

and, in particular, local culture—all of which together Billings calls “plexus.” She summons up classic culture and personality theory to argue that “style” or the patterns of a culture explain why some folks become cultists while others do not. Unlike New Ireland, New Hanover was culturally predisposed to culting. This argument recalls Peter Lawrence’s contention that cults are “conservative,” expressing deep Melanesian cultural patterns (which Lawrence called cosmological and epistemological). Billings’ argument also recalls Peter Worsley’s celebrated premise that cults function to assemble larger political unities. Since folks on New Hanover are predisposed to individualism, the Johnson cult worked to pull them all together. Their already communitarian neighbors on New Ireland had no need for cargo culting for unity.

Billings looks back to her first experiences in the field and to the discursive contexts of the 1960s. The book rehearses much of what she has previously presented in earlier publications and is not much informed by recent commentary on Melanesian cargo or other sorts of cults. Still, she offers generous (discounting the book’s price) accounts of an infamous cargo cult and of her close and long-term engagement with it. Margaret Mead, whom Billings happened on in 1960s Port Moresby, insisted that “cargo cults are boring” (33). Forty years later, Billings proves Mead wrong.

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*Harvesting Development: The Construction of Fresh Food Markets in Papua New Guinea*, by Karl Benediktsson. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002. ISBN cloth, 0-472-09800-4; paper, 0-472-06800-8; xii + 308 pages, tables, maps, photos, figures, notes, glossary, botanical terms, bibliography, index. Cloth, US\$57.50; paper, US\$23.95.

It is no easy matter, these days, to find a publisher for a PhD thesis written about a country as unfashionable as Papua New Guinea, especially when the subject is actually a community in Eastern Highlands Province looking for ways and means to sell their sweet potato in the national food market. So the Icelandic author should certainly be congratulated for his skillful use of the Viking “wantok system” to channel this work through the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies and into the bountiful arms of the University of Michigan Press. Perhaps, in doing so, he trod the same kind of path, and surmounted the same kind of obstacles, as the Eastern Highlanders who go to such lengths to fly huge bags of sweet potato down to Port Moresby and then fly back with a much smaller bag full of money.

Karl Benediktsson’s thesis, completed in 1997, was written under the supervision of Bryant Allen in the Department of Human Geography at the Australian National University. Its subject matter reflects a long-standing concern of Allen and his colleagues, in what is now called the PNG Land Management Group <<http://rspas.anu.edu.au/lmg>>, to show that one of Papua New Guinea’s best chances of “real development” (if there is any chance at all) is to be

found in the expansion of the national fresh food market. And the people of the central highlands have shown themselves to be highly capable of exploiting all available opportunities to participate in this process, with or without the assistance of formal marketing organizations sponsored by government or donor agencies.

Benediktsson's book still bears the standard hallmarks of the doctoral dissertation, which must contain a theoretical chapter 2—in which the author demonstrates his capacity to open up the toolbox of his discipline and select the right spanners for the job in hand—and a conclusion—in which he carefully positions himself somewhere in the midst of the arguments raging in the pages of international journals in order to accommodate the theoretical predilections of any potential examiner. Benediktsson's chosen position lies somewhere between the “actor-oriented” approach of the Netherlandish tribe of development sociologists and the “actor-network” theory espoused by the Parisian tribe that follows Lord Bruno Latour. Which means that he leans fairly heavily toward the agency side of the agency–structure divide, and not just because that is a fairly safe location in the contemporary spaces of human geography, but also because the local entrepreneurs who form the subject of his study would doubtless prefer to see themselves in much the same way, as people who might not be able to choose all of the circumstances in which they are making their own history, but who are making it all the same.

Having completed his obligatory review of “general theoretical

approaches to the integration of rural people into markets” (17), and the specific application of these approaches in the literature on PNG rural development, the author takes us on a guided tour of the marketing elements of the “lifeworld” of the Lunube people who live in the Asaro Valley, some twenty-five kilometers by road from the provincial capital of Goroka. Chapter 3 documents the internal social relations of the community, as the author witnessed and experienced them during his fieldwork in the mid-1990s; chapter 4 locates this community within the national food market and investigates the way this market looks to the community; chapter 5 explores the distinction between “formal” and “informal” forms of marketing activity (which is, not surprisingly, a heavily gendered distinction); chapter 6 zooms in on the commoditization of the sweet potato, which is of course the major staple crop throughout the central highlands; chapter 7 considers the relationship between the sweet potato trade and the marketing of coffee, which is the major export crop throughout the central highlands; chapter 8 examines the relationship between the development of the sweet potato trade and local changes in land use and social organization in the Upper Asaro Valley; and chapter 9 is the conclusion, which reiterates the persisting theme that all markets are socially (and messily) constructed and embedded things, just as the well-known political economist Karl Polanyi said they were.

Since I have not had the privilege of reading the original dissertation, I do not know the extent of the improve-

ments made by the author during his sojourn at the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (in Denmark) in the year 2000. But while it is true that the book still has the hallmarks of a dissertation, I must also say that the text is beautifully written, with many delightful turns of phrase (and the maps and figures are also a pleasure to contemplate). The theoretical wrapping may be just as essential for the global market in intellectual capital as it is for the examiners of doctoral dissertations, but the real value of this work lies in the excellence of its ethnographic exploration of linkages between national and local institutions in Papua New Guinea.

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*In-House in Papua New Guinea with Anthony Siaguru*, by Anthony Siaguru. Canberra: Asia Pacific Press, 2001. ISBN 0-7315-3680-0, xvi + 359 pages, acronyms, glossary, notes, AU\$36.00, US\$32.00.

This volume is a collection of Sir Anthony Siaguru's newspaper columns, "In House," in the *Post Courier*, the leading English-language daily in Papua New Guinea. Most of the articles in this collection appeared from 1988 to 2000. The articles are organized into themes close to the author's interest, namely "The Great Game" or contemporary politics; "Transparency" (the author is one of the founders of Transparency PNG); "Changing Society"; "Bougainville"; "Celebratory"; "Economic Matters";

"The Other Estate" (dealing with the press, women, and the Church); and "Friends and Neighbours." For those unfamiliar with Papua New Guinea, Anthony Siaguru is one of the "Gang of Four" who ran the PNG bureaucracy during the crucial first decade after independence. He was secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, before opting for active politics. He successfully ran for a parliamentary seat in 1982 and was appointed minister for state and public service. After serving just one term in parliament, he took up the position as deputy secretary-general of the commonwealth in London for seven years before returning to Papua New Guinea. Since then, he has emerged as a major corporate player in Papua New Guinea's small economy, holding seats on the boards of all the major PNG corporations and helping to establish the Port Moresby Stock Exchange. He is also known to be a major behind-the-scenes player in Papua New Guinea's byzantine world of politics.

The bulk (and the most interesting and valuable part) of the book can be found in the first section, "The Great Game." Here Siaguru expresses his thoughts on the biggest problem facing Papua New Guinea since independence: political instability can be summarized in one phrase: vote of no confidence. Since independence in 1975, more governments have fallen due to a vote of no confidence than by losing a general election. Unlike votes of no confidence, the timing of PNG general elections runs like clockwork—every five years or at the end of a full term of parliament. Parliament has never agreed to earlier dis-