

Gender accommodation in the New Guinea highlands

The construction of houses has further gender dimensions, which revolve around a sexual division of labour

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ABSTRACT:

A discussion of housing arrangements in the Was valley of the Southern Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea opens up some intriguing questions about gender relations. The construction of houses has further gender dimensions, which revolve around a sexual division of labour. The paper argues that Was valley attitudes to gender, as illustrated by such housing issues, challenge conventional views of male-female relations in the New Guinea Highlands, which are portrayed as unequal, even exploitative of women. It also argues that they challenge conventional views of the division of labour, both those coming from economics such as Adam Smith and Karl Marx and those originating in sociology with Émile Durkheim and Herbert Spencer. The esteem accorded to individual liberty and equality, which I think are central values in Wola social life, informs this investigation of sexual division of labour arrangements. It brings out the paradoxes evident in stateless political-economic orders, and invites interpretation of their transactional accommodation.

When I arranged for some friends to build an enzatenda style house, so that I could study house construction in detail, some of my neighbours thought that they had finally convinced me of the danger of living together with my wife. An enzatenda is a style of house seen throughout the Was valley that has separate male and female accommodation. It has an aend wil 'foyer' at the front, where men sit and cook, which has a crawl-through doorway in the internal wall that leads to the men's uwpuuwk tubael 'sleeping room'. At the rear, such a house has a tenda 'women's room' reached by a separate crawl-through doorway in the outer wall. My neighbours were disappointed when a friend and his family took up residence in the finished house (Sillitoe 2010:225). Although on reflection, the construction of pig pens in the rear women's room indicated our intentions, particularly in view of my disastrous foray into pig keeping (Sillitoe 2010:257-60) and my wife's sensible refusal to be part of that escapade, whose supposed 'quarters' contained the pens.

The actions of people following the construction of a house to ensure that it becomes warm and cosy further reflect something about male-female relations. In addition to the practical steps taken lighting fires to warm up and dry out the damp clay floor and green building materials of a 'raw' newly built house, house owners place an aend showaip 'house taboo' on it, prohibiting any married persons, other than the residents of the house, from approaching it for 'one moon'. This aend tinjiyay 'house cover-up' is necessary to prevent anyone who has recently had sexual relations from approaching the house because if they did so it would not dry out properly but remain chilly and inhospitable. Indeed from the time they start work

on a house, no individual should approach who has recently engaged in coitus and the builders should remain celibate too. The residents also abstain from sexual relations for 'one moon' after taking up residence in a new house. In order to protect their houses from the gaze of those 'carrying sexual contamination', anxious owners sometimes erect high screens of cut cane grass around their new homes, particularly enza 'men's houses' and if they are adjacent to heavily used footpaths.

REGION AND RESIDENCES

This new house taboo on sexual relations is one of a range of injunctions that hedge around interaction between women and men (Sillitoe 1979a). They are of a piece with the design of houses and living arrangements in the Was valley, which signal to even the casual observer something about male-female relations and discrimination between their domains - albeit gradual change has occurred in accommodation arrangements (Sillitoe 2010:225), not that this invalidates knowledge about what pertained previously and the political-economic implications, particularly as these relate to still extant labour arrangements.

The Wola speakers, an estimated total population of 60,000, occupy five valleys in the Southern Highlands Province, from the Mendi river in the east to the Augu in the west. They live in homesteads comprising nuclear or extended families, scattered along the sides of valleys, indistinctly grouped together on territories, to which kinship structures access to land (Sillitoe 1999), resulting in loosely constituted kin corporations.

The region is divided up into a large number of territories to which these kin groups, called sem 'families',

claim rights collectively. The country is rugged, comprising sharp-crested mountain ridges, ranging between 1800 and 2200m ASL. Watersheds and some valley areas are heavily forested, other settled parts are under garden regrowth, notably cane grassland.

The Wola are swidden and fallow horticulturalists, their neat gardens dotted about valleys. Sweet potato is the staple, typically cultivated in composted mounds; other crops include bananas, taro, various cucurbits and greens (Bourke et al. 1995; Sillitoe 1996). A marked gender division informs activities, men undertaking the initial work of clearing and fencing and woman assuming most responsibility for routine cultivation.

The exchange of pigs, with other wealth - including cash today and previously sea-shells and cosmetic oil - between defined categories of kin on specified occasions, is a prominent feature of social life (Sillitoe 1979b). The transactions remain today a significant aspect of social order in this fiercely egalitarian society with weak central government authority and lawless 'rascal' activity a constant threat throughout the region.

Men who excel at exchange achieve locally positions of renown and influence, called ol howma they approximate to 'big men' elsewhere. But bigmanship does not extend to authority to direct the actions of others. In the past, supernatural beliefs centred on ancestors' spirits causing sickness and death by 'eating' vital organs, others' powers of sorcery and 'poison', and malevolent forest spirits. Sometimes people offered pigs to restrain these malicious supernatural powers. Today many people profess to be Christians and attend mission services. The region is peripheral in development terms, although the Highlands Highway runs through Wola territory. Cash crops are few. But with gas and oil finds the position may change, with possible exploitation of these in the near future.

It is residence, notably arrangements involving men's and women's accommodation, which primarily underlies the distinctions made between the various kinds of house seen in the region, which in turn informs variations in construction. These gendered accommodation arrangements may be seen, from an 'interpretivist' perspective (Geertz 1993), as symbolising female and male relations.

The enzatenda 'men's-women's house', such as we built, comprises all of the features found in other types of houses, with differing ground plans. An enza 'men's house' comprises the front two enzatenda rooms with a foyer and men's sleeping room.

A tenda 'women's house' truncates the front rather than the rear of the enzatenda, having no open-fronted foyer room and usually comprising one room with no internal dividing wall; the internal enzatenda wall with the central crawl through doorway equates with the front outside wall of such a house. Sometimes they have two rooms; such houses are often longer and have a central solid internal dividing wall and two crawl-through entrances in the external wall, giving accommodation for two women and their children. A momaenda 'family house' is built according to the same design as a tenda 'women's house', usually a single roomed dwelling, it only differs in having men, women and children living together.

The type of house families occupy is a matter of personal choice - mbinyon konem 'their thoughts' - with no social patterning evident beyond that of gender. Some families opt for males and females living in separate men's and women's houses and in others they decide to live together in the same house, sometimes in separate rooms and other times in the same one. The decision making is difficult to follow, depending to a certain extent on family dynamics, previous events, location and current housing arrangements. A man whose father and brothers live in a longstanding men's house, for instance, may decide to reside with them and build a separate house for his wife and children. If he is polygynously married, his wives may demand that he builds a house for each of them - particularly if they are not on good terms, otherwise differences between them may make life difficult for the family - and refuse a larger house divided into separate rooms.

One reason that people give for the gendered separation of living arrangements is men's fear of associating too closely with women, who they believe may make them sick, even fatally ill, particularly if they come into contact with menstrual blood (Sillitoe 1979a). Regarding the question of why people believe that a non-toxic substance is poisonous, we can speculate that sometime in the distant past a man (or men) fell sick and died after some contact with menstrual blood and that this led to fears that became widely recognized and passed on from generation to generation. Once culturally established, we can appreciate how such fears may pass from generation to generation - for instance, I have no firsthand experience of strychnine being poisonous but I believe that it is, as I have been told so and I have no wish to experiment on to see if it would poison me or others.

► **SEXUAL DIVISION OF LABOUR**

The beliefs about women's capabilities to harm men are a feature of the differentiation between their respective gendered domains - note that it is a consequence not necessarily a reason for their existence in functional sense - which has particular resonance regarding the sexual division of labour that structures many tasks in the Was valley, including house construction. The building of houses falls largely to men who collect and prepare the necessary materials, and construct the framework of the house (see Meggitt 1957 for an account of a house in the Enga region that is similar in design to those in the Was valley, and Steensberg 1980:124-180 on house construction in various highlands regions).

The work involves the construction of walls from sharpened wooden stakes and sheets of pandan bark, and the erection of a roof that features a double ridge pole arrangement supporting rafters with horizontal battens attached to support the thatch. It is at the thatching stage that women may assist, collecting and transporting thatching materials, which usually comprise cane grass or kunai grass.

If asked why there is a sexual division of labour in house building, people are likely to point out that it involves the use of axes and that as men only can use these tools they are responsible for constructing houses. They believe that women can blunt an axe just by handling it. They may also add that it is a burly 'strong' task, implying that such a heavy undertaking requires men's physical strength. Regarding this gendered structure of production, there are intriguing - albeit locally unremarked - parallels with female and male roles in reproduction.

Women continuously contribute blood and flesh to a foetus growing in the womb, they say, whereas men only do so intermittently during acts of coitus, their semen furthering the growth of bones. Similarly, men undertake productive tasks intermittently, often featuring heavy bursts of labour - as in house building, being involved in the construction of perhaps one or two houses a year, and in the pioneering of new swiddens - tasks that involve the erection of the bone-like frame of various structures and garden fences; whereas women contribute continuously to the tasks that fall to them - such as swidden cultivation, undertaking gardening activities daily and making artefacts such as bags regularly - supplying the food and things their families require to grow and sustain themselves (Sillitoe 2010:258-329). The existence of these male and female domains relates intimately to the stateless order; which I have previously depicted in terms of transactor versus producer domains, although I have subsequently dropped this as too stark with both men and women involved in transaction and production (Sillitoe 2010:364).

The Was valley labour arrangements, situated in a stateless subsistence political-economic context, suggest an alternative view of the division of labour to those of classic studies of the topic such as Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, Karl Marx's *Capital* and Émile Durkheim's *The Division of Labour in Society* that continue to hold sway. The sexual division of labour effects radically different outcomes to the occupational division of labour, prioritising other values. The specialised division of labour by occupation, where workers are responsible for different tasks in producing something, may increase productive efficiency and output (as demonstrated by industrialists such as Henry Ford who took Adam Smith's (1993:4) pin making to its logical conclusion in the establishment of the soul-destroying motor car production line) and, so

it is argued, increase the wealth of nations with market competition ensuring the efficient distribution of products. But as Karl Marx (1974:561-570) pointed out, the resulting capitalist arrangements are amendable to control by a few who, consolidating their power over others' lives, exploit their labour and enrich themselves at their expense - exemplified in the contrast between mansions and cottages.

ECONOMIC DIVISION OF LABOUR

The sexual division of labour, on the other hand, structures production in such a way that it averts any party gaining such control, promoting unequal relations and curtailing the liberty of the majority (Sillitoe 2010:365). Women and men expect to be responsible for different tasks in the Was valley. The household, the basic unit of production, depends on them co-operating to supply its needs. While individuals may sometimes take on the tasks of the opposite sex - in emergencies, for instance, if partners fall sick - they find it awkward and normally adjusted persons do not do so ordinarily.

Avoiding one another's activities in this way contributes to them not seeing the potential that extending control over production might afford to increase output, and beyond this discovering the latent power possibilities regarding sway over others material needs. The labour arrangements also keep their activities within certain limits, which, together with the absence of any idea of economic growth, have environmental implications regarding the sustainable use of natural resources.

Every household is independent with similar productive capacities, and consequently the same material standing and means-based access to power, maximising individual liberty equally for all - after Hobbes' dictum that liberty is power divided among the many - which is in keeping with an egalitarian order where persons do not expect to differ in these respects - as seen for instance in all occupying houses of similar design.

If someone aberrantly decided to increase production with a view to amassing surplus capital, this would mean pushing other household partners to increase their efforts, which they would likely resist; for instance, women who think that their partners are too overbearing may leave them and return to their natal kin, who will support them if they agree that the demands made on them are unwarranted. This can be embarrassing for a man, effectively undermining his household's productive capabilities and cost him something in compensation in negotiating his partner's return. Anyway, the use of surplus as productive capital is a foreign idea; any extra output beyond subsistence requirements finds its way into the exchange domain where stripped of productive associations (Sillitoe 2010:438-440). A production focus is misplaced, as illustrated by polygynous households. While such households arguably have more female labour at their disposal (which in part assumes the pioneering and cultivation of larger garden areas, albeit women may cultivate areas cleared by other male relatives besides their husbands such as fathers, brothers and sons - Sillitoe 2010:187-196), they do not use it to increase their productive capital, so much as their social capital, for being married to more than one woman increases men's transactional responsibilities and much of the added female labour contributes to meeting these exchange commitments, with women concerned to see that their husbands deal fairly with their kin. Relations between the sexes make it improbable that a couple would hit upon the idea of increasing their household's

production with a view to accumulating a surplus that they might convert into political capital, and certainly not beyond the customary transactional arena.

Even today, when exposed to the capitalist market and the power it exerts controlling the supply of things necessary to meet the material needs of others, if an eccentric couple did hit upon an Anthony-and-Cleopatra-style bid for power they would encounter other checks and balances of the acephalous political-economic order, such as the equal access all have to the materials and capital they require to meet their needs and the independence of households in supplying their wants.

Arguing for a reversal of Marx's portrayal of the implications of the division of labour in capitalist contexts - that the sexual division of labour obviates control of production and the exploitation of many by few - may seem wrongheaded from a feminist perspective that sees it as an arrangement that exploits women. But this depends on how you judge what women do compared to what men do, which in capitalist contexts concerns access to money that makes participation in the market possible. The occupational division of labour allows scope for differential ranking of employment, some judged as superior to others and better rewarded; an aspect of hierarchical power relations.

Other occupations, which often involve women, earn less, and domestic work undertaken within one's own home, which until recently fell largely to women, brings in no income, which effectively disempowers housewives, having no earnings and control over money, which is central to life in market society. Feminists argue that women should not only have a place in the waged work force, which many have had for generations, but also that they should do the same work as men for the same pay. This may reduce gender inequalities but it reproduces capitalist society's unequal exploitative arrangements, now with more women in wealthy and powerful controlling positions; the divide becomes even larger between rich and poor families where there are two high income earners in a household.

The Wola political-economy does not countenance such differentiation and to seek exploitation alternatively in relations between the sexes - in respect of what women and men do under the sexual division of labour code - is questionable. If not, my argument about the egalitarian order collapses. It is problematic to rank some tasks above others where we have no income yardstick to measure them by, money being absent in the Was valley until recently and cash playing a small role today in the local economy, and to go further and identify activities that fall to women as inferior and argue that allowing them to be responsible for such work men are exploiting their labour.

If the local population does not rank tasks in this way, it is difficult to avoid the charge of ethnocentricity in doing so according to what we judge to be more laborious, less rewarding work; the awkwardness is evident if we reverse the argument and imagine arguing that women exploit men's labour in the construction of houses. Indeed the idea that some activities are work and others are not may itself be doubtful (Sillitoe 2010: 351-364). And recourse to the false consciousness argument is surely untenable - which maintains that people are unable to understand the real nature of their circumstances because they are subject to ideological control by powerful institutional processes that they are unaware have a vested interest in preventing them from seeing things as they are (whereas the more sophisticatedly aware can do so). Turning to false consciousness when local actors'

judgements do not match up with yours, raises starkly the conundrum of outside intellectuals claiming to understand people's lives better than they do themselves, when their thoughts and behaviour are the subject of their enquiries.

While some men may talk disparagingly about women's occupations, as some women refer disdainfully to what men get up to, this does not indicate exploitation of one by the other. Indeed these attitudes arguably buttress the classless order by discouraging either sex from aspiring to take on what the other does, which could undermine the egalitarian political-economic arrangements with some seeking to control the productive process.

It is misleading to adopt a Marxist-like line regarding domestic arrangements: the reverse applies in the Was valley. This challenges the conventional view, others thinking that what I identify as key values, such as egalitarian relations and individual sovereignty, are wrongheaded, seeing instead inequality and dominance (A. Strathern 1982; Josephides 1985; Jolly 1987; M. Strathern 1988 McDowell 1990; MacKenzie 1991; Kelly 1993; Modjeska 1995; Biersack 2001; Wiessner 2002).

The involvement of women and men with defined domains does not facilitate but checks exploitation, discouraging some from trying to outdo others productively. The relation between the sexes, which is central to the articulation of production with exchange domains (Sillitoe 2010:449), features a mutual dependency that counteracts any tendency for some parties to dominate production at the expense of others, or it even occurring to them. All men recognise that they are similar, as all women recognise that they are similar, and while men and women think of themselves as dissimilar - as underlined by sexual division of labour arrangements - they depend on one another and enjoy equal liberty within the inevitable constraints of their social order.

The upholding of individual autonomy that is central to the polity applies equally to both women and men. There are curbs that thwart either partner becoming too domineering, which give women, for instance, discreet ways to handle outwardly overbearing male behaviour, such as undue interference in their activities, pushing them to work harder and produce more, which is tantamount to an initial step towards exerting control over the production process. The fears that men have of menstrual pollution, which inform the forgoing separate housing arrangements, are one such potential lever, albeit more symbolic than actual, as a woman is unlikely to be reckless enough to threaten to pollute a man openly, which would be tantamount to threatening fatally to poison him, but oblique allusions can be made sufficient to warn men off whose behaviour is unacceptable.

There are many examples of females acting freely in ways they choose, sometimes in a manner that is not in the interests of their male partners, such as wives temporarily withdrawing their labour from their households because they think that their husbands' behaviour is unreasonable, moving in with their brother's or son's families who will support them if they agree with the grounds of their protest - it often costing husbands a compensation payment, as pointed out, to right matters and have their wives, and maybe children, return to them. The freedom of action even affords wide scope for the few mavericks or eccentrics in a community to behave abnormally, such as engaging without embarrassment in activities customarily the responsibility of the opposite sex (Sillitoe 2010:353) - infrequent exceptions that pro-

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There are many examples of females acting freely in ways they choose

¹¹ In some places people equate women's string bags with the womb and reproduction (MacKenzie 1991), although no one has ever made such a connection directly to me.

- ve the rule regarding the sexual division of labour, making others feel distinctly uncomfortable.

SOCIOLOGICAL DIVISION OF LABOUR

The division of labour arrangements among the Wola not only challenge the orthodox interpretations of economics but also those of sociology. Focussing on occupational division of labour, sociologists argue that the resulting specialisation, increasing the dissimilarities between persons, consequently intensifies their interdependence within increasingly 'complex' society, what Émile Durkheim (1933) called 'organic solidarity' and subsequent sociologists have elaborated on with further jargon such as Smelser's (1959) 'structural differentiation' model of modernisation.

This contrasts with so-called 'simple' societies that feature what Durkheim called 'mechanical solidarity' where social order depends on strong feelings of collective consciousness that prompt individuals to subsume their interests to those of the community, which severely punishes those who violate its collective expectations and interests, in contrast to 'organic' societies that supposedly focus on legal rights rather than punishment.

The distinction has a strong evolutionary flavour with mechanical solidarity characterising primitive societies and organic solidarity advanced societies, paralleling Herbert Spencer's (1969) view of social change as a progression socially from homogeneity to heterogeneity

his social evolutionary tree (intriguingly Marx's final communist stage, coming from the opposite left-wing political pole, reflects a similar acephalous order; and to pile irony on irony, both models give us circular rather than linear evolution).

The state and its laws inevitably interfere with liberty, Spencer argued, but they are dispensable and would decay, their coercive aspects superseded by voluntary market association. For him liberty is not a question of "the nature of the government machinery . . . [but] the relative paucity of the restraints it imposes" (1940:19). It is necessary, following early liberalism, to overcome central government and its laws that restrict and coerce individual action. But his 'law of equal freedom' sacrifices equality on the altar of freedom, as the consequences of capitalist-liberal nostrums, such as he advocated, increasingly show today; the ego-centric let-the-market-rip philosophy resulting in an ever more unequal society with a few wealthy and many poor.

The genius of Was valley political-economic arrangements is that they accommodate both liberty and equality; they achieve what seems impossible in state orders, where these two values confront one another in an either/ or relationship - liberty as a core right wing value and equality a core left wing one. The Wola, on the other hand, are socialised to have an equally high regard for liberty and equality, which predisposes persons to behave in certain ways with certain consciously unacknowledged outcomes that I seek to tease out.

According to the sociological view, the uniformity seen in tribal communities reflects 'primitive mechanical solidarity' rooted in the similarity, even homogeneity of individual members of society, while 'advanced organic solidarity' draws on their dissimilarity or heterogeneity. The Was valley ethnography points to egalitarianism as a significant factor regarding socio-cultural consensus in acephalous face-to-face social contexts, rather than any individuality-stifling mechanical solidarity. Persons do not expect to differ from one another, with the potential for unequal relations, as evident for instance in housing arrangements.

A noteworthy feature of the region's housing stock is its uniformity: all houses built according to the same general design and in the same way; variation relating primarily to the gender of a house's occupants. Otherwise differences in the size and style of houses does not relate to the personal identity or social status of the occupants. It is not possible, for instance, to tell if a successful ol howma 'man of renown' lives in a house because it is larger, built to a different design, features better materials or fittings. In keeping with the egalitarian political-economic environment, all persons enjoy the same level of accommodation and material living standards.

While the egalitarian-value-fostered socio-cultural consensus may promote a certain social solidarity in the classic sociological sense - albeit it is necessary to exercise caution with this hypothesis, it resulting in the discredited big-man led descent group view of New Guinea highland society (Sillitoe 2010:45-46) - it is not because it subsumes individuality under some collective consciousness. Indeed the reverse, the egalitarian ethos promotes individual sovereignty, ensuring the equal distribution of power between all, such that no institution or its officeholders are able to dominate others.

We have egalitarian values that simultaneously accommodate wide scope for individual freedom of action, as pointed out. They afford considerable latitude for individual variation in behaviour and understandings, with no authority figures to determine what is right and

wrong (Sillitoe 2003:111), but the variation is contained by collectively held values and axioms within broadly defined socio-cultural parameters equally shared by all. They paradoxically allow and yet simultaneously inhibit expression of individuality. The very egalitarian values that underpin the same individual freedoms for all are the ones that inhibit expression of individuality in ways that may lead to significant differences between persons emerging with the possibility of some parties wheeler-dealing and securing more power than others, which we may speculate would convert over time into authoritative offices within a hierarchical social system.

Although egalitarian value promoted cultural similarity may endorse social solidarity, the reverse is equally feasible, namely social homogeneity could undermine solidarity, notably with autarkic households able to supply all their own livelihood wants, interaction atrophying with all the same and having no need of others. So what is responsible for 'social solidarity' in Was valley, if it is not a ruthlessly enforced mechanical process?

Dissimilarity is significant here, notably that between women and men, as instituted culturally by the sexual division of labour arrangements. These gendered activities, concerning rights and responsibilities, have a strong moral dimension, the complementary roles being a significant aspect of relationships. The separation of men and women paradoxically promotes social interaction. The division of activities along gender lines creates relations of mutual dependency, women and men attending to different but complementary domains, both central to everyday life. They comprise a partnership; no man or woman can function socially alone. The consequences of weakening such interdependent relations are evident in Britain currently where marriage partnerships are fragile as a result - not being partnerships at all in the sense that the sexual division of labour promotes partnership - and many families collapse, portrayed in the popular media as a 'breakdown of society' (which is not to condone unfair patriarchal arrangements of the past but to question the assumption that the sexual division of labour necessarily implies such relations).

TRANSACTIONAL; OBLVIATION.

The partnership between women and men extends beyond the family across and beyond the Was valley. The ramifying networked interaction that characterises Wola social life (Sillitoe 1979b) rests on the esta-

blishment of interrelated families through marriage, women marrying men from other families, and their daughters marrying sons of different families again, and so on down the generations with the consequent constant adding of new relations and social interaction - i.e. the effect of exogamy as Tylor (1889) pointed out many years ago.

Marriage involves protracted bridewealth transactions, which brings us to exchange institutions that are central to social interaction and the obviation of the contradictions apparent in Was valley socio-political life. An example of such paradox is the way that egalitarian values simultaneously underpin individual freedom for all and inhibit expression of individuality, thwarting the advent of large differences between persons with potential power differentials, which is a manifestation of the greater individual versus collective interests antinomy. Socio-political exchange institutions circumvent such inconsistencies by simultaneously allowing for competitive expression of individual self-interests - Smith's self-love - and sociable expression of collective group-interests - Durkheim's social solidarity.

The notion of social solidarity, whether it be thought mechanical, organic, transactional or whatever, raises again the status of our understanding of social interaction when actors themselves do not conceive of the implications of their behaviour in such sociological terms, for instance with respect to social cohesion. Solidarity is a product of their tacitly informed social interactions; it happens without aforethought. Similarly, in interpreting what I have heard and observed during behavioural interactions in the Was valley, I address political-economic problems that occur to me, which emanate from my intellectual, state-informed cultural heritage, while for the Wola associated behaviour is tacit.

They do not ask themselves about the wider implications of their housing arrangements regarding gender relations or consider the stateless connotations regarding liberty and equality. It is what persons expect to do, without pondering economic and political issues. I underline this for socio-political exchange that features prominently in communal interaction, which figures in the resolution of acephalous paradoxes consequent upon such ordered anarchy, by paraphrasing Adam Smith and referring to 'the invisible hand of exchange' to characterise what occurs during transactional sequences in the Was valley (Sillitoe 2010:83). ●

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Advanced "organic" societies represent moral progress in stressing values of individuality, equality, liberty and justice

ty and continuing today in modernisation views of development that focus, after Smelser, on the integration of increasingly differentiated social systems that result as specialisation increases.

According to these views, advanced 'organic' societies represent moral progress in stressing values of individuality, equality, liberty and justice. Attitudes and behaviour in the Was valley, where mechanical-like solidarity should pertain, are quite at odds with these assumptions. They up-hold the values of equality and liberty beyond anything imaginable in states featuring occupational specialisation, and the collective conscience certainly does not smother individual sovereignty. This is not to deny that behaviour is subject to guidance by collective values. When I refer to the freedom of the individual, I am not talking about the philosophers' imagined 'freedom in state of nature' but liberty relative to that experienced in hierarchically organised states. No human being is totally free, in the sense of being free of social constraints. The Wola, like all of us, are born into a cultural context that inculcates persons with values and expected codes of behaviour - they do not make these up for themselves, although they may self-interestedly try to innovate on them.

The expression of political freedom in the Was valley brings to mind Spencer's (1940) individualistic conception of social life and advocacy of laissez faire policies, whose final evolutionary stage, which predicts a sort of stateless arrangement with the disappearance of central government coercion, ironically intimates a tribal order such as we find in the New Guinea highlands - supposedly the primitive homogenous society at the bottom of