



## The 'clan vote' in Papua New Guinea open electorates

*data from Angoram*

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THE PREVAILING ORTHODOXY OF ELECTORAL POLITICS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA, and to a large extent in Melanesia generally, is that, in the absence of significant ideological cleavages and established party allegiances, electors vote along clan or kin lines.<sup>1</sup> Thus, for example, Ben Reilly asserts that under Papua New Guinea's first-past-the-post electoral system 'candidates rely, sometimes exclusively, on their own clan base for support'<sup>2</sup> and Ben Scott states, 'Until recently it was possible for a candidate to succeed with the support of only a fraction of their electorate, usually their kin' (Reilly 1997:5; Scott 2005:73).<sup>3</sup> This is undoubtedly largely true, especially in the highlands of Papua New Guinea, where there are generally more candidates (the average per electorate across the thirty-four open electorates in 2002 being twenty-eight)<sup>4</sup> and winning votes tend to be smaller.<sup>5</sup> In extreme cases, some candidates or their local supporters in recent elections have forcibly taken bundles of ballot papers initialled by returning officers and marked them in their candidate's favour.



But 'clan voting' is not a sufficient explanation for electoral outcomes in general. For one thing, clans often put up more than one candidate – brother has even been known to stand against brother, and spouse against spouse.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, 'vote splitting' – in which a candidate sponsors a member of a rival candidate's clan to stand for election, in the hope of drawing clan votes away from the rival candidate – is common. For another, elections are sometimes won by outsiders – that is, candidates who have migrated into the area from another district, another province or even another country; such candidates, of necessity, must appeal to something other than loyalties deriving from common lineage. There is also evidence that in some situations the quality of a candidate's campaign, or the amount spent on buying votes can swing an election result. It is even possible that in some instances party support might have an influence on election outcomes, though there seems to be little statistical support for this view.

To date, there has been little attempt to assess, statistically, the importance of the clan or local vote in Papua New Guinea elections.<sup>7</sup> In the absence of a coherent party system, clear social cleavages within electorates, and published data identifying voters by place of residence, it has been virtually impossible to undertake the sort of statistical analysis of voting figures undertaken in more developed polities. There is the possibility for some such analysis, however, because figures are recorded for each ballot box.

In this paper I have attempted to test for the evidence of a clan vote by a rough analysis of ballot box results (using ballot boxes as a proxy for clan) for an electorate with which I am familiar, namely Angoram Open in the East Sepik Province – recognising, however, that Angoram is not representative of the eighty-nine open electorates nationally and that its relevance to electoral behaviour in the highlands (where, as noted, the number of candidates is generally higher and clan voting more pronounced) may be limited. That said, the data do suggest that clan voting has less value as an explanation of electoral outcomes than the statements quoted above would lead us to expect.



### **The data**

Although there is some variation across the country, ballot boxes usually contain a few hundred ballots from specific polling places. Typically, one ballot box contains the votes of anything from a portion of a large village to two or three villages visited by officials during an electoral patrol. In the words of John Burton, analysis of ballot box figures is, in practice, 'extremely difficult' (1989:254–5). For one thing, the figures are not published and have usually been made available only at the discretion of the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission, on the condition that the locality of each box remain confidential (since with small numbers of votes in some boxes the identification of the source could breach the confidentiality of the vote, and in some cases even invite reprisal from candidates who did not receive the vote they expected). Secondly, even with fairly small numbers of votes, a single box may contain ballot papers from several communities, cutting across clan and other divisions.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, I have used ballot box data for Angoram Open for three consecutive national elections – 1987, 1992 and 1997.<sup>8</sup> In 1987 there were thirty-eight ballot boxes,<sup>9</sup> containing, on average, almost 500 ballots; in 1992 there were fifty-nine boxes with an average of just over 300 ballots; and in 1997 there were seventy-five boxes, again with just over 300 ballots on average. In other words, each box contained the votes of about a third to a half of a large village or several small villages,<sup>10</sup> and thus provides a means of measuring the degree of localisation or concentration of support for candidates.

For each year I have provided two crude calculations: first, the percentages of votes received in each ballot box by the top-scoring candidate, and the top-scoring candidate plus the runner-up – this provides a measure of the degree of concentration of voting at the location of the ballot box; and second, the percentage of votes candidates received in the boxes in which they scored most votes (for 1987 I measured the best two and the best four ballot box results; for 1992 I used the best three and best six, and for 1997 the best four and best eight) – this indicates the degree of the candidate's dependence on concentrated local support (the clan vote or local 'vote bank'<sup>11</sup>). Data from the first set of calculations are summarised in table 1 and in the text below; full data may be



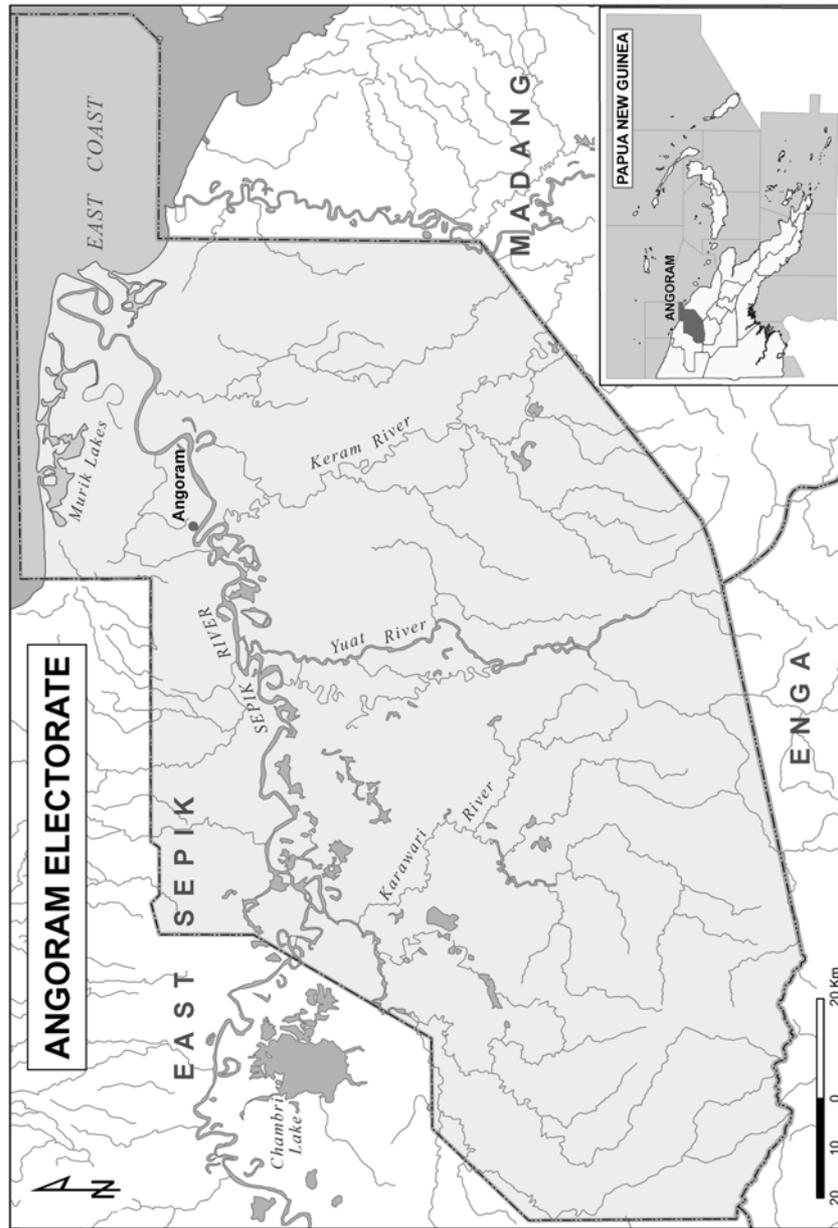
found in the original electoral studies (May 1989b, 1996, 2002b). Data from the second set of calculations are summarised in tables 2–4.

Because the Angoram data also include instances of the same candidate standing for different parties in different elections – these candidates either switching from party-endorsed to independent, or from non-endorsed (challenging an endorsed candidate) to endorsed – there is also an opportunity to see what difference, if any, party status makes to electoral outcomes. Given the large size and low population-density of the Angoram electorate, and the fact that East Sepik during the 1980s and early 1990s was a stronghold of the Pangu Pati – the party that, under Michael Somare’s leadership, led Papua New Guinea at independence and with which many Sepik voters identified – one might expect that party affiliation, and Pangu endorsement in particular, would have given candidates a significant advantage.

And, finally, since Angoram produced two strong outside candidates in the period reviewed (one from another district of the East Sepik and one from another province),<sup>12</sup> there is scope for looking at how candidates without a kin-based vote bank garner voter support (though that question is not pursued in detail here).

### **The electorate**

Angoram, one of East Sepik’s six open electorates, is geographically one of the largest electorates in the country, stretching some 135 km north to south from the coast to the border with Enga Province and 190 km east to west from the border with Madang Province to the Ambunti district boundary, an area of over 15,000 km<sup>2</sup> (see figure 1). Much of the electorate is thinly populated, the population being concentrated along the Sepik River and its major southern tributaries, the Keram, the Yuat and the Karawari. The electorate (whose boundaries coincide with Angoram District) contains a number of language groups divided between fourteen census divisions, but in terms of self-identification the bulk of the population can be roughly divided into three geographical zones: the middle Sepik, which includes a number of large river villages (mostly Iatmul speakers); the grass country south of the river, including the Keram and Yuat villages; and the lower Sepik, including the Murik Lakes and the scattered population between the river and the coast in the eastern





corner of the province. Of a total district population of 48,454 in 1990, about 38 per cent were in the Grass Country, Yuat and Banaro census divisions and 21 per cent in the Middle Sepik and Korosameri census divisions. Angoram town, a minor administrative and commercial centre, had a population in 1990 of 1,400, including a shifting population of people from up and down the river, and the Gavien Resettlement Scheme, a few kilometres outside Angoram, contained 2,533 people, drawn from various parts of the province.

The Angoram District is one of the poorer districts of Papua New Guinea, being ranked fifty-ninth out of eighty-seven districts in a 1985 study of district-level inequalities and sixty-fifth out of eighty-five districts according to an index of disadvantage calculated in 2001 (de Albuquerque and D'Sa 1985; Hanson et al. 2001:310). Two traditional mainstays of the cash economy, crocodile skins and artifacts, have provided only a small and irregular source of income, artifact sales having been adversely affected by a decline in tourism (itself a minor source of income) and official discouragement in the 1980s of private – mostly foreign – artifact dealers. With the development of the Gavien Resettlement Scheme, cocoa, robusta coffee and rubber production have become the major sources of income, along with small quantities of copra and vegetables. The Wewak–Angoram Land Development Scheme, formulated by the provincial government, was under consideration in the mid-1980s. It was planned to cover some 90,000 ha in Angoram and Wewak districts and involved logging, plantation and smallholder production of coffee, cocoa and copra, and subsistence agriculture, but the scheme did not materialise.

Angoram town has become something of a backwater, although a small group of local businessmen, constituting the Angoram Development Association, had some local influence in the 1980s and 1990s. During the 1987 elections voters complained that although the Pangu Pati, which up till then had exercised a dominant influence in East Sepik's electoral politics, had held office for long periods, other provinces had prospered (*ol i bin kesisim mit* – others have been getting the meat) while the Sepik had been left with the scraps (*mipela i gat bun tasol* – we just get the bones).

The construction, by the Somare government in the 1980s, of a road between Wewak and Angoram considerably improved land communication, but transportation in the electorate is still mainly by motorised canoe, and is difficult and expensive.

**A brief electoral history<sup>13</sup>**

Between 1972 and 1982 the Angoram seat was held for Pangu by Bill Eichorn, a mixed-race former schoolteacher, who had a crocodile farm and cattle smallholding on the Keram River. On the eve of the 1982 election Eichorn looked vulnerable and, though endorsed by Pangu, he was opposed by seven candidates, including two strong pro-Pangu candidates, John Maiben and Philip Laki Yua. The last-minute candidacy of Laki, a local businessman from Timbunke village in the Middle Sepik, who had been a member of the provincial assembly since 1979, was not universally popular: many Middle Sepik villagers resented the fact that the man they had elected to represent them in the provincial assembly had resigned, without consulting them, to contest the national seat, and many Pangu Pati officials, who had seen Maiben as a likely successor to Eichorn, feared that a three-way split of the Pangu vote might let a rival candidate through. Laki was supported, however, by the Angoram Development Association and, in the event, he won the contest by a clear margin over Maiben. Eichorn came third, the three Pangu candidates together collecting 73 per cent of the vote. The endorsed National Party candidate, Teddy Sane, came fourth with 12 per cent of the vote, and the endorsed Melanesian Alliance candidate received less than 200 votes (May 1989a).

Sane, a former naval cadet officer, merchant seaman and then stevedore instructor in Lae, had returned to the province in 1977 to contest the national election as a Peoples Progress Party (PPP) candidate. Failing to get elected, Sane set himself up in Angoram, operating a trade store and dealing in crocodile skins. In 1981 he founded a local branch of the National Party (NP) and the following year stood as the endorsed NP candidate in Angoram, with support not only from colourful NP leader Iambakey Okuk but also from the Melanesian Alliance (MA) (see May 1989a).

In the lead-up to the 1987 election there were suggestions (as there had been in 1982) that Sir Michael Somare, the East Sepik regional member, whose home village is in the Murik Lakes area at the mouth of the Sepik River, might stand for Angoram, leaving MA national chairman Bernard Narokobi to contest the provincial seat rather than his home electorate of Wewak Open, thereby avoiding a confrontation between Narokobi and the sitting Pangu member for Wewak, Tony Bais. But nothing came of this.

In the event, twelve candidates stood. Laki, as the sitting member, was re-endorsed as the official Pangu candidate. In 1987 Pangu policy ruled against candidates standing as 'pro-Pangu'. None of the other parties that had endorsed candidates in 1982 – the NP, MA and PPP – endorsed candidates in Angoram in 1987 (though one candidate, Benny Simbi, who had been the endorsed PPP candidate in 1982, claimed affiliation with the PPP and another, Elias Kainor, with the MA). Sane was again a candidate, this time – having lost interest in the NP following the death of Okuk – as an *independen kendidet i sapotim gras rut pipol bilong ples* (independent candidate supporting grassroots village people), though he appears to have had some contact with Paias Wingti's Peoples Democratic Movement (PDM).

Another prominent candidate in 1987 was Leo Unumba. From Biwat (Yuat census division) but resident in Angoram, Unumba had unsuccessfully contested the national elections in 1977 as an independent. Two years later he was successful in the provincial elections, winning the Yuat seat and subsequently becoming deputy premier and treasurer of the province. He was re-elected to the provincial assembly in 1983, but resigned to contest the 1987 national election. Although standing as an independent, and having served in a predominantly Pangu provincial government, Unumba was said to have PPP links.

Sari Wimban was also seen by some as a strong candidate. Wimban, born in Mindimbit (Middle Sepik census division) but living on the Gavien settlement, had served for ten years as provincial health extension officer and had stood for the national parliament unsuccessfully in 1977 as the endorsed United Party candidate. In 1987 Wimban stood with the support of the Public Employees Association. He did not declare any party attachment, but was widely believed to be a PDM supporter and admitted having 'had talks' with Wingti.

Most people with an opinion in 1987 seemed to think that the winner would be either Laki or Unumba. Both were well known and had firm bases in the populous Grass Country and Middle Sepik areas. Reports from the Middle Sepik, however, suggested that a longstanding antipathy between the big Iatmul villages of Tambanum (1990 population 896) and Timbunke (1990 population 915) had resurfaced and that the Tambanum people were



therefore likely to support Unumba against Laki (who is from Timbunke), splitting the Middle Sepik vote and thereby giving an advantage to Wimban, who, himself a Middle Sepik, was believed to have strong support in the Grass Country as well as in Angoram town and Gavien. There was also some suggestion that people in Yuat were angry with Unumba for abandoning his provincial seat to contest the election, but similar comments had been made about Laki in 1982, and it had done him no obvious harm. Opinions differed as to Sane's prospects. Sane himself was confident (as he had been in 1982), claiming strong support in the grass country and lower Sepik, but only a small number of the people with whom I spoke gave him much chance, counting against him the fact that he had stood for three different parties in three elections.

When the votes were tallied, the victor was Laki, with 32 per cent of the vote, over Sane (21 per cent) and Unumba (13 per cent). Wimban (6 per cent) finished fifth, behind little-known candidate Victor Terenfop (8 per cent), a former community school teacher from the Yuat census division, who had not stood previously and had no party attachment.

In 1992 Laki, as sitting member, was again the endorsed Pangu candidate. Twelve other candidates contested the Angoram electorate. Three of the candidates from 1987, apart from Laki, recontested in 1992: Terenfop, Wimban and Sami Januarius (who had come tenth in 1987). In 1992 Terenfop stood for the MA; Wimban and Sami were said to have 'undercover' support from the PDM. The other candidates included Maiben, a pro-Pangu candidate in 1982 who did not stand in 1987, and Ludwig Schulze (or Schultz), originally from New Ireland Province but for several years a businessman in Angoram town (dealing mostly in crocodile skins). Schulze had also stood in 1982 but not in 1987 and was believed to have PPP support (through his New Ireland links to PPP leader Sir Julius Chan). Another was Joe Kenny (or Kenni), a prominent businessman in Angoram town. Kenny was born outside the electorate, in nearby Yangoru, but was a long-time resident of Angoram and president of the Angoram Development Association. In 1972 Kenny had stood as the endorsed Pangu candidate, but was defeated by Eichorn and had not contested again (see Wandau 1976).

On the eve of polling the general feeling seemed to be that the real contest was between Laki, Schulze and Kenny, and so it proved to be: Laki was returned with 25 per cent of the vote, Kenny was second with 19 per cent, and Schulze was third with 17 per cent, ahead of Terenfop (10 per cent) and Wimban (8 per cent)

In March 1994 a tribunal found Laki guilty of twenty-five counts of misconduct in office and misappropriation of public monies, and he was dismissed from office. In the ensuing by-election seventeen candidates stood, including Kenny, Schulze, Unumba and Januarius. Victory went to Schulze, who stood as the endorsed PPP candidate, breaking Pangu's twenty-two-year hold on the Angoram seat. Schulze received 20 per cent of the vote. Unumba, the former provincial deputy premier, who resigned to contest in 1987 but did not stand in 1992, came second with 18 per cent of the vote, and Kenny, to the disappointment of his supporters, came third with 11 per cent.

Between the by-election of 1994 and the next national election in 1997 a split occurred within the Pangu Pati, and in 1996 Pangu figurehead and independence prime minister Sir Michael Somare was expelled from the party. Somare formed the National Alliance (NA), a group that included some Pangu colleagues, members of the Melanesian Alliance, and several other progressive politicians (see May 2002a). In 1997 Somare went to the polls as leader of the NA.

In 1997 ten candidates contested the Angoram Open election. They included the sitting member, Schulze (PPP); Kenny, who was endorsed by Pangu (but said to be pro-Somare); Luimek Pandima Johnson, who had stood in 1992 and 1994, coming ninth on both occasions; and Stanley Lumbia, who had come fourth in the 1994 by-election. Also standing were two first-time candidates, Paul Bengo and Arthur Somare. Bengo had had a distinguished public service career, including appointments as East Sepik provincial secretary in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and secretary for defence, but had not spent much time in his home place, Korogopa, south of the river. Somare, the son of Sir Michael Somare, recently returned from Australia, had been working in the electorate as consultant/manager of a timber project at Kaup Base Camp prior to the election.



In the lead-up to voting, there was no clear favourite. Schulze, the sitting member, was said to be campaigning fairly vigorously, both personally and through a network of *komiti* (campaign team leaders), and was thought by many to be the likely winner. Kenny was expected to pick up votes in town and around the resettlement scheme at Gavien, and to gain something from Pangu endorsement, but many people suggested that his slipping from second in 1992 to third in the 1994 by-election had diminished his chances of gaining election. Johnson, who stood as the endorsed Peoples Action Party (PAP) candidate, was also said to be running a well-organised campaign, focused on the Yuat and Grass Country. Arthur Somare was the unknown. A bright, well-educated young man (twenty-seven-years-old in 1997), he was carrying out an extensive campaign and might have been expected to gain from the family connection given the widespread deference accorded his father. But many people, including villagers from the Somares' home area of Murik, expressed to me their reservations about having two members of the family contesting in the same election – a common phrase was *nogat tupela wantaim* (not two [Somares] at the same time). Arthur Somare stood as an independent, though he was known to be aligned with his father and was generally perceived as NA.

In the event, the young Somare was victorious, winning 25 per cent of the vote, ahead of Schulze (20 per cent), Johnson (16 per cent) and Kenny (14 per cent).

### Analysing the vote

#### *Vote spread*

In a series of studies of the national elections in the East Sepik electorates I have provided more detail on the candidates, their campaigns, and the role of parties (May 1989a, 1989b, 1996, 2002b). In the following sections I will focus solely on what the ballot box figures tell about the composition of the vote.

Table 1 shows the number of ballot boxes in which candidates secured the most votes at the 1987, 1992 and 1997 elections. While losing candidates tended to get most of their votes locally, stronger candidates achieved a substantially wider spread – though not an even one. Party endorsement or affiliation does not explain that spread. The figures also reveal that being an outsider is not necessarily a barrier to election (see the discussion below).

**Table 1** Number of Angoram ballot boxes in which candidates scored top and second position, 1987–1997

Election year	Number of ballot boxes	Final position of candidates					
		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
<b>Number of ballot boxes in which top position was achieved</b>							
1987	38*	13	11	5	2	0	2
1992	59	15	18	9	6	2	2
1997	75	23	21	11	7	7	4
<b>Number of ballot boxes in which second position was achieved†</b>							
1987	38*	9	7	11	3	3	0
1992	59	14	11	17	1	8	0
1997	75	13	21	16	10	3	3

\* One of these ballot boxes was excluded from the calculations (see n. 9).

† In some cases, two candidates were tied for second place and both are included in the table.

In 1987 Laki, the sitting member and endorsed Pangu candidate, achieved the best spread of votes, placing first in thirteen of the thirty-seven ballot box counts analysed and second in another nine – that is, gaining the largest or second-largest vote in just under 60 per cent of all ballot boxes (see table 2). Nevertheless, Laki derived a quite high 31 per cent of his vote from only four of these thirty-seven ballot boxes, and in twelve ballot boxes he scored less than fifty votes and in five boxes ten votes or less. Surprisingly, second place-getter Sane achieved a comparable spread: first in eleven ballot boxes, second in seven, with 32 per cent of his vote in four boxes but scoring less than fifty votes in fifteen boxes and ten or less in eight boxes. Unumba, who came third, recorded only five first- and eleven second-placings and his vote was more concentrated: 42 per cent from four boxes and ten or fewer votes in thirteen boxes. Other candidates' votes tended, as might be expected, to be more highly concentrated: Terenfop, who came fourth, received more than half his votes from two ballot boxes; Wimban (fifth) received 40 per cent of his vote from two boxes; and the next-ranked candidate, Tamoane, received a high 74 per cent from two boxes (apparently defeating Laki on the Lower Sepik) but no votes at all in nineteen. Only three candidates – Wimban, Januarius and Dambui – failed to win a single ballot box (though Wimban scored three seconds).

**Table 2** Candidate performance, 1987

	Best 2 ballot box results % candidate's total vote	Best 4 ballot box results % candidate's total vote	Candidate's total vote	% all votes	Placing
Nime	66.9	87.8	502	2.7	9
Wimban	40.1	56.0	1157	6.3	5
Sane	16.7	32.0	3835	21.0	2
Terenfop	50.2	65.5	1423	7.8	4
Unumba	26.8	41.8	2435	13.3	3
Simbi	80.0	84.0	150	0.8	12
Januarius	32.1	44.3	246	1.3	10
Tamoane	74.0	90.2	1116	6.3	6
Maika	52.0	75.8	788	4.3	7
Laki	17.0	31.0	5851	32.0	1
Kainor	36.2	54.9	621	3.4	8
Dambui	35.4	55.1	158	0.9	11

In 1992, when campaigning seems to have been more restricted than in 1987 and parties at least nominally more in evidence in Angoram, the pattern of voting seems remarkably similar (see table 3). Laki's votes were again fairly well spread, placing him first in fifteen of the fifty-nine ballot boxes and second in another fourteen (i.e. first or second in 49 per cent of all boxes), though he nevertheless received 32 per cent of his vote from six ballot boxes (compared to 31 per cent from four in 1987) and scored less than thirty votes in seventeen of the boxes. In 1992 the third-placed candidate, Schulze, standing as an independent, recorded a comparable spread – he placed first in nine ballot boxes and second in seventeen (i.e. first or second in 44 per cent of all boxes) but 31 per cent of his votes came from six ballot boxes – while the second-placed candidate, Kenny, had a more concentrated vote (58 per cent of votes coming from six boxes) but actually outscored Laki in the number of first placings (eighteen) and matched Laki's performance in combined first- and second-placings.

**Table 3** Candidate performances, 1992

	Best 3 ballot box results % candidate's total vote	Best 6 ballot box results % candidate's total vote	Candidate's total vote	% all votes	Placing
Anmokm	64.9	88.6	687	3.8	7
Januarius	57.0	67.5	249	1.4	12
Laki	18.4	32.0	4541	24.9	1
Anskar	63.7	82.7	364	2.0	11
Schulze	18.3	31.4	3156	17.3	3
Johnson	72.7	89.3	440	2.4	9
Ali	52.2	69.9	655	3.6	8
Terenfop	46.1	65.7	1822	10.0	4
Japhlom	44.0	65.1	771	4.2	6
Kaur	63.2	76.4	174	0.9	13
Wimban	26.0	42.2	1506	8.2	5
Maiben	38.5	50.4	385	2.1	10
Kenny	15.5	57.7	3488	19.1	2

Voting for the minor candidates was again, predictably, more highly concentrated. Terenfop, who stood as an independent in 1987 and received 50 per cent and 66 per cent of his votes from two and four boxes respectively, was the endorsed MA candidate in 1992 but nevertheless recorded a very similar spread – 46 per cent and 66 per cent from three and six boxes. Four candidates failed to win a single ballot box, though three of them came second in at least one.

I did not obtain ballot box figures for the 1994 by-election, in which Schulze was elected. In 1997, ballot box figures again revealed that the top three candidates all had a fairly broad spread of votes (see table 4). Arthur Somare, standing for the first time, was ranked first in twenty-four boxes and second in twelve – that is, he gained the largest or second-largest vote in just under half the ballot boxes; Schulze was ranked first in twenty-one and second in twenty-one (actually getting more top-two rankings than Somare); and the corresponding figures for Johnson were ten and sixteen, and for Kenny six and eleven.

Somare's vote was concentrated in the Lower Sepik and Angoram; he received only sixty-eight votes in the Middle Sepik, and forty-one of those came from one ballot box (he received no votes in five ballot boxes). But he also picked up a significant number of votes in the Keram, Yuat, Banaro, Karawari, Grass Country and Ajirab census divisions. He received only 22 per cent of his votes from four ballot boxes and 39 per cent from eight. Schulze had a somewhat broader spread, with a relatively low 17 per cent of his vote from four boxes and 31 per cent from eight. He polled well in the Lower Sepik, which is also a Somare stronghold, and scored well in the Grass Country, Kanda, and parts of the Middle Sepik and Yuat. He received some votes in every ballot box. But whereas Somare received more than 240 votes in each of five ballot boxes, Schulze did not score as many as that in any box. The third-ranking candidate, Johnson, had a reasonable spread of votes (29 per cent from four boxes and 43 per cent from eight) but (coming from Kambaramba – according to 1990 census figures, the largest village in the electorate) received a marked concentration of votes from the Yuat and Grass Country.

**Table 4** Candidate performances, 1997

	Best 4 ballot box results % candidate's total vote	Best 8 ballot box results % candidate's total vote	Candidate's total vote	% all votes	Placing
Kenny	34.9	52.1	3314	14.4	4
Lumbia	43.7	62.2	2009	8.7	5
Bengo	42.3	59.7	1516	6.6	6
Paita	33.4	49.1	966	4.2	7
Bukka	62.2	89.2	767	3.3	8
Waike	64.9	86.0	57	0.3	9
Somare	22.4	38.6	5731	24.9	1
Schulze	17.4	30.6	4685	20.4	2
Johnson	29.3	43.2	3711	16.1	3
Koni	44.4	61.1	54	0.2	10



Considering his past record and the fact that he was in 1997 the Pangu-endorsed candidate, Kenny's result was disappointing. He achieved a narrower spread of votes than Somare, Schulze, Johnson or the seventh placegetter, Paita, with support concentrated in the Middle Sepik and Kanda (which includes the Gavien Resettlement Scheme). Bengo's reputation and record as former provincial secretary did little for him either, with 60 per cent of his votes coming from eight ballot boxes and most of those from his home area in Banaro census division. At the other end of the scale, Bukka and Waike, ranked eighth and ninth, received, respectively, 62 and 65 per cent of their votes from four boxes and 89 and 86 per cent from eight, though the last-ranked Koni's meagre fifty-four votes were spread more widely.

Thus, over three elections the strongest few candidates managed to secure a fairly broad, though by no means an even, spread of votes across the electorate, while the weaker candidates, for the most part, garnered their support locally.

*The impact of party*

As noted above, East Sepik, and Angoram specifically, was till 1997 a stronghold of the Pangu Pati. It is therefore tempting to infer from the size and spread of his winning vote in 1987 that Laki, as the endorsed Pangu candidate, received a party vote (in 1987 Pangu was the only party with an endorsed candidate in Angoram). The uncomfortable facts are, however, that Laki received the same percentage of the vote in 1987, as Pangu-endorsed candidate and sitting member, as he did in 1982, as an unendorsed challenger,<sup>14</sup> and that Sane, the endorsed National Party candidate in 1982, supported by Okuk and the Melanesian Alliance, improved his share of the vote (from 12 to 21 per cent) in 1987 as an independent, and achieved a geographical spread comparable to that of Laki (as also, to a lesser extent, did the independent Unumba).

Standing again as the endorsed Pangu sitting member in 1992 Laki received much the same spread and concentration of the vote as he did in 1987. Moreover, Schulze, an independent, received a similar spread. As noted above, Terenfop was in 1992 the endorsed candidate of the MA, a party with an established presence in the East Sepik province; notwithstanding this, his spread of votes in 1992 was almost identical with that he received in 1987 when he stood as an independent.



Although I did not have access to ballot box figures for the 1994 by-election, it is notable that Schulze, standing as an independent in 1992 captured 17 per cent of the vote, yet in 1994, as the endorsed Peoples Progress Party candidate and winner in the absence of Laki, could manage only 20 per cent, suggesting again that party endorsement brought little advantage.

In 1997 Pangu Pati endorsement appears to have done little for Kenny, nor is there evidence that Johnson gained from having the endorsement of the Peoples Action Party. Analysis of the vote for Arthur Somare (formally an independent but associated with his father's National Alliance), in conjunction with interviews I conducted in the electorate in 1997, provides nothing to suggest that there was an NA vote in Angoram in 1997, though it is tempting to conclude that the family name, on balance, was a valuable asset (see May 2002b).

#### *Outsider status*

In Angoram being an outsider does not seem to have been a major obstacle to garnering electoral backing. Kenny, as noted, was originally from Yangoru, to the north of the Angoram electorate, but was well accepted in Angoram, having been chairman of the Angoram Development Association, a prominent local member of the Pangu Pati, and the endorsed (but unsuccessful) Pangu candidate in 1972. He stood again in 1992, coming second to Laki, and in 1994, when he was seen by many as a likely winner but came third. In 1997 he stood again as the endorsed Pangu candidate but slipped to fourth place.

Schulze was even more of an outsider: he came from New Ireland Province, and in an electorate generally loyal to Pangu and to Sir Michael Somare specifically, he was seen as associated with the PPP and Sir Julius Chan, who had split with Somare in 1980 and replaced him as prime minister. However, this did not prevent Schulze from being a serious candidate in 1992 (coming third behind Laki and Kenny), winner in 1994 and runner-up in 1997.

Sane, too, was something of an outsider: his father, a pastor, had come to Angoram from the Yangoru area to the north and married locally, and young Sane had spent much of his life outside the province. He was, however, a strong candidate in 1982 (coming fourth) and 1987 (coming second), before being elected to the provincial assembly.



### Conclusion

Contrary to accepted wisdom, the figures above suggest that the leading candidates in the Angoram Open elections of 1987–1997 drew their votes from quite a broad spectrum of the electorate: in 1987 the three leading candidates were placed first or second in, respectively, 59, 49 and 43 per cent of all ballot boxes; in 1992 the corresponding figures were 49, 44 and 49 per cent; and in 1997 they were 48, 56 and 48 per cent. But the pattern of votes each received was lumpy, in that the distribution of votes received outside the candidates' home areas or vote banks was very uneven. This lumpiness is consistent with the view that endorsement by, or attachment to, a political party did not yield significant generalised party support – notwithstanding the fact that Angoram was till 1997 a Pangu Pati stronghold. The data also suggest that being an outsider was not a major obstacle to election, provided that a candidate could establish some basis for a vote bank.

The obvious question following from these conclusions is how does a candidate establish these lumpy pockets of voter support beyond his/her clan (or in the case of outsiders how does a candidate establish a vote bank without a clan base)? This question can only be answered by detailed studies of election campaigns, of the sort contained in the volumes of constituency studies put together for each of Papua New Guinea's national elections since 1964 (Bettison, Hughes & van der Veur 1965; Epstein, Parker & Reay 1971; Stone 1976; Hegarty 1983; King 1989; Oliver 1989; Saffu 1996; May & Anere 2002). These suggest a variety of explanations, including effective campaigning (travelling throughout the electorate, or at least strategic parts of it, and sitting down and talking with villagers); being known – for example, as the sitting member (though this can be a double-edged attribute, since being perceived as a poor member can be fatal), a provincial government member (again, a double-edged attribute) or the son of a former prime minister; establishing networks of people (*komiti*) who will campaign on behalf of the candidate in areas where they can draw support; and establishing client relationships either through prior occupational roles (for example, Wimban's role as a provincial health extension officer) or by providing cash, credit or other benefits to potential voters (Schulze, for example, was known to many people as a crocodile skin buyer and as an agent who might extend credit for purchases

of benzene for outboard motors). What is sometimes remarkable to the outside observer talking to local people in the field is how widely candidates and their deeds are known across the electorate – even, as in Angoram, where distances are great and communications apparently poor.

The demonstration that strong candidates have a fairly broad spread of votes also challenges one of the arguments used widely to justify the switch, after 2002, from first-past-the-post to limited preferential voting, namely that it was necessary in order to break down voting along clan lines and promote cooperation between candidates.

This study, of course, draws on a very limited data set. Its principal purpose is to underline the dangers of simple generalisations. There is some evidence, however, that the conclusions from the Angoram case have a wider relevance for the study of Papua New Guinea elections – even in the highlands,<sup>15</sup> particularly insofar as they highlight the need both for more careful statistical analysis of electoral outcomes and for observation of electoral processes on the ground.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In what follows I use ‘clan’ as a shorthand term for kin, *lain*, or whatever local group is seen as providing a candidate with support based on personal or group loyalty.

<sup>2</sup> After the 2002 national election Papua New Guinea changed from a first-past-the-post to a limited preferential voting system.

<sup>3</sup> Similarly, see Premdas (1989:246), Reilly (2002:705) and Reilly & Phillpot (2002:919, 923–4).

<sup>4</sup> There are currently 109 seats in Papua New Guinea’s National Parliament: twenty are provincial (previously regional) seats, which prior to independence were restricted to candidates with a minimal education qualification; the other eighty-nine are open seats, geographically defined, which may be contested by candidates who meet the residential requirements. Each seat returns one member (prior to 2002 on a first-past-the-post vote).

<sup>5</sup> On the particular circumstances of the highlands, see, for example, Standish (1992, 1994, 2002), Ketan (2004) and Burton (1989).

<sup>6</sup> Note, however, John Burton’s comment in relation to the highlands: ‘If candidates stand from the same tribe, or from the same section of a tribe, that tribe or section will predictably split down the middle along structural lines’ (1989:273).



<sup>7</sup> The major exceptions are Burton's study of Hagen Open in 1987 (Burton 1989) and Orlegge's study of the Goroka open election in 1997 (Orlegge 2002), both of which use ballot box figures. For more general discussions of the importance of the local vote see Hegarty (1983:chs 1, 7), Oliver (1989:chs 1, 2, 4, 16), Saffu (1996:chs 1, 9, 11) and May & Anere (2002:chs 5, 9). Yaw Saffu notes that the candidate's 'ascribed relationship with the relevant ethnic/language groups in the electorate' is a primary consideration in electoral choice, but warns that "primary" is not the same as "exclusive" and rejects 'monocausal explanations of the vote' (1989:30–1; 1996:3–5). Burton proposes a model of 'segmentary enclavement' but with modifications (1989:277–8).

<sup>8</sup> At the time of writing, in 2004, I had not been able to obtain similar figures for the 2002 election.

<sup>9</sup> One ballot box contained only fourteen votes (of which, two candidates, Sane and Laki, together got twelve), and because of its small size has been excluded from the calculations.

<sup>10</sup> In 1990 village populations ranged from twenty-three to 1640. To preserve the confidentiality of the voting data, the ballot boxes are identified by number only.

<sup>11</sup> The term 'vote bank' is being used increasingly by candidates and commentators on Papua New Guinea elections. As the name suggests, it refers to places in which a candidate can count on getting fairly solid support – usually a clan or segment of a clan, but sometimes also a spouse's clan, a place where the candidate has previously worked, or a group of people who are indebted to the candidate.

<sup>12</sup> Prior to this, Angoram returned an expatriate candidate, Peter Johnson.

<sup>13</sup> For more detailed accounts of the national elections in Angoram Open, see Wandau (1976) and May (1989a, 1989b, 1996, 2002b). This paper draws on material previously published in May (1989b, 1996, 2002b).

<sup>14</sup> I note that Eichorn, who was defeated by Laki in 1982, had become the sitting member in 1972 by defeating the endorsed Pangu candidate, Kenny.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, the recent study of Koroba–Lake Kopiago Open electorate by Nicole Haley (2004).

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