



DEBORAH GEWERTZ  
FREDERICK ERRINGTON

## The Alimentary Forms of the Global Life: The Pacific Island Trade in Lamb and Mutton Flaps

**ABSTRACT** In this article, we track the controversial flow of lamb and mutton flaps (sheep bellies) from New Zealand and Australia to Papua New Guinea and Fiji. We focus on a multivalent fetish, a commodity that has the power to make a range of important things happen for differently located people. Some view flaps as trash, others, as treasure. They are objects of distaste or desire. As such, they are agents of social differentiation or of commonality. By exploring the different ways in which lamb and mutton flaps are fetishized in this part of the Pacific, we learn much about how contemporary socialities and economies are constructed and understood. [Keywords: meat, Pacific, globalization, trade, lifestyle diseases]

**W**E HAVE BEEN STUDYING the complex articulations necessary to move cheap, fatty meats from First World pastures and pens to Third World pots and plates. Specifically, we have been tracking the controversial flow of lamb and mutton flaps (sheep bellies) from New Zealand (NZ) and Australia to Papua New Guinea (PNG), where they are still consumed to the satisfaction of many, and to Fiji, where they have been recently banned to the regret of many.<sup>1</sup> Significantly, those in NZ and Australia who produce them often refuse to eat them; correspondingly, those in PNG (and elsewhere in the Pacific Islands) who do eat them know that they are eating what powerful others (generally, white others) eschew—what such others tend to view as suitable for consumption by their pets.<sup>2</sup> In our concern for lamb and mutton flaps (hereafter, l-m flaps) in motion, we are, hence, focused on a commodity that has the power to make a range of important things happen for differently located people. In essence, we are focused on a commodity that is both potent and diacritical in its capacity to be either trash or treasure, to be either the object of distaste or desire, to be either the agent of social differentiation or of commonality.

We are not, of course, the only social scientists concerned with food to have productively tracked peripatetic commodities.<sup>3</sup> To name a few: James Watson (1997) has delineated the shifting resonances of McDonald's hamburgers as they are transformed from fast foods in the United States to modernist luxuries in East Asia. Theodore Bestor (2001, 2004) has mapped the migration of Atlantic bluefin tuna

as they are rushed from run-down ports in New England to elegant sushi restaurants in Japan. Deborah Barndt (2002) has traced the journey of corporate tomatoes as they are sprayed, picked, packed, and trucked north from fields in Mexico to supermarkets in Canada. Ian Cook (2004) has charted the passage of papayas as they are transported in their uniform perfection from former sugar plantations in Jamaica to kitchens in North London. And David Lind and Elizabeth Barham (2004) have revealed the contested career of tortillas as they are commodified from a family-centered staple in Mexico into a fast-food wrap worldwide.<sup>4</sup>

Like these others, we are engaged in what Robert Foster (2006) calls "critical fetishism." Critical fetishism requires "a heightened [and analytic] appreciation for the active materiality of things in motion" (Foster 2006:285). It requires, thus, an appreciation of the capacity of certain commodities to be salient and compelling, to make things happen, to be (as it were) fetishes. By tracking salient and compelling—fetishized—commodities, critical fetishists, Foster argues, achieve a critical edge concerning processes of globalization—indeed, concerning processes of global capitalism. By tracking such commodities, critical fetishists challenge a view of globalization as inevitable and homogenizing, revealing it instead to be "partial, uneven and unstable; a socially contested rather than logical process [producing] many spaces of resistance, alterity and possibility" (Whatmore and Thorne 1997:289; cf. Appadurai 1991). Correspondingly, critical fetishists also reveal global capitalism as never fully hegemonic and coherent. Rather, they

show both that “local places are constituted historically in terms of much larger relationships” and that “there are identifiable local continuities not solely of exogenous nature” (Friedman and Hviding n.d.).

But there can be, we think, an additional critical edge to critical fetishism, one made possible through the recognition that the items on which critical fetishists focus may be doubly “good to think.” These items can do more than reveal the partial, uneven, and unstable processes of globalization. To the extent that these items seriously compel those from whom and to whom they flow, they can lead people to think critically about the broader historical relationships that make them, for instance, into Third World eaters or First World eschewers. As such, these fetishized commodities should compel analysts to take into account the ways in which people themselves may engage in critical fetishism of the products with which they cathect: the products that enable, if not provoke, understandings of who they are, including their positions in the world.<sup>5</sup>

Here, through our focus on l–m flaps—and on what (as fetishes) they make happen—we wish to apply this (extended) critical fetishism in an especially elemental manner, one derived from the significant fact that l–m flaps are not only a food but also a food of a particular kind. As with any food, l–m flaps constitute bodies, sustain lives, shape identities, and create socialities; as widely traversing food, they do so in a variety of ways in a variety of places.<sup>6</sup> But, flaps are not just any food, not even just any protean protein: They are, as an inexpensive and fatty meat (often 50 percent fat), both affordable and low quality.<sup>7</sup>

As affordable, they are emerging as staples for many urban and periurban Pacific Islanders, maintaining and marking the transition of their lives from a “traditional” subsistence economy to a “modernist” market economy. Throughout the Pacific Islands, meat (generally fatty) is seen as supporting a particular way of being in the world: a “lifestyle” that (partially, unevenly, and unstably) combines the delights and the drawbacks, the promises and the premises, and the conveniences and calamities of modernity. Certainly many of the Papua New Guineans we know who can afford l–m flaps on a regular basis relish the ease of simply picking up a frozen package from the store and the subsequent pleasure of greasy repletion.<sup>8</sup> Others, the impoverished urban poor for whom repletion is rare, often envy lives of such ease and pleasure. Yet, importantly, such an image of the good life is occasionally clouded by public-health pronouncements that fatty urban diets cause “lifestyle diseases” such as obesity, diabetes, and hypertension (Coyne 2000).

As low quality, the traffic in l–m flaps also reflects significant disparities of power. Thus, an editorial in *Pacific Magazine* presents the view that it is only because fatty l–m flaps and the like are unhealthy that they are exported at all to Pacific Islanders: “New Zealanders won’t eat them, which is why they get tossed to . . . [Pacific Islanders] as cheap meat” (Pacific Magazine 2003). We ourselves hear this perspective (sometimes phrased in terms of having l–m flaps “dumped”

on them) from Papua New Guinean and other Pacific Island friends. Often expressed with indignation, sometimes coupled with rueful acknowledgement of their collectively marginal status in the world, they worry that what comes their way to eat may be the “garbage” of First World others.

As both affordable and of low quality, l–m flaps are not only destined for the Third World but also destined for a market that, in PNG (and often elsewhere in the Pacific Islands), the purveyors of flaps regard as “difficult”—as uncertain, volatile, and small scale. As we shall see in detail, traders must be attentive, vigilant, and hands-on if they are to make a profit. In fact, they must be directly involved in the fundamental (if not elemental) operations of the trade. This means that much of the trade in l–m flaps linking NZ and Australian pastures to PNG plates is relatively direct, relatively basic.

In effect, most of those involved with l–m flaps recognize them as salient, as often contentious: as affecting people’s lives multiply and differently. As widely circulating commodities, l–m flaps serve not only to distinguish but also to link—and, hence, to provide a means to recognize and appraise First and Third World differences. But, there is more to it, we venture, than this. Because fetishized l–m flaps are constitutive of groups, both similar and different, and revelatory to group members about the nature of their social worlds, they might be usefully (if loosely) considered as globally “totemic.” Although clearly not sacred objects (as in Émile Durkheim’s [1968] seminal analysis of totems), l–m flaps do compel: They affect lives and thoughts about lives; they are instructively provoking. Far from taken for granted, they neither go nor come without (a great deal of) saying. And, it is more than a matter of differences in attitudes and activities that some condone them and others condemn them, that some eat and others eschew, and that some count as blessings and others contemplate as losses. It is that these differences diacritically locate and are understood as locating. They are diagnostic of various persons and places—and of various perspectives on persons and places.

Hence, the positions they effect, link, and register are not only the commensurate differences of Durkheim, who viewed groups within a totemic system as all equal variations on a common theme, but the incommensurate differences of Karl Marx (1906). Yet, whereas Marx argued that the fetishization of commodities obscured the profoundly unequal “life process” that gave rise to them, we reiterate that the critical fetishization of such globally flowing commodities as l–m flaps reveals, albeit in a modest and partial way, this process.<sup>9</sup> As such, these alimentary forms of global engagements, creating as they do both commonalities and classes, are, for all of us pondering them, remarkably good to think.

## ABOUT OUR METHODS

To document the ways differently located people critically fetishize l–m flaps demands a multisited ethnographic approach, which, as many have pointed out, runs the risk of

sacrificing the local to the global, the deep for the broad, and the thick for the thin.<sup>10</sup> One way of mitigating the problem is to station several anthropologists along a network of globally flowing commodities. Another—one more anthropologically feasible technique (partly because it is hard to support a team of investigators)—is to build on the researcher's own field experience in a part of the world where globally traversing commodities originate, pass through, or are consumed. We have used this latter method in our study of l–m flaps, building on our extensive research in PNG, especially (for the purposes of this article) on that at Ramu Sugar Limited (RSL), a sugar plantation in the town of Gusap (where we worked on a social history, on and off, between 1999 and 2002; see Errington and Gewertz 2004). In essence, we have pursued an ethnographically enriched network-focused methodology so as to learn how a portion of the Pacific world is organized through l–m flaps.

During 2004, we spent three months of our summer vacation (beginning in June) in NZ, Australia, PNG, and Fiji to discern whether our project was possible and to refine its parameters preparatory to seeking funding. To these ends, we spent a month in NZ and several weeks in the remaining contexts speaking with as many people concerned with the meat business as possible. During our 2006 work (funding achieved), we stopped first in NZ where, for four and a half months (beginning mid-January), we interviewed members of the meat industry (incl. traders, meat processors, and farmers), of the government, and of the public health sector. From NZ, we traveled to Australia, spending several weeks interviewing Pacific Island-focused meat traders in Brisbane and Sydney. Then, we went to PNG for five weeks (arriving late in June), meeting with importers, retailers, health professionals, and government representatives. Moreover, while in PNG, we worked in the town of Madang with periurban settlement dwellers (who belong to the Chambri ethnic group with which we have long-term field experience) and returned to RSL to learn more about the “shopping basket” of plantation workers.<sup>11</sup> We supplemented our own conversations in PNG with over 300 interviews conducted by Papua New Guinean university students in five towns (Madang, Goroka, Mount Hagen, Kerowagi, and Gusap) about the consumption of, and attitudes toward, flaps.<sup>12</sup> Finally, we journeyed to Fiji for a month to learn how the ban on l–m flaps had taken place and with what effects. There, we interviewed public health professionals, government officials, members of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, and meat importers. In addition, we hired two Fijian graduate students who conducted 185 interviews about when l–m flaps had been eaten and whether the ban had been necessary and successful.

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Although we did learn much about Fiji, our primary concern in this article is with the trade of l–m flaps into PNG, the largest and most commercially challenging of the Pacific Island markets. For reasons of space, we must limit our discussion of Fiji to the ways its ban on flaps has proven

discursively important: how its ban has contributed to flaps becoming the subject of regionwide attention and, indeed, contention. It is to this contention that we must first turn, as the background to the current trade.

### THE FLAP ABOUT FLAPS

Before we interviewed anyone for this project, we knew that l–m flaps were controversial. As we have already suggested, fatty meat imports have been under attack in PNG and elsewhere in the Pacific for health reasons. “Imported mutton and lamb flaps [largely] from New Zealand [have been] blamed for contributing to health problems here [in Samoa]” (Tuiletufuga 2003), particularly to an alarming increase in obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Comparably, in an article indicating that flaps are a health risk that can lead to obesity and high blood pressure, the executive director of Fiji's Consumer Council said that “we want consumers to know that buying lamb flaps doesn't help in their health” (Pacific Islands Report 2000). And Fiji's health statistics do show an increasingly dire circumstance. In fact, according to Philip Hone and Henry Haszler, the proportion of overweight or obese urban Fijians went up between 1993 and 2001 from 34 to 49 percent for males and from 49 to 60 percent for females (n.d.). Moreover, based on a sample of 2,277 people conducted in 2002, Fiji has a diabetes rate of 16 percent—with 33 percent of those in the age group 55–64 succumbing to the disease (Cornelius et al. 2002). Correspondingly, Wila Saweri reports in the *New Guinea Medical Journal* that “in [PNG] towns and villages with easy access to urban centres . . . dietary changes [primarily focused on consumption of fatty meats] are leading to increases in the prevalence of chronic lifestyle-related diseases” (2001:151).<sup>13</sup>

Not surprisingly, efforts to ban or otherwise restrict the traffic of fatty meats have been strongly resisted by trade interests (Slatter 2003:5), especially those in NZ, the principal source of l–m flaps to Fiji (as well as to most of the Pacific Islands) and a major source to PNG. These interests especially protested when, in 2000, Fiji placed a ban on the sale of l–m flaps. (Trade interests in Australia were less concerned because few flaps went to Fiji from there.) The Fiji ban was justified on the grounds that flaps were “likely to cause the death of a person, or to injure, or to adversely affect the health or well being of a person” (Kumar 2000). The trade interests countered that there was no scientific evidence that such meats were inherently unhealthy: Hence, this ban was, as Thompson notes, “a really highly undesirable precedent in international trade” (Choudry 2002), and it was illegitimate under the guidelines of the WTO.<sup>14</sup>

However, the NZ government proved unwilling to take this issue to the WTO. While supporting both free trade, in general, and those in their meat industry, in particular, the government was regarding the Pacific Island trade in l–m flaps with some ambivalence. We heard, for instance, that the then–Minister for Health from NZ was frequently embarrassed when, as she traveled in the Pacific, she was

confronted by Islanders demanding to know how she could justify her concern with promoting healthy lifestyles when her country's exports undermined these lifestyles. Moreover and relatedly, NZ was finding it hard to refuse medical services such as renal dialysis to Pacific Island diabetics from the countries with which NZ had special relations (esp. Tonga, Samoa, Tuvalu, and the Cook Islands).<sup>15</sup> And such procedures were straining the budgets of urban district-hospitals in NZ because it "costs about [NZ]\$600,000 a year to treat overseas dialysis patients, mostly Pacific Islanders" (Walsh and Mold 2003). Given such contention, it is not surprising that the purveyors of flaps to the Pacific Islands feel put on the spot.

### MEETING THE TRADERS OF L-M FLAPS

While in NZ and Australia, we interviewed a wide range of meat traders: 32 in all. Some of these were now retired but still famous for having put together spectacular deals; some were currently working for major meat packers, accountable for moving huge amounts of meat; most had extensive overseas experience, were responsible for overseas sales, and often ran overseas offices. We were especially interested in talking with those who either had been or still were active in the Pacific Island trade, including with PNG. We found such traders, whether New Zealanders or Australians, to be substantially alike in their outlooks and practices.

They tend to work in small firms (sometimes owner-operated and with five to 15 employees) in which enterprise and skill are marked and rewarded. Correspondingly, they are very alert to anything that might affect their business. Given the controversy surrounding the trade in flaps—especially Fiji's ban and the possibility of future bans elsewhere—it was no wonder that several of these traders were initially suspicious when we phoned for appointments.<sup>16</sup> One wanted to know whether our interest in l-m flaps was "political"—that is, likely to create unwanted publicity. Another said that he did not want conversations that might in any way unsettle his relations with his clients, indicating that a difficult market had been made additionally difficult by the controversy over flaps. In addition, they wished to protect commercially sensitive material from competitors. Yet, by assuring them of our discretion—that we would be careful in our conversations with other traders, in public statements, and in our writings—and by incrementally building contacts and, hence, our credibility, we were able to meet with representatives of most of the relevant Pacific Island-focused firms. These men—and the meat trade is overwhelmingly the domain of men—seemed to find our questions (framed most broadly as "what do we need to know to understand the business of selling l-m flaps to Pacific Islanders?") sufficiently engaging to spend at least several hours with us in their offices. (This, despite the fact that they are quite busy: When they are not traveling, they are catching up, keeping in touch, pursuing prospects, etc.) In some cases, these office interviews led to repeat visits and after-hours socializing.

In summary form, this is the story many traders tell of how l-m flaps arrived on the Pacific market, generally, and in PNG, specifically. It conveys the major exigencies and contingencies—some material, some entrepreneurial, some sociocultural—believed to have led to the multiplex flap over l-m flaps. Although it is true that we expressed an interest in learning how this trade began, we have a strong impression that this is a well-established account: a narrative ready to roll.

The history usually begins with a foundational story linking the earliest contact between Europeans and Pacific Islanders with the trade in meat. According to this story, for Pacific Islanders, animal protein was always scarce and, hence, a luxury item. Consequently, imported meat of even the cheapest kind was immediately considered to be high status, as the initial explorers, whalers, traders, and missionaries (some say, Captain Cook, himself) discovered when they traded in salted brisket of beef. (Brisket is a cheap, fatty cut from the breast of a cow, about 15 percent of the animal.) The Pacific was, in this rendition, the global entrepreneur's dream: a market just waiting to happen and one both deep and easy to fill with low-quality products.

In the l-m flap story, beef brisket continues to play a role. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the primary markets for Australian brisket were the United States and Canada, where it was ground into hamburger. However, both countries abruptly stopped importing brisket after discovering nodules (probably caused by midges carrying roundworm). This left Australian meat processors with a great volume of low-value beef clogging their freezers. Australia looked immediately to its de facto colony to the immediate north—PNG—as a rapidly emerging market. Especially appealing were the densely populated Highland regions that were increasingly affluent (through coffee growing) and accessible (through a vastly improved road system). In the Highlands, pork was greatly valued but was consumed only rarely, primarily on ceremonial occasions. Moreover, according to the traders, Highlanders not only liked meat, they especially liked fatty meat, given the high-energy requirements of living in a relatively cold climate. It was another market waiting to happen, although not one as remunerative as those of the United States and Canada. Fortunately for the traders, imports to North America resumed when authorities there decided that the brisket nodules were not a health hazard. With the reopening of this more lucrative market, Australia stopped exporting brisket to PNG, leaving what one trader described as "a big, gaping desire" (conversation with authors, July 12, 2004). Quickly filling this desire—replacing Australia's brisket—were l-m flaps from Australia and NZ.

Both countries had rather suddenly found themselves with a surfeit of these low-value cuts. This came about as a result of new practices at meat-processing plants. Whereas beef carcasses, because of their large size, virtually required significant disarticulation at processing plants before shipment, sheep carcasses had no such requirements and could be readily shipped whole to markets for further butchering.

That sheep carcasses, in both Australia and NZ, began to be cut into components at the place of slaughter, including into flaps, reflected changes in respective major markets: In the case of Australia, that market was domestic; in the case of NZ, that market was the United Kingdom. (Both countries raise comparable numbers of sheep, yet NZ's domestic market is only about one-fifth of Australia's; indeed, NZ remains the world's largest exporter of sheep meat.)

In Australia, processing plants began cutting up sheep carcasses into components to profit from the growing demand by supermarkets (increasingly taking over meat sales from butcher shops) for the more desirable cuts, more efficiently produced. In NZ, processing plants began cutting up sheep carcasses to profit from a change in trade agreements between NZ and its primary trading partner, the United Kingdom. In 1973, the United Kingdom negotiated a new agreement with the European Economic Community. Consequently, it began imposing import quotas on many of its trading partners. NZ was held to a quota reflecting the weight of meat it had been sending to the United Kingdom over the years. It therefore became in NZ's interest to fill that weight quota, not with whole carcasses but with the particular cuts that would command a market premium such as lamb legs and loins.

Thus, both Australia and NZ were left with a great many inferior cuts (shoulders and flaps). Now recall that this was happening at a time when throughout the Pacific Islands there was a growing market for inexpensive, fatty meats: a market created initially through the sale of brisket but also one actively cultivated by traders. One NZ trader told us, for example, that at this time he and others were scrambling to find export markets for their cheap sheep meat. From visits to the South Auckland shops favored by resident Pacific Islanders, he (rightly) concluded that exports of such cheap cuts to the Pacific Islands would flourish. This was, as another trader put it, the conversion of "our trash into their treasure": the perfect global market (conversation with authors, March, 17, 2006).

Facilitating this trade was a base of reliable clients. In PNG, for instance, there were large, long-established, European-owned—and, to a lesser extent, Chinese-owned—firms. For a number of years—through the period of post-war prosperity to the early- to mid-1980s (some five to ten years after PNG's Independence)—these firms had operated with an "indent" system. Firms that knew their own local, substantially expatriate, demand simply placed routine orders with the same Australian and NZ exporters. And if these orders were filled at a reasonably good price, everyone was happy: "All could remain within their comfort zones and still make money" (conversation with authors, July 13, 2004).

Those traders to whom we talked agreed that the situation has soured of late. Trade barriers (incl. Fiji's ban), health concerns, corruption, law-and-order problems, and regional economic decline—coupled with intensified competition—have made the Pacific Island markets "difficult." In addition, traders have become increasingly restricted in what

they can sell. With the decline of expatriate numbers, especially in PNG, they have become limited to selling the most basic—low-end, low-margin—commodities. In fact, a fair number of traders to the Pacific Islands have switched emphasis to established markets in Europe and North America. Others were considering diverting their energies to markets with more exciting futures—to larger, expanding, and more diverse markets such as China and Mexico. Some had already made the change. Even those committed to the Pacific Islands periodically thought they had made a mistake by staying on. One trader, claiming to have had l-m flaps on the first post-Cold War ship into Vladivostok, wondered whether he should have pursued this (or another non-Pacific Island) market. He regretted (and this was common among his peers) that, in the Pacific Islands, he was limited not only to selling a product that was pretty basic but to selling to people whose tastes were pretty unsophisticated and who were not likely to want or be able to afford much else anytime soon. Under such circumstances, these traders were, in the words of a colleague (exporting primarily to Mexico), "left working the bottom of the market" (conversation with authors, March 14, 2006). Yet, these traders could console themselves that—as one illustrated through reference to his expensive car—a guy "could still make a buck" in the Pacific Islands if he knew how.

To make a buck as a trader to the Pacific Islands, you really have to get your product cheaply.<sup>17</sup> With increasing competition from both domestic and foreign sources, the NZ and Australian meat industries have become exceedingly cost-conscious and efficient. Everything has to move, especially the bulky low-end cuts that clog up freezer space. The particular problem in moving flaps is that the market is limited (even with increasing demand in China and Mexico). Many white Australians and New Zealanders do, in fact, define flaps as barely fit for human consumption; many in Europe and in the United States have never even heard of them. Efforts by processors to add value and to expand appeal have yet to succeed. Attempts to transform flaps into "nuggets" have failed because most fast-food eaters do not like the long-lasting, greasy aftertaste of sheep meat.<sup>18</sup> Other attempts to roll them into inexpensive roasts for export to developing countries with an emerging middle class are only just under way.<sup>19</sup> So, despite the best efforts by the processors, virtually their only option for l-m flaps is to sell them for export, simply as they are cut from the carcass. This is a circumstance that the traders to places like PNG can work with. But this is only the beginning.

To make a buck as a trader to the Pacific Islands, you also really have to know how to sell to your market. No longer an embodiment of the entrepreneur's dream (one in which fortuitously available brisket or l-m flaps could be pumped into "a market just waiting to happen"), the contemporary market has become very demanding, hands-on, and competitive. Selling meat in the Pacific Islands has become (unlike the product itself) a lean—and mean—operation. Traders cannot be merely middle men. Now, they have to get their feet (wet) in multiple worlds. At least in one case,

this involved poking through PNG rubbish dumps where the trader noted with interest the preponderance of small packages of gum and cigarettes and small cans of meat and fish. From this, he deduced that Papua New Guineans are not interested in economies of scale. Not only do they lack the ready money, they also would rather not be cleaned out of any leftovers by improvident and importuning relatives. Thus, there would be little point in arguing, for instance, that a leg of lamb might actually convey more value for the money. This trader also used both this insight into the PNG market and his special skills as a trader to stay one step ahead of the competition. He knew that, although whole pigs' heads were readily available for export, there was only limited demand for them in PNG, despite the well-known liking for pork there. The limited demand seemed to stem from two factors. The first was obvious: A domestic pig industry was protected by a 70 percent tariff on imported pork. The second was related to his observation at the dump: A pig's head is too large—and too expensive—to be casually purchased. The trader's solution was to innovate. He arranged with his meat processors to slice the very fatty jowls from the heads as a separate cut. These pieces were then of a suitable size to be purchased readily in PNG. Importantly, they were also inexpensive because they could be imported duty free. Designated as offal, they were exempt from the usual tariff on pork.<sup>20</sup>

This trader's skills are considerable, but he kicked himself for not having thought of the jowls ten years earlier. Coming from a line of butchers, he has been around meat all of his life. He is a "dead-meat man" (unlike the live-meat farmers) and can, he claims, "visualize a carcass better than anyone else" (conversation with authors, July 13, 2004). He visits meat processors and thinks about the different ways carcasses might be divided so as to create new cuts for particular overseas markets. (In this regard, he considers himself as very different from the specialists at a huge firm like ConAgra who spend their days behind banks of computers buying and selling 65cl beef, which is basically cheap hamburger.)

However, special skills aside, he is typical of the Pacific Island traders in important ways, especially in his view of the market as the most efficient mechanism to supply what people desire and can afford. He—and other traders—certainly would not refuse to sell flaps and jowls to Papua New Guineans because the meat was too fatty to be good for them: "It is their choice; it's a free world, after all" (conversation with authors, April 11, 2006). As long as the meat is properly processed from healthy animals, kept frozen along the way, and is what was ordered, a trader's responsibility has been fulfilled. No doubt it would be a better world if people could desire and afford less fatty cuts (and, anyway, the problem is not that great because few Papua New Guineans can currently afford to eat that much of even cheap meat). Perhaps sometime in the future, if they become more affluent, they will become more sophisticated buyers. He would be pleased if he could develop his market and move his trade up a level by introducing Papua New Guineans to a

wider range of products such as lamb shoulder chops and, eventually, legs. Regardless, he can manage.<sup>21</sup>

But having a product that will sell in a place like PNG is not enough. The comfortable indent system—focused on the big expatriate-owned firms with their largely expatriate clientele, all with strong ties to the mother countries—has gone. What remains in PNG from the colonial days are a handful of substantial firms, some owned by Chinese who have long lived in the country and some owned by Europeans who often have affinal ties to PNG nationals. These firms have sufficient continuity, including of key personnel, that long-term ties can be nurtured through the likes of periodic visits, with attendant hospitality, and holiday gifts. However, these ties can be nurtured only if traders offer competitive prices and services, and they must be quite competitive because these firms now serve a customer base of very price-conscious Papua New Guineans. In addition, traders may nurture relationships with their long-term clients by filling special—decidedly mixed—and not necessarily profitable orders. Thus, along with meat and other provisions, one trader filled a client's request for a used Holden transmission. In another case, a trader complied with a client's request that his next container include a carton of his favorite, hard-to-find, pickled herring. Traders will provide other services to cultivate their present and future networks. They may, for instance, meet a client's child at the Sydney or Auckland airport to buy lunch and make sure the connecting flight to boarding school is met.

In partial contrast are the newer supermarkets. These are substantial, but they often have rapid turnover in managerial positions, including in their meat departments. Moreover, these firms insist not simply on a competitive price but, rather, on the very cheapest price. Although traders expect little loyalty from these concerns, they do visit, give gifts, take managers for drinks and dinner, and so forth. But, to a much greater extent than in dealing with their long-term customers, traders recognize that such niceties are the necessary but not sufficient requisites of doing business.

In sharpest contrast are the stores owned by PNG nationals. Often in the Highlands, these are relatively small and frequently go under. They tend to be undercapitalized and disorganized; as such, they are especially vulnerable to substantial overhead costs as from robbery and various forms of default. In dealing with these stores, traders must temper their eagerness to chase up orders with a realization that it may be hard to chase down debtors. Certainly with the smaller stores, traders expect to extend credit beyond the conventional 30-day (after delivery) period to 45—and often to 60—days. In effect, traders recognize that they must act as bankers to these clients. They must wait until the clients sell their stock before expecting payment for it. When visiting these clients, traders look closely for signs of whether the business is going downhill: Is the store busy with commerce? Is the owner in attendance? Are clerks responsive? Is the store well stocked? Are there containers with additional stock in the yard? If not—and if other

suppliers say that they have not been paid in a long time—it may be time to cut back, or perhaps to “pull the plug.” Of course, it would be preferable if they did stay in business. In fact, it is sensible for a trader to do what he can to make sure that “everyone makes a few bucks along the way” (conversation with authors, June 8, 2004).

Protecting interests in such a firsthand manner requires skill, not only in appraising particular operations but also in being sufficiently rough, ready, and resourceful—having enough masculine vitality and savvy—to negotiate the features of the PNG scene more generally. All of those we know who traded there prided themselves on their stamina, both emotional and physical. They could cope, as one had to, when mugged in the parking lot of a major supermarket. They could deal, as another was forced to, when his 20-foot shipping container of flaps was hijacked on its way into the Highlands by villagers who hacked it open with axes. They could manage, as yet another was compelled to, when his visit to a store was cut short by an approaching riot. One trader, in fact, told us that he really enjoys the adventure of selling meat into PNG. He sometimes feels that he is “going back in time” to the very beginning of outside influence, of commerce (conversation with authors, June 11, 2004). He is excited to be in a country where l–m flaps have been, until very recently, a wonderful novelty for many. To work what he saw as a frontierlike trade, he developed a special strategy. In addition to cultivating clients and coping with circumstances, he has created his own contingency force. On his visits throughout PNG, he establishes and maintains collegial relationships with police commanders and their senior officers. He does this through buying them drinks and dinner. He also presents “police badges” acquired from contacts in the Auckland police force. Delighted, the PNG police complete the connection with the Auckland force by giving him badges in return. Above and beyond whatever enjoyment the trader derives from the company of PNG cops, he knows that they will try to look after his physical safety. Moreover, he claims that, if a defaulting client sought to protect his resources by fleeing to his home village, the police would travel there, “knock a few heads and scare up some payment” (conversation with authors, June 11, 2004).

### MEETING THE EATERS OF L–M FLAPS

Everyone interested in Pacific Island foodways will have noted the gusto with which many local people consume l–m flaps and other extremely fatty and inexpensive meats (such as pig jowls). This is especially so in PNG. Thus, James Kila reports in a PNG newspaper that “imported lamb meat generally referred to as ‘lamb flaps’ . . . [has come to be] a delicacy and a . . . [substitute] for the traditional pig meat in the highlands of Papua New Guinea” (Kila 2003). This is certainly the case among Seventh-Day Adventists, who are enjoined to substitute flaps for the now-prohibited pigs during collective feasts.<sup>22</sup> But it is also the case, for example, among Catholics on Manam Island, who used a 20-kilogram carton of frozen lamb flaps as “a fundamental rit-

ual feature” of one mortuary ritual (Pearson 1995:53). Moreover, throughout PNG, candidates for political office often bring in cartons of l–m flaps for distribution among potential supporters. And we have heard such supporters brag that they have eaten the flaps of all the contenders—and voted for none. We have seen women at outdoor markets cook small pieces of l–m flaps for sale as snacks to shoppers. We have watched Papua New Guinean employees on their lunch breaks buy cooked l–m flaps at “kai bars” (fast-food places). We have heard from Papua New Guineans carrying cartons of l–m flaps that the meat was intended to feed relatives who were helping to harvest large cash-crops of peanuts. And we have joined our contribution of l–m flaps to those of others at Lutheran Church picnics.

However, the fact that so many Papua New Guineans (and other Pacific Islanders) enjoy their l–m flaps (and other fatty meats) can strike indigenous observers as profoundly less than a good thing. We have mentioned the concerns of health professionals about lifestyle diseases. We have also mentioned the lingering concerns of ordinary people about eating out of necessity, but usually with pleasure, what other people reject and feed to their pets.<sup>23</sup> In addition, there are concerns of some that the trade in flaps places the entire country in a position of postcolonial vulnerability. Thus, in a letter to the editor of a PNG newspaper, Yarakipi Ipi argues that because of their popularity such imports should be banned from PNG: The local people’s “huge appetite for imported goods” like these meat products has led to an unfortunate food dependence on “foreign-controlled business houses” (Ipi 2002).<sup>24</sup>

Given the evident capacity of l–m flaps to compel appetite and attention, we were curious to learn how wage earners engaged with them. After all, with regular income and largely dependent on cash-purchased food, they were likely a prime market. To this end, we returned to RSL, the sugar plantation at Gusap where, as mentioned, we had done research before. There, we supplemented our own (old and new) conversations with formal interviews conducted by university students about consumption of, and attitudes toward, flaps. The students interviewed 62 people in the Gusap shopping area: Some were just passing through, but most either worked for RSL or were related to those who worked there. Of those interviewed, many spoke of l–m flaps as “waste products,” which New Zealanders and Australians fed to their dogs. Many, as well, knew that there were health issues associated with eating greasy food (mentioning most frequently, though, shortness of breath and asthma). Nonetheless, even these said that they ate and liked flaps. Indeed, virtually all ate flaps whenever they could afford to.

Yet most workers, especially those in the low pay grades who were supporting their nuclear (although frequently large) families, found that they could afford l–m flaps only once or twice during a fortnight pay period. In fact, it would be especially on payday that we would see crowds at the two local mini-marts, surrounding the open-topped freezers so as to sort through the piles of plastic-wrapped,

one-kilogram (or so) slices of flaps (at about K[ina]8.50 per kg [US\$2.83] during 2006). The preferred slices were not those with the least fat, but those with the fewest bones (ribs). The fat did not matter largely because of the way in which flaps were cooked. Cut into small pieces and boiled up with tubers (or rice) and greens, l-m flaps lent themselves to feeding large families. (As a technique of endocuisine, boiling is, of course, a very frugal mode of cooking.)<sup>25</sup> Carbohydrates and greens would be well flavored with grease and everyone could have a small piece or two of fatty meat. More often, though, families would have to make do with a small can of fish (at approximately K1.40 per 185 g [US\$0.46]) shared out, generally, on top of rice and greens.<sup>26</sup>

We also spoke at length about l-m flaps to Mari villagers living in the vicinity of the plantation. Because many of these had (until recently) leased their land to the company, they were accustomed to a regular cash income. With this income, they had access to modern goods—to a good life—making them the envy of most other Papua New Guineans for whom cash (and, sometimes, food) was often short. Mari could, for instance, easily supplement their garden produce with store-bought food, which frequently included l-m flaps.<sup>27</sup> For them, l-m flaps were a modernist flavor-fringe to a still rather traditional life. One Mari friend told us of his pleasure in walking out of the mini-mart with a bag of frozen flaps in each hand; he said he enjoyed the heft and looked forward to the meal. And, at meal's end, there was nothing that better signaled his repletion than licking up the grease that oozed from the corners of his mouth.

Moreover, their resources not only allowed particular Mari and their families to enjoy the good life but also allowed them collectively to create contexts of inclusive and mutually affirming sociality. In addition to holding fairly frequent church picnics to which families contributed pots of food for general consumption, Mari also were able to do things up right on ritual occasions such as funerals. One such funeral occurred after the sudden death of the highly respected RSL manager responsible for dealing with the Mari landowners. The Mari were able to contribute large amounts of food, including l-m flaps, to feeding the hundreds of mourners. Their grief was somewhat tempered by their satisfaction at being able to respond impressively and appropriately. Their affluence allowed them a public generosity that presented them at their best. Conversely, any threat to their resources—to their access to (the likes of) l-m flaps—was viewed as diminishing both their standard of living and their standing in the world. In fact, in the face of contemporary court challenges by other local groups to Mari ownership of their resource-generating sugar land, easy access to l-m flaps has become iconic of a good life under threat.<sup>28</sup>

Significantly, the view of many Papua New Guineans that eating l-m flaps in domestic and ritual settings is the appropriate, in fact the reasonable, expression of their aspirations is mirrored in their resentment of the evident capacity of the elites to overindulge. Although it is true that a few Mari have become corpulent (as had our grease-savoring

friend mentioned above), their bulk is more amusing than aggravating. However, many are aggravated by the corpulence of national politicians, which they regard as marking the incommensurability of class differences.<sup>29</sup> Thus, when (nonelite) Papua New Guineans talk, as they do, about their politicians looking “pregnant with twins,” they are commenting not only on their corpulence but pointedly on their corruption. They are making a wry, cynical, and apprehensive comment about a disordered world, one in which the “monstrous” bulk of politicians is an index of their illegitimate and disproportionate power and privilege. It is these men—or at least some of them—who travel all over the world at public expense and who amass enough money to educate their children in Australia and NZ and to buy Australian property in Cairns and on the Gold Coast. It is these men who not only have access to all of the l-m flaps they may or may not wish to eat but who also enjoy steaks and beer (and women) with regularity at hotels. As one young Mari man told us, when he sees a fat politician, he is afraid. He knows that this man, with his obvious resources and connections, can eat anything he wants and do (virtually) anything he wants. He knows that if there is a reason to take a politician or another comparably rich man to court, there would be no point in doing so. Rich people, virtually all Papua New Guineans agree, always win.

## CONCLUSION

As we think about the trade in l-m flaps, we keep coming back to (an adaptation of) Durkheim for his understanding that complex social systems can become manifest and comprehensible as people think about and are compelled by particular material forms: that is, as they seriously engage with the fetishes that, as totems, define substance and identity within a system of similarity and difference. Indeed, we have been prompted to think of l-m flaps as totemic markers: The subject of critical fetishism (among both analysts and participants), l-m flaps locate and define people relative to a range of others, both local and global. We also, of course, keep coming back to (an adaptation of) Marx for his understanding that the apparent equivalences constituted through the fetishization of commodities serve to mask inequalities, which, nonetheless, can be revealed by critical analysts, both observers and (sometimes) participants. Thus, l-m flaps operate as totemic markers within a global system of commodity transactions in which some eat flaps and others feed them to their dogs, some eat flaps and others eat steaks, some sell flaps to Port Moresby and others sell filet mignons to Paris, and, to be sure, some sell labor (if they are lucky not to have been underbid or outsourced) and others buy it. In this regard, what l-m flaps denote as totemic markers, at least in PNG, are not only the commensurate differences of local continuities but also the incommensurate differences of much larger, exogenous relationships. As their global tacking both unites and differentiates, l-m flaps are especially useful to a critical fetishism of one (fatty) aspect of the life process of world capitalism.

Concerning the identities of the traders as they participate in this life process within PNG, we observe that, for them, this trade provides an expression of masculine know-how and vigor.<sup>30</sup> The trade is hands-on, immediate, personal, down and dirty, and requires an accurate and immediate sizing up of persons and places. It calls for both the skill of dead-meat men to visualize potential products and the competencies of clever cope-ers to drive the trade into places like PNG. It becomes who they are, because it not only demands their particular skills but also reflects their preferences and values. These men (and here we are perhaps extrapolating a bit) seem to find the fundamental in their trade in meat: the core of entrepreneurial capitalism, of a market with few intermediaries, of supply and demand. They are, from their perspective, engaged in a primal—elementary—form of commerce. Nothing fancy.

However, this identity has problematic aspects. As purveyors of low-value meat to a difficult Pacific Island market, the traders feel underappreciated. Relative to other traders, to say nothing of other entrepreneurs, they worry that their hard-won successes do not bring real prestige. They may make an OK living—they claim, a good living—but they are not important players in important arenas. Many wonder if they could have been contenders in larger, more exciting, and more lucrative markets. As with the man who mused about the lost opportunity of the Russian market, many wonder if they should have jumped into emerging but unfamiliar markets in China or Mexico. Sometimes they wonder if they are tainted by the primal nature of the market in which they do deal. Nothing fancy is also not so classy. In their critical fetishism of flaps—as they trade and think about who they are by virtue of their trade—they locate themselves in an historically constituted system in ways they sometimes find disquieting.

Concerning identities of Papua New Guineans within this localized life process, we perceive that, despite a degree of persistent ambivalence, flaps do denote for many the desirable life. Certainly for Mari landowners, the purchase and consumption of l–m flaps provide an expression of personal efficacy, marking their enviable situation as those who can enjoy the requisites of a modern good life, both as individuals and as members of social networks. For plantation workers, the purchase and consumption provide a suitable, if too occasional, reward for their paid employment: their regimented work in a nontraditional, industrial setting. For their wives, it is a convenient way to please the whole family. And, for those many seriously cash-short Papua New Guineans, flaps are what life should be like, if it could be so.

That being said, there at least two sorts of Papua New Guineans for whom the purchase and consumption of l–m flaps are not the appropriate measures of the reasonably good life. The first sort is composed of a relative few (such as some health professionals and the likes of Ipi, quoted earlier) who go beyond ambivalence and find the import and consumption of l–m flaps to be truly lamentable. The sec-

ond and much more disturbing sort in the eyes of the flap eaters is composed of the more voracious elite: those who “look pregnant with twins.” It is these who can eat what they choose whenever and wherever they want. And it is these—the postcolonial powerful—whose lives, resources, and aspirations have become incommensurate from the rest.

There are, as well, broader dimensions of similarity and difference brought into existence through the trade in l–m flaps. That traders worry that their dealings in the PNG market do not bring them prestige is, of course, linked to the concern of some Papua New Guineans that they are viewed by white people as easy targets for the sale of what others regard as undesirable meat. That traders worry that they lack prestige relative to other traders is, likewise, linked to the concern of most Papua New Guineans that certain of their countrymen have transcended them, not only in distinction but in power. Thus, the global trade in l–m flaps conveys differential access to types of meat and differential access to somewhat pervasive standards of worth.

In effect, among all concerned with l–m flaps, there is a significant measure—if not of disgruntlement or of “grumpiness”—at least of disquietude about relative positions within the life process of global capitalism.<sup>31</sup> Such disquietude derives, we think, from the particular characteristics of l–m flaps as an affordable but low-quality meat. As such, it is in places like PNG an elementary commodity, an emerging, modernist staple. (And, therefore, one very different than, for example, the Atlantic bluefin tuna Bestor [2001, 2004] traces, which is an exquisite morsel for the hyperwealthy and refined.) Staples are constitutive and definitional of what people think are the minimal conditions of existence. This constitutive and definitional aspect has both prescriptive and proscriptive implications. Not having staples because one cannot afford them means being deprived of something that is almost a right. Having them because one can afford them means living an appropriate, although basic and unembellished, life. Yet, taking them or readily leaving them for something better (or not even considering them as proper food) is exempting oneself from the constraints and standards by which others live.

Hence, what it means to belong to any of the disparate groups (for our purposes, traders and various sorts of consumers) compelled by the call of l–m flaps is not just a matter of local definitions. It is also a matter of the broader system through which l–m flaps (and those who do or do not eat them) are evaluated. In this regard, our critical fetishism shows what others have theorized all along: What it means to be a member of any of the local groups compelled by l–m flaps is always affected by the larger, historically rooted relations of capitalism and class. It shows, in addition, that members of these groups, all engaged in critical fetishisms of their own, may understand reasonably well what these relations of capitalism and class are that both link and differentiate them. Thus informed, some might eventually be propelled to change their preferences or their politics—or perhaps just their markets.

**DEBORAH GEWERTZ** Department of Anthropology, Amherst College, Amherst, MA 01002

**FREDERICK ERRINGTON** Department of Anthropology, Trinity College, Hartford, CT 06106

## NOTES

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1. The increasing consumption of l–m flaps in PNG is documented by export figures from NZ and Australia, the primary suppliers of sheep meat to this region. According to the trade organization Meat and Wool New Zealand, exports of l–m flaps into PNG from NZ increased from 4,480 tons in 1999 to 6,103 tons in 2005. Comparably, according to Meat and Livestock Australia, the export of flaps into PNG from Australia increased from 6,257 tons in 1996 to 11,111 tons in 2005. We should mention here that there is a technical distinction between lamb and mutton: lamb being the meat from sheep younger than a year, and mutton, older than a year. However, the terms *lamb flaps* and *mutton flaps* are often used interchangeably by members of the public. Consequently, although most of the flaps circulating in the Pacific are, in fact, lamb flaps, we generally use the combined term *l–m flaps* to encompass the range of usages.

2. This perception on the part of Pacific Islanders appears accurate. During the course of our research, we spoke to many white New Zealanders and Australians about our interest in flaps. Most had never eaten them as such (except perhaps when incorporated into sausage). Some told us that they used to eat them when they were growing up in rural areas, but more frequently they fed them to their dogs. (In fact, this latter practice remains common among sheep farmers. Indeed, one recent article of *NZ Farmers Weekly* recommended that if flaps were not available from animals killed for domestic use, they should be acquired elsewhere and fed to working dogs once or twice a week [Holland 2005].) Others said that they ate them during their impoverished student days because they were cheap. But, even for this minority, consumption of l–m flaps was something they had left behind. Interestingly, the fact that they are no longer normally viewed as appropriate fare stimulated one New Zealander's efforts to redeem them. He was prompted by the recollection that “when he was a kid, his father would buy and butcher half a lamb at a time so that he could get cheap meat and tasty lamb flaps featured regularly” (Anonymous n.d.). In his article, “Barbecue Lamb Belly the Slow Way” (interestingly subtitled “Or How I Wasted My Saturday Afternoon”), he describes how, after trimming the flaps and giving the scraps to his cat, he grilled them for four hours with the idea that “if lamb flap is slow-cooked, most of the fat will render out.” Along the way, he mentions that flaps are “as good as currency in New Guinea.”

3. We are, of course, tracing a commodity chain; however, we are, somewhat unusually, following the flow of primary products from the First to the Third World rather than vice versa.

4. The literature on food systems in a contemporary world has become diverse and extensive. As Phillips makes clear in her recent review article, much of this literature is about shifts in the meaning and uses of foodstuffs as they move in and through “food regimes” (2006:19). The changing social lives of some of the items just mentioned—tomatoes and tortillas—provide good examples of the “commodity careers” (Appadurai 1986:15) foodstuffs can realize. (See also, among others, Chalfin 2004; Dixon 2002; Goldfrank 2005; and Sonnenfeld et al. 1998.) L–m flaps are somewhat dif-

ferent from these other items because they came into existence as distinct entities—as parts destined for the export trade—only with the large-scale commercial butchering of sheep carcasses.

5. One of our anonymous reviewers suggested that our focus on l–m flaps actually allows a critical “defetishization” of First and Third World relationships. However, to use this term would imply that l–m flaps had lost their active materiality—their capacity to compel us and others, and to do so in multiple ways.

6. On the different ways in which Pacific Island bodies are constituted and, in turn, create socialities and identities, see Becker 1995; Pollock 1999; and Stewart and Strathern 2001.

7. Some would argue that flaps, because they are meat, are food of a distinctive kind: that meat universally compels in meaning and constrains in materiality. Meat, after all, may exemplify a process of transformation (almost a rite of passage) involving the change of “animal into edible” through slaughtering, butchering, and packaging (Vialles 1994). Meat may also exemplify a transformation that embodies the significance of human activity on the world (Conklin 2001; Fiddes 1991). Moreover, meat is a highly perishable (raw) product that, unless preserved through freezing (or smoking), must soon be cooked and eaten, lest it rot.

8. The debate as to whether there is an inherent human desire for fatty meat is interesting, although of secondary importance to us in tracing the circulation of flaps. On this debate, see Fiddes 1991 and Harris 1985. One of our anonymous reviewers pointed out that by “focusing on the different ways that fatty foods are engaged and valued (fetishized) in their global movement, . . . [we] counter arguments that . . . [the desire for fat] is a genetic disposition, or an evolutionary adaptation to the environments of early hominids.” We hope to pursue this point in a later publication.

9. Marx was, of course, speaking about relations of production, not consumption. For an extension of his argument in a discussion of how social inequalities are established and maintained through consumption, see Baudrillard 1981.

10. For elaboration about the difficulties of multisited research, see Foster 2002, Hannerz 1992, and Marcus 1995.

11. We accomplished this research with the help of Philip Klomes, a long-term friend who works in the Agronomy Department at RSL.

12. The students, from Divine Word University, were trained by anthropologist Nancy Sullivan. In this article, we only draw on interviews conducted at Gusap by Rebecca Emori, James Topo, and Krito Keleba.

13. The literature on lifestyle-related diseases in the Pacific is extensive. We find especially informative the comprehensive volumes by Jansen et al. (1990) and by Coyne (2000). See also the following articles: Curtis 2004; Evans et al. 2003; Gill et al. 2002; Hodge et al. 1996; Hughes 2003; Lako and Nguyen 2001; Simmons and Mesui 1999; Taufa and Benjamin 2001; and Temu 1991.

14. Although there is no evidence that cuts of meat from Australia and NZ ignore appropriate sanitary and phytosanitary standards, there is also no doubt that much of the meat exported to Pacific Islands is cheap and fatty.

15. Australia has a very different immigration policy toward the Pacific Islanders most directly under its influence, namely Papua New Guineans. They are not often granted residential rights, even for seasonal labor. Certainly providing expensive medical assistance to indigent Pacific Islanders has not become a public issue.

16. Tonga and Samoa have been considering such a ban. For arguments in its favor, see Hughes and Lawrence 2005; Lawrence 2002; and Lawrence and Swinburn 2004.

17. Most of the traders told us that there was a lot to know in their business. In fact, outsiders and those new to the business often failed to realize how much one needed to understand, and how quickly they needed to understand it (there was an “extremely steep learning curve”), to make a good living in a hard and somewhat underappreciated business.

18. As Dr. Mustafa Farouk, a meat scientist working for NZ's AgResearch, explained, sheep fat has a high melting point, which makes it difficult to use in fast foods. Whereas chicken, beef, and pork fat readily melt in one's mouth, sheep fat does not. Therefore, people

experience a lingering, greasy aftertaste that many find unpleasant, especially in a snack.

19. Certainly few Pacific Islanders will buy them as roasts: This is in part because of their added expense and in part because oven roasting is neither traditional nor, for most, possible.

20. Pork imports are, for the most part, subject to heavy tariffs to protect PNG's own pork industry. Offal can be imported duty free because it is assumed that it will be reprocessed by PNG businesses into sausage and the like. Pig jowls, however, are being sold in PNG as such, without reprocessing.

21. In effect, many traders would hope that Pacific Islanders adopt the meat preferences of, at least, the middle class. In this sense, they would like Pacific Islanders to learn to emulate the taste preferences of their social "superiors." On such processes of trickle-down-aspirer-up, see Bourdieu 1984 and Mintz 1985. For an interesting discussion of the relationship between changing tastes and changing markets, see Dixon 2002 on chickens in Australia.

22. Anthropologist Paige West reports that, among Seventh-Day Adventists in the Eastern Highlands Province, l-m flaps "totally replace pigs (and they do in brideprice, marriage, compensation and the like)" (personal communication, May 28, 2006). Anthropologist George Westermarck agrees, finding that in the Kainantu area "lamb flaps . . . were essential to ceremonies since so many people were Seventh-Day Adventists . . . [and] no food could be eaten from a mumu [an earth oven] where pig was included" (personal communication, May 25, 2006).

23. In many ways, flaps have an ambiguous materiality. One of the reasons for this is because they lie between the cheap fatty meats that constitute world-traversing, highly caloric, branded and patented fast foods, like McDonald's hamburgers and Kentucky Fried Chicken's pieces, and the cheap fatty meats that constitute the regionally distinct, highly caloric ethnic foods, like Italian "lardo" (Cavanaugh 2005) and Afro-American "chitlins" (Brown and Mussell 1984; Poe 1999). Unlike the former, flaps do not evoke an imagined, international community of flap-eaters (even when eaten as a lunch-time snack as in PNG); after all, many Papua New Guineans know that most New Zealanders and Australians refuse to eat them. Neither have flaps yet come to be a repository of cultural pride and autonomy, as have the latter; after all, many Papua New Guineans know that they are not only a First World reject but a relatively recent introduction.

24. Jane Kelsey, a NZ scholar specializing in trade law, agrees, arguing that the ready import of such "fatty waste products" discourages local food production and thus fosters the "explicit links between dependence and [these] imported foods" (Kelsey 2004:4).

25. See Lévi-Strauss 1966. We were also advised by health experts that boiling is a good way of cooking meat so as to minimize the effects of bacterial action. Boiling, hence, makes particularly good sense in a place like PNG where frozen food may travel long distances and people often lack refrigeration in their homes.

26. As mentioned, we also arranged for a more focused study of the "shopping basket" of workers of all grades at RSL. Philip Klomes interviewed 22 of his coworkers. According to his survey, they virtually all buy the same items each fortnight in varying amounts depending on their salaries and family size. The basics are rice, sugar, cooking oil, canned fish, instant noodles, and local vegetables from the open-air market. The desirable, if limited, supplements are chicken wings, chicken tails, pig tails (or another cheap cut of pork, like jowls or trotters), l-m flaps, and canned corned beef. In addition, the nonfood essentials are toilet soap, laundry soap, bleach, razor blades, and deodorant or perfume. Finally, respondents indicated that a real treat would be a live chicken.

27. "The good life" did more than just allow them a diet including store-bought food. It also enabled them to pay school fees easily, to buy commodities such as sneakers and bicycles (sometimes even television sets and generators), and to drink beer, play snooker, and splurge on some ritual occasions.

28. In 2003, when, under court order, RSL began placing payments in an escrow account, Mari income was drastically reduced and their lifestyle seriously cramped. At this time, conversations about

a life replete with flaps began to acquire nostalgic overtones. As of this writing, the case is still unresolved.

29. We must qualify somewhat here. In our experience, when non-affluent Papua New Guineans, whether rural or urban, have a personal connection with a politician such that they can make claims on him, then that politician's corpulence may be a respected sign of success. In the absence of such a connection, that corpulence is likely to arouse cynicism and fear.

30. Hartsock (1985) argues that the Western market has always been distinctly male. More recent analyses of the market concur. See, for example, Lynn 2004 and Zaloom 2003 and 2004. Of course, the kind of masculinity valued by the purveyors of l-m flaps is different from the fast-paced, in-your-face assertiveness of, for example, open-pit futures traders.

31. Kaplan and Kelly (1994), in their criticism of Gramsci, use the word *grumpy* to characterize disaffected Fijians. These are people who neither suffer false consciousness nor have a fully developed revolutionary consciousness. Rather, they occupy an intermediate position from which they are sometimes propelled into political action.

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