The Politics of `Payback': Villager Perceptions of Elections in the Markham Open.

By
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Abstract.

This paper is based on my own experiences as a candidate for Markham Open Seat during 2002 General elections in Papua New Guinea. (PNG). Many Melanesian societies have witnessed changes in the political and leadership patterns since the period of colonial rule and have adapted to the new political system based on their own interpretations. The paper is centered around two themes; Firstly, the role of traditional bigmen to give and take and at the same time bringing people under his influence and secondly the paper looks at impact of cargo cultism and the cult mentality towards politicians that developed among rural villagers. It is unfortunate but many villagers think that a candidate must give in order to get a vote from the people. For many villagers they must make money during the time of elections. Some people are, for example, fed up with voting and they literally demand to be paid for a vote. The unfortunate role of hosting big feasts and delivering goods during the elections had also made the people to expect the candidate and political parties to have a lot of money, thus-the demand for payment.

The final outcome of this might as well be that politics will be left to the rich and those who have the resources, for those who do not have the resources; forget politics. Further outcome of such will be that the candidates who have the means can simply buy their votes, which leads to bribery and or undue influences. One can argue that this is not bribery and undue influence, but a traditional of the bigman being applied to influence and win followers. The time to payback and to reward someone who has done something good for the other in the past.

1 Professor Ron Crocombe coined this term during his comments and I have adopted it for the title of this paper.
Introduction.

The Markham Open electorate is one of the electorates of Morobe Province in Papua New Guinea (PNG). The Province has ten seats in Parliament and the member for Markham holds one of them. There have been previous studies of the electorate in the past, but my own participation and observation of the attitudes and beliefs of the people is discussed in this paper. The traditional methods of give and take to entice support for a leader had continued in many rural communities and that was literally observed during my election campaigns in 2002 general elections in Leron/Wantoat. I have copies of letters asking for funds to sponsor various community projects and even individual family support in order that the people can vote for me. In modern politics it should be the other way around, people should be assisting candidates and rising funds to support the elections.

This paper gives a summary of the problems and issues raised during the elections. It will discuss the area in general and outline the current problems for the people and the area, I then move onto discussing my own involvement in the elections, the next part of the paper discusses the traditional role of the bigman and mixing it with present days elections, followed immediately with the impact of cargo cults and mixing it with modern day politics. I then discuss my election experience, discussing the candidates, their policies and responses of the people to candidates and rumors that followed. This is then followed by the result of the elections and I will conclude with an over view of the mentality and some
problems and issues that need to be addressed into order to alleviate the cult mentality.

**The Markham Open Electorate history in brief.**

The Markham Open Electorate encompasses northern part of Markham valley and hinterland areas of Markham Headwaters, Awara, Wantoat, Irumu and Yaros Census Divisions. The electorate covers the entire administrative area of Kaiapit District, which is situated 85 miles inland of Lae, the Provincial Capital. The electorate shares electoral boundaries with Usino Bundi and Rai Coast Open Electorates in Madang Province and Obura Wonenara and Kainantu Electorates in Eastern Highlands Province. It also shares electoral boundaries with four electorates in Morobe Province, which include; Menyamya, Kabwum, Nawae and Huon Gulf Open.

There are 3 LLG areas in the Markham Open electorate, Onga/Waffa, Leron/Wantoat and Umi/Adzera. The Umi Adzera are valley dwellers, while the Onga/Waffa live east towards the mountains of Eastern Highlands and Menyamya. The Leron Wantoat live west of the valley towards Rai Coast of Madang. In terms of development Umi/Adzera are well served by the Highlands Highway, which runs through the central valley.

The Onga/Waffa and Leron/Wantoat are disadvantaged as they live in mountain ranges and do not have easy access to the main roads. In case of Wantoat the road is in poor condition and regularly needs maintenance. In numerical strength Umi/Adzera has more people and possible voters, followed by Leron/Wantoat and Onga/Waffa has smallest of possible number of voters. The
tradition had however been that there were many candidates from Umi/Adzer and only few candidates have stood in Onga/Waffa and Leron/Wantoat. The logic then always remains if only one candidate stood in Onga/Waffa and or Leron/Wantoat he would win easily. I will focus my discussion on the Leron/Wantoat LLG area, as I am from this area and did most of my campaigning here. This was also mainly due to lack of funds and logical support.

In the first general elections in 1964 Gaudi Mirau was elected member for Markham. In 1968 general election, Tom Leahy won the seat, and in 1972 Philip Buseng defeated Tom Leahy. A detailed discussion on the 1972 election study has been by Holzknecht and others. In 1977 Giri Yaru was elected and returned again in 1977 and he was the longest serving member for the seat until 1987. In 1987 he lost the seat to the first Wantoat candidate, Stephen Mambon until 1992. In 1992 Andrew Baing won the seat and he was returned again in 1977 general elections. As a sitting member Andrew Baing was one of the contestants in 2002 general elections. This study is about 2002 general elections with a focus on Leron/Wantoat LLG area and how the people of the area voted.

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2 Gaudi Mirau was a Papuan of the Gulf District working at Kaiapit as a District Clerk before he was elected.
3 Tom Leahy was a former living in Malalumi where a lot of Wantoat were working as labourers; they indeed campaigned for him in Wantoat. He was a strong United Party man
Amongst the candidates and provincial leaders in Leron/Wantoat were Paipdak Tongon stood for the Seat in 1987, Bianga Wambam who was once a Provincial Member, Mathias Yalambing also a provincial member, Matap Embaku contested 1997 elections and Bange Bon was a contestant in 1992 and 1997 elections and was also contesting 2002 election.

The Wantoat.

The first European arrived in Wantoat very late after missionaries settled most of coastal Morobe. The first missionary arrived in 1927 and a year later he returned with few evangelists and left them at main villages of Bumbum, Mupiapun and Matap. In 1936 the first recorded Kiap (Patrol Officer); Leigh.G. Vial was sent from Salamaua, which was then the District Headquarters. He was one of the few kiaps who went into the area, as before him there had been only six patrols. In the same year, in November another patrol officer who planned to visit and take census was wounded by villagers and did not complete his patrol. He was carried to Kaiapit and flown to Salamaua where he died on December 20, 1936. The coming of the Second World War had an impact on the people as well. In particular the walking track from Kaiapit to Saidor in Madang was used.

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This track passes through Wantoat villages and people have suffered as a consequence, as the Japanese escape through the area.\textsuperscript{9}

Colonial settlement and involvement amongst the people would have taken a full swing after the Second World War. The first patrol officer to go was James Sinclair who in 1949 patrolled the area and was instructed to rebuild and extend the small airstrip built just before the war. The Wantoat patrol post was established in 1955 and a year later a Lutheran missionary was posted to the newly created mission station at Kongaim\textsuperscript{10}. The first Local Government Council was set up in 1964, the year first National elections were held. Wantoat was only connected by road to the provincial capital, Lae in 1986. Only small airplanes were used to travel to Lae and back before then.

Between the time of independence and 2002 the people of Wantoat have seen and witnessed a lot of changes and their desire for development was also commonly held among the people. Their first attempt to advance was the setting up of coffee blocks and eventually setting up of Wanbunawa Imangaman Cooperative Society. Many little trade stores were set up in the villages as well. This was in the hope that the shareholders will be supplied the `cargo' for their little trades stores. When the road was officially opened in 1986, attempts were made by several local men to run PMV trucks, which continue to break down due to bad road conditions.

The desire for economic, social, and political development was there, but the means to get what they wanted was lacking. They needed a good leader to

\textsuperscript{9} See two seminar papers of mine presented at the Symposiums on the War in New Guinea presented in Canberra and in Tokyo.
lead the people to achieve their desired development. For many people elections and the selection of leaders will help them get these results.

**Mixing Traditional bigman roles with modern politics.**

Taking evolutionist views I argue that the leadership patterns in this country have evolved and transformed from one stage to the next. In doing so, what was desired and hoped for by the former leader was simply replaced by the next group of leaders. The transition, evolution of these leaders also included those who were `cargo cults’ leaders during the process evolution of the leadership patterns. The role of traditional that Melanesian `bigmen to give feasts and assist people in time of need had also continued. One had to give feast and unite people for possible supporters to come under his influence.

The methods of electing leaders, although are a western concept, methods and ways of influencing possible voters and bringing people under one’s influence is traditional. Thus, the role of bigman did not change but continued to present political system. Similarly villagers believe that to be a leader one must produce and give to `impress’ the people before they can vote for him.

Many Court of Disputed Returns have been raised after the elections and the same reasons have been bribery and undue influence. What is wrong with distributing library books for community schools just before campaigning? This is exactly what I did in 1999 and people thought I was a good candidate and as a result asked me to contest the elections. What is wrong with delivering a brand
new land cruiser for an ambulance service for Kupiano Health Center?\textsuperscript{11} What is wrong with distributing clubs uniforms for team just before the elections? Is this not bribery or undue influence? For many villages this is neither, bribery nor undue influence. It is part of their tradition and they expect a leader to give in order to impose influence over his people. This paper focuses on this with concrete evidences of what happened among the Wantoat voters of Markham Open electorate during 2002 general elections.

The tradition of `give and take' as was done by traditional Melanesian `bigman' has been applied to modern politics in this case. One must give in order to acquire power and status, and at the same time win favor among the voters. This paper therefore argues that whether it is bribery or undue influences, in modern political concepts the practice is traditional. Therefore, there is no option but be part of the tradition either you pay or you never get a vote.

There is a danger in this sort of demands and ransom, as if the leader spends a lot of money during the political campaigns, she/he will be forced to recoup the lost money during the elections. The question is how and when is this possible? It is when the leaders may be forced to take brides and or misappropriate the electoral `slush funds'. We have for example seen many cases of these in the past, where leaders have faced leadership tribunals in the country. Thus, in giving into the demands of the voters leaders have felt obliged to give to their voters in order that they get voted again in the next elections.

\textbf{Mixing politics and `cargo' doctrines.}

\textsuperscript{11} This is exactly what Puka Temu did in Abau Electorate where he told the people to `Think of me when the election time comes'. He was taken to a Court of Disputed Returns. The charge was bribery and Undue Influence. He lost the seat and was later re-elected using the Limited Preferential system.
The traditional chiefs, and leaders were replaced by *tultuls, luluais* in German New Guinea and village constables in British New Guinea followed by LLG Councilors, which was then replaced Local Government Councilors and then later by elected politicians. In some parts of PNG and other Melanesian countries leaders of `cargo cults' also come onto the scene. Thus the concept of `development' preached by the previous leaders was taken over by the new leaders. The idea for a new saviour to lead the people to the aspired development had continued. Accordingly, many political parties and leaders want `development' for their people- this is not much difference as preached during the cargo cult era. Therefore, my argument is that these traditions have not died but have survived to the present day political system.

In discussing the mixture and impact of cargo cults on politics; Peter Lawrence\(^\text{12}\), Eugene Ogan\(^\text{13}\) and Louise Morauta\(^\text{14}\) discussed mixing of political thoughts and `cargo cults'. The authors of these articles show links between cargo thinking and political thought, and the dangers of such mixture on the political processes. There is a need to review that theory again today to see if it had continued. Taking my evolutionist theories I have followed some years later


by two articles ‘politics as cargo in PNG’\textsuperscript{15} and the ‘evolution of cargo cults and the emergence of political parties in Melanesia’\textsuperscript{16}.

The politics of cargo cults is an attempt by a person who witnessed and saw the impact of cargo cults on politics in PNG and other parts of Melanesia. We have seen the rise of magico-religious movements leading to amalgamate political propaganda and slogans. In many cases this has resulted in political developments and force among rural majority to drive colonial administrations to give ‘quick political independence’. Villagers can easily think that ‘cargo’ message had been replaced by ‘development’ message of new candidates and political parties.

There have been numerous discussions on impact of ‘cargo cults’ on politics in the past. For the present Melanesian countries of Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea ‘cargo cults have laid the foundation for political advancement and mobilization for many rural villages. As a consequence of this many rural villages saw the evolution of political parties from ‘cargo cults’ as a ‘transition period for failure of the former to the ‘new’. That is cargo cults have failed the people but new political parties and leaders will lead them to new and desired development. A good example of this is an election campaign speech from a John Frum Party candidate in Vanuatu:

\begin{quote}
If the John Frum Party gets in then within six months everyone will have jobs for $6.00 per hour and you will buy a Toyota Truck within three months.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

\footnotesize
Such a statement will have an impact on the people, another example of such would be a statement that Eddie Zuneki made during a public forum in Wantoat, just two days before voting, which goes along like this:

If I get in I will seek donor assistance to have all the villagers build their houses of iron roofs and permanent materials. In these cases both statements above are unrealistic and cannot be achieved in the expected time. However, for a rural villager this may be seen as true and may want to vote for the candidate. The question then is what if the candidate wins; can such be delivered as `promised' within the time period?

Some examples of instrumental political movements and `cargo cult' leaders have been Paliau Moloat, Yali Singina, Maasina rule and Jonathan Fifii in the Solomon Islands, the John Frum Party in Vanuatu, blending Pangu policies with that of Pitenamu Society in Morobe Province, Mathias Yaliwan and his Peli Association in Yangoru, The Napidokae Navitu, there was also Walla

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18 A public forum was held in Wantoat station for all candidates from Wantoat to spell out their policies on Saturday 4 2002. All of us Andrew Gena, Bange Bon and Eddie Zuneki spoke at this gathering.
19 There are numerous works on Paliau movement, by Theodore Schwartz book; Paliau Movement is the most informative. We know that Paliau eventually entered politics and became a member of Manus, the movement too have eventually became Makasol and has been active in provincial politics. Paliau Moloat was one of the founding members of the Pangu Party.
20 There are numerous books and articles on cargo cults and the works of Yali Singina, by see this for more details: Morauta, Louise. 1964. Beyond the Village; A Study of cargo cults in southern Madang. Manchester: Manchester University Press. Yali Singina was also a contestant for the House of Assembly elections on two occasions. Many people voted for him, even if he was not standing in the electorate, thus making the votes informal. The name and his influence did not wane, it transformed into Dabsau Association and the son of his is now the Governor of Madang
23 Gesch, Patrick. 1985. Initiative and initiation: a cargo cult type movement in the Sepik against its background in traditional village religion. Studia Instituti Anthropos; no.33. St Augustin: Anthropos-
Gukguk of New Hanover\textsuperscript{25} and many smaller groupings in most parts of Melanesia. It should be remembered that the leaders of modern day political groupings have good and sound policies, but the remnants of the followers of ‘cargo cults’ have made it worse for them. The political preaching and propaganda had made it worse for the political parties as the people amalgamate their cargo ideologies with that of political party policies.

What is needed now is a study of whether hangovers of these movements have continued to the present day. I present in this paper the impact of Pitenamu, Yali and Pangu politics in relation to 2002 general elections in Wantoat. The people have seen their share of cargo cult stories especially during the 1970’s and the time when the nation was approaching political independence. This election experience proved beyond doubt that cargo thinking has and continues to play a part in politics of many rural communities in this country. The people of Wantoat have been misled to wait for the election time and then go racing after a candidate who hopefully will lead them to a desired destiny. The destiny of hope is when their candidate wins the election and then the expected ‘cargo’ will come from the candidate.

\textsuperscript{24} The impact on politics and cargo cults have been discussed by Griffin and Ogan, but Griffin’s chapter; Napidakoe Navitu in Micronationalist movements (ref. 8 above) pages 113-138) is the more detailed discussion on this movement. The Late Sir Paul Lapun was the founding member of this movement and led his people against the administration, which saw him enter Parliament and a long-term member of the Peoples Progress Party. The history of political transition and involvement of cargo cults and politics is discussed by Eugene Ogan as listed in reference no.5 above.

\textsuperscript{25} The famous Johnson Cult of New Hanover had it’s leader elected Daniel Bakof to House of Assembly in 1968 and later Walla Gukguk also member of Tutukuval Isukal Association (T.I.A.) and was elected to Parliament and was a Member of the Unite United Party. For more information on this see; Billings, D.K. 1969. Johnson Cult of New Hanover. \textit{Oceania} pages 13-19.
Cargo cultism is not new in Wantoat. It has developed over the years and remnants of the movements had rise and decline in the area over the years. The Yali movement in southern Madang had an impact on the Wantoat from over the Rai coast area; there was also Tanget cult of Pindiu that creep into the area, while I also discussed the rise of money cults in Wantoat during the 1970s. Being magico-religious in nature many of the people have not forgotten these movements as memories have lingered on to this day. Some one out there must arrive to save them. In other words a saviour must be found to replace the former. In fact many people think and see candidates as the only ones who will lead them from destruction without knowing that plans and budgeting is necessary for honest development to take place.

Road to political independence and a message of salvation from colonial rule were rampant during the years of late colonial rule as Pangu politics drive the nation to political independence in 1975. Many rural people in Morobe Province became members of Pangu Party and thought the membership fees was part of their registration with the Pitenamu Society. Somare and Pangu were the `saviors' of the rural majority in the province. In is no wander that Pangu dominated Morobe and Markham politics up till 1980s when the politics of Pitenamu and the revival of politics and mixture of `cargo doctrines' came onto

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26 Pitenamu is initials for the first two letters of rural districts of Morobe, namely Pindiu, Tewae, Nabak and Mumeng
28 The impact on this movement in Morobe is discussed in detail by Bob Adams in; Pitenamu Society. In; Micronationalist Movements in Papua New Guinea. Edited by RJ May. Canberra: ANU Press. Pages 63-113. (See full ref. 12 above)
the scene when Pangu lost badly after political independence. The villagers had continuously searched for a `savior' as John Strelan wrote about Pitenamu:

Pitenamu is an attempt on part of the people themselves to do something about the lack of development in the mountain areas of Morobe Province\textsuperscript{29}.

The word `development' is preached by today's political parties, candidates and is part of party policies. Thus, for a villager Pitenamu as do also preached many candidates the message of development and political parties do today. What happened was when the rural parts of Morobe saw that there was lack of development; they opted for Pitenamu and Pangu, which in light of this discussion was the only way for them to get the desired development. In Wantoat Pitenamu had an impact too where people felt that Pitenamu was the `road belong development'. Many villagers joined the movement and had high hopes for success in the future. Unfortunately for them this was not to be the case, therefore an alternative has to be found. Thus a new leader must be found to replace the former politicians who have failed to deliver the desired goods and services.

In 1980s firebrand Utula Samana and leader of MIG completely wiped out the politics and policies of Pangu in the province. The people have observed and listened to these movements and activities and in 2002 wanted another person to led them, having been fed up Andrew Baing `who has never been to Wantoat since he was elected in 1992 and returned in 1997.

It seemed to me that 2002 was to be different, but the candidate this time must deliver the goods before he is elected. The generous person was for the people their candidate, they had not thought of hardships candidates and political parties may face in raising money for the goods they wanted.

However, as the previous elections and parties have done, they thought the delivering of goods during the elections campaign was a token `of more to come from the candidate.’ Therefore, the vote must ideally go to the person who can deliver the goods at the time of campaigning. Unfortunately this attitude has been developed over the years, as politicians and political parties have delivered speeches and at the same time delivered desired goods and in some cases cash for a development project was delivered during the campaign time. This is bribery at the best, thus, turning the voting public into `cargo cultic’ expectants. Thus a leader will have to buy his votes’. Is this bribery or not?

**The candidates and campaign in Leron/Wantoat.**

Of the twenty-three (23) candidates there were five of us from Leron/Wantoat. Namely; Andrew Gena, Bange Bon, Eddie Zunekie, Awadum Sip and myself. It would seem that we secured votes from within the Leron/Wantoat area alone as most of us did not go out to the Markham valley to campaign due to lack of funds and logistical support. A political party supported all of us, John Pundari’s PNG Revival Party supported Gena, People’s Action Party endorsed me, Pangu party supported Awadaum Sip, and the PNG Country Party supported Zenekie. To the surprise of many of the voters and us Bange Bon was endorsed at the last minute by People’s Democratic movement (PDM), the party that was
opposed directly in Leron/Wantoat because of the Land mobilization policy in 2002. The campaign for all of us was similar, but our approaches to win votes differed from candidate to candidate. To begin with although political parties funding supported us it was a problem as I was told after the elections.

By the year 2000 the people of Wantoat already knew that Bange Bon was contesting again. It was well known that Andrew Gena was going to be a candidate. The three of us, Eddie Zuneke, Awandum Sip and myself entered the political race and made our intentions known towards the end of 2001. Party policies and ideas were used in each of our campaigns and people were visited in all villages in Awara, Rumu, Leron and central Wantoat valley. There was a public forum just before the voting for all candidates from Leron/Wantoat to outline their policies. We all spoke and outline our policies during this forum. While most of us were talking and outlining our policies some people had been expecting money. There were council ward candidates who also attended the forum. All the candidates from Wantoat who attended this forum had to express their views and policies. Most of the speeches evolved around lack of economic development in the area and need to improve infrastructure and communication.

This is understandable, as the area is one of the least developed in the province, due basically to the geographical terrain. It was interesting to note that speeches made by Eddie Zuneke who said if he were elected he would push to have entire villages have their houses built using permanent materials as alluded to above.

My campaign and experiences.
On January 19 2002 I had my launching amidst festivities and several pigs were slaughtered for many possible visitors. My village boys were asked to record a head count of the possible total. There were three singsing groups and ten pigs were killed overnight for the launching. This was typical of a Melanesian bigman hosting possible voters. After the launching a campaign committee and scrutineers were selected from my to take a lead in walking to villages and campaign for me.

In the process of campaign rumors can spread quickly among the people and one has to go and defend himself as a candidate before the rumor destroys the reputation of a candidate. Some stories have spread against my standing and views of these have been very damaging. On April Fool’s Day (April 1 2002) I was in Lae when there was a huge landslide in Wantoat killing 28 people.\textsuperscript{30} It was reported and spread among the nearby villages that I had condoned the landslide and that the people must therefore not vote for me as a candidate. Unfortunately this was not true at all; the fact was they were supporters of my opposing candidate, Andrew Gena in this area. The later news revealed that the people of the village concerned have been worshipping their ancestors to have access to a mountain of wealth in the ridge on top of the villages. Thus, cargo cults were still a life in Wantoat in 2002 during the elections.

The next story about me relates to my being endorsed by two political parties and that I were being taken to court. When I left the University, People’s Action

\textsuperscript{30} The landslide disaster was reported in the two national daily newspapers; some of the headlines were as follows: 34 buried alive: 22 others till missing after Morobe landslide. \textit{Post Courier} Wednesday April 3 page 1; 28 still missing. Post \textit{Courier} Thursday April 4 pages 1-2; Landslide carries all in its wake. \textit{Post Courier} Thursday April 4 page 15. In the National newspaper; Jack Metta reported; Landslide toll 36; dozens missing \textit{National} April 4 pages 1-2; \textit{National Weekender} April 5 pages 2-3
Party (PAP) had already endorsed me, but a colleague also wanted me to join the Liberal Party. I gave him my CV and left in early December of 2001. As a result without my knowing it the papers reported that I had my name as being endorsed by both parties. This was not the case, as soon after that my posters came out, funded and printed People’s Action Party. The rumor was then dismissed when the people saw my posters. Unfortunately, this had made many of my possible supporters give up and went to vote for another candidate.

Supporters from all parts of the area have experienced the dreams and visions. Many of these dreams and visions were interpreted according to traditions and the dreams were in our favor. Many of my supporters thought that I was going to win the election out right based on these dreams. Dreams, visions and use of religious values was also common among the people, especially my own supporters who came up with many dreams of us winning the elections easily. Finally after losing one of my supporters eventually told me; ‘Poro Mi les long Anutu Ating Anutu giamanim mipela31’. (Mate, I am now fed up with God, I think God must have tricked us) Here indeed was the use of religion for high achievements, without knowing that we can loose. For him the blessing of the gods and our dreams were true and must come to fruition.

I started my campaign walkabout in January 2002, the year of elections. However, my own village boys had visited several villages during 2001 and told them that I was contesting. With the educational qualifications, I was the best candidate for the people of Wantoat. Unfortunately, for me the funding from

31 In fact prayers were offered to Christian God during the campaign period to select a good candidate, while at the same time traditional means winning the hearts of the people was also applied. This was the response from my campaign manager, Paul Manom from my own village Yaparingan.
People’s Action Party never supported me and I wasted a lot of time even for the posters to be printed and distributed. We used our own funds to get black and white copies of the posters and distributed them to start with.

My speeches were straightforward and clear, I was the best candidate for the entire Markham Open with the necessary education and experiences. I did not have the money to campaign but the money should not be seen as a means for one to be elected. The traditional handout by parties must be stopped. The voters must vote according to party policies and speeches of individual candidates, who have good and sound policies.

It is good to host people who had come to a candidates house to hear his policies. How does one decides whether it is bribery and or vote buying for a candidate to host a party and then give out money for campaigners to go out and campaign for the candidate? Many people from all over the area came to my house and spent a night or two before my launching on January 19 2002. It seemed that all the people who attended were pleased, but messages and letters for funding assistance came after they have left my village. The idea of buy us first before we vote for you was implied in letters that I received.

`Mipela istap long maket’ (We are on sale).

In many villages that I visited the attitudes has been that of political prostitution, that is they wanted candidates to `buy them’ before they can vote for the person. One would have expected voters to campaign for the candidate and help meet the cost of campaigning, but this was practically the opposite.
We are on the market, buy us and we will vote for you. It is interesting to note that many village leaders wanted to be `on the market' before a vote is caste by his people. This is simply to say; `if you do not buy me I will not vote for you'. There seem to be a general attitude that voters often had expected money before they can caste a vote for the person who gives support in the first instance.

In this way the candidates are forced to in-fact buy votes, which often leads to candidates being bribed and taken to ransom by the voters. There is a danger for this sort of attitude, the villagers will continue to expect the leader to deliver them the desired goods without thinking for plans and budgetary processes involved. In the long run the leaders become cult figures as soon as they are elected to Parliament. That is if the candidate wins the voters will expect him to continue to deliver the goods as he had done during the elections. If the candidate does not provide then they go against the person and demand more of what he had done during the election.

In my case I received a lot of letters asking for favors from the village people. They wanted iron roofs, money to build church buildings, one councilor wanted K1500.00 to help meet his campaign so that his people can in return vote for me in the national election. The other said he and fifteen (15) people voted for me and so I must pay him K200.00 worth of iron roof. This demand is still there despite my loosing the election. As he approached me recently with his request before I left for Port Moresby in 2004.

Hanmak Bilong yu we? What have you done for us?
It would be too early to see what the leader can do before one could vote for the person. The demand to show what a candidate can do before the vote puts a candidate at ransom. How and where is he going to get the money to display what he is capable to doing so? On the other hand if the sitting member had delivered the goods, during his term of office he is sure to get his votes. He has an advantage over the new candidates in this regard. In demanding such, the villagers have unfortunately developed a mentality that the candidates must have money- thus demanding that they be paid before they can vote for him. People want to see what a leader is capable of delivering before they can cast their votes. Unfortunately, many people have this notion without knowing that money was involved in order to provide for the community. This is like putting a cart before the horse, as candidates are not able to deliver during the campaigns, but can if they were elected.

What have you done for the community in the past, and how can you proof that you are capable of delivering goods and services? Is it bribery and or providing a service, if one who intends to be a candidate distributes a brand new truck to a health center for the purpose of providing health service? The village people were asking me for all sorts of things, after I had nominated. Letters came from the village leaders asking for money to build a church, to help a youth group, and other associations. Even after the election people keep asking for me to give them what they want if I wanted to re contest the next general election.
Eventually a possible leader is sucked into the system, he has no choice but to `give and take'. Surely, one must be seen to have established himself before the next general election, otherwise the people will not vote for the person. Thus, the village people expect a leader to provide something for `development' projects among the village before he has a chance of winning the election. In fact after the elections many came to me asking that I continue to supply library books to the community schools if I wanted to stand again in 2007 elections.

I believe the villagers too have been smart in demanding their leaders to pay them first before they vote due mainly to past experiences. They had voted and voted, but results of their votes have not been forthcoming. The false promises by previous candidates and members have made the people reluctant to vote when the time comes. Frustrations, then lead to demands for payment before one can vote for the person. May be we have tricked the people; we must find alternative means and also educate the voters to tell the difference between political propaganda and reality. Can for example a political leader be completely being honest?

The Results.

Like voting in many parts of the country in 2002 the election was marred by many problems. In many polling areas many voters were not on the newly updated common roll. I was nervous myself, as I had only filled in the enrolment forms in August 2001. Thus in my own village at least 100 people did not vote because their names were not on the common roll. Despite the name list a total
of 161 people in my village voted for me, while four voted for candidates other than myself. This gave me confidence, that if other villagers can do this, my chances were great.

The first week of voting had gone ahead as planned except for delays in Awara and Rumu areas, which were hampered by lack of helicopters to help polling teams over the mountains. In these areas polling was delayed by some days starting on Wednesday 19 of June. I had scrutineers in all the Leron-Wantoat polling areas. They were told to bring in brief and quick reports of voting in their respective areas. By middle of the next week it all seemed the voters have decided their favorite candidate. It seemed that the people had not gone for Markham valley candidates, but there was a split among Wantoat contestants. Three of us were ‘favorites’, Andrew Gena, Bange Bon and myself with Eddie Zuneki getting the least. I had confidence as majority of the villagers voted for me, followed by Gena. The problem, however, was that the people of Markham valley were not visited during the campaign and that I was not expecting votes from that part of the electorate.

The counting of votes was held on June 30 at Markham Valley High School. Every one listened to the radio anxiously; I was in Lae with few supporters also listening. I could not get back to Wantoat, as most PMVs have gone back to Wantoat fearing election related troubles. The first boxes were from Onga/Waffa and boxes from Wantoat were counted late the next morning. We had anxiously waited and listened.
Because the first boxes counted were from Onga/Waffa Koni Kidabing led the count followed by Yatu Idauman. This was because as mentioned above these two candidates were from the area. This showed that people voted for their own candidates and those that they knew. The other candidates got the numbers later from different parts of the electorate. Those of us from Leron/Wantoat only got the votes during the counting of later boxes as these boxes were from the area.

Unfortunately, one has to accept that there is only one winner in a democratic election. Yet few voters and supporters in Wantoat did not feel this way. They had issued threats and as a result supporters of some candidates felt very angry. Threats were issued as a result people felt scared of walking around from village to village. Supporters of some candidates, for example had a fistfight as a result of their candidate loosing and blaming the other for splitting the votes.

The people also voted for the LLG Ward councilors at the same time. In Leron/Wantoat there was in particular tension and threats issued by a person wanting to be LLG President. The candidate who wanted to be President of Leron/Wantoat LLG had to ‘force’ elected councilors to vote for him. The following are results of Markham Open Seat in order to votes polled.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Total Votes</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Baing</td>
<td>3034</td>
<td>13.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iguan Koni Kidabing</td>
<td>2801</td>
<td>12.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Andrew Gena</td>
<td>2573</td>
<td>11.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Ezekiel</td>
<td>2361</td>
<td>10.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moses Zamoantz</td>
<td>1752</td>
<td>8.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Bange Bon</td>
<td>1357</td>
<td>6.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parim Chiru</td>
<td>1176</td>
<td>5.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fama Yati</td>
<td>1097</td>
<td>5.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yatu Idauman</td>
<td>795</td>
<td>3.64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
John Maran 794  3.63%
*Sam Tua Kaima 761  3.51%
Stanley Sali 624  2.85%
Paul Yalu 551  2.52%
Terry Isan 391  1.79%
Amba Tomba 365  1.67%
*Awandum Sip 321  1.47%
Shem Waenesa 294  1.34%
Maruam Nangu 258  1.18%
*Zuneki Eddie 250  1.14%
Frank Igub 187  0.85%
Gilbert Kuris 144  0.65%
James Ibras 78  0.35%
Abraham Ambrias 72  0.32%

- Leron/Wantoat candidates.

**Total** 21,836 votes.

The winning candidate won by 13.89 % (percent) like most electorates, not the majority of the people voted for him. The only person who won the elections with more than fifty percent of the votes in the country was Dr Allan Marat for the Rabaul Open\(^{32}\). In Markham the votes of the people was split with voters voting for their own preferences. In Wantoat with a good total of 5000 people voted we could have won if only one of us from the area stood. Thus, we can be able to block vote for our own candidate.

Assuming that voters voted for the people they knew, then the candidates would have collected most of the votes in Leron/Wantoat. The results showed that Andrew Gena scored the most with 2573 (48.89% of Leron/Wantoat votes), followed by Bange Bon on 1357 votes, (25.78%) Sam Kaima got 761 votes. (14.64%), Awandum Sip scored 321 votes, (6.02%), and Eddie Zuneki came in last with 250 votes (4.75%) In total there were a possible total of 5,262 votes.

\(^{32}\) I am glad that Dr Henry Okole highlighted this point during one of the MAPS seminars at UPNG.
(24.09% of the overall total) from the area. Indeed if only one candidate stood from this area he would have won the seat easily. The five of us split Leron/Wantoat votes, resulting in Andrew Baing winning the seat again with 3034 votes capturing 13.89 percent of the total votes.

Unfortunately, the term `development' was on the agenda of the former `cargo cults', it is still the major topic and policy for nearly all the political parties. Thus, the dream for development continues. The village people in this country have been lead to believe that all the candidates and political parties have money. Therefore, when it comes to election time, it is time to make money. Campaign leaders and committee often believe that when they are out campaigning for candidates they expected the candidates to fund their village projects. The request for funding assistance during the campaign was a way many people saw a chance to get the funding for their much-awaited projects. If and when the money is not forthcoming from the candidate then the village people will turn their backs and vote for the candidate who can deliver and buy them the goods.

In this manner and attitudes, the village people just do not care, whether a candidate has good policies and is supported by a political party with good and sound policies for development. They vote for the person, they know and have seen him in the past. The others from outside of the area would be wasting their time campaigning in other area. This is precisely what happened as the five contestants from Wantoat got their votes from the Leron/Wantoat voters. Only a few people voted for the candidates from the Markham Valley and or Onga/Waffa
LLG areas. The same is also true of the voters in these two areas, as they would not have voted for the candidates from Leron/Wantoat.

There is a need for education and reeducation of politics and in particular, to mislead the voters candidates and political party leaders must be honest in their policies and avoid jargon that will lead to high expectations among the voters. The notion that a leader must provide the goods and services soon after the elections are a mistake, as there is planning and budgeting involved. There is planning and budgeting to be done before the project is finally approved and funded. This is one of the main reasons why you read many letters to the two daily newspapers asking for the leader to deliver, where the leader is after the election promises and yet people have not seen the promises delivered. It is not a surprise then that one sees letters to the editors of the two dailies asking why the member had been since he was elected. In fact most of the time he is a resident of Port Moresby. He will only go to the electorate when the next election comes around. How can MPs for example live in expensive hotels and drive expensive cars when the rural majority of the people do not have basic health services and schools? The politicians are living in another world of their own.

Honesty is required on behalf of political parties and candidates. Political campaign must take its limits do not throw out money and give out feasts during the campaigns, as this in many cases revives the traditional bigman role, without thinking that the villager is being enticed into believing that the candidate will deliver such upon winning. Once again this encourages cult mentality among the village people.
Conclusion.

The Melanesian ideas and political ideologies are difficult to understand unless one is involved in the political processes itself. Very often candidates and political parties will have good and sound policies, but the villagers have different notions of the ideas and policies being portrayed during the campaigns. Many young men in Wantoat for example, jump from candidate to candidate looking for financial assistance and support. They were not so committed to candidates, and had to see who can give the money for their own personal use.

The ‘mipela istap long maket’ and ‘hanmak’ syndromes are very common among the people as shown in this case study. Such is or may be similar in others parts of the country. However, this goes to proof that the voters do not often vote for the best candidate but for the person who can give the people what they want. The main problems with this attitude will be that those of us with no funds cannot enter politics, but leave it to those who have the money. That is leave politics for the rich people. The danger of this developing is real, and that a political elite will rise in Melanesian countries where it will be a father and son becoming leaders. In other words inherited leadership pattern may rise, as we have seen two examples already in PNG.

This is an old Melanesian tradition of ‘bigman’ giving in order to get more support. This syndrome had unfortunately come into the modern political system and the voters have been lead to feel oblige that the leader must give in order for the voters to return favors. Whether this is bribery or not - one must take the precaution to observe.
There are dangers of this system in that the winning candidates will be put under pressure to give more to the people. The problem will be if there is no funds and delivery of goods and services, the voters will then change allegiances and vote for another candidate in the next election. This will often mean a complete turn over of candidates and new members every time there is an election. In the end there is no continuity and stability in planning processes.

The attitudes of `payback`; unfortunately is not modern politics at all, but a tradition being applied to modern politics. A candidate will however, have no option but to give in order to get a votes. This, in a way can be seen as bribery in context, but for the villager it is not. The only problem is that many villagers will continue to expect the leaders to give and thus the handout mentality will continue to survive. On the other hand if there is continued demand for payment before a vote is caste, then we might as well leave `politics to the rich man’ and those who have the money. While on the other hand, I am tempted to say that if I was to stand again, I will need at least a million kina to do my campaign. The implications for this in my view is clear, to buy votes and throw out parties so that I can bring in more people to vote for me.

Unfortunately the politics of `pay back’ can also be applied in bureaucracies where leaders often pick their own supporters for the government department position. Nepotism as it may seem, this is a traditional method being used. Such scenarios often create fear and favor among the politically appointed positions in the country.
Perhaps the other problem for the candidates and their parties is to campaign honestly and not give out policies and deliver empty promises that cannot be achieved overnight. The village people will remember what a leader has said during the campaign and they will therefore demand that the person deliver what was promised during the campaign.

Perhaps the Limited Preferential Voting (LPV) system being introduced will have an impact on the voters. This time they will vote for three people, and not for the only candidate who gives out money and the goods. It will also mean that tribal voting for only one candidate will not be the same anymore, people will be marking three candidates and they can be from any part of the electorate. However, the problem would be that this time people can go for as many as three people to ask for funding, when previously they had only went for one candidate. Using LPV there is a good possibility of a Wantoat winning if they can decide to have only one candidate instead of more than one.

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