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A Stone Age Setting

The Goroka Sub-District, the setting for this narrative, is one of the administrative units of the Eastern Highlands District in the Australian-administered Territory of Papua and New Guinea.

¹ It includes 680 square miles of valley and mountain lands, ranging from about 4,500 feet to over 11,000 feet in elevation. The Goroka Valley, one of a series of valleys which occur between the mountain ranges along the central Cordillera of New Guinea, forms the main section of the sub-district. The valley is wedge-shaped, pinched in the northeast where the commanding Bismarck Mountains, dominated by 11,600-foot Mount Otto, and the Asaro Range, less commanding, but studded with peaks reaching up to 8,000 and 9,000 feet, come together, and opening out toward the southeast to a rolling plains landscape almost twenty miles wide. The low Kami Hills rise out of these plains thirty-five miles from the northeastern tip of the valley and cut the Goroka Valley off from other low-lying areas to the east. Two rivers drain the valley, the Asaro and the Bena Bena. Both flow south from the foothills of the Bismarcks, then join at the southeastern edge of the valley, and flow out through a gorge separating the Kami Hills and the Asaro Range to form part of the headwaters of the Purari River, which eventually empties into the Papuan Gulf. Appended to the Goroka Valley to complete the sub-district is the small and mountainous Watabung region, just over the Asaro Range.

Although Goroka lies only 6 degrees below the equator, because of its elevation the climate is relatively pleasant compared to the hot and humid lowlands of New Guinea. Along the heavily populated valley floor and on the lower elevations of the mountain slopes daytime temperatures in the eighties are common but are bearable because of the relatively low humidity. Nights are cool—frequently in the fifties even at the lowest elevations—and frosts occur above 8,000 feet or so.

There are two distinct seasons—the wet season, during the Southern Hemisphere summer months of November through March, when about three-quarters of the annual rainfall occurs, and the dry season of the winter months. Rainfall varies with local topography. The lower elevations along the southeastern border of the valley get only 50 to 60 inches a year and are subject to prolonged droughts, while in the upper reaches of the valley, particularly at the narrow northeastern end, annual rainfall is in the 100-inch range, and seasonality is less marked. Throughout the year morning mists along the valley floor are common, and a heavy cloud cover usually surrounds the ranges each afternoon. Particularly in the wet season these cloud formations result in thunderstorms, lightning, heavy showers, and sometimes hail (Howlett 1962:7-17).

Well before the coming of Europeans and the introduction of cash crops, man had evidently altered the vegetation of Goroka. The climate of Goroka and much of the Highlands is potentially a forest climate; rainfall and temperature patterns provide a habitat in which forest would be the natural climax vegetation for all but the tops of the highest mountains and the low-lying swampy areas. Yet, when the first Europeans arrived, they found extensive grasslands covering the valley floor and the lower slopes of the ranges. The lowland forests had apparently been gradually removed by successive generations of settlers, who had cleared the land for cultivation by ring-barking and burning. The resultant grasslands were probably then stabilized by continual fallowing and reuse of the land, plus use of fire to burn off brush for hunting drives (Robbins 1963). These grasslands appear to be most permanently established in the dry southeast end of the valley, that area of Goroka which, because of low rainfall and relatively poor soil, is least conducive to regeneration of forest cover. Above the practical limit of cultivation, which usually varies a few hundred feet either way of 7,500 feet, the forest cover remains. Between 7,500 feet and 9,000 feet the ranges are covered by a dense rain forest dominated by evergreens. Above 9,000 feet the cloud forest of stunted trees covered by mosses and lichens begins, and above 10,500 feet, on Mount Otto alone, alpine shrub and grasslands appear (Howlett 1962:21-26).

THE COMING OF MAN

Archaeological research in the Highlands started barely a decade ago with Susan Bulmer's pioneering excavations of rock shelters (Bulmer and Bulmer 1964), and it is still too early to reconstruct Highlands prehistory with any confidence. Nonetheless, enough evidence has accumulated to suggest a tentative outline of the main benchmarks of human occupation of the area. If anything, this outline should serve to dispel any view of Highlands societies as static entities unchanged for thousands of years and to promote the notion that they have been subject to constant change. The recent transformation of Highlands societies stimulated by the late arrival of Europeans in New Guinea has come at the end of a long history of exploration, occupation, and development of the region by New Guineans.

The first evidence for human occupation in the Highlands comes from excavations made in rock shelters, including one at Kafafana in the Goroka Valley. Radiocarbon dates of organic materials taken from these shelters indicate that man has been in the Highlands for at least 11,000 years. The first Highlanders were probably small groups of hunters and gatherers who moved into the area from the earlier-settled coastal and foothill regions of New Guinea. They probably lived in the warmer valleys, seeking shelter in caves and under rock overhangs, hunting birds and small mammals, and also gathering various edible nuts, fruits, and tubers. They used pebble and flaked tools (and later ground stone tools), presumably made wooden artifacts like the bow and arrow, and had trade links from the coast, as is evidenced by seashells found at the lower levels of excavated sites. At the Kafafana rock shelter, for example, small cowries (*Cypraea moneta*) were found at a level dated at about 7000 B.C. (White 1967).

Over time, these first hunting groups undoubtedly explored their new habitat, killing off some of the larger fauna as their numbers grew, and extended their hunting activities throughout the valleys and up the mountain slopes. The first signs of what may have been a period of major economic change occur in archaeological diggings at around 4000 B.C., when the first pig bones appear in the sites. These bones could, however, be from feral pigs, as there is no direct evidence to suggest that Highlanders were then agriculturists and could raise domesticated pigs as they do today. About 3000 B.C. the rock shelter sites were abandoned, an event that may indicate that agriculture

had been introduced and that Highlanders were shifting their living sites to open, cultivated areas. However, the first firm evidence for agriculture does not come until about 500 B.C., from an open site in the Wahgi Valley, west of Goroka. There a system of water-control ditches has been uncovered, along with fence posts, digging sticks, and a wooden spade, all of which indicate the existence of a well-developed agricultural complex, although evidence as to what crops were involved is lacking (Brookfield and White 1968). The most recent changes in the Highlands, for which there is not yet any firm archaeological evidence, probably occurred between two hundred and three hundred years ago, when the sweet potato was introduced. The sweet potato, a South American plant that was probably taken to Indonesia by the Portuguese and then to New Guinea by Indonesian bird of paradise hunters and traders, proved to be an ideal crop for the Highlands. Its caloric yield per acre was higher than those of taro, yams, and other foods that must have been the first staples, and its relative hardiness against frost allowed cultivation to be pushed higher up the mountain slopes than was possible with the previous crops. Watson (1965) considers that the introduction of the sweet potato led to a subsistence revolution: population greatly increased, the process of converting forest to grasslands was accelerated, and the elaborate subsistence systems based on the intensive cultivation of sweet potatoes and the breeding of pigs which so impressed the first European explorers were developed.

THE GOROKANS

The Gorokans now number about 60,000, perhaps 10,000 more than at the time of first contact. They are a short, stocky mountain people. A sample of more than a thousand Gorokans studied in the late 1950s revealed that men averaged just over five feet in height and about 120 pounds in weight, while women were on the average three inches shorter and fifteen pounds lighter (Kariks et al. 1960). Gorokans are dark-skinned, ranging in color from light brown to black. Their hair is normally black and is crisply curled in its natural state, although traditionally it was worn in long, narrow plaits, reaching the shoulders or below. Men have abundant facial and body hair, although few grow full beards. The rugged, muscular physique of mature men

is matched in many of them by prominent facial features, although there is much variation and some men have markedly delicate features.

Despite the coolness of the nights and misty mornings, traditional Gorokan dress was scanty. Modesty required a pubic covering. Most men wore bark cloth G-strings, often combined with a back covering of netting slung from the shoulders to the knees. Others, influenced by neighboring Chimbu groups from the west, wore wide belts from which were suspended bark cloth or netting coverings in front and bundles of leaves in back. Women wore string aprons—wide ones in front and narrow ones in back—and net carrying bags suspended from their heads that reached down to their buttocks. Women completed their costume with shells and other ornaments worn around the neck or the head, but male finery was much more impressive. Particularly for important ceremonial occasions, men wore elaborate headdresses featuring bird of paradise plumes and other feathers, headbands made of small shells, and breastplates of mother-of-pearl shell or strands of large cowries—both important symbols of wealth—slung from their necks. Plaited arm-bands and belts, shell ear pendants, and bone or shell ornaments piercing their septums completed their dress. The New Guinean artistic verve so evident in the wood sculptures of Sepik and other coastal peoples was clearly expressed by the Gorokans, like other Highlanders, in their elaborate costumes.

New Guinea is noted for its linguistic diversity; estimates of the number of languages spoken there usually run into the many hundreds. The Highlands follow this pattern of diversity, although language communities there tend to be somewhat larger and more closely related than elsewhere in New Guinea. For Goroka, Wurm (1964) identifies five separate languages: Asaro, Gahuku, and Bena Bena of the Bena Bena subfamily and Siane and Yaviyufa of the Siane subfamily. These he considers to be part of the East-Central family of the East New Guinea phylum, a grouping that includes all but a few of the languages spoken in the Highlands of Australian New Guinea. The Gorokan languages, like the others in the phylum, are classed as non-Austronesian or Papuan languages, in distinction from the Austronesian languages spoken on some offshore islands and by some coastal communities. The non-Austronesian languages probably represent modern developments descended from the first New Guinea languages, while the Austronesian languages—being part of a great oceanic language family that

stretches from Madagascar to Polynesia—probably stem from languages spoken by seafaring intruders who arrived relatively late in New Guinea's history.

The Gorokan languages, particularly those of a single sub-family, seem to be relatively close to the boundary between being separate languages and being dialects. Even the most stay-at-home Gorokan can usually understand something of a neighboring language, even if he cannot actually speak it. Gorokans who live near linguistic boundaries are often multi-lingual, as are those who do a lot of traveling around the area. Now, as I have indicated, Pidgin has been widely adopted as a lingua franca and is commonly heard in conversations when people from different groups gather.

Goroka has five census divisions, which partially follow linguistic boundaries. Asaro is the main language of the Upper Asaro census division, Gahuku is spoken in the Lowa (short for Lower Asaro) census division, and Bena Bena is the language of the Bena Bena census division. Yaviyufa is spoken in the Unggai census division, and Siane is the main language of Watabung,² although most Siane speakers live outside this census division and outside the sub-district, altogether.

Between linguistic communities (and census divisions) there are some cultural differences; variations in ritual, dress, and other customs are apparent. However, the similarities among Gorokan groups are much more impressive. Read (1954:20, 34-35) regards the whole of the Goroka Valley as a single culture area and considers that the Siane are probably closely related. In this study what cultural variation exists is largely ignored, particularly because the people of Goroka are conscious of their close linguistic, cultural, and social ties, which have been reinforced by their being grouped together in a single administrative unit by the Australians. Although they seldom refer to themselves as Gorokans (*man bilong Goroka* in Pidgin), in this study it is convenient to refer to them all by this label.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL GROUPS

In traditional Gorokan society the clan was the basic social unit. Typically, members of the same clan lived together in one village, forming a community of two hundred men, women, and children, on the average. Villages were usually located on ridges and were stockaded for protection against attack. Other stockaded villages were usually located farther up a ridge

or lower down it and on parallel ridges. Outside the village stockade were the clan's lands, either being cultivated, lying fallow, or temporarily being left to grazing pigs. Pig houses were scattered throughout the clan's land as shelter for pigs and for persons working on the gardens. Although people sometimes spent the night in these houses, usually they slept in their villages, particularly if there was fear of attack from hostile groups. Within the stockade there was usually a single or double row of women's houses—low, round huts—and one or several men's houses—larger, elliptical structures. As men feared contamination from too close and prolonged contact with women, they preferred to sleep as a group in their men's house, leaving their wives to sleep alone with their children (and often the pigs), each in her own house.

Clansmen formed a tightly knit group, living in close daily association, sharing similar interests, and working together for common goals. The injury or death of one member at the hands of an outsider brought retaliation by the victim's clan against the outsider's clan. Each clan was normally exogamous, and clansmen had to pool their resources to make payments to other groups to bring in brides. The ability of clansmen to pay a respectable brideprice and to contribute handsomely to wealth exchanges with other clans on various occasions was a great source of clan pride. In addition to these crucial wealth-exchange situations, a clan's solidarity also was evident on more mundane occasions. Clansmen combined to form working parties to build and maintain stockades and men's houses and stood ready to aid each other in such arduous tasks as clearing land for new gardens.

In theory, the clan was a patrilineal unit composed of patrilineages—often grouped into subclans, all linked by descent from a common ancestor. In practice, however, deviation from the patrilineal ideal was common, and men were recruited into the clan by other means than birth (compare Langness 1964).³ A man sometimes settled, for example, in his wife's village rather than his own and identified with her natal clan rather than his. Or in times of war refugee groups from defeated clans might seek to settle in a friendly village and, in effect, join the local clan. However loosely structured the resultant groups might appear in terms of anthropological models of patrilineal descent groups, from the point of view of the individuals seeking the resources and protection of the host group,

or from the point of view of a small, undermanned clan needing manpower to cultivate its land and defend its boundaries, non-patrilineal recruitment made practical sense to the Gorokans.

Clans often joined together to form a social unit called a phratry, or a subtribe, and marriage prohibitions might be extended throughout the unit, making it exogamous. The most dramatic occasions when members of a subtribe acted together were in times of war, when they united to fight a common enemy, and when they held joint religious ceremonies and festivals. Of the latter the pig festival was the most notable, for it was the occasion when the clansmen of a subtribe joined in celebrating the alliance of clans with the ostentatious exchange, slaughter, and consumption of their most highly valued pigs.

The largest social unit in precontact Goroka was the tribe, a group composed of anywhere from a pair to almost a score of clans. Tribes varied in size from a few hundred members to as high as fifteen hundred or so, with a mean of perhaps around a thousand. Although kinship terms might be used by tribesmen to emphasize their ties, the tribe was not a genealogically structured unit. The tribe was, above all, a unit of political expediency, a grouping of clans willing to fight together and defend their territory from other tribal clusters of clans surrounding them.

Gorokans distinguished two types of fighting, called in Gahuku, for example, *hina* (feuding) and *rova* (warfare) (Read 1954:37-42). Disputes over land, pigs, women, or sorcery, the classic overt precipitants of conflict in New Guinea, that broke out between members of the same tribe led to *hina*. Although *hina* fighting often involved confrontations of heavily armed warriors and sometimes resulted in death or serious injury, it was a limited, controlled type of fighting, terminated either when the aggrieved group felt it had done sufficient damage to pay back the other group or upon payment of blood money in the form of traditional valuables. *Rova*, in contrast, was more a matter of unlimited warfare of tribe against tribe, and was never completely terminated. Every tribe was a potential, if not an actual, enemy of every other tribe, and when warring groups broke off fighting, only a temporary truce came into effect, and hostilities were always likely to be renewed. The object of intertribal fighting was the complete destruction of the enemy and the taking over of his lands. Although this was probably seldom achieved completely, numerous tales are still current among

Gorokans of large massacres of men, women, and children and of routs of tribes, or sections of tribes, which were then forced to seek refuge with friendly groups.

In Goroka, then, there was no state, no government, as such. Cultural-linguistic groups were in no way politically united. There were only warring tribes or potentially hostile tribes and their constituent subtribes and clans. This social and political atomism was typical of New Guinea and has only begun to change through the imposition of a governmental system of districts, sub-districts, and local government councils.

SUBSISTENCE PATTERNS

Almost without exception, the first explorers who penetrated the Highlands valleys reacted with astonished admiration to the agricultural accomplishments of the people (Brookfield 1962:243). Instead of the scattered gardens littered with half-burned logs found in much of lowland New Guinea, they found extensive tracts of cleared and intensively cultivated land. For example, Michael Leahy, who led the first party into the Goroka Valley, remarked:

The gardens of the people inhabiting the headwaters and numerous tributaries of the Purari are probably the most scientifically worked of any native cultivations in New Guinea. The ground is first turned over by means of pointed sticks, then allowed to fallow for some time, then it is dug up again with pointed sticks, every weed or grass root being taken out and the soil rubbed into a fine mulch between the hands. It is then arranged in long, straight rows, a shallow drainage channel cut between the beds and their sweet potatoes, yams, beans, etc., planted. Looked at from a distance the general layout is symmetrically perfect. (1936:230)

This description refers primarily to the valley peoples of Goroka and the Wahgi Valley farther west; cultivation on the lower slopes of the Bismarck and Asaro ranges involved slightly different procedures, such as the clearing of primary or secondary forest with axe and fire, but the resulting gardens, located on steep slopes, were no less impressive.

The sweet potato was the main subsistence crop of the Gorokans, forming about 90 percent of their diet (Howlett 1962:79). Sugarcane, bananas, yam, taro, maize (apparently introduced before 1930), and a range of other root crops, legumes, and green vegetables were grown as secondary crops. In addition, the oil pandanus was cultivated for its oil, which was used as a food, a dye, and for smearing on the body, and the fruit of the mountain-loving nut pandanus was highly prized as a luxury food. Animal protein intake was low, mainly coming from pigs fed with sweet potatoes and allowed to graze on fallow land. Game was a scarce addition to the diet. In the valley lowlands children caught some birds and rats, and on the mountain slopes an occasional game bird, tree kangaroo, possum, or other small marsupial was taken by a hunting party of men.

The extensive cultivation of the sweet potato, a crop which matures in as few as four months in favorable areas, supplemented by other gardening activities, as well as the raising of pigs, allowed a considerable population to develop in Goroka, as in other favorably endowed Highlands areas. The precontact density of about seventy-five persons per square mile for the entire Goroka area is not, however, particularly high, for the sub-district contains much uncultivable mountain land. In the Goroka Valley proper, population densities varied from between around one hundred persons to the square mile at the eastern edge to about three hundred in the center and at the western end (Brookfield 1962:244-245). The difference in population density between the two areas probably correlates with the contrast between the relatively poor soils and low rainfall (as well as frequent drought conditions that interrupted the growing season) of the east and the richer soils and higher and more evenly distributed rainfall in the center and the west of the valley.

Around the villages were the lands of the clan: fenced gardens interspersed with casuarinas planted for firewood, shade, or soil conservation; adjacent fallow stretches covered by grass or shrubs but showing signs of former cultivation; and forested lands, either uncultivable or awaiting cultivation, in gullies or on the mountain slopes. These were all clan lands, but they were not necessarily communally owned or exploited. The constituent subclans, lineages, or both, had their own parcels of land, usually marked by borders planted with tall, long-leaved, cordyline plants. Within these group boundaries members of the proprietary subclan or lineage had the right to claim individual

plots of land for exploitation. Ordinarily, rights to this land were inherited through the male line. Given, however, the loosely structured character of Gorokan groups, there was probably considerable flexibility in matters of inheritance and allocation of land to men recruited into the clan through marriage or as a result of their being driven from their own lands in warfare.

Men were charged with subsistence tasks requiring the axe; women did the rest. Thus, men used their axes to clear land, build fences, and cut support poles for sugarcane and yams (which then became "male crops") and to chop down banana trees for replanting (Salisbury 1962:49). Women, using digging sticks as their main tool, did the more routine and prolonged tasks of planting, weeding, and harvesting. As women also did the cooking and cared for the children, they were kept relatively hard at work all day. Although men had to build and maintain the village stockade and houses in addition to keeping up with their gardening duties, it is easy to gain the impression—particularly in reading postpacification accounts—that men led a highly leisured existence in comparison to their wives. However, before the Australian administration stopped warfare, men probably had to spend a great deal of their time on guard duty watching out for sneak attacks (compare Langness 1967:164), and, if the tales of old Gorokan warriors are to be believed, some men spent considerable time fighting, particularly in the dry season, when open warfare was endemic.

WEALTH AND PRESTIGE

The preceding outline of subsistence patterns gives little indication of the Gorokan's "ebullient materialism," to borrow a phrase Stanner (1962:viii) applies to Siane economic behavior. Gorokans have traditionally been passionately interested in wealth and in prestige associated with wealth. Read succinctly describes this wealth-prestige orientation and how it is publicly expressed among the Gahuku, who are, he writes:

... materialists concerned to the point of exhaustion with the acquisition of wealth and its distribution in a never-ending series of competitive exchanges. They lose interest quickly in ideas and measure the good life in terms of worldly success, bestowing prestige on those who have acquitted themselves conspicuously in the pursuit of its

riches. Wealth signifies both power and strength, testifies to the achievements of individuals, of the clan, and of the tribe; reputations are placed on the ballot of public opinion each time the great festivals are held, when the slaughtered pigs, the array of plumes, the necklaces of shell and the breastplates of mother-of-pearl hopefully win both envy and respect. (1965:60)

This aspect of Gorokan life is essentially separate from mundane subsistence activities and involves the ceremonial exchange of valuables.⁴ Pigs, various seashells, ornamental stone axes, necklaces of dog's teeth, bird of paradise plumes, head-dresses of cassowary feathers and bundles of salt were all regarded traditionally as valuables by Gorokans and used by them in ceremonial exchanges. Pigs and shells appear to have been the main items of wealth. Pigs, of course, could be raised locally, but shells had to be obtained through ceremonial exchange or trade with neighboring groups. Both the Papuan Gulf and the north coast of New Guinea appear to have been source areas for shells, which were traded up to the Gorokans through chains of transactions involving coastal, foothill, and Highlands groups. The small cowrie (*Cypraea moneta*) and the tiny nassa (*Nassa* sp.) shells favored for making necklaces and headbands may have reached Goroka from both coasts. The Asaro Range, however, was a major dividing line for the flow of mother-of-pearl shell (*Pinctada maxima*) from the Papuan Gulf and the large, white egg cowrie (*Ovula ovum*) from the north coast. Jim Taylor, the first patrol officer to enter and traverse the Goroka Valley, has told me that until Europeans began importing mother-of-pearl shell it was extremely scarce in the Goroka Valley and was only found in abundance west of the Asaro Range. The egg cowrie was the primary traditional shell valuable of the Goroka Valley peoples and was most common among those living at the eastern end closest to the trade routes that came up the Markham Valley and through the Kami Hills, or across the Bismarcks from the Ramu Valley (compare Read 1954:9).

Among some groups in New Guinea, notably the Tolai of New Britain and the Kapauku of the West Irian Highlands, it has been shown that shells were used as general currency for buying and selling a wide range of goods and services, as well as for valuables in ceremonial exchange (Epstein 1968:19-23; Pospisil 1963:300-305). In Goroka shells were undoubtedly used from time to time to buy pigs and other articles, but there

is no firm evidence of their systematic use as a general currency in precontact times. The main function of shells and other valuables was as symbols of wealth—and therefore prestige and power—to be displayed and exchanged on ceremonial occasions.

The exchange of valuables took place primarily at life crisis ceremonies—the most notable being marriages and the initiation of youths—and at pig festivals, for which Gorokans and other Highlanders were renowned. These exchanges were intergroup events, drawing together pairs of clans or subtribes in dramatic demonstrations of the social ties binding them. Marriages brought together clans which, while they might have had a record of hostility in times of war, often also had long-standing histories of intermarriage. The pig festivals were the largest and most spectacular of all the occasions for exchanging wealth, and ideally they were coordinated with initiation rituals. As pig festivals served primarily to affirm ties between clans or subtribes that had previously fought as allies, they were fitting occasions for introducing the newly initiated youths—the future warriors—to society. Although pig festivals and other occasions for exchange were events in which the financial achievements of big-men came to the fore, they were also of paramount concern to the entire social group as the following summary of the Gahuku pig festival as described by Read (1952a) illustrates.

The common goal of members of a subtribe sponsoring a pig festival was to acquit themselves well in the exchange of valuables with their allies. To this end, well before the appointed time of the festival, the men of each clan began to build up their pig herds by fattening them from their gardens, by farming some pigs out to friends and relatives with abundant supplies of sweet potato, by temporarily moving their herds to areas reported to be favorable for pig growth, and by using mother-of-pearl shell and other valuables to augment their herds through traditional channels of trade. As the time for the festival approached, the prospective guests of the other subtribe were invited for a small feast. On this occasion bundles of sticks were handed to the visitors as a formal invitation to the festival; each stick represented a pig to be given them, and the largest ones, decorated with cassowary feathers, represented the biggest and best quality pigs. Both donor and recipient were singled out, the latter being designated to receive his pig in honor of a deceased kinsman who had fallen in battle when both groups were fighting a common enemy.

The weeks following this preliminary ceremony were devoted to the intensive care of pigs and other preparations. Young people traveled as far away as the Ramu Valley over the Bismarcks in search of bird of paradise plumes, vegetable dyes, and bark cloth, and both men and women prepared shell valuables and personal adornments. Finally, on the eve of the main ceremony the guests arrived, bearing counter gifts of egg cowries, bark cloth, and other valuables to present to the donors of the pigs. The following day the pig-killing took place. The largest pigs, decorated with cowries, plumes, and shell necklaces, were killed by the guests designated to receive them in honor of their group and its deceased heroes, and the pigs were prepared for the ovens. The festival was concluded on the following day with dancing and the final distribution of pig meat and other valuables; crowds of up to a thousand or more participants, as well as spectators from other clans who had come to watch the excitement, were common. The events on this final day represented the culmination of months of preparation by members of the host subtribe. If the number,⁵ size, and quality of the pigs presented, as well as the mass of other donated valuables, was impressive, and if they were well received by the visiting group, a pig festival brought the host group great renown among its neighbors and gave its members a feeling of great pride.

LEADERSHIP AND STATUS MOBILITY

One common element that cuts across the seeming diversity of New Guinean societies and extends eastward to the other Melanesian societies in the Solomon Islands and the New Hebrides is an open system of status mobility. Unlike Polynesian societies and the societies of Fiji and New Caledonia, on the extreme eastern edge of Melanesia, where hereditary rank and genealogical position have been prime determinants of status, most New Guinean societies lack a fixed class structure, and their leaders achieve eminence through personal accomplishment.

A leader in New Guinea is commonly known as a *bikfela man* (big-man), a Pidgin term denoting the scale of a man's reputation. In traditional society a man became known as a big-man because of his deeds. Being a skillful warrior, a forceful orator, an expert in ritual, or a wealthy man and financier of wealth exchanges were the main accomplishments that brought an ambi-

tious New Guinean renown and a political following. The system was open and fluid. There was no formal office of big-man to succeed to; men became known as leaders because of their skills and their ability to use these to create ranks of followers. At any one time several big-men might be competing for status in a clan or tribal group, each perhaps representing a different faction or a different level of competence. An especially strong and forceful man might achieve dominance over the others, but his influence, like that of lesser big-men, was always transitory. Ultimately, it depended on his physical and intellectual powers, and as a man aged and could no longer demonstrate his powers on the field of battle or in wealth production and exchange, his reputation waned and he was superseded by younger and more vigorous men, anxious to assert themselves as big-men.⁶

There were exceptions in New Guinea to this extreme pattern of status mobility, the most famous being from the Trobriand Islands, where local leaders ordinarily came from the senior members of the highest ranking descent group in each locality. However, even in the Trobriands a junior man might compete with and win out over a genealogically more qualified man for the role of acknowledged leader (Powell 1960:118). And elsewhere in New Guinea where hereditary rank enters the picture, it seems that in most cases some status mobility is still expressed, either through competition between those in the ranking class, as in the Trobriands, or in struggles for leadership in which an achieving commoner could, in a big-man style, best a hereditary leader (Meggitt 1967a: 23).

In Goroka, as elsewhere in the Highlands, the big-man system was strongly entrenched. Only at the lineage level was ascribed status important; ordinarily the senior male was the lineage leader. Above the lineage level, leadership was achieved (Langness 1963: 158; Newman 1965:43-44; Salisbury 1962:28; Read 1959). Among the Gahuku, for example, the man who demonstrated his strength in fighting, oratory, and wealth accumulation and exchange was the ideal candidate for becoming a "man with a name," or big-man, as a leader was known in the vernacular.⁷

Read (1959:428) cites warfare as being the archetype of "strength-demonstrating" pursuits among the Gahuku. Elsewhere in the Highlands the prime role of prowess in warfare in achieving status is stressed by a few writers, but in most descriptions, including those from Goroka, wealth accumulation and exchange receives more attention as the basic means for becoming a big-man. This apparent discrepancy may reflect

two related factors: first, that most descriptions of leadership date from postpacification times when open warfare had already been suppressed by the administration, and, second, that a noted warrior was often also a wealthy man who used his wealth to revalidate or even upgrade his status in peacetime pig exchanges. After pacification, then, men who had won their spurs in battle would be seen as conspicuously active in wealth exchanges, and ambitious younger men, who might previously have expressed their achievement drive in warfare, would be seen throwing all their energy to the more peaceful activities of wealth accumulation and exchange (compare Berndt 1952-1953:147). Whatever the case, of the two main paths to achieved status, the economic road is most relevant to this study, and it is the one that requires some examination in the Gorokan context.

To begin a career based on wealth and its circulation, a young Gorokan had first to amass a fund of pigs. Although the ethnographic record for Goroka is not entirely clear on this score, the process probably involved a combination of "home production" and "finance," as elsewhere in the Highlands (Strathern 1969). Home production of pigs normally came first. For this a man needed at least one sow (received as a gift or borrowed), land for growing sweet potatoes (the main pig fodder), and female labor for tending both gardens and pigs. The labor could be supplied at first by a man's mother or sister, but eventually he had to acquire a wife, or perhaps several wives, to guarantee himself a constant labor force. Building up a pig herd from a single sow took time, particularly if disease struck, and a portion of the pigs produced had to be allocated to paying off obligations assumed in starting his career. The lender of the original sow had to be paid a piglet from the first litter, and eventually a sow, as well. Furthermore, after marriage the young man found himself in a web of debt to those who had contributed to his brideprice, which tended to drain his pig wealth, either through direct repayments or through donations to the bridewealth funds of young relatives of those who had helped him pay for a wife.

Once, however, a man had shown himself to be a successful pig breeder and had demonstrated that he could repay his debts and manage his obligations, he was in a position to expand his wealth holdings by "financial" means. Pigs could be advantageously traded to people or groups needing pigs for festivals, in return for shells and other valuables. Or they could be loaned out to younger men anxious to start their first pig

herds, and they could also be farmed out to relatives who would tend them in return for a portion of any litters produced. (These arrangements also served as a protection against the loss of a man's entire pig herd, which could be wiped out by disease if it were concentrated in one place and that area was hit by a local epidemic.) By both loaning pigs and farming them out the owners stood to gain "interest" in the form of piglets, which, especially if the original loans were not immediately repaid, as was common, could augment his pig herd considerably over the years (compare Salisbury 1962:92-93).

A man who had started to trade pigs for other valuables and to loan his pigs to others had already gone beyond the point of merely accumulating wealth; he had begun to weave a network of ties which, if shrewdly exploited, could serve to create a political following composed of trade partners and those indebted to him. His following and reputation could then be greatly increased through prominent participation in pig festivals, bridewealth exchanges, and other occasions for wealth exchange. His role in these was twofold. First, as a man of standing and of proven financial ability, he took a leading role in organizing the pooling of his clansmen's valuables for presentation to the other group and then in distributing the counterpresentation among his clansmen. Second, as a wealthy man interested in using his wealth as a means for achieving more status, he made major contributions of pigs, shells, and other valuables to his clan or subtribe's exchange fund.

In the arena of ceremonial exchange a big-man therefore had an opportunity to further his own career. But at the same time he was also serving his group's interest by augmenting its wealth presentations, and hence its prestige. In the Gorokan system, then, individual and group ambitions were complementary. Read (1952a: 19), for example, describes how in the Gahuku pig festivals the subtribe needed the contributions which only its wealthy big-men could supply to uphold its honor, while, at the same time, the big-men needed a socially sanctioned context for the use of their wealth to enhance their personal prestige. The pig festival therefore maintained "its corporate character while simultaneously according social recognition to important individuals."

Related to this balance between individual and group interests in wealth exchanges is a basic principle of Gorokan social behavior, which stands in opposition to the value placed on "strength." Read (1959) terms this principle *equivalence* and explains it in terms of the desire for a degree of parity in re-

lations between groups and between individuals. A subtribe, for example, should not strive to completely outdo another in wealth presentations at a pig festival; its contributions may be considerable, but not so great that the other group cannot immediately or eventually match them with counter-presentations. In individual behavior this means that a man should not try to completely dominate others—as, for example, in giving overly large gifts or in demanding too stringent repayment terms of a debtor. The main sanction against an individual's showing too much strength and flagrantly violating the principle of equivalence is apparently the withdrawal of public support so that he no longer commands the respect of his fellow clansmen and cannot call upon them for support, economic or otherwise. Attempts to harm or kill the overly strong individual by physical assault or by means of sorcery are apparently ultimate sanctions, sometimes applied in extreme cases. The Gorokan status-mobility system thus includes some checks against rampant individualism; the rising big-man has to pay heed to the feelings and needs of others and to stop short of blatantly exploiting his fellow clansmen.