Literacy as carco in Papua New Guinea

Literacy as Cargo in Papua New Guinea

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Introduction

Much has been made of the transforming of cognition by literacy and much less about how literacy changes social perception in terms of the written word. It is the latter which concerns me here. Illich and Sanders (1988:32), for instance, observe an unprecedented change in social relations in northern Europe during the Middle Ages, when "trust, power, possession and everyday status were henceforth functions of the alphabet." They go on to explain how the use of documents turned writing into a constituent element in the mediation of mundane relations. Before this, in the Early and High Middle Ages writing had been extolled and honored as a mysterious embodiment of the word of God. We might call this transition from the religious to the wordly domain the "secularization of literacy." It is to the consequences of this shift in the functions of literacy which Illich and Sanders allude when they speak of the "alphabetization of the popular mind."

Among the many effects of European colonization of the Pacific has been the spread of literacy, particularly in metropolitan European languages such as French and English. The introduction of vernacular literacy to a preliterate society involves much more than devising optimal orthographies for an unwritten language, a process commonly referred to as "reducing a language to writing." Literacy is not simply a question of reducing a language to writing. As Joseph (1987:39) points out, once writing has been introduced in a speech community the balance of power shifts. The literate become a powerful and élite minority who try to impose their norms of language on others.

Just as the spread of literacy in 12th century Europe cannot be separated from religion, it cannot in Papua New Guinea either. Literacy is a relatively recent phenomenon in Papua New Guinea as it is elsewhere in developing countries of the Third World. In Papua New Guinea literacy has yet to undergo secularization.

Illich and Sanders (1988:32) note that as long as literacy was confined to minorities, power was exercised in the form of foreign rule, but then filtered down into society as a whole. We can see this in the Pacific, where Europeans legitimized, certified and extended their powers through acts of literacy. In Vanuatu and New Caledonia, for instance, Europeans pressed for the establishment of land registration under colonial administrations (see e.g. van Trease 1987). Traders and settlers rushed to register land claims with written documents to which the populace did not have access. The signing away of land by written documents was contrary to the traditional system of customary tenure by clans. In this way documents became objects through which a piece of property could change hands. It was largely through such events that Pacific Islanders became acquainted with writing and the importance attached to it by Europeans.

The arrival of literacy in Papua New Guinea

Literacy was first spread along the north coast of New Guinea through the use of Tok Pisin in Catholic mission schools. Tok Pisin is an English-based pidgin/creole now spoken by more than a million people in Papua New Guinea. A product of 19th century colonialism in the Pacific and used for trade between Pacific Islanders and Europeans, it has since become the most important lingua franca in a highly multilingual country where more than 700 languages are spoken. While Tok Pisin was originally a language used for instrumental purposes in vertical, hierarchical, communicative encounters between Europeans and indigenous people, in its expanded varieties it later came to serve an integrative function at the horizontal level of communication among villagers. Amidst a highly linguistically diverse scene, Tok Pisin today stands as a lingua franca which cuts across the linguistic and social spectrum. Roughly half of the population of some 3 and a half million claim to speak it. It is known by villagers and government ministers. Most government and church communication at the grassroots level is in Tok Pisin. Tok Pisin was the language used to make the public aware of voting, elections and Independence in 1975. Before 1975 the northern half of the eastern portion of the island of New Guinea was controlled first by the Germans and then the Australians, while the southern half was first a British and then an Australian colony. In 1982 90% of the candidates campaigned in Tok Pisin. When the New Guinea legislature was established in the mid 1960s, Tok Pisin was accepted for use in the House of Assembly. In the first four years of its use it was restricted

to certain topics and specific purposes. Now any business arising in the House can be and usually is discussed in Tok Pisin. Tok Pisin has in the past few decades become the main language of the migrant proletarian and the first language of the younger generation of town-born children. However, English is the official language of education, even though it is known by only 20% of the population.

Table 1 shows that literacy is still not widespread in Papua New Guinea. Statistics are compiled for the three major languages, Tok Pisin, English, and Hiri Motu (itself orignally a pidgin based on the indigenous language Motu). Fewer than one third of the population over 10 can read and write. Adult literacy is not given high priority and there are few classes. Most of these are run by missions and the Summer Institute of Linguistics. Those who are literate are just as likely to be literate in Tok Pisin as in English, despite the official policy of English medium education. Those who are literate in an indigenous language are more likely to be literate in a language other than Hiri Motu. Although literacy is difficult to measure, it is often used as an index of development. Tuvalu, for instance, is not classified as a "less developed country" by the United Nations simply because literacy is virtually universal. Although the country is poor in terms of other resources, this classification may exclude it from consideration for foreign aid.

Table 1
Rate of literacy in three major lingua francas [data from 1980 National Population Census]

Major languages spoken by population 10+		rate of literacy
English	22.34	20.17
Tok Pisin	45	20.20
Motu	9.4	4.5
	other languages	14.23
	illiterate	67.87

The systematic development of Tok Pisin as a written language for use by Melanesians began in the 1920s when Catholic missionaries realized its potential as a valuable lingua franca for proselytizing among a linguistically diverse population and began using it for teaching. When the missionaries arrived in the late 1880s, Tok Pisin was already becoming well established and some of the missions realized the practicality of adopting an already

existing lingua franca, even if they were not particularly fond of the idea of using a pidginized variety of English.

For the missionaries civilization was synonymous with Christianity, and they conceived of education in terms of the acquisition of literacy (mainly for Bible reading). Providing education to indigenous peoples was also seen as part of the white man's burden and was used to justify the legitimacy of colonial rule. Missions wanted to educate indigenous people in order to convert them, while governments wanted to train them to work in the service of Europeans. This inevitably meant that decisions had to be taken about which language to use and linguistic matters had to be subject to control. The acquisition of literacy was the common ground which brought together the interests of both parties, although they were not always agreed about which language to use.

In the early days, the majority of indigenous people regarded education as a waste of time. Under the boarding school system established by German missionaries, Neuendettelsau mission pupils were attracted to the school by the offer of trade goods in the same way as laborers were attracted to the plantations. Pupils and/or their kinsmen were paid off with axes and other goods after a year's study. This was common practice at other missions too. Thus, for example, one French missionary wrote (cited in Smith 1987:16): "Our missionaries collect children and the recruiting is easy. It is a matter of buying them from their uncles on whom they are dependent." Some mission societies purchased orphans and even village children with parents. Thus, from the native perspective all Europeans were recruiters of one sort or another. Contacts between missionaries and the indigenous population were simply an extension of the kind of trading relationships contracted on the plantation. Schooling for some was a form of paid employment (Firth 1986:156). After the pupils had been catechised for a few years, they were dispatched to their villages with stories of the white man's wealth and power. As the pupils also did work for the missionaries, they were a cheap and captive labor force, just as plantation workers were.

Despite reluctance on the part of some villagers to attend church and school, Johannes Flierl, who arrived in the Lutheran Mission in Finschafen in 1886, wrote (1927:31): "the magnet that attracted and held them and also made their parents willing to leave the children with us for a while, was tools and implements and other articles of the white man that they coveted." It is in this sense that Swatridge (1985) speaks of education as

"cargo" in the Papua New Guinean context. By this he means that schooling is understood in cargo terms. *Kago* is the Tok Pisin term used to refer to European material goods. As Harding (1967:20) puts it, cargoism is the "Melanesian world view applied to the task of providing meaningful interpretations of European culture, in particular, the sources of European wealth and cultural superiority." Local people were unable to understand how the wealth of white people could be generated by other than ritual means. They thought if they had access to the white man's secret formulae, they would be able to get their cargo. The power of Europeans was even further enhanced by the advent of the Second World War, when the vast accumulation of goods brought by the Allied troops far exceeded anything the people had seen before.

Swatridge (1985:62) cites interviews he conducted with secondary school pupils in Papua New Guinea to illustrate the cargo mentality associated with education. One 10th grader comments here on the reactions of villagers when they saw white men:

> They saw the whites every time eat their food only from the house. The people wondered where they got it from. They thought their gateway was the river. So they thought that if we sent our children to school they will teach them how to get all these things which the whites are having. So they sent their kids into school. When they went to school in grades 1 to 6, some of them were selected and went to high school. Later, when these people graduated they told their parents that the education system is not like that. It is a place where they get knowledge and get jobs to earn money.

Another 10th grader said (cited in Swatridge 1985:75):

> When school first came to my village the older people believed that when they put their children in school, they will get the white man's knowledge and will contact our dead relatives and bring goods to our villages.

Another example comes from Michael Danga, who was born in Simbu Province in 1945 and recalls the speech made by the Australian kiap on the establishment of the first administration school in Kundiawa (cited in Weeks 1977:18–9):

> Olrait yupela manmeri i harim gut tru. Nau mi kam long tokim yupela

olsem, mipela waitman i laik givim gutpela save long pikinini bilong yupela.
Olsem na mipela i wokim wanpela sikul long Kundiawa. Ol boi tasol bai igo
sikul.
"Alright you people listen well. I have come to tell you that the white people
want to give knowledge to your children. Therefore we are building a
school in Kundiawa. Only the boys will go to school."[1]

When the people were puzzled at the concept of a school and what would
go on there, the kiap said:

Em i olsem. Taim yu salim pikinini i go sikul em bai ikamap olsem mi
waitpela. Em bai sikul na kisim big save, planti mani, put shoe na soks
olsem mi tu. Bihain bai yupela hamamas tru.
"It's like this. When you send your child to school, they'll become like us
whitemen. He will go to school and get a lot of knowledge, plenty of money,
put on shoes and socks like me. Then you'll really rejoice."

The promotion of literacy and schooling took place in a cargo-cult
atmosphere, with indigenous people expecting access to wealth and status
and Europeans hoping for an ample supply of converts or cheap labor.

Prior to the 1950s, there was no central government Department of
Education and there was no organized curriculum until the late 50s. As
Smith and Guthrie (1980:7) say: "Governments were content to support
the missions in their work, for their aim of pacification, civilization and
native education were equally served by the mission schools." After the
Department of Education took charge of the schools in the 1950s,
however, government assistance was given only to English-medium
schools. The government's aim at this stage, as in many developing
countries, was to provide universal primary education and literacy in
English.

Preferences for particular language varieties are always articulated
within the context of an ideology which reflect society's view of itself. In the
case of Papua New Guinea indigenous views of language and society
clashed with those of the colonizers. The rhetoric of the European
colonizers was based on the notion of one nation—one language, a

[1] Even today education is gender-biased with many more males in attendance than
females, who are kept at home for work in the family gardens.

characteristically European mode of sociolinguistic organization. Multilingualism was seen as a threat to the integrity of the state, and a common language critical for unification. Linguistic diversity is still seen as an obstacle to development. Grillo (1989:173) points out that an essential feature of linguistic stratification in Europe is an ideology of contempt. Subordinate languages are despised languages. From the 16th century the label "barbarous" was applied by speakers of dominant languages to those who spoke subordinate languages. The colonizers transported this ideology with them to the New World, where they used it to justify their policy of spreading their own languages as a means of socio-economic control. Thus, Sir Hubert Murray, British administrator of Papua, commented in 1924 (cited by Johnson 1979:3–4):

> The superiority of English to any New Guinea languages is so great that it is obviously to the advantage of the native to acquire it as quickly as possible, and if we do not teach it to him, we are hardly carrying out the duties of our "sacred trust" . . . whereas it is the duty of the civilized overlords of primitive folk to leave them their old institutions so far as they are not directly prejudiced to their gradual advancement in culture . . . yet this consideration hardly applied at all to the native language. If the tongue of an advanced people can be substituted, it is for the good of all concerned.

This attempt to justify the imposition of the colonizer's language as a solution to the communicative problems posed by linguistic diversity occurred throughout the Pacific (see also Fabian 1986 on the use of this tactic in colonial Africa).

The government's battle to get rid of Tok Pisin began in earnest in the late 1940s and early 1950s, when the United Nations began to speak out against pidgin English and recommended that Australia take "energetic steps" to eradicate it from all instruction. At first people were eager to learn Tok Pisin, often in the erroneous belief that it was the white man's language. Rowley (1966:166) relates an incident which shows how frustration at failure to acquire the white man's language resulted in cargoism.

> Some of our men have been to school with the mission. We were looking for a road and we thought we had found it. But the road was not straight. They taught us only *tokboi*. The road turned and brought us back to

> ourselves, our own *tokboi*. They did not show us the straight road that
> would lead us on to your knowledge, your ideas, your language. They
> showed us a picture of God in a book. They did not show us God.

The first students who were pushed through the expanded education
system were able to obtain well-paying jobs in town after leaving school
and there was rapid upward mobility. The shortage of qualified indigenous
people was so severe that virtually any paper qualification and minimal
literacy skills were sufficient to guarantee a job. As the promises of
postwar government education were paying off in these early years,
villagers in rural areas wanted their children to go to school so they could
get jobs and send money and goods back home. As Independence
approached, however, a flooded job market caused qualifications to
escalate and employment opportunities to decline sharply. It became
apparent that education had relied too heavily on infusions of foreign aid.
The system was producing school leavers at a rate faster than the economy
could absorb them. Now it is estimated that only 10-15% of the work force
can expect to find formal employment.

In the postwar years, fluency in English and English literacy are sought
after for the almost magical access that they give to jobs and cargo. English
is a kind of cultural capital with a value in the linguistic market place (see
Bourdieu and Boltanski 1975). Villagers became distrustful of missions
which taught in the vernacular in the belief that they withheld the truth.
The Enga, who are primarily subsistence farmers with a short period of
European contact, underwent the transition from vernacular schools to
Tok Pisin to English-medium education in the space of a few years. Ewald
(1968), who did a survey of Engan motives for education, reports that the
parents wanted education in Tok Pisin for their children rather than in
Enga, which was the medium of the Lutheran schools in the area. The most
important reason Enga people offered for sending their children to school
was to enable them to get employment later. The aspirations of the parents
and children were geared towards obtaining higher status jobs. Only 5.4%
of the children (and 1.6% of the parents) wanted to be agricultural
workers.

Most Papua New Guineans regard modern jobs in the formal
employment sector as more prestigious than traditional labor, with the
perceived prestige of occupations determined primarily by income
(Conroy 1976:Ch. 6—7). Attendance at school and gaining employment are

still seen as proof of successful education because the educational system was originally designed to train an élite corps of administrators rather than on developing resources and skills at the community level. The schools have thus not altered their function from colonial days when they were seen as training "native managers of other managers." (Gilliam 1984:305)

Even in the 1960s Ewald says that the Engan belief in the ability of Tok Pisin medium education to secure higher status jobs for their children was misguided. A later commentator found the Enga to be reluctant to support either vernacular or Tok Pisin medium schools. Thus, Hilgendorf (1980:2):

> Enga people viewed schools as a way to become eligible for employment. As late as 1963, companies were seeking people literate in Pidgin to become employees. Then, just a couple of years later, the requirement was Standard Two-English. People became disenchanted with Komuniti Edukesan Sentas. Knowing how to read and write in Engan and even Pidgin had become virtually useless! They demanded more English schools. They withdrew monetary and verbal support from the system.

Since the language of government schools was English, many people preferred to enroll their children there rather than in mission schools. The seemingly direct equation between school attendance and becoming like the whiteman and having the things the white people had, as suggested in the kiap's speech I cited earlier, if anything, made the people inclined to support the government rather than mission schools once the government established schools after World War 2. In some areas where there were already mission schools, parents requested government schools be built because at the mission schools the children got only "tok bilong god tasol" (the word of God).

It is unlikely that Europeans did much to counteract the erroneous view the indigenous population had of literacy and schooling since it served their purposes to have them in awe of European power and technology. Burridge (1960) observes the respect accorded to the *pas*, a term used to refer to any piece of written paper. Villagers holding such a *pas* were allowed to go in town where others could not go. A *pas* could get cash from banks and goods from overseas.

Similar scenarios are recorded in other cases of contact between literate and pre-literate cultures. For example, in New Zealand the Maori believed the printed (particularly, sacred) text had a magical power of

protection against enemies. Mihalic (1977:1122) says that Papua New Guinean readers of *Wantok*, the only newspaper published in Tok Pisin and the only major secular publication, tend "to take as Gospel truth whatever is written." Strong missionary faith in the power of the word is affirmed in the opening words of *Genesis* in the *Old Testament*. Christianity is very much a religion of the book; one had to be able to read and recite from the Bible in order to be saved and the authority of the church derives from it. Most of the Christian missions believed it was essential for their converts to read the word of God. In Samoa, for instance, literacy was made a requirement of church membership and since belonging to the church was highly desirable, people were eager to become literate (Huebner 1989:63).

Contrary to what is often claimed by supporters of literacy programs, literacy has seldom emerged as a response to needs inherent in traditionally oral societies, but has been used by outsiders to achieve certain objectives. Despite the claims made for literacy's transformation of cognitive processes, society and consciousness (see e.g. Ong 1982 and Goody 1977), critical examination indicates they have been exaggerated. The near total absence of secular material in Tok Pisin and vernacular languages, has, however, created a powerful misconception of what literacy is. Kulick and Stroud (1990) show how Gapun villagers, who live close to the border of East Sepik and Madang Province, have seen similarities between their own ideas and those of the missionaries and elaborated the link between literacy, Christianity and cargoism. The people of Gapun believe words have power because they have always been associated with the ability to influence supernatural beings. The practice of word tabooing is but one instance of the belief in the efficacy of words. However, the missionaries' words linked them with a more powerful deity than their own, one who could deliver the white man's cargo. As soon as they discovered that these words could be put on paper for anyone who knew how to read to decipher, people were keen to be taught to read and write.

Kulick and Stroud relate how boys who have finished primary school wonder how they can obtain the application forms which they have heard will bring cargo if filled out correctly. One young man in his twenties believed that some one had stolen seven million Kina from him (i.e. nearly the equivalent sum in U.S. dollars). He had filled in a lottery form on the assumption that all one had to do to win was to write one's name and

address without any mistakes.

Many villagers believe the missionaries and government are still hiding information because they do not want to reveal the secrets necessary to get cargo. Because traditional oratorical style is often indirect and builds on analogy, people are used to relating seemingly abstract discourse to particular events. They are always on the look-out for the "true" hidden meanings of the words of others. Kulick and Stroud argue that instead of being transformed by literacy, the villagers have transformed it to fit in with their own belief systems. In this sense they have not misconceived anything.

Mühlhäusler (1990) has questioned the value of vernacular literacy promoted by missionaries in the Pacific. In more than a few instances one of the first uses to which vernacular literacy was put was to sign away traditional land to colonizers. Maori assent to the written Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 within twenty-five years of the advent of literacy became the substantive ground for British sovereignty over New Zealand. In discussing the case of Maori literacy, MacKenzie (1987:178—9) notes that historians have too readily affirmed extensive and high levels of literacy among the Maori in the early years of European settlement without taking into account that a shift from an oral to literate culture involves more than learning the rudiments of writing and reading or signing one's name to a printed document. According to MacKenzie (1978:178), the missionaries "failed lamentably to equip the Maori to negotiate their rights with the Pakeha [whites SR] in the one area that really mattered to them — land." He cites this as a clear example of the way in which even the most sophisticated technology will fail to serve an irrelevant ideology, i.e. an alien religion.

Although most of the land in New Guinea was not alienated, New Guineans signed away their own labor and often their lives when they signed contracts (referred to in Pidgin as *mekim pepa* "to make paper") to work as indentured laborers. There were many cases where workers were unwillingly recruited and passed uncomprehendingly through the ceremony of signing a written contract to work on a plantation for several years. Presumably many of them though they were performing a ritual to obtain the material goods which Europeans used to wave before them to entice them to sign.

Conclusion

The constitution of Papua New Guinea calls for all persons to achieve universal literacy in Tok Pisin, Hiri Motu or English and in a tok ples. Yet, plans for vernaculars or Tok Pisin to be used in primary schools as languages of instruction were abandoned early on. Because control of English is needed for participation in national power development, modernization of vernacular languages and Tok Pisin is not encouraged. Even now there is a strong link between vernacular literacy and missionization, while literacy in metropolitan languages reflects attempts by colonial governments to bring about social and economic change.

The models of development which prevail in Papua New Guinea have come via colonialism and indigenous definitions of development have taken second place. Although 90% of the population depends on agriculture, development has come to be associated with wealth in natural or mineral resources, where Australian interests are paramount. Although self-reliance is one of the eight aims of the constitution, the country is still dependent on Australia fo a significant, although declining, portion of its budget. Financial dependency is of course symbolic of the illusion of independence. As Nelson (1972:114) says, "political colonialism can be removed with a grandly worded declaration; neo-colonialism cannot." Australia exerts control over its neo-colony by imposing its models of development and controlling the economy to its own advantage. Even now 50% of Papua New Guinea imports are supplied by Australia. Years after the creation of a House of Assembly containing a majority of elected Papua New Guineans and in the years following independence, there has been no radical change in the direction of policy or substantial shift in power from the Australian administration. While the colonial struggle was between Europeans and those whom they colonized, the role of the foreign colonizers has now been transferred to the English-speaking élite who have perpetuated the colonizers' language and lifestyle.

Colonialism created center-periphery relations between towns, which are not part of traditional culture, and rural villages, where 86% of the people still live. Foreign domination of the economy is particularly apparent in towns. Peripheral areas become dependent socially, economically, politically and geographically. Peripheral regions are marginalized so that they are underdeveloped. This political economic

period (see e.g. Wallerstein 1966). From a linguistic point of view, incorporation into the center has entailed the loss of indigenous languages, in both the colonies and home country. The educated are forced to migrate to town by virtue of their qualifications and many migrate to town to obtain education, thus creating more pressure on the town's economy and services. The social cost of modernization has been migration, which has raised unfulfilled expectations and aspirations at the same time as it has caused alienation from traditional society. The educated become rural misfits.

Ahai (1984:26) says school leavers cause problems because they are culturally disoriented in a system that emphasizes foreign values in a foreign language and are not prepared for community life. At the moment for many children in rural areas, English is a language which is used only at school, and there, only to a very limited degree. They acquire literacy in a language which they will never use once they have left school. Kulick (1990:79), for example, says that English has played almost no role in Gapun villagers' understanding of development.

Educational policy cannot be formulated in isolation from policies concerning rural and urban development. In any case, educational systems are more likely to maintain social stratification rather than change it. By the early 1970s it was already apparent that the expansion of education into rural areas accelerated a migration of people into towns. In 1973, scarcely a decade after the Foot Commission's indictment of Australia for failure to provide secondary education, a visiting United Nations mission argued for a reversal of what it saw as undue emphasis on the production of high level man power. It criticized the overproduction of school leavers and concluded that the highest priority was to create employment and income opportunities at the lower end of the employment market (Faber et al. 1973:48). It also recommended that further expansion of the educational system be limited to those districts with school attendance below the national average.

What I have said here casts some doubt on highly influential ideologies about colonial development, e.g. the desirability of mass literacy, universal primary education, the inevitability of urbanization and policies which favored the concentration of resources in urban areas as the solution to inequalities. Educational policy is often singled out for criticism, but it is only part of a complex picture.

Nowadays, many of these strategies for development are seen as

misguided. Fischer (1970:ix), for instance, describes the educational policies advocated by UNESCO during the 1960s as "extraordinarily naive." Similarly, in retrospect, the Ashby report (Federal Ministry of Education, 1960:41), which recommended "massive, unconventional and expensive" increases in educational expenditure in Nigeria, has been acclaimed as one of the "most wrong-headed pieces of advice given on educational policy to any African government over the last decade." (Foster 1970:261) It was, however, widely cited at the time as a model for developing countries. Influential economists too, such as Galbraith, contributed to this ideology which greatly exaggerated the benefits which would accrue from educational expansion and the acquisition of literacy. Thus, Galbraith (1964:80): "Nowhere in the world . . . is there an illiterate peasantry that is progressive. Nowhere is there a literate peasantry that is not." He has recently articulated the same position in stating that "We must remind ourselves that in this world there is no literate population that is poor and no illiterate population that is anything but poor. (*Guardian*, March 27, 1991)."

Scholars, however, now question the literacy myth, i.e. the view that the acquisition of literacy leads to social mobility, overcoming poverty and achieving self-fulfilment. Taking 19th century Canada as an example, Graff (1979), for instance, claims that the deprived classes and ethnic groups as a whole were further oppressed by literacy. Greater literacy did not lead to greater equality or better conditions for the working classes. Literacy correlates instead with continuing social stratification and served as a means of social control. Today in post-colonial Papua New Guinea, social mobility, wealth, prestige are almost exclusively related to education. Where more than 86% of the population still have no formal schooling at all, education can quickly create vast inequalities. School outcomes create categories of literate and non-literate. Schooling and literacy create a division between those whose credentials give them access to town as opposed to those who have no negotiable skills on the wage market. In traditional society illiteracy of course posed no problem; it becomes a problem, however, when part of society is illiterate. Then literacy becomes essential for the functioning of that society.

What happened in colonial Africa was repeated in Papua New Guinea. Fabian (1986:68) could just as well be writing about Papua New Guinea when he reports that schooling in the Belgian Congo was a factor that could double or triple wages. "The market value of competence in a

European language and of a certain degree of literacy was established, and means to procure these assets had been found, *before* the Government took over the "promotion" of languages and the organization of schooling. Similarly, the spread of English in Tanganyika under British rule had the effect of demoting Swahili to a second class language. With Swahili one could participate in the government only as far as the junior Civil Service. At higher levels, English was required (Whiteley 1969:61–2).

Furnivall (1948:372), who was one of the earliest observers to make a comparative study of formal western education in "tropical colonies," generalizes that educational policy has developed along similar lines in these places, produced similar types of schools, and encountered similar difficulties. Repeatedly, the results have been directly contrary to the ends proposed. "For the repeated failure there would seem to be one sufficient explanation: they disregard the environment." Furnivall is especially critical of the single-minded view that schools are economic institutions. Furnivall (1948:404; 376) goes on to say:

> Schools, teachers and textbooks may try to sow the seed of Western civilization, but pupils are content to pluck the fruit. They see the fruit; they see that export crops are more profitable than food crops; that the motor car is speedier and more comfortable than the bullock cart; and . . . they learn that education is a way to make a living. . . . From the beginning of the nineteenth century, missionaries and humanitarians have expected education in the tropics to change the character of the environment, but in the event the environment had changed the character of education. . . . where schools teach children how to live, the more who go to school the better; but when they teach them merely how to make a living, the more who go to school, the less they earn.

The identification of church with school and vice versa has had enormous consequences, not just in Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific, but in Africa too. Mission literacy was not intended to liberate, but to indoctrinate. The government, however, has been unwilling to intervene in missionary activities. Former Prime Minister Michael Somare, for instance, said in reply to a complaint from a Southern Highlands MP about attempts by the church to change traditional life styles that he would not interfere unless it could be shown that the activities of a church group were detrimental to national development: Elsewhere, however, he (1975:13)

has said: "the missionaries who tried to destroy our culture never properly understood our system of values." Many of the political leaders and urban élite of the country have been educated at mission schools and are reluctant to challenge their cultural hegemony.

Unless the populace has access to information, they will be controlled by a small minority who do have access to it. Because illiteracy is high, the country's newspapers reach a limited audience. The Australian-owned *Post Courier, Niugini News* and the *Times* are the English language dailies, while *Wantok* is published in Tok Pisin. Since national news is mostly printed or broadcast in English, it is restricted to only a small minority of the population.

The first Secretary of Education after independence, Tololo, (1975:11) was critical of what he called "'cultural colonialism' . . . the semi-magical belief that speaking and writing English like Europeans means the possession of many goods and power." The cargo mentality I described here is in some respects a local manifestation of a global demand for English. However, in the context of a developing country like Papua New Guinea, where literacy has yet to be secularized, and the functions of writing have yet to be seen as relevant to traditional domains, the acquisition of literacy remains an "act of faith and hope," whose results have not delivered the cargo.

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