THE WEWAK ROTARY CLUB:
THE MIDDLE CLASS IN MELANESIA

FREDERICK ERRINGTON & DEBORAH GEWERTZ
Trinity College, Hartford, Amherst College

Focused on the Rotary Club in Wewak, the capital of Papua New Guinea’s East Sepik Province, this article examines emergent forms of stratification and, in particular, the Club’s role in the development and operation of an indigenous middle class. We show that by stressing middle class sociality and generalized service to the community, the Rotary Club enabled affluent Papua New Guineans to overcome moral and strategic conflicts so that they were able to place their desire for lives of enhanced consumption over their obligations to kin. We also show how, in postcolonial Wewak, the Rotary Club allowed middle-class ‘nationals’ and ‘expatriates’ to assist one another in justifying the privileges which distinguished them from the ‘grass roots’. Finally, and most generally, we show why members of the middle class, such as the Rotarians upon whom we focus, had a particularly salient role in transforming Papua New Guinea.

We have been working for some time on a project which documents the effects of global processes on local realities within the East Sepik Province of Papua New Guinea. As anthropologists committed to ethnography, our goal has been to understand the engagement of those we have come to know well with that complex of social forms and forces called ‘modernity’. In the following discussion of the Rotary Club of Wewak (the capital of the East Sepik Province), we investigate a ‘modernist’ transition between what we have termed commensurate and incommensurate differences: between differences of degree and of kind (Gewertz & Errington 1991). In other words, we focus on important processes in the production of new forms of inequality: the means by which members of an emerging elite sought to create and consolidate new identities and interests constitutive of class formation. Since these Papua New Guinea circumstances are subject to continuing change, we shall describe them in the past tense.

In arguing that processes of class formation provided a key element in the organization, experience and direction of late twentieth-century life in Papua New Guinea, we must, of course, recognize the particularities – if not peculiarities – of the socioeconomic circumstances there. Thus we should note that, whether or not post-industrial capitalism has, in general, moved away from a social organization polarized between workers and owners, certainly in Papua New Guinea such dramatic class polarization did not exist (cf. Amarashi et al. 1979). There were, of course – and as we shall see more fully below – the rich and the poor in Papua New Guinea. However, in a country where there were over 700 different linguistic groups, these categories were still at least partially

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cross-cut by ethnic allegiances (see Fitzpatrick 1980; May 1984; Meillassoux 1981). In addition, although nearly 25 per cent. of Papua New Guineans lived in the towns and although unemployment was high, few had to sell their labour to survive: little land (only 3 per cent.) had been alienated permanently and most town-dwellers could return home to a viable, subsistence economy (see O'Faircheallaigh 1992; cf. Fitzpatrick 1980). Furthermore, few Papua New Guineans actually controlled much of the means of production in an economic context of large-scale, foreign and governmentally owned projects of resource extraction, such as mining, logging and fishing. Certainly in Wewak, the most affluent and influential either owned (usually small) businesses or worked as professionals for themselves or for the government.

It should also be noted that, in Papua New Guinea (as often elsewhere) any virtual consonance between class and experience – between class 'of itself' and class 'for itself' – seemed far from historically inevitable (see Joyce 1995; Scott 1995; Stedman Jones 1995). Indeed, such a connexion between an objectively defined set of economically derived positions and a subjectively held sense of identity was only partial because identities, and corresponding interests, not only complexly mingled 'traditional' and 'modernist' elements, but also because the 'modernist' elements were themselves variable and various. For instance, in so far as ethnic ties still significantly cut across distinctions between rich and poor, these ties did provide certain important 'traditional' sources of identities and interests. (As we shall indicate, though, these ties were becoming increasingly transformed and attenuated.) At the same time, some of the non-'traditional' ways in which Papua New Guineans were defining their identities and interests were both shifting and multifaceted, as residents explored and appropriated a number of (mostly imported) activities ranging from evangelical religions to bingo and golf. Moreover, and significantly, it could be argued that to the extent that identities and interests were defined in terms of a 'modernist' economy, they tended (as with bingo and golf) more directly to reflect the capacity to consume than the capacity to produce (Philibert 1986).

These particularities of Papua New Guinea suggest that the new inequalities attendant on 'modernism' should, to some extent, be understood in terms of a Weberian view of status, one focused on life-style (see, especially, Weber 1958). Class position was significant in Papua New Guinea substantially because it provided access to a restricted and coveted life-style – a specific culturally salient socio-economically based set of identities and interests focused on the capacity to consume and to display (see, especially, Parkin 1979; see also Burris 1987; Curtain 1984; Hooper n.d.; Lipset 1985; Ogan n.d.a; n.d.b; Ogan & Wesley-Smith 1992; Ormer 1991; Runciman 1969; Thompson & MacWilliam 1992; Wacquant 1991; Wiley 1987).

In this article we will examine those who not only occupied key economic positions but, in consequence, most overtly and successfully embodied a highly sought-after life-style: the emerging and largely urban middle class elite. These visibly affluent owners of small businesses and holders of professional positions played, as Hooper has stated, a crucial role in 'energising and transforming civil society' (n.d.: 22). This is not, of course, to say that this class was *sui generis* – existing without relation to global capital – a point to which we will return (see Moore 1990; M.M. Turner 1984).
The capacity of members of the Papua New Guinea middle class to energize and transform their society derived, to be sure, partly from the nature of a late-twentieth-century global economy in which services had increasing importance. But it also derived from special characteristics of Papua New Guinean society. One, as mentioned, was the relative absence of indigenous elites owning large-scale capital. Another was the special salience of the recent colonial past.

The members of the middle class in contemporary Papua New Guinea were heirs to the colonists who had manifested and justified their superiority largely in their life-style - a life-style that became synonymous with 'development'. And in post-colonial Papua New Guinea, development, though still highly desirable, had remained painfully elusive for most. This was so because a restrictive system of education within a stagnating, if not declining, economy meant that educational and (linked) employment opportunities were becoming severely limited (AusAID 1995). Those of the middle class, as teachers, bureaucrats and business people, not only controlled access to these opportunities (Moore 1990), but also had a pivotal role as the obvious and ostensibly emulable embodiments of development. Indeed - and importantly - the middle class became the evident and envied exemplars of the 'material life-styles and ideologies' (Hau'ofa 1987: 11) conveyed in mass advertising (Errington & Gewertz 1996; Foster n.d.). That this class was in the 'middle' meant that, as well as being accessible exemplars, its members were potential conduits. In fact, through extended family ties, virtually all workers or villagers - generally termed the 'grass roots' - could gain some access to middle-class resources.

However, as opportunities became less generally available, and as stratification concurrently intensified, this conduit was narrowing. Differences in life's prospects and styles - differences that made a difference - were increasingly shifting from degree to kind. Thus, in Papua New Guinea the emergence of the middle class was a major factor in redefining the nature of distinction, of identities and interests, and in reclassifying people, their worth and their goals.

As we shall show, the Wewak Rotary Club was a thoroughly middle-class organization both in its American inception and its Papua New Guinean manifestation. And it provided one important context for such redefinition. To understand this context of redefinition - that is to say, of class formation - we will explore what Rotary, both as organizational form and ideology, brought with it to Papua New Guinea, what it has encountered there and what it has produced.

The inception of Rotary as a middle-class institution

Rotary's founder, Paul Harris, had come as a young lawyer to an early twentieth-century Chicago characterized by daunting social anonymity and economic competition - features only exacerbated by the cut-throat impersonality of an increasingly powerful corporate capitalism. Harris, realizing that others, too, lacked both friends and business contacts, undertook in 1905 to create a fellowship of those pledged to aid each other in business. Believing that only non-competitors (and, one might add, class equals) could be friends, and sensing the advantage in having diverse business allies in what he hoped would be an economically fruitful network, he recruited for his club a single member (if possible, the most distinguished) from each of a range of occupations. Initially,
in order to display their professional services, members hosted meetings in rotation (hence ‘Rotary’) at their various business establishments.

In the ensuing several decades, Rotary expanded exponentially in the United States, with clubs in every major city by 1915. At the same time it spawned two direct competitors, Kiwanis and Lions, in 1915 and 1917. Clearly, Harris’s effort to deal with the isolation of atomized individuals in highly competitive entrepreneurial capitalism was appealing, particularly to middle-class, small-scale businessmen and professionals. Providing an essentially conservative way of working within the existing system – of prospering within rather than opposing or significantly transforming – the Harris model of sociality might be viewed as Durkheimian rather than Marxist.

Indeed, given its continuing insistence on its ‘classification system’ – there being one representative from each occupation – Rotary remained fundamentally premised on an organic solidarity. This solidarity took full cognizance of an advanced division of labour and the existence of occupational enclaves. At the same time, it sought to avoid the potential anomie deriving from the insularity of occupational enclaves. Yet, because Rotary also sought the best representative from each occupation, it relied on the continuing activities of these occupational enclaves in fostering professional excellence. Thus, eschewing any Marxist idea of an explosively riven society, Rotary – in its middle-class, and perhaps Panglossian, aspirations – hoped that its, effectively Durkheimian, mini-society was also a Weberian (medium-high) status group.

Its members were prosperous, influential and respectable, yet rarely truly elite. The centre of gravity in the Rotarian microcosm consequently remained in the middle or upper middle class – with managers of small-scale businesses and with professionals. As such, and perhaps as a continuation of its midwestern cultural roots its ambience also remained friendly, informal and neighbourly. However, for reasons additional to the fact that the social extremes either were not recruited or did not join, Rotary never fulfilled its organizational premiss of becoming an organic whole. Members early on concluded that they were restricting themselves to a less than viable sphere, especially since they were obliged to give each other favourable terms. In short, they needed outside business. Therefore, Rotary had to look outwards to cultivate economic relationships with non-Rotarians.

Members were also sensitive to charges of social isolation. Clearly influenced by the ideals of the Progressive Era, Rotarians began to concern themselves with issues of social welfare, such as the need of underprivileged children for recreational facilities. Reflecting this social concern they coined the motto which persists today: ‘Service above self’. Yet, perhaps a more accurate motto might have been, ‘Service and self’.

Rotary as a ‘service organization’ could be regarded as a strategic expansion of its founder’s vision of a community in which sociability and profit were equally legitimate and necessary. Thus, another Rotary slogan, first uttered in a keynote address delivered at the national convention in 1911, became, ‘He profits most who serves best’. In this view it was good business to do a good job, as by serving customers well, and it was good business to do good more generally, such as by contributing time and money to community projects. In other words, businessmen could expect to flourish from the patronage of their satis-
fied and prosperous neighbours. Furthermore, this slogan reflected a view in which public good was synonymous with good capitalism, a capitalism that was small-scale and personal, middle class and non-corporate. And, of course, in such a community context, fellow Rotarians would remain important social and business contacts.

Rotary soon became international. Expanding first to Canada and then to the British Isles (where by 1912 there were ten Clubs), its global expansion (initially, though not exclusively, throughout the English-speaking world) accelerated greatly after the first world war. Rotary arrived in Wewak, a long way from the first Chicago Club, in 1965. At the time of our research in 1996, the Wewak Club was one of ten in Papua New Guinea, all clubs belonging to District 9600. This District included seventy Clubs: those in Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and also in part of Queensland, including Brisbane.

In understanding the Wewak Rotary Club, the problem we faced was not so much to explain why Rotary had flourished among white (mostly Australian) expatriates during the 1960s. After all, there were more similarities between the heartland of early twentieth-century America and the periphery of the Antipodes a half century later than might at first be expected. The American citizens who, for instance, thronged to world fairs celebrating the global triumph of material progress and control were not that different in their middle-class expectations and aspirations from those Australians who sought a convivial and affluent life in business or government during the economic prosperity of Papua New Guinea's colonial period after the second world war.

Both these Americans and Australians felt justified in, and validated by, the extension of their particular way of life to the rest of the world. In a world laid open for business, it seemed that prosperity appropriately went to those who also served - those who provided 'uplift', whether through building playgrounds or shouldering the 'white man's burden'.

Rather, our analytic problem became how to explain Rotary's persistence in Wewak - and by extension, Papua New Guinea - in a post-colonial time marked by economic decline and a widespread shift of important jobs from non-citizens to citizens. What was Rotary's consonance with Wewak's middle class - both emerging and remnant? How, for instance, did the concept of service-above-self manifest itself there? And what were the broader socio-economic implications of Rotary's existence in a rapidly transforming Papua New Guinea?

On Wewak's middle class and its Rotarian 'chiefs'

Wewak's Rotary Club was one of the smaller ones in Papua New Guinea, with twelve members during 1996. Six were Papua New Guinean 'nationals' and six 'expats' (the term 'expatriate' was rarely used), including the two of us. In fact, according to membership figures in the Governor's Newsletter, published by District 9600, there were at this time only about 250 active Rotarians in all of Papua New Guinea. However, because members conspicuously worked for the public good and represented widely held middle-class values and aspirations, Rotary's significance, both in Papua New Guinea generally and in Wewak in particular, was greater than these numbers might suggest.
Certainly, Rotary was well known for its commitment to service. For example, when the Port Moresby Club on 22 May 1996 flew Papua New Guinean Siamese twins (with their parents) from Papua New Guinea to Melbourne for surgical separation, Rotary was lauded throughout Papua New Guinea and Australia. And in Wewak alone, Rotary reached thousands through its service activities. Also, as we shall see, the Wewak Rotary Club successfully persuaded many of the town’s several hundred middle-class nationals and expats to participate in its fund-raising efforts.

And there could be no doubt that the restricted membership and affluent sociability of Rotary – as well as that of the larger, purely recreational Golf and Yacht Clubs, with paid-up memberships of 34 and 85 respectively – provided a desired exclusiveness for some members of the middle class. Though Rotary was smaller than the Golf and Yacht Clubs, many of Wewak’s middle class found its combination of exclusive fellowship and commitment to service especially appealing. Indeed, attendance at the twice-monthly Rotary meetings was often substantially augmented by guests, some of whom were prospective members. Yet membership was very expensive – sometimes too much so – in both money and time.

In fact, we met both nationals and expats who told us that they had appreciated Rotary, but, after a few meetings, had found participation difficult to afford. It was not just the yearly dues of K90.00 (the Papua New Guinea Kina was worth US$0.80 at the time) that discouraged them from joining or continuing their membership. Monthly dinners cost K15.00 and fines for minor infractions of Rotary rules – such as coming late to a meeting (although minimal in comparison to fines in Rotary Clubs elsewhere) – mounted up. Most financially draining, and key to fulfilling the standards of the affluent sociability that constituted Rotary’s fellowship, was standing rounds of drinks. We, for instance, would return home from a dinner meeting full of fellowship but depleted of funds, having spent K60-80.00. Even an ordinary business meeting typically cost us K25-30.00. Early on, when we half-jokingly mentioned to the Club’s President, an affluent national physician, that we had to visit the bank prior to Rotary meetings, he jovially remarked that a Rotarian should not complain about the cost of anything, especially not of Rotary: he should enjoy his job, and enjoy earning and spending money on fellowship and on service.

Though Wewak’s Rotarians sometimes complained that service was not a value easily adopted by all nationals (or, for that matter, all expats), we found that service was, at least rhetorically, valued by a significant number of Wewak’s middle-class nationals. Even some of the same persons criticized by Rotarians as unduly self-focused would offer examples of community service. One national woman, for example, justified her own intense preoccupation with her multi-faceted business by mentioning with pride her father’s signal contribution to the economic and social development of Wewak and Papua New Guinea more generally. Another national, a businessman, justifying his preoccupation with his own affairs, stressed the generous financial assistance he regularly gave to local fund-raising activities, including those of Rotary. (These activities will be discussed in more detail below.)

Indeed, we were struck by how similar the six nationals active in Rotary – five men and one woman – were to the dozens of other members of Wewak’s
middle class with whom we spoke at length. One was a physician in private practice; one, a bank manager; one, a high school headmaster; one, the International School’s headmaster; one, a trade store owner; and one – the only female national – an administrator of the province’s ‘youth’ office. They came from various provinces and ethnic groups in Papua New Guinea. Four had married outside of their cultural groups. Only three spoke their native languages well and not one regularly spoke a native language in his or her home (even in the two cases in which both spouses spoke the same native language). All were fluent in English and had completed tertiary education. Many sent, or intended to send, their children to the International School so that they might learn, as one Rotarian put it, the ‘non-Melanesian inflected English which would allow them to become competitive in a world market’. As the children of fathers who themselves worked for the government or for missions, none had been brought up in villages.

Significantly, and again in a manner completely typical of the many national middle-class business and professional people to whom we spoke, all nationals in Rotary stressed the complexity of their relationships with ‘grass-roots’ relatives who, as less affluent and educated, were different in a variety of ways. All recognized that the demands of kin for economic assistance – with paying school fees, for instance, or with financing ritual activities, or simply with spending time in town – could mean financial ruin unless properly controlled. Most had established stringent rules to regulate these demands lest they be ‘pulled down’ to the grass-roots level. They explained to their kin that they could only occasionally help with more than a few kina and, even then, primarily for some worthy purpose such as school or hospital fees. Many stressed that they sought to educate their kin to ‘respect’ the demands and complexities of their middle-class lifestyles – to recognize and accept that they had to meet their own considerable expenses, which ranged from restocking their stores to buying toilet paper for their families.

In fact, though, they often did finance ceremonies in their home villages, particularly death rituals for senior kinsmen. Yet they regarded this less as a commitment to ‘tradition’ than as an investment. Knowing little of the specifics of these rituals or the cosmologies associated with them, they participated financially largely to strengthen their future claims on ancestral land – land they explicitly referred to as an ‘asset’. At the same time they resented being asked by villagers to contribute to ceremonial activities. They thought the villagers were making an extractive business out of such rituals and so ‘draining resources’ better used in other ways.

One Rotary member, for example, who still resided on ancestral land only a few miles from Wewak, had for years accepted his mother’s advice as to which of his ritual obligations were mandatory. Nevertheless, despite the thousands of kina he expended – money he wanted to invest in the expansion of his in-town office complex – he still quarrelled bitterly with his kinsmen. Most recently, he and his siblings had sought without success to convince their cousins to grant them full ownership of their share of ancestral land so that they might develop it without further consultation or claims. So strained were relations that he was reluctant to drive at night: he was afraid his cousins, resentful of his success and
wishing to maintain their collective power over him and his family, might throw rocks at his van or, more likely, hire someone to attack him or his vehicle.

Yet, even as interactions with grass-roots kin became increasingly instrumental and as customary practices — generally concerning life-cycle rituals and land tenure — became redefined in a pervasively cash economy, few of the middle class wished to give up their cultural identity entirely. They still (at least when asked) defined themselves as members of particular ethnic groups (although they might joke that they were not ‘bushy’ [i.e. backward]). At the very least, they defined themselves as, for instance, ‘Sepiks’. Most maintained a genuine interest in their traditions, although this interest had become limited and ambivalent.

Thus, one Rotary member with political aspirations, an Arapesh by birth, asked us to send her the three-volume set of Margaret Mead’s *The mountain Arapesh*. She, like many members of the middle class with whom we spoke, had grown up away from her cultural group and hence was largely ignorant of her ‘traditions’. Prompted both by a diffuse personal curiosity about her ‘roots’ and a more pressing political need to convince village people that she was still located in her culture, she wished to acquire distinctive cultural authority. Indeed, she sought a kind of cultural connexion which would, in effect, elevate her over others in her cultural group. Hence, if elected as representative of her constituency she would have both connexion and separation.

Significantly, the particular articulation of connexion and separation provided a frequent justification for developing class distinctions, a justification with a neo-colonial, Melanesian twist. All of Wewak’s Papua New Guinean Rotarians — and most others in Wewak’s emergent middle class — often spoke about themselves in ways that strongly implied an inevitable superiority because of ancestral precedent. Even those from among Papua New Guinea’s most competitively egalitarian groups would describe their fathers not as ‘Big Men’ but as ‘chiefs’, that is, as hereditary leaders. To be sure, their fathers may well have been prominent, possessing more of what others had: pigs, pearlshells, ritual knowledge, wives and land. After all, the practices of colonial administration, such as installing local leaders as headmen, may have dampened fluctuating inequalities to the extent that the momentarily influential could ensure educational and other forms of ‘advancement’ for themselves and their children. Yet, perhaps not surprisingly, our middle-class informants saw their distinction more as the product of ontology than historical caprice or process. They were separated as permanently privileged because they were of a ‘chiefly’ line.

This modern-day rhetoric of ‘chiefs’ was, in fact, proving increasingly useful to politicians in particular, and to members of the middle class in general, as a way of justifying growing class differences (see, for comparison, Besnier 1996; Feinberg 1978; Howard 1996; Lutkehaus 1996). It summarized and made more palatable the shifts in life’s opportunities that everyone knew were taking place. It presented a transformed present in terms of a reinvented, stable past which defined distinction not in terms of continuity but of difference. It also implied that difference still carried certain, though distinctly limited, obligations. Thus, unlike Big Men (who were like everyone else, but more so), contemporary chiefs were clearly different, and were at least partially dissociated from other people. This, we think, both signalled and facilitated a shift in political process.
in the direction of increasing stratification. The Big Man’s compulsory egalitarian and levelling redistributions of wealth to his allies were becoming transformed: they were changing into the politician’s discretionary handouts to his electorate (such handouts, drawn mostly at election time from large ‘slush’ funds, were perhaps a form of stratified redistribution) as well as changing into the middle-class Rotarian’s voluntary service – a diffuse *noblesse oblige* – to the generalized less fortunate.¹³

Kinsmen and constituents did not, of course, overlook this attenuation of the ties between themselves and their leaders. Kinsmen complained that their middle-class relatives had ‘turned their backs’ on them; constituents complained that they never saw their politicians except before an election. From the perspective of the Rotarians, and other middle-class, ‘chiefs’, however, this attenuation freed resources which could not only be invested in business and family but in relations with one another as useful class equals. Just as Harris and his subsequent Rotarians combined sociality with business, so also did Wewak’s Rotary Club members. They bought each other drinks, dined together and gave each other business assistance and advice, including somewhat privileged information. True, Rotarians (as did others in the middle class) cultivated their own networks. They kept up, for instance, with university classmates and with colleagues met elsewhere, including those met during training abroad. Nonetheless, Rotary was particularly important to them. Members talked about how useful Rotary was, how well-placed Rotarians were both locally and more generally. Indeed, one Rotarian jokingly described Rotary International as an ‘extremely effective Mafia’.

Part of the importance to these middle-class nationals of their Rotary networks, we came to understand, stemmed from the fact that Rotary was not only inherited from expats but still included them. Furthermore, these middle-class nationals cherished the fact that the Wewak Club remained part of the worldwide organization of Clubs constituting Rotary International.

**Wewak Rotary in – and as – a world system**

Simply put, in post-colonial Wewak, the expat members of Rotary remained important arbiters of the degree to which national members were not just economically and socially advantaged relative to other Papua New Guineans but were superior, having not just cash but cultivation. At the time of our research, these expat members were: the male, Australian owner of a company selling portable sawmills and exporting tropical hardwoods; the male, French manager of the Catholic Mission’s large wholesale and retail business; the female, Chinese-Australian manager of her family’s wholesale and retail business; the female, British head of a programme to educate teachers of the disabled; and two American anthropologists (having only their labour to sell!) – who, shortly before their departure, were replaced by two, married Canadian volunteers. (These volunteers had recently been assigned to Wewak to aid a women’s organization in accounting and in marketing.) All (even in their way the anthropologists) saw themselves as generally low-key, supportive mentors of the national Rotarians.

Often through example or discussion of established Rotary Club procedure and etiquette, subtleties of middle-class European lifestyles and standards were
Thus, the expat Rotarians would clarify how to engage in non-partisan good works (as with an even-handed distribution of the children’s books received from an Australian Rotary Club); how to approach a fellow businessperson with a civic appeal (as in eliciting a contribution to the annual fund-raiser); how to entertain at home (as with providing drinks and hors d’oeuvres during the occasional unofficial meeting, always held in expat homes); how to maintain accounts and fiscal reputation (as with paying Rotary bills promptly); how to exhibit gracious manners (as in writing thank-you notes to other clubs for having offered toasts to one’s own). The ‘instruction’ was apparently accepted without resentment and, in fact, meetings seemed warm and fellowship generous. This sociability assumed that the ontological difference between these ‘chiefs’ and the grass-roots was such that Wewak’s Papua New Guinean Rotarians could, with a modicum of polishing, meet international standards. Indeed, the sociability indicated to them that membership in Rotary itself was both the means to, and the measure of, such acceptability.

In their turn, the national members of Wewak’s Rotary Club helped the expat members deal with some of the generic difficulties foreigners were likely to encounter. Virtually everyone – expat and national alike – who engaged in business in Papua New Guinea met with difficulties. But the expats, in particular, found what they considered to be the poor roads, unreliable labour, inefficient and corrupt bureaucracy and ever-present problems of protecting person and property from attack especially frustrating. Many expats to whom we talked wondered openly whether they had remained in the country too long and, in outstaying the late-colonial prosperity, had fallen behind those who had remained at home. Rotary did in a very real way provide its expat members with useful connexions which could help them do business with nationals in what was, for them, a trying context.

Rotary helped expats in another crucial regard. It helped them improve their public image. The expats not only considered themselves to be struggling against adverse circumstances but, as non-citizens engaged in business, to be vulnerable to accusations of exploitation, accusations which some feared could lead to deportation. Thought to have made large profits and to have invested them abroad, they were widely regarded as having no real connexion with, or commitment to, the country or its people. Rotary counteracted this problem. It enabled its expat members to demonstrate to each other and to the public that expats and nationals could work productively together and socialize comfortably with each other. Moreover, it demonstrated to all that they could work not just for the benefit of themselves or other Rotarians but for the betterment of the country.

The idea that Wewak’s Rotary Club was part of Rotary International, a worldwide organization, was appealing to both its national and expat members. This was so in part because they all recognized that Papua New Guinea was peripheral as a Third World nation. Certainly, Wewak’s Rotarians stressed that they were part of a community composed of millions of Rotarians: wherever they might find themselves they were ensured of a welcome, of fellowship and assistance from other Rotarians. Attesting to this fact and following standard Rotary practice, the Wewak Rotarians displayed at their meetings Club banners from Australia, Japan, France and the United States, as well as elsewhere in
Papua New Guinea. These had been obtained by members (mostly expat) during visits to those Clubs in exchange for Wewak Club banners. Comparably, and following standard Rotary protocol, Wewak Rotarians often proposed and reciprocated toasts linking them with other Clubs.

In addition, many of Wewak’s Rotarians would eagerly peruse and respond to the District 9600 Newsletter and the Rotary Down Under magazine as distributed by the Club’s secretary. Once, for instance, an article describing the annual International Convention to be held in Calgary was discussed, with both national and expat members expressing a desire to attend. On another occasion, a national hoped that after the forthcoming fund-raiser, the Wewak Club could make a generous contribution to the District’s (Australian) Governor for one of his special projects described in the Newsletter. Similarly, an expat suggested sending a letter of support and condolence, as recommended in the Newsletter, to the Hobart Rotary Club in Tasmania, which was reeling from the massacre at nearby Port Arthur. 

As one final example: an expat described to other interested members his pleasure at the warm response he had received from the Rotary Club in his Australian home town. In fact, through his efforts, the Nedlands Club, made up largely of wealthy professionals, was sending the Wewak Rotarians many medical supplies for distribution to the less fortunate of the Province.

Thus as an international organization, Rotary provided assurance to the nationals that they measured up to the international standard; and it provided assurance to the expats that they had not fallen below that standard. For them both, Rotary furnished the international connexions as well as the context for service which ensured that all could unite as exemplars within a contemporary Papua New Guinea.

It was at their annual dinner-auction that these Rotarians most directly engaged comparable others in their vision of a desirable and achievable sociality. This event brought together those of similar identities and interests so as to evoke a community of the middle-class residents of Papua New Guinea committed to a lifestyle in which good fellowship, good business and good works were seamlessly and without contradiction combined. The Wewak Rotarians, through their initiative and example, were thus emulating Paul Harris. They were crystallizing from the ambience of a world-capitalist culture both consciousness and substantiation of what it took for the middle class to thrive: a convincingly universalized, seemingly practical, pleasing vision, as well as enactment, of the right and proper — a vision of doing well by doing good.

Exemplary exchange: the annual Rotary dinner-auction

On the evening of 22 June 1996, selected members of the public began arriving for one of the Wewak Rotary Club’s dinner meetings. As usual it was held in the dining room of the New Wewak Hotel, on this occasion festooned with balloons. This dinner meeting was, however, to engage in some unusual, if annual, business, as the decorations suggested. It was held to raise the money needed for the following year’s service activities through the auction of donated goods and services. These goods and services had been solicited by Rotarians, sometimes persistently, from commercial establishments in Wewak and beyond over a two-month period.
Eighty-one people spent K20 each to attend. By place of origin they were: twenty-nine Papua New Guineans, sixteen Chinese and Filipinos and thirty-five Europeans. Although it was assumed that most of Wewak’s expats would come as a matter of course, nationals were to be recruited on condition that members could vouch for them: central to the concerns of both nationals and expat Rotarians was that the national guests should not be rowdy and that they should have enough disposable income to bid generously. To this latter end the auction was scheduled for a payday weekend so that the nationals in particular would still have some of their fortnightly earnings to spend.

Guests arrived at the hotel’s dining room in what the printed invitation had specified as ‘tropical formal dress’: usually a white shirt and dark trousers for men, and a somewhat fancy frock for women. After milling about, chatting, buying drinks from the cash bar in a convivial, cocktail-party manner, they examined the goods which Rotarians had earlier arranged into auction lots and placed in an impressive display at the front of the dining room. The guests were then seated for dinner and asked to search under their chairs for the two sticky labels indicating who had won free dinners at local eating establishments.

Guests were welcomed by the President of the Wewak Rotary Club, who was a national. In his address, he touched on the history of Rotary International and then on the founding of Wewak’s Club: it was begun in 1965 and, though still small, it was now healthy with twelve members. These members had, in accord with Rotary’s motto of ‘service above self’, done much good work over the past few years. They had, for instance, renovated the building housing a literacy centre for women, paid the correspondence course fees for worthy students from remote villages in the Province, provided an X-ray machine to a mission clinic and given books to local schools.

Then, as at all Club meetings, the President proposed a toast to Queen Elizabeth II and to Papua New Guinea. Again in accord with Club protocol, the International Secretary proposed another toast to the Rotary Club of Amherst, Massachusetts, as thanks for its contribution of $250 to the Wewak Club’s malaria-control project. Next came the induction by the President and President-elect (the Papua New Guinean owner of a trade-store) of two new members, the Canadian volunteers. Finally, with the Club’s usual sort of formal business now concluded, the dinner and conviviality began. This was the portion of Rotary gatherings given over to the explicit value of fellowship. The food was ample and conversation was animated.

Then came the main event: the auction. Following the Club policy of ‘black/white’ rotation, this year’s auctioneer was the European manager of Boral Gas. (The other usual auctioneer, considered just as good, was the Papua New Guinean head of security for a large Chinese-owned conglomerate.) Throughout, the auctioneer presented jokes evoking in-group knowledge. Beginning with reference to Rotary as a service organization, he announced a series of forthcoming public service lectures to be sponsored by the Club and given by well-known local persons whom he named. His announcements were greeted with howls of laughter. One lecture was to be given by a notoriously irascible European male golfer on golf etiquette entitled ‘Do it my way’; one was to be given by a European woman, who had recently vacationed in Bali without her husband, entitled ‘Bali, island of love’; and one was to be given by an absent and
frequently deprecated Papua New Guinean politician, entitled 'Alcoholics Anonymous and how it has helped me'.

This kind of dangerous humour was expected and the auctioneer maintained it throughout the evening. Once, for example, he alluded to a long-standing and fierce business competition between the two major Chinese wholesale operations in Wewak. This competition had, according to popular understanding, recently intensified, with one firm reclaiming only with difficulty a shipping container of canned mackerel, worth about K45,000, which had ended up in the other's warehouse. Summoning the aggrieved owner of one firm and the representative of the other to the front of the room, the auctioneer presented an award for the best purveyor of gourmet food to the aggrieved owner. Looping a necklace of completely ordinary sausage links over his head and onto his immaculate white shirt, the auctioneer proclaimed the superiority of his firm's famous product. The auctioneer then handed the rival firm's representative a can of corned beef to present to the other in acknowledgment of the other's superior meats. As this spoof unfolded, the auctioneer pointedly stressed that it was meat and not fish being presented - thus invoking, through this humorously positive transaction in meat, the bitterly negative transaction in fish.

In addition, the auctioneer laced his bidding patter with ambiguously - sometimes dangerously - humorous jibes and other personal references. His evident strategy was to engage the audience by keeping them both amused and a bit off balance. Indeed, early on he announced that he would try to generate higher bids by creating contention rather than harmony at the auction: he would pit Highlanders against Sepiks, Catholics against Protestants. Thus, he surreptitiously attached a package of condoms to the picture frames donated by the local pharmacist and insisted that the Catholics present (who included a priest and several nuns) could not abstain from bidding on these items. Another of his more dangerous jokes involved a case of Mobil engine oil. After warning the hotel's manager and cook that this was not for frying chips, he solicited a bid from a former pilot - a man whose Mobil-lubricated engine had suffered catastrophic failure - saying if he were still flying, this item would be of interest to him.

Such comments had their intended effect: they did indeed create an atmosphere of convivial competition. Bidding was reasonably animated on what was, in fact, a fairly wide assortment of goods and services. For instance, a Honda water pump (donated by the Papua New Guinean manager of Toba Motors) went for K510; and a ten minute helicopter trip over Wewak (donated by the European pilot for Helipacific) went for K110.

The big spender of the evening was the Papua New Guinean manager of Wewak's Mobil Oil depot and service station. He and his wife had also won the prize for the best-dressed couple, a dinner for two donated by the Papua New Guinean owner of a local hotel. He bought the following: a case of Pepsi Cola donated by the Papua New Guinean owner of a local retail trade-store; a case of Coca Cola donated by the company's European trade representative; a portable radio cassette unit donated by the Chinese owner of a local retail and wholesale store; an 'executive' briefcase, raincoat, tee-shirt and cap donated by the Papua New Guinean business manager of one of the country's English language daily newspapers; a set of sports equipment, including a soccer and a rugby ball
donated by the European trade representatives of Puma Sports and Supervalue Wholesale Distributors; and a circular saw donated by the Papua New Guinean manager of the local branch of Steamships Hardware. He spent, in all, K735 and went home, he told us, very pleased with the evening. This was so not only because he had acquired useful items, but also because the items he had donated (two cases of the aforementioned motor oil and a fountain pen set) went for good prices (K90 and K95 respectively).

Others also bid generously: a European parish priest spent K525; the European owner of an oil-tank construction firm spent K340; the Papua New Guinean headmaster of Wewak's International School spent K210.

The final tabulations were made and the books closed on the auction a few days later at the Club's next regular meeting. According to information distributed, those attending had spent K5,280 on the auction and K2,563.30 on the dinner, a raffle, several other fund-raising diversions and on various special items such as paintings donated by students at a local teacher's training college. After expenses (principally the cost of the meal), the Rotary Club netted K5,980.82. Members reflected on the event with considerable satisfaction. They were pleased not only with the amount raised, which would allow them to finance a number of service projects, but also with the way it had been raised. The evening was a success. It was regarded as more than a means to an end. It was an end in itself.

For the duration of its annual dinner-auction, the Rotary Club of Wewak had coalesced Wewak's middle class into a momentarily complete, organically solidary community based upon an apparently seamless union of self and service. And as self and service became linked in an immediate and ostensible manner, the connexion between private and public interest became more than just an article of capitalist faith in a hypothesized long-term (see Parry 1989). Indeed, the dinner-auction became a virtual tour de force of capitalist adjustment and justification: it was an occasion to portray, and exuberantly enact, as non-contradictory a set of linked distinctions central to modernist social and economic interaction and obligation. In so doing, gifts and commodities, co-operation and competition, social entailment and disentailment could no longer be as readily – or as necessarily – seen to be disjunctive. In what approached the best of all possible worlds, donors from a wide range of commercial specialties received favourable publicity, and hence future business rewards, for their gifts of commodities; bidders from a range of professional and business occupations competed jovially for good buys in an exemplary free and fair market (in the auction, participation was open to all present and value was transparently determined); monies raised were to be used as gifts to the excluded, but still deserving, less fortunate. By what was, in effect, a muddling or at least partial collapse of these distinctions increasingly pervading everyday Papua New Guinea life, the Wewak Rotary Club provided a template for the formation of a middle-class sociality: it was a sociality of the unentailed but voluntarily concerned – a sociality of neighbours, not of kin.

For the nationals, who were among an emergent middle class, the template authorized what was for many a hard and painful transition in lifestyle. As middle-class consumers, if not entrepreneurs, entailed commitments of kinship or gift exchange were almost impossible to maintain in a commodity economy.
The dinner-auction facilitated a reconfiguration, both in ideology and in action, of such particularist and enduring ties into a diffuse middle class sociality. For the expats, in effect direct heirs of Paul Harris, the template did not have to assist them to break ties and reorient relationships. Rather, it worked to affirm the rightness of a way of life long under way by promising that the alienation and social discord of a striving capitalist individualism were not inevitable.

It must be stressed that the dinner-auction was not just an occasion for individuals of certain identities and interests to engage amicably in diffuse sociality. It was, as well, an occasion for these individuals to exhibit a heightened collective consciousness that they formed a certain kind of social category. Selected by Rotarians from the community at large as suitable, they acceded to — indeed, by all evidence, embraced — an ambience that invoked a moral community. In part, this community became defined, bounded and solidified through the operation of the dangerous humour. This humour evoked certain widely recognized tensions — those arising from commercial, ethnic and religious competition as well as from personal delicts and difficulties — only to treat them all as amusingly idiosyncratic. Certainly, this humour defined those present as sufficiently solidary that they could tease each other without causing offence. At the same time, such humour provided public recognition that those present knew much about each other and, therefore, were bound together, not only in mutual tolerance but in mutual regulation. Thus, Wewak Rotarians provided an annual context in which they and like-minded others could make manifest, with minimized ambivalence and awareness of contradiction, that they composed a class with acknowledged interests.

Conclusion

We have discussed a moment in the complex process of class formation, a process more historically than ethnographically documented (see Carrier 1995; Earle 1989; Hunt 1996; McKendrick et al. 1985; E.P. Thompson 1978). We have shown in moderately fined-grained ethnographic detail how a group of relatively affluent Papua New Guineans has been gaining a new kind of consciousness about differences and similarities — about identities and interests — through engaging in the Rotary Club of Wewak, either as Club members or as participants in Club activities. Their engagement, although clearly not the sole cause of their new consciousness, played, we think, an important role in actualizing and manifesting the modernist transformations under way in Papua New Guinea. Indeed, they would fully agree that, in accord with the Rotary template, they had an important role in (to reiterate) 'energizing and transforming civil society' (Hooper n.d.: 22).

But what, in fact, were the implications of the Rotary template for an emerging Papua New Guinean middle class? However optimistic and energetic members of this class might be, they and their expat associates were confronting a world affected by the increasing power of corporate and multinational capitalism. As we mentioned earlier, important aspects of the Papua New Guinean economy rested on the extraction of mineral, oil and timber wealth by overseas companies. Other international corporations also had disproportionate economic weight. Indeed, the Rotary dinner-auction itself was importantly underwritten, both in the objects donated and in the sales representatives...
attending, by such corporations, ranging from the producers and purveyors of (Rothmans) cigarettes to (Honda) water pumps. That Rotarians and their guests were in the middle class meant, as we have suggested, that they were actively negotiating identities and interests with respect to their Papua New Guinean and overseas pasts and presents. But it also meant they were subject to economic contingencies over which their own industry and discipline provided less than full control.

Thus, at the Rotary dinner-auction itself, a still prosperous Chinese trade-store owner and wholesaler commented to us that the elaborate sound system he had donated to the auction was, like other such items, increasingly difficult to sell. Indeed, business was not that good and times were obviously hard, and becoming harder. The kina had been sharply devalued and large numbers of civil servants had been retrenched – both changes substantially reducing middle-class buying power. In addition, taxes were rising and infrastructure was declining as public expenditures on everything from roads to schools were drastically cut. Desperately seeking revenue, the nation was subject to the draconian strictures of lending agencies such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank, as well as to the plunderings of such concerns as Malaysian logging firms and the corresponding corruption of their politician allies.

It was by no means clear how far such systemic processes would continue and whether they would result in the marginalization not only of the grass roots but of much of the Papua New Guinea middle class, especially if the expats eventually chose to leave. The middle class had certainly come to feel marginalized and vulnerable elsewhere in the face of comparable forces. In this regard, we note that, at the time of writing, both Papua New Guinea and the United States were gearing up with much the same kind of rhetoric for a national election. Designed to appeal in each instance to members of the middle class, the rhetoric stressed the importance of parental supervision, discipline, hard work and personal responsibility – the ‘family values’ by which the middle class would, or would again, energize and transform civil society. One might, therefore, speculate that what many Papua New Guineans saw as the turbulent wave of the future might be little more than the tranquil harbour of another culture’s nostalgia.

Epilogue: nostalgia and the Teddy Bear Rally

If much of American politics was nostalgia, then the Rotary Club of Amherst’s yearly fund-raising effort, the Teddy Bear Rally, was meta-nostalgia. After presenting the Wewak Rotary Club banner to the Amherst Rotarians late in the summer of 1996, in thanks for their contribution to our malaria-control project, we were asked to help out a few weeks later at the forthcoming Rally. Although we had been aware of the event for years, and had attended briefly once before, this time we became fully involved.

We arrived on the town commons several hours before we were to serve as French fryer and food distributor at the Rotary food stand. Wandering through the hundred or so booths, we saw displayed for sale a wide assortment of bears representing humankind. Whether punk bears, Parisian bears, Russian bears, ballerina bears, bridal bears, academic bears, motor-cycle gang bears, all were
appealing. None would provoke disquieting thoughts or bad dreams. Displayed, as well, were remarkable bear accoutrements such as bear chairs and other domestic bear furniture. In addition, there was a bear doctor to care for damaged – aged or injured or sick – bears.

Then the teddy bear parade began, to be followed by the teddy bear contest. Led by a Rotarian bagpiper, hundreds of parents and children, many of the former and all of the latter clutching their bears, wound their way slowly through the booths. Eventually, children were awarded ribbons and certificates for those of their bears deemed the cuddliest, the funniest, the saddest, the best dressed and the most unusual. Each child was assured by the Rotarian judge that his or her bear was special, each in its way a winner.

Merging back, along with the contestants and their parents, into the crowd of thousands (Amherst Rotarians told us that the event is always popular, with people arriving from all over the country as well as Canada), we were overwhelmed by the wholesomeness of this family-oriented, largely White, event – by this particular sentimental education. We were surrounded by a sea of minimally-alienated commodities (virtually by definition, each bear purchased found a ‘good’ home) in an ocean of parents, many clutching their own childhood reassurances. As they relived and recreated for their children their own idealized recollections of protected childhoods, we worried that this Rotarian vision of middle-class family life might eventually reach the shores even of Papua New Guinea’s East Sepik Province – that, in other words, this latter day variant of ‘teddy bear patriarchy’ (Haraway 1989) might some day be floated in Wewak.

NOTES

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1 The meaning of the term ‘modernity’ (or ‘modern’ or ‘modernist’) is to be understood as multifaceted and situationally contingent. The concept of the ‘traditional’ (or ‘tradition’) is to be understood as often invented. See, among others, Hobsbawm & Ranger (1983). On postcolonial modernity see Lee & Ackerman (1994) and Turner (1995).

2 For reviews of the literature on class as it has been used (and misused) in analyses of Pacific societies, see Hooper (n.d.) and Ogan (n.d.a; n.d. b).

3 In Errington & Gewertz (1988), we argue that the idea of the exemplar is likely to be important primarily when the path to eminence is either obscured or highly restricted. Such was increasingly the case, as was the increasing importance of exemplars, in Papua New Guinea.

4 An excellent analysis of the changing social roles of the Rotary Club and other service organizations is Charles (1993). We have also found significant data on Rotary in University of Chicago Social Science Survey Committee (1934), and in Marden (1935) and Nicholl (1984).

5 Clubs, of course, had long been organized to provide mutual business support for members of the middle class. See, for instance, Brewer (1985), Jacob (1981).

6 Rotary Clubs, to be sure, were shaped by their varying sociocultural contexts. Thus, according to Charles (1993), European Rotary Clubs were considerably more formal than American ones.

7 Rydell (1984) and Bradford & Blume (1992) both demonstrate the remarkable resonance America’s turn-of-the century world fairs had for the millions who visited them.
This prosperity was fuelled largely, until 1972 when the copper mine at Bougainville opened, by the expansion of public services and by the coffee and cocoa industries.

According to local usage, Europeans, Filipinos and Chinese were, as mentioned, all categorized as 'expats'. However, when socially significant, they would be referred to by place of origin, as we do here. We might also note that the term 'national' was used interchangeably with 'Papua New Guinean'. We, as others, were likely to use the latter term when the former might be ambiguous, as in the phrase 'national leader'.

Since returning home, we received a letter from our 'grass roots' research assistant during our 1996 field trip. He wryly described what had happened to the money we had given him upon our departure. It had all been distributed to kin who made claims upon him which he simply could not refuse.

Carrier & Carrier (1989) argue that, on Manus, the colonial intrusion actually flattened hierarchy by undermining the economic bases of chiefly precedent. We accept that this may have been, at least sometimes, the case. Yet we also suggest that the distinctions within Papua New Guinean societies early in the contact period, whether of flattened hierarchy or not, might have become restructured as class differences by the same colonial (and post-colonial) processes.

Although there has been much debate of late concerning the ontological status of those described in the literature on Pacific societies as 'big men' and 'chiefs' (see Ryan 1978 and the collection of articles in Jolly & Mosko 1994), we are interested here only in a contemporary rhetorical use of these terms.

In fact, if the cultural bases allow (and perhaps even if they do not), chiefly claims by the most elite may be followed by formal chiefly installation. We were not, therefore, surprised to learn that several national politicians holding especially desirable senior posts - posts which conveyed numerous opportunities, both licit and illicit - were given chiefly titles by their kin and constituents. Not only have such men of long-term eminence as Sir Michael Somare, often described as the father of the country, been transformed into 'the chief' (by which title he is generally known throughout the Sepik and beyond), but so also have others of more recent prominence. Thus, during our period of research, both of Papua New Guinea's daily newspapers carried front-page pictures of a chiefly installation. Each newspaper published captions such as: 'Paramount chief is a new title for Deputy Prime Minister Chris Haiveta, pictured above shaking hands with leaders at Iokea village after being "crowned"' (Tannos 1996: 1).

The Rotary Club acted, in other words, much as an etiquette book. As Schlesinger (1946) pointed out, etiquette books become important precisely when people are trying to move up in the world.

On 28 April 1996, a gunman killed thirty-five tourists visiting the site of an old penal settlement at Port Arthur, Tasmania.

Members of the Papua New Guinean middle class frequently referred to - sometimes bragged about - their cosmopolitan experiences as marked by travels abroad. Indeed, their curricula vitae would enumerate such trips.

Yet expat Rotary members sometimes feared that, though welcome to visit, they might find it difficult to join the Club of their choice if they returned home - given how 'snobby' Clubs were supposed to be, for example, in Sydney.

As Carrier (1995) has made clear, the disjunctions between gifts and commodities frequently blur in people's activities - whether in Melanesia or the United States. Yet, as he also has made clear, these disjunctions were rhetorically, and hence sociologically, compelling. What the Rotary dinner-auction accomplished was more than the merging which goes on in everyday life. Rather, it was a merging of the rhetorical salience of the categories themselves.

For instance, we heard economically influential business people say they were going to 'make things difficult' for companies which could easily have contributed to the auction but did not do so.

For literature on the social context of auctions see Errington (1987) and Smith (1990).

James Carrier has described a somewhat comparable change in eighteenth-century England with the development 'of the free, independent individual [for whom gifts are important but] who is neither bound to give nor bound by giving' (1995: 157).

During the Depression, the University of Chicago's Social Science Survey Committee (1935) analysed Chicago's first (the original) Rotary Club and reported what it considered to be a failing: Rotarians emphasized 'service' but rarely considered serious social and political prob-
lems or injustices. This was still the case in 1996 – at least in Wewak – where Rotarians stressed the amelioration of a basically fair system rather than the change of a basically unjust one.

23 Public joking and jibing were featured in all of the large-scale social events we attended with members of the middle class – all of which events involved masters of ceremonies, auctioneers, bookmakers, or other purveyors of dangerous humour.

24 Nationals were teased less than expats at all public events, even when the master of ceremonies was a national. This was the case, we think, for the same reasons Apaches were usually careful not to go too far in their humorous jokes about the white man (see Basso 1979): when humour became too real it spilled from its play frame and provoked a socially disruptive response.

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Le club du Rotary de Wewak: la classe moyenne en Mélanésie

Résulté
En se concentrant sur le Club du Rotary de Wewak, la capitale de la Province du Sepik oriental de la Papouasie-Nouvelle Guinée, cet article examine les formes de stratification en émergence et plus particulièrement le rôle du Club dans le développement et le fonctionnement d'une classe moyenne indigène. Nous démontrons qu'en privilégiant une socialité caractéristique des classes moyennes et un service généralisé dans la communauté, le Club du Rotary a permis aux Papouans-Néo-Guinéens de surmonter leurs conflits moraux et stratégiques de telle sorte qu'ils puissent donner précédence à leur désir d'accorder une part plus grande à la consommation dans leurs vies plutôt qu'à leurs obligations de parenté. Nous montrons aussi comment, dans la phase post-coloniale de Wewak, le Club du Rotary a permis aux 'nationaux' et aux 'expatriés' appartenant aux classes moyennes de s'entraider pour justifier les privilèges les distinguant des 'bases populaires'. Finalement et plus généralement, nous montrons les raisons pour lesquelles les membres de la classe moyenne, tels que les Rotariens sur lesquels nous portons notre attention, ont joué un rôle particulièrement crucial dans la transformation de la Papouasie-Nouvelle Guinée.

(Fe), Anthropology Program, Trinity College, Hartford, CT 06106, U.S.A.
(DG), Department of Anthropology, Amherst College, Amherst, MA 01002, U.S.A.