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NEW GUINEA AS A FIELD FOR ETHNOLOGICAL STUDY

A PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

A pleasing climax may be perceived in the articles devoted in this journal to anthropological research in New Guinea: loose structure, social structure, New Guinea as a field for ethnological study. Van der Leeden's rejoinder to my review of his doctoral thesis¹ was not confined to polemic, but, in accordance with the intention of the review, developed into a contribution to a general appreciation of the problem of New Guinea as a field for ethnological study. This latter term is employed here in the sense already formulated in 1935 by J. P. B. de Josselin de Jong: "a limited part of the earth's surface with a population whose culture as a whole appears sufficiently homogeneous and distinctive to form a special object of study for ethnology, and which at the same time appears to exhibit enough local variations for an internal comparative investigation to be fruitfully possible".² The present article is intended as an attempt at a synthesis of existing points of view on the ethnological field of New Guinea, and seeks to provide a lead to further research. Van der Leeden's critique of my own criticisms of his thesis has been discussed in more detail in an earlier article in this Journal (BKI 116, 1960, pp. 365 ff.).

That New Guinea is a field of study in the above sense is indubitable in the light of our greatly increased knowledge; for, in the first place, there is unmistakably a certain homogeneity and distinctiveness in these cultures. In the beginning of his article, van der Leeden sums up a number of features and makes a successful attempt to show the distribution of a certain type of social structure. If one has oneself conducted research in different parts of New Guinea and to some extent commands the literature, one is continually struck by the agreeable sensation of "I've been here before". This "re-encounter" concerns very disparate matters from quite different areas, such as

¹ *Bijdragen*, 116, 1960, pp. 119 ff.

² „De Maleische Archipel als ethnologisch studieveld." Inaugural Lecture, Leiden, 1935.

material and technological aspects of culture, land tenure, personality-type, motifs in myths, the attitude towards the outsider and the interpretation of his world, cargo cults, women as objects of direct and indirect exchange, and — last but not least — a social structure which by its variety defies the ethnologist to discover its basic principles.

I regard this peculiarity of the social structure, which may be described as flexible or elastic, as one of those typical, positive characteristics of New Guinea cultures which together constitute the homogeneity and particularity of the field of study. This flexibility is not limited to the social aspect of culture, but is to be found in all its aspects.

We may be brief here concerning "local variations", the second condition of fruitful ethnological research formulated by de Josselin de Jong. Every researcher can bear witness that even within one tribal area they may be numerous, so numerous in fact that Held and van Baal have been misled by them, a point which van der Leeden correctly makes. In this connexion he writes that variability can hardly serve as basis for a comparison of cultures. A curious statement, for variability is not a starting-point, but together with homogeneity is an important precondition of comparative research. Presumably van der Leeden understands something else by variability, viz. a differentiation so great as to preclude comparison.⁴

It is clear, moreover, that variability can only be estimated by "cultural content". The distinction between cultural content and cultural form, stressed by van der Leeden, seems to me scarcely essential. Content and form are interdependent, they are aspects of one and the same thing. It is precisely for this reason that I account the flexibility of Papuan cultures, a question of integration and thus of form, as a factor in the definition of our object of study. Both the content and the form of a culture must be considered in the comparison or typology of cultures. It may be remarked, incidentally, that the flexibility of New Guinea cultures and the accompanying great structural significance of personal relations, which van der Leeden also emphasises, offer an ideal situation for the study of processes of integration, disintegration, and reintegration.⁵ One may thus acquire greater insight into

³ op. cit., p. 122.

⁴ Cf. his statement: "If there really were no relationship between the various Papua cultures, there would simply be nothing to compare..." (op. cit. p. 122).

⁵ Cf. van der Leeden's thesis and also G. Oosterwal, "The position of the bachelor in the Upper Tor territory", *American Anthropologist*, 61, 1959, pp. 829—838.

two of the central problems of cultural anthropology, viz. how does a culture come into existence, and when can one speak of a well, indifferently, or badly integrated culture?

For illustration of "cultural flexibility", reference may be made to the "Bangkok paper" published in *Oceania*,⁶ which deals with Meibrat, Moejoe, Mimika, Waropen, and Sarimi. What I call flexible, van der Leeden calls loose. I have considerable objections to the term „loose structure", since it may contain a terminological contradiction: incoherent coherence. According to van der Leeden, this flexibility tells us nothing about the fundamental content of Papuan cultures, while moreover, correctly understood, "looseness of structure is not typical of New Guinea, but is a universal phenomenon". On the question of form and content I have already written above. A certain flexibility is indeed common to all cultures: in fact, they *must* be flexible to some extent, just like a weather-vane. But the degree of flexibility varies. A certain indicator in this respect is precisely the fact that researchers in New Guinea continually wrestle with the construction of models. This difficulty is assuredly not encountered elsewhere in the world to such an extent. There are so many variations on the theme that it is difficult to formulate it. To neglect this flexibility would be damaging to any characterisation of New Guinea cultures intended to accord with reality.

What is the origin of this flexibility, this elasticity? Van der Leeden sees "structural looseness" as the consequence of a very unfavourable natural environment which demands great power of adaptation on the part of the population. Here we come up against the difficult problem of the interplay between nature and culture. I have myself related flexibility to adaptation to an "unfavourable natural environment", a concept which does not mean that the Papuan can in all circumstances assure himself of only a meagre existence. There is frequently even a surplus of foods prized by the people, e.g. fish and sago. However, the limited technical equipment possessed by the Papuan — a cultural factor, therefore — and the geographical distribution of sources of food (sago areas, the necessity for extensive shifting cultivation) keep the yields low in relation to the time expended on them, and militate against an economic surplus.

⁶ "Anthropological research in Netherlands New Guinea since 1950", by the Bureau for Native Affairs (Hollandia, Netherlands New Guinea), *Oceania*, 29, 1958—59, pp. 132—163. (*Oceania Monographs*, No. 10, 1959).

⁷ op. cit., p. 21.

In what does the traditional adaptation of the population consist? Among other things, in communal residence in small hamlets (for the most part not larger than 100 souls) and in an elastic composition of this group. The local group is one pillar of the social structure. The other is the kin-group. The local group stands at the border of nature and culture. It is nature in so far as, like a colony of bees, it signifies an adaptation to the demands of nature. One man alone, or in a family, cannot maintain himself. It is perhaps because of this that the local group is a universal phenomenon. The group is also culture, in that it is governed by norms. The local group is even a very effective instrument of enculturation.

In the local group the external factor of nature is, as it were, internalised. In other words, adaptation to the natural environment — including the animal world — is canalised and enculturated, to the extent indeed that it is scarcely possible to determine where nature (adaptation) ends and culture (choice, selection) begins. Thus the inhabitants of Frederik Hendrik Island, where conditions for human existence seem hardly to exist (swamps, spring-tides, mosquitoes), have wonderfully adapted themselves, with very limited technical means, to the demands of the natural environment; but at the same time they have to a certain degree subjugated nature, by the raising of hundreds of little islands on which horticulture is practised and houses are built. At the same time, horticulture is an object of a prestige-economy there, of potlatch. Nature and culture are very closely interwoven in horticulture and in mode of life.

The local group is a peculiarly fundamental phenomenon of social life, and its recognition must therefore form part of any typology of society and culture. It should not be subsumed under "kin-group", even when — as often happens in New Guinea — the kin-group is found localised in one place; for the local group partly includes more, and in part less, than the local descent group. Persons who have married into it, as well as others, belong to the local group, while kin who have married out are still reckoned as belonging to the descent group but no longer to the local group.

In the comparison and the typifying of culture, therefore, the local group may neither be set aside as an external or secondary factor nor be subsumed under "local descent group".

Living in small local groups, in adaptation to an unfavourable natural environment and to primitive techniques, has important structural consequences which have been summed up in the "Bangkok paper".

It will suffice here to mention them briefly :

- (1) Accent on the functional significance of the small social groupings (nuclear family, sibling group) and of the bilateral sub-structure.
- (2) Great significance of personal relationships, on which van der Leeden also lays such stress.
- (3) Vulnerability and uncertainty of composition of the local group, on account of its small size.
- (4) Strongly pervasive principle of reciprocity.
- (5) Emotional inbreeding and the accompanying danger of fission of the local group.
- (6) Development of strong "in-group/out-group" feelings which hinder thought and action, in that they are fertile soil for the magic which flourishes luxuriantly everywhere in New Guinea.
- (7) Frequent lack of formal political structure and administration of justice in the small communities, where they are superfluous.
- (8) Almost complete lack of fixed connubial relations between two or more groups. The local descent groups are too small, too vulnerable, and too changeable in composition to meet the obligations of fixed connubium.
- (9) Enculturation taking place in small local groups with a strong "in-group" consciousness, the result of which is a great regional variation which may have contributed to the diversity of cultures. To this may be added the attachment of the people to the land (cf. V. E. Korn, *De Grond van de Papoea in de Staten Generaal*, 1956, p. 11).

It should be remembered in connexion with the above that the local group, small though it is, often disintegrates into yet smaller and rather mobile communities, since it is not the village but the hamlet which is typical of traditional New Guinea. These modes of life are connected with the dispersal of sources of food (sago areas, fishing-grounds, plots of shifting cultivation).

All these consequences of small-scale social life which have been summed up here may explain the fact, already stated, that the kinship and territorial groups are indistinct and very difficult to describe comprehensively. We must however be careful with these conclusions. The Australian aborigines lived in small mobile bands in an unfavorable natural environment, and also had at their disposal a very limited technical equipment. But they possessed a clearly delineated complex social structure in which, as van der Leeden correctly observes, the emphasis fell on the collective kinship categories and not so much on the personal, genealogical relationships, as is the case in New

Guinea. It may however be asked whether this difference in social organisation may not be connected with the ecological difference between Australia and New Guinea. The difficulty of access of many coastal and mountain areas in New Guinea presents an obstacle to regional contacts. The habitat of the Australian aborigines, on the contrary, is characterised by wide open spaces which facilitate mutual contact between groups and individuals.

Van der Leeden relates the fact that the social structure in New Guinea is only seldom embodied in clear institutional complexes to the greater significance of the relations between the children of siblings, both in the eyes of the participants and in reality.⁸ The central place of these relations is to some extent a result of the asymmetry of the sexes in the marriage relationship (Lévi-Strauss). Here arises an objection similar to that concerning the effect of the small local group. Asymmetry between the sexes also exists elsewhere in the world; it becomes acute in the relationship between brother and sister and in that between their children, at least in consanguineal (as opposed to conjugal) groups.⁹ Why then should this asymmetry have consequences in New Guinea which are lacking elsewhere? In other words, the undeniably great structural significance of the small local group and of the exchange mechanism are insufficiently specific factors for a conclusive explanation of the cultural peculiarities of New Guinea.

Here the importance of cultural choice comes to the fore, viz. a choice which may well be influenced by the two factors referred to above (small local group, exchange) but which is not determined by them. There are, in my opinion, reasons to suppose that the bearers of Papuan culture have exercised choice in order to realise their social system and their own culture along the lines of small and dispersed hamlets, small-scale social relationships, preferably of a genealogical nature and with a strong bilateral pattern (the sibling relationship), as well as by means of personal, genealogical, or genealogically-interpreted relationships. This is why the mechanism of exchange, as far as goods, services, and women are concerned, is based not so much on collective kinship categories as on personal relations. This choice is in line with the adaptation discussed above and its consequences, but it could have been made otherwise, as is shown by the situation among the Australian aborigines.

⁸ op. cit., p. 138.

⁹ Concerning this distinction, see R. Linton, *The Study of Man*, (Students' Edition), p. 159.

"Independent cultural choice" may be seen in the following: in districts where a concentrated mode of life in village is "technically" possible, such as for example around the Wissel Lakes, people nevertheless prefer to live in small dispersed settlements, the composition of which moreover is not governed by strict rules. Great freedom exists with respect to choice of domicile.¹⁰

There is further the fact that more permanent political, regional federations scarcely ever occur, or are entirely lacking, in areas which are relatively densely populated (Baliem, Wissel Lakes) or which — in exception to the general rule — possess large villages (Asmat).

The in-group consciousness of the local groups and the great importance of interlocal personal genealogical relationships overwhelm the collective consciousness of region. In this connexion, too, it is typical that the people of many areas in New Guinea have no tribal names of their own.

Next, it is striking that a genealogical pyramidal segmentation of kin-groups, comprising the whole society, such as is well-known in Africa, is certainly not typical of New Guinea. In many areas, descent groups coincide with the kinship nuclei of the local groups; but connexions with the parent descent groups are lost or are no longer functional.¹¹ In place of a genealogical conceptualisation of the whole society there is a spatial one. (Further on this see the Bangkok paper.)¹² With this is connected, in my opinion, the frequently remarked fact that genealogical knowledge does not for the most part extend very far, either vertically or horizontally, and is often extremely vague; and also the striking interaction between local and genealogical solidarity, between local group and descent group.

Naturally, it is nothing new that, as van der Leeden writes, the influence of the territorial factor on the kin-groups is seen not only in New Guinea but is reported from everywhere. But this influence is seen in New Guinea in such a pregnant form that it may indeed be regarded as specific to it. What Lawrence encountered in this respect among the Gari, and I myself among the Mimika people — both mentioned by van der Leeden¹³ — is certainly not commonplace. It

¹⁰ Information recorded by de Bruyn, van Emmerik, and van Logchem in official reports.

¹¹ R. Firth describes these situations and this process by the terms "definitive segmentation" and "gemination". See his article "A note on descent groups in Polynesia", *Man*, 57, 1957, art. 2, p. 7.

¹² *op. cit.*, p. 22.

¹³ *op. cit.*, p. 127.

is noteworthy, moreover, that in areas where clans divided into sub-clans are found (e.g. Wissel Lakes, Baliem, Ajamaroe, Sterrengebergte) little sign is to be seen of corporate interlocal relations between clans. Members of the same clan, but belonging to different localised sub-clans, war with each other without scruple, though they spare their personal relatives. In the Sterrengebergte, clan-members who have settled elsewhere are not permitted to enter the sacred house of the hamlet. Again, it is the local group and personal connections which are predominant.

As a final example of independent choice I may cite the ambilateral tracing of kinship, defined in the main (in my review of van der Leeden's thesis) according to Goodenough. Although I clearly stated in my review that "this system represents a structural type in its own right and cannot be considered as a secondary phenomenon of adaptation",¹⁴ van der Leeden still thinks that I regard this system as a secondary phenomenon of adaptation.¹⁵ The system may well be inspired by the preponderance of the small local group and by the great importance of the "bilateral substructure", as well as by personal genealogical relationships; but — it should be repeated — it is not determined by them. The central question is: can a non-unilineal descent group be constructed, on the basis of a bilateral tracing of kinship, which will exhibit a clear delimitation and continuity? If the answer is yes — as I am inclined to think it is — then the bilateral emphasis in the system may be regarded not as a phenomenon of adaptation, as an expression of "loose structure", but as a fundamental structural datum. I believe this question demands an urgent answer, not simply with an eye to the situation in New Guinea, but also in connexion with the fact that bilaterally-organised societies are most definitely not rarities.¹⁶ These societies possess a continuity based on kinship. Of what kind, then? I am unable to see why this system cannot form a type of social structure in its own right simply because in changing external or internal circumstances it may evolve in the

¹⁴ *Bijdragen*, 116, 1960, p. 117.

¹⁵ *op. cit.*, p. 127.

¹⁶ In Murdock's sample of 250 societies, 75, representing 30 per cent of the total, follow the rule of bilateral descent (G. P. Murdock, *Social Structure*, 1949, p. 57). However, in the "World Ethnographic Sample" compiled by Murdock in 1957, 204, representing 36.3 per cent, have bilateral descent (Murdock; "The World Ethnographic Sample", *American Anthropologist*, 59, 1957, pp. 664—687).

direction of e.g. a patrilineal system.¹⁷ A system is not necessarily static.

To return to our starting-point, viz. flexibility, I would postulate that it is above all this quality which gives New Guinea cultures their peculiar character. This property is not lacking elsewhere, but it is so prominent in New Guinea that it may be called typical of this field of study. It is brought about by the preponderance of small territorial and genealogical social contexts and the structural consequences mentioned above.

This preponderance is on the one hand a phenomenon of adaptation to an unfavourable environment and a poor technology, but on the other hand it represents an independent cultural choice. It is this flexibility which to a considerable degree makes the composition of a culture-construct pattern difficult. I would stress that this flexibility appears in all aspects of culture. The wonderful ease with which new elements and complexes (objects, songs, rites, myths, language) are adopted through culture contact, and are interpreted in new fashion, is clear indication of the flexible framework of the cultures. Margaret Mead even employs the term "importing culture". In this connexion we may also mention the remarkable suppleness and speed with which the western outsider and his world are assimilated, sometimes in a rather capricious way.

On the one hand the small territorial and genealogical communities, with their strong in-group feelings, show a great deal of ethnocentrism, selfsufficiency and exclusiveness; on the other, it is precisely their smallness that forces them into contact and open-ness. The linguistic situation is telling: on the one hand, a great number of languages and dialects, spoken by small communities; on the other, a considerable mutual knowledge of, and interest in, languages and dialects spoken in neighbouring districts, without however a diminution in the differences between these languages and dialects.

Cargo cults, in one aspect, bear witness to a matchless ethnocentrism: "the white man is our younger brother, his goods and riches are ours; the white man enjoys our goods and denies them to us; he lets us pay for them and work hard for them, he even steals them from us by receiving packing-cases addressed to us and putting his own address on them". In another aspect, though, in cargo cults and myths the people adapt their own world-view in an amazingly supple

¹⁷ See van der Leeden, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

way to the new situation: culture-heroes and ancestors use outboard motors, airplanes, money, binoculars, and drink coffee and gin. Stories and actions teem with syncretistic elements. Finally, it is striking that the cargo cults which loom everywhere in New Guinea are spreading rapidly.

Although at first the far-reaching ethnocentrism would appear to make it unlikely, mythico-religious ideas and practices show a considerable degree of flexibility, in the sense of "capacity to assimilate". There is always "play" or "room" in these notions. The flexible "framework" of Papuan cultures can lead to a certain multivalent content by which Held was struck.

We can see from this how closely form and content are connected, and thus also that flexibility must have a place in a characterisation of the culture. The following example may serve to elucidate the connexion between flexible framework and multivalent content. Calvinistic dogma, with respect to certain central dogmatic beliefs (no spiritual authority other than God's Word, predestiny, the *Sola Fide*) is hardly flexible;¹⁸ on these points it permits little variation. The consequence of this is that the belief-content of Calvinistic communities on these points is not multivalent but very uniform. Contrast with this the very flexible framework of Remonstrant doctrine, which permits its adherents great personal freedom of profession of faith. It is a well-known fact that, because of this flexibility, the belief-content of Remonstrant communities is highly multivalent. If I might be excused the metaphor, I should characterise Papuan cultures not as "Calvinistic" but as "Remonstrant".

Multivalence may in its turn have the effect that particular cultural features may not be prominent, may have a not very explicit character, or as Held put it they as it were remain implicit. I am thinking of concepts of descent, marital residence, status and influences of leaders, political federations, the asymmetry (alluded to by van der Leeden) operating through the generations, the assimilation of mythical motifs in ritual (Held), and also the sometimes hybrid assimilation of modern culture-elements into myths and practices.

I should not wish to ascribe the high degree of suppleness (or flexibility), and the accent on small-scale social relations and personal contacts, to individualism, distaste for discipline, or the setting up of norms only to fail to conform to them (Van Baal). For within the small contexts of social concern, and also outside them, there is indeed

¹⁸ We may recall the struggle between the "rekkelijken" and the "preciezen" in Netherlands church history.

such a discipline to be discerned, a conformity of individual conduct to absolute norms. This discipline and conformity are achieved however in an informal personal way, with the aid of the principle of reciprocity, a principle which, as observers have already remarked, implies equality of status.¹⁹ This principle operates even in the relationship between parents and children, and between older and younger siblings — thus in relations between persons of unequal status. The principle is also found in the “tit for tat” of individual vengeance by natural or supernatural means, in calling off a war, and in the strongly-developed institution of “legal liability” (Malay: *bajar kepala*).

It is *this* principle, and not so much the principle of authority, which regulates relations between individuals and groups of unequal status. Is it to be wondered at that the establishment and maintenance of authority and power by western agencies, in the form of the institution of village headmanship and, not to be overlooked, of village school-teachers, is so little effective, fails to make a lasting impression, and that it leads to so many disappointments? Serious attention should be paid to this in the current introduction of district councils. To the “western agencies”, their power and the hierarchical organisation based on it are so selfevident that they are inclined to regard Papuan forms of society as loose, undisciplined, individualistic, and even atomistic. They overlook the regular working of the principle of reciprocity by which Malinowski was struck among the Trobrianders. It occurs to me that van Baal may also have been guilty of this oversight.

Although I cannot share van Baal's view, I attach great value to a psychological approach to the problems of the description and comparison of cultures, together with an institutional approach. However, this means taking the totality of the society, i.e. the collective mental life, as starting-point. In other words, its objects of study must be the cultural background of personality about which Linton has written so many useful things.²⁰ Only in this way can the researcher guard himself against the danger of an intuitive, emphatic interpretation along the lines of a western train of thought. But in a more concrete way, the researcher should make a study of the influence of the preponderance of small-scale social relationships, and of the pronounced functioning of the principle of reciprocity, on the formation of the characteristic features of the personality-type. There is no doubt, I think, that this

¹⁹ See K. E. Read, “Leadership and consensus in a New Guinea society”, *American Anthropologist*, 61, 1959, pp. 425—436.

²⁰ R. Linton, *The Cultural Background of Personality*, 1947.

influence may be discerned. I have already stated that the principle of reciprocity implies equality of personal status. How is the situation with regards to equality (reciprocity) and inequality (authority) in the relationship between parents and children, and in that between siblings? Many have already been struck by the fact that Papuan children very early act independently, and presumably do not submit to any great extent to the authority of their parents. There is the view of the parents that when their children go to school they must look after themselves as far as possible, because they no longer have much use for their children. There is the personal gift of food made by parents and guardians to children in boarding-schools, with the manifest aim of retaining a hold on the child. Parents refer to the care they have given their children when they negotiate the marriage of their sons and daughters. There is also the comparatively slight distance between children and their siblings who are nearly or fully adult, a mutual relation of reciprocity. This obtains also in a negative sense: if you do not help me in the collection of bridewealth, then I shall not help you either.

Deceptions between brothers and between sisters as a result of the neglect of reciprocity are common in daily life and in reflections of it such as myths. Life in small local and genealogical groupings intensifies the operation of the principle of reciprocity and makes relations between members highly personal. A man's personality is thus a weighty factor in the daily intercourse of these small communities. In such a community one is in contact with a tiny circle of people whose feelings must be considered as much as possible for the sake of peace. Fierce outbursts of emotion must so far as possible be avoided, or — and this is certainly not unusual — they are staged. One acts out rage and grief, in a mixture of genuine emotions, social obligations, drama and farce. Bystanders know what true value is to be placed on such "outbursts".

Grievances, great and small, against one's fellow-men go underground (emotional in-breeding) until at some triviality they suddenly blaze up fiercely. One keeps a continually sharp eye on others, but allows this to be perceived as little as possible. Little remains secret; a word to the wise is sufficient; a stealthy gesture, a furtive glance, a scarcely perceptible pressure or tickle on the hand will give expression to personal feelings, but can also betray them to outsiders. When people live so close to each other a certain distance and privacy must be respected, in order to forestall frictions, tensions, and conflicts. The

individual finds this privacy in his own dwelling or in his own part of it; one may not enter another's dwelling or apartment unexpectedly and without warning. Each family has its own hearth and its own store-place, which outsiders must respect. Strong feelings of personal possession attach to a person's carrying-bag, basket, box or chest. The individual and the married couple find privacy mainly in the gardens, and in sago-plots and fishing-grounds. It is because of this that the Papuan is very attached to his freedom of movement. It is reckoned very ill-bred in Mimika, for example, to ask of someone who gets up and leaves where he is going to. Besides, as a result of the dispersion of his areas of food-supply (including hunting and collecting areas), the Papuan is fairly mobile and is very attached to the travelling and moving about that is involved. There are, further, barter between localities, regional feasts, and the visiting of kin and other relatives who live all over the place. In the modern sphere this attachment to mobility and to freedom of movement is found also in a considerable mobility between occupations. The young Papuan readily changes his field of activity, though he may have a special training behind him and even though he may be financially worse off. The lack of social classes, the slight differences in status, and the ideal of equality, together with the strongly-maintained principle of reciprocity, have the consequence that he has difficulty in considering himself in a relationship of inferior to superior. He is free and easy in his bearing and regards himself as not in the slightest degree inferior to the white man; the discipline of labour and attention to work do not suit him. In the maintenance of a relationship between servant and master, he regards himself as scarcely bound by any personal responsibility towards his employer. For him, what primarily counts is the norm of prestation and counterprestation. If for some reason it no longer suits him, then he terminates the employment, as soon, and sometimes even before, prestation and counterprestation are balanced.

As stated above, the Papuan child is taught very young look after himself. He is trained to make the most of everything in nature that is to his taste. The Papuan therefore usually possesses a great deal of common sense; he knows how to help himself, and as a result of *do ut des* is fairly "materialistically" minded.

Naturally this outlook also operates in modern relations of labour and production. Here too there are specific factors at work which cannot be explained simply by reference to the existence of a dual economy (Boeke). It is urgently desirable, in my opinion, that field

research by a psychologically-specialised ethnologist should be conducted in a rapidly developing situation of acculturation. What are the characteristics of the personality-type of the Papuan, and to what norms should he conform? What demands are to be made on his personality if he is to integrate himself with the modern society which irresistibly advances upon him and the standard of living of which, moreover, is an unprecedented temptation to him?²¹

It will not have escaped the reader of the above argument that I concur with van der Leeden in attributing a structural importance to the operation of the principle of reciprocity. His starting-point of reciprocity as an integrating principle, and mine — viz. the preponderance of small territorial and genealogical social groupings and the high degree of cultural flexibility — can not only be combined with each other but even must be, at any rate if comparative study is to reveal "similarities" rather than "regularities".²²

The tenor of van der Leeden's exposition of the principle of reciprocity, particularly in the socio-economic field, is in this respect not entirely clear to me. Is it his intention to test the universal validity of the theories of Lévi-Strauss and of de Josselin de Jong in a particular area of study, viz. New Guinea — that is, to establish regularities? Or is he attempting by comparative study to characterise New Guinea cultures as entities in which the principle of reciprocity is demonstrated in a special way and in a specific (double-unilateral) form — that is, to establish similarities?

That both these approaches may be combined appears from van der Leeden's own words, e.g. when he explains the wide distribution of marriage by direct exchange of women in the light of "the instability of the community" and "the preference for living in small, scattered units".²³

Direct exchange always involves a smaller risk, and is thus particularly suited to the small exchange-units, of variable composition, found in New Guinea. We may accept it that the principle of reciprocity is also a structural factor elsewhere. Are we therefore justified in saying that it is specific to New Guinea and typical of it? If so, why?

²¹ See J. van Baal, "Erring acculturation", *American Anthropologist*, 62, 1960, p. 118.

²² Steward makes the following distinction: "Regional comparison leads to the discovery of similarities, cross-cultural comparison to the discovery of regularities". See Milton B. Singer, "Summary of comments and discussion" (on the comparative method), *American Anthropologist*, 55, 1953, p. 366.

²³ op. cit., p. 139.

Van der Leeden does not discuss this question. I believe that the forms of expression which the principle of reciprocity receives in New Guinea are indeed typical of this field of study, and that they derive particular prominence from the typical preponderance of small social groupings, a preponderance which may be traced to adaptation and to independent choice. A culture does not hang in the air, but is as it were projected on to a particular ecological and technological situation, the implications of which *must* be taken into account in its characterisation, and the more so when these implications seem to influence its orientation (cultural choice). The processes of adaptation cannot then be separated from culturally-determined forms of expression. Adaptation is always achieved and canalised by means of culture. (Cf. the discussion of the small local group).

I hope I have shown in the above that the preponderance of small social groupings, and in particular of small local groups, together with cultural flexibility, influences the total culture as much as does the operation of the principle of reciprocity (van der Leeden), and that these processes do not only "refer to the dynamic interplay between various tendencies in group organization".²⁴ It seems inexact to speak of a secondary phenomenon of adaptation. Man and nature are basic conditions of culture, and are irremovably bound up with it. We may not, and we cannot, imagine man independent of his culture, nor man and his culture independent of nature. "Adaptation" may not therefore be termed a secondary phenomenon. It is as essential to each culture as is "independent choice".

To return to the issue of the exchange of women, van der Leeden is in my opinion correct in thinking that an asymmetric marriage system with matrilateral or patrilateral cross-cousin marriage occurs less widely in New Guinea than symmetric sister-exchange.²⁵ Asymmetric cross-cousin marriage is too "risky" a rule of marriage for the small and often unstable exchange-units of New Guinea, which offer inadequate guarantees for the realisation of this type of exchange. There is however another type of indirect general exchange which is as well suited as direct exchange to societies characterised by the preponderance of small exchange-units, and which possesses the advantage of indirect exchange, viz. that it is general and all-inclusive. I refer to indirect exchange by bridewealth and without an obligation or preference to marry a cross-cousin. I should point out again in this connexion

²⁴ Van der Leeden, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

²⁵ *op. cit.*, p. 143.

that it is the smallness, and thus the inadequacy, of the exchange-units which necessarily leads to multiple contacts with other exchange-units. Van der Leeden unfortunately does not discuss this form of general exchange. In circulating connubium the wife-giving party receives a guarantee that the woman who is ceded shall be replaced by another woman by means of unilateral cross-cousin marriage. Thus a woman passes from A to B, but also a woman of C or X passes to A. In an indirect exchange system by bridewealth this guarantee lies in the bridewealth, which therefore *possesses a privileged character*. A gives a woman to B because in exchange for her he receives bridewealth which will enable him to obtain a woman from C or X. Thus a network of relations of kinship comes into being, of which the number of participating exchange-units is in principle unlimited, while the choice of spouse is not limited to the cross-cousin or other specific relative. There are cases known to me, from the Ajamaroe area, the eastern Vogelkop, and the Sterrengebergte, in which one exchange-unit has marriage-contacts with 15 or 20 other units. Perhaps the only limitation is that by choice marriage is contracted within the very large circle of kin, even though distantly related, because otherwise there could develop a leak in the circulation comparable to the flight of capital in the circulation of money. On this point, in fact, the comparison with the circulation of money forces itself upon the attention, and it is perhaps not accidental that in many areas where this type of indirect exchange occurs there are also found valuables which function more or less as money (Vogelkop — *kain timur*; Central Highlands and Moejoe — cowrie-shells). This type of indirect exchange bears the same relation to direct exchange (sister-exchange) as do barter-transactions to those which are effected with the aid of a generally-accepted and valid measure of value and means of exchange into which all valuables may be converted, such as money. As the valuables in the latter case circulate together with their counter-value, viz. money, so women circulate with their counter-value, viz. bridewealth. And, just as with money, the circulation-circuit is diffuse; but the circulation lies moored to the injunction to marry within the extensive circle of relatives, and to the prohibition on direct exchange, which may only be ignored if the bridewealth cannot be paid. Sister-exchange does then appear in fact, but only as an extreme exception.²⁶

²⁶ Here too a comparison with the circulation of money suggests itself: a fixed unit of currency (e.g. the Netherlands guilder) circulates in a restricted area; money transactions are replaced by barter transactions only in the most

Bridewealth in this system of indirect exchange has moreover a function other than in circulating connubium with unilateral cross-cousin marriage. In the former, the bridewealth is primarily a guarantee; in the latter, it is a gift which is acknowledged by a counter-gift. This latter feature is indeed not lacking in the case of indirect exchange by bridewealth, but it is not primary.

The desire to make the system all-embracing may find expression in a prohibition on marriage with two sisters or two cousins. This prohibition exists in fact in the Moejoe area and in the Sterrengebergte, but not in eastern Vogelkop (Anggi Lakes, Arfak).

It seems to me that a preference — *nota bene*, preference, for it is not a prescription and in my opinion never has been — for marriage with the mother's brother's daughter which is found in Ajamaroe (only around the lakes, perhaps) and in south Moejoe is a later development from indirect exchange by bridewealth, appearing in special circumstances. Schoorl is in my view entirely correct in stating that the payment of bridewealth is the central feature in the whole Moejoe area.²⁷ I myself have found indirect exchange by bridewealth, coupled with a prohibition on cousin-marriage, everywhere in the hilly and mountainous country which is contiguous with Moejoe (viz. Mandobo, Katèmse, Sterrengebergte) and culturally closely related to it. There was no sign of any preferred marriage. Marriage with a cousin is also forbidden in North Moejoe (Toemoetoe), though it sometimes does occur in exceptional circumstances and, at the present time, under the influence of the abandonment of traditional social sanctions.²⁸

Indirect exchange by bridewealth and without cross-cousin marriage or other marriage preference is probably typical of the whole mountainous area of Netherlands New Guinea. In some coastal regions (Biak, the Sarmi littoral) the people have replaced direct exchange with indirect exchange by bridewealth.

The system of relationship terminology from Moejoe and Awjoe as far as and including the Sterrengebergte accords with a social structure of Omaha type (Murdock) and, contrary to Schoorl's opinion,

exceptional circumstances, viz. when because of a great scarcity of goods the money has become worthless.

²⁷ J. W. Schoorl, *Kultuur en Kultuurveranderingen in het Moejoegeried*, 1957, p. 37.

²⁸ I analysed a number of these cases during research at Toemoetoe in September 1959. A publication dealing with this issue, among other things, is in course of preparation.

is not based on mother's brother's daughter marriage but is a reflection of a strongly-developed patrilineal reckoning of descent.

My informants in Mindiptana (south Moejoe) related the preference for mother's brother's daughter marriage to the strongly-felt need to have some guarantee that on the one hand a marriage which had been arranged should in fact take place, and that on the other the wife-taker should meet his obligations. Also, unmarried girls, whether or not influenced by their kin, fairly often change their minds, which increases the uncertainty about the actual contraction of an agreed marriage. It may be remarked in this respect that "child marriages" used to be contracted in the Moejoe area, just as they still are today in Ninggroem. A little girl was married to a young man at a very early age, and in order to get used to the groom and his kin she moved into his parents' house. Sexual intercourse was not allowed until the girl had menstruated. This phenomenon also forms the background to the fear that the betrothal will come to nothing.²⁹ Child marriage is an attempt to cover oneself against this risk.

We know from Schoorl's thesis that mistrust of the intentions and the good faith of others and of other groups is very strong in the whole Moejoe area. It might even be said that there is a hypertrophy of mistrust. Black magic flourishes. It may be wondered whether the enormous interest in trade and the "business-like" attitude in Moejoe may not have contributed considerably to this mistrust. Woman is the supreme "valuable" in exchange. The business-like bent is seen in, among other things, the attitude towards children, particularly young girls, whose guardians are dead or have failed to meet their obligations. Others, preferably well-off people, then lend assistance and sometimes force it upon the needy party, in order to be able to demand the due counter-prestation (e.g. bridewealth) of the child when it is adult. In a negative sense this "business-like" or "objective" attitude towards children appears in the quite frequent cases of child-neglect, of which I have seen a number of harrowing examples in the Mindiptana hospital.

Why it is that mother's brother's daughter marriage remains limited to south Moejoe — it no longer occurs in Jibi, central Moejoe — is still an open question, and further research into it is urgently desirable. Are barter and mistrust less strongly developed in central and north Moejoe?

In the Ajamaroe area (Vogelkop), it appears from my own field

²⁹ I found "child-marriages" in similar circumstances in the Moiree area (eastern Vogelkop), where indirect exchange by bridewealth is also the rule.

data that mother's brother's daughter marriage is probably connected with the desire to keep the foremost valuables, viz. *kain timur* (cloths of Indonesian origin), in a small circle, so that they may be manipulated — they are lent out at interest — with as high a profit as possible.

The question arises why the preference is for mother's brother's daughter marriage and not for marriage with the patrilateral cross-cousin (father's sister's daughter). In the Sterrengebergte, where as stated marriage with a cousin is not permitted, father's sister's daughter marriage is considered wrong because it confuses the position of debtor with that of creditor: "My father gave his sister to my father's sister's husband. If he does not pay the bridewealth — which is not settled all at once — then my father has a claim on the bridewealth received for his sister's daughter. That is why I may not marry her." Reciprocal claims and debts would affect the differentiation of status, a social phenomenon, between wife-giver and wife-taker. Asymmetry, the transfer of women in one direction, is not connected in this case with cross-cousin marriage. Schoorl records a statement by Moejoe informants, which van der Leeden cites, to the effect that "it must continue in one direction, it is incorrect if it is reversed," and "marriage in the reverse direction is wrong". The prohibition on marriage with the father's sister's daughter is held to be motivated by this consideration; but we can now see that there is no necessity to relate this *per se* to circulating connubium with mother's brother's daughter marriage.

The prohibition on marriage with the father's sister's daughter, the *onong murkura* (*onong* = father's father's sister, father's sister, elder sister; *murkura* = daughter) in the Sterrengebergte is at the same time expressed as follows: "it is forbidden to marry with the father's people". The kinship relation with patrilateral relatives is regarded as very close.

Marriage with the mother's brother's daughter is considered incorrect, both in the Sterrengebergte and in north Moejoe, "because the mother's brother has already given a woman (viz. my mother)". For the same reason marriage is forbidden with the mother's sister or with two sisters. It should be remembered, in this connexion, that in both areas the mother's sister, and mother's brother's daughter are terminologically identified (viz. by *nan* and by *nang* respectively). As has already been stated, this prohibition contributes to the all-embracing character of the system and brings about a certain distribution, and

thus reduction, of risk. While marriage with the father's sister's daughter would confound the positions of debtor and creditor, marriage with the mother's brother's daughter does not have this effect, but on the contrary reinforces the debtor's position and increases the risk of nonpayment (a claim on the sister's husband is followed by a claim with respect to the marriage of his son with Ego's daughter). Both procedures are thought undesirable.

The injunction to marry the mother's brother's daughter, as well as the prohibition on doing so, both contribute to the contracting of relations with as many kin-groups as possible, even though in different systems — viz. in circulating connubium with matrilinear cross-cousin marriage and in asymmetric marriage by bridewealth. The desire to reduce the risk to the groom can as well lead to a preference for (south and central Moejoe), as to prohibition on (Sterrengebergte), marriage with the mother's brother's daughter. Finally, there is another argument to be heard in the Sterrengebergte and in north Moejoe with respect to both sorts of cousins — that a marriage between cousins is undesirable because they are children of siblings. In south Moejoe one of my informants even went so far as to explain the prohibition on father's sister's daughter marriage by saying that one might not marry one's "younger sister" (Malay: *adik*) — and this in spite of the fact that the kinship terms for sister and for father's sister's daughter are dissimilar.

Van der Leeden has, I think, demonstrated in his interesting analysis of symmetry and asymmetry in the regulation of marriage the correctness of Lévi-Strauss's position that these phenomena are not mutually exclusive but are alternate modes, viz. as direct and indirect exchange respectively, of exchanging women. They can therefore occur in one and the same culture and be capriciously distributed in one area of study, as is the case in New Guinea. His suggestions concerning the occurrence of double descent together with circulating connubium draw attention to phenomena which are well worth further attention and above all more intensive field investigation. It will be clear, however, from my description of the marriage system of Ajamaroe and Moejoe, that in opposition to van der Leeden I regard the existence there of double descent as scarcely acceptable. The circuit of indirect exchange by bridewealth is too diffuse to be connected with a latent matrilineal reckoning of descent. If indirect exchange by bridewealth goes together with a certain ideal *preference* — and not with an ideal *obligation* — for marriage with the mother's brother's daughter, then the precon-

ditions for a matrilineal rule of descent in addition to a patrilineal are still not met.

From the data collected in 1959 by Scipio, during the compilation of a precise census and civic register by the Bureau of Native Affairs at Hollandia, it appears likely that in the Sentani Lake district (northern New Guinea) double descent does in fact occur, embodied in patrilineal clans and matrilineal moities, together with an at least ideally obligatory marriage with the mother's mother's brother's daughter's daughter. Marriage with a first cousin is not permitted. Further examination and verification of this material should however be awaited. Moreover, it is not out of the question that a similar system exists in bordering areas, viz. in Humboldt/Joteffa Bay and Nimboran. Galis and van Logchem, as well as my own findings in Humboldt Bay, indicate something of the sort. Further research in these two areas is much to be desired. As yet, I doubt whether circulating connubium with unilateral cross-cousin marriage or second-cousin marriage and double-unilineality can be taken as characteristic of New Guinea. Next to direct exchange, it is indirect exchange by bridewealth that is most prominent, because these usages are the best suited to the situation existing in New Guinea, viz. a preponderance of small territorial and genealogical social groupings.

So much for the discussion of van der Leeden's premisses and mine for the conduct of comparative research in New Guinea. We both attempt to base comparative cultural research on the demonstration of the operation of certain fundamental factors in the whole area of study. Van der Leeden goes about this in a deductive way: he applies a general theory to this field of study. I proceed more inductively, and strive to characterise it. Both methods are justifiable, and they should even be combined if the maximum scientific profit is to be gained. I hope to have shown this, among other things, in the discussion of indirect exchange by means of bridewealth.

Other aims and methods are of course possible in comparative research. There is the comparative-functional method, recently brought to the fore in the Netherlands by Köbben. In my opinion, this is most successful when applied to particular problems rather than to a culture in its totality. I have in mind, for example, a comparative study of unilineal systems and the systems of kinship terminology pertaining to them. A similar study of bilateral systems is much to be desired. Moreover, these studies, particularly if undertaken in New Guinea, could contribute greatly to the refining of ethnological analytical notions

such as unilinearity, bilateralism, and ambilaterality. I agree with P. E. de Josselin de Jong in thinking that a revaluation of elementary ethnological concepts is badly needed.³⁰ In New Guinea one is often confronted with a constellation of social facts before which one asks oneself: with what term can I adequately record it? Another object for the comparative-functional method is a study of specific interrelations. By this I mean avoidance and joking relationship, the practically universally important relation between mother's brother and sister's son, the relationships between siblings and between affines. Also a comparative-functional study of bridewealth, apart from its scientific value, would also be of great practical use. Bridewealth is one of the most pressing issues in planning modern social welfare measures. The same is true of cargo cults.³¹

As further objects of comparative research I may name a study of the plots in myths. Certain mythical themes probably have a very wide distribution in New Guinea. This research could be combined with a structural investigation of myths such as van der Leeden has referred to.

Lastly, a comparative study of value-systems employed in native education would be of great scientific and practical value.³² I have the impression, however, that on this point much basic fieldwork is still to be done. The rich variety of forms of society and cultural expression makes New Guinea suitable *par excellence* for comparative fieldwork and scientific investigation of all kinds. There is certainly no place in New Guinea for a dogmatic approach. Our knowledge of the island has been greatly increased since the Second World War and permits more effective direction of field research, so that comparative research may be facilitated. In this connexion, I should emphasise strongly the need for more consultation between institutions and individuals working on New Guinea, whether in the field or in the library. There is little sign of it at present, and it is therefore pleasing to learn that the Australian National University plans to send a fieldworker to the Baliem Valley in 1960. The real interest on the part of the Netherlands is increasing, as is witnessed by the research of Oosterwal on the upper Tor (Netherlands New Guinea), financially supported by the Netherlands Organisation for Pure Research, and by the expedition of researchers to Frederik Hendrik Island and

³⁰ See his inaugural lecture: „Enige richtingen in de hedendaagse culturele antropologie”, Leiden, 1957, p. 13.

³¹ See also J. van Baal, *op. cit.*, pp. 108 ff. & p. 111.

³² See van Baal, *op. cit.*, pp. 117 ff.

Asmat financed by the W.O.N.G. Foundation in the course of 1960.

The organisation of seminars in which students of New Guinea from the whole island could take part has much to recommend it. A concerted effort, as soon as possible, seems to me imperative. Time presses, with respect both to acculturation and to political development. It is still possible at present to conduct research in peace and without hindrance.

In conclusion to this survey of New Guinea as a field for ethnological study I should like to list, point by point and for the most part in summary fashion, the following desiderata for research:

1. Continued investigation into the causes of the mode of life in small territorial and genealogical groupings, and into its influence on all aspects of life, particularly on the social structure and on the formation of personality.
2. A comparative investigation into the significance and function of small social groupings in the few areas with large local groups, e.g. Asmat and Waropen, and in the numerous areas with small local groups.
3. Research into processes of integration and disintegration, particularly in areas with miniscule communities living in a marginal situation, and in areas where cargo cults develop.
4. Continued research on the structural effect of the principle of reciprocity *in all aspects of culture* and especially in connexion with the exchange of women.
5. Research into double-unilineal structure in areas where its occurrence may reasonably be suspected.
6. An inquiry into the relation between indirect exchange with asymmetric cross-cousin or second-cousin marriage and indirect exchange by bridewealth, in areas where both systems occur simultaneously (Moejoe, Mandobo, Ajamaroe).
7. Continued and intensive research into the continuity through the generations of bilateral kinship structures.
8. Research on "value systems" in native education.
9. Continued research into the occurrence of "cultural sub-areas" within New Guinea. That these exist is indubitable. Examples from New Guinea are: the whole eastern part of Vogelkop (see Map, sections 19, 22); the mountainous western part of Vogelkop with its strictly secret and isolated houses in which youths are initiated into the secrets of magic and counter-magic (section 21); the extensive area on the north coast of New Guinea characterised by the flute-complex (from

Sarmi deep into Australian New Guinea) (sections 1, 2, 3); the Baliem Valley (section 12); the wide surroundings of the Wissel Lakes (section 9); the east-central mountain area with cultural off-shoots as far as and including Moejoe and Awjoe (sections 10, 11, 12); Mimika, Asmat and the Casuarina Coast (sections 13,16); the Jee-anim and the inhabitants of Frederik Hendrik Island in its relation to the Marind-anim (section 10); the Schouten Island and the Radja Empat (sections 5, 18); the coastal area of Bintoeni and Babo (section 22); the area around Argoeni Bay (section 15). The Bureau of Native Affairs has in its care a number of official reports and communications which urgently require documentation, a task for which however personnel are lacking. Co-operation on the part of this office with the archives section of the Ministry for Internal Affairs (Plein 1, Den Haag), the Instituut voor Volkenkunde at Utrecht, and the Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen at Amsterdam, is urgently desirable.

10. In connexion with item 9, continuation of research into art-styles by Netherlands museums.

11. Comparative-functional research as discussed in pp. 21—22 above.

12. The recording and comparison of systems of kinship terminology with the object of determining their distribution. A beginning to this project has already been made at the Instituut voor Volkenkunde at Utrecht.

13. Comparative study of mythological motifs, and a comparative structural study of myths.

14. Investigation of forms of social life and cultural expression among urban Papuans, against the background of the traditional culture.

15. Research into the economic and social implications of shifting cultivation, and of a change towards a more intensive utilisation of the land.

In New Guinea lies an enormous task for international science which is of great importance. It requires the mobilisation of funds, and close co-operation between institutions and individuals engaged in pure scientific and applied anthropological research. The accomplishment of this task will undoubtedly contribute greatly to the development and refining of anthropological theory and to a better thought-out tackling of problems of social welfare in an area in which radical cultural changes are being effected and must be effected.

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