



State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project
Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies
Australian National University

Seminar Series

State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project

Presents

Michael Goddard

University of Newcastle and Visitor to SSGM

Expressions of interest: Usury in Port Moresby settlements

Date: Thursday 6 May 2004

Time: 11:00am – 12.30pm

Venue: Seminar Room C, Coombs Building, ANU

Abstract: The presentation examines the nature and practice of small scale usury, or moneylending, in a “grassroots” urban community in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. In this environment the moneylenders are people of limited financial resources and barely richer than their clients, and the latter are often self-employed in informal occupations. Using examples from cases where usurers have taken defaulting debtors to urban “village courts”, it shows how debt is negotiated by usurers and clients and indicate differences between local attitudes toward usury and those which are generally held in Western societies. The presenter will discuss prevalent views in social science literature about the influence of kinship sensibilities on socioeconomic behaviour in urban Papua New Guinea, and attempt to situate moneylending for profit in Port Moresby in the complex local integration of the so-called gift economy and cash economy.

Dr Michael Goddard is a Senior Lecturer in Anthropology at the University of Newcastle. He has been engaged in urban ethnography in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, since the early 1990s, concentrating on the city’s so-called settlements and peri-urban villages. A particular focus of his research is urban “village courts”, which deal with the disputes which are generated by the day-to-day problems of urban grassroots communities

ALL WELCOME

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