY SIBLINGS	OTHER	
MALES	136	50	48	234
FEMALES	3	7	1	11
	139	57	49	- 245 Plots

.

MISSING CASES: 62 Plots

Since most landholders are middleaged or older, the low incidence of living fathers is not surprising. To the contrary, the fact that 13% of all landholders <u>do</u> have living fathers and the 20% of those who control land in their own right are <u>not</u> eldest or only siblings is interesting in light of the discussion, earlier in this chapter, of a gradual transfer of land control from senior to junior Longanans.

Tables 5 and 6 show how Lonanans acquired control of their plantation land. Transmission of land from father to child accounts for 56% of the 219 valid cases in table 5. Another 14% of the plots passed matrilineally. The same percentage of plantation plots were purchased as were transferred through a matriline. Although the number of valid cases in table 6 is small, the data concerning land acquisition in the generation before that of the current landholders are distributed in patterns similar to those in table 5. Comparison of tables 5 and 6 suggests that father to son inheritance may be slightly more frequent than in the past, at the expense of land transmission within a matriline. The statistics are consistent with the generally-held Longanan opinion that father to child inheritance is more common now, although it is believed always to have been practiced to some extent.

TABLE 5

MODE OF LAND ACQUISTION

FOR CURRENT LANDHOLDER

	No.	ę
Father	122	56
Line	32	14
Purchase	30	14
Husband	6	3
Compensation	5	2
Wife's father	11	5
Wife's line	4	2
Mother's father	9	4
Missing cases	88	*
Contested	7	*
	314	100%

*Missing and contested cases are excluded from percentage calculation.

TABLE 6

MODE OF LAND ACQUISTION

PRIOR TO CURRENT LANDHOLDER

	No.	8
Father	38	46
Line	19	23
Purchase	15	19
Compensation	7	9
Wife's father	1	1
Mother's father	2	2
Missing cases	232	*
	314	100%

*Missing cases are excluded from percentage calculation.
The category called compensation in tables 5 and 6 refers in part to the acquisition of plantation land as repayment for bongi funerary contributions (see chapter 3). Land as compensation for war-related deaths also is included in this category, as is land that influential men were able to seize without payment or justification. Most men who acquire land as recompense for bongi gifts or who gain control of land through their knowledgeability and persuasiveness justify their positions as landholders in kinship terms. It is not difficult to establish that one is a distant "son" or "brother" of the prior landholder. The category labelled compensation in tables 5 and 6, then, contains deceptively few cases. Kin-based categories in tables 5 and 6 no doubt contain landholders who used skillful action rather than close kinship to lay claims to land.

231 Plantations in the research population

For the following analysis, I eliminated contested land and the 34 Church of Christ landholders who held 76 parcels of plantation land (see table 7). For 11 of these plots, I was unable to obtain reliable measurements. In comparison, only 2 cases of the remaining 231 lack data on hectarage.⁹

TABLE 7

LONGANA LANDHOLDERS 1978

	People	Plots
Melanesian Mission men	80	185
Melanesian Mission women	15	18
Seventh Day Adventist men	10	27
Seventh Day Adventist women	1	l
Church of Christ (all men)	34	76
Contested		7
	140	314

Portions of the following analysis are based on the 231 parcels of plantation land, totalling 831.24 hectares, held by 106 individuals who were affiliated with either the Seventh Day Adventists or the Melanesian Mission (see appendix 1). As I will note where appropriate, part of the analysis uses a population of 76 male Melanesian Mission landholders.

Residence

In presenting a statistical portrait of the average Longanan landholder, I noted that such a man lives on one of the parcels of plantation land he controls. Anthropologists, including myself, have characterized east Aoban residence patterns as patrilocal or virilocal (Lovell 1981:41; Rodman 1979:147;). It is true that a woman almost invariably moves into her husband's house at marriage. Often a man builds his house in his father's hamlet, although he may choose to establish his home elsewhere. But in analyzing Longana residence patterns, as research elsewhere has suggested, anthropological categories can cloud rather than clarify issues (Fischer 1958; Goodenough 1956; Holy 1976). In any Melanesian society there are many exceptions to residence norms. The categories are the anthropologist's. Longanans do not advocate patrilocal residence rather than, for example, neolocal residence. What Longanans stress is that a man must have a place; after marriage, a woman's place is her husband's home.

anthropologists have viewed residence Some as creating kinship in Melanesia, attributing structural primacy to locality (Langness 1964; deLepervanche 1967) or emphasizing shared substance as a mediator between locality and descent (Strathern 1973). But even anthropological characterizations of residence that stress locality as a principle of group recruitment are predicated on relations between people -- those with whom one lives -- not on relations between people and places.¹⁰ Unfortunately, place itself is not recognized as part of the process of creating identity out of residence. Yet places have a reality in experience that is comparable to the people who also are part of a lifeworld (see chapter 3). In analyzing residence, where people live is as important as with whom they live. If one casts aside anthropological residence categories to look for patterning evident in the places where Longanan people live, the connection between residence and landholding is obvious.

Longanan adult males live on land they control. Only four Melanesian Mission male landholders did not live on their own land in 1978: one was an immigrant from west Aoba, two were separated from their wives and had moved out of the hamlets on their own land where their wives remained. Finally, one of the four men was virtually landless; he owned less than half a hectare of immature coconuts in a remote part of the district. He had lived on his wife's land for at least ten years, but moved his family frequently back and forth from his wife's land to another hamlet where his daughter had married into a family with ample plantation resources.

Some men who are landholders in their own right live with their fathers on land they expect to inherit; often a father who will transfer control over much of his land to his sons as they mature will retain control over the hamlet where the family lives throughout the father's lifetime. If landholding sons who live on and expect to control their fathers' land are included with men who live on land they control outright, 95% of Melanesian Mission male landholders can be be said to live on their own land (76 cases out of 80).

The composition of Waileni hamlet illustrates the contrast between a traditional anthropological approach to residence and analysis of residence that arises from a focus on place. Table 8 shows that after marriage, most males do live patrilocally and almost all females reside virilocally. The exceptions to the Longana residence "rule" are ambiguous. Both of the males who live

TABLE 8

DISTRIBUTION OF POST-MARITAL RESIDENCE

WAILENI 1978

	Male	Female
Matrilocal	1	1
Patrilocal	8	0
Virilocal	/	12
Uxorilocal	1	/
Avunculocal	2	0
Neolocal	_1	_0
	13	13

avunculocally also could be classified as matrilocal residents, for the mother, a divorcee, sometimes lives with her sons and sometimes maintains her own household in the hamlet they all share with her brother (segment 1 in map 4). The mother of the only matrilocally resident male and female listed in table 5 also is a divorcee (segment 2 in map 4). Obviously, the uxorilocally resident male in table 8 is married to the matrilocally resident woman. The only remaining exceptional case is the retired local priest whose daughter married a Waileni man; he and his wife live on land he purchased in the hamlet (segment 8 in map 4).

The exceptional cases in table 8 reflect a variety of social configurations within the hamlet. Waileni is the largest settlement in the district, yet its structure still is that of a hamlet cluster, not a village. Trees, flowering shrubs and the slope of the hill on which Waileni is built shelter one sector of the hamlet from the next. The residential units circled on map 4 represent people who live together in the sense that they interact more with each other than with others in the hamlet. They may prepare food together, for example, or work together on a daily basis.¹¹ One of these residential units has а matrilocal focus (see figure 4a). Another is oriented around an influential old man whose divorced sister also is





<u>MAP 4</u> RESIDENTIAL SEGMENTS WAILENI 1978

K = kitchen

FIGURE 4

COMPOSITION OF TWO RESIDENTIAL SEGMENTS

WAILENI 1978

(a) A segment focused on a divorced old woman (23)*



(b) A segment focused on an old man (63)



*Numbers refer to residential buildings on map 4

resident in that part of the hamlet (see figure 4b). Other hamlet segments are more conventionally patrilocal.

Despite this apparent heterogeneity, all of Waileni's residential segments share one common characteristic that is evident in the spatial arrangement of the hamlet. Every segment is built on land held by its senior resident (see map 5). Waileni is a settlement made up of people; it is also the intersection of those peoples' places. The people who live in Waileni have land there and, with a single exception, they live on that land, not near it. The one exception is an elderly widow, a woman from another island who married a Longanan now deceased. The position of her house and kitchen (buildings 35 and 35K on map 4) reflects her placelessness, for she does not live on, nor does she have secure claim to, the land on which she cuts copra outside the hamlet. She lives in the shadow of the church and she does not belong to a hamlet segment.

I am not arguing that Longanans reside in a particular place <u>because</u> they have land there. Most landholders control more than one plantation plot and they may choose to live anywhere on their land. Further, control over land may result in part from residence; the relationship between landholding and residence is not necessarily causal. Deciding on a good place to live (see chapter 3) and choosing people to live with are complex



personal decisions. They are choices many Longanans make more than once in their married lives. What I am claiming is that control over land is an important factor to consider in studying residence. The patterns that peoples' places create may reveal a basis for residential grouping complementary to that of kinship and affinity.

Inequality of land distribution

The average landholder in the research population controls 7.84 hectares of coconuts, but this mean is deceptive. Altogether, the 106 individuals in the research population hold 831.24 hectares; but 71% of this area (587.31 hectares) is under the control of only 24% of the population (25 people). A mere 5% of the population (5 people) control 31% of the total land area. Thus for 65% of the population, average plantation size is only 2.5 hectares, despite the relatively high sample mean of 7.8 hectares. The inequality of land distribution is summarized in table 9. Columns three and five of the table are represented graphically in figure 5.

The inequality of land distribution is evident in the map of Longana landholdings (map 3). Plantations in the northeast clearly are larger than most holdings elsewhere in the district although a few of the largest

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TABLE 9

DISTRIBUTION OF PLANTATION LAND AMONG 106 LANDHOLDERS

size of holding	no. of people	<pre>% of population</pre>	total hectares	% of area	Ave. size of holding
≤ 5 ha.	70	66%	175.37 ha.	21%	2.5 ha.
5.1-10 ha	. 11	10	68.56	8	6.2
10.1-15	10	9	117.25	14	11.7
15.1-20	4	4	65.71	8	16.4
20.1-25	3	3	66.55	8	22.2
25.1-30	3	3	83.85	10	27.9
> 30 ha.	5	5	253.95	31	50.8
	106	100%	831.24	100%	7.84 ha.

FIGURE 5

PERCENTAGE OF LAND HELD COMPARED TO PERCENTAGE OF LANDHOLDERS IN SEVEN CATEGORIES BASED ON SIZE OF TOTAL LAND HOLDINGS



Size of holding in 5 ha. increments

holdings are in the southwest. Table 10 shows total hectarage as a function of the number of plots a landholder controls. Although one man has almost thirty hectares divided among six plots, this is rare. On average, each landholder controls 2.2 plantations. Landholders with less than five hectares tend to control fewer plots than others (1.6). But for those with more than five hectares, the number of plots controlled is not correlated with the total size of a person's holdings. People with six hectares hold the same number of land parcels, on average, as those with more than thirty hectares.

* The largest plantations support more people than When the number of consumers per most landholdings. landholder is considered, the inequality in the distribution of Longanan land is slightly reduced but is I calculated the number of consumers still pronounced. dependent on each landholder's coconuts for seventy-six Melanasian Mission men (see appendix 2 for explanation of these calculations). An average of 4.51 consumers are dependent on each landholder. All of the landholders who control more than thirty hectares support more than the average number of consumers; the plantations of the five men with the largest holdings support an average of 7.68 consumers.

TABLE 10

NUMBER OF PLOTS PER LANDHOLDER BY SIZE OF TOTAL HOLDINGS

	- 1	2 -	3	4	5	6 Plots		
≤ 5 ha.	38	23	6	2	1		70	
5.1-10 ha.		4	5	1		1	11	
10.1-15 ha.	1	1	6	2			10	
15.1-20 ha.			1	2	1		4	
20.1-25 ha.		2		1			3	
25.1-30 ha.			1	1		1	3	
> 30 ha.	1	1	1	1	1		5	
	40	31	20	10	3	2	106 Landho	olders

•

Although the largest landholders support the most people they also maintain a higher ratio of hectares to consumers and that ratio varies directly with the size of While 41% of landholders in the sample the holdings. control less than one hectare per consumer, no one who controls more than 10 hectares has such a low ratio. Six of the largest landholders enjoyed a ratio of more than 5 The flexibility of access to hectares per consumer. coconuts is such that the plantations of large landholders in fact may provision many more Longanans than these figures indicate. Nevertheless, the ratio of hectares to consumers is indicative of the strength of the inequality in land distribution that persists even when the number of consumers per landholder is taken into account.

How did the 5% of Longanan landholders who control almost one-third of the plantation land in the research population acquire their land? How do they maintain control over that land in a situation where almost twothirds of the individuals in the landholding population control about two hectares? Fundamentally, the men who acquired the largest landholdings skillfully manipulated the flexibility of customary land tenure to their own advantage. They, or their heirs, maintain control of their plantations through their articulate use of knowledge about the land, its people and the history that links them. Longanan landholders did not break with tradition in acquiring the tracts that now support the largest plantations in the district. To the contrary, they were masters of tradition. They were men of high rank, rich in pigs, with a wealth of exchange relationships and a reservoir of knowledge about past configurations of kinship and authority. The following examples illustrate the continuity between past and present techniques for acquiring large landholdings.

First, all of the men who are large landholders today have selectively used bonds of kinship to manoeuver around other heirs. This is not a tactic confined to large landholders, as chapter 3 made clear; but when the holder of a large land parcel dies, the stakes are too high for Those who have the most pigs to contribute to most men. the funerary feasts, who know the most about the history of the land (gaindumu), and who are articulate in defence of their own claim can acquire control of the land if they choose. As Longanans are quick to point out, most influential men are also "good" men who use their wealth and talent to defend the claims of less powerful but more Nevertheless, many hectares of what is immediate heirs. now the most productive plantation land in the district came into the hands of high ranking men when sons were unable to retain control of their dead father's land.

For example, when a man who was a powerful warrior and leader in the graded society died in the late 1930s, his only son was a child unable to contribute many pigs in his own right. Some of the dead leader's many wives had sons by previous marriages, and several of these sons were wealthy, established in the graded society, and becoming influential in the district. Rather than support the true son's claim to his father's land, these men took control of the land themselves.

What these men did was not wrong; they followed a customary practice for gaining legitimate control over land. It was simply the son's misfortune that he and his line members lacked the wherewithal to compete with his older stepbrothers. Even today a child <u>must</u> give pigs at a father's funeral. In one 1978 land dispute, a leader publically chastized a woman who had tried to make copra on her father's land. She had been absent when her father died and never had contributed a pig to his funerary feasts; consequently, she had no right even to make copra in her father's plantation.

Land purchase is a second way that a few men have been able to acquire large holdings in the past. Like the manipulation of kinship ties, it is a technique that still is effective today. Many small landholders also have bought land and others continue to do so when they can find a seller. Men with foresight and wealth were able to buy large amounts of land in the 1930s. Buyers sought to amass large holdings of bush that could be planted in coconuts. The uncultivated northeast of Longana where old land claims were confused or forgotten was prime land for plantations. Sometimes a vendor came forward who claimed to be a distant heir of earlier inhabitants and a sale was transacted. Prices were cheap by contemporary standards. A few good pigs or mats, or perhaps \pm 50 (\$100 in today's Australian dollars) established title to as much as thirty hectares.

In both the past and present, a land purchase could secure one's kinsmen's future. For kinsmen one disliked, selling land could be an act of defiance. Brothers who share control over land may fight with each other through land sales. If one brother sells a piece of land, another may try to even the score by selling another plot from their joint estate. A dozen landholders along the road southwest of the airfield bought their plots when three brothers who shared the land fell to fighting among themselves twenty years ago.

In those days, the land sold was uncleared bush. Today little uncultivated land remains that is suitable for coconuts, and land sales are less frequent. Yet even mature plantations sometimes are sold; one buyer recently paid \$200 for about 3.5 hectares of coconuts. Another Longanan sold most of his land in the 1960s and 1970s to avoid passing his plantations to his closest heirs. Others have sold land for credit at the local store or for kava. Longanan land still tends to concentrate in the hands of men who are rich. Men whose wealth is measured in dollars rather than pigs now invest their money in land when the opportunity arises. The increasing discrepancy between the incomes of most Longanans and an affluent few (see chapter 5) is sustained in part by the land purchases that richer Longanans can afford to make.

Like men who gain land through funerary gifts and manipulation of kinship, wealthy men who purchase land are following a practice sanctioned by tradition (see chapter 3 for discussion of the alienability of land). In the past, the distinction between purchase and other methods of acquiring land may have been largely a function of the setting in which the transaction took place. Pigs and mats were the medium of exchange used to buy land and to acquire control of land through funerary contributions. The security of tenure granted a purchaser or a man who gained land through funeral gifts were, and are, comparable. With the entrance of cash into ceremonial spheres of exchange, the difference between purchase and funerary payments remains primarily a matter of context.

Although Longanans speak of the importance of preserving what garden land remains and of keeping one's plantation land for one's heirs, individuals' actions often contradict this ideal. At least half-a-dozen Longanans in need of money in the past decade have approached wealthy men and asked these men to buy some of their land. The fact that wealthy men hold more and more Longana land in part reflects the willingness of some smallholders to exchange land for cash.

So long as the sale of land involves only Longanans, title to purchased land is very secure. Sale of land over-rides all prior claims, even if the vendor had little right to sell the land. Unless an objection is made prior to completion of the sale, a Longanan's only recourse is to try to buy the land back. A land dispute resolved in 1979 illustrates several aspects of continuity and change in land transfers over the past four or five decades. A Longanan summarized the history of the case:

> The ground belonged to Solomon. Now, Noah didn't ask for any land, but Solomon wanted to give him a piece of land to plant coconuts on -- this was a long time ago -- and Noah planted the coconuts. Solomon hadn't asked Noah to pay him anything for the land [at first, but later he changed his mind] because the land consisted of six fences -- it wasn't small.

> Solomon asked Noah to pay him \$20 per fence, but Noah didn't have \$120, so his son-in-law paid for the land. Now Solomon no longer had

any claim to the land. The son-in-law used the land for a while, but when he began to beat his wife Noah got very angry. The man's wife was Noah's daughter.

Then Noah asked Howard to buy the land from the son-in-law. Many times Noah asked Howard to buy the land, but Howard wouldn't agree. Finally Howard [bought the land for \$300.] Now Howard held the land.

Then last week Solomon Jr. bought the land back from Howard for \$300 because he wanted to reclaim his father's land.

The change in attitudes toward control over land is particularly noticeable in this account. Many years ago, Solomon gave Noah land on which to plant coconuts: Solomon Jr. paid \$300* to regain control of his father's land in 1979. Noah's control over the land he planted was weak. Had his son-in-law not paid \$20 cash for each of the six gardens he had transformed into plantation, Solomon probably would have reclaimed the land. The summary also shows clearly that in the early days of cash cropping, as now, the person who pays becomes the landholder. Both Noah's son-in-law, not Noah, and Howard, not Noah, were landholders because they provided the money to buy the land, albeit at Noah's instigation.

Howard's role in the case illustrates the position in which wealthy men may find themselves. Many times Noah

*Australian dollars are used throughout the dissertation.

asked Howard to buy the land from Noah's wife-beating sonin-law before Howard finally agreed. Howard was willing in this case to sell the land back to Solomon Jr. without making a profit, but most wealthy men now or in the past have retained the land they bought or made money on its sale.

Some men can even sell land they have not purchased or acquired through kinship or funerals. When the leader mentioned at the beginning of this chapter sold land, Longanans who were unhappy about the sale could only complain that the purchaser did not own the land because he had not yet paid for it in full. They would not publically question the leader's right to sell the land.

In the past, land seizure provided an alternative to kinship or funerals, and to purchase as a third avenue for acquiring large holdings. Even after warriors faced prison sentences, leaders in the graded society could freely cross the fine line between assuming responsibility for law and order in their domain and assuming control of at least part of the domain itself. The practice of paying a pig to a leader in whose territory one commits an offense continues in Longana. And leaders still control their territory in a personal way, for the public good or for individual gain.

Land usurpation accounts for some of the larger In the northeast, where prior land holdings on map 3. claims were murky, some men simply cleared the land and Even in the more densely populated planted coconuts. southwest, some leaders similary usurped their followers Their positions as men of rank and wealth justified, land. but did not legitimize, their control of the land. Α Longanan who held land in such a man's path would not, and will not, object publically to confiscation of his holdings. He might complain privately that the leader was acting like an old fashioned warlord; he might say the leader was behaving as if he owned land that actually belonged to other people. But he would not express his anger publically or attempt to reclaim his own land from the leader.

In the old days, Longanans knew a leader would greet objection to his land seizures with violent retribution. In the decade following pacification, Longanans continued to fear the violence of the men to whom they gave their political allegiance. But fear does not explain acceptance of loss of land to a leader, for Longanans today still will not gainsay a leader who seizes control of the land of another man. They respond to such a man's actions the same way that they say their ancestors reacted to acquisitive warriors: they keep guiet.

Longanans probably remain reluctant to make men of rank accountable for their landholdings because they see nothing to gain through protest. Hierarchy traditionally has tempered equivalence in Longana, and a few men always have enjoyed privileges commensurate with their achievements in the graded society (Rodman 1973). One of these privileges has been public toleration of land Men who can seize land always have been those seizures. with the knowledge about the land that is called gaindumu. Not only do they know about the land, they know how to talk persuasively. They can justify their actions. They can shame those who contradict them. Unless a Longanan can foresee a strong chance of success, he will not speak out try to reclaim his land. The following examples to illustrate the circumstances in which people will and will not accept the loss of their land to a leader.¹²

Among the men who moved their families to the northeast coast the 1930s and began in to establish plantations were two brothers of high rank. One brother seized the unused garden land and bush that became his plantation. He was a formidable leader, glib and quick to anger. Those who knew he was taking their land said nothing. The plantation and adjacent gardens (plot 250 on map 3) grew to 38 hectares. The other brother seized some land and acquired other plots through purchase or by making large contributions to the funerals of adjacent landholders. His plantation prospered and in 1970 was 28 hectares of the most productive coconuts in the district (plot 200).

By 1978, both men had died. Plantation 250 was securely in the hands of its founder's son. Plantation 200 was in shambles as Longanans argued with each other about who could reclaim which parts of the plantation. Why were the fates of the two plantations so different? First, the holder of plantation 250 had an obvious heir, a son who lived on and took an interest in the plantation. The son of the man who held plantation 200 lived off the island and when his father died he did not press a claim to his father's land by living in the plantation.

Second, the son who inherited plantation 250 used his father's wealth in pigs and money to make lavish funerary gifts to those most apt to demand return of a portion of the plantation. No such gifts were made at the other brother's funeral. He was known as a very rich man who, in his last years, kept his wealth in cash which he kept well-hidden. But relatives were unable to locate the man's money when he died and his funerary feasts, consequently, were relatively small.

A third and crucial difference that affected the transfer of control over the two plantations was that one

of the strongest leaders in the district defended the son's right to plantation 250. Any one who considered reclaiming their land upon the death of its usurper would have to reckon not just with an affluent young man but with a powerful leader. No one came forward. In contrast, following the death of the holder of plantation 200, everyone who had a claim pressed for the return of their land within the plantation. Some people believed that others were reclaiming land that the previous holder had acquired legitimately, through payment or funerals, but there was no way to be sure. In the end, those who are the most persuasive in justifying their claims no doubt will succeed in establishing control over contested portions of the plantation.

As the fate of the two brothers' plantations indicates, Longanans will try to reclaim land when they perceive that their attempt will be successful. Chances of success are greatest when claimants can make a persuasive case based on <u>gaindumu</u> knowledge, when no one else is using the land in question, and, most importantly, when no current man of influence opposes the land claim.

Paradoxically, cash-cropping makes those who have lost control of land more eager to reclaim it, while making reclamation more difficult. Some men acquired large portions of land by manipulating the flexibility of

Longanan land tenure. The customary attitudes and practices that allowed these men to plant their followers' land in coconuts also maintain inequality that probably always has characterized Longanan distribution of control over land. But the consequences of unequal land distribution are different in a cash cropping context from the transitory expansion of territory that marked a warrior's rise. An old fashioned leader's domain often dissolved after his death as gardens reverted to jungle. A powerful son might, or might not, maintain his father's Today sons like the heir of holdings through use. plantation 250 can use the wealth their plantation generates to cement their control over the land.

In sum, these cases illustrate the argument I have built in this chapter showing how inequality in plantation landholding has arisen in Longana and how its consequences have changed behind a mask of flexibility. I have presented the flexibility of Longanan land tenure as a customary illusion and shown that those who are the largest landholders are sanctioned by tradition. Differentiation within tradition such that a category of large landholders exists within the Longanan peasantry contrasts with the notion that "plantation agriculture ... tends increasingly to replace traditional power with a new power" (Bonnemaison 1977:129). Instead, the resilience of traditional land tenure and leadership have served efficiently to establish the privilege of a few in the transition to cashcropping.

Anthropologists have argued that the position of the big man has given him an advantage over others in economic ventures, allowing him to accumulate capital and utilize the labour of his followers (Epstein 1964; Finney 1973a; Strathern 1972b). Tradition sanctions the preeminence of Longanans who control large landholdings, but, like their peers elsewhere in Melanesia, Longanans with wealth from land are dogged by equally customary redistributive demands. Yet, the flexibility of traditional land tenure, and the illusions arising from it, are such that some Longanans can consolidate their privileged position while apparently engaging in customary redistribution. This is not to say that traditional Longanan society is a kind of primitive capitalism (Epstein 1968) or is predisposed to capitalism (Finney 1973a). Rather, tradition becomes an illusion, half true, half unreal, behind which wealth is protected in the course of customary exchanges. Thus a son and heir who distributes his father's wealth satisfies customary redistributive demands and invests in the future security of his own position as a wealthy landholder. Similarly, a wealthy Longanan is asked to purchase land as part of an obligation to a fellow Longanan, an obligation born of affluence and contributing to greater wealth. And so, too, are those with land and with wealth in a variety of forms -- cash, pigs, mats -- encouraged by tradition to pay the debts of the deceased and hold his land.

The concentration of land among a few individuals and, paradoxically, the equivalent right of all Longanans to land are customs brought forward from the past into a present where they effect different consequences in conjunction with cash-cropping. Production for the market arises through tradition but goes much further: "production with a nexus to the market really provides ... a base for an economic expansion potentially much more extensive than anything required to meet traditional obligations" (Fitzpatrick 1980:106). In Longana, traditional land tenure disguises the extensive potential of the base that cash-cropping provides. As the next chapter shows, copra production reinforces the inequality that masters of tradition have extracted from the flexibility of Longanan land tenure.

CHAPTER FIVE

CASH CROP PRODUCTION

In 1979, the map of Longana landholdings testified the unintended consequences of decisions to plant to coconuts that individual Longanans had made as much as fifty years earlier. As in any situation of economic change, response to the prospect of growing coconuts for cash was uneven.1 Some of the grandparents of today's Longanans took small risks and gradually planted coconuts in gardens near their villages; others boldly claimed, cleared and planted larger areas along the unpopulated coastal plain. Today, five individuals in a research population of 106 landholders control 31% of the coconutproducing land in Longana. Heirs of those men who established relatively large plantations along the coast prosper in a society where 66% of the research population produces copra on plots with an average area of only 2.5 hectares.²

The preceding chapter has explored the implications of cash-cropping coconuts for Longanan land tenure in principle and in practice. The present chapter introduces a contrasting but complementary approach to the nexus of relations expressed through land and copra. Coconuts have

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transformed Longanan cognitive and physical landscapes, as chapter 4 has shown; but from another perspective it is equally true that relations between people expressed through land constrain and shape copra production, and thus affect the distribution of wealth in the district.

Labour is the crucial variable in the copra production function. As Brookfield observes, the "wide measure of freedom in the application of labour is of fundamental importance in understanding both the ubiquity and the persistence through time of the coconut industry [in Melanesia]" (1971:148). I have shown that individuals use the flexibility of Longanan land tenure in competition for access to copra-producing land. Similarly, competitors exploit the flexibility of copra as a hardy cash-crop whose yield is dependent largely on the application of labour. In a situation similar to that which Rutz (1977) describes for Fiji, constraints on a Longanan household's use of land are imposed by landholders and by the production decisions of other members of a landholding unit. Decisions members make about copra production express the quality of social relations between members of a landholding unit.

In the first section of this chapter, I suggest the relative contribution of the various inputs to the production of copra. I then describe the social relations of copra production in Longana and explore the implications of those relations for access to copra-producing land. Next, I discuss plantation management and describe landholders' responses to cocoa production as a supplementary cash crop. The chapter concludes with an analysis of incomes Longanans earned from copra. The few who control the largest plantations are shown to have incomes at least four times as large as those of the average copra seller; inequalities of landholding and income contribute to differentiation among Longanan peasants.

Factors of Copra Production

The small set of inputs into the production of low quality copra is easily defined. Basically, these inputs are coconuts, a dryer with fuel, a few simple tools and the producer's labour. Ideally, the statistical relation of the output to the set of inputs could be specified in a production function that is a formal theoretical model of the production process (Plattner 1975). Without representing copra production as a mathematical equation, the relationship of each of the inputs to the output still can be discussed to indicate the shape that the copra production function assumes in Longana.³ Examination of the relative contribution of each of the inputs to the end product shows, not surprisingly, that the flexibility of

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labour in the copra production function is much greater than that of the other inputs.

Extensive coconut planting began in Longana following pacification in the 1930s (see chapter 2). The plantations dating from the 1930s today produce low yields from senescent palms. Most of the Longanan palms now bearing coconuts were planted in the late 1940s and early 1950s when Vanuatu was recovering from World War II. Although these postwar plantations may produce coconuts until the end of this century, the trees already have passed their productive peak which occurs between the ages of ten and thirty years (Brookfield 1971:139). Planting continued through the 1950s and 1960s (Wilson 1966:17). By 1978-1979, however, the rate of coconut planting in Longana was very low for several reasons: first, almost no land remains available that is suitable for coconut production; second, allocation of land to coconuts precludes ongoing use of that land for gardens and Longanans perceive a serious shortage of garden land; third, many Longanans are unwilling to risk the disputes over the rights of landholders and tree-planters that so often accompany coconut planting.

Because of temperature and humidity fluctuations as well as soil conditions, coconuts do not prosper above an altitude of two to three hundred metres, the level of the

highest inland villages in Longana (Quantin 1975). At lower altitudes, however, coconuts are extremely hardy and require minimal attention to achieve reasonable yields (Brookfield 1971:148). Following a practice common to peasant holdings in Melanesia, the palms in Longanan coconut plantations are spaced as little as five or six metres apart, so that the crowns of the trees almost meet Based on examination of aerial photographs, I overhead. estimate that a density of two hundred trees per hectare is common along Longana's coastal plain. The dense plantings of a ni-Vanuatu plantation contrast with the 110 to 120 trees per hectare that characterize French plantations in the islands (Wilson 1966:13). Shade from the densely planted palms inhibits growth of grasses on plantation floors and reduces the labour required for plantation maintenance. The European system yields larger coconuts and more nuts per palm; indigenous spacing produces smaller yields per tree but the greater number of palms per hectare least partly offsets the lower productivity of at individual palms. I estimate Longanan yields at about two tonnes per hectare per year. This is compatible with the rule of thumb New Guinea development planners use of one tonne per thousand palms per month for village copra, which is 2.4 tonnes per 200-tree hectare annually (David Counts, personal communication 1981).
To transform coconuts into copra, a Longanan requires only an axe and a copra-scooping knife. A machete to clear underbrush around the palms also is useful. The dry, fallen coconuts are collected, then split with the axe. Next, the coconut meat is scooped from the shell. The meat, or "green copra" may be placed in baskets or loosely bagged for transport to the copra dryer. Workers who cut copra for wages sometimes are paid according to the number of "green bags" they produce.

The quality of ni-Vanuatu copra is inferior to that produced with better drying methods on most large plantations; however, so long as there is no grading system for copra exported from the country, no incentive exists to produce better copra. Longanan copra is dried in homemade smoke dryers scattered throughout the district. Most producers can make green copra within walking distance of a dryer. Each dryer is owned by the landholder who built it, but any producer can use a convenient dryer by seeking the permission of the owner. Often, the dryer's owner receives two or three dollars from the producer for use of the building. Almost all Longanan dryers are crudely made. The drying bed is built over a firepit, where wood and/or coconut husks are burned to yield heat and smoke to cure the coconut meat. The bed itself is a wire screen sheltered from the rain by a thatched roof. Some dryers

have one or more walls to increase protection from wind and rain. The drying process should take about twenty-four hours.⁴ The dry copra is bagged and rammed, compressing the contents to a bag-weight of about ninety kilograms. Producers then sew the bags shut with twine and transport the copra to a storage shed or directly to market.

Axes, knives, bags and dryers are essential to the making of copra, but they are fixed technical coefficients of production. Procuring "enough" of the basic instruments of production generally is not a problem in Longana, despite occasional shortages of useable bags (see chapter 6) or delays encountered when a producer must wait for a turn at a copra dryer. But the addition of another unit of any of these factors, holding all other inputs constant, has little effect on the quantity of copra produced. The marginal productivity of another axe, knife, bag or dryer nears zero without additional coconuts to process and without the labour of another producer.

Theoretically the elasticity of labour is much greater than that of the other inputs in the copra production function. In Longana, where the supply of coconuts exceeds the fairly low current requirements of producers, more work quite simply means more copra. But how much more copra results from how much more work?

Specification of the effect of labour as an input of production is complicated by wide variation in ability and effort among peasant copra producers. Unlike workers in a plantation system, Longanan copra producers are not just healthy males in the prime of their lives. At one time or another virtually every Longanan strong enough to swing an axe makes copra to earn cash. Among the copra producers I observed were a ten-year-old girl and a man in his seventies, each of whom made some copra entirely alone. Many individuals who are not physically able to split coconuts can shell out green copra and so contribute their labour to copra production. In this way a woman who was nine months pregnant and a frail grandmother made "their own" copra with the assistance of others.

The labour time required to produce a tonne of copra varies not only with the composition of the work force but also with the intensity of effort invested in copra-making. To supplement my observations of copra production, I collected estimates from Longanans regarding the amount of green copra that an individual could cut in a day. Estimates ranged as high as seven green bags of copra per day for a healthy adult male worker, but three to five green bags per day was considered average. The bag weight of green copra varies, but as a rule of thumb two bags of green copra will produce one bag of dry copra weighing about ninety kilograms. Thus in one day a man can cut green copra that will yield 135 to 225 kilograms of dry At this rate, between 4.4 and 7.4 man/days are copra. needed to cut a tonne of copra. Adding three or four days labour time for drying, bagging and transporting, the total time required to produce a tonne of copra in Longana is between 7.4 and 11.4 man/days. A man and wife working together can produce eight green bags per day, which falls within the range of three to five bags per man/day. Estimates regarding the contributions of children and old people can be deduced from these figures, as Sahlins does regarding the intensity of labour in subsistence production (1972:115). But such inferences should be made cautiously. Children, for example, by no means work at a constant rate when they make copra. In fact, the intensity of copra production is highly variable for all producers and, like subsistence production, follows a variant of Chayanov's rule that "energy expenditure is inhibited by the drudgery of the labor itself" (1966:81). For example, I observed a copra-making party of nine adult males who passed a pleasant day producing the equivalent of only half a tonne of dry copra, compared to the two tonnes they could have produced.

My estimates are much lower than the thirty-six to forty-five man/days that Salisbury finds are needed to make

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a tonne of Tolai peasant copra (1970:127). My figures concerning copra cutting time also are lower than those suggests as guidelines for consultants making Potten economic appraisals of projects for Vanuatu. He estimates that an average copra producer cuts, collects and bags only 150 to 200 kilograms of green copra daily, or the equivalent of 75 to 100 kilograms of dry copra. Allowing three to five days for drying, bagging and transport, a tonne of copra would require 13 to 18.4 man/days to produce evaluation of the validity of (Potten 1978:2). But Potten's estimate is impeded by his failure to include any information about the basis of his calculations.

In a sense, the relatively high rate of daily productivity indicated in the Longana figures is deceptive. While an average of only 9.4 man/days is invested in the production of a tonne of copra, Longanans almost never work at copra production two days in a row. Other demands on their labour time, as well as the monotony and hard physical work of copra production ensure that copra-making is intermittent even among those Longanans who make copra regularly. It would be inappropriate, therefore, to estimate annual copra production in Longana by calculating that a man might work 240 days in a year and produce 25.5 tonnes of copra annually.

the peasant producer's practice of Yet interspersing copra production with other activities could have the effect of increasing rather than constraining overall productivity. Certainly, when they do make copra, Longanans produce more than their fellow islanders employed on Santo plantations who cut only ninety kilograms of dry copra per man/day (Wilson 1966:32). A Longanan producer makes copra intermittently, but he continues to produce at about the same rate year after year. In contrast, plantations in the colonial New Hebrides always had difficulty holding labour; many workers chose to return home after a few months, ostensibly to tend their gardens. Subsistence and market production continue to alternate cyclically Vanuatu as in other peasant in areas; subsistence agriculture does not simply give way to production for the market (Roseberry 1976:49). But in regard to a reluctance to labour for long on expatriate plantations, the behaviour of ni-Vanuatu plantation workers resembles that of wage labourers on Columbian coffee The need for cash that prompts a person to plantations. work as a plantation labourer becomes less important as time passes, while the quality of life on the plantation assumes greater weight as a factor in a worker's decision to continue work or return home:

An Indian working for a coffee planter will not only consider his need for cash

-- the goal satisfied by wage-labour -and his immediate pleasure, but also the competing need for labour on his own plantation. Cash and labour requirements are evaluated against each other and if both are equal and hence choice is impossible, then the decision to stop work...is based on the...quality of food and friendliness of the planter (Ortiz 1973:266-267).

high productivity of Longanan copra-makers The compared to the low productivity of indigenous wage in Vanuatu is linked to labourers on plantations the requirement that plantation workers commit all their labour time to copra production. As in Columbia, the efficiency of small producers is higher and "their energies are far less taxed as peasant farmers than as [agricultural] wage laborers" (Taussig 1978:63). Nevertheless, some incentives greatly increase plantation workers' productivity. can Brookfield reports that plantation workers who are paid piece rates may produce as much as 200 to 250 kilograms of dry copra per man/day, a rate comparable to my estimates of Longanan production (1971:147). Clearly, the frequency with which a producer makes copra and the degree to which leisure or time spent in other work contributes to the productivity of copra producer are a important considerations in evaluating the efficiency of copra production. But more fundamentally, it is the motivation of ni-Vanuatu producers and the production decisions they reach that make a difference in the productivity of the labour they allocate to making copra.

Relations of Copra Production

The household is the basic unit of both copra and subsistence production in Longana. A husband and wife are the nucleus of the household, with dependent children or parents included for some periods of the domestic cycle. Married couples may be assisted by their older children, in turn may assist their parents in making copra. and Widows and older couples rely on their children and children's spouses for help in copra production. Unmarried Longanans make copra with their parents or with their peers, and both bachelors and married men join together to produce copra as a kompani 'company' or to help out a friend. But copra-making is not always a social event; occasionally any Longanan may work alone for a day or two cutting copra.

While it seems reasonable to assume that the amount of labour a household invests in copra production is a measure of the family's needs (Chayanov 1966:41) -especially in view of the crucial position of labour as a factor of copra production -- it is not necessarily the case that the family's needs vary with household size (Barlett 1980<u>c</u>:143). The motivation underlying Longanan copra production is different for large and small producers even when the composition and size of the units of production are the same. A small producer's household makes copra intermittently to satisfy specific family needs. A larger producer's household makes copra regularly without the necessity of a specific consumption goal. Examples of the differences between the motivations of small and large copra producers illustrate part of the process of gradual differentiation that is occurring within the Longanan peasantry.

In the hamlet of Waileni, seventeen household heads represented a 1978 population of sixty-eight individuals. In May 1979, I administered a questionnaire concerning subsistence and copra production to each household head.⁵ I found that none of the respondents knew the quantity or value of the copra he or she had sold in the past year, or in other periods often used to reckon the passage of time in Longana such as the five months "since Christmas." Producers did say they knew how many bags of copra their land <u>could</u> yield if most of the coconuts were ripe, and they knew how many bags of copra they had produced most recently. Awareness of the copra producing potential of land under their control influences strategies for satisfying a family's needs, leading household members to

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seek access to others' coconuts or to work as wage labourers on others' plantations if the need for cash outstrips the household's copra resources.

Small producers do not make copra to make money, they make copra to buy things. Notably, the producers in my sample remembered how much they had produced in terms of the specific reason why they had made the copra. These reasons included a woman's purchase of a sewing machine, a child's school fees, a man's wedding expenses, and the celebration of a dead man's hundredth day funerary feast. One husband and wife made copra two weeks before the anticipated birth of their child in order to pay maternity charges at the Lolowai hospital. Most often, Waileni residents made copra to cover travelling expenses. The airfare to Vila was FNH 3100 (\$40)*; a one-way ticket to Santo cost FNH 1200 (\$15). Copra production financed many an excursion to Santo to visit relatives, buy goods unavailable on Aoba or enjoy a holiday.

In contrast to small producers, some households make copra on a regular basis instead of producing for a short-term goal. Larger producers, of course, have needs

^{*}Australian dollars are used throughout the dissertation. The average 1979 exchange rate is used to convert francs Nouvelles Hébrides to Australian dollars: 100 FNH=1.25 \$A.

to satisfy through income from copra, but they often invest as well as consume. For example, three brothers and their mother's brother had bought property on Santo on which they were constructing a house financed by the Caisse Centrale. They were repaying the low interest Caisse Centrale loan monthly with money they earned from copra, but they hoped to rent rooms in the Santo house to defray costs of the loan payments. Each of the men's households made more than two tonnes of copra monthly, only a fraction of which was required for this particular venture.

Even producers who do not know exactly how much copra they make cut copra regularly. I interviewed one large producer who had steadily expanded his copra production over the years. As he explained how frequently he made copra, he evaluated the possibility of improving his own knowledge of how much he was earning and how much copra his several plantations were yielding:

> We make copra every week. Every week we have copra ready in case a ship comes. Some people ask us how many tonnes of copra we have, but we have to tell them that we haven't counted properly. All we know is that we make copra every week.

> I don't know why we haven't counted it all. I think we'll try to count how many tonnes there are; if we did that we'd know how much money we made from copra in a year. Yeah, hmm, I think we'll try that.

> But I'm afraid it wouldn't be clear. If we start making copra on the coast, then work our way up to the last of our plantations, then we

could just add up all the weights. But sometimes we don't reach the last of the plantations before beginning over again to cut copra on the coast. I'd really like to know how many tonnes the the plantations produce, but because we start cutting at the bottom before we've finished the top, I just don't know how to start counting the tonnages. (translated from a taped interview in Bislama).

Household's like this man's make copra to make money. They use their regular incomes from copra to make more money in a variety of ways some of which are discussed later in this chapter.

Larger producers seldom rely simply on the labour power of their own households. And most households, large or small also rely on a larger work force at least once a year. Copra work parties may be composed of individual men and women who provide casual wage labour for landholders. The composition of this work force shifts from day to day, and some individuals who are employers one day may be employees the next although a tendency toward rigidification of this relationship is increasingly apparent.

A company provides a type of labour force that is a variant of characteristically Melanesian work groups mobilized to burn swidden plots or build houses. Copra cutting companies centre on a parish church or hamlet rather than an individual, although a local leader may be instrumental in mobilizing the group. All able-bodied men in the designated area are <u>de facto</u> members of the company, but not all members work equally often or hard. A company seeks to raise money through copra cutting for a particular goal -- for example, the construction of a community water tank -- and the continuation of the company depends upon both the attainment of goals and the creation of new targets. Some companies cease to function for years then are reborn in a burst of enthusiasm for a new project. Companies raise money through fruit and vegetable markets, selling hot meals and other schemes; but copra making provides the most certain source of any company's income.

Copra workers, as individuals or as a company, are paid piece-work rates. Companies set their own rates while landholders determine the wages they will pay other The rates are tied loosely to the price of copra workers. so that a high price could serve as an incentive to those who cut coconuts as well as those who sell copra.6 Further, keying wages to the copra price inhibits grumbling among workers when the price is high while protecting the landholders' interests when the price is low. Copra cutters earned between \$2 and \$3 a green bag in 1978. When the copra beach price climbed to more than \$300 a tonne in early 1979, wages rose accordingly to between \$3 and \$4 per green bag.

Some landholders extract an indirect commission on copra made on their plantations. A producer may be allowed to make copra if he or she agrees to sell the produce under the landholder's share at a cooperative society. Cooperative society profits are distributed among members at the end of the fiscal year in proportion to the volume of copra credited to each member's share. The landholder then benefits from the copra made on his property in the form of increased profits from the cooperative.

On a small scale, reciprocity continues to underlie many offers of and requests for an individual's labour in Longanan copra production. Some Longanans still successfully solicit the unpaid assistance of their neighbours who cut copra and receive only a hearty meal and some kava at sundown. Close relatives and close friends still help each other with the expectation that the labour they give someday will be returned. Yet, while the ideological commitment to reciprocity remains strong, the practice appeared less common in 1978 than in 1970.

In some cases, labour is provided freely without any obligation to return the gift. Longanans justify such free labour in Bislama in terms of <u>sore</u> 'compassion' for those who are too old or too busy with good works (such as catechists or teachers) and most importantly who are too poor to hire wage labour for copra production. In these instances, considerations of social security appear to sustain the traditional obligation to provide one's labour freely upon request.

Copra cutters who are wage labourers do not have a lien on their employers' future labour. Landholders who are too old or ill to produce copra themselves but who have plenty of coconuts can avoid dependence on the generosity of others by paying workers in cash and then selling the copra. Similarly, a prosperous landholder can employ the labour of local men and women for cash without in return having to divert his own labour. A few of these older and/or more prosperous men let it be known that they can always use labour. Likewise, a few Longanans with little chance to make their own copra generally are looking for Increasing differentiation between wage employment. labourers and landholders in the context of copra production arises from differential access to coconut plantations. How do landholders control the means of copra production and what are the implications of decisions landholders make regarding plantation access?

Access to Plantation Land

A landholder is said to <u>legora lo tano</u> 'be manager of the land' in the same way that a man of influence

legora 'leads' his followers, or a Biblical shepherd legora 'looks after' his flock. Part of a landholder's responsibility is to serve as a gatekeeper, overseeing and usually controlling the comings and goings of those who make copra in the plantations of a landholding unit. Longanan producers may stake their claims to active membership in a particular landholding unit by seeking access to a particular plantation location. Their decisions about where, when, and from whom to seek such access often are strategies complementary to the strategies of heirship that older men employ in Longana and elsewhere (see Goody 1976). Similarly, a landholder's decision to grant or deny access to those who ask, his invitation to a widow to cut copra in the plantation, or his tacit acknowledgement of a brother's right to make copra without asking permission all have consequences for the distribution of short and long term rights in the land. Decisions about where copra will be cut give concrete reality to principles of land transmission and usufruct rights, a reality that may be an unwelcome one for competing claimants.

In a variant of the situation Rutz (1977) describes for Fiji, constraints on a household's access to land are imposed not only by the cultivation strategies of a Longanan's neighbours, but also by other members within a landholding unit who seek to use the same plantation resources: "some people's actions constitute other people's constraints" (Berry 1980:331). Often copra producers are not confronted with these contraints; the unharvested nuts that litter plantation floors are evidence of ample coconut resources. But even where there is no apparent pressure on plantation land, there may be competition between members of the landholding unit.

Copra production provides a way for a Longanan to maintain a strong claim to land use rights. An individual who is known to make copra regularly in a certain location that likely to enjoy continued frequent access to is plantation. Heirs of such men can strengthen their claims to the land by producing copra there. Relatively weak rights to a plantation can be buttressed by frequent copramaking as well as by investment of labour, and sometimes capital, in the maintenance or improvement of the property. For Longanans anxious to secure present and future access to a plantation, copra production is highly visible evidence of an interest in the property and of a need to use its resources.

Longanans may use copra production as a strategy for establishing rights to the land of their spouses, their children's spouses, or distant kinsmen who have plenty of plantation land. In 1978, some individuals regularly made

copra on land held by a daughter's husband or a wife's father; others never used these relationships to qain access to plantation land. Whether to try to take advantage of the resources of an affine and how extensively use them depends not only on one's own plantation to requirements but also on the number of workers in the affine's landholding unit relative to the plantation's size and productivity. Thus Longanans can adjust to changes in the ratio of workers to coconut resources by seeking access to plantations on the basis of marginal or indirect claims, even as wage labourers, when one's own plantation or resources seem inadequate.

When a distant kinsman has few heirs, frequent use of his land for copra production can strengthen a weak land claim and improve an individual's chances of one dav gaining control over the property as a landholder. For example, a teenage boy whose mother had left Longana twenty years earlier to marry a Malekula man returned to the district in 1978 to visit his maternal grandmother whom he had rarely seen. This old woman, a widow, controlled a large plantation in the neighbouring Malavung district. land from a childless mother's She had acquired the brother. She herself was an only child, as were her daughter and the visiting grandson. Simply by cutting copra on his grandmother's land the young man was able to

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activate his claim to the entire property, a claim he would be able to secure when his grandmother died by proper attention to her funeral and mortuary feasts. This was an exceptional case in that so few immediate heirs to the land rights of a large plantation existed. Yet the example of this fortunate young man shows clearly how copra production can realize a theoretical land claim.

By the same token, a Longanan member of а landholding unit who fails to produce copra in the plantation risks weakening his own and his heirs' claims to Longanans say that such claims need not be that land. activated in order to be perpetuated, but for several reasons failure to make copra in a particular location jeopardizes a person's future access to that plantation. By not making copra an individual signals that he and his family do not need access to that plantation. Competitors within the landholding unit who feel they do need the coconuts tend to absorb the non-producer's share of the Further, failure to produce copra implies a resources. disinterest in the land that can affect how access to the plantation is redistributed upon a landholder's death. Finally, an individual who does not make copra in a plantation to which he claims use rights may be regarded as uncertain of the validity of his claim. Reluctance to

activate a claim suggests wariness on the part of a nonproducer who is reluctant to risk a land dispute.

Longanan copra producers within a landholding unit may compete for more frequent access to the plantation or for a larger share of the coconuts within the plantation. Lack of complaint by another rightholder signals toleration of a producer who makes more copra, or who makes copra more often than before. An individual's occasional need for extra income, for example to pay school fees or buy a sewing machine, rarely is disputed. But conflict between rightholders arises should one producer appear be to consistently taking more than his or her share of coconuts.

When talking about land rights, Longanans stress the importance of sharing access to plantation land. In part, this emphasis on shared access is a reaction against the greed for land that powerful Aoban leaders exhibited prior to pacification; in addition, Longanans seek a kind of ecological insurance, in the sense of preserving options their for distributing land resources among children through shared access to territory (Rodman 1979). Yet at any point in time, access to plantation land is not freely shared but is divided, in constantly shifting patterns, among copra producers. Competition within and between landholding units expressed through production strategies generates frequent disputes concerning who may actually make copra, and where and when they may make it.

Bringing an area under cultivation activates land claims that may spark a dispute. Clearing undergrowth and planting crops draw attention to the site and to the cultivator, providing an opportunity for others to acknowledge the gardener's rights through silence, or to challenge his action through public complaint. Similarly, the rhythmic sound of an axe splitting dry coconuts in a plantation signals a claim to use rights that others may accept or protest.

Arguments over access to land for copra production are the proximate cause of virtually all disputes over plantation land, except for some conflicts about inheritance that follow a landholder's death. Even disputes that concern distribution of a deceased Longanan's holdings usually find expression in copra production, or its absence, as strategies that parties to the conflict may employ to press their land claims. For example, in 1978, copra production initiated a dispute between two landholding units concerning the location of their common boundary. In another case, an individual asked his elder half-brother for permission to make copra. The elder brother granted permission but then rushed off to make the copra himself, pre-empting his younger sibling's plans and generating a dispute over the brothers' production rights. A third case concerned whether a man should prohibit plantation access not only to a sister with whom he had quarreled seriously, but also to her son. One individual catalyzed three separate land disputes by making copra on plantations to which he claimed to have hereditary rights, much to the dismay of the persons generally considered to be the landholders of the plantations.

An absence of productive activity in a plantation can signal more serious disputes within a landholding unit or between competing landholders. Unless Longanans seek to aggravate a conflict over land, they do not make copra in disputed territory. Unresolved land disputes caused several Longana plantations to remain unharvested in 1978. Two of these plantations had been neglected for at least a year.

The characteristics of copra as a cash crop are such that a plantation can be abandoned for long periods yet sustain no permanent damage. As Brookfield notes, "In a sense a coconut grove is the antithesis of Geertz's (1963) hard-driven wet rice ecosystem, which has great elasticity of response to increases in the input of labour" (1971:148). This flexibility means that a plantation can produce reasonable yields during periods when labour is applied fairly heavily, and yet endure other periods when no labour is invested even in maintenance.

The three neglected Longana plantations were visible evidence of strained social relationships. In general, observing where people actually cut copra provides an indication of the current tenor of their relationships with members of their own landholding units and with other landholders. Whether a person cuts copra on land he claims his "own" is a measure of the strength he or she as attributes to the claim. For example, one man insisted to me that his land included plantations I had identified with The fact that he and his adult other landholding units. sons never produced copra there suggested, as other informants confirmed later, that his rights to the land were more remote. In another incident, a widow assured me that her son could make copra on land controlled by her deceased husband's brothers. Yet not once during my fieldwork did the son actually produce copra on this land. The son and his father's brothers were not on sufficiently good terms with each other for the boy to want to use their land. theory, he did have the right to use In the plantation; in practice, at least temporarily, he chose not to exercise that right, and his failure to produce copra in the plantation was a clear sign of his attitude.

Because they control access to coconuts for copra production, landholders are in a position to manipulate the relative strength of other people's rights to use plantation resources. Landholders may try to secure the claims of favoured heirs through anticipatory bequests, giving control over a portion of plantation land, for example, to a son who then reinforces his claim to hold the land through copra production on the property. Landholders may try to prohibit some individuals entirely from making copra; they may restrict the area in which other people can produce copra; they may hire wage labourers or, in contrast, give free access to coconuts. The strategies a landholder pursues regarding copra production in a plantation under his control are limited only by what he can get away with -- that is, by the sanctions of public opinion expressed informally or in public meetings. Since the most prominent Longanan leaders are among the largest landholders, constraints on those who control the biggest plantations are self-imposed as part of maintaining the image of leadership.

Plantation Management

Part of a landholder's responsibility in controlling copra production is to look after the

maintenance of the plantation. A landholder tries to ensure that coconuts are gathered in all portions of the plantation, although remote or relatively inaccessible areas inevitably receive less frequent and thorough A landholder must supervise collection and attention. burning of fallen palm fronds and other debris. In many plantations the pattern of closely planted palms and the presence of grazing cattle obviate the need to cut grass to find fallen coconuts. Where cattle are not used to clean a plantation, grass-cutting generally is confined to the area around the base of each palm where most of the fallen nuts are likely to lie. Replanting is not systematically Fallen coconuts often take root in situ, undertaken. although a landholder may sometimes gather newly-sprouted nuts and plant them in selected locations.

Some coconut planting still continues in Longana despite increasing local concern about the availability of garden land (see chapter 4), and in spite of the fact that coconut planting frequently has catalyzed land disputes. Landholders now are planting coconuts in previously unutilized areas within plantations in order to organize agricultural production more efficiently. As these gaps are filled, Longana's coastal plain is becoming in effect one large plantation. Cattle herds move freely throughout much of the coastal area and some Longanans favour enlarging fences so that the coast could be devoted entirely to coconuts and cattle, while portions of the foothills would be reserved as a gardening area.

Beef production has become increasingly important throughout Vanuatu; more than 800 tonnes of chilled and tinned beef were exported in 1978. Longanans do not yet raise cattle for export, but they do sell beef for local consumption. In 1978 the price was about \$40 for a mature In some parts of the district, cattle are killed animal. about once a week, but generally the animals continue to be slaughtered mainly for special celebrations. Longanan cattle are inbred island stock and the beef they produce certainly is not of commercial quality. Upgrading the herds would be a prerequisite for commercial beef production in Longana. Further, procedures for killing, butchering, and distributing the meat would require major improvements before Longanan cattle could provide a reliable source of income. While in many parts of Vanuatu, cattle no longer are simply plantation "lawn mowers" (Malosu 1980:97), this continues to be their primary function in Longana.

The minimal plantation maintenance that Longanans practice is oriented toward the short-term production of enough copra to satisfy the needs of current plantation users. Longanans know that wider spacing between palms, improved floor maintenance and other modifications would increase plantation yields. In 1965, an agricultural training school opened at Tagabe, Efate, and soon thereafter the Agricultural Department established a station at Santo. Longanans then requested and received a resident Agricultural Extension Officer. A succession of Agricultural Officers and Field Assistants over the past decade have met with little success in modifying established coconut plantations.

The conservatism of Longanans regarding improvement of existing plantations reflects both their acceptance of the <u>status quo</u> as adequate for the present, and their uncertainty about copra as a cash crop for the future. While recognizing that many plantations are poorly maintained, Longanans seem reluctant to actually invest time and energy in improving future productivity of their coconuts. The yields that Longanans enjoy generally are adequate for present demands on plantation resources, and, so long as this is true, little effort is likely to be made to improve productivity.

Longanans talk about coconuts as a resource that will provide wealth for their children, yet they do not take action to ensure the continued productivity of plantations for the future. This contradiction expresses the uncertainty that Longanans feel about the copra market. Why work to improve quality so long as copra is ungraded? Why replant a crop whose value will probably continue to fall? Yet coconuts fill the land Longana's children will inherit. The future of copra is so uncertain that many Longanans prefer simply to focus their efforts on shortterm aspects of coconut production and marketing.

Cocoa

Rather than attempt to improve coconut plantations, some Longanan landholders choose to diversify. Interplanting cocoa among established coconuts is a strategy that Agricultural Officers have encouraged in Longana with some success. Cocoa was introduced from Ceylon in about 1905, and soon became a major cash crop in the Condominium. In 1935, the New Hebrides was the leading producer of cocoa in the Pacific, but since then production In 1978, the Condominium exported 1,096 has declined. tonnes of cocoa worth almost 176 million FNH (\$2.2 million). Rising production costs, especially the amount of labour per hectare required to establish and maintain a cocoa plantation, contributed to the movement away from cocoa in European plantations (Brookfield 1971:153). The volatility of cocoa prices further discouraged expatriate planters.

A few Longanans have raised cocoa for at least ten years, but more now show an interest in growing cocoa under coconuts as a second cash crop. In 1978, Longanans exported about thirty-eight tonnes of processed cocoa, but this figure is likely to increase as young trees mature. 1975 of a highly-skilled Agricultural The arrival in Officer who quickly gained Longanans' trust has encouraged the establishment of new cocoa plantings. The officer held courses in Longanan villages about growing and processing cocoa, and established a nursery of cocoa plants at the agricultural station. He offered seeds local and individual assistance to those who wanted to plant cocoa in their coconut plantations. He tried to rehabilitate older cocoa trees and built, or rebuilt, fermentation boxes and dryers for processing wet beans.

The presence of good quality agricultural assistance enhanced the appeal of cocoa as a cash crop for Longanans, but basically Longanans are turning to cocoa because there are no viable alternatives at present to cocoa as a second cash crop. Longana lacks available land for the introduction of any cash crops that cannot use plantation space. Agricultural workers have found Longanans very resistant to suggestions that they should cut down palm trees. It is extremely unlikely that they could be persuaded to replace existing coconut plantations

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with another cash crop. Much of cocoa's appeal to Longanan producers lies in the fact that it takes advantage of existing land while not requiring the farmer to choose between one cash crop and another in terms of land use.

The increase in cocoa production in Longana does not match either the enthusiasm or the scale that has characterized the introduction of cocoa as a cash crop for peasant producers elsewhere (Hill 1963, Epstein 1969, Salisbury 1970). In part, ecological constraints limit the extent and profitability of cocoa plantings. Cocoa trees, like coconuts, do not grow well above an altitude of about three hundred metres; and in contrast to coconuts, cocoa trees do not produce well in the shallow soils of Longana's Therefore, cocoa production is restricted coastal plain. to a fairly narrow band between the coast and the Further, cattle and cocoa are incompatible, as mountains. the animals damage the young trees and eat ripening pods.

In addition to ecological constraints, other factors have limited the acceptability of cocoa as a cash crop for Longanan farmers. First, cocoa requires frequent attention, especially in the early years of establishing a plantation. Wilson reports an estimate that seventy-five man days per hectare are required for the first six years, and forty-five days thereafter (1966:42). If a Vanuatu man, his wife and one adolescent son could devote twelve

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days a month to cocoa (Friend 1978), such a household could manage about two hectares of cocoa. A cocoa producer must invest his labour on a weekly basis to insure a good return. Unlike coconuts for which the labour requirements are very flexible, cocoa cannot be neglected when the price is low or when other obligations demand the producer's attention.

A second factor affecting the success of cocoa production is that not only labour but also skill is required. A producer must know how to plant and prune his young trees, how to protect them from rat, cattle and storm damage, and how to recognize and treat common cocoa diseases such as canker and black pod (both caused by the fungus Phytophthora palmivora). Until the mid-1970s the Department of Agriculture lacked manpower to provide adequate assistance to Longanan cocoa growers. Frequently, the trees that hopeful Longanans planted died; often the grower was too discouraged to try again and his experience, in turn, was a negative influence on other Longanans who might have tried cocoa production under more favourable circumstances.

Cocoa beans must be fermented and dried prior to export. Processing cocoa involves considerably more skill than producing wet beans and requires fairly elaborate equipment. Cleanliness, patience and expertise at

assessing the degree of fermentation are essential to producing saleable cocoa. In 1978, six small fermentaries operated in Longana; one of these belonged to a cooperative The largest society and the rest were privately owned. fermentation unit had a wet bean capacity of about 820 kilograms and was full only occasionally during the peak harvest period of May through July. Owners of the fermentaries buy wet beans from producers and later sell the processed beans to export firms. Used to controlling the entire copra production process, Longana cocoa producers complain that wet beans do not command a high enough price. Yet they have no alternative but to sell the unprocessed beans to the fermentaries which are, in any case, operating well below capacity.

The intensity of labour and the degree of expertise required to produce cocoa tend to discourage Longanan producers. The fact that the cocoa market is not appreciably more stable than the copra market further tempers enthusiasm for cocoa as a cash crop. Nevertheless, in 1978 Longanans consistently received more than \$1,000 per tonne for their cocoa, and values had been high for several years. Longanans hoped that future copra and cocoa price fluctuation cycles would be out of phase with each other, so that when the price of one crop was low the price of the other would be high. Unfortunately, this diversification provides no guarantee against the coincidence of high or low prices. In 1978, both copra and cocoa prices were high and, despite Longanans' hopes, in the future prices for both commodities may be low at the same time.

Finally, not all Longanans who could grow cocoa are willing to incur the risks and uncertainty that accompany innovation. The characteristics of cocoa demand that production costs must be "front loaded". A great deal of planning, labour, and, if a fermentary is constructed, some capital must be committed to a cocoa plantation in the first four to eight years before any return can be realized. Disease, drought, or hurricane during the initial years, or a low cocoa price when the trees finally begin bearing can mean that the producer's efforts were wasted. For many Longanans whose cash requirements are still small and who prefer to deal in the short term, coconuts are an adequate source of income, and an unstable copra market seems preferable to the greater uncertainties of initiating cocoa production.

Even Longanan entrepreneurs who are risk-takers in other domains may find the uncertainties associated with cocoa discouraging. In the early 1970s, one such entrepreneur, who had been successful in a variety of business ventures, began producing and processing small quantities of cocoa. The Agriculture Department in Santo, anxious to develop local cocoa production, persuaded the Longanan to send them samples of each fermentation, with a promise that the department would find a good market for the cocoa in Australia. When he encountered difficulties in bringing the first shipment of cocoa to Santo, the entrepreneur sold his cocoa to a supercargo who worked for a large export house. The supercargo took the cocoa on to arrange for its consignment and promised sale in Australia. Not long afterwards, the supercargo left the New Hebrides having swindled local producers throughout the islands. He was never apprehended and the Longanan entrepreneur was not compensated for the loss of his cocoa. In his words:

> I lost more than a ton of cocoa and never got a penny for it. After that, I realized there were plenty of white men who knew how to rob you. Later, I decided not to worry -- it was just greed that made [the supercargo] take it, and I knew I could make some more cocoa. But that experience did make me think -- I gave away the cocoa, didn't earn any money from it, and couldn't buy anything with it (translated from a taped interview in Bislama).

Wharton (1971) has suggested that a subsistence farmer's perception of risk and uncertainty may lead him to reject an apparently beneficial policy. Producers often are unwilling to endure uncertainty accompanying an innovation that might substantially increase their standard of living but that also might fail, thereby lowering their standard of living below a tolerable level. Longanan producers, like the Welsh farmers in Patagonia whom Williams (1977) has described, are wary of adopting a high relatively labour intensive risk and strategy for increasing their incomes. Yet the conservatism of Longanans is different in cultural style from that of Patagonian farmers. Williams states "the Welsh farmer rationalizes that his long term security is superior to a short term profit that may be denied him in subsequent years" (1977:82). For many Longanan landholders, easy access to a fluctuating income from copra in the short term is preferable to a promise of increased long-term security that requires more work and that may never materialize.

Copra Incomes

Not surprisingly, the largest landholders also earn the most money from copra. Of the five Melanesian Mission sector landholders who control more than thirty hectares, four earned more than \$5,000 from copra between April 1978 and March 1979 (see table 11). Two of the three other

TABLE 11

COPRA INCOMES GREATER THAN \$5,000 AMONG MELANESIAN MISSION LANDHOLDERS

CASE	<u>I.D.</u>	HECTARES	DEPENDENTS	UNADJUSTED INCOME	ADJUSTED* INCOME	
A	60	30+	13	\$ 9,597	\$16,515	
В	90	20+	27	14,860	41,599	
С	166	15+	10	5,539	5,539	
D	175	30+	10	5,296	11,165	
Е	205	20+	10	12,074	12,074	
F	208	30+	12	6,206	6,475	
G	231	30+	12	13,074	32,685	
			94	\$66,646	\$126,052	

*See Appendix 1 for calculation of the multiplier used to determine adjusted income.
landholders who earned unadjusted*incomes of more than \$5,000 control at least twenty hectares, and the remaining landholder controls nineteen hectares. These seven landholders had a combined income of \$66,646. The average income for this group was \$9,520. In contrast, about 72% of Longanan landholders in the research population earned less than \$2,000 annually from copra sales.

Figure 6 summarizes the unadjusted distribution of income among landholders in the Melanesian Mission sector of Longana. The results of the analysis on which table 11 and figures 6 and 7 are based is presented in tabular form as appendix 4. A total of sixty-four landholders earned \$148,809 from copra sales, an average income of \$2,325 per landholding unit. The difference between the seven landholders whose incomes averaged \$9,520 and the overall average of \$2,325 per landholder is striking. If the seven largest incomes are excluded in calculating average income the difference is even greater: for the remaining fiftyseven landholders average income sinks to only \$1,441 per landholding unit.

^{*}Unadjusted income refers to that which I know each individual earned. Adjusted income includes assignment of Longana copra exports unattributed to individuals, to each seller in proportion to his known direct sales. This is explained below and in appendix 3.

FIGURE 6

INCOME EARNED FROM COPRA (UNADJUSTED) FOR 64 LANDHOLDERS



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FIGURE 7

INCOME EARNED FROM COPRA

(ADJUSTED) FOR 64 LANDHOLDERS



On a <u>per capita</u> basis, the discrepancy between the 7 landholders together with their 94 dependents, on the one hand, and the remaining 57 landholders and their 419 dependents, on the other hand, remains large: <u>per capita</u> income for the first group is \$660, versus \$173 for the rest of the 577 people in the research population.

reasonable to see in these figures It is the beginnings of differentiation in terms of income between those who control relatively large plantations and those with smaller holdings. But caution must be exercised in interpreting the data on Longanan incomes from copra sales. Although I was able to account for all the copra exported from Longana during the research period, I was not able to attribute all the copra to individual producers. The total weight of Longana's copra exports (1,945.5 tonnes) exceeds the total weight of the exports attributed to Melanesian Mission producers in appendix 4 by 1,173.148 tonnes. Τn other words, I have been able to identify the sellers of only 40% of the copra that left Longana. A sizeable part the remaining 60% can be credited to the 41% of of Longana's population who were not included in the research population. Nevertheless, the implication of the discrepancy between total exports and sales attributable to individuals is that the incomes in figure 6 are very conservative figures.

appendix 3, I suggest why and how exports In attributable to individuals should be weighted for modelling purposes. The resulting multiplier of 2.5 cannot be applied indiscriminately to all copra sellers, but only to those known to have sold copra directly to export firms rather than through an intermediary buyer. The largest exporters tend to sell directly to export houses (see chapter 6), hence it is their incomes that are increased the most when calculating adjusted income with the multiplier. As figure 7 shows, adjusted incomes reflect an even greater differentiation than do the known, but partial, incomes of figure 6. When adjusted, the Melanesian Mission sector of Longana is estimated to have earned a total of \$223,232, yielding an over all per capita income of \$387. Per capita income was \$1,057 for the 8 landholders (and their 117 dependents) who earned adjusted annual incomes of more than \$5,000, while for the remaining 56 landholders and their 396 dependents, per capita income was only \$202.

Undoubtedly, these statistics distort actual income differences between rich and poor Longanans. To see why these distortions occur and what their consequences are for understanding the distribution of wealth in Longana, the statistics must be interpreted in terms of the social situation they purport to represent. First, copra is not the only source of income available to Longanans. I was not able to collect comprehensive data about money earned from such major enterprises as truck-taxi businesses and trade stores, or from smaller entrepreneurial ventures such as selling cattle, bread or vegetables. I do know that some individuals earned as much from taxis and stores as they gained from copra sales. If income from all sources could be included in the analysis, the discrepancy between the few wealthy large landholders and other Longanans would be even greater. It is the men with capital earned from copra who can afford to buy a truck or stock a new trade store.

Second, copra incomes attributed to the largest earners conceal an invisible trade. Case B in table 11, for example, is an individual who serves as a middleman, routinely buying small quantities of copra from local producers. In this way, he provides a source of income for small copra producers. If I were able to allocate portions of B's income among those whose copra generated that income, the distribution of wealth in Longana would appear smoother. Yet the fact that B is able to buy and store large quantities of other people's copra, then sell it at a profit is indicative of his relative wealth and commensurate control over the incomes of other Longanans.

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Third, another invisible source of income is created when producers sell copra under the cooperative society share number of the person on whose land the copra Copra that I have attributed to a particular was made. landholder, then, may actually have provided income to another individual. Where I have been able to identify people whose incomes are hidden by these sorts of transactions, I have reassigned the income from the shareholder to the actual seller. Like the invisible trade concealed in a middleman's exports, the hidden cash flowing in cooperative society purchases, if matched with the true seller, would smooth the Longanan income distribution Yet at the same time, the very presence of this curve. kind of concealed income suggests one consequence of differential access to plantation land, namely landlords' extraction of a kind of rent from copra-makers to whom they grant access to their plantations.

Finally, some of the copra the wealthiest people exported was produced by wage labourers. This was especially true of cases A, E, and G in table 11 who employed permanent groups of workers from other islands, a practice reminiscent of the structure, if not the style, of European plantations. The cost of paying wage labour reduces the employers' gross incomes from copra, just as a middleman's copra purchases from small producers reduce his apparent income. Further, if wages earned from copra could be accurately attributed to labourers, income distribution in the district would appear slightly less uneven.

In sum, analysis of the copra incomes presented in the first part of this section represents only a portion of Longanans' actual incomes from all sources. The apparent earnings of larger sellers may conceal the incomes of smaller copra producers. This is particularly true of the incomes of middlemen who buy copra from a large number of small producers and of landholders who employ wage labour or who use their cooperative society shares to earn indirect rent from producers. While the accurate attribution of these hidden copra incomes to their earners would tend to smooth the pattern of income distribution in Longana, inclusion of income from sources other than copra would further increase the share accruing to the wealthiest landholders.

The inequality of incomes from copra -- such that a few large landholders earn at least four times as much as the average copra producer -- together with the kinds of entrepreneurial, middleman, landlord and wage labour relationships I have described suggest how differentiation is occurring within the Longanan peasantry. Income inequality arises from inequality in plantation land distribution, which in turn is a consequence of manipulation of flexibility in customary land tenure. As I have observed (chapter 4), Longanan tradition sanctions discrepancies between ordinary people and men of rank. Pre-eminent Longanans customarily have controlled more land and more wealth than others. But the consequences of concentration of land in the hands of a few are different when that land is planted to coconuts.

A class category of "big peasants" is emerging in Longana through inequalities of landholding and copra Big peasants can be defined as a stratum of income. comparatively wealthy peasants; "although having a significant operative committment to the traditional mode, the big peasant will often hold property within the capitalist mode and employ labour on a proletarian basis" (Fitzpatrick 1980:24). Longana big peasants control enough land and produce enough copra that investment becomes an option for them. As we have seen, they begin to act as middlemen, buying smaller producers' copra and trying to As big peasants accumulate more sell it at a profit. profits some expand their middleman activities, for example, opening trade stores or operating taxis. Land purchase is another option as is heavy investment in funerary feasts that are a major route to land control. Thus, big peasants operate more and more as capitalists; they come to hold more land and control more wealth at the

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expense of smaller peasants who ultimately could be expected to fall back on their own labour power as wage workers.

But, for at least two reasons, the process of differentiation is inhibited within Longana's peasantry well short of the general proletarianization of smaller The first reason relates to traditional land peasants. tenure which became the basis for cash cropping as a consequence of the colonial conditions under which peasant copra was introduced (see chapter 2). Traditional land tenure continues to be fundamental to Longanan copra production; while the flexibility of customary tenure can be manipulated, tradition also requires that all Longanans have some land. Big peasants must appear to look after the interests of smaller peasants regarding control over and access to land; the cultural impossibility of landlessness encourages an illusion of equivalence that constrains big peasants; all Longanans must have land and no one can be simply a landless labourer. Further, tradition places redistributive demands on big peasants, as occurs generally for big men in business throughout the Pacific (e.g., Finney 1973a). Some of what appears to be customary redistribution, as I suggested in chapter 4, actually is investment using copra profits to generate future wealth, for example, through land acquisition at funerary feasts.

Nevertheless, customary demands on a big peasant are a levelling influence, both in actually redistributing wealth and in tempering hierarchy with apparent equivalence. While Longanans are well-aware that some men hold more land and make more money than others, they accept inequality as natural, or customary, so long as big peasants' social behaviour minimally conforms to cultural norms about redistribution, reciprocity and generosity.

The marketing structure of copra is a second influence cross-cutting the process of social differentiation. The rent that the chain of copra costs extracts from peasant producers, the volatility of copra prices, and the risks associated with irregular shipping service fall upon big as well as small peasants. As the next chapter shows, big peasants are able to reduce slightly some of the costs and risks involved in marketing their copra; but they share with other Longanan producers an inability to influence the price they receive or to reduce the rent that is extracted from them through the copra price-setting structure.

CHAPTER SIX

THE ISLANDS IN THE WORLD

Copra exports are the mainstay of the economy of Vanuatu, yet the amount of copra produced in the islands is so small as to have no impact on the world copra price. Ni-Vanuatu villagers produce almost three-quarters of the country's copra,¹ yet no one has investigated the effect upon them of the ways in which prices are set, of price fluctuations, and of transport and marketing arrangements.² This chapter examines consequences of the world copra market for small-scale ni-Vanuatu copra producers through analysis of Longanan copra exports.

The first section of the chapter describes the operation of the price-setting mechanisms by which local copra prices are derived and investigates consequences of price fluctuations for producers who are shown to be powerless to affect the prices they receive for their copra. The price of copra on the world market fluctuates widely and, in real dollars, the long-term trend of the copra price is downward. Moreover, it is the small-scale producer who shoulders the largest portion of marketing costs. Options facing producers are further restricted by

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disincentives to improve copra quality. Copra from Vanuatu long has been known as perhaps the worst quality copra in the world, yet because copra is not subject to a grading system, producers in the islands cannot increase their income per tonne of copra by selling a better quality product.

The second section of the chapter investigates the response of ni-Vanuatu copra producers to short-term variations in price as reflected in Longanan copra exports. In 1979, the Condominium government was exploring plans to initiate a national stabilization scheme to cushion producers from severe downward price movements. Advocacy of a price stabilization system was predicated on an assumption that ni-Vanuatu producers would increase production and investment in copra if they were assured of a relatively stable income from copra sales. Yet, as advisers to the Condominium have realized, the nature of the previously uninvestigated and complex relationship between copra prices, the copra marketing system, and village copra production cannot be assumed (Davey and Rogers 1971:27). Analysis of Longana copra exports for 1978-1979 indicates that it is by no means safe to assume that ni-Vanuatu copra producers are responsive to price in the same way as were producers in the colonial plantation economy. I suggest that Longanans respond to rising prices in the short run by maintaining or even reducing prior levels of production. To some extent, this behaviour indicates a precapitalist attitude of satisficing or targeting in which coconuts are a relatively liquid asset that are transformed into copra on a cash-for-need basis. Producing less at higher prices, then, is not a conscious economic strategy to ensure a constant income level; rather, this behaviour reflects the reasons that ni-Vanuatu villagers make copra, reasons that have less to do with money as a regular income than with money as the purchase price of desired goods and services, such as outboard motors, plane tickets, and school fees.

In the final section of the chapter, I examine those factors other than price that affect producers' marketing behaviour. Increased competition among interisland firms and the establishment of a copra oil mill on Santo have increased producers' options with regard to buyers. I suggest that selection of particular modes of sale, as well particular buyers, affect producers' satisfaction with and sense of control over copra transactions. In spite of -- indeed perhaps because of -their inability to influence the ever-changing copra price, Longanans do not act like powerless pricetakers unable to affect the terms of sale of their product. Altering the quantity or quality of the supply of copra is not a strategy available to the Longanan producer as a way of affecting the price of his product. Yet Longanans can and do withhold copra to drive bargains with the inter-island shipping firms that purchase all the local production. These bargains focus on Longanan demand for goods required in copra production that only inter-island vessels can supply. Interactions between Longanans and the coprapurchasing firms follow patterns reminiscent of the lively bargaining in which southern ni-Vanuatu engaged by virtue of their control over supply in the sandalwood trade in the 1820s and 1840s; similar uses of indigenous control over supply characterized negotiation of the terms under which labour was forthcoming for recruitment to Queensland later in the nineteenth century (Shineberg 1967; Scarr 1967).

The Chain of Copra

Over the past decade, Vanuatu exported an average of 32,000 tonnes of copra annually yielding 43% of the country's total export earnings (Bureau of Statistics 1978). In 1976, with exports totalling 34,228 tonnes, the Condominium was the world's third-largest copra exporter; yet the archipelago was a distant third. Papua New Guinea, in second place, exported approximately 2-1/2 times as much copra as Vanuatu; and the Philippines alone, with almost 823,000 tonnes, accounted for 74% of the world's total copra exports (FAO Trade Yearbook 1976).

Except for a few years during World War II, most New Hebridean copra historically has been exported to France where the copra enjoys duty free entry. France has had to purchase some "foreign" copra at world prices because her overseas territories cannot supply sufficient copra to meet France's needs. As Wilson suggested in his <u>Economic Survey of the New Hebrides</u>, "if there were no import duty and New Hebrides copra was offered at the same price as foreign copra, the importers in Marseilles would tend to prefer foreign copra, because on the whole it is of rather better quality. It has only been because of its relative price advantage that New Hebrides copra has been able to hold its own for so long..."(1966:101).

Unipol of Marseilles has been the principal buyer of Vanuatu copra; consequently, the reference price used in this chapter will be CIF Marseilles. The world prices established in the Rotterdam vegetable oil market have guided but not dictated the prices offered for New Herbridean copra in Marseilles. The duty free status and poor quality of ni-Vanuatu copra, together with the virtual monopsony facing sellers have ensured that the price paid for the Vanuatu product over the years has been somewhat below the world price (Wilson 1966:99-100). Copra competes not only with other hard oils such as palm oil, but also with soft edible vegetable oils such as olive oil and peanut oil. A high price for copra will result in some substitution of other oils. Sellers, then, are in a weak bargaining position, and while there is the possibility of seeking other markets for ni-Vanuatu copra in the long run, the poor quality of ni-Vanuatu copra and its favourable position with regard to import taxes have mitigated against this. Whether similar conditions will prevail in the postindependence period remains to be seen, but it seems likely, at present, that close relations with France, including sale of copra or coconut oil to Unipol, will continue.

The price of copra on the world market is subject to great variation and, although between 1950 and 1970 fluctuations in price were fairly moderate, since 1970 the price of copra has alternately plummeted and soared. In 1972 the FOB price fell to 7,100 FNH (\$A89) a tonne.* Then in March 1974, the price reached a record high of 58,500 FNH (\$A730) per tonne. Figure 8 presents the cycle of price fluctuations since 1973.

^{*}The average 1979 exchange rate is used in the dissertation: 100 FNH (francs Nouvelles Hébrides) = 1.25 \$A.



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MONTHLY AVERAGE OF WEEKLY COPRA PRICES, NEW HEBRIDES, 1973-1980

NB. Semi-logarithmic chart of FOB prices. Source: Bureau of Statistics 1980b

'00 FNH

Not only are unstable prices, <u>per se</u>, a deterrent to long range planning and improvement of copra production, "d'autant plus que l'organisation commerciale et le mode de calcul des prix aux producteurs répercutent, voire amplifient, le mouvement de prix à tous les niveaux de la "chaîne du coprah" (Negri 1976). In other words, the marketing of copra within Vanuatu and the way in which the price to the producer is calculated reflect and amplify price changes at every level of the "chain of copra".

The beach price of copra is the price offered the local ni-Vanuatu copra producer when he sells his copra to an inter-island ship on consignment. Set jointly and published by the two largest commercial houses in the islands, Burns Philp and Comptoirs Françaises des Nouvelles Hébrides (CFNH), the beach price is derived from the price of copra CIF in Marseilles. Changes in the CIF price cause Burns Philp and CFNH to revise the prices offered producers in the islands, but, as Figure 9 shows, the beach price is slow to rise in response to changes in the CIF price. The sluggishness of the beach price is due partly to the fixed costs that are passed along to the producer, and partly to conservatism on the part of the price-giving firms such that they respond more quickly to a falling CIF price than to a rising one.

FIGURE 9

COMPARISON OF CHANGES IN

CIF, FOB AND BEACH COPRA PRICES



NB. This figure is derived from notes provided by the Central Planning Office, Vila.

Copra producers in the islands can sell their copra for a "firm" price or on "consignment". Until the mid-1970s the beach price was used for firm copra sales, but now the beach price serves as the usual advance on consignment sales. When a producer sells on consignment, he receives an advance payment, usually the beach price, at the time his copra is loaded aboard an inter-island vessel. The supercargo records the transaction so that the producer can receive his ristourne, a second payment that reflects the difference, less freight, between the advance payment and the CIF price for which the copra actually sold in The producer may wait as much as four months Marseilles. to receive his second payment. Alternatively, should the price fall while the copra is en route, the producer may be obliged to repay part of his advance.³

Approximately half of the New Hebrides' copra in 1978 was sold on consignment (Central Planning Office, Vila, personal communication). The other half of the archipelago's production was sold at one of two kinds of "firm price". The firm price for copra "in the islands" established and published by CFNH and Burns Philp usually is 1000 FNH per tonne, or approximately \$A12.50, above the beach price. This price, like the beach price, is derived by deducting a series of fixed costs and freight charges from the CIF Marseilles price, and by including a margin to compensate for estimated factors of dessication and risk incurred by the exporter.

The New Hebrides Cooperative Federation began offering a second set of firm prices in 1974: one price for the producer selling to his local cooperative society, and a second, higher, price for the society selling to the exceptionally poor copra Cooperative Federation. The market of 1972-1973 had exacerbated local cooperative members' dissatisfaction with selling their societies' copra on consignment, a practice which often yielded no final payment to the producers and no profit to the local society. By instituting a system of firm prices set somewhat below the CFNH/Burns Philp firm price rate, the Cooperatives Federation hoped to cushion the producer from downward price movements. Unfortunately, the firm price system initially plunged the Cooperative Federation into serious financial trouble, and maintenance of sufficient funds to absorb downward price fluctuations remains a problem.

In 1977, the Cooperative Federation provided 50% of the initial capital for Vanua Navigation. By establishing close ties with the new shipping company, the Cooperative Federation attempted with some success to reduce the freight costs involved in inter-island transport of cooperative society copra. Competition from Vanua Navigation caused CFNH and Burns Philp to reduce their freight charges by approximately 25%. Moreover, the major exporters have responded to competition from the alliance of the cooperatives with Vanua Navigation by lowering commissions on firm price copra sales from 15% in 1977 to 5% only two years later. Lower commission rates mean a relatively higher firm price "in dock" in Santo and Vila that is now very close to the net price (see table 12). Despite these changes concerning the firm price offered for copra in the islands, the mode of calculating the price paid for copra in Vila and Santo, from which the firm prices in the island derive, continues to follow an old colonial formula in which the brunt of the costs are borne by the local copra producer.

Table 12 depicts the composition of the price of copra using the hypothetical CIF prices. Overseas freight charges are deducted from the CIF price to determine the FOB price. In 1979, these charges included fixed amounts totalling 5,164 FNH per tonne (\$A64.50) incurred for surveillance, unloading, and freight to Marseilles on one of the Compagnie Générale Maritime container ships that handle two-thirds of the archipelago's exports to Europe. In addition to these fixed costs, variable costs are included for insurance, brokerage, commissions and packing; these total 1.8% of the CIF price per tonne. Finally,

	CASE A		CASE B		CASE C	
CIF less overseas freight:		12,000		36,000		62,000
fixed costs (includes 4300 freight) variable costs 1.8%	5,164 216		5,164 648		5,164 1,116	
Subtotal	5,380	6,620	5,812	31,188	6,280	55,720
<pre>less shrinkage 3.5% FOB less local freight:</pre>	232	6,388	1,057	29,131	1,950	53,770
fixed costs variable costs:	1,778		1,778		1,778	
customs duty* financial charges:	249		2,093		3,822	
l%(FOB + freight) commission:	107		334		581	
5%(FOB + freight) subtotal	$\frac{534}{2,668}$		1,672 5,877		<u>2,904</u> 9,085	
less shrinkage 5%	186	3,720	1,163	23,254	2,234	44,685
NET PRICE less commission:		3,534		22,091		42,451
5% Net price FIRM PRICE IN DOCK Vila/Santo	177	3,357	1,105	20,986	2,123	40,328
less freight: FIRM PRICE IN THE ISLANDS	2,000	1,357	2,000	18,986	2,000	38,328
BEACH PRICE		357		17,986		37,328

TABLE 12						
THE	CHAIN	OF COI	PRA			
Calculation of	Beach	Price	from	CIF	Price	

*3.5% for case A, 7% for cases B and C (see footnote 4). A

All prices in FNH

NB. This table is derived from notes provided by the Central Planning Office, Vila.

about 3.5% shrinkage of the copra is estimated to occur <u>en</u> <u>route</u> to Marseilles, and this factor is included in the calculation of the FOB price.

The net price is reached by deducting local freight charges from the FOB price. These charges include fixed amounts per tonne for handling, loading, and port tax that totalled 1,778 FNH (\$A22) in 1979. In Santo, where Longanan copra goes, all of these charges are levied by the Société Portuaire, a monopoly.

At this level of the price calculation, variable costs have a greater effect on the producer than do the variable costs involved in arriving at the higher FOB In 1978, the customs duty, as applied to the real price. FOB value, ranged from 3.5% to 7% ad valorem, with the rate tied to the copra price.⁴ Exporters who give their clients an advance on consignment sales must themselves wait approximately forty-five days until the copra is sold in Europe before receiving their money; consequently, the exporters pass on to the producer financial charges of 1% of the combined FOB price plus freight. In addition, exporters charge a commission of 5% which also is calculated against the FOB price plus freight. The fact that the exporters deduct their finance charges and commission as a percentage of freight costs discourages hard bargaining between the shipping lines and these export houses, for higher freight charges mean a greater portion for the exporter. An estimated shrinkage factor of 5% is deducted to reach the net price. Finally, the firm price "in dock" in Vila and Santo is set by subtracting an additional 5% commission for the buyer. It is this commission that has been reduced from 15% in response to competition from Vanua Navigation. Firm price for copra in dock in Vila and Santo usually is set 2000 FNH higher than the firm price offered producers in other locations to cover estimated freight charges for inter-island shipping. The beach price is an additional 1000 FNH below the firm price in the islands.

The chain of copra-costs subjects the producer to strong variations in the theoretical beach price even when changes in the CIF price are relatively slight. For example, when the CIF price rises from 900 to 1000 French francs (+11%), the beach price rises from 3,777 to 4,868 FNH (+29%) (Negri 1976). In table 12, the theoretical beach price in case A is only 2% of the CIF price, whereas in cases B and C, the beach prices are 49% and 62%, respectively, of the CIF price. The wide fluctuations that characterize the world copra market, then, are considerably amplified at the level of the producer. Yet this amplification of price movements is not so great as at first appears. Burns Philp and CFNH do not invariably follow the theoretical beach price on a falling market. For example, case A in table 12 yields an absurdly low beach price of 357 FNH. In fact, when the copra market sank to a beach price of 3000 FNH in June 1975, most of the freight and commission costs were reduced in order to support the firm and beach prices and ensure some supply of copra.

The second way in which the theoretical fluctuations in beach price are modified is not to the producer's advantage: as noted earlier, exporters are reluctant to raise the beach price quickly when the CIF price rises. The lack of responsiveness to an improving market, when combined with the necessity of cushioning a very poor market by reducing the charges passed on to the producer, result in a beach price curve that is flatter than the CIF curve (see figure 9).

Price instability often is cited as the culprit that has discouraged both village and plantation producers from investing in improving the quality of both their coconuts and their copra (Wilson 1966, Davey and Rogers 1971). Increased production will be necessary to keep incomes from copra at current levels in the face of international copra prices that are expected to move downward in real terms. In areas like Longana where little agricultural land remains available for planting coconuts, increased production can only result from improved management of existing coconut holdings. The problems and prospects for increasing production through improved agricultural management are discussed in other chapters. For present purposes, it is sufficient to note that change in Longanan management practices is occurring very slowly and is restricted to a few of the larger copra producers.

In the future, producers may have the option of improving the quality of their copra as well as the quality and quantity of their coconuts. The possibility exists that a grading scheme will be introduced in which better quality copra will receive a higher price than the ordinary ni-Vanuatu product, known as "rubbish copra" (Malosu 1980:101). Grading of copra might accompany the operation of a government-sanctioned copra oil mill, for production of an odorless edible oil requires high quality copra.⁵ Currently, ni-Vanuatu copra, which yields a high oil content despite its quality, is sold as a technical rather than an edible oil, but the demand for the former relative to edible oils is expected to decline (Davey and Rogers 1971).

Despite anticipated changes in the demand for "rubbish copra" vis-a-vis a higher quality product, "it is not necessarily the case that quality pays." (Ibid:20). When the Natural Resources Committee of the New Hebridean Representative Assembly considered copra production in 1977, it noted that "more research needs to be done into the costs and benefits of quality improvement -- it may not be worth attempting" (3 January 1977: RA/NR/WP9). The market for low quality oil has remained strong and the difference in price between good and poor quality oil remains small. Davey and Rogers' recommendation still is true today: "The fundamental point is that, under present market conditions, it is almost certainly uneconomic for the individual producer in the New Hebrides to go over to hot-air drying to achieve better quality copra" (1971:21).

Price Responsiveness among Copra Producers

The preceding section has described the impact of copra price-setting mechanisms on ni-Vanuatu producers. Additional constraints that work against improving the quantity and quality of copra in Vanuatu also have been suggested. In this section, I present analysis of Longanan copra exports with a view toward explaining producer behaviour regarding price fluctuations in the market context described above.

The data analyzed include copra receipts from five sources: (1) a relatively large producer of copra who dealt directly with the big export houses; (2) a private

served as a middleman between copra buyer who small producers and the exporters; (3) two cooperative societies that handled approximately one-third of Longana's copra; and, (4) the copra returns that each ship carrying copra files with the Bureau of Statistics in Vila. Taken together, these sources account for all the copra exported from Longana between April 1978 and March 1979.6 These data are supplemented with analysis of responses to questions on copra marketing administered, as part of a larger questionnaire, to seventeen household heads representing a population of sixty-eight individuals, and information gained from interviews regarding with the decisions producers reach about the sale of their copra.

The research population for analysis of Longana copra exports was confined to the Melanesian Mission sector of the district which comprised 577 people, or 59% of the population.7 According to my research, the Melanesian Mission sector exported almost 1,148 tonnes of copra between April 1978 and March 1979. If the research population is assumed to have produced copra in proportion to its representation in the Longanan population as a whole, copra exports for the district can be estimated at approximately 1,945.5 tonnes. This figure compares well with the Bureau of Statistics estimate, based on returns from the ships that bought copra, which places Longanan

exports for calendar 1978 at 1,949 tonnes. As noted in Chapter 5, individuals who produced less than twenty-five tonnes of copra per year accounted for about half of Longana's total copra exports in 1978-1979. A few larger producers, seven out of a total of sixty-four landholding producers in the Melanesian Mission sector of Longana, exported the remaining half of the district's copra. As table 13 shows, the seven individuals who sold more than twenty-five tonnes accounted for 45% of Melanesian Mission adherents' exports attributable to named individuals, and for 57% of estimated exports for the research population. Estimated tonnage was added in proportion to known direct sales to ships, using a multiplier whose calculation is described in appendix 3. No estimated tonnage was added for case C, who sold all his copra through a cooperative, or for case E, whose exports were fully accounted for in the records he made available to me.

Price Responsiveness and the Larger Producer

Do producers who export more than twenty-five tonnes a year respond to rising prices by increasing copra exports in the short term? Planners in the archipelago, including most recently the team researching and developing a copra price stabilization scheme in 1979,

TABLE 13

LARGE COPRA PRODUCERS AMONG MELANESIAN MISSION RESIDENTS

	April	1978-March 1979	Kilos Added		
	K	nown Kilos	by Estimation:	Total	
CASE	I.D.	Exported	multiplier 2.5*	Kilos Exported	
А	60	49,183	36,413	85,596	
В	90	93,821	140,731	234,552	
С	166	29,384	-0-	29,384	
D	175	25,872	30,889	56 , 761	
E	205	53,396	-0-	53,396	
F	208	25,776	1,419	27,195	
G	231	68,812	103,218	172,030	
		346,244		658,914	
	out o	f 770,389 kg.,	out of	1,147,859 kg.,	
	or 45	% of attributable	or 578	of estimated	
	Melan	esian Mission	Melane	sian Mission	
	secto	r production	sector	production	

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*See Appendix 3 for calculation of multiplier.

have assumed that a positive correlation exists between price and the supply of copra forthcoming from indigenous smallholders. Generally, this assumption has been an explicit one, made necessary by an absence of information regarding ni-Vanuatu producers' responsiveness to price and supported by a belief that on New Herbridean plantations, at least, "production increases when the price increases above, or remains above, a certain level" (New Hebrides Representative Assembly, 3 January 1977:RA/NR/WP9). Yet studies of peasant societies, and in particular studies of Melanesian involvement in cash-crop production and wagelabour migration suggest that rising prices do not always encourage smallholders to produce more. The shape of labour supply curves throughout Melanesia, if not actually backward sloping, generally have been inelastic to price increases in the upper regions of the curves.

Analysts tend to agree that part-subsistence farmers will cease cash-crop production when the prices they can get for their crops fall below a minimum threshold. Inelasticity of supply in the <u>upper</u> price ranges, however, has been credited to a variety of factors. For example, Brookfield (with Hart 1971:260-262), following Fisk (1962), suggests that structural limitations, especially limitations regarding scale of production, may affect inelasticity of supply at higher prices. Other

studies focus on the notion of "target income" as an aspect of peasant producer behaviour that affects labour supply. For example, Bollard finds that on Atiu in the Cook Islands "it appears that extra money can induce extra labour efforts up to some target income, after which the farmer becomes increasingly insensitive to further inducements" Of course, both the effectiveness of money as (1978:326).an inducement to produce and the operation of a Chayanovian "drudgery" factor are highly situationally specific. Nevertheless, researchers in Papua New Guinea have generalized that peoples' lack of interest in cash-cropping coffee is "a reflection of the value each community placed on money in relation to the effort required "(Shand and Straatmans 1974:190; see also Moulik 1973).

Sutti Ortiz represents another approach to explaining the relationship between peasant farmers' output and rising prices. She suggests: "prices are taken into account only in so far as they are expected to rise and fall within a certain range; more specific calculations are not made, and would, in fact, be an impossible task for a peasant farmer" (1967:216). Part-subsistence coffee growers in Colombia, Ortiz argues, can readjust to small price changes only by improving or intensifying harvest activities; the decision to plant and produce coffee is a long-term choice in which farmers take into account those factors which they can control (see also Roseberry 1976:47-48). For the Colombian coffee grower or the Longanan copra maker, price is not a factor under the producer's control.

Do Longanan producers exhibit the relatively positive response to rising prices assumed by planners in Vanuatu or the relatively negative response that analysts of peasant societies would expect? Those Longanans who produce the most copra could be expected to be most aware of price changes and most oriented toward responding to changing market conditions. Yet the case of a relatively large-scale producer (case E in table 13) suggests a negative relationship between copra price and output. As prices rose, this individual exported less copra.

Figure 10 shows kilograms-per-day as a function of price that Charlie (as I shall call case E in table 13) sold to ships calling in Longana in 1977 and 1978. Charlie manages 24.35 hectares of coconuts located on the coastal plain near one of the major Longanan anchorages. Charlie began to keep thorough records of his copra sales in 1970, a practice he continues to follow. He notes details of each copra transaction: the daily tonnage, number of bags, dollar amount received, and the name of the firm buying the copra. He also notes the price per tonne at which he believes the copra was sold.

FIGURE 10

KILOGRAMS OF COPRA EXPORTED AS A FUNCTION OF PRICE CHARLIE RECEIVED FOR COPRA IN 1977

100%=366 KG. per day, maximum for 1977 and 1978


Analysis of Charlies' records in terms of variables of price and kilograms exported required calculation of a variable KGDAY (kilograms-per-day); this is simply the number of kilograms exported in a transaction divided by the number of days that elapsed since the previous The variable KGDAY controls for the number of shipment. days at which copra sold for a particular price. For example, if a beach price of 17¢ a kilogram prevailed for 107 days while a price of 16¢ held for only 18 days, the fact that more copra sold for the former amount is not just a function of price.⁸ Where more than one shipment sold at the same price, the KGDAY values were averaged. As figure 10 indicates, using the variable KGDAY, Charlie sold most of his copra in 1977 and 1978 for between 15¢ and 16¢ a kilogram, although the price Charlie received for some of his copra reached as high as 21¢ in 1977 and 19¢ in 1978. In 1977, his volume of copra sales declined as the price rose from 12¢ to 14¢, then increased markedly when the price rose through 15c to 16c; but when the price rose to 20¢ and 21¢, Charlie sold less copra.

If variation in Charlie's copra exports is indeed a function of price fluctuation, his marketing behaviour appears typically Melanesian; there is a very positive response to price increases in the lower ranges followed by an increasingly negative response as prices continue to

rise (Brookfield 1971:261). Presumably, should the price fall below a certain minimum threshold, Charlie would cease investing labour in copra production entirely. Charlie's records lend support to this assumption. In 1972, when the price Charlie received for his copra averaged only \$44 per tonne, or 4-1/2c a kilogram, he did not stop producing copra entirely, as other Longanan smallholders say they however, he sold only 17.852 tonnes of copra that did; year. In the following year when prices rose gradually to \$150 per tonne Charlie sold 40.943 tonnes of copra. Charlie's greatly reduced output suggests that very low prices were a real factor in his decisions regarding the allocation of labour to copra production, as indeed he claims they were.

Is the increasingly negative response of Charlie's labour supply, as measured in terms of his copra sales, truly attributable to rising prices? Analysis of the volume of Charlie's copra exports as a function of price requires exploration of other possible explanations for the variability of his exports such as seasonality and irregularity of shipping service. As figure 11 shows, Charlie's largest exports occurred in May of each year, with smaller peaks in March and September or October. Although Charlie sold his greatest absolute volume of copra 240

FIGURE 11

COPRA SALES BY MONTH

FOR A LARGER LONGANAN PRODUCER



in May, he sold his greatest number of kilograms per day in December of 1977 and between January and March of 1978.

Longana is a weather shore while the southeast tradewinds blow, and the tradewinds prevail steadily from May or June until September or October each year. The fact that fewer ships call at Longana passages during the tradewind season may be reflected in the pattern of Charlie's exports. Yet his copra sales do not follow the pattern of Longana exports obtained from the national copra returns (see figure 12). This may be due in part to the fact that a ship's copra returns are logged according to the day she leaves her home port, while Charlie recorded his sales on the day the ship called in Longana. Thus, for example, a copra sale Charlie listed as occurring in May could be credited to April on the national returns. However, the fact that the curve of Charlie's exports per month consistently deviates from that for Longana as a whole suggests that transportation and weather problems were not the sole cause of Charlie's variable exports. Rather, his production for export seems to follow his own bimonthly cycle -- that is, Charlie sold his copra when he felt he had enough to sell.

Decisions about marketing copra, like decisions about producing it, concern how much is enough. Enough is a relative measure based on family needs and alternative

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FIGURE 12

LONGANAN MONTHLY COPRA EXPORTS

COMPARED TO CHARLIE'S EXPORTS, 1978

100%=134,563 Kg. for Longana, 9363 Kg. for Charlie



demands on the seller's time in particular situations (Ortiz 1973:7-8; Berry 1980:328). For Charlie, a storage shed full of copra could make selling worthwhile even if his current need for money was low. A planned trip to Santo to buy supplies could increase his need for ready cash and encourage him to sell whatever copra he had on hand. His estimation of the risk involved in selling or withholding his copra, based on expectations concerning future shipping service also affect his marketing decisions.

Weather, availability of transport, and Charlie's own production cycle, all appear to have affected the volume of his copra exports. Price fluctuations alone by no means explain his marketing behaviour, but other factors influencing his decisions about making and marketing copra are difficult to quantify. In evaluating methodological alternatives for understanding farmers' decisions, Barlett has observed that in many agricultural decisions, qualitative factors are crucial to profit calculations: "With multiple goals for each household, complex resource mixes, and the diverse characteristics of the choices being considered, estimation of opportunity cost often may be more an expression of researchers' values than an estimation of the behaviour of the people under study" (Barlett 1980c:158). Charlie's careful record-keeping

provides one measure of his own decisions. His books are compatible with a Chayanovian profit calculation -- i.e., one in which only cash costs are deducted from the gross product of the family farm and in which no wage is imputed to unpaid family labour. But his records also suggest qualitative dimensions affecting his decisions that arise from the Longanan situation and from Charlie's own personality.

Charlie is a meticulous businessman who values routine and order. He is not trained in book-keeping, but he carefully records copra income in his recordbook. He does not enter any copra expenses. These are almost entirely labour costs, of which he keeps a mental record. Charlie regularly employs six copra-makers. He keys their wages to hundred dollar changes in the price of copra. For example, if the beach price is over \$300 a tonne, he pays his workers \$3 a bag for green copra; should the price fall to between \$200 and \$300, he reduces the green bag rate to Thus Charlie is in some respects clearly responsive to \$2. price fluctuations, but, consciously or unconsciously, he routinizes and smooths out daily price variations. For himself and his workers, Charlie is able to introduce order and regularity in the face of an inherently uncertain market.

Charlie says he knows that the cost of six workers making one complete pass through the plantation will be about \$400 if the wage is \$3 per green bag of copra. He also believes on the basis of past experience that a good yield for the plantation is seven tonnes at one cutting. He does not calculate his costs against his yields, but his estimates are more or less consistent with each other --\$400 in wages would represent about six tonnes of copra. In figuring his costs, Charlie does not attribute a wage to the labour he and his family contribute to the copra production. He keeps no records of how much he, his wife and several grown sons make. Sometimes the children sell directly to the ships. Sometimes they sell to their father for ready cash.

Several times a year, Charlie entered in the margins of his recordbook the price of a tonne of copra. These entries, I believe, reflect Charlie's attitude toward changes in the copra price rather than his awareness, <u>per</u><u>se</u>, of copra price fluctuations. Although Charlie recorded prices, he did not calculate the price per tonne that he actually received in his copra transactions. Division of the cash he received by the kilograms of copra he sold indicates that the price Charlie received for his copra frequently differed from the price he noted in the margin of his book. For example, during 1977, Charlie recorded

that he sold copra for \$155 a tonne from January to May and that thereafter he received \$110 a tonne. Yet, actually, Charlie never received less than \$160 a tonne in the first half of 1977 or less than \$120 a tonne in the second half of the year. In other words, the price he listed in his recordbook was consistently lower than the price he received. Although in some years the discrepancy between the prices Charlie listed in his book and the prices he received was smaller than in 1977, the tendency for the actual price to be greater than the listed price in Charlie's book is pronounced.

Ortiz has shown that although peasant farmers lack the information and "process solving approach" that they would need to determine the relative utility of options, "farmers are aware, however, what is the lowest likely return and its relation to minimum bearable income (focus loss point)" (1980:195). The prices Charlie recorded seem to have provided this kind of marker for him, a threshold indicating the minimum price that he should consider acceptable. It is not clear how he arrived at these prices that deviated from the published beach prices, but it is clear that the prices in Charlie's book were not entered in ignorance. Copra prices are broadcast daily and Charlie listened frequently to these transmissions. Some confusion over the correct beach price may arise from the fact that five different copra prices are announced on the radio in three languages and two currencies. In view of Charlie's other business practices, however, it appears that Charlie indeed followed the copra market and, although his information was imperfect, he generally was aware of the prevailing prices.

His response to the market was to smooth out day to day price fluctuations in his own records, focusing instead on what he saw as more or less long-range trends. Such a practice is consistent with his formula for setting copra wages discussed earlier in this chapter. It is also a practice that Ortiz has documented among Columbian peasants:

> The numerical price given [by farmers] is not necessarily a true representation of the perceived price ... The numerical price, like the qualitative judgement of price, is the label for a category that includes a variety of prices observed. Prices other than the one used to label the category are likely to be forgotten and lost as material for concept formation (1980:182).

Charlie ran a store selling tinned foods, rice, soap and similar goods. Like his copra records, Charlie's storebook is a meticulous document. Charlie entered gross sales in his storebook daily, but never calculated expenses against these sales. On the first pages of the storebook, Charlie entered \$201.60, the amount of money he used to start his store in 1967. At that time he decided what information was important to put in a recordbook, although he had no training in bookkeeping. His purpose in keeping such a record book, he said, was to monitor the prosperity of his business by comparing the volume of store sales with the amount of his initial capital. Charlie believes that the \$201.60 he invested in his store continues to serve as a marker warning him where the brink of financial failure lies. I suggest that the copra prices in the margins of Charlie's recordbook serve a similar purpose. They are signposts guiding Charlie's transactions, and they mark not the price he expects to receive but rather the minimum price that, based on past experience, he is prepared to Should he be offered prices below the "signpost" accept. prices, Charlie would seek a different buyer: in fact, he has done this in the past. Like Ortiz's Columbians (1980:192), Charlie seems to base such decisions on the changed range of the returns he is receiving rather than on altered copra price trends.

As with the relationship between capital and sales in his store, Charlie seems content to receive a price for his copra that is the same as, or greater than, the price entered in his recordbook. He was not aware that since 1976 the price he actually received from his copra generally has been lower than the official beach price. In 1977, Charlie began selling all his copra to one of the large export houses that set the beach price in the

Charlie did not calculate the actual price at islands. which his copra was sold, but he believed that this firm gave him a particularly good price. On the contrary, however, except for his first two transactions in 1977, the actual price Charlie received was consistently below the official beach price (see figure 13). The fairness of the firm's purchasing practices cannot be evaluated here. What is important for present purposes is that Charlie did not know that he sold his copra at a discounted rate. Like ni-Vanuatu copra producers generally, Charlie seeks to strike a good bargain in selling his copra. He is well-aware of price levels and fluctuations. He is responsive to price, and in his own way evaluates the price he receives vis-avis market prices. But his calculations are general and focus on staying above a threshold price in his copra sales.

Price Responsiveness and the Smaller Producer

Do small producers' responses to short term price variations reflect patterns similar to that just described for Charlie, a relatively large producer? As noted in the preceding chapter, factors affecting production decisions are different for small and large Longanan copra exporters. The small producer usually makes

FIGURE 13

COMPARISON OF OFFICIAL BEACH PRICE AND THE PRICE

CHARLIE RECEIVED FOR COPRA IN 1977



DAY/MONTH

copra as a means of earning money for a specific purpose. He or she has a short-term target amount of cash, not necessarily a more long-range target income, that can be achieved through copra production. For producers with this kind of motivation, price may be a crucial factor in deciding how much copra to make -- i.e. the weight of copra needed to meet the producer's cash target is an inherent consequence of the copra price -- but a rising price is not an incentive to produce more. Rather than responding to a rising or steady copra market by increasing production, such individuals can be expected to exhibit a tendency toward reducing the volume of production as prices rise. Analysis of Longanan small-producer marketing behaviour will suggest that indeed a tendency to adjust levels of production downward can be seen as the price of copra rises.

For reasons to be discussed in the final section of this chapter, small producers sell very little copra directly to export firms' ships. Instead, local businessmen and the cooperatives provide the small producer both with ready cash for a few bags of copra, and with a store in which to spend money earned from copra sales. Cooperatives purchase approximately one-third of the copra exported from Longana, and almost all of this copra is produced by individuals who sell less than twenty-five tonnes a year. The two Longanan cooperative societies have 62 and 146 shareholders, respectively. In fiscal 1978 (April, 1978 - March, 1979), the smaller society purchased from its members and a few other producers 139.687 tonnes of copra worth \$29,745; the larger society bought 502.775 tonnes of copra valued at \$107,224. The records of the larger society form the basis for the following discussion of small producers' price responsiveness. The statistical analysis of the society's copra trade is summarized in table 14.

Not all shareholders in Longana cooperatives market copra through their society.⁹ In 1978-1979, 127 of the larger society's 146 members shared in the annual distribution of profits among members. Any shareholder who sold copra or cocoa through the society, bought goods at the society store, or hired one of the society's trucks received a proportional rebate from the society's profits. Of these 127 members, 110 sold copra to the society. The average value of the copra that each of these 110 shareholders sold was \$974.77 representing approximately 4.642 tonnes of copra per shareholder.¹⁰ Figure 14 shows the frequency distribution of the cash amount of annual copra sales by the cooperative shareholders. Only four society members sold \$3000 or more (approximately 14.286 tonnes) to the society, and of these, only one person

TABLE 14 SUMMARY OF STATISTICS FOR THE LARGER LONGANA COOPERATIVE For the Fiscal Year, April 1978 - March 1979 No. of shareholders 146 No. of active shareholders 123 No of copra-selling shareholders 110 Average annual copra sales to cooperative per (110): \$974.77 shareholder representing approximately 4.642 tons Total paid by coop to purchase copra \$107,224.00 representing approximately 502.775 tons For 282 days between March and December, 1978 No. of copra sales to cooperative 1,285 Total paid by cooperative to purchase copra \$77,748.15 representing 407.691 tons Average maximum amount paid to an individual* \$161.94 Absolute maximum amount paid to an individual \$423.30 Average minimum amount paid to an individual* \$12.26 Absolute minimum amount paid to an individual \$2.60 \$59.00 Average amount paid per transaction representing 318 kg. Daily Activity: Average number of transactions per day 4.8 range: (2 - 9)Average amount paid by coop to buy copra daily \$281.96 range: (\$63.51 - \$675.43) Ave. amt. of copra purchased daily by coop 1.499 tons Copra Summaries: 43 No. of copra summaries Average number of days per summary 6.5 range: (1 - 12) Avg. amt. paid by coop for copra per summary \$1,808.10 range: (\$203.05 - \$4,252.80)Avg. amt. of copra purchased by coop per summary 9.481 tons range: (1.562 - 17.593)*These terms are defined on p. 257

marketed more than twenty-five tonnes of copra through the society.¹¹ Of those who sold copra to the coop, more individuals in table 14 appear in the category selling between \$1000 and \$1499 than in any other category; sales in this category represent an approximate volume of between five and seven tonnes of copra.

Although figure 14 indicates that indeed the majority of the cooperative's copra trade is with small sellers, data from the annual profit distribution can reveal little about producers' responsiveness to price for First, as discussed in the preceding chapter, two reasons. the volume of a shareholder's copra sales often is not the same as the volume of that shareholder's copra production. Not only do shareholding producers sell copra outside the cooperative, they allow -- in fact, may encourage -- other producers to sell copra under their share number at the Thus the volume of copra sold under a cooperative. particular share in the cooperative does not necessarily shareholder's actual copra production. represent that Second, each shareholder's copra sales are totalled for the annual profit distribution. The dates on which a member brought copra to the cooperative and the amount of copra sold in each transaction cannot be determined from annual profit distribution data. However, a second source of information is more useful in this regard. The cooperative



COPRA SALES

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FIGURE 14

COOPERATIVE SOCIETY FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF COPRA SALES AMONG SHAREHOLDERS, 1978-1979

secretary records the date, weight, and cash value of individual copra sales on dockets that he then summarizes every few days. These summaries provide information about the volume of sales to the cooperative at different prices and at different times of the year. Data from these summaries, reproduced in table 15, appendix 5, provide the basis for discussion in the remainder of this section of the chapter.

From 8 March through 14 December 1978, the cooperative secretary recorded forty-three summaries of the society's copra purchases. Once the secretary summarized copra sales to the cooperative after a single busy day, and once he allowed twelve days of slow trading to elapse between summaries. The mean number of days covered by each summary was 6-1/2 days.

During the 282 days covered by the summaries, the cooperative paid out \$77,748.15 to purchase 407.691 tonnes of copra from its members and from a few producers not selling under a cooperative share. The cash amounts summarized range from a minimum of \$203.05 covering one day, to \$4,252.80 over eight days. The mean cash total recorded per summary was \$1,808.10. The amount of copra that the cooperative purchased during the period covered by a single summary varied from a minimum of 1.562 tonnes for one day to a maximum of 17.593 tonnes for eleven days. The mean tonnage of copra purchases per summary was 9.481.

The summaries listed the weight and cash value of each copra sale to the cooperative, although the individual sales could not be identified with shareholders in the recording data, I noted the cash and summaries. In kilogram amounts of the maximum and minimum individual sales to the cooperative during each period covered by a summary. For example, the largest transaction covered by the summary dated 31 March was a purchase of 983 kilograms for which the cooperative paid the seller \$176.90. The smallest sale to the cooperative included in the same summary was 95 kilograms valued at \$16.50. This summary covered a period of four days during which twenty-four copra sales to the cooperative took place. From this type of data concerning the cooperative's 1,285 copra purchases from March to December 1978, I averaged, respectively, the maximum and the minimum amounts of cash paid to an individual seller. The average maximum amount per summary paid to an individual for copra was \$161.94, and the largest cash amount that the cooperative paid to a single seller was \$423.30. The minimum amount paid to an individual -- in other words, the smallest copra sales to the cooperative recorded on the summaries -- averaged \$12.26. The smallest purchase of copra that the

cooperative made during the period was a mere \$2.60 paid to a producer, probably a child, selling about thirteen kilograms of copra. The average amount of copra sold to the cooperative per transaction was 318 kilograms worth an average of \$59.¹²

During the nine months that the summaries cover, the price paid to sellers averaged 19¢ per kilogram, ranging from 13¢ to a high of 27¢. Figure 15 shows changes in price as derived from copra summaries over the period from 8 March to 14 December. Data from each summary is entered in the following manner in the lower portion of the table under the price prevailing at the time of the In order to control for the different number of summary. days covered in the summaries, I have divided the total number of kilograms sold to the cooperative in one summary by the number of sales that are included in that summary. The resulting average number of kilograms per transaction is plotted on the chart with the date of the summary to which it pertains. Figure 15 demonstrates that the average number of kilos sold to the cooperative did not show marked seasonal variation. The average volume of individual transactions with the cooperative remained fairly constant throughout the year. There were no pronounced periods of peak trading volume and the single sharp drop in volume, in the summary dated 11 April, recovered only a day later.



FIGURE

ц С While no relationship appears to exist between the time of year at which Longanans sold copra to the cooperative and the amount they brought to market, there is evidence that the average amount of copra sold declined as the price of copra increased in late 1978. The scattergram in figure 16 shows a fairly strong negative association between the variables of copra price and the average number of kilograms sold to the cooperative. The strength of this correlation is suggested by a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient of -.58382 which is significant at the .00002 level.¹³

Is it reasonable to conclude that Longanan copra producers who market through the cooperative society sell less copra at higher prices than at lower prices? First, other variables must be examined. The volume of individual transactions is only one variable among others that may reflect price changes, and some producers' responses to price would not affect this variable. For example, if the cooperative's regular clientele made more frequent sales of fairly constant amounts of copra, or if additional producers entered the market at high prices selling the same amounts of copra per transaction as regular producers, the volume of individual sales would not record an increase. Other indicators, however, suggest that regular sellers did not significantly increase production, nor did



FIGURE 16

SCATTERGRAM OF VOLUME OF COPRA SOLD

TO COOPERATIVE BY PRICE

sufficient numbers of new producers come forth to affect the total volume of copra that the cooperative exported in 1978. Analysis of these indicators is presented in appendix 5.

The relationship between copra price and the average number of kilograms sold to the cooperative can be expressed simply and mathematically; the relationship between copra price and producers' marketing decisions is more complex. Longanans who sell copra to the cooperative, while generally small producers, are not a homogeneous In fact, as noted in chapter 5, some individuals group. whom the cooperative credits with copra sales are not producers at all. Producers may be children and teenagers, adult women acting alone or in groups, church work parties, "companies", or adult male producers all of whom sell copra to the cooperative under their own and/or other people's shares. Each type of producer undoubtedly has a different awareness of and responsiveness to price. Nevertheless, the goal of earning a target amount of cash through the sale of copra is shared by many of the diverse producers who sell to the cooperative (see chapter 5).

Producers who sell to the cooperative are not uniformly well aware of current prices or of short-term price trends and so cannot calculate their profits as, for example, Gladwin (1975) has suggested Ghanaian fish sellers

do, because they lack enough information. Even if production were guided by perfect knowledge of prices, the producer can only estimate roughly the amount of green copra needed to provide the requisite weight of dried copra. No producer could regularly make just enought copra to meet his or her cash target, no more, no less. Hence, even if all small producers consistently sought to reduce production in response to rising prices, the inverse relationship between price and product would be imprecise. Further, decisions about how much copra to make are responses, as chapter 5 indicated, to a variety of factors related to labour supply, weather, transportation, facilities for drying and storing copra, and so on. Price is one of these factors, but not an especially important The price of copra becomes crucial to the producer one. only when it falls so low that the small producer is hardpressed, or even unable, to meet his modest cash goals through copra sales. At the relatively high price levels of 1978, short-term fluctuations have little effect on producers who seek to attain particular cash targets, except in so far as these producers are able to lower their rough estimates of how much copra will be enough.

In sum, the supply response of copra producers to price changes and to other variables is complex. This response hinges on the decision-making processes of smaller

larger Longanan copra-makers, processes guiding and production in which price is not a major factor unless it is seen as exceptionally low in terms of the range of prices experienced in the past. Further, decisions regarding the amount of copra to produce -- as measured by sales to the cooperative and, in the case of a larger producer, by direct sales to export firms -- are only one aspect of producer responsiveness to price. Longanans react to copra prices by considering where and how to sell their copra, as well as by deciding how much copra to make at a particular time. As the final section of this chapter will show, awareness of price differences and estimates about price trends colour marketing decisions, but these decisions also go beyond considerations of price.

Pricetakers as Decision-makers

Longanan producers do not have to understand the chain of copra to know that they cannot influence the official copra price. Yet they know too that the marketing decisions they make as individuals have consequences for the profitability of each sale. Further, producer's marketing decisions affect their satisfaction with the transaction. Despite their position as apparently powerless pricetakers in the world copra market, Longanans seize opportunities to drive a bargain and make a profit. Like the Chimbu farmer cited in <u>Colonialism</u>, <u>Development</u> <u>and Independence</u>, the Longanan copra producer "is not responsive so much to a 'market', which he cannot even understand, as to perceived opportunities for finding a road to wealth..." (Brookfield 1972:168). The perceived opportunities that govern Longanans' decisions about where and how to sell their copra are the subject of this section of the chapter.

Longanan producers face three alternatives with regard to where to market their copra: an inter-island ship, a cooperative society, or a local middleman who in turn deals with the ships. In general, those who deal directly with the ships are either large producers, like Charlie, or middlemen. In contrast, as discussed earlier, cooperative societies mainly attract copra from those of their members who are small producers. Virtually all of a middleman's clientele are small producers.

The main exception to this pattern is that small producers who happen to have copra ready for market on the day a ship calls will sell directly to the exporter. Unless a ship is immediately available, however, producers with a few hundred kilograms of copra to sell will not deal directly with exporters. Small producers lack both copra storage facilities and ready transport to the two passages

where ships call in Longana. Shipping is irregular, radio bulletins regarding ships' schedules are unreliable,¹⁴ and trucking service seldom can be arranged on short notice; the small producer cannot plan to make and transport his copra so as to coincide with the arrival of a ship. Therefore, small producers sell to middlemen or cooperatives that will transport the copra to a storage dock¹⁵ and purchase the copra immediately for a firm cash price.

Some producers habitually sell all their copra to a cooperative or to a single entrepreneur. For example, questionnaires administered to the residents of Waileni (population: 68) indicated that five of the seventeen households sold all their copra to the larger cooperative. One household sold only to a particular entrepreneur. The remaining eleven households sold copra to the cooperative and to at least one additional buyer.

Is the tendency to sell to more than one purchaser a strategy for minimizing marketing risks?¹⁶ Economic anthropologists have adapted classic terms such as risk aversion as they come to see "agricultural choices as fluid and responsive to the decision-making environment" (Barlett 1980<u>b</u>:173; Cancian 1980:1973). Producers tend to make flexible decisions that allow for a variety of contingent strategies under conditions of uncertainty (Ortiz

In analyzing Melanesian economic behaviour, 1980:199). Brookfield (1971) and others have argued that strategies which allow producers to keep open a variety of options for earning income or provisioning their families are characteristic. But the decision to sell to a variety of buyers does not necessarily reflect a similar concern with minimizing risk at the marketing level. Longanans I interviewed disapproved of those who sold copra olbaot 'hither and yon' as if by these sales a producer and his household might be viewed as disorganized or avoiding decision-making. More important, a small producer cannot minimize his risks to any substantial extent by selling to a variety of buyers. Individual Longana middlemen and cooperatives alike are entwined in the chain of world copra prices. The real risk, as Longanans know, lies in the volatility of prices in an imperfect market that they Hedging one's bets by selling to a cannot influence. variety of local copra buyers minimizes a risk that is insignificant in comparison to the wide fluctuations in price that affect all ni-Vanuatu producers and buyers.

But, in another way, risk can be an important consideration in a small producer's decision to sell to a cooperative or a middleman. Specifically, a producer must decide whether he is willing to forego some current income in anticipation of a greater long-term reward. The

cooperatives buy copra at prices slightly under those offered by private middlemen, but cooperative members receive a second payment at the end of the cooperative's The volume of a member's sales to the financial year. profitability of the cooperative cooperative and the society as a whole determine the size of the second payment to each shareholder. Cooperative members thus are tied not only to the instability of the world copra market, but also to the prosperity of their own cooperative society. In some years the second payment has been small, and producers say that the size of the end-of-year cash distribution has negatively affected their subsequent willingness to sell to the cooperatives.

What factors other than price influence small producers' decisions to sell to a cooperative or a middleman? Often the decision depends on the relative accessibility of a buyer. Small producers who do not sell habitually to a single purchaser usually make their marketing decisions <u>after</u> producing the copra. With little covered storage available and the everpresent threat of a tropical downpour, a producer whose copra is dried and bagged urgently seeks a market for his produce. The cooperative societies keep regular hours; private middlemen do not. When the middleman is not at home, producers may take their copra to the cooperative for sale. When the

cooperative is closed, especially on Saturdays, cooperative members with copra to sell take their produce to private buyers.

A person who has produced only a few bags of copra may carry the copra to market on his or her back. For such producers, who are mainly children and old people, the proximity of a purchaser is of crucial importance. Since these producers prefer ready cash to the hope of long-term profit, they favour middlemen over cooperatives as copra Thus while a man, his wife and his grown children buvers. may prefer to pay for transporting their copra to the cooperative, younger children and elders in the family may carry what little copra they make to a nearby private Even those who prefer to sell to the cooperative buyer. may sell copra privately if a middleman's truck appears when the copra is ready for market, for transportation can be difficult to arrange and unreliable. In a district of scattered hamlets with poor internal communication, accessibility of the copra buyer is an important factor in producers' marketing decisions.

The relative liquidity of cooperatives and private middlemen is another consideration that affects a Longanan's copra marketing choices. Cooperative secretaries must buy copra with the cash on hand in the society. A heavy volume of copra sales to the cooperative

at high prices can quickly deplete the society's cash funds. When this happens, only the arrival of a ship to purchase the society's copra can provide a remedy. Several times in 1978-1979, a cooperative society had to curtail copra purchases because of lack of funds. The cooperatives are supposed to sell their copra only to Vanua Navigation ships, a company affiliated with the cooperatives movement. Waiting for the infrequent and irregular arrivals of these ships rather than selling to the first available vessel cooperative societies' exacerbates Longanan liquidity Private copra buyers suffer from the same kind problems. of cash shortage as the cooperatives in a strong copra market. In contrast to the cooperatives, however, middlemen are free to sell to any ship that calls and so acquire cash to buy more copra.

Social considerations must be added to price and to the accessibility and liquidity of the buyer as factors influencing whether a producer will sell his copra to the cooperative or to a particular middleman. Social considerations affect producers' marketing decisions both positively and negatively. For example, one questionnaire respondent who sold most of his copra to the cooperative society told me that he had also sold a small amount of copra to his "brother" (FBS), a young entrepreneur, to show support for the brother's copra-buying business. On the other hand, another respondent told me she would no longer sell her copra to a certain entrepreneur because she believed he had been dishonest in his dealings with her. Social considerations alone do not determine whether a small producer will sell to a cooperative or to a private buyer. The data indicate that even nearby relatives of a middleman who sell most of their copra to him also sell part of their produce elsewhere.

sum, the small producer's choices In are constrained by circumstance. If he is angry with an entrepreneurial kinsman, a Longanan seeks another purchaser for his copra. If rain threatens, he sells to the nearest buyer. If a producer tires while carrying a sack of copra to a middleman, the proximity of a cooperative becomes attractive. The choices that a small producer encounters in making his marketing decisions are always changing. Hence, small producers do not even begin to make marketing decisions until they have produced the copra they will sell: as Ortiz notes regarding Columbian coffee producers, "the higher the uncertainty level the less likely [it is] that planned rational decisions will be made well ahead of time" (1973:255).

Longanans who produce more than twenty-five tonnes of copra annually are more able than small producers to plan their marketing decisions because the larger producers

can reduce some of the uncertainty that accompanies copra marketing. As a concomitant of the scale of their production, the few Longanans who export more than twentyfive tonnes of copra annually own at least one Landovertype truck (unless they live at an anchorage) and have storage docks for their copra. They have, therefore, greater control over the timing of their copra sales than do small producers.

Although most of the large producers belong to a cooperative society, for economic reasons they sell virtually all their copra directly to the export houses. Sales to ships yield the producer higher prices for his copra than those offered by the cooperatives or by middlemen. Further, dealing directly with Burns Philp or CFNH allows the producer to establish an account with the firm so that goods can be purchased against copra sales. Finally, the largest producers who are regular customers of a particular firm sometimes can summon that company's ship to load a large shipment of copra that is ready for market.

Producers who sell directly to ships must choose between selling their copra at a firm price or on consignment. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the firm price offered producers usually is 1000 FNH per tonne higher than the consignment price, but a producer who sells

on consignment receives an additional payment later if his copra sells at a profit on the world market Large producers are well aware that the world price may fall before their copra is sold; they know that sometimes they must repay a portion of the advance they receive when selling on consignment. Yet selling on consignment is a gamble that most Longanans prefer to selling for a firm price. As one large producer explained, "I prefer to take my own risks than to have Burns Philp take them for me."

The national copra returns document this tendency to sell on consignment, as well as exceptions to the rule. The marketing decisions of large producers, like those of small producers discussed previously, are influenced by how much an individual values current cash income. When access to ready cash assumes an exceptional importance, for example, immediately before Christmas, large producers who usually sell on consignment will sell for a firm price. Further, the national returns suggest that decisions to sell for a firm price or on consignment reflect a local consensus about the immediate future of the world copra Longanans waiting for a ship or relaxing on the price. cooperative society's verandah try to second guess trends in the copra price. The fact that they know their information about the way the copra market works is limited does not deter them from trying to make profitable
decisions about the few choices that the chain of copra offers. A switch from selling on consignment to firm price is seldom an individual act in Longana. The decisions made by others are an important part of the decision-making environment (Berry 1980:330; Cancian 1980:173). National returns show blocks of Longanans selling for a firm price when the local consensus is that the copra price is on a downward trend.¹⁷

Large producers usually have a preference for dealing with a particular firm. This preference is based on evaluation of such concrete considerations as credit availability and copra price. In addition, the quality of copra bags given to replace those in which the copra is bought is of great importance to Longanans. Ships that give new bags are preferred to those giving old bags that have been slashed to load copra into container ships. The nuisance value of a bag that breaks when filled with copra and the sixty-five cent cost of buying a new bag contribute to this preference.

The size and quality of the ship's store where the copra producer can buy goods to provision his family or stock his own retail business also is an important factor in choosing to deal with a firm. Less tangible but also important is the producer's evaluation of how pleasant it is to do business with a company. An arrogant supercargo, store personnel who ask Longanans what they want to buy, or captains who rush to close the store as soon as the copra has been loaded are unpopular.

The honesty of a supercargo and the way in which a firm handles consignment payments also affect producers' willingness to deal with a firm. For example, a welleducated, astute Longana businessman who sold large amounts of copra to a single export house discovered he had been swindled by a supercargo who tampered with consignment payments. The Longanan learned from this experience:

> Sometimes the supercargo is in a big hurry on the ship, but when I come ashore I always check the figures twice. Often I find I'm owed more money and then I just go right back to the ship and straighten it out. Sometimes it's as much as a hundred dollars. I feel very sorry for people who can't or don't check like this (transcribed from a taped Bislama interview).

In 1978, politics figured in Longanans' copra marketing decisions. The opening of the Vanuaaku Copra Mill in Santo affected producers' choices about which firms to patronize. The mill was especially attractive as a copra buyer for the majority of Longanans who supported the Vanuaaku Pati. The party encouraged ni-Vanuatu to invest in the mill by purchasing shares for 2000 FNH. Many Longanans believed erroneously that the mill belonged to the Vanuaaku Pati; the name of the mill, chosen by a prominent Vanuaaku Pati member, did nothing to dispel this illusion. For the many Longanan producers who chafed against selling their copra for the profit of white expatriate firms, buying shares in and selling copra to the oil mill was an assertion of independence in the politically tempestous pre-independence period.

The popularity of the oil mill in Longana was not purely political. Sales to the oil mill increased in the second half of 1978 as more Longanans became aware that the mill offered a beach price that was 500 to 1000 FNH higher than other buyers. Further, the mill returned "consigment" payments within two or three weeks instead of the several months other firms required to return a second payment to the producer.¹⁸

Some Longanans claimed that the mill was responsible for the rising copra prices that prevailed from the second half of 1978 into 1979. While the opening of the mill, of course, had no effect on the copra price in the archipelago, Longanans correctly perceived that entry of the mill into the copra-buying market increased competition and benefited islanders. During 1978, the mill bought as much as 400 tonnes of copra a month, capturing 12% of the copra market in Santo by December.¹⁹ Producers on Santo and neighbouring islands such as Aoba were the mill's main suppliers. A small vessel capable of carrying thirteen tonnes of cargo purchased Longanan copra for the mill, competing successfully with the much larger CFNH and Burns Philp ships.²⁰

Until 1977, Burns Philp and CFNH purchased about 80% of the copra destined for export from the Condominium; Fung Kwan Chee, a Santo-based Chinese firm, bought another 15% of the total, leaving only about 5% of the market in the hands of other exporters. By 1978, a marked change in the proportion of exports had occurred. Burns Philp and CFNH's share of the market had dropped to 50%, Fung Kwan Chee's portion was reduced to 10%, and fully 40% of the copra came under the control of four new firms.

All but one of these companies (Claude Martin) sought to attract Longanan copra: the three firms were the Vanuaaku Oil Mill, the cooperative-affiliated Vanua Navigation, and Cofatex. The latter is a subsidiary of Unipol which, as the first section of the chapter indicated, is the major buyer of Vanuatu copra in Marseilles. A small ship under charter to Cofatex quickly snared a portion of the Longana market in 1978, while the Burns Philp ship that served Longana was undergoing repairs.

Increased competition between copra-buying firms, like competition between labour-recruiting vessels a hundred years ago, represents part of an economic situation that is determined at a great geographical and conceptual distance from the islands on which the competition is most visibly focused. Yet islanders, who understand in general terms that they cannot affect the Vanuatu copra price, see ships vigourously competing to buy their copra and create for themselves a customary illusion that they, as local producers, indeed control a valuable commodity, a source of bargaining power that can humble even Burns Philp or CFNH.

Before 1977, the near monopsony of Burns Philp and CFNH that faced Longanans discouraged producers from withholding copra from a particular ship for fear of being unable to attract another buyer before the copra spoiled. In 1978 and 1979, increased competition for copra allowed Longanans to act as a block, on occasion, with regard to restricting copra sales.

On 8 December 1978, Longanans tapped the last forty-four gallon drum of gasoline for sale in the district. At the time there were seventeen trucks and eight motorcycles operating in Longana, and although some drivers quietly fueled their vehicles from hoarded gasoline reserves, everyone anxiously awaited a shipment of gasoline that was due to arrive on a vessel I shall call the Columbine. When the ship called in Longana on December 15, word spread quickly that she had no gasoline on board. The beach price of copra was \$285 a tonne and the storage docks throughout the district were filled to capacity in

anticipation of Christmas. Six weeks had elapsed since the Columbine's last visit to Longana and she was eager to resume copra trading with the district. But the Columbine had no gasoline and Longanans decided she would have none of their copra. They refused to trade with the vessel until she returned with gasoline to supply the trucks on which Longanans depend for transporting copra. The Columbine sailed for Santo and when she returned three days later with gasoline Longanans sold her 37.5 tonnes of As one Longanan explained, "Mifala i usem kopra copra. blon fulem benzin." 'We used the copra to attract the gasoline'. A similar incident occurred on another occasion during my fieldwork when a ship could not provide new bags in exchange for full sacks of copra. A few days later the vessel came back to Aoba with new bags and Longanan copra was again forthcoming.

Ortiz has suggested that Paez coffee growers deal with the consequences of competition between farmers by forming what she calls "coalitions" to restrict the sale of food and thus cushion the peasants against starvation in the face of a widely fluctuating coffee market (1973:5-7). Paez growers form coalitions only concerning the sale of food and never with regard to their cash-crop. Longanan copra producers, enmeshed in an equally uncertain and volatile market, also restrict the sale of food; but, more

importantly for this dissertation, they restrict the sale of copra in order to insure a continued flow of the supplies needed to maintain production of the sole cashcrop that stands between most Longanans and a reliance on subsistence gardening. In contrast to the Paez grower, Longanans seek to avoid impecuniousness as well as starvation. They have become so accustomed to a relatively high standard of living that a diet consisting entirely of garden produce would be a serious hardship.

Why do Longanans act together to withhold their cash-crop from sale while Paez coffee farmers do not? Like (Ibid.: 274), Longanans are substantially Paez peasants unable to influence the price that their product commands. Yet this need not mean, as Ortiz argues, that "as producers contribute only an infinitesimal amount to the total national coffee production, coalitions would be ineffective" (Ibid.: 7). Coalitions could not influence the profitability of the cash-crop, but they nevertheless can be effective in terms of produers' satisfaction. In fact, by withholding copra, Longanans seek successfully to obtain goods important to them without affecting the price of those goods or of the copra. One reason Longanan producers sometimes act as a bloc in marketing copra, while Paez coffee growers do not, lies in differences between the markets in which Longanans and Paez sell their products.

Unlike Longanans, Paez growers sell coffee almost These entirely to middlemen who are local residents. middlemen then take the coffee to a marketing centre where they also purchase supplies for their stores (Ibid.: 219-In Longana, as this chapter has shown, 221). large producers sell copra directly to ships, and the small producer's copra is first bulked by entrepreneurs and cooperatives, then sold to vessels calling along the Thus the amounts of copra for sale are Longana coast. relatively greater than the amounts of coffee that Paez farmers sell to their middlemen. Moreover, copra producers and buyers interact in a market structured so that the buyers appear on the scene sequentially and one at a time Except for light items that can be to purchase copra. transported by air, Longanans are totally dependent on the copra ships for all supplies except food grown on the island. A ship that fails to bring a crucial item emphasizes the insular character of the market structure; Longanans respond by refusing to come forth with copra, much as they refused their labour to recruiters who lacked crucial trade items in the late nineteenth century. Like labour recruiters and unlike Paez middlemen, the buyers that Longanans encounter are outsiders, who, by operating from ships, lack even a place of business in Longana. In a sense, the copra buyers represent the larger world beyond Longana. But in another way, that larger world, the world in which the chain of copra dictates prices to which Longanas may respond, is the periphery to Longana's centre.

Occasionally, one of the Compagnie Générale Maritime container ships, laden with copra and with oil from the Vanuaaku Mill, passes near the Longana coast. The ship dwarfs the islands of Maevo and Pentecost that dominate Longanans' horizon. For the few moments of the ship's swift passing Longanans watch and speak quietly of the world beyond the islands. But when the ship disappears from view, what Longanans stress is not the insigificance of Vanuatu in the world copra market; what they speak about is their copra that fills the holds. It is their copra that draws that ship through all the islands in the world to Vanuatu.

CHAPTER SEVEN

In a recent article reviewing literature on peasant agricultural production, Peggy Barlett observes that "current research is moving away from asking yes/no questions like .. 'is access to land the key?' and toward questions that seek to define when and in what way ... land resources are important" (1980a:565). It is in this spirit that I have tried to describe the behaviour of Longanan copra producers and customary landholders. My purpose has increase anthropological understanding of been to the behaviour of customary landholders who are peasant copra producers. The approach I have adopted is holistic, incorporating perspectives from political economy as well anthropology, and melding a phenomenological as interpretation of land tenure with an empirical orientation toward production, marketing and land distribution. Throughout, I have focused on the partial truths of myths in action that I have called "customary illusions," in an effort to "reduce the puzzlement," in Geertz' sense (1973:16) while preserving the meaningful ambiguity in a kind of behaviour that is familiar to anthropologists but insufficiently understood.

In this chapter, I summarize the conclusions reached so far in the dissertation. Then I discuss the broader implications of these conclusions for understanding customary land tenure and peasant production.

Summary of conclusions

The dissertation's conclusions have emerged through exploration of customary illusions, mystifications experienced as true. Two customary illusions that appear repeatedly as linked themes in the dissertation are introduced in chapter 2 in discussion of the question: what were the consequences of colonial history for ni-Vanuatu views of their place in the world, and for the use of their land as a symbol and a resource? Expressed as aphorisms, these illusions focus attention on (1) peoples' independence in a context of dependence, and (2) the inalienability of their land amidst its alienation. Paradoxically, these illusions are at once real and unreal. Part of the ambiguous meaning of both customary illusions is grounded in the particular history of the ni-Vanuatu colonial experience.

A summary of the conclusions drawn in chapter 2, first, demonstrates the historical basis for the ambiguity within the illusions I have glossed as independence and inalienability, and, second, introduces the dissertation's remaining themes:

From beginning to end, Britain's and France's involvement in Vanuatu not only allowed but required the preservation of traditional societies. This is, emphatically, not to deny that traditional societies experienced tremendous upheaval and redefinition in encountering colonialism. Admist the sweeping changes indigenous people experienced, the Condominium and the metropolitan interests it represented required the continuation of traditional societies to reproduce a cheap labour force, and to facilitate administration of scattered islands with limited colonial funds and manpower. During the labour trade in the nineteenth century, the shallowness of European linkages with island societies led ni-Vanuatu to continue to act as if they were still independent. An illusion of independence persisted in some ways for the duration of the Condominium as the extraction of copra (the surplus product of peasant labour) replaced extraction of ni-Vanuatu labour itself.

Independence was expressed in action, for example, in the bargains ni-Vanuatu negotiated with labour recruiters to obtain favourable terms of trade. Actions like these fostered an illusion of control in the face of apparent dependence; for example, while ni-Vanuatu on the periphery

today are unable to influence the price their copra brings in centres like Marseilles, they can independently affect their own satisfaction with particular transactions.

The style of independence in action that outsiders began to see during the labour trade was compatible with, and came to encourage, differential control of wealth. At first, coastal ni-Vanuatu with the easiest access to Europeans seeking labour tended to become middlemen, at least partially controlling recruitment of labourers from inland groups beyond the beach frontiers. In the 1970s, those Longanans with the most land and copra can avoid dealing with middlemen and sell directly, on more favourable terms to inter-island ships, thereby reinforcing an incipient differentiation between themselves and smaller peasant producers.

The ni-Vanuatu illusion of independence was reinforced by the same colonial system that denied their independence. The languages, religions and administrative systems of the French and British colonizers further divided or reinforced existing divisions within islanders' social space, which geography, indigenous languages and other aspects of culture traditionally fragmented. This isolation effectively contained island societies so that the birth of political parties and development of a national identity did not occur until the 1970s. Yet, at the same time, in

Longana the weakness of the dual colonial regime's effect on social life and the Anglican church's tolerance for indigenous tradition encouraged a persistent sense of local autonomy in matters of law and land. Thus, while the Condominium was created in part to legalize and supervise expatriate land claims, islanders generally did not accept as legitimate the alienation of large tracts of land. Instead, they regarded their land as inalienable partly through a conviction, both true and unrealistic, of their own independence. In response to the Condominium's equally strong determination to deny ni-Vanuatu independence where European control of land was concerned, islanders eventually coalesced around the problem of land alienation. As a political issue, land alienation transcended local independence and fragmentation in the successful movement that led to national independence in 1980.

In addition to exploring the meaning of illusions of independence and inalienability as modern outcomes reached through a colonial past, the conclusions of chapter 2 which I have just summarized introduce the themes of the rest of the dissertation. I have already anticipated three of these themes in mentioning (1) the quality of exchange relations at the colonial periphery, (2) the processes through which traditional societies were contained and (3) the importance of the maintenance of these traditional societies to the colonial state. I will draw upon these themes later in the chapter. For now I want to turn again to the illusions of independence and inalienability to show the implications of their analysis for other conclusions reached within the dissertation.

Independence and inalienability are deeply rooted not only in the political economy of Vanuatu, as chapter 2 showed, but also, phenomenologically, in Longanan These illusions expressed in behaviour serve experience. as examples throughout the dissertation of myths in action: ripping out an expatriate's fenceposts (chapter 2); affirmations in land dispute settlements that every Longanan must have land (chapter 3); the paradoxical retention by some sons, as an inalienable right, of control over land their fathers illegitimately acquired (chapter 4); copra-making as a strategy to maintain a birthright that, while supposedly inalienable, can be lost (chapter 5); and, in refusing as an independent group to sell copra except to a ship stocked with gasoline for the district (chapter 6). These myths that I have used the notion of customary illusions to highlight represent, in Leach's sense, a "language of argument, not a chorus of harmony" (1954:278). In particular, they point to meanings associated with the flexibility of tradition. The consequences of such flexibility in the ways that

contradictory principles of land tenure are expressed in action are the focus of the three central chapters of the dissertation (chapters 3, 4 and 5).

Chapter 3 approaches the problem of dimensions of meaning in the flexibility of Longanan landholding through the ambiguity of illusions associated with the experience of place. Being a Longanan is inseparable from Longana as a place, for the land is lived space in which place and people partake of each other. Landlessness is a cultural impossibility in Longana because having a place is equated naturally and inevitably with having a father and a mother. Yet there is a paradox in the equation of place and parentage that is fundamental to understanding the dynamics a Longanan's place is of Longanan land tenure: an inalienable birthright, but his or her claim to any particular piece of land can be won or lost. For example, the birthright that Longanan children have to their father's land by virtue of the very fact of their parentage can be lost through action, inaction, or the actions of Thus, the inseparability of parentage and land is others. illusion, but it is an illusion that highlights the an dynamics of local land tenure. Being a child of Longanan parents and having a place are experienced as inalienable, and this experience of the inalienability of place or parenthood is, in some ways, real despite the fact that any particular relationship to a place or parent may be alienated.

The paradox of land inalienability within a context of alienable relationships to places draws attention to the importance of flexibility as a defining characteristic of Longanan land tenure. The flexibility of the distribution of control over land in Longana is realized through <u>gaindumu</u>, knowledge of relations between people and places that is both a mode of evaluating the strength of an individual's land claim and a means of explaining particular ties to land. Through <u>gaindumu</u>, knowledgeable men monitor and manipulate the distribution of land among individual landholders. They select principles and precedents from a reservoir of tradition to achieve and legitimate their own objectives as well as, generally, to defend the interests of other Longanans.

The flexibility characteristic of most customary land tenure systems is, in Longana, both an asset and a liability. An assumption common both among ni-Vanuatu (e.g., Sope 1975:10) and Europeans who study Pacific societies (e.g., Bonnemaison 1977:130) is that flexibility in customary tenure benefits islanders. Traditional flexibility in land tenure is seen as beneficial to society if it allows redistribution of land in each generation according to demographic changes. But in Longana, redistribution of <u>control</u> over land often does not reflect demographic changes; distribution of <u>access</u> to land for subsistence and cash-cropping is more responsive to the changing needs of particular Longanan households. Transfer of land control between generations is based only partly on the relative needs of heirs, and does little to mitigate against the accretion and retention of control over large plantation holdings in the hands of a few individuals on whom others must depend for access to coconuts.

In chapters 4 and 5, I document processes whereby 5% Longanan landholders control 31% of the district's of plantation land and earn incomes four times as large as other Longanans. My position is that this inequality arises from manipulation of flexibility in customary land tenure, and that it represents differentiation within the peasantry as a class. The empirical analysis in these chapters builds upon prior conclusions about the shape of the political economy of Vanuatu drawn in chapter 2, and about the phenomenological meaning of place presented in chapter 3; these conclusions are basic to discussion of how control over land is distributed (chapter 4) and how inequality of landholding generates differential copra incomes (chapter 5).

There is no indication that inequality of land distribution is a recent development; to the contrary,

control over land seems always to have been a measure of a Longanan's influence. But the consequences of this inequality are different in a cash-cropping context. Copra was introduced to Longana as a peasant commodity produced on a small-scale in customary garden plots. As copra production became popular in the 1930s, Longanans planted coconuts in gardens to which they had usufruct access but which they did not necessarily control as landholders. The value and relative permanence of commercial stands of coconuts weakened the investment of labour in planting as a criterion for owning palms, and strengthened equation of control over palms with control over the land on which they grow. Control over land began to include control over access to coconuts; coconut palms came to be seen ambiguously as a natural part of a landholder's place, as well as products of social labour. Control over the land and trees composing a plantation came to be transferred -through funerary feasts, use of gaindumu, payment, production, and so on -- in the same variety of customary ways as control over land used for subsistence or residence had been acquired in the past.

From this context of the situational flexibility of land tenure arises the "naturalness" of Longanan customary illusions that have accompanied differentiation within the peasantry. Alienation of land to which one had a birthright is a legitimate variant within customary patterns, an extension, for example, of a war leader's proclivity for appropriating his followers' land. A warrior's holdings could return through natural processes (fallowing the land, a warrior's death) to the social control of prior claimants. So, in Longanan experience, a few men customarily might control relatively large landholdings during their lifetimes; the natural basis for this idea is expressed in a Longanan metaphor that such men, while they live, are the tallest trees in the forest. Further, if Longanans <u>are</u> Longana, in the sense that the people are the place, only land that passes to non-Longanans truly is alienated from the domain under their control.

In sum, these partial truths present social inequalities in land distribution as transitory and natural, an illusion whose ambiguities are basic to understanding Longanan experience of the differentiation accompanying cash-cropping, traced in chapters 4, 5 and 6. The largest landholders are no longer temporary custodians of land that will naturally return to heirs of the land's prior claimants; yet Longanans often act as if this were the case, waiting rather than complaining about land lost to leaders, for the flexibility of customary land acquisition makes redistribution of large holdings into smaller portions a possibility, however unlikely. More often, large landholders' incomes maintain and further the inequality expressed in land distribution. Large landholders' sons use wealth from the plantations to cement claims to their fathers' estates. Large landholders continue to buy land from smaller landholders, and land sold to other Longanans continues to enjoy secure title. Purchase, like other modes of customary land acquisition, f removes a plantation from the effective control of others, even if, because the purchaser is Longanan, the illusion remains that the land is not alienated.

Concentration of land among a few landholders combines with the incomes these men earn from copra to differentiate them from smaller peasants. Those who earn the most money from copra invest in other small business ventures, such as trucks operated as taxis, or tradestores selling imported consumer goods and buying copra from small producers. Large landholders in Longana allow others access to their plantations to make copra, extracting rent for this in a variety of ways. Some of the largest copra producers hire other islanders as wage labourers. Those Longanans with the most copra to sell, market their copra differently from smaller producers: large sellers deal directly with ships and realize the best available "beach price" for their copra; smaller producers sell to middlemen -- larger producers or cooperative societies -- and receive a lower payment.

extent of differentiation in the Longanan The peasantry is constrained by traditional obligations that redistribute income, but also, more fundamentally perhaps, by the terms under which Longanans participate in cash-In Vanuatu, as elsewhere in the Third World, cropping. "the vagaries of world prices and general economic instability underline for the peasant the necessity of maintaining subsistence production" (Fitzpatrick 1980:15). For example, Longanan peasants are dependent on earning cash from copra, yet most would be unable to subsist on their copra incomes alone. Because the uncertainties of the copra market make their participation in the capitalist sector precarious, both large and small landholders exhibit little interest in improving the productivity of their plantations. There is no shortage of coconuts to meet the limited cash requirements of most Longanans and even those who control no plantation land still can gain access to enough coconuts to earn needed money. The fact that copra is not graded according to quality combines with the uncertainty of a volatile copra market, whose long-term trend in real prices is downward, to discourage Longanans from better plantation management. Diversification through cocoa is attractive to many, but cocoa cultivation

initially is more demanding than copra of a producer's time and skill, and, again, producers face unstable prices.

The price-setting mechanisms by which local copra prices are derived pass a large portion of marketing costs on to peripheral peasant producers who have no influence over the copra prices they receive. Copra thus takes on a fetishistic quality; copra prices on the oil markets, like other commodities, seem to "vary continually, independently of the will, foresight and action of the producers. To them, their own social action takes the form of the action of objects, which rule the products instead of being ruled by them" (Marx 1954:75). Not only can Longanan producers not influence the copra prices they receive, the amount they produce is negatively correlated with price variations above a minimum threshold. They cannot time the sale of their product to take advantage of higher prices or avoid lower ones in the short-run. Small copra-makers and, to a lesser extent, larger Longanan producers, orient their decisions to make a certain amount of copra at a certain time toward cash targets they want to meet (to pay school fees, for example).

If the price of copra and the chain of copra costs appear as objects to rule Longanan producers, people can still respond by asserting control over those aspects of the exchange that remain clearly social. Through

bargaining as individuals and as coalitions with those who buy their copra over terms other than prices, they affirm their own ambiguous independence within the constraints that participation in the copra market imposes, in much the same way as they asserted their autonomy while acceding to the exploitation of their own labour in the nineteenth century.

In the course of the dissertation, I have presented a description of plantation landholding and copra production and marketing that explores dimensions of flexibility amidst inequality and documents the reciprocal consequences of copra and customary land tenure for each other. On the basis of the series of conclusions I drew within the dissertation and have just summarized, I turn now to the broader implications of the themes within the dissertation for understanding customary land tenure and peasant production.

Custom and illusion

An argument basic to the dissertation has been that peasants' participation in the larger economic system "is not limited to the simple domination of peasant 'communities' by the larger system ... In addition to differentiation within peasant communities, such groups have complex and changing relationships with the larger system" (Roseberry 1976:46). Customary land tenure can bind peasant producers to the colonial past, to the larger economic system in which they continue to participate from the periphery, and to living traditions that can express the indigenous past in the present. An illusion of custom surrounds Longana's insular society disguising its articulation with the larger system that contains it, and preserving freedom for peasants to act as if they were independent of that larger system.

Copra production and the processes of inequality and differentiation that arise from cash-cropping in Longana are taking place within tradition rather than in defiance of customary principles and practices. The flexibility of customary land tenure presents inequality of control over plantations as legitimate, allowing the emergence of a few relatively affluent copra producers in a pattern familiar to Pacific and African anthropologists whereby "indigenous institutions often serve as highly effective mechanisms for economic enterprise and change" (Berry 1975:5). Compared New Guinea land tenure (e.q., James 1978), the to relatively strong rights of individuals in Longana have minimized the degree to which customary tenure has visibly changed in response to cash-cropping; a traditional emphasis on individual landholding compatible with cashcropping encourages an indigenous illusion of immutable

custom as the charter for land acquisitions that, in action, are highly negotiable processes.

In contrast to people in parts of Papua New Guinea indigenous cash-croppng was either strongly where discouraged or, conversely, was legally mandated (Fitzpatrick 1980, chapter 4), but like those who became peasant cocoa farmers in Ghana (Howard 1980) and Nigeria (Berry 1975; Hill 1963), Longanans sought out cash-cropping as an economic opportunity for individual producers that Europeans made available without coercing indigenous participation. For Longanans, some control over their own means of copra production was preferable to labouring for European planters. In Vanuatu, as in Ghana, "retention of 'traditional' land tenure ... was the necessary condition ensure that a peasantry rather than a plantationto oriented rural proletariat, would be the class providing surplus product for the core" (Howard 1980:77).

Longana and other Vanuatu societies were contained, allowed or encouraged to maintain themselves in ways that promoted a sense of local independence, grounded in tradition but expressed, in part, in the marketplace. The cultural diversity of Vanuatu encouraged the illusion that "colonial society would disintegrate in the absence of colonialism and that its unity is only possible under the colonial state" (Chandra 1980:281). Clearly, this cultural

diversity preceded colonialism and persisted, perhaps thrived, amidst contact between indigenous societies. But the Anglo-French Condominium did little to smooth over cultural fragmentation within the group. While the colonial state nurtured the physical well-being of traditional peoples, its representatives often discouraged traditional beliefs and practices. Christianity and colonialism both weakened and strengthened customary structures by hardening indigenous peoples' attitudes toward their own traditions and making them critical of those of other islanders: the effect has been "not only to rigidify indigenous notions about kastom [custom; traditional ways] and the past, but also to bind kastom more closely and inflexibly to place -- to freeze it in space and time" (Tonkinson n.d. [a]:24).

While customary land tenure in Longana today exhibits a high degree of flexibility in a cash-cropping context, Longanan experience stresses its strictures; knowledge of ties to people and places is the key to unequivocal control over land that puts aside competing claims as illegitimate, at least for the time being. An aura of flexibility persists -- in the face of often singlehanded control over plantations and inequalities of copra incomes -- through the liberal access most landholders allow for copra production. At the transfer points between generations, the meanings of flexibility become clearer: competition, negotiation, knowledge and action become critical in asserting control over land by virtue of custom.

In Longana, as in Vanuatu nationally (Tonkinson n.d. [b]), custom has been reified as a natural object that, while clearly a context for and a product of social relations in action, appears immutable. The illusions of custom, as they have reflected the constraints and freedom within which Longanans make copra for cash, have been central to this dissertation as cultural artifacts of action. Customary illusions are not sources of explanation, but they can be read to point toward cultural For meaning, as Handsman has suggested that meanings. North American anthropology still needs to learn, "is a question of change, illusion, reification and consciousness" (1980:265). The meanings I have explored through the customary illusions of land and copra in Longana describe multiple and sometimes contradictory dimensions of peasant production and traditional land In analyzing these meanings, I have tried to tenure. depict the vulnerability of all Longanan producers to the broader system that created and continues to sustain their participation as small powerless peasants. But I have also tried to understand the power that Longanans exert over an independent little world: power that is shared yet

unequal, and power they express in custom, experience in place and nurture with the flexibility of land tenure.

APPENDIX 1

DISTRIBUTION OF 831.24 HECTARES OF PLANTATION LAND AMONG 106 LANDHOLDERS

	# of			# of		
<u>I.D.</u>	Plots	Hectares	I.D.	Plots	Hectares	
Melanesian Mission Men						
Meranes	tan nis	Ston nen				
1	2	1.40	109	2	3.07	
3	2	4.60	113	3	15.00	
5	6	6.20	116	2	3.79	
8	3	5.24	118	3	3.06	
14	2	4.51	121	4	3.71	
15	2	1.53	128	1	12.50	
21	1	.65	132	1	.40	
23	2	3.87	139	3	5.89	
24	2	3.22	140	1	2.58	
25	3	4.83	161	2	6.77	
31	2	3.71	164	2	2.26	
32	2	.80	166	4	19.01	
33	5	37.14	172	2	5.52	
35	1	.48	174	2	2.58	
37	2	2.18	175	4	41.93	
38	6	29.06	176	3	15.32	
42	2	3.46	191	1	1.94	
44	4	6.53	195	1	2.26	
45	1	4.84	205	2	24.35	
46	4	29.60	208	2	89.54	
48	2	2.58	210	2	22.04	
49	1	1.77	223	1	.32	
54	4	2.34	225	2	4.68	
59	1	2.42	227	1	2.42	
60	3	50.66	231	1	34.68	
61	2	5.97	242	3	5.65	
66	1	.48	245	1	.97	
71	2	4.52	246	3	25.19	
74	5	15.24	249	1	.48	
76	4	10.40	259	1	3.55	
77	3	4.20	263	1	3.23	
80	2	1.29	264	3	10.97	
83	1	.81	270	2	3.88	
85	1	4.19	276	3	11.12	
90	4	20.16	286	4	11.46	
91	2	/.90	291	2	3.90	
9/	1	4.50	302	Ţ	.48	
104	3	6.92	305	3	5.97	
10/	ל י	L3.55	309	Ţ	.81	
T08	T	5.00	310	2	4.20	

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APPENDIX 1

DISTRIBUTION OF 831.24 HECTARES OF PLANTATION LAND AMONG 106 LANDHOLDERS

TD	# of					
<u>1.D.</u>	Plots	Hectares				
SDA Men						
501 504 505 506 507 512 517 519 523 525	3 3 1 3 1 5 4 2 2	4.44 3.56 11.78 5.00 10.03 1.45 4.75 16.14 2.58 4.28				
SDA Women						
1501	1	.65				
Melanesian Mission Women						
1007 1010 1018 1021 1027 1029 1066 1073 1078 1099 1124 1155 1174 1199 1232	2 1 1 1 1 1 1 3 1 1 1	10.44 3.87 .32 1.45 1.45 .48 1.13 .48 .97 2.10 1.13 2.74 .81 .40 2.58				

APPENDIX 2

CALCULATION OF NUMBER OF CONSUMERS PER LANDHOLDER

Using census data, I noted the dependents of each Melanesian Mission male landholder, excluding four nonresidents (I.D. #s 42, 45, 309, 310). Dependents were defined as (1) permanent residents of a landholder's household, a category that mainly includes wives, children and adopted children, or (2) siblings, children or parents of the landholder who are resident in the landholder's hamlet <u>and</u>, if male, who do not hold any land in their own name.

The total number of dependent consumers is conservative, for many of the transient adolescents who were not residing with their parents at the time of the census are not counted. These children are consumers although the burden of provisioning them may be spread among several households. Similarly, children at boarding school or working outside Longana may be rather heavily supported by Longana land; cutting copra to pay for a child's school fees is common.

The notion of consumer is used here to examine how many people, weighted according to their age and sex, are

dependent on land parcels of a fixed size. The analysis leaves aside questions of caloric intake and carrying capacity, examining more generally the ratio between hectares and people. Most of the hectares are copra producing and provide consumers with cash for food purchase rather than with food itself.

In calculating the weighted number of consumers, I included the landholder himself and used the following system from Sahlins (1971):

Child (<15 years old) = .5 Adolescent (15-19) = 1 Male Adult (20-54) = 1 Female Adult (20-54) = .8 Old Person (55+) = .8

Then I totalled the number of consumers per landholder and divided this result into the hectares held by each landholder. Thus for each of the seventy-six landholders I obtained a figure: hectares-per-consumer.

The land area involved in this part of the analysis is 736.23 hectares divided among 183 plots. Dependent on this land are 342.6 consumers, representing 470 people. Thus the average number of hectares per consumer is 736.23/342.6=2.15, and the average number of hectares per individual is 736.23/470=1.57. As there are 76 landholders in the sample, there are an average of 4.5 consumers, or 6.18 persons per landholder.

APPENDIX 3

CALCULATION OF MULTIPLIER FOR DIRECT COPRA SALES

Individuals' names do not always appear in the national returns when they sell copra to a ship. The name of the seller who accepts a firm price for his copra often is not recorded; instead only the copra weight and the passage where the transaction occurred might appear on the Some entries are aggregates of numerous purchases return. and reveal only the total weight of the copra, not the number of transactions or the names of the sellers. Even the cooperatives' sales to ships were not always attributed National returns identified to the societies by name. 70% of the larger society's sales to ships about in calendar 1978; only 40% of the smaller cooperative's sales appear by name on the returns. This does not mean that the returns are inaccurate; to the contrary, the quality of the work done by the statisticians who compile and analyze the returns is excellent. Thus I could accurately attribute copra to Longana, but I could not always attribute copra to the individual Longanans who sold it.

On the basis of the percentage of cooperative society sales reported in the returns, I hypothesized that

between 30% and 60% of an individual Longanan producer's copra does not appear under his name if he sells direct. I compared records of sales to ships kept by a relatively large Longanan producer (case E in table 13, chapter 6) with sales credited to him by name in the national returns and found that 38% of this individual's copra tonnage in 1978, and 26% in 1977, appeared under his name in the In a second comparison of the same kind using returns. another producer, I found that 58% of the weight of this individual's exports was listed in his name in the returns. Unfortunately, I was unable to obtain additional producers' records that I felt confident were complete and accurate. The low total copra weights attributed on the returns to half-a-dozen producers whom I knew to be much larger exporters persuaded me of the need to estimate their invisible sales.

Thus I concluded that when a producer sells copra to ships, only a percentage of his sales are identifiable as his from data in the returns. I suspected that the larger cooperative, because of the size of its transactions, was listed anonymously <u>less</u> often than most individual Longanan sellers, so I did not include the cooperative in calculating a multiplier for individual producers. I averaged the accuracy-of-reporting figures for the two producers whose records I had been able to
compare, which yielded a figure of 40.6% or roughly 40%. Assuming that about 40% of the weight of an individual's copra appears in his name in the returns means that the weight of known direct sales must be multiplied by 2.5 to yield the total weight of a person's estimated total sales to ships.

Use of the multiplier yields results for the largest producers in which I place more confidence than the data in the returns alone; the copra weights are more consistent with the apparent volume of exports and income that these producers exhibit. For some large producers, however, the volume of exports still seems to me too low. This is so because very little of these producers' actual sales happened to appear in their names in the returns. Since an exceptionally large proportion of their sales are invisible, the multiplier has too little effect. Similarly, there are probably some individuals who sold small amounts of copra to ships but whose names never appeared in the returns. All of these individuals' sales to ships thus are invisible and remain so, in spite of the multiplier. I have no evidence that use of the multiplier attributes too much copra to any producer; all the limitations on the usefulness of the multiplier suggest it errs on the side of conservatism. The fit is good between total Longanan copra exports using my data and estimates

(1,945.5 tons), and total Longanan copra exports according to the Bureau of Statistics using their national returns data and estimates (1,949 tons).

				APPEN	IDI	X 4				
INCOME	FROM	COPRA	APRIL	1978	-	MARCH	1979	FOR	64	MELANESIAN
			MISS	SION I	AN	DHOLDE	ERS			

I.D.	KNOWN KG.	KNOWN VALUE	ADD EST. KG. <mark>1</mark>	TOTAL KG.	TOTAL VALUE ²
1	8.069	\$ 1,598	Ø	8,069	\$ 1,598
3	3,056	842	์ส	3.056	842
5	15,455	3,283	์ส	15,455	3,283
8	2,499	537	ğ	2,499	537
14	7,802	1,482	â	7,802	1,482
15	3,658	716	์ส	3,658	716
21	2,611	528	ğ	2,611	528
23	8,361	1,588	ø	8,361	1,588
24	6,191	1,187	์ต	6,191	1,187
25	8,311	2,047	ø	8,311	2,047
31	5,758	937	1,700	7,458	1,260
32	2,150	446	ø	2,150	446
33	9,036	1,717	ø	9,036	1,717
37	7,148	1,378	1,201	8,349	1,606
38	10,207	1,939	ø	10,207	1,939
44	8,397	1,595	ø	8,397	1,595
45	10,626	2,019	ø	10,626	2,019
46	1,142	208	ø	1,142	208
48	9,994	1,930	731	10,725	2,069
49	3,181	604	ø	3,181	604
54	6,036	1,146	2,987	9,023	1,714
60	49,183	9,597	36,413	85,596	16,515
61	16,916	3,214	ø	16,916	3,214
66	3,922	761	ø	3,922	761
/1	11,326	2,18/	Ø	11,326	2,18/
/6	8,112	1,541	ø	8,112	1,541
77	8,632	1,640	Ø	8,632	1,640
80	7,780	1,4/8	ø	7,780	1,4/0 720
03	5,792	1 107	ø	5,794	1 107
00 00	2,820 02 921	1,107	140 731	⊃,0∠0 231 552	1, 107 11 599
107	523	101	700	1 332	253
107	7 222	1 272	a 20	7 226	1 372
100	8 8/1	1 680	6 821	15 662	2 976
113	14 776	2,717	714	15,490	2,853
116	8 100	1,539	а́	8,100	1,539
118	3,977	791	Ø	3,977	791
121	20-942	4.046	ã	20,942	4.046
128	14.416	3.352	ัส	14.416	3,352
139	9,211	1,803	Ĩø	9,211	1,803
140	5,873	1,115	8,809	14,682	2,789
161	5,409	1,027	359	5,768	1,095
164	5,860	1,301	ø	5,860	1,301

.

	KNOWN	KNOWN	ADD	TOTAL	TOTAL
I.D.	K.G.	VALUE	EST. KG.	K.G.	VALUE ²
166	29 , 384	\$5 , 539	ø	29,384	\$ 5 , 539
172	7,821	1,482	11,731	19,552	3,711
174	3,298	627	ø	3,298	627
175	25,872	5,296	30,889	56,761	11,165
176	1,659	283	1,043	2,702	481
195	7,525	1,598	ø	7,525	1,598
205	53,396	12,074	ø	53,396	12,074
208	25,776	6,206	1,419	27,195	6,475
210	8,077	1,535	12,115	20,192	3,837
223	373	71	559	932	177
227	3,936	748	1,857	5,793	1,101
231	68,812	13,074	103,218	172,030	32,685
242	5,532	1,249	881	6,413	1,416
246	11,838	2,295	617	12,455	2,412
249	2,741	521	ø	2,741	521
259	4,764	905	ø	4,764	905
263	8,061	1,532	702	8,763	1,665
264	12,597	2,402	ø	12,597	2,402
270	2,920	601	ġ	2,920	601
276	5,918	1,121	789	6,707	1,271
283	20,692	3,974	10,785	31,477	6,023
	765,154	\$148,809	\$377,870	\$1,143,024	\$220,605
Misc. ³	7,198	2,627	-	7,198	2,627
TOTAL	772,352	\$151,436		\$1,150,222	\$223,232

64 Landholders

5 Non-landholders classified as Misc.

 $N = \overline{69}$

Of the remaining 16 landholders, no data was available for 5 individuals with I.D. numbers 132, 191, 305, 309, 310. Eleven individuals were combined with other landholders' incomes as follows:

#35	entered	under	#31
42	entered	under	37
91	entered	under	90
74	entered	under	90
97	entered	under	90
104	entered	under	90
59	entered	under	140
225	entered	under	242
245	entered	under	242
291	entered	under	283
302	entered	under	208

¹Additional estimated kilograms are added in proportion to known direct sales only, using the multiplier whose calculation is the subject of Appendix 3.

 $^2 \mbox{Additional}$ estimated kilograms are valued at an average price of 19¢ per kilogram.

 $^3\ensuremath{\mathsf{Five}}$ sellers whose source of copra income could not be determined.

APPENDIX 5

COOPERATIVE COPRA SUMMARIES AND PRODUCER PRICE RESPONSIVENESS

Figure 17 shows the larger cooperative's copra exports (as per national returns) arrayed against 1978 copra prices. The export curve is sharply peaked due to factors of shipping, storage, and accounting described in relation to the larger producer, Charlie's, exports; but the overall volume of the cooperative's exports shows a slight negative correlation with price.

In addition to the volume of the cooperative's total exports and the volume of individual transactions, (analyzed in the text of chapter 6), there is a third way of examining the data for signs of producer responsiveness to price, namely the volume of copra sales to the cooperative per day. In order to explore this possibility I created several synthetic variables to transform the data into a <u>per diem</u> format. As in analysis of Charlie's copra sales, the purpose of these variables was to control for the fact that different prices prevailed for different lengths of time; further, in the case of the cooperative, the copra summaries covered different time spans. One of

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FIGURE 17

MONTHLY COPRA BEACH PRICE AND COOPERATIVE

COPRA EXPORTS, LONGANA 1978





the synthetic variables, KGDAY (kilograms per day), was used to analyze both Charlie's and the cooperative's copra sales. For the cooperative summaries, the variable KGDAY equals KG divided by TOTDAY, or the number of kilograms per summary divided by the number of days covered by a summary (see table 15 for these variables and their values). Calculation with this variable shows that the cooperative bought, as an average daily amount, 1.499 tons of copra. The minimum value of KGDAY was 353 kilos and the maximum number of kilograms sold to the cooperative in a day was 3,061.

The other two synthetic variables, CASHDAY and VOLDAY, are constructed in the same way as KGDAY. CASHDAY is the variable CASHPD (the amount paid by the cooperative in each summary) divided by TOTDAY (the number of days covered by a summary); VOLDAY is VOL (the number of sales per summary) divided by TOTDAY. Using the created variable CASHDAY, I determined that the average amount that the cooperative paid out daily to buy copra was \$281.96. The maximum value of CASHDAY was \$675.43, while \$63.51 was the smallest estimated amount of copra sales to the cooperative in a day. Using the variable VOLDAY, the average number of sales to the cooperative was found to be 4.8 transactions a day. The number of sales per day ranged from a minimum of two to a maximum of nine.

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CASE-NO	() A Y	MO	CASHPD 1	_{к 6} 2	HUTDAY 3	PRICE 4	AVERG5	CASHDAY 6	KGDAY 7	VOLDAY 8
1	8. 13.	3. 1.	1975.80	13.471	5. 5.	14.	293. 401.	375.	2598.	9. 5.
5	17.	1.	1013.10	6.401	4.	16.	337.	253.	1500.	ś.
4	22.	<u></u>	1894.70	11.233	2·	17.	340.	379.	2247.	<u></u> .
6	51.	;:	1617.15	9.005	4.	18.	375.	409.	2251.	6.
7	6.	4.	381.10	2-114	6.	18.	Ž12.	64.	353.	Ž.
8		4.	13/.15	4.339	5.		189.	147.	868.	5.
10	15:	4.	851.80	6.572	5.	13.	346-	203.	1314.	7 •
iī	26.	4	2020.60	14.081	9 .	14.	440.	225	15651	4
12	.!.	ş.	928.50	6.406	4.	14.	427.	232.	1502.	4.
1 3	11.	2.	2408.20	10.021	10.	14.	462.	241.	1652.	4.
15	25.	5.	1411.10	9.042	8.	16.	411.	176.	1130.	.
16	31.	5.	1509.10	2.641	6.	16.	402.	265.	1607.	4.
17	<u>, 6</u> .	6.	1297.05	7.549	6.	17.	177.	216.	1257.	3.
10	21.	6.	2391.90	6.122	9.	11	372.	260.	1503.	3.
źó	28.	6.	1455.60	8.328	7.	17.	278.	208.	1190.	4
21	13.	7.	2009.00	14.914	12.	17.	347.	217.	1243.	4.
22	20.	<i>.</i>	2038.80	11.657	8.	17.	353.	255+	1457.	4.
24	28.	7 :	1222.00	6,997	4.	11:	279.	306	1747	7.
25	4.	8.	913.00	5.226	1.	i7.	346.	130.	747.	Ž.
26	12.	8.	\$500.30	12.537	11.	17.	311.	200.	1144.	3.
27	76.	8 .	3141.40	17.573	11.	18.	330.	286.	1599.	2.
29	3	<i>.</i>	971.80	4.859	4.	20.	286.	243.	1215.	4.
30	15.	9.	2651.70	13.236	<i>i</i> .	ŽŪ.	282.	379.	1891.	i:
31	13.	<u>9</u> .	2025.30	9.184	3.	22.	367.	675.	3061.	8.
14	4.	10.	1789.30	13.057	11.	25.	279	209.	1209.	2.
34	15.	iŏ.	1740.30	1.512	<i>4</i> .	21	270.	435.	1893.	;:
35	17.	10.	1205.80	5.251	7.	23.	210.	172.	750.	4.
36	25.	10.	/1/5.90	9 . 252	2.	23.	237.	236.	1078.	4.
36	51.	111	1728.90	7.240	5.	24.	211.	288.	1207	č .
iğ	1 3 .	ii.	1651.90	6.501	ž.	25.	217.	236.	729.	4.
40	<u> २</u> १०	11.	4252.80	15.768	8.	27.	292.	532.	1971.	7.
41	<i>//.</i>	11.	304J.90 1826 90	11 • 2/ /	b •	21.	24/.	507.	1159	6.
43	14.	12.	3999.90	15.497	11.	26.	298.	364.	1408.	5.

¹Cash paid to buy copra ²Kilograms of copra bought ³Number of days summary covers ⁴Price in cents paid per kg. of copra ⁵Average number of kg. per transaction ⁶Cash paid per day ⁷Kilograms bought per day ⁸Average number of transactions per day

TABLE 15

COPRA SUMMARIES FOR A LONGANA COOPERATIVE (1978)

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Bivariate analysis of the relationships between short-term copra price variations and the variables KGDAY, CASHDAY, and VOLDAY indicates that the daily volume of copra sales to the cooperative was not related significantly to the copra price. A very weak negative correlation between price and KGDAY (Pearson's r = -.13881) suggests that a decline in the size of transactions was partially offset by slight increases in the number of transactions per day. Yet this increase was slight indeed, for the volume of copra sales calculated on a daily basis (VOLDAY) yields an even weaker Pearson's r (.10997) than KGDAY in relation to price. The correlation between price and CASHDAY is positive (r = .40075 with a significance of .00387), but much weaker than one would expect. In sum, the daily volume of copra sales to the cooperative, as measured by CASHDAY, KGDAY, and VOLDAY responded quite indifferently to price; yet for all three variables the direction of the slight relationship with price was the same as that suggested by the moderate inverse relationship between price and the average number of kilograms sold to the cooperative.

NOTES

Chapter One

¹Encounters with the subject matter of anthropology have led to modifications in the application of each approach within the discipline. Phenomenology was first adapted for use in the social sciences (Schutz 1967) Merleau-Ponty (1964); Luckmann (1978). Clarification of the problem of the experience of others was an essential step. This, as Schutz paraphrases Husserl, was shown to be a "dark corner feared only by children in philosophy because the spectre of solipsism or psychologism and relativism haunts it" (Schutz 1978:125). Within anthropology, most phenomenological approaches have begun with simpler models than the lifeworld which has been the usual starting point for phenomenological sociology and geography (Lansing 1979).

Bloch (1975), Godelier (1977) and O'Laughlin (1975) review the adaptation of historical materialism to anthropological analysis. Because Marxist assumptions preclude the existence of anthropology as a separate discipline, at times the process has seemed more one of confrontation than adaptation. Thus, Marxists who study traditional societies often "spiritedly set out as a final objective the capture of social anthropology" (Firth 1975:48).

²Yet Merleau-Ponty speaks directly to the problem of anthropologically understanding other cultures through "imaginary variation" (1964:104, 107-108).

³Silverman skillfully expresses the cultural facticity of supposition, expectation and ideals:

People sometimes speak of culture as if it contrasted with behavior or with action. This is a subversive usage. Culture is abstracted from behavior, action or interaction; it is not opposed This does not mean that an ideal to them. construct of, for example, how government should function may not be different from how government But it does mean that the actually functions. ideal construct of how government should function is in no sense less real than the way in which government actually functions. Nor does it mean that the ideal construct exhausts the cultural aspects of "government." If people suppose that

government functions in a nonideal way, or they <u>expect</u> government to behave in a nonideal way, this is an important fact and a <u>cultural</u> fact. In the cultural analysis of the "definition and interrelation of persons in interaction," to use Schneider's phrase, suppositions and expectations are as relevant as ideals (1971:8-9).

⁴By this Barthes means that the signifier in myth contains material already "worked on" so that the signifier (such as the Latin phrase in a child's grammar, <u>quia ego</u> <u>nominor leo</u> 'because my name is lion') is itself a product of signs. Thus, the signifier in myth can be seen from two points of view: "as the final term of the linguistic system, or as the first term of the mythical system. We therefore need two names. On the plane of language, that is, as the final term of the first system, I shall call the signifier: <u>meaning (my name is lion ...);</u> on the plane of myth, I shall call it: form." (Ibid.:116-117).

⁵Individuals in the research area were assigned identification numbers through a census my husband and I conducted soon after our arrival in Longana; I then used these numbers to interconnect people and their landholdings, as well as their incomes from copra and the amount of their copra exports, which figure in chapters 5 and 6.

⁶In the course of chapter 4, I further narrow the sample of landholders to 106, representing a total of 636 people and 231 plantation land parcels. The basis for these sampling decisions are given as they are introduced in the body of the dissertation. At points in the chapter, I reduce the analysis to 577 people and this sample becomes the research population for the rest of the dissertation.

CHAPTER 2

¹For information on the politicization of social movements over the issue of alienated land, and the emergence of political parties see Jackson (1972, 1973), Sope (1975) and Kele-kele et al. (1977).

²The Santo rebellion began 28 May and was widely reported in the popular press in June and July. A sampler of accounts that discuss issues in the seccession attempt include reports in the London <u>Times</u> (Reinhardt and Carroll, 1 June 1980); <u>Toronto Globe and Mail</u> (Reed, 3 June 1980); New York Times, 8 June 1980; Newsweek, 16 June 1980; Vancouver Sun, 12 June 1980; The Economist, 21 June 1980; and the Far Eastern Economic Review (Callick, 25 July 1980). Reports on the Santo rebellion in Pacific Islands Monthly include among others, Hutton (1980), Lini (1980) and Salmon (1980a, b, c, d, e).

³These land claims were not necessarily mutually exclusive as the overlapping boundaries of some applications surveyed in the 1960s attest.

⁴A Canadian called Wilbur was the first white man known to have lived in the Nduindui area of Aoba. He arrived "soon after 1870" (Allen 1968:33). By 1878, a Dutch trader had lived on, and left, east Aoba (Scarr 1968:91); while an American named Johnson and his partner Chaffin, worked in the Tavolavola area until an Aoban murdered Johnson in 1879 (Harrisson 1937:217).

⁵This land dispute was made even more difficult for all parties by the inability of the Land Trust Board (to which Burns Philp had transferred the land in 1974) to compensate expatriate owners at this time. Not surprisingly, the Australian who had spent forty-seven years on Aoba was unwilling to leave without compensation for his land and buildings.

⁶The land in question is not suitable for coconuts. If Longanans or expatriates planted coconuts on such disputed claims, increased conflict rather than peaceful coexistence probably would result.

⁷A Longanan story reports that sickness struck the coastal population and had claimed the lives of all but one man by the time Captain Cook sailed past the island.

⁸See W. Rodman (1973) for analysis of the graded society.

⁹See Rodman (1979) for description of this period of Longana history.

¹⁰For white middlemen the system has changed substantially since the 1930s when a sharp distinction was drawn between "foreign" copra which sold at low prices against "French" copra made by French resortisants. For example, when French traders and planters dearned \$7.50 for a ton of copra, foreign copra fetched \$2.25. To sell copra for French rather than foreign prices, Burns Philp formed the Sociéte Comptoirs Francais (SCF). The company was

1.

known among anglophones from its initials as "So Called French" (Stan Breusch, personal communication 1978).

¹¹Irregularities in the Longana pyramid probably are a function of sample size.

CHAPTER 3

¹In "Social space in interdisciplinary perspective" (1969), Anne Buttimer reviews the development of the concept of social space. She notes that Durkheim was the first to introduce the concept; however, in the 1950s' Sorre and Chombart de Lawe modified Durkheim's purely social approach to include consideration of the effects of physical setting. Through the influence of Heidigger and Merleau-Ponty, concern with the egocentric nature of existential "lived space" has become an important aspect of the study of place in geography (e.g., Bollnow 1967; Relph 1976; Tuan 1971).

The concept of social space has developed along rather different lines in anthropology and is linked to ecology or psychology, orientations that diverge from the geographical meaning of place that I am using here.

²The adoption of Vanuatu as the country's name may encourage a broader sense of place than previously prevailed among the islands' societies.

³The custom Longanans always cite in explanation of Aoba's sacredness is that men and women clothed themselves in pandanus mats.

⁴See Rodman (1973) and Lovell (1981) for detailed accounts of this myth.

⁵Monthly census figures for Waileni suggest the frequency with which people move between hamlets. Although the total population varied only a little -- between a minimum of 68 people and a maximum of 74 during Christmas holidays -- a total of 113 individuals either arrived or departed during one of the census intervals (see table 3). The census figures recorded only those people who were

TABLE 3

MONTHLY CENSUS OF WAILENI HAMLET 15 SEPT. 1978 - 15 MAY 1979

	Total	Departures	Arrivals		
Base Popula	tion (Sept.	1978): 68			
November	73	11	16		
December	74	15	16		
January	73	8	7		
February	72	3	2		
March	71	8	7		
April	70	5	4		
May	71	_5	6		
		55	58		

sleeping in Waileni on the fifteenth of each month. Many more people's entries and exits occurred within the month between censuses -- for example, a family who went to hospital in Vila on the nineteenth of March and returned to Waileni the sixth of April. These movements, of course, do not appear as a change in hamlet population in the March or April census, so that table 3 is merely suggestive of the very high velocity of movement into and out of a Longanan hamlet.

Teenagers, especially but not exclusively males, enjoy a wide range of choice about where to spend a few days, weeks or even months. Choice of sleeping arrangements can be something of a fad. For example, from December through April, between nine and thirteen adolescent boys spread their sleeping mats in an unused cocca bed, a platform on which cocca beans are dried with hot air from a fire below. Every evening between 8 and 8:30 p.m., the boys strolled past our house in groups of two, three, or sometimes half a dozen, singing and chatting on their way from the hamlet to the cocca dryer. At dawn they returned to their mothers' kitchens for breakfast. The pattern was reminiscent of the days when preadolescent and older boys slept in a mens' clubhouse. The cocca bed occupation ended in May when the cocca producing season began and hot cocca beans displaced the boys.

⁶In 1970, one hamlet was abandoned because it was diagnosed as a poisoned place. The residents became ill and uneasy, and finally left the settlement convinced that an unknown enemy of the hamlet's high ranking man had buried a coconut charged with a potent spell in the main pathway into the hamlet. By 1978, the place had been cured and the residents returned. However, by that time a second hamlet (the site of our first fieldwork) had been poisoned at the opposite end of the district. In this case, the place was considered toxic only for one man who moved his family elsewhere. In 1978-1979, he returned often to the settlement which was located in the midst of a plantation where he often made copra, but he was careful never to sleep in the hamlet.

Some places are always dangerously evil. Longanans considered one creek bed, for example, a particularly bad place. Its length was punctuated by spots of concentrated evil -- a rock that caused illness, a hole that was a home of evil spirits. The creek was the scene of several spirit sightings during our fieldwork (see Rodman and Rodman 1980 for more on spirits and poison).

⁷Rosen's recent article (1979) on social identity and points of attachment in the Sefrou region of Morocco presents an analysis similar in orientation to my own. Like customary illusions, Rosen's "collective images -through which people sometimes experience, interpret, judge and create their ties to one another" (Ibid.:19) point to a cultural emphasis on the individual in the energetic negotiation of reciprocal relations.

⁸See Lovell (1981:208-212) for discussion of illegitimacy and adoption in terms of the alienability of <u>dai</u> 'blood' ties between genitor-offspring and genetrixoffspring. See Rubenstein (1978) for implications of adoption for landholding on Malo.

⁹In an effort to reduce the expenses involved in staging a <u>bongi</u>, the hosts often hold public feasts only at ten day intervals, privately celebrating each alternate five-day interval.

¹⁰If a man is not survived by full brothers or if he is childless, his closest <u>duvi</u> members classified as "brothers" or "offspring" fill these roles. Lovell summarizes well the meaning of <u>duvi</u> in such circumstances:

When a Longana uses the word <u>duvi</u> with reference to the rights and duties concerning weddings, funerals, land or vengeance, he is referring primarily to a set of siblings and their uterine kin of proximate generations (MB, ZC), and secondarily to any members of the descent category who feel obligated, on an individual basis, toward the former (1981: 262). ¹¹Rodman (1973) Lovell (1981) provide more detailed accounts of the pattern of <u>bongi</u> exchanges. Lane (1971) also discusses how Aobans can acquire land through funerary payments. Whether a contributor to a <u>bongi</u> receives land or pigs in compensation for his gifts is entirely situational, as examples to be presented in chapter 5 indicate.

¹²See Rodman (1976) for analysis of ceremonial spheres of exchange in Longana.

¹³A Longanan's full control over land he purchases contrasts with the fragile rights of outsiders, especially whites, who buy Longanan land that were discussed in chapter 2.

¹⁴The data Schieffelin presents to support his argument that land is a mediator of identity are similar to the Longana material included here. Clearly, for the Kaluli, place is more than a metaphor. Schieffelin notes that,

> in effect, as one moves along tracks and pathways through successive areas of different kinds of forest, one passes sites representing a history of houses and gardens and the people who made them over the previous fifty years. These sites mark to the people the various contexts of their own past experience (1979:133).

Although he fails to identify these "sites" as places in a phenomenological sense, he correctly recognizes them as the source of the nostalgia with which Kaluli people react to certain ceremonial songs. After all, nostalgia, as Schieffelin might have noted, was coined as a term to describe the symptoms of homesickness; it is a longing to return to a place, not a time (Tuan 1971:189).

¹⁵A few <u>gaindumu</u> are absolute scales; a man who weighs copra sacks is said to <u>dumu</u> as is a person who tells how far away one thing is from another.

CHAPTER 4

¹While I encountered no one who opposed the mapping project, I had to rely heavily on a few men who had a talent for and an interest in reading the aerial photographs. Most people had difficulty identifying all but the most obvious landmarks on the photographs. They responded well, however, to description of landmarks that I or a Longanan could provide as a kind of translation of the photographs from a visual to a verbal mode.

²Inland boundaries of plots along the Longana border with Lolovenue district were difficult to establish for several reasons. First, these boundaries rise toward crests of volcanic spatter cones in very rugged the Because the cliffs and deep valleys are behind terrain. the rest of the district on the aerial photographs and, following standard photographic procedure, the shadows fall toward the viewer, shadows obscure the boundary area of some plots on the photos. Second, these boundaries were too hard to reach and too difficult to map with a compass and topophile once one reached them to make expeditions to the inner borders worthwhile. Third, the border between Longana and Lolovenue was under negotiation in 1978-1979. Toward the end of my fieldwork, Longanans began to mark this border, but they were uneasy about my including it on my map as the Lolovenue people had not yet signalled their agreement. Consequently, the inland border of Longana in map 2 and 3 is approximate.

³Unfortunately, my data on the amount of garden land available are not precise. I did not measure garden plots, nor could I identify all the fallow garden land. Garden land near the airfield is included in plantation holdings.

⁴I did not have time to investigate the proportion of store foods in the Longanan diet, nor was I able to evaluate size of garden resources as a factor affecting consumption of purchased food. However, as an indication of how much Longanans spend on food and other goods at local stores, my data from the larger Longanan cooperative society indicate that 46% of shareholders spent between \$Al0 and \$150 at the cooperative store in the society's fiscal year, 1978-1979. Of these, 12% spent between \$10 and \$49.95, 16% spent between \$50 and \$99.95, and 18% spent between \$100 and \$149.95. In contrast to the majority of consumers, 12% spent more than \$500. Those who spent the most at the cooperative store were those who sold the most copra there, anticipating the differentiation between big and small peasants to be discussed later in the dissertation. But the data have not yet been analyzed to determine if a correlation exists between volume of store purchases and size of garden resources.

⁵I have not included the I.D. numbers of landholders on map 3. Instead I have used only plot

numbers to protect the anonymity that I.D. numbers, used elsewhere in the dissertation, provide to landholders.

⁶Because the analysis here is by plot (307) not person (139), individuals who control more than one plot (85) are included more than once in the statistics. Thus, for example, the frequency distribution by age is weighted in favour of those who own more plots of land. As later analysis in this chapter suggests, however, the number of plots a person controls is <u>not</u> positively correlated with the total size of his landholdings (see table 10). In other words, weighting in favour of number of plots does not overemphasize characteristics of large landholders.

⁷The balance of the 307 cases is made up by 8 separated or divorced landholders and 5 missing cases.

⁸In fifty-four cases moiety affiliation was missing data.

⁹One of these cases is plot 76 in the southwest corner of the district. I was told that this is a small area newly planted to coconuts. The landholder, who had bought the plot, was so land poor that he was willing to carry the expected copra out on foot. Hills and creeks made access difficult and I did not visit the plot, nor was I able to identify it adequately on the aerial photographs.

The other plot excluded from analysis is number 265, an extremely large area of bush in the uplands southwest of the airfield. This land had been under the control of Liu Taburingi, the last warrior-leader of Longana. Upon his death in 1938, several men who were leaders in their own rights laid claim to his land, but they did not transform this particular tract into plantation. Some of the land is quite high for coconuts, all of it is hilly and, without a road to transport copra to the coast, the area remains marginal as potential plantation land.

¹⁰In Micronesian studies, land has received more attention than in Melanesian research as a factor distinct from locality or territoriality in the creation of kinship. In particular, Silverman's use of the "blood and mud hypothesis", in which he brings together symbolic complexes centering, respectively, on common substance and locality, approaches a problem related to the one I am addressing from a complementary perspective (1971:72-81). Feinberg recently has suggested (1981) that land figures importantly in the Polynesian codes for conduct that partially define corporate group membership.

¹¹Residential mobility within hamlets, as well as between them, is great (see chapter 3), and the shape of residential segments is dynamic. For example, segment number 1 grew spatially between 1970 and 1978. In 1970, the southernmost house in the segment was number 70, buildings 67, 67K, and 38 did not exist and 37 was a \underline{na} gamal for the church, not a residence. By 1978, in addition to construction of our house and kitchen (67, 67K), the man and wife who had lived in 61 moved to 37 to accommodate their growing family. Several of this couple's sons moved into building 69 which was vacated by another couple (the first man's brother and his wife) who felt the house made them sick. This couple moved into building 61. Such triangulation resulted in an elongated residential segment, but the interaction within the segment is still great, especially between the brothers in buildings 37 and 61 and their mother in 70, and between the women of buildings 61, 62, 64, and 70.

Probably the segment will continue to grow in a southerly direction as the brothers' sons mature; the eldest has built his own residence (38) near his father's converted <u>na gamal</u>. When the old leader in building 63 dies, the segment might divide so that his son's family forms a separate segment from his sister's sons (see figure 4b).

Another segment became smaller in 1979, when old house number 44 fell down. The household head moved his family into his unmarried brother's house (50) and the brother moved into his new kitchen.

¹²Ironically, ordinary Longanans welcomed pacification as the beginning of a new era in which leaders no longer would be above the law and could no longer seize the land of their followers (Rodman 1979). Land usurpation following pacification has had more serious economic consequences for Longanans than did a warrior's greed for land. Yet no Longanan yet has been able to establish the guilt of a leader in court as an offender in matters of land.

CHAPTER 5

¹Salisbury discusses a similarly uneven response to cash-cropping among the Tolai (1970:149).

²By "relatively large" here I mean plantings greater than twenty-five hectares.

³I have not attempted to calculate a copra production function because of the difficulties that would be involved in quantifying the opportunity cost and efficiency of labour invested in copra production.

⁴Wilson (1966:113-122) describes the drying process in detail and suggests improvements that would yield a better quality product.

⁵Each of these households generally made copra without assistance from others and produced less than twenty-five tons annually. In seven households with young children, a husband and wife made copra together; teenage children assisted their mothers and fathers in six households; in one household, teenage sons helped their widowed mother; in one household a widow produced copra alone; and two widows who were household heads were too old to make their own copra.

 6 Whether or not a high price <u>does</u> serve as an incentive to produce more is discussed at length in chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6

¹34,328 metric tons out of a total of 46,960 metric tons received for export or processing at Vila and Santo during 1978. The remaining copra was produced on plantations. (Bureau of Statistics, Vila).

²Anne Dunbar of Australian National University conducted a study of shipping in 1979 that should contribute to understanding of the problems of transporting copra in the islands and offer recommendations for improved shipping service (see Dunbar 1981).

³Repayment takes the form of a deduction from the producer's consignment account, or, in effect, from his next copra sale. Selling on consignment holds risks for the producer beyond those of a falling market. Producers attitudes toward consignment and the factors influencing decisions about which mode of copra sale to follow are discussed later in this chapter.

⁴For purposes of calculating customs duty, real FOB=CIF-5%-freight. Customs duty was applied to FOB value thus: where real FOB is greater than 20,000 FNH, the <u>ad</u> <u>valorem</u> rate is 7%; where real FOB is between 10,000 and 20,000 FNH, the <u>ad valorem</u> rate is 5%; where real FOB is less than 10,000 FNH, the ad valorem rate is 3.5%. Restructuring of these rates to a more progressive 8%, 5%, and 2% respectively was expected to occur in 1979.

⁵The small oil mill that opened without government backing in 1978 in Santo buys ungraded copra.

⁶Rather than selecting calendar 1978 as the time period for analysis, I chose the twelve month period that coincided with the fiscal year of the two Longanan cooperative societies, since their copra records were compiled on an April-March annual basis and the data available to me from other sources was monthly.

⁷The decision to restrict this part of the analysis followed from decisions discussed earlier in the dissertation to restrict much of the land analysis in the same way. The composition of the Melanesian Mission population and their agricultural resource base is such that it is reasonable to assume that they contribute to copra exports in proportion to their representation in the population.

⁸Longana copra prices are quoted in Australian dollars, which remain the local currency in the islands despite the pervasive use of FNH as the currency of commerce in Vila and Santo.

⁹Although I analyzed the records of both societies, the major reason for selecting the larger cooperative society for discussion in the dissertation is that many members of the other society were large producers who sold no copra at all through the society. Such individuals profit from cooperative membership only when they buy goods at the cooperative store or when their children sell small amounts of copra to the society under their father's name.

¹⁰The copra weight here is estimated, based on an average price of 21¢ per kilogram for fiscal 1978.

¹¹This person appears as case C in table 5, the chart of larger Longanan copra producers.

 $^{12}\mathrm{By}$ comparison, sales to private businessmen tended to be even smaller; 74% of the sales to one entrepreneur in 1978 involved less than 200 kilograms of copra.

¹³A Pearson correlation coefficient of -1 would indicate a perfect inverse linear relationship between the variables; a coefficient of 0 would imply a poor fit between a linear regression line and the data.

¹⁴Captains are reluctant to reveal the exact location of their ships to competing vessels. Hence the evening shipping news on national radio often reports such erroneous information as that a particular ship will call in Longana the next day, when in fact that ship has already come and gone.

¹⁵Charges for transporting copra within Longana were a flat \$A 1.00 per bag in 1978, regardless of the distance travelled or the number of bags hauled. A Toyota Landcruiser holds ten bags of copra and, in Longana, gets about ten miles to the imperial gallon. Gasoline sold in Longana for between \$A1.60 (wholesale) and \$A2.00 (retail) in 1978. Clearly, transporting copra long distances at these rates was uneconomical and truckers would not take copra from one end of the district to the other. During the tradewind season (May to October), ships often call only at Lolowai, the sheltered bay at Aoba's eastern tip. On such occasions, only a small percentage of Longana's copra is transported to Lolowai for shipment.

¹⁶Here I follow the distinction Cancian draws (following the economist Knight's definitions sixty years ago) between risk and uncertainty: "In simple terms, it is risk in situations where one knows the probabilities of various possible outcomes of an action; uncertainty in situations in which one cannot specify the probabilities" (1980:162-163). Because Longanans, while not statisticians, are familiar with the chances involved in copra marketing through past experience, much of what they encounter in daily experience is risk rather than uncertainty.

¹⁷During August, 1978, firm price sales in the national returns, which had been virtually nonexistent in prior months, leaped to almost one-quarter of Longanan exports on a falling market. Unfortunately for Longanans, the price quickly recovered, and in September only onetenth of the district's copra sold for a firm price.

¹⁸Discussion with management personnel at the mill did not reveal how the mill could return what it called consignment payments before the oil reached the European market. This and other aspects of the mill's operation were somewhat obscure and coloured popular opinion against the mill in Santo, a strongly anti-Vanuaaku Pati constituency. The idea of operating an oil mill on Santo long has been controversial from an economic point of view (for an evaluation of project proposals for an oil mill see Injac 1976). The fact of the copra mill's existence also has been highly controversial. The mill had been operating for only about a year when I left the field. At that time it was not yet clear if the mill would fulfill the hopes that the Vanuaaku Pati had placed in the venture. The mill was burned in the Santo rebellion in 1980.

¹⁹With the installation of two new expressers in 1979, the mill would be able to process 1,300 tons of copra monthly.

²⁰The CFNH ship that called in Longana was the Henry Bonneaud, which had a gross registered tonnage of 397 tons. The Kathleen (GRT 124) and occasionally the Konanda (GRT 414) purchased copra for Burns Philp (Anne Dunbar, personal communication).

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