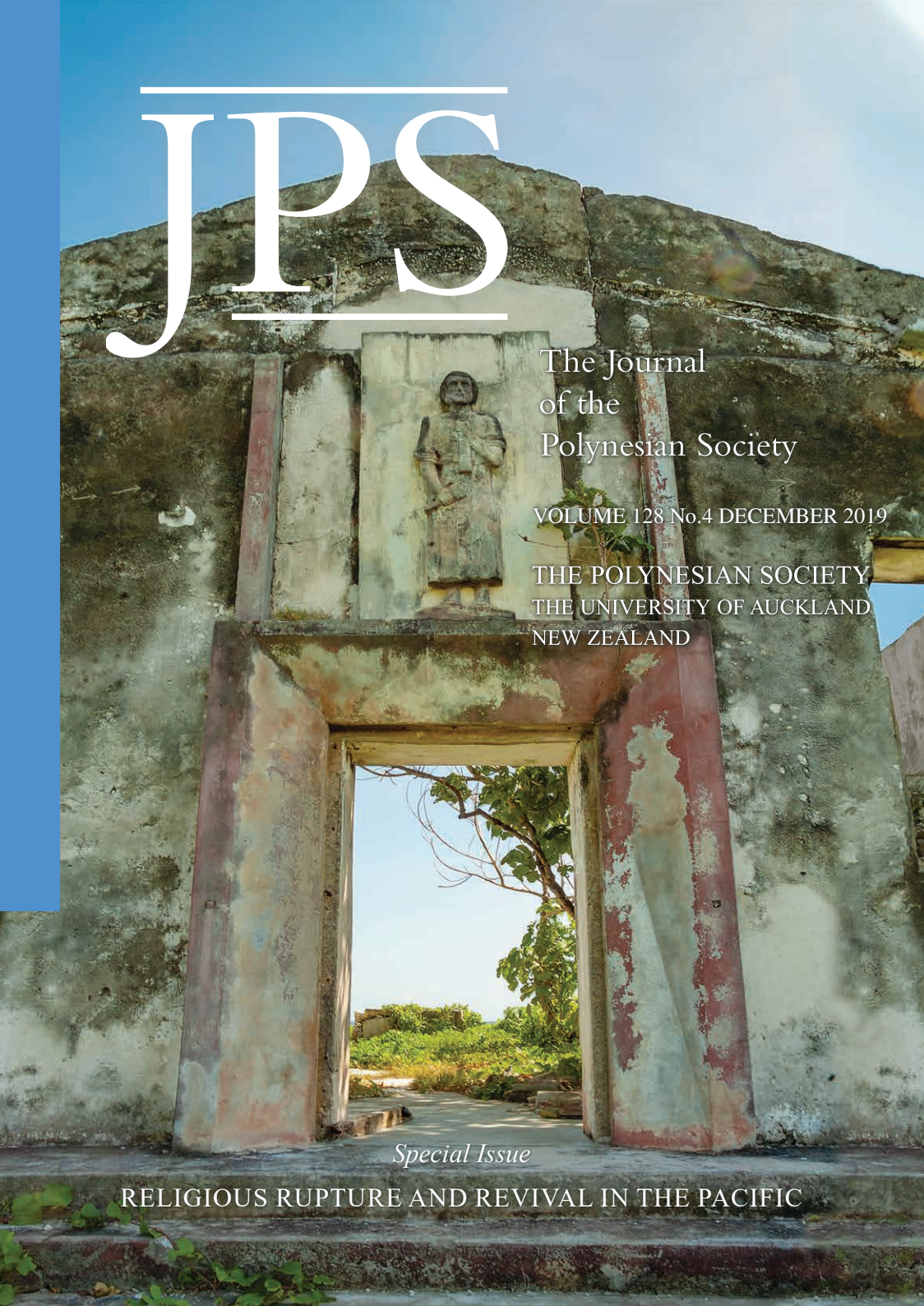

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RELIGIOUS RUPTURE AND REVIVAL IN THE PACIFIC

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Special issue

RELIGIOUS RUPTURE AND REVIVAL IN THE PACIFIC

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Cover image: Exterior of (old) Falealupo Catholic Church on the north-western coast of Savai‘i, which was destroyed by Hurricane Ofa in 1990. Photograph by Hamish Macdonald.

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Contributors to This Issue

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Jeffrey Sissons is an Associate Professor who teaches cultural anthropology at Victoria University of Wellington. His most recent book is *The Polynesian Iconoclasm: Religious Revolution and the Seasonality of Power* (Berghahn, 2014). He is currently working on a Marsden-funded project on the Taranaki prophet Tamati Te Ito Ngāmoke.

INTRODUCTION: RELIGIOUS RUPTURE AND REVIVAL IN THE PACIFIC

FRASER MACDONALD
University of Waikato

MICHAEL GOLDSMITH
University of Waikato

This special issue arose from a panel, "Political and Religious Conversions in the Pacific", convened by Fraser Macdonald and Michael Goldsmith at the 2017 Australian Anthropological Society (AAS) annual conference held at the University of Adelaide. The papers carried over from that session into this special issue more directly address the question of religious conversion, marshalling evidence from a wide range of ethnographic contexts throughout the Pacific to shed light on the ramifications of conversion to various brands of Christianity. The issue collectively points up a number of critical issues now gaining deeper appreciation within anthropological writing on Pacific Christianity, including the centrality of indigenous agency to processes of change; the importance of charismatic leaders who initiate and orchestrate popular movements; the intrinsically political character of Christianity in the Pacific, including its inextricable historical relationship with colonialism; and, finally, the strongly regional dimensions of Christianity, whereby particular societies are embedded in and contribute to broader religious communities that transcend the local.

Focussing on the Taranaki region of Aotearoa/New Zealand, Jeff Sissons describes an intense Māori religious movement centred on the destruction and desecration of *tapu* 'sacred' places and objects, undertaken in the greater interest of political centralisation. Also examining a regional religious movement, yet this time from Melanesia, Fraser Macdonald describes the explosion of Pentecostalist revivalism within Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea in the early 1970s, exploring the variety of factors that contributed to its rapid spread. Debra McDougall's paper examines the Christian lives of Solomon Islanders living on Ranongga Island, analysing the deeply complex skein of political influences surrounding a ceremony held to mark the centenary of Christianity's arrival in the area. Interrogating a dynamic rural-urban network, Stephanie Hobbis's paper shows how Christians on Malaita, Solomon Islands, undertake annual "rescue missions" for their relatives in the national capital of Honiara, seeking to morally buttress them against the perils of urban life. Further afield in the Pacific island nation of Tuvalu, Michael Goldsmith's paper examines the conjunctures and disjunctures between missionisation and colonial administration in the nineteenth century, using this as a lever to highlight the broader issue of periodisation in Pacific history.

THE TARANAKI ICONOCLASM

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Victoria University of Wellington

ABSTRACT: This article proposes that regional iconoclasm occurred in Taranaki (New Zealand) in the 1850s. Like the Polynesian Iconoclasm, the Taranaki Iconoclasm was pursued in the interests of greater centralisation and involved the destruction and/or desecration of tapu 'sacred' places and objects, including wāhi tapu 'sacred groves', mauri stones 'stones containing life essences', god-images and ancestral relics. In its later phases, this iconoclasm was orchestrated by a tohunga matakite 'seer/prophet' named Tamati Te Ito who, in 1857, became the inspired leader of a pan-tribal movement whose members called themselves Kaingārara.

Keywords: Māori prophets, iconoclasm, Christian conversion, centralisation, tapu, tohunga 'priest, ritual expert'

In a recent book, *The Polynesian Iconoclasm*, I sought to show how Christian conversion in East Polynesia was a ritual and seasonal event that comprised a series of closely linked iconoclastic episodes, each an emulation of an earlier one (Sissons 2014). Beginning in Mo'orea in 1815, chiefs and priests in the Society Islands, Austral Islands, Hawaiian Islands and Cook Islands expelled their personal and tribal *atua* 'gods, ancestral spirits, demons' by defiling their god-images and eating with commoners at collective feasts. In some cases, the food consumed at these feasts had been cooked on fires into which god-images had been thrown. In making an argument for a single regional event I excluded Māori conversions in New Zealand for two reasons: firstly, because mass conversion to Christianity was initiated by Māori leaders in the late 1830s and early 1840s and did not appear to involve any intentional emulation of the iconoclastic events in Island Polynesia; and secondly, because god-images and temples such as those destroyed during the Polynesian Iconoclasm did not feature strongly in Māori religious practice.

I have since discovered, however, that although there was no widespread iconoclasm in New Zealand, many *ariki* 'high chiefs' and *tohunga* 'priests, ritual experts' throughout the country did expel their atua (and hence violate their personal *tapu* 'sacredness', a state derived from associations with atua) in the late 1830s and early 1840s by pouring warm cooking water over themselves or touching parts of their bodies with cooked *kūmara* 'sweet potato' (Sissons 2015). These rites appear to have cleared the way for mass

conversion and so paralleled to some extent the Polynesian Iconoclasm—in 1839 there were only around 2,000 baptised Māori adults, but after the expelling of atua this number increased dramatically, reaching around 60,000 within five years (Yates 2013: 127). Subsequent rites for driving atua from burial grounds and *wāhi tapu* 'sacred groves' in the 1850s appear to have been a sequel to the deliberate violation of personal tapu prior to baptism. While the tapu of chiefs and priests had been significantly reduced, their altars and sacred remains deposited in the wāhi tapu (including hair and nail clippings, food scraps and items of clothing) remained dangerous—particularly so, since the atua that guarded the groves were now effectively uncontrolled. Examples of these latter rites have been documented for Taranaki, Northland and the lower South Island (Sissons 2016).

In this article, my focus is exclusively on these and other post-conversion rites as they were performed in Taranaki. While there was no New Zealand iconoclasm, I will argue that the destruction and/or desecration, throughout Taranaki, of god-images, sacred groves, stone altars and ancestral relics, together with the unearthing of *mauri* stones (stones that had been buried in abandoned hill settlements and into which the life essence of the settlements had been instilled) constituted a regional iconoclasm which, like the Polynesian Iconoclasm, was directed towards political centralisation. While, strictly speaking, stone altars, mauri stones and relics were not icons, they were all, like the East Polynesian god-images, tapu indexes of divine or ancestral agency (Gell 1998: 106–15). I have chosen to emphasise this shared quality by naming the regional event "the Taranaki Iconoclasm". Whereas in East Polynesia, centralised Christian polities were promoted by priests acting on behalf of high chiefs who would become "kings", in Taranaki, a related political and religious project was pursued by a local *tohunga matakite* 'seer/prophet' acting on behalf of local chiefs who were seeking to unite as one pan-tribal body. The prophet's name was Tamati Te Ito Ngāmoke, and his pan-tribal movement called themselves "Kaingārara".

One of the sources of inspiration for my understanding of the Polynesian Iconoclasm as a process of centralisation was the highly original, at times brilliant, writings of A.M. Hocart. Marshall Sahlins has half-jokingly claimed to be "a Cartesian—a Hocartesian" (2017: 91). In some respects, I am too, but, strangely, my Hocart points me in the opposite direction to that divined by Sahlins. While the Hocart from whom Sahlins claims to have drawn inspiration bears an uncanny resemblance to Sahlins himself—he anticipated the ontological turn and "freed himself from anthropological conventions by adhering to indigenous traditions" (p. 91)—my Hocart was an unconventional theorist of centralisation who would have had little time for the mythological underpinnings of the ontological turn. Following Hocart's lead, Sahlins proposed, in the inaugural Hocart Lecture, that the "original political society"

was cosmologically organised, existing first as myth and later as reality. My Hocart would have stressed, however, that the original political society was *ritually* organised; myth was significant because it was "a true record of ritual" (1952: 25). Defending his focus on ritual, Hocart wrote:

> A friend of mine thinks I hang too much on the peg of ritual. When you see a man reducing many things to one, it is natural to get alarmed, to think he has a bee in his bonnet; but my friend forgets we all have one great bee in our bonnets and that is Life—life for ourselves, life for our progeny, as much life as is possible with as great a margin as possible over bare existence. … One technique for securing life we call ritual. (1952: 51)

In my view, Hocart's most profound insight, and one that potentially opens up a whole post-Foucauldian anthropology of the colonial state, is that all government has ritual origins—governmentality is essentially a ritual phenomenon. In his posthumously published *Kings and Councillors* Hocart was scathing in his criticisms of economists and sociologists who were unable to appreciate the place of ritual practice in human political history:

> Ritual is not in good odour with our intellectuals … In their eyes only economic interests can create anything as solid as the state. Yet if they would only look about them they would everywhere see communities banded together by interest in a common ritual; they would even find that ritual enthusiasm builds more solidly than economic ambitions, because ritual involves a rule of life, whereas economics are a rule of gain, and so divide rather than unite. (1970: 35)

Kings and Councillors seeks to show that state formation was a process of ritual centralisation that entailed an initial concentration of collective life in the person of the king and a subsequent transformation of ritual functions into state functions. In relation to the role of religious ritual in the centralising projects of kings, Hocart wrote:

> It may seem a roundabout way of centralizing government to let one god devour all the rest. It seems roundabout only to those who are still possessed by the idea that the primary function of the king is to govern, to be the head of the administration. We shall see that he is nothing of the kind. He is the repository of the gods, that is of the life of the group. (1970: 98–99)

Hocart further claimed that iconoclasm needs to be understood as integral to this process of ritual centralisation, noting that "the struggle between idolaters and iconoclasts is … at bottom a struggle between local autonomists and centralizers" (1970: 248).

Indeed, Hocart's generalisations precisely describe the activities of the priests and high chiefs of Polynesia who, taking Jehovah as their "one god",

initiated the Polynesian Iconoclasm, centralising their societies around themselves in ritual formations that were stronger than any that they had known previously. And they also describe well the activities in the 1850s of the Taranaki tohunga matakite Tamati Te Ito, who, like the Polynesian priests, employed "one god to devour all the rest"—except that in Tamati Te Ito's case, the "god" most immediately employed was Karutahi, a pre-Christian atua that had elsewhere assumed the form of a *taniwha* 'water-dwelling guardian'.

THE TARANAKI ICONOCLASM, PHASES ONE AND TWO

The Taranaki Iconoclasm, as I conceive of it, occurred in three distinct but closely related phases: (i) the desecration of sacred groves by local tohunga, 1851–1852, (ii) the unearthing of mauri stones from abandoned *pā* 'fortified settlements' and contemporary villages, 1853–1855 and (iii) the building, throughout 1857, of large bonfires into which were thrown heirlooms, ancestral treasures and tapu material that had been excavated from the sacred groves. In making a claim for a three-phase iconoclasm in Taranaki in the 1850s my interpretation of the iconoclastic activities will differ significantly from that provided by Bronwyn Elsmore in her general overview of biblically influenced Māori social movements (Elsmore 1989: 127–40). Elsmore understood these activities as healing "responses" to the introduction of the gospel to Taranaki in a context of high levels of mortality among Māori caused by introduced diseases. Certainly, healing appears to have been of primary concern for tohunga and their communities during my Phase One; however, I will argue that political centralisation became an equally or perhaps more significant concern during Phases Two and Three. Because she understood the 1850s as "a decade of the healers" (pp. 95–106), rather than a decade of extreme colonial tension in relation to land, Elsmore failed to register the transformation, under Te Ito's guidance, of a Christian healing movement into a Christian political movement.

The collective eating that characterised the first phase of the iconoclasm began in New Plymouth in 1851 (Taylor journal, 13 August 1851) and was quickly taken up by communities all along the west coast as far south as Whanganui. Directed by a number of different local tohunga, the rites entailed piling together wood and stones—including, in some cases, those of the ritual altar (*tūāhu*)—into a large fire upon which potatoes were roasted and eaten by the whole community. People stood in a circle around the fire and passages from the Bible were read by the tohunga while the food was being consumed. This rite was intended to expel any *atua kikokiko* 'malevolent ancestral spirits' that haunted the grove in the form of lizards and which were thought to be causing widespread sickness. Cooked food was understood to be the antithesis of all things tapu, including places to which atua had been ritually called or installed as guardians. Cooking and eating food in sacred groves, therefore, rendered these places uninhabitable for atua.

Here is a description of the rite as performed by the Ngāti Ruanui of southern Taranaki:

> Pirimona assembled the inhabitants in the wahi tapu or sacred grove in the midst of which the "tuahu" or praying stone still stands and having lit several fires in the middle of the grove, whilst the entire population sat round in a circle, he read a chapter from the Testament and cooked some potatoes, which he hukihukied or strung on short sticks and then laid on the fires, which being done he presented some to each person in the circle … On my speaking to a person who had done so he said "was it not right to drive away the ngararas or reptiles from them (so they called their gods)". (Taylor journal, 10 September 1851)

I will say no more of the events of Phase One here, partly because I have discussed these in detail in an earlier article (Sissons 2016) but also because while they were a prelude to Tamati Te Ito's centralising activities, they were all local ceremonies led by local tohunga. It is quite possible that Te Ito was one of these tohunga, but I have yet to discover any direct evidence to support this view. Te Ito is said to have returned to Taranaki from the Victorian goldfields in 1853 (AJHR 1869, A-13: 15); if so, he would have been absent from New Zealand during at least some of the Phase One period. Between 1851 and 1854 some 300 Māori miners were camped at Bendigo in the Australian state of Victoria and Te Ito may have joined this group (Cahir and Clark 2014: 118–19).

During Phase Two of the Taranaki Iconoclasm, mauri stones were removed from the sites of abandoned fortified villages by a large group of horsemen led by Tamati Te Ito. Robert Parris, who as district land purchase commissioner and a fluent Māori speaker gained a good knowledge of Te Ito's activities, wrote:

> A party of young men, varying from twenty to thirty, was made up for him from the different tribes, and maintained for a very long time doing nothing but digging over their tapued grounds, gathering stones and old trophies, such as he chose to pronounce to be sacred. (AJHR 1869, A-13: 15)

Mauri stones were consecrated fetishes into which the life essence of the community had been instilled before they were buried by tohunga to prevent their discovery by enemies. Alfred Gell, in his brilliant discussion of distributed personhood, termed them "aniconic idols" and explicitly likened them to the iconic idols of Tahiti that were destroyed during the Polynesian Iconoclasm. Both, he argued, were indexes of divinity that participated in social life, distributing or concentrating divine personhood in the process (1998: 106–15). We have no way of knowing how many of the stones unearthed by Te Ito were, in fact, ancient mauri, but this pan-tribal *whakanoa* 'tapu removal' project appears to have proceeded under the *mana* 'power, status' of tribal leaders who recognised Te Ito's visionary abilities.

There are two further accounts of Tamati Te Ito's Phase Two activities, both of which generally support that of Parris quoted above. The first was written by an eyewitness who, remarkably, was none other than Stephenson Percy Smith, future Surveyor-General of New Zealand and founder of the Polynesian Society. Percy Smith was born in 1840 and so would have only been a boy of 13 or 14 when he observed the events he recorded. Here is his account in full, written around 67 years after the activities he witnessed:

> We do not know what was the immediate cause of the movement that took place to remove the *tapu* of the old *pas*; but one man named by white people Tamati Tito, but whose proper name was Te Ito, suddenly came to the fore as a *tohunga*, or priest, with the assertion that he had the power to remove the *tapu* from the sacred stones. And this he proceeded to do by visiting all the old *pas* in the neighbourhood of New Plymouth and surrounding district. We have no record of his visiting *all* the old *pas*, but he probably did—I can at least vouch for his visit to Ngaturi, the old *pa* on which was afterwards built—during the Maori war—the Omata stockade.
>
> Either in 1853 or 1854, I was passing this place and there saw a large body of Maori horsemen, some fifty or sixty in number, some looking after the horses, others on top of the *pa*, which is not a large one—perhaps half an acre in extent—the ancient *maioro*, or ramparts, of which are still (1920) distinguishable. Being curious to learn what was going on, I went up to the *pa*, but was not allowed to go further than the entrance. I saw at the far side a group of men going through some performance which, after knowledge enables one to say, was the recitation of *karakias* ['chants'] by one of the men. This was Te Ito, and as I learned, he was *whakanoa*, or removing the *tapu* from the place. Though I saw nothing of any stone in this case, I heard at the time from others that Te Ito always searched for some sacred stone in the many *pas* he visited, and in most cases these stones were removed to other places and buried in spots known only to a select few of the old Maoris. (Smith 1920: 150–51)

The second supporting account was written by the Wesleyan missionary T.G. Hammond. Hammond's account of Te Ito's activities appears to draw upon information supplied to him by George Stannard, a missionary stationed at Waitōtara, southern Taranaki, in the period 1850–1857 (Missionary Register 1851: 222). Hammond emphasised that Te Ito was a tohunga matakite, an inspired seer who had the power to divine the presence of "representations of deities", including mauri stones, "under buildings, alongside rivers and in various other places" (1940: 59). In an insightful comment, dismissed by Elsmore because it contradicted her argument for a "healing response" inspired by Scriptural command, Hammond further noted that Te Ito's project was probably in "anticipation of circumstances in relation to the retention of

land by the people" (p. 59). This opinion finds support in a pithy comment by Te Ito himself. Smith met Te Ito in 1906 and asked him why he had thought it necessary to remove the mauri stones from pā. Smith was told: "We wanted to combine all the Maori people from Mokau to Patea in one body, and to remove the *tapu* from the old *pas*, as it was harmful to people" (Smith 1920: 151). Mōkau and Pātea are at the northern and southern boundaries respectively of the Taranaki district.

In addition to removing mauri from pā and other tapu places, Te Ito and his group of horsemen attempted to expel Maru, an extremely powerful atua, from at least one god-image toward the end of this Phase Two. Rangipito Te Ito, one of Smith's main Taranaki informants and a relative of Tamati Te Ito, told Smith that Maru "was a very powerful god, indeed he was like Jehovah". He added that Maru "was the principal god of Taranaki, indeed of all descendants of those who came in the 'Aotea canoe', as also of [Te] Ati-Awa" (Smith 1908: 143). In a note written to Smith in 1906, Hammond recorded:

> The stone image of the god, Maru, which the Patea people formerly possessed, was burnt by Tamati Te Ito, and his *ope whakanoa* (or party who took the old *tapu* off the *pas*, etc. in about 1855. Te Ito is still alive, a very old man, at this day, 1906). The stone broke in pieces when burnt. (p. 143, unnumbered footnote)

Maru had also been called upon by tohunga to reside in a wooden "god-stick" approximately 25 cm long with a carved head at one end and a smooth, tapered shaft, wrapped tightly with flax cord, at the other. Hammond wrote that this image was also burned, although possibly not by Te Ito, since he implied that its destruction occurred earlier "when they embraced Christianity" (Hammond correspondence, letter to Percy Smith, 29 December 1891). In East Polynesia, the wrapping of god-images in order to fix the spirit of the god into the image was central to most seasonal rites. The binding of the wooden Maru image had no doubt been a closely related practice, probably with the same intended result. In Taranaki, but rarely elsewhere in New Zealand, these bound images, termed *rākau whakapākoko* or *atua whakapākoko*, were used by tohunga in rites performed beside altars such as those destroyed in Phases One and Three of the Taranaki Iconoclasm (Smith 1908: 143).

In a useful rethinking of the concept of the "fetish", David Graeber (2005) proposed that the production of fetishes is always a socially creative activity that may, at times, be revolutionary. Indeed, in the aftermath of iconoclasms in the Society Islands, the printing, binding and distribution of biblical texts by missionaries under the kingly authority of Pōmare was a revolutionary process of fetish production that replaced the pre-Christian production and distribution of god-images by his priests (Sissons 2014: 101–16). Tamati Te

Ito's unearthing of mauri previously distributed throughout Taranaki and his reburying of them in a secret location can be viewed as a reversal of this process of fetish distribution—it was, instead, one of fetish concentration. Yet, since it was a concentration of fetishes into the hands and control of one powerful tohunga, it was also a process of Hocartian political centralisation. Mauri stones, some of which were hollow, were, like the god-images, believed to contain power and life, concentrating the productivity of people, forests, gardens and fishing grounds. Te Ito's ability to "see" these and the presence of their guardian atua throughout Taranaki, and his ability to bring them under his control, was evidence of his exceptional mana as a tohunga matakite. By boldly destroying the stone image of the powerful god, Maru, and surviving the iconoclastic episode unharmed, Te Ito further enhanced his reputation throughout Taranaki, so much so that by 1857 he had risen to become the prophetic leader of his pan-tribal Kaingārara movement.

Up to this point, our lens has been focused closely on the details of Te Ito's Phase Two ritual activities. I now want to zoom out, widen the view and provide some necessary political context for his project. This will enable us to understand Te Ito's actions as constituting both a ritual struggle with local atua and a political struggle against colonial aggressors.

By far the most significant development in southern Taranaki tribal politics in this 1853–1855 period was an attempt by Ngāti Ruanui leaders, supported by others from northern Taranaki (Te Āti Awa and Taranaki Iwi) and Ōtaki (Ngāti Toa and Ngāti Raukawa), to build a strong political alliance able to better resist colonial pressures for land sales and provide a strong, united voice in dealing with the Government. With the proclamation of the New Zealand Constitution Act in 1853, most Māori became disenfranchised citizens. The Act created Provinces (including the Province of New Plymouth), a Legislative Council and a House of Representatives elected by British subjects who were over the age of 21 and who owned land worth 50 pounds. While some Māori were able to vote under these provisions, most were excluded because their land was owned collectively. Section 71 of the Act also made provision for the setting apart of areas in which Māori "laws, customs and usages" could prevail so long as they were "not repugnant to the general principles of humanity" (*Taranaki Herald*, 13 October 1852, p. 4). In February 1853, and at least partially in response to this Act, Mātene Te Whiwhi and Tamihana Te Rauparaha from the Ōtaki tribes Ngāti Toa and Ngāti Raukawa began canvassing support for a Māori king, visiting Taupō, Rotorua, Maketū and Waikato. Ngāti Ruanui leaders supported this political initiative and in May of the same year they began building, at Manawapou (near present-day Hāwera in southern Taranaki), what would be at the time New Zealand's largest meeting house. Named Taiporohēnui by Matene Te Whiwhi, it was to

be a pan-tribal parliament house (Taylor journal, 26 May 1853, 9 May 1854; Church 1992: 117). Taiporohēnui was also a ritual name for the west coast of the North Island and in its new application is said to have referenced a blocking of the tide of European settlement (Sinclair 1969: 85 n33).

Opposition to land sales by Ngāti Ruanui leaders predates the New Zealand Constitution Act, and a local landholding alliance appears to have been forming immediately prior to the start of Te Ito's Phase Two activities. In September 1852, the local inspector of police, George Cooper, reported that on a recent journey through Ngāti Ruanui territory he had been told by local leaders that "Ngati Ruanui were bound by an oath never to sell any land and they never would till the end of the chapter" (Cooper to McLean, 12 September 1852). Cooper later wrote that Ngāti Ruanui were supported in their desire to hold onto their land by leaders of other Taranaki tribes (Te Āti Awa and Taranaki Iwi), describing this alliance as a "land-league" that had been solemnised through the burying of a Bible:

> The league has been ratified and confirmed at several meetings with various formulas and solemnities, a copy of the Holy Scriptures having on one occasion been buried in the earth and a cairn of stones erected on the spot in attestation of the inviolability of the oath to oppose the sale of land to Europeans. (Cooper 1854: 35; Donald McLean, Chief Land Purchasing Commissioner, also described this ceremony in February 1854, AJHR 1861, C-1: 197)

This ceremony had probably been held by Christian leaders of Taranaki Iwi in August 1853. The Lutheran missionary Johann Riemenschneider noted, in his December 1853 report to the North German Missionary Society, that a copy of the New Testament had been buried, adding that the purpose of this was:

> … to place for all of Taranaki and for ever a sacred oath and divine tapu (ban) against all complete and partial sale to and settlement by Europeans! (Oettli 1996: 86)

While there is no evidence to suggest that Tamati Te Ito was present at this ceremony, it is surely no coincidence that it was being staged at the same time that he was beginning his Phase Two activities—as already noted, Te Ito is reported to have returned from the Victorian goldfields sometime in 1853, and Smith saw him with his *ope whakanoa* 'tapu-removal troop' in 1853 or 1854 (AJHR 1869, A-13: 15; Smith 1920: 150). Both the placing of the New Testament in the earth and the removal of mauri stones from the earth were undoubtedly informed by the same understanding—the Testament represented a new form of mauri, a consecrated fetish or "aniconic idol" which contained the power of God. It made perfect sense, therefore, for Te

Ito to remove the tribally specific mauri stones that, in effect, competed with this new centralising mauri and the tribal alliance it indexed.

In May 1854, a grand, pan-tribal hui was held in the large Taiporohēnui meeting house, again attended by the Ngāti Raukawa leaders and around 500 Ngāti Ruanui. At a huge feast, which included 140 pigs, 1,000 baskets of potatoes, 900 baskets of kūmara, 700 baskets of taro and bread baked from two tonnes of flour produced by a local mill, the opposition to land sales was reaffirmed (Taylor journal, 8 May 1854). Tamati Te Ito and his party of horsemen (ope whakanoa) would have been fully immersed in their whakanoa project at this time.

THE TARANAKI ICONOCLASM, PHASE THREE

The final phase of the Taranaki Iconoclasm commenced in early 1857, when Tamati Te Ito moved out of the shadows as leader of the ope whakanoa to orchestrate spectacular *ahi whakanoa* 'tapu-destroying fires' as the prophetic leader of the pan-tribal movement which named itself Kaingārara. It appears that Te Ito and his supporters had concluded that the rites of cooking and eating in sacred groves during Phase One and the removal of mauri stones during Phase Two had not been effective enough in combating the dangerous presence of atua—epidemics were still ravaging local Māori communities—and despite the burying of a Bible, people were becoming more politically divided in their attitudes towards land sales.

The first hint of Te Ito's changed mission is contained in a report by Rev. Riemenschneider to his German Missionary Society, written in June 1857. The missionary wrote that during the period January to March 1857, Te Ito had been performing "miracles" among the Ngāti Ruanui people who had thus become "entranced" by him (Riemenschneider 1857: 113). By July of the following year, Riemenscheider had become convinced that Te Ito's movement had millennial dimensions—it sought "the fulfilment of the divine order to come" by clearing away tapu, the main obstacle to this fulfilment:

> He needed to clear away this obstacle which still lies between [God and Māori] in the name of God in order to open the way for their perfection and completeness … This fulfilment [of the divine order to come] will and must take place when his work is completed … and nobody should be allowed to doubt him or his work … . (Riemenschneider 1858: 327)

The Kaingārara conception of a divine hierarchy included three levels of atua: on the highest level was the atua of Paihia—the Church Missionary Society God; below him was the Catholic atua; and on the third level were Māori atua termed *atua whakapākoko*—atua that could enter images and human mediums (Te Whena 1858). In accordance with this conception, Te Ito

was now orchestrating the clearance of tapu as the inspired medium of a third-level atua named Karutahi (lit. 'one-eyed'). An apparently knowledgeable correspondent, perhaps Riemenschneider or the Wesleyan missionary Rev. John Whiteley, reported in the *Wellington Independent*:

> This *Puketapu* man [member of the Puketapu *hapū* 'kin group' of Te Āti Awa], whose name is Tamati, asserts that Karutahi, an old Waikato deity has entrusted him with a divine commission to abolish the ancient and sacred rite of *Tapu*. Tamati has become the medium whereby the god Karutaha [*sic*] reveals to the maori race the *cause of their rapid diminution*. It runs this :—The all potent institution of Tapu has of late years been disregarded; the "wahi tapu," or "sacred place," has been desecrated; from the consecrated grove, flax and toetoe [a grass] have been gathered … vengeance [of atua], assuming the form of a *Ngarara* (lizard) enters the body of man, consumes his vitals, and thereby causes death. (*Wellington Independent*, 22 July 1857, p. 2)

Karutahi is known today as a Waikato taniwha, an ancestral guardian who inhabits a swamp near Meremere. When Transit New Zealand was carrying out an improvement to State Highway 1 in 2002 the *hapū* 'kin group' for whom Karutahi now acts as a guardian atua (*kaitiaki*) objected that the new route would pass through Karutahi's abode, and after negotiations the original route was altered in 2002 (Keene 2007: 8). If Te Ito was acting as a medium for this taniwha then he was embodying the atua of a powerful neighbour who had 25 years previously driven many Taranaki people from their homes, forcing them to migrate south to Ōtaki, Waikanae and the South Island. Taniwha often take the form of *ngārara* 'large reptiles'; hence it seems that in taking on the power of Karutahi to expel the lizards from sacred groves Te Ito was embodying the spirit of a large Waikato ngārara to defeat a multitude of smaller Taranaki ngārara. Appropriate, therefore, that his followers named themselves "Kaingārara", lit. 'reptile-eaters'. As I have said, in Hocartian terms, Te Ito was bringing about centralisation by calling upon "one god to devour all the rest".

In its associations with Karutahi, Te Ito's movement exhibited a curious parallel with another movement in Northland that began around the same time. In January 1856, the Church Mission Society missionary, Richard Davis, was shown a drawing of a flying ngārara which he termed a "flying dragon". He subsequently learned that the image provided protection from an epidemic that a tohunga matakite, or 'doctor' (as Davis described him), predicted would visit the world. Davis (1856) wrote that the unnamed tohunga's followers protected themselves by looking at personal renderings of the image and that there was "scarcely a tribe throughout the country" which did not possess a copy. Like Te Ito, this man formed a tapu-removal party and with this ope

whakanoa visited many pā and sacred groves throughout Northland during 1856 and 1857 (Davis 1857). While it is possible that this movement was influenced by that of Te Ito, the two ngārara and their atua-expelling projects appear to have been quite distinct.

Riemenschneider took a particular interest in Te Ito's activities and lectured on them as a local expert in New Plymouth. Percy Smith, now a 17-year-old youth, recorded in his diary on 11 June 1857:

> My 17th birthday. Attended interesting lecture by Mr Riemenschneider on the movement going on amongst the natives, viz "Whakanoa" or making "common" their Tapu places, which is done by a Prophet named Tamati of Ngati Ruanui.

The *Taranaki Herald* later printed a lengthy summary of Riemenschneider's lecture. The missionary had attended some of Te Ito's ceremonies and had learned that frequent deaths had been attributed to the continued presence of atua kikokiko that haunted burial grounds. To free people from their influence, the grounds had been excavated "in various directions", and the material that had been collected was burned in large fires. Riemenschneider added that Te Ito had begun his movement in the south where he had performed his ceremonies "to the complete satisfaction of the Ngāti Ruanui tribe" and that, at the time of speaking, he was working with Te Āti Awa living to the north of New Plymouth (*Taranaki Herald*, 20 June 1857, p. 2).

The results of some of Te Ito's southern Ngāti Ruanui ceremonies were recorded by Rev. Richard Taylor in March 1857. In January, at Weriweri and Waiheke (between present day Hāwera and Eltham), Taylor was told that certain stones, which had been placed by pre-Christian tohunga around the boundaries of kūmara gardens to signify that the crops were under the protection of atua, had been causing sickness and death (Taylor journal, 4 and 5 January 1857). Then, some three months later, he wrote:

> All the old stones used as land marks and many others had been bewitched by their forefathers and they caused the death of all who touched them. They had therefore carefully dug them all up and carried them to one spot where they formed a heap of considerable size, there were several tons of them. These they heated in a large fire and then cooked potatoes with which the whole pa partook. This was done to w[h]akanoa or render common the stones and destroy the spell supposed to land on them. (Taylor journal, 28 March 1857; Elsmore (1989: 131) incorrectly dated this event as March 1858)

If, as Riemenschneider noted, Te Ito was performing "miracles" among Ngāti Ruanui at this time these activities had almost certainly been orchestrated by him. In concluding its report on Riemenschneider's lecture the *Taranaki*

Herald expressed its hope that after the tapu had been removed from the land people would be more willing to sell it—a comment that suggests an extraordinary level of ignorance or hopeful thinking among settlers in relation to Te Ito's motivation.

A further report on Te Ito's movement was later sent to the Wesleyan Missionary Society by their missionary, Rev. John Whiteley. He wrote that the movement had been occurring all along the coast, and that the "destruction of all their sacred places" had been "attended to with great zeal and parade" (Wesleyan Missionary Society 1857). The "parades" included the blowing of "trumpets", possibly the long wooden trumpets termed *pūkāea* (*Lyttelton Times*, 15 August 1857, p. 2).

Following the parades and trumpets, large bonfires were lit. Whiteley, an "anxious" witness to these, later wrote:

> Cart-loads of stones, and trees, and rubbish were dug out and collected from the *wahi tapus* of the respective settlements and tribes; and then, with great ceremony, reading of the Scriptures and pretended devotion, burnt in large fires made for the occasion. (*Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, 23 January 1861)

In his insightful book *Maori Folk Art*, artist and writer Alan Taylor described what appears to have been one of these events. His account is unsourced, but given that much of Taylor's deep knowledge of Māori art history came from interviews with Taranaki Māori informants, it is likely that it derives from local oral tradition. Taylor wrote:

> The death rate in south Taranaki was so alarming that tribal elders threw onto a bonfire all they could find of their old culture—carvings, ornaments and figures of ancient gods—in the hope that this might lessen the calamity that had come upon them. The fire burnt for three days, but to no purpose: the death toll continued to rise. (1988: 48)

A related oral tradition, included by John Houston in his *Maori Life in Old Taranaki*, tells of "carvings of wood and stone" being destroyed in a fire at Taki Ruahine pā, situated south-west of Hāwera, "subsequent to the introduction of Christianity". Houston wrote that "the fire burned for days, until in the end one special stone image burst asunder with a loud report, to the consternation of tribesmen" (1965: 118). It is possible that the "special stone image" referred to here was the same Maru figure which Hammond said was "formerly possessed by the Patea people", but this is unlikely given that Taki Ruahine pā is some 15 km north of Pātea.

Te Ito's iconoclasm continued throughout 1857—in addition to the Pātea fires, the New Plymouth police commissioner, Henry Halse, reported fires

at New Plymouth, Ōakura, Wārea and Umuroa, near present-day Ōpunake (Halse to McLean, 15 June, 5 and 19 September, 12 and 19 October 1857). In September, after having attended Te Ito's Ōakura ceremony held at Poutoko pā, Halse thought that Kaingārara was destined to become a national movement, writing to the Native Secretary and Chief Land Purchasing Commissioner, Donald McLean:

> The only occurrence of the past week has been the meeting at the Poutoko pa about the Kai ngarara ceremony. It took place on Wednesday and was attended as nearly as I could reckon by about six hundred and fifty-five natives. The particulars of which will appear in my diary. Tamati Te Ito is at Poutoko and was to leave this day for Warea [heading south down the coast] and thence to Umuroa. Where he will proceed next is not at present known, but it is supposed that he will be called upon to perform his ceremony all over this island. (Halse to McLean, 14 September 1857)

* * *

If what Te Ito told Percy Smith in 1906 was true then Te Ito had never had any intention of taking his ceremony "all over" the island as Halse predicted. Rather, Te Ito and his chiefly supporters were seeking to unite *Taranaki*—"to combine all the Māori people from Mōkau to Pātea in one body". And this is exactly what he and the leaders of Te Āti Awa, Taranaki Iwi and Ngāti Ruanui began to do in earnest after the last of Te Ito's bonfires in October 1857. Letters written to Te Ito by his Kaingārara followers in villages throughout Taranaki show that in 1858 plans for a pan-tribal settlement near Parihaka (where Te Whiti's pacifist community would later be formed) were well underway and a court system had been instituted (Goode 2002; Sissons 2019). In her introduction to her translations of these letters Penelope Goode noted that people appealed to Te Ito for judgement and advice on a wide variety of cases. She continued: "These cases strongly suggest that the Kaingārara Movement had much in common with the King Movement in its focus on law and order and the development of policies for land rights" (2002: 15). Indeed, one of the letters, signed by Rewi Maniapoto, a leading supporter of the king, suggests that Te Ito's Taranaki iconoclasm and associated pan-tribal vision were viewed as a challenge to the wider ambitions of the King Movement. This letter, written to Te Ito and the tribes of Taranaki in December 1859, was blunt:

> E hoa ma, whakamutua ta koutou mahi kikokiko. Kaua e tohe. Whakamutu rawatea.
>
> Friends, cease your atua-expelling work. Don't continue with it. Cease completely. (Goode 2002: 159–60, my translation)

Te Ito did, in fact, cease his ritual "work" soon after receiving this letter, but not because he had been commanded to do so by Rewi Maniapoto. Rather, in March 1860 the Kaingārara's plans for a pan-tribal settlement were dashed when government troops destroyed Tamati Te Ito's village at Waitara, initiating the Taranaki wars (see map in Cowan 1922: 156 which identifies Te Ito's *kāinga* 'village'). Te Ito, who had been living at Waitara with the leader of Te Āti Awa, Wiremu Kīngi Te Rangitāke, sought refuge, along with many Te Āti Awa families, at an inland pā named Mataitawa, near present-day Lepperton (Whiteley journal, 11 March, 8 April 1860). He would remain there throughout most of the 1860s.

Priests and prophets do not become kings, they serve kings; and, as Hocart recognised, they do so via the performance of centralising rituals. While Te Ito's ability to organise public spectacles and to oppose the malevolent influence of some atua did translate into a temporary increase in his personal mana, this was not the enduring mana of chiefly status, grounded in genealogical primacy and connection. While the Polynesian Iconoclasm could produce kings because the priests who orchestrated it were the priests of high chiefs with ambitions of more centralised rule, Tamati Te Ito had no such local high chief to serve—Taranaki was not Tahiti, Rarotonga or Hawai'i. Instead, Te Ito's Taranaki Iconoclasm was intended to clear the way for the emergence of a new pan-tribal community where God would be fully present. This was to be a Christian community whose members also recognised the continued presence of local atua and the need to combat their potentially malign influence. Unsurprisingly, therefore, Riemenschneider reported in 1857 that church attendance in his district had increased at the time of Te Ito's bonfires. He added that Te Ito had never opposed him or the work of the mission but that he instead saw his work as preparing the land for God (Oettli 2008: 154; Riemenschneider 1857: 326–27).

The military invasion of Taranaki meant that the political vision of Te Ito and the other Kaingārara leaders would never be realised. Instead, a new form of Christian community would be established at Parihaka under the biblically inspired leadership of Te Whiti-o-Rongomai and Tohu Kākahi. Most of the former Kaingārara moved to Parihaka in the mid-to-late 1860s and Tamati Te Ito joined them in 1870 (AJHR 1870, A-16: 18). Although Te Whiti referred to himself as the "King of Peace" (Elsmore 1989: 245), he was not the kind of king that Te Ito could serve. Indeed, contemporary Parihaka traditions, related to me by a knowledgeable descendant of Te Whiti, record that when Te Ito joined the Parihaka community Te Whiti told him to cease his work as an inspired seer (*pōrewarewa*). This is confirmed by a report of a meeting at Parihaka on 18 March 1870 at which Te Whiti spoke against three sources of confusion: the Māori king, the Government, and prophets, specifically referring to Te Ito as one of the latter:

> … as to the Prophets he most emphatically condemned them, and said they had all been guilty of perverting the truth. One he referred to personally, Tamati Teito [*sic*] who he said was an idiot (*porewarewa*). (AJHR 1870, A-16: 18)

Pōrewarewa were certainly not "idiots", as the report states. They were, instead, inspired prophets and mediums; the prophet, Te Ua Haumene, had used this term to refer to his emissaries (Head 1983: 170). Nonetheless, Te Whiti had strongly signalled his opposition to Te Ito's Kaingārara movement and had effectively declared it ended.

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MELANESIA BURNING: RELIGIOUS REVOLUTION IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC

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ABSTRACT: In the history of Pacific Christianity, the explosion of revival activity within Melanesia during the 1970s remains an untold story. Within this regional spiritual upheaval, ecstatic Pentecostalist phenomena spread with unprecedented rapidity, intensity and geographical scope. As a result of these movements, Christianity assumed an importance in Melanesia in a way it never had before, as local congregations redefined their church life and spirituality over and against mission Christianity. This article documents a major branch of this regional revivalism. A detailed description of this series of interconnected movements transitions to an explanation of their success in terms of four factors: the mutual ramification of the revivals with political independence movements; the fact that despite being built on theologies of world breaking, the revivals dovetailed with traditional Melanesian religious experiences; the existence of interdenominational organisations that expedited the movement of people, practices and ideas across local, regional and national frontiers; and, finally, the personal dimensions of Melanesian revivalism, whereby the genesis, uptake and diffusion of revival movements often depended crucially upon the persuasive capabilities of influential Christian leaders in each society.

Keywords: Melanesia, Christianity, revivalism, Pentecostalism, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, religion, South Seas Evangelical Church

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Beginning in the early 1970s and continuing for at least the next decade, Melanesia became the scene of intense Christian revival activity. This dramatic upsurge in the spiritual life of Melanesian Christians occurred with such rapidity, force and scope that Joel Robbins (2004a: 122) justifiably asks if it "might well be seen as something of a Melanesian 'great awakening'". As a direct result of this groundswell, Christianity assumed an importance in Melanesia that it never had before, as local congregations asserted their own Christian identities over and against the ideas and practices imposed upon them by missions (Barr 1983a; Ernst 2012).

Here I focus upon a main branch of this overall regional upheaval, namely, a series of interconnected revival movements which occurred within conservative evangelical churches across Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea in the early 1970s. Many localised expressions of the wider movement have been documented (e.g., Batley 1998; Burt 1994; Flannery 1983–1984;

Griffiths 1977; Kale 1985; Robbins 2004a; Robin 1981, 1982; Tuzin 1989, 1997). But as yet, no researcher has assembled these pieces into the broader story of which they are, in fact, a part, despite allusions to its existence (Barr 1983a: 112; Douglas 2001: 623). My paper thus positively responds to Barker's challenge that "if the Anthropology of Christianity is to be truly inclusive, it needs not only better ethnographies of rural communities but studies focused upon regional associations and networks" (2012: 77).

Of the individual revivals that together made up the overall movement I am focusing on, none were identical. However, most shared certain recurrent phenomena: a deep conviction of sin and associated repentance; the repudiation of, and deliverance from, traditional *qua* Satanic spirit beings and forces; healings; glossolalia, or speaking in unknown tongues; visions, dreams and prophecy; and episodes of collective shaking and crying. These phenomena fit comfortably within theological definitions of revival, referred to alternatively as "spiritual awakening", "evangelical awakening" or "spiritual revival" (Lovelace 1979; Orr 1976). Furthermore, practices such as healings, casting out evil spirits, speaking in tongues, and visions, dreams and prophecy are collectively known as *charismata*, or "gifts of the Holy Spirit", components of the revivals which are also the leading features of institutionalised, denominational Pentecostalism, where they are received through "baptism in the Holy Spirit".

But it would be inaccurate to claim that the Melanesian revivals duplicated these theological models. Indeed, my article illuminates a distinctly Melanesian form of revivalism and Pentecostalism. In an important article, Barr (1983a: 110) shows how many of the phenomena reported during this time did not appear *de novo* as a result of revivalism, but rather formed integral components of indigenous religious traditions. To understand them simply as generic aspects of revival or Pentecostalism, then, is to overlook that Melanesians had these existing forms of religiosity and spirituality from which to help build new forms of Christianity. My discussion also shows how the revivals were uniquely Melanesian not only in their religious dimensions but also in how they grew out of a particular regional history which imbued them with a distinct political ethos.

I begin by describing this branch of Melanesian revivalism, structuring the discussion according to the temporal and geographical trajectory of the overall movement. I then explain revivalism's spread in terms of four factors. Firstly, I want to think about the revivals as movements of religious independence. As I show, revivalism struck just as Melanesian countries were approaching political independence, and I see the processes as mutually ramifying, especially in light of the fact that one of the key aspects of revival was to appropriate control of Christian cosmology and worship from foreign missionaries. There is also a range of movements with a similar ethos that

occurred in both the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea that I think provide an important historical backdrop for what occurred.

The second key factor is that the revivals, despite embodying a theology of world breaking and rupture (Meyer 1998; Robbins 2004b), nonetheless established themselves across a cultural region whose societies had pre-existing traditions of spirit possession and ecstatic behaviour, as alluded to above in relation to Barr (1983a). Through highlighting this synergy my work joins a growing body of studies that seek to move beyond understandings of evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity as traditions of rupture and explore the elements of cultural and cosmological continuity that may exist within such transformative contexts (Anderson 2018; Marshall 2016).

A third factor I underscore is the denominational and interdenominational institutions and relationships that fostered the flow of people and ideas within and between Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. Without the relationships that existed between certain individuals and churches, as well as the existence of institutions that welcomed theologically similar Christians from throughout the region, the revivals would never have started. My discussion focuses particularly on the networks of both the Christian Leaders' Training College (CLTC) in Banz, Papua New Guinea, and the South Seas Evangelical Church (SSEC) as the filaments through which the spark of revival spread.

A final element in accounting for the success of the revivals in reshaping local Christianity was the influence of Christian leaders who catalysed change in their respective home areas. These were Christian leaders, both men and women, who were able to claim privileged access to and knowledge of the Holy Spirit and who could then forcefully communicate to their communities a range of directives for remaking their societies in line with the Holy Spirit's intentions. Some of these stories, such as that of Diyos of Eliptamin, are already known to anthropology (Lohmann 2007). But there are many other individuals who were crucially involved in this historically significant event whose identities remain obscured.

REVIVAL

Making Fire in Solomon Islands

The major branch of Melanesian revivalism that I describe in this article began in 1970 with a major upsurge in the spiritual life of SSEC congregations on the island of Malaita, Solomon Islands. The majority of sources that have documented the Malaitan revival (for example, Burt 1994: 241; Garrett 1997: 363; Griffiths 1977; Orr 1976: 197; Strachan 1984) attribute its origin to the evangelistic crusades held throughout Solomon Islands in July and August 1970 by the Māori evangelist Muri Thompson, who was joined by two other Māori men, John Pipi, a noted singer, and Rex Tito, a guitarist.

Anticipation for Thompson's visit was high following an April 1970 letter that went out from the South Seas Evangelical Mission (SSEM, the parent mission body) to all SSEC pastors representing nearly 300 local churches that read:

> Muri Thompson, a Maori evangelist from New Zealand, will be here for a number of crusades during July and August … Have your people pray every day … Now is the time to start praying. What should we pray for? Revival, a mighty pouring out of God's Holy Spirit upon His people so that people from all churches and missions will be eternally built up in Christ. (Griffiths 1977: 170)

Beginning in Honiara, for the first month of his visit Thompson and his team held revival meetings throughout different parts of the country, but did not manage to produce the desired breakthrough. In August he arrived at Malaita, the main stronghold of the SSEC. Thompson and his entourage made their way to the One Pusu Bible School, where he was the invited speaker at the annual Mission's Field Conference, attended by local and foreign Christian leaders and missionaries. It was here that the atmosphere of Thompson's crusades began to exhibit a greater intensity. In response to Thompson's preaching, which "called down the 'fire' of the Holy Spirit" (Garrett 1997: 363), participants at the conference began to speak in tongues, publicly repent their sins and cast out evil spirits, all of which occurred alongside episodes of crying and fainting. Following the conference, a missionary at One Pusu reported that

> for the last five weeks we have not had a regular school. Lectures have been interrupted simply by the Spirit taking over … One of our own missionaries has reported to New Zealand that Muri Thompson has introduced Pentecostalism. All I can say is that we need more of it and quickly. (as cited in Garrett 1997: 363)

Thompson's crusades continued up the west coast of Malaita, where his meetings produced similar results. Events reached fever pitch at Kobiloko on the northeast coast of Malaita during a meeting held on Sunday morning, 23 August (Burt 1994: 241; Griffiths 1977: 172). Here revival broke out within a group of 600 lay Christians who had come to see Thompson and Pipi preach (by this time Rex Tito had left the team after contracting malaria in south Malaita). Catalysed by Pipi's singing (Griffiths 1977: 173), the Holy Spirit diffused throughout the congregation, moving those in attendance to receive visions, speak in tongues, confess sins and past grievances and expel evil forces disturbing the church. Thompson's team subsequently held meetings in several other villages throughout Malaita, sometimes attended by over 2,000 in large, open-air gatherings, all of which produced miraculous outpourings of the Holy Spirit.

The above represents the received narrative of the Malaitan revival as told by the SSEM and other scholars to have documented it. This version of events is largely accurate; however, it overlooks some critically important facts. In particular it does not acknowledge the visit to Malaita from 16 June to 2 August (thus immediately preceding the One Pusu conference where Thompson preached) by John Pasterkamp, a Dutch Pentecostal pastor based in Rabaul, Papua New Guinea (Pasterkamp, letter to the editor in *Pacific Islands Monthly*, January 1971, p. 123). Pasterkamp had been invited to Solomon Islands by Roy and Margaret Latter, a couple living on neighbouring Tulagi, who explained in their letter that they had been approached by a group of SSEC men from Malaita eager to learn about baptism in the Holy Spirit and the associated spiritual gifts; in other words, Pentecostalism. After spending ten fruitful days with the group on Tulagi, Pasterkamp was taken by Arnon Sau to his village of Kakara, on the northwest coast of Malaita. Every morning, Pasterkamp gave the local SSEC congregation there a dose of Pentecostalism, teaching them how to receive the Holy Spirit. This teaching set in motion a groundswell of spiritual excitement and energy the likes of which SSEC congregations throughout Malaita had been praying for over several months, if not years. According to Pasterkamp (unpublished newsletter, 20 October 1970), within a week, around 100 members of the Kakara church began experiencing visions of Jesus, speaking and singing in tongues, casting out "demons", performing miraculous feats of healing and crying profusely during confession. Pentecostalism had unlocked the door to revival and was essentially acting as its delivery system. Of crucial importance is also that a group from Kakara, all of whom had become conversant in charismatic phenomena, would become part of the team accompanying Thompson around Malaita during the crusades and who, we must assume, played an important part in promoting this form of religiosity within the revivals.

Although not acknowledged within accounts of the Malaitan revival, the Kakara eruption, jointly orchestrated by Pasterkamp and SSEC leaders from Malaita, was the embryo from which the greater Malaitan revival grew. After months of concerted prayer, congregations were primed and ready for revival, and it was the spark of Pentecostalism that eventually ignited the flame. Once it had broken out, the powerful surge in spiritual activity that started in Kakara was picked up and amplified within the context of the subsequent Malaitan crusades from the time of the SSEM/SSEC conference in One Pusu onwards. Furthermore, the Pentecostalist flavour of the revivals provided the theological and ritual blueprint that SSEC churches would eventually adopt over the ensuing years.

While revival was felt most strongly in Malaita, immediately following Thompson's departure teams of SSEC Christians who had experienced the movement's force fanned out across the country, initiating similar revivals in many communities. While the full extent of the SSEC revival in Solomon

Islands is not yet clear, the fire certainly spread rapidly, with one SSEM missionary estimating that it had touched the lives of over 10,000 people within the first three months and that, writing in 1971, "the movement continues unabated on Malaita and is extending to other islands" (George Strachan, letter to the editor in *Pacific Islands Monthly*, January 1971, pp. 119–23). Such estimates obviously need to be assessed against the religious enthusiasms of their authors, but they nonetheless call attention to the popular uptake of the movement.

Fire in the Papua New Guinea Highlands

The Christian Leaders' Training College (CLTC), situated in Banz, in the highlands of Papua New Guinea, regularly received students from the SSEC. Those that were already present at CLTC when the revival broke in 1970 were fully aware of these events and shared the story with their colleagues, but in subsequent years students started arriving from the midst of the Malaitan upheaval, many of whom had a profound influence on the thinking of their Papua New Guinean counterparts. Of particular interest is that in 1973, as the revival spread throughout the Solomon Islands, several SSEC pastors who had directly participated in the 1970 explosion travelled to CLTC to undertake a Senior Pastors training course. While at the college, these SSEC pastors shared their experiences of the Malaitan revival with their classmates and teachers, contributing to a sense of urgency that something similar should also occur in Papua New Guinea. As a result of this growing expectation, several outreach meetings were planned for the SSEC contingent to visit their classmates' home communities, many of which were already in the early stages of revival.

The first excursion by the SSEC pastors into the Western Highlands Province took them to Engan communities within the Lumusa and Baiyer River Baptist Churches where they had been invited to interpret preliminary signs of spiritual awakening that had appeared in the village of Kembotapusa, namely, a woman trembling in response to the powerful preaching of a local CLTC student named Opa Miki (Cramb and Kolo 1983; Kale 1985; Sanders 1978: 114). Within a matter of days, this bodily shaking had spread to others in the congregation who, in addition, began crying profusely and confessing their sins. Upon their arrival, the SSEC group entered into dialogue with local pastors concerning the nature of events and quickly came to the conclusion that a revival was breaking. Over the next two weeks, the pastors travelled throughout the wider network of churches, providing similar advice, instruction and encouragement to local pastors and congregations about the spiritual upheavals beginning to emerge. Revival proliferated within these churches, with congregation members experiencing a deep conviction of sin, crying and bodily shaking (Cramb and Kolo 1983: 94). It seems that some

also spoke in tongues but that this was not as prominent as trembling, which became the hallmark of the Engan movement. Before long, revivalism was filtering through the capillaries of the broader Western Highlands Baptist Union (WHBU), which at the time had 151 congregations (Cramb and Kolo 1983). Visits by the Solomon Islands pastors then followed in 1973–1974 to Evangelical Church of Papua (ECP) congregations around Lake Kutubu, Southern Highlands Province (Robin 1981; Sanders 1978: 120), which again set in motion further local revivals in the surrounding area, particularly within Huli congregations around Tari and Homa (see also Barr 1983b).

From the available evidence it appears that the SSEC pastors did not start these highlands revivals in the same way as they had in Malaita but rather actively shaped and moulded local movements that had an origin and impetus of their own. Notwithstanding, their influence was crucial in facilitating the spread of revivalism. Firstly, they definitively labelled the local movements as "revival", a designation familiar to the evangelical Engan congregations and which was readily accepted as the official name. As well as giving the movement a name, the SSEC pastors also likely played a key role in consolidating the Pentecostalist theological framework employed to interpret the range of phenomena that was occurring (cf. Kale 1985: 63–64); the dreams, visions, trembling, crying and healings that occurred were, just as they had been in Malaita only a few years earlier, a sign of the baptism in the Holy Spirit and a return to the Day of Pentecost described in Acts 2.

Other revivals occurring during this time throughout the highlands were sparked by students whose time at CLTC had overlapped with SSEC Christians but who had independently orchestrated revival in their home areas. In the Southern Highlands, Agiru Gewaria and Hedai Urulu, both of whom had been students at CLTC between 1970 and 1972, initiated revivals within the Brethren/Christian Mission in Many Lands (CMML) churches in the Tari and Koroba areas, respectively, during 1975–1976. Also, in 1977 at the Duranmin Bible College, Diyos Wapnok precipitated a charismatic revival that swept through the entire Min region over the next four to five years (Bennett and Smith 1983; Jorgensen 1996, 2007; Lohmann 2007; Robbins 2001). Especially noteworthy within this movement was the role played by *spirit meri* who, as female mediums of the Holy Spirit, directed a totalistic reorganisation of society in Christian terms (Jorgensen 2007). Diyos attended CLTC from 1970 until 1972 and was not, therefore, present at the college for the visit of the senior pastors, though there is a good possibility he met them at later annual meetings of the Evangelical Alliance. Nonetheless, during these years he interacted closely with other SSEC students who had both heard of and directly experienced the events that unfolded in Malaita, exchanges that strongly shaped his ideas and motivations for a revival in the Min area, as recorded by Lohmann (2007: 134).

The Cup Runneth Over: Revival in the Papua New Guinea Lowlands

The Solomon Islands–based SSEM (the parent mission body to the SSEC) had established a presence in Papua New Guinea in 1949, when it set up a mission at Brugam, within the Maprik region, East Sepik Province. The SSEM PNG's work in this area (SSEM PNG became SSEC PNG in 1973), particularly around Ilahita, was a crucial platform from which revivalism emerged. In mid-1972, a team of four SSEC pastors fresh from "an experience of God's reviving power among their own people" visited SSEM churches throughout the Sepik, catalysing spiritual awakenings (Garrett 1997: 363; Griffiths 1977: 199–200). Then, following a lull in revivalist activity, a second wave of revivalism swept through the Ilahita area in 1976, again as a direct influence of SSEC Christians with experience of the Malaitan eruption. An Ilahita man called Barnabas Ke'in (Griffiths 1977) or Banabas Kain (Tuzin 1997) was visited in Wewak hospital by Jezreel Filoa, a Malaitan SSEM missionary who had worked in Papua New Guinea for 13 years, both before and after studying at CLTC from 1965 until 1968. Filoa, who had witnessed the events of 1972, discussed revival at length with Ke'in during his convalescence. When Ke'in arrived in Ilahita in June 1976, the revival flourished, lasting at least into the early 1980s. As reported by Tuzin in *The Cassowary's Revenge* (1997), the Ilahita revival caused widespread cultural destruction as well as a major rift in the community between those who supported revival and those who opposed it.

Of likely significance in helping to explain the genesis of the Sepik revivals is the presence within the immediate Maprik region of the Assemblies of God (AOG) church, a Pentecostal denomination that had arrived in the area in 1948, one year before the SSEM. To concentrate efforts, the churches had entered into a comity agreement, dividing the surrounding territories up into respective spheres of influence (Gallagher and Gallagher 2019). Operating in such close proximity to each other, a cross-pollination of ideas and practices would have been inevitable, such that prior to the arrival and influence of the SSEC leaders from Malaita, SSEM/SSEC congregations in the Sepik would already have been at least aware of, if not conversant in, Pentecostalist doctrine and worship.

At least two other local revivals that took place in lowland Papua New Guinea during the 1970s and 1980s were direct outgrowths of the work done at CLTC by SSEC Christians. More specifically, these wider radiations occurred as CLTC students influenced by SSEC Christians travelled home to start their own charismatic movements. The first of these took place within the Australian Churches of Christ (ACC) congregations in and around Bunapas, on the Ramu River, Madang Province, as described by Batley (1998), while the second was a sustained period of revivalism that occurred in the late 1970s and early 1980s among the Kieta circuit of the United Church, Bougainville (Garrett 1997: 351; Taruna 1983).

WHAT MAKES A FIRE BURN?

Colonial History

The series of interconnected revivals that took place in the 1970s can be seen as religious independence movements that emerged from a deeper history of Melanesian social movements which strove, in various ways, for liberation from colonial oppression. A crucial consequence of the revival was for Melanesians to take control of Christian worship and church organisation from missionaries and to thereby define a new, localised Christian identity in relation to the exogenous institution of the mission. With the direct, unmediated access to the Holy Spirit afforded to them by their Pentecostal-styled revivalism, Melanesians no longer needed outsider missionaries to tell them how to run their religious lives; they could now do it themselves. Indeed, the revival was not simply a change in worship and ideology, it was a change in religious rule (for some examples, see Burt 1994: 242; Robbins 2001; 2004a: 127; Tuzin 1997: 18).

This declaration of religious independence emerged out of a particular set of historical conditions. Consider first the crucial fact that the place where the revival started in Malaita, the village of Kobiloko, was the same village of Kwaisulia, one of the co-founders of the Remnant Church, an SSEM breakaway movement that formed in the 1950s (Burt 1983; 1994: 241). As described by Burt, "the goal of the Remnant Church is 'spiritual freedom' under a church independent of the state" (1994: 211). This image of theocratic rule, whereby followers acknowledged only the authority of God's government, law and tax, importantly led to a rejection of colonial government taxes as well as the government census (Burt 1983), an act of resistance that ultimately led to many adherents being imprisoned. As Burt notes (1983: 334), the Remnant Church "falls within a long tradition of such movements in Malaita", referring to the Maasina Rule Movement of the 1940s, which marshalled both indigenous and exogenous cultural resources in the pursuit of "political autonomy under spiritual authority" (Burt 1994: 201; see also Keesing 1978, 1979). Furthermore, as Akin shows in his wonderfully detailed account of Maasina Rule (2013: 180–86), the established SSEM church network acted as "ready integrative structures" for the island-wide movement and, of considerable importance, "SSEM members virtually melded their church with the movement" (p. 180). I argue that through these inextricable connections, the Malaitan revival inherited the anti-colonial drive towards self-determination and autonomy of Maasina Rule and the Remnant Church and sought to achieve in the realm of spirituality and worship what those earlier movements had attempted in the political and governmental sphere. This is powerfully exemplified by the fact that the Pentecostalist emphases of the Malaitan SSEC revival went directly against the staunchly anti-Pentecostal theology of the conservative SSEM.

The colonial era in Papua New Guinea produced similar political-religious movements that were disparagingly grouped by the administration under the label "cargo cults". The cargo movements that emerged in New Guinean societies as a result of their contact with European colonial powers were distinguished from the Remnant Church and Maasina Rule by their emphasis upon manufactured goods and commodities, but all were essentially alike in that they were assertions for control over the new social order imposed upon them. Indeed, as Lawrence famously argued for the Madang area, the cargo movement "may be regarded as, in the long run, a rudimentary form of revolutionary 'nationalism'—the people's first experiment in completely renewing the world order and achieving independence from European rule" (1964: 222), a view also shared by Worsley in his appraisal of cargo movements as based on an "anti-authoritarian attitude" (1957: 226) and taking the form of "a proto-nationalist political party" (p. 192; see also Lindstrom 1993: 49–50).

What we can see is that prior to the emergence of the revival movement there were, across both Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, social movements that sought to break free of colonial domination (often by reimagining their structures) through ritual and religious means. The fact that some of these movements occurred in the same places where the revival was most intense suggests that they were an important background for revivalism, which expedited the transition from mission (colonial) to locally orchestrated Christian worship and organisation.

As the fire of revival spread throughout the 1970s, there were, of course, concurrent movements for political change that I would argue also buttressed the movement. Indeed, as this series of revivals in many cases marked a claim for religious independence and a shift in religious rule, then the coincidence of their rapid spread throughout Melanesia with movements towards formal political independence can be taken as mutually ramifying. Papua New Guinea obtained self-governance in 1973, the same year the SSEC senior pastors arrived at CLTC, and then became fully independent in 1975, as this branch of Melanesian revivalism was in full swing. Solomon Islands, too, also achieved national independence in 1978, as local revivalism was continuing to work its way outwards from Malaita through neighbouring islands. Melanesians were taking the final steps towards self-governance and national independence at the same time as they were also dismantling missionary control of their Christian lives within the overall revival movement.

Cultural Tradition

Revivals also depended for their rapid growth upon an existing repertoire of spiritual entities and experiences that they synergised with, albeit through a process of reimagination. These strong elements of continuity, however, must be set against the profound cultural changes that the revivals brought about. The culturally destructive aspects of evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity are very well known to anthropologists, with two prominent descriptions being that these kinds of Christianity are "a culture against culture" (Dombrowski 2001) and also that Pentecostals in particular invariably pursue "an unabashed and uncompromising onslaught against their local cultures" (Casanova 2001: 437; see also Meyer 1998; Robbins 2011). The revivals precipitated far-reaching cultural and religious destruction wherever they took hold, for example, among the Telefolmin (Jorgensen 2007: 116), the Ilahita Arapesh (Griffiths 1977: 200; Tuzin 1997: 32), Solomon Islands (Burt 1994: 264), and the Enga Baptist churches first visited by the SSEC pastors in 1973 (Barr 1983a: 114).

But more recent approaches within Pentecostal studies in particular have argued that in addition to making a radical break with the past, Pentecostalism often incorporates existing religious and cultural material. According to Anderson (2018), this occurs in two main ways: firstly, traditional practices, spirits, ideas and experiences are, either deliberately or unconsciously, brought into Pentecostalism yet reimagined in Christian terms (see also Marshall 2016 on "resonant rupture"); or, universal Pentecostal religious forms are given new meanings through the encounter with a local cultural context (2018: 1–2). Here I focus upon the first of these processes.

The ecstatic phenomena that are associated with Pentecostal revivalism are nothing new to Melanesia, forming integral aspects of traditional religious experience across the region (Barr 1983a: 109). The continuation of these traditional customs under new Christian terms of reference was an important part of why revivalism spread so quickly. Again, Burt's work among the Kwara'ae in Malaita is exemplary. He writes how while the revival of 1970 "forms part of the worldwide 'charismatic' or 'pentecostal' movement and Kwara'ae trace it back to the Pentecost, it also draws upon their traditional religious culture. People 'convict' by the Holy Spirit in the same way that their ancestors were possessed or inspired by ghosts, and the experience (Kwara'ae *ta'elia*) with its physical sensations of trembling and glowing is said to be similar in either case" (1994: 241). Similarly, a local observer of the revivals within the Enga Baptist church around the Baiyer River area remarked upon the similarity between the "dog-men" who would "sniff out" unconfessed sin and traditional techniques of ascertaining wrongdoing (Cramb and Kolo 1983: 100). Kale's analysis of the Engan

revivals also makes this point emphatically (1985: 61–66), and also suggests potential links to the pre-Christian sun shaker cult described by Meggitt (1973). Jorgensen's account of the Telefolmin revival underscores how the *spirit meri* at the centre of the movement experienced "recurrent episodes of shaking that are virtually identical to bouts of hysteria experienced by others both before and after the advent of *Rebaibal*" (2007: 116), but that these were taken "as evidence of the Holy Spirit" (p. 120). These are just a handful of examples that show how existing indigenous traditions of spirit possession and divination acted as an important experiential source from which revivals drew for understandings of the Holy Spirit and its work. It is highly important to note, though, that this "continuity" is also discontinuity, in that the experiences were understood in Christian terms. In other words, this was a uniquely Melanesian version of Pentecostalism and Christian revival.

Indigenous performative repertoires were also marshalled as an outlet for revivalist fervour. In numerous societies across the region, revivals compelled people to spontaneously compose new music and song that was couched mainly in traditional performative idioms. Among the Oksapmin people, Ian Flatters (pers. comm., 31 August 2010), the resident missionary at the time the revival struck around 1980, observed how:

> All of a sudden, people who could not sing could sing … with revival they could sing the roof off, so to speak. They instantaneously produced songs about God, their growth as Christians, important dates, etc. New songs and praise and worship just came to them. Revival brought real life and vitality to the church. It gave the church a sense of its own local identity. They were able to move away from the missionary imposed structure as far as singing, clapping, dancing, and whatever they did in a service.

The Oksapmin people employed their traditional performative repertoire to capture this new burst of creative energy, including their handheld drums (*walon*) and decorative shells (*tiambel*), as well as singing and dancing styles (for more, see Macdonald 2019). Utilising traditional expressive culture within the context of the revival was also noted in the Enga Baptist church (Barr 1983a: 115; Smith and Hitchen 1975), the Evangelical Church of Papua around Lake Kutubu (Sanders 1978: 120) and the United Church in Huli areas (Barr 1983b: 149). This process, taken together with the absorption of spiritual traditions mentioned above, clearly shows how the rapid spread of this major branch of Melanesian revivalism in the 1970s has to be understood in relationship with the existing cultural frameworks with which it synergised, even if only to reimagine them.

Spreading the Fire: Institutions and Relationships

The spread of revivalism across national and cultural barriers depended upon a network of interdenominational relationships and institutions within which people, ideas and practices freely circulated. Through illuminating the centrality of these configurations I follow Barker's appeal for more anthropological studies of Christianity that focus upon "regional associations and networks" (2012: 77).

Two institutions stand out as particularly important crucibles for revival: the SSEM/SSEC and the interdenominational CLTC. To begin with, the SSEM depended upon the theological and evangelistic contributions of individuals from a wide range of conservative evangelical backgrounds. The organisation thus transcended denominational boundaries in the name of spreading the gospel throughout Malaita and Solomon Islands, and was even established in the Sepik region of Papua New Guinea by a Baptist minister (Garrett 1997: 180). The decision of the SSEM to establish a mission in Papua New Guinea in 1948 (which eventually became SSEC Papua New Guinea) was also crucial in establishing an important piece of infrastructure by which the revival could spread. It will be recalled that it was this regional extension that allowed a team of SSEC pastors fresh from the Malaitan revival to visit the Sepik area in 1972, beginning what would become a full-scale charismatic movement with far-reaching cultural changes. Even more so than the parent mission, however, the autonomous SSEC, which was established in 1964, served as a beacon of inspiration for other churches throughout the region due to the shape and tone of its worship and organisation. As Barr states, the SSEC served as "a 'prototype' or 'model' for ecstatic activities and the intense evocation of the Holy Spirit, since its independent ethos and evangelical style have been actively pursued by other similar bodies" (1983a: 112). Nowhere was this more evident than in the interconnected revivals spurred by SSEC Christians that I have described.

The other institution importantly responsible for spreading revivalism was the CLTC. Before discussing the role played by the CLTC in the revival, it is necessary to first understand its connection to the Evangelical Alliance (EA), an association of evangelical and Pentecostal missions within Melanesia established in 1964 for ecumenical cooperation and support. The organisation expanded quickly, with Liddle estimating that "by 1966 the EA represented approximately 400 European missionaries, a constituency of over 100,000 in New Guinea, and 285 local churches in the Solomon Islands" (2012: 366) and that by 1973 that number had expanded to 34 members and associate members.

Many of the missionaries associated with the EA, particularly those within the Asia Pacific Christian Mission, had strong ties to the Melbourne Bible Institute. A key figure within both organisations was Leonard (Len) Buck, a

Melbourne Methodist businessman who spearheaded efforts to establish the CLTC. Opened in 1964 and still running today, the college's central objective is to provide theological and biblical instruction to local Christian leaders primarily from the EA's constituent churches. CLTC acted as the engine room of the Papua New Guinean revivals, taking in students from across Melanesia, exposing them to the rapidly unfolding charismatic movement, and then sending them back out to their home communities, where they promulgated their revivalist inspirations. The CLTC accommodated a wide range of theological positions, and certainly not all supported charismatic revival. Indeed, it must be noted that it would have been enthused elements within the college which would have supported the promulgation of these ideas. In this respect, it should also be noted that several original members of the EA were Pentecostal denominations, who are likely to have exerted some influence on any developments concerning spiritual gifts and baptism in the Holy Spirit. Also of importance are the connections between CLTC and SSEC, as it was through this specific relationship that Christians involved in the 1970 revival on Malaita were able to travel to Papua New Guinea and, consequently, ignite further fires throughout this country. Without this wide variety of relationships, revivalism would not have spread as quickly or as successfully.

Christian Leaders: The Firestarters

Fires are often intentionally lit. As Robbins states, "revivals are, like other movements, very much guided by leaders who help to initiate and shape them with their preaching and other promotional activities" (2004a: 125). However, unlike other social movements, in the case of the revivals I describe this does not entail the development of a cult whereby the personal character and objectives of the leader come to dominate; rather, leaders of such revivals tend to move into the background as participants give pride of place to the work of the Holy Spirit. In this section I want to briefly show how it is against the broad brushstrokes of political history, culture and institutional configurations that the leaders of the revival stand out as specific and definitive details.

In line with Robbins's remark, a review of the literature clearly shows that at each step of its spread, revivalism was continually reignited in each individual society through the actions of charismatic and persuasive men and women Christian leaders. One of the most important individuals was Muri Thompson, as his evangelistic crusades in Malaita provided an important forum within which revival emerged. While Thompson looms large in documented accounts of the 1970 explosion, the identities and backgrounds of the SSEC Christians who first catalysed revivalist fervour in Kakara, helped to guide the Malaitan revival, brought the movement to Papua New Guinea and, in conjunction with their Papua New Guinean colleagues at the CLTC, helped to spread it throughout the country are more obscure. Griffiths

(1977: 198–99) provides the photos and names of the four pastors who carried the fire from Solomon Islands directly to the Sepik in 1972, but little else is known of these pivotal figures. As for the senior SSEC pastors who were the fulcrum around which many of the Papua New Guinea highlands revivals revolved, even less is known. To take just a few indicative examples, J.O. Sanders, the principal of CLTC during 1973, writes simply of "seven senior pastors from the Solomons" (1978: 113), Garrett (1997: 337) refers to "a group of Solomon Islander students who had experienced revival in their own church on Malaita", and Cramb and Kolo (1983) also mention them in passing in their account of the Engan revivals of 1973. These were a group of Christian leaders who catalysed a religious revolution in Papua New Guinea but whom history has not appropriately acknowledged. More research is needed to bring their stories to light.

The same applies for the majority of local Papua New Guineans who, influenced by SSEC Christians while at CLTC in the early 1970s, spread revival among their own communities. I use the word "majority" advisedly, since one figure in particular, namely Diyos of Eliptamin, the man responsible for orchestrating the Min revivals of the late 1970s and early 1980s, has had his story told many times by anthropologists and missionaries working in that culture area. We should also note that the men centrally involved in the 1976 upheaval in Ilahita, namely, Barnabas Ke'in and Jezreel Filoa, have also been recognised (Griffiths 1977; Tuzin 1997), though not in any detail. These exceptions notwithstanding, however, the identities and histories of the majority of local men and women have not been recorded, and exist only as scattered and isolated references in reports of revival. As with the SSEC Christians mentioned above, I argue that these are individuals who played pivotal roles in ushering in a new era of religious worship and organisation throughout many parts of Melanesia, but whose stories have largely been ignored or forgotten. As Barker (2012) states, for the anthropology of Christianity to be truly inclusive it needs studies of regional networks and associations, but for it to be historically respectful it also needs to give due recognition to the local men and women who animated these configurations.

* * *

The spreading fires that erupted throughout the world in the twentieth century, whether inside established Pentecostal churches or mainline Catholic, Protestant and evangelical denominations, precipitated a seismic shift in the character of world Christianity. Here I have provided an overview of a formerly hidden chapter of this global revival story, namely, a major branch of Melanesian Pentecostalist revivalism that radiated outwards from Malaita to the rest of Solomon Islands and also many parts of Papua New Guinea in the 1970s. With this account, Melanesian revivalism should begin to take its

rightful place alongside the innumerable spreading fires that facilitated the rapid global diffusion of Pentecostalist Christianity, in all its myriad forms, in the twentieth century (Anderson 2007a, 2007b).

Like Pentecostal revivals across the world, the Melanesian movement I have examined was a popular religious revolution that exhibited a number of generic features associated with global revivals (Shaw 2010: 12–29). It was a politically infused religious movement that marginalised missionary rule; it vigorously critiqued existing traditional cultural frameworks from the theological position of embracing the power of the Holy Spirit, yet often unconsciously drew upon existing spiritual experiences for its momentum; it spread through an established transnational Christian network of churches and colleges; it depended crucially upon influential Christian leaders to set local expressions of the revival in motion; and it manifested itself by means of a familiar repertoire of charismatic techniques of worship.

While embodying these generic features, however, my discussion has shown how the Melanesian revival was unique in its political, cultural, historical and personal details. Its ethos for spiritual self-determination in many places emerged out of a set of historical conditions that are particular to Melanesia, including the social movements of Solomon Islands and the cargoism found in Papua New Guinea, as well as the trajectories of both countries toward formal political independence in the 1970s; the cultural and religious traditions that formed the raw material for the movement's impetus thereby animated the fire with features specific to the region; the networks and associations that expedited the fire's spread throughout Melanesia, particularly the rise of the SSEC and the establishment of the CLTC, appeared at the most opportune historical juncture; and, finally, one can also speculate that the men and women who catalysed revival were drawing, either consciously or unconsciously, upon political, persuasive and oratorical techniques associated with traditional Melanesian leaders, such as the big man.

Historically, then, the paper has demonstrated the existence and the importance of a series of closely interconnected revivals that can be seen as one of the regional spreading fires that established Pentecostalism as a prominent global force in the twentieth century. Moreover, anthropologically and theologically the revival needs to be recognised as a regionally unique, culturally and historically localised expression of a global phenomenon. The revival movement I have described, and other regional Pentecostal effusions like it, can best be thought of not as departures from a Western or mission-based Christianity but rather as essential, integral and unique elements of a world Christian faith. Christianity as a contemporary world religion is not built upon a process of adopting and indigenising a western form of Christianity but rather that local people, within and beyond the cultural kaleidoscope of Melanesia, creatively and strategically build their own Christian worlds.

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REJECTING AND REMEMBERING ANCESTORS: A CHRISTIAN CENTENARY IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

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ABSTRACT: Conversion narratives all around Oceania focus on heroic ancestors who transformed their own societies. These local heroes are often both the missionary and a local chief who welcomed him ashore. Yet, these narratives require anti-heroes as well as heroes, the warriors or priests who resisted the gospel message. This paper focuses on a 2016 celebration of 100 years of Christianity in the Kubokota region of Ranongga Island in the Western Solomon Islands. Kubokota's conversion story centres on the return of a young local man named Paleo who had left years earlier for the Methodist mission headquarters. Senior men opposed his return, but a chiefly woman named Takavoja welcomed this "lost son" home and supported his work. Over weeks of preparation for the centenary celebration, people of Kubokota struggled to overcome the divisions of ordinary life and embody the spirit of Christian cooperation. They also struggled to remember their own ancestors. The task was most complex for descendants of a man remembered for opposing the missionaries and mocking Christian ritual. I argue that some of the representational struggles of the centenary celebration arose because colonial violence has been forgotten.

Keywords: Christianity, Solomon Islands, religious conversion, historical memory, indigenous religion, missionisation

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On 4 February 2016, I joined nearly a thousand people near the shore of Pienuna, one of the oldest coastal settlements of the region of Kubokota on the northeastern coast of Ranongga Island in the Western Province of Solomon Islands (Fig. 1). Before a four-hour worship service commemorating a century of Christianity, we were witnessing a dramatic reenactment of the arrival of the first missionary. All Kubokota people know the story. When a ship anchored off the Kubokota coast one day, an old man, Noso, paddled with a young man, Betijama—known by his nickname, Paleo[1]—and another youth, Tetebule, to the ship, intending to sell their copra. When they learned that it was not a trader's ship but a mission ship, young Paleo decided to climb aboard and travel to the Methodist mission station in Roviana Lagoon some 100 km to the southeast. His relatives thought that he was gone forever. Years passed. Finally, on 4 February 1916, newly baptised James Paleo returned

from Roviana to evangelise his Kubokota relatives. Senior men confronted the mission party and tried to prevent Paleo from coming ashore, but a chiefly woman intervened to welcome home this lost son.

Commemorations like this one are common throughout Island Melanesia and have been well documented by anthropologists (Dureau 2001, 2012; Errington and Gewertz 1994; Gewertz and Errington 1993; White 1991; Young 1997). As Michael Young (1997) observed in his analysis of European "missionary heroes" who arrived in Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu decades before young Paleo returned to Kubokota, Christian and national imaginaries are entwined in these commemorations (see also Errington and Gewertz 1994). In comparison to some such celebrations, the Kubokota centenary was a parochial affair: the key players were from Kubokota and the identities articulated were highly localised. This centenary may, therefore, be more representative of the histories of similar settlements all over the region where local people or other Pacific Islanders, not Europeans, were the primary agents of Christianisation.

Oceanic narratives of Christian conversion often echo racialised European discourses in narrating a one-way movement from darkness to light and from savagery to civilisation. On another level, though, they replay more ancient scenarios, dramas in which people of the place confront arriving strangers, decide whether they are friend or foe, then violently repel them or warmly welcome them.[2] Moreover, commemorations of the break with ancestral tradition have themselves become traditions. In Kubokota, reenactments of Paleo's arrival were well established by the 1950s, which means that now three generations have taken part in commemorations, which provide a sense of continuity even if the meaning of the performance has changed quite dramatically (see Errington and Gewertz 1994). In his masterful historical ethnography of Santa Isabel in Solomon Islands, Geoff White (1991) explores how and why ritualised performances of the conversion of the first Christian chief prove so productive for people to reflect on their past and produce collective identities. Sometimes the movement is from violence to peace, darkness to light, or savagery to civilisation, with local people embracing what seem like racist caricatures of their ancestors. At other times, for example when a Christian bishop is installed as a customary priest (White 2013), the ritual movement is in the other direction, confounding any analysis that would see the values or symbols of custom and Christianity as fundamentally incompatible rather than being held in constant tension with one another.

In recent discussions of Oceanic historicities, Chris Ballard (2014) calls our attention to aspects of the past essential in the lived experiences of Oceania but rarely accounted for in academic representations—the sounds, smells,

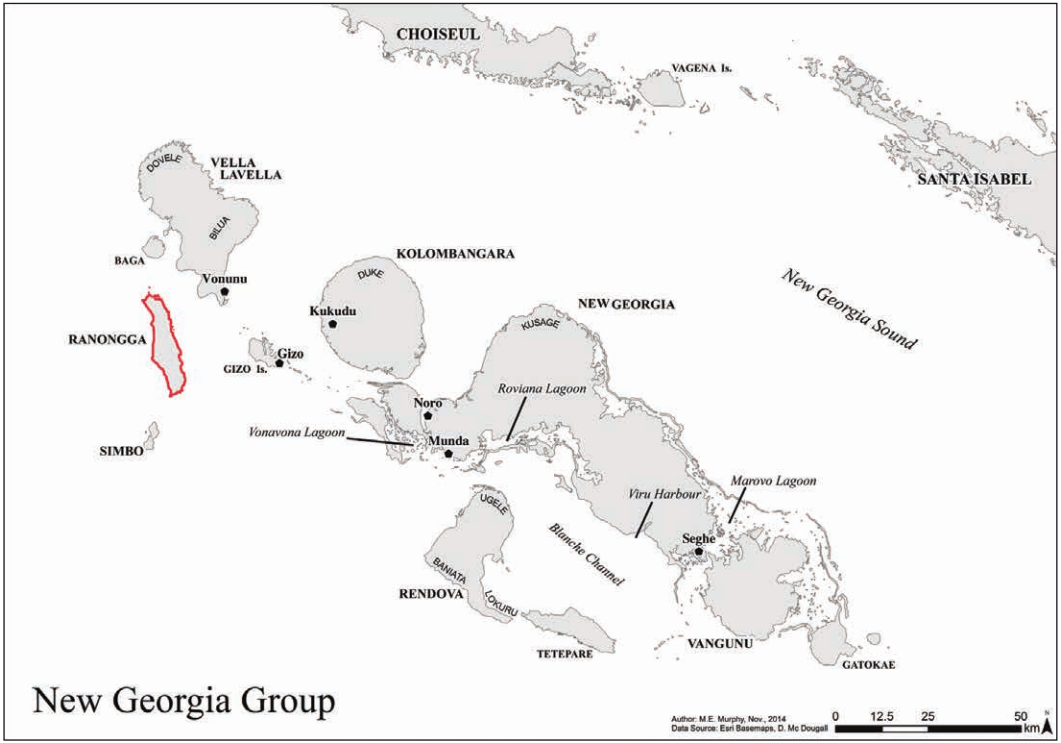

Figure 1. Map showing the location of Ranongga Island in the New Georgia Group of the Western Solomons.

sight and touch of persons, places and events; the apparent collapse of time when a tale is told in the place where it unfolded generations or centuries ago. Oceanic historicities, he suggests, are grounded in the landscape: "The sheer density of names for the land and for people can be overwhelming for an outsider, but the forms of knowledge from which they are drawn are the archives of vernacular Pacific history" (Ballard 2014: 105). The material landscape mapping people onto place is cross-cut by genealogy, perhaps the most pervasive theme in the indigenous histories of the region (Ballard 2018; Salesa 2014).

In this essay, I approach the Kubokota centenary as an enaction of vernacular history and local historical consciousness. It memorialises an encounter between indigenous and exogenous ways of being, but Europeans are mostly absent—it focuses entirely on local ancestors. My use of "ancestor" follows Kubokota use of the term *tite* 'grandparents': the term refers to the parents of one's parents (including collateral relatives) as well those of all preceding generations. Sometimes more distant generations are called *tite pa moa* 'grandparents from before', but the term *tite* bridges the divide between the pre-Christian distant past and the Christian recent past. The events commemorated in Pienuna are not captured in any texts in European-generated archives. Textual accounts do exist: the first generation of mission-educated men wrote down this story and other accounts of the early days of the mission along with genealogy and other important information in humble exercise books, which are now closely guarded by their children and grandchildren. The primary expression of this vernacular history, however, is through oral storytelling and, above all, dramatic performances like the one I witnessed in February 2016. In these performances, the story is enacted in song, speech and movement, with laughter and tears, on the very ground where these events took place. Descendants take on the roles of their ancestors. The story of the coming of the church has become a reference point for people contemplating what they value and why they continue to invest energy in the exhausting work of community-building. The interpenetration of this story and the lives of Kubokota people is what makes it both powerful and, as I will show, contentious.

The "arrival of the gospel" in Kubokota is a mythic charter for the contemporary socio-political order. As I have discussed elsewhere (McDougall 2016: 34–63), the establishment of Christian churches was one component of a profound transformation of territorial relations in the early twentieth century. Driven as much by commerce as by Christianity, people moved from inland hamlets to the coast and from defensible outposts on Ranongga's treacherous west coast to more accessible settlements on the east coast. The church became the new ritual centre of these new coastal communities, and Christianity provided ideological grounds for colonial pacification: no one is

an enemy because everyone is a child of the same transcendent God. Yet old rivalries took new forms in this era: the arrival of the Seventh-day Adventist mission on the heels of the Methodists established new sociopolitical fault lines. By the end of the twentieth century, established church communities were losing members to a plethora of alternative denominations (McDougall 2013). These schisms were theological, social and geographic (new churches were established in hamlets at some distance from the main settlement). Thus, reaffirming the solidarity of the established church-centred community through the 2016 centenary was both urgent and challenging.

The story of conversion is also the story of a single family (Fig. 2). James Paleo's father, Padaqeto, was the *bangara* 'chief' at Pienuna who was responsible for the last great war raids on neighbouring islands sometime around 1900. Takavoja was Padaqeto's sister (thus Paleo's classificatory mother). Padaqeto died sometime during Paleo's absence. Lineage identity and chieftainship is passed matrilineally in Ranongga, so Takavoja's son, Jirubangara, succeeded his uncle. His installation ceremony had just concluded when Paleo returned in February 1916. Sagobabata was the brother of Padaqeto and Takavoja. Remembered as both warrior and priest, he was among those who most vehemently resisted Paleo's attempt to bring Christianity to Kubokota. In line with other celebrations which foreground not only the missionary but also the local chief credited with accepting the gospel message, centenary organisers treated both Paleo and the chiefly woman Takavoja as heroes of this story. While chiefly women throughout Oceania seem to have played important roles in seeking to protect missionaries,[3] the Kubokota story is unusual insofar as a woman played a central, not supporting, role in the drama. The official centenary theme was "the victorious arrival of the Gospel through a mother's love" and work groups were organised around Paleo and Takavoja. As the preparations for the Kubokota centenary progressed, this focus on "mother" and "son" became problematic because it called uncomfortable attention to Sagobabata, forcing his descendants to come to terms with their grandfather's opposition to the faith that they now take as the source of truth and morality.

Narratives of conversion in Oceania focus on local heroes, but they also create antiheroes. Thus, in Santa Isabel, depictions of heroic indigenous pastors and Christian chiefs were set off by parodies of the senseless violence and ignorance of pre-conversion ancestors (White 1991: 141–43). Such parodies are a standard feature of conversion dramas. They underscore the transformative power of Christianity, illustrate the vast distance between a violent past and a peaceful present, and often erase the violent colonial power that made missionisation possible (Dureau 2001; Errington and Gewertz 1994; Gewertz and Errington 1993; Young 1997). The foes of Christianity are often generic figures, but sometimes particular ancestors are remembered

for resisting, or even killing, missionaries. For example, in 2009 people of Erromango in Vanuatu undertook a large reconciliation ceremony to atone for the murder of missionaries in the nineteenth century, crimes that were thought to have cursed both the local community and the nation as a whole (Eriksen 2014; Mayer *et al.* 2013). Conversion narratives affirm the inherited power of local chiefs to welcome strangers ashore, but they are far more ambivalent about warriors who sought to prevent enemies from arriving or priests who sought to maintain relationships with ancestors.

The challenge of representing Sagobabata's opposition to Paleo was but one of many sources of conflict in the preparations for the centenary event. Other challenges emerge in any large-scale event that seeks to build a state of solidarity from fractured groups and strong-willed individuals. To make matters even more difficult, long-standing tensions around landownership and leadership had emerged in particularly pernicious form in the lead-up to the centenary as some of the families involved had begun negotiating with timber companies for the right to harvest the tiny patches of hardwood forest on this small, steep island. These factors made it difficult to stage the ceremony.

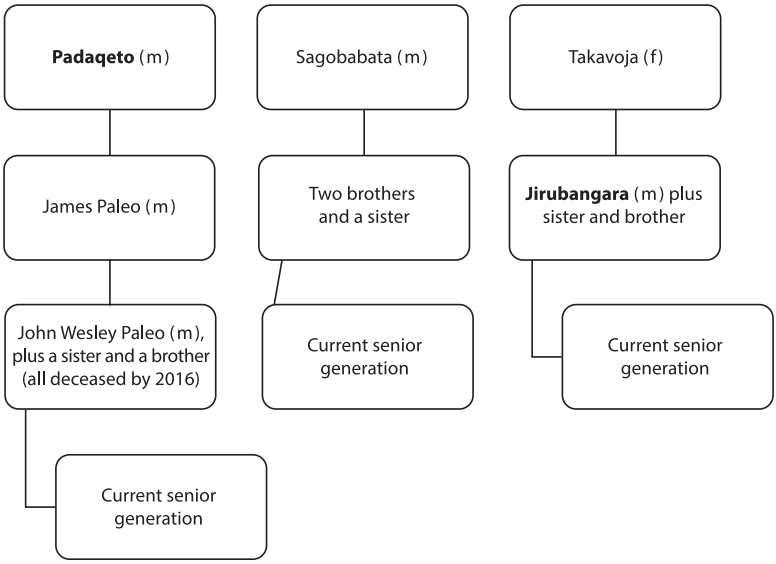

Figure 2. Descendants of Padaqeto, Sagobabata and Takavoja (village chiefs in bold type).

The story of Paleo's arrival was the first story I was told when I began my PhD research 20 years ago. The night I arrived in Pienuna, John Wesley Paleo came to the house where I was staying, which happened to be just metres from the site where his father, James, had come ashore in 1916. Each February that I have resided in Pienuna (1999, 2001, 2007), I have watched dramatic reenactments of these events. In early 2015, members of the planning committee asked me for my records and narrative of Paleo's arrival (McDougall 2016: 94–95, 100–108), which I shared with them—only to hear much of it read verbatim during the Bishop's address![4] I took part in the centenary as an invited guest and a member of the community who contributed time and money to the staging of the event. In my role as an anthropologist, I interviewed many people about why they felt this event was so important. I also worked with David Frances Tafoa, an evangelical pastor and filmmaker, in video-recording interviews and events in the celebration.[5] From the outsider–insider perspective of someone with a long-standing commitment to the flourishing of this place and its people, I have struggled with the task of writing about conflicts behind an event intended to display solidarity.

For my friends in Pienuna, manifesting collectivity—the state of being united—is critically important for their sense of connection to one another, to the land of their ancestors and to God. The centenary is a ritual that seeks to set up what Victor Turner called "a symbiotic interpenetration of individual and society" (1974: 56). When this sense of wholeness is achieved in ritual, it "can be carried over into secular life for a while and help to mitigate or assuage some of the abrasiveness of social conflicts rooted in conflicts of material interests or discrepancies in the ordering of social relations", but the process "only works where there is already a high level of communitas in the society that performs the ritual" (p. 56). Because a failed ritual is thus testament to a disunited and disordered state of being, the stakes are high. In lifting the curtain on some of the behind-the-scenes struggles of this celebration, my intention is not to discredit the public presentation of unity. Instead, I hope that when future generations reflect nostalgically on the way their grandparents were able to cooperate, an account like this one may help them understand how much work, skill and effort their parents and grandparents put into the production of "community" for this event.

REMEMBERING CONVERSION, FORGETTING COLONIALISM

Why is remembering conversion so important for so many Pacific Islanders, who now comprise the most thoroughly Christian region on earth (Tomlinson and McDougall 2013: 1–2)? Is the ongoing racialisation of Christianity as White or European one of the lasting legacies of nineteenth-century imperialism? When can Islanders "forget conversion" (Gow 2006) and

just be Christian, rather than constantly disavowing then reengaging with ancestors? To answer these questions about remembrance, we must start with what is forgotten—forgotten in European archives and forgotten in localised commemorations.

I have never found a trace of James Paleo, Kubokota's missionary hero, in the annals of the Methodist mission or any other archival source. His father, Padaqeto, however, does appear. Nearly a decade after the British Solomon Islands Protectorate was formally established in 1893, deputy commissioner Arthur W. Mahaffy in the Western District undertook a swift, ruthless and effective campaign to end long-distance warfare. On 10 June 1901, Mahaffy used a confiscated war canoe to raid Kubokota as punishment for a Kubokota raid on Choiseul undertaken with Vella Lavella allies. Graham Officer, a curator of the Museum of Victoria, accompanied Mahaffy and wrote about the events. Arriving in the early morning to an abandoned village, they destroyed two large war canoes and several smaller canoes, damaged gardens and cut and burned coconut trees. Officer stole an ornamented skull from the shrine near the beach. Later, Padaqeto (spelled "Panangatta" in Officer's diary) travelled to Gizo to plead for the return of this ornamented skull, the remains of his father. Officer refused, hid the head, and shipped it to Melbourne (Lawrence 2014: 229; Richards 2012). It was no wonder Padaqeto's brother, Sagobabata, was enraged to see the mission boat reappear not many years later: the so-called ship people were stealing both ancestors and children from Kubokota.[6]

More surprising than the absence of the indigenous missionary in the colonial archive is the absence of this colonial violence in vernacular histories of Ranongga. It was not entirely forgotten. In 1999, I interviewed an elderly man about how the village of Obobulu was founded, and he told me of how families from Pienuna fled southward following the burning of Pienuna's canoe house. But no one ever spontaneously told me this story, nor was it ever mentioned in the context of any anniversary of the founding of the church. Nor do the conversion narratives focus on the dramatic transformations that had occurred long before Paleo's birth: encounters with European whalers and traders had brought devastating epidemics, and the adoption of steel tools and guns intensified long-standing practices of interisland warfare (Bennett 1987: 35; Jackson 1975; White 1983; Zelenietz 1983). As is the case in so many narratives of conversion in Island Melanesia (Dureau 2001; Young 1997), this early ambivalent encounter with Europeans is erased. Temporal sequencings are reversed, with Christianity remembered as the cause of peace—not following in the wake of violent campaigns through which colonial governments subjugated local polities.

Rather than remembering the forcible destruction of the old ways by British imperialism, the first generation of converts reenacted this revolution as a moral transformation that they had chosen themselves. Local people are

the heroes, not victims, of these histories. They celebrate the role that they themselves—that is, their ancestors—played in history. Arguably, in the very act of destroying old gods and installing a new one, they were also following old ritual patterns pervasive throughout Polynesia (Sissons 2014, this issue) and perhaps further to the west as well. Amnesia about colonial violence made narratives of Christianisation more dramatic and compelling, but it also erased the motive for local resistance to Christianity. Men like Sagobabata are portrayed as benighted and backward, not understandably outraged by crimes committed against them, their land, their ancestors and their children.

Temporal rupture is not absent in indigenous myth and tradition in Oceania, but it has an even more prominent place in the Christian tradition that converts embraced. Rupture is not the only temporal dynamic in the faith—the Christian liturgy, for example, collapses cosmic patterns onto the life of Christ, evoking a cyclical time that cross-cuts the linear time of revelation (see Swann 2019)—yet it is hard to deny that a move from old to new is embedded in the texts and traditions of the global faith. This does not, of course, mean that people really do abandon their pasts; arguably, the constant emphasis on the need to reject old ways keeps attention focused on the past in a way that might not happen in a faith less adamant about radical change. Writing of centuries-old Bolivian Catholicism, Olivia Harris observed that "for most human populations, respect for their ancestors operates as a powerful metaphor of continuity between past and present", and Christianity invariably undermines that metaphor (2006: 72). Yet, in the case she examines, the Christian division of past and present was overlaid onto an Andean spatial structure, with foreigners mediating engagements with the God of the outer and upper world and Indians controlling the powers of the autochthonous spirits of the inner and lower world (p. 64). Ancestral powers were relocated, not eradicated. This is not merely a feature of Catholicism, a tradition known for incorporating rather than rejecting aspects of indigenous tradition. Even in vehemently past-rejecting forms of evangelical Protestant Christianity, ancestors are rarely abandoned, and are instead encompassed within the Christian universe, often reappearing as Satanic forces to be battled through spiritual warfare (Jorgensen 2005; Macdonald 2019; Meyer 1998).

Recent work in the anthropology of Christianity (including articles in this collection) are attending more closely to the different temporalities and approaches to indigenous pasts within different historical churches. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when missions moved into the western Pacific Islands, mission societies from established churches emphasised liturgy, tradition and community, while more evangelical societies emphasised revelation, biblical literalism and individual faith. These tensions played out in the historic missions of Solomon Islands. The influential Anglican Melanesian mission, for example, sought to harmonise indigenous

tradition and Christianity. John Coleridge Patteson, the first bishop of Melanesia, dreamt of "evangelizing Melanesia through a Melanesian agency" and "had an upper-class English distaste for the dramatizing of conversion stories to drum up popular support" (Hilliard 1993: 336–37). Ethnographic studies of Melanesian Anglican communities suggest that tradition has endured in contemporary indigenous ethnotheologies seeking to probe the relationship between Christian and local mythology and ritual (Barker 2014; Kolshus 2007; Scott 2005, 2007; Taylor 2010; White 1991; Whiteley 2015). In contrast, evangelical missions like the Wesleyan Methodist mission had no hesitation in evoking the depraved practices of the "savages"—cannibalism, wife strangling, sacrifices—to emphasise the miraculous effects of Christian conversion (Darch 2009: 31, 80). Methodist missionaries in Western Solomon Islands narrated the path of local converts from darkness to light and savagery to civilisation, often conflating Christianity, commerce and Anglo-European culture (for an example, see Nicholson 1923). It is this tradition that is refracted—but not exactly replicated—in the commemoration at Pienuna.

WORKING FOR ANCESTORS, WORKING FOR COMMUNITY

By memorialising conversion, Kubokota people were remembering their own ancestors. In interviews, the grandchildren of James Paleo continually expressed their dedication to the preparations and to the church as a whole—they were the fruit of the seed that their grandfather planted. One of the men who worked tirelessly on building projects for the centenary, Morris Vaevo, told me and Frances Tafoa that he was trying to emulate his grandfather, Kubokota's second pastor-teacher, a Vella Lavella man named Boazi Nunukujuku who married Paleo's sister and who is remembered for building the area's first large church (Bensley 1932). Boazi did not tell people to work—he just worked and inspired others to join him. All of the men and women we approached for interviews were eager to tell of a grandfather who had chosen to attend the new mission school and embrace the new way of life.

Despite the deep commitment of many villagers to celebrate both Christianity and their ancestors' legacy, by the time my family and I arrived in Pienuna village just after New Year's Day in 2016, many were beginning to panic about the lack of progress. There was a great deal to be done in a few weeks: constructing a memorial monument and buildings for the centenary activities; planning and practising church services, dramas, choir competitions, dancing, marching and other events for the three-day celebration; drafting text and printing the programme for the service; preparing to serve food three times daily; planning a large concluding communal feast; purchasing furniture; weeding and beautifying village grounds; arranging flowers; and myriad other smaller tasks. Another two weeks passed and at least three all-day meetings were held before the work of preparations got underway in

earnest. Over and over, and with increasing urgency, village pastor Geoffrey Pinau and other leaders of the centenary committee urged the community: *ta makarai* 'let's [work] together'!

Centenary celebrations had rippled through the region for a decade and a half before 2016. They followed the temporal sequence and spatial path from the headquarters in Roviana Lagoon where Australian Rev. John F. Goldie established the mission headquarters in 1902 (Carter 2014; Ziru 2016). The Seventh-day Adventist mission, founded in nearby Marovo Lagoon by Australian missionary George F. Jones in 1914, celebrated its centenary with a massive gathering of some 5,000 people (Diisango 2014; *Solomon Star News* 2014). The 2010s were a time of similar celebrations for other historic mission churches all around the Solomons (Anglican, Catholic and South Seas Evangelical Church) (Frances 2014; Piringi 2014). Most of these celebrations narrate the transition from darkness to light, and most involve dramatisation of the missionary arrival. Explicit narration is not the only representation of the effects of the arrival of Christianity. Gatherings themselves are a tangible manifestation of Christian commitment to unity, harmony and large-scale collaboration. Throughout the region, success in any undertaking is seen to require a state in which every member of the community "is one" in heart and mind. This ability to work as one is simultaneously associated with the good ways of the ancestors and the core values of Christianity (Barker 2007; Smith 1994).

Such high expectations are often unfulfilled. In 2017, the wife of a United Church minister told me that in all of the celebrations she had attended, none of the communities were truly prepared: church buildings were unfinished, disputes were unresolved, food supplies were inadequate. Among the most difficult celebration was the region's first: the 2002 commemoration of the arrival of the Methodist mission in Roviana occurred during a period of economic and political collapse associated with the Tensions (1998–2003) in Solomon Islands. The United Church was unable to muster the resources, so the commemoration was supported by the Christian Fellowship Church, a movement that broke away from the original Methodist mission in the 1950s (Hviding 2011: 76, 84–85). Centenary events thus prompt not only celebration but also lamentation about the inability of people today to work together to pull off these large demonstrations of hospitality (see Tomlinson 2009).

In the months leading up to the Kubokota centenary, everyone agreed that nothing significant would be accomplished until everyone in the community was reconciled with one another. Disputes arising from contested land boundaries, sexual transgressions, gossip, accusations of misuse of community funds and even dog bites would have to be resolved. Over the years, a semi-formalised chief's committee had managed such conflicts with more or less skill and efficiency (McDougall 2014, 2015). Dispute resolution

was particularly challenging in early 2016 because important leaders were on opposite sides of a dispute about a logging project commencing on land on Ranongga's northwestern coast. In late January, a centenary Peace and Reconciliation Committee was established with the indefatigable Hazel Paleo Havea as chairwoman. She brought disputants together, talked them through their conflicts, used small sums of money borrowed from her brother-in-law's canteen to pay "compensation" and led them in prayer. As a granddaughter of the first missionary, James Paleo, Hazel was concerned not only with the everyday disputes but also with long-term denominational schisms. She visited Jehovah's Witnesses and Wesleyan Methodists to encourage them to join together to celebrate the arrival of Christianity, not just the arrival of the United Church.

One of the most vexing conflicts concerned the placement of the monument that would mark the arrival of the gospel—a clear indication of how important the landscape is in this history. James Paleo is said to have arrived at "the chief's shore", which was the landing place for large canoes and the site of an important ancestral shrine. This shore area had been utterly transformed by a 2007 earthquake that lifted the entire island of Ranongga metres out of the sea (McDougall *et al.* 2008). In 2016, a family whose house had been destroyed by the earthquake had nearly completed a new dwelling just on the edge of this old beach, now some 50 metres inland from the water's edge. Although they had permission from the village chief to build on that land, they faced resentment from others who felt the land should remain public. As the centenary neared, a rumour that this family objected to having the monument close to their house stoked these resentments. The village pastor and others undertook a great deal of behind-the-scenes negotiation to orchestrate a public reconciliation between the opposed parties before ground was broken. Only after that dispute was solved did a team of stone carvers begin the arduous process of cutting a large piece of river stone, carrying it back to the village, sanding it, engraving it and erecting the cement and wood monument that would encase it. It was completed just in time, with the paint still tacky when it was dedicated at dawn on 4 February (Fig. 3).

Some of the struggles in the weeks of centenary preparations resulted from decisions taken in 2015 about how the work should be organised. At that time, the superintendent minister for the Ranongga Circuit of the United Church decided that the community should be divided into two sides: the side of the missionary James Paleo and the side of Lillian Takavoja who welcomed him ashore. He assigned Paleo's side the task of rebuilding a dining hall for guests and assigned Takavoja's side the task of building a new speaker's pavilion. Each side would fundraise throughout the year for these specific projects and for the general fund of the centenary committee, which would cover all other costs. The superintendent minister's division of the community was not, in itself, unusual. During Christmas and New Year's holidays, the community

Figure 3. The centenary monument.

is often divided into zones named after different countries, for example. Each year, the United Church organises hamlets into numbered zones which are then assigned weekly responsibility for morning devotion, floral arrangements for Sunday service, feeding visiting preachers and other duties. Because hamlets are composed of close relatives, this "zone" organisation taps into existing patterns of cooperative work. But zones generally are larger than small family hamlets, so they draw together neighbours who are not closely related. These organisational zones are ephemeral; they are created for specific goals and dissolved when the goal is achieved. They are not part of inherited structures of descent and they are not constitutive of personal or group identity. They serve to foster conviviality and cooperation across families rather than affirming distinctive identities.

The centenary division of the community into Paleo's and Takavoja's side was problematic because these were real ancestors. Moreover, Takavoja was Paleo's father's sister: these close cognatic kin were positioned on competing sides rather than working together. Even more worryingly, it was never clear how people who were not directly descended from Paleo or Takavoja were

supposed to contribute to the centenary preparations. As the centenary neared, families began to define themselves around some of the ancestors who had been excluded from the Paleo/Takavoja structure. The first to do so were descendants of Takavoja's brother Sagobabata, who decided to build a canoe house just below the monument on the old shoreline. Other families followed, establishing descent groups focused on the first generation of young men to join Paleo's school, many of whom became pastor-teachers themselves. The proliferation of groups based on cognatic kinship meant that husbands and wives found themselves pulled in different directions, wanting to contribute to both their own and their spouses' groups. Financial dealings were even more difficult than they usually are in community projects. The treasurer for the central centenary committee found it nearly impossible to extract funds promised by each of the family groups. Suspicions about whether funds were going to the central community or the more "private" family projects abounded. As the task of representing ancestors overshadowed the task of celebrating the conversion of the community as a whole, groups began to plan centenary-eve "parties" (this English word was used). One party was held well past midnight on 3 February, after final preparations and evening entertainment for visiting guests. With so much food and money invested in family parties, the main communal feast after the centenary worship service was not as lavish as many had hoped it might be.

Unsurprisingly, Sagobabata's descendants were most troubled by the decision to organise the event around Paleo and Takavoja. One friend of mine, herself an important leader of women's fellowship in the United Church, objected to the way that Takavoja was treated as a hero of the story of the gospel arrival equal to Paleo. "Why don't we just celebrate the gospel bearer, Paleo?" she asked in exacerbation. "Mother's love, mother's love—Takavoja just did what any mother would do. It had nothing to do with faith." If Takavoja is celebrated for welcoming Paleo, Sagobabata is the ancestor remembered for resisting him.

DRAMATISING ANCESTRAL ACTION

Getting the story of the arrival of the gospel correct was a preoccupation of many Kubokota people in the weeks leading to the centenary. The official narrative would appear in the centenary programme to be handed out to visitors, be retold in the service and be reenacted on the shore. Several people produced exercise books containing accounts written by their fathers and grandfathers, each with slightly different details, which had implications for the shape of the celebration and the identities of families and villages involved.

One example of contestation concerned Paleo's spatial path back home from Roviana. He began on the Methodist mission ship with Rev. John F. Goldie. When the launch had engine trouble, Goldie landed at a European-run plantation south of Pienuna and sent Paleo with other Islander missionaries

northward to Pienuna in a smaller dingy. Everyone agreed that before arriving at Pienuna, the small mission party landed at Obobulu village, where Paleo visited his mother. During planning meetings, some of Paleo's descendants who are living in Obobulu insisted that Paleo held a short worship service there, thus planting the faith first at Obobulu. For this reason, they argued, the dramatic reenactment ought to begin in Obobulu before moving onto Pienuna. Obobulu committee members lost the argument, and the fact that the dramatic reenactment began in Pienuna rather than Obobulu remained a source of resentment years after the event. What might be to an outsider a minor detail of little importance is absolutely critical for those involved, in this case setting consequential relationships of precedence among villages.

Another point of discussion was Paleo's decision to climb aboard the mission ship. How did he know what the crew and Rev. Goldie were saying? They spoke Roviana, a language that people of Ranongga learned primarily after joining the Methodist mission. Some men who had travelled widely might know Roviana, but Paleo was just a young man. Did the ship's crew and Goldie communicate in signs and gestures rather than words? Did Paleo know what he was doing by boarding the ship—was he actively choosing the gospel of Jesus Christ? Or, was he just eager for adventure? It was decided that the crew and Goldie would speak Roviana, but also mime the actions of buying copra, reading and praying to show that Paleo knew what he was getting into.

As I've already suggested, the most ambivalent element of the performance was the depiction of old men's resistance to Christianity. This tradition of reenactment has changed over time (see Errington and Gewertz 1994: 107). Reenactments in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s were staged by Simion Panakera, one of the first local youths to follow the path of James Paleo to the Methodist mission headquarters. Panakera's dramas lingered on the crude and ignorant responses of the old priests and chiefs to Paleo's efforts and were remembered as hilarious. Those I witnessed in the late 1990s and early 2000s were staged by John Wesley Paleo, James Paleo's son. He did not linger on the ongoing resistance of the old men to Paleo. Several men tasked with staging the drama in 2016 wanted to return to what they saw as a more accurate version of history, not this more recently sanitised story. It was important, they said, to display the ancestral ways that had been changed with Christianity.

In 2016, as in annual commemorations, James Paleo's grandchildren played central roles in orchestrating the drama, and many of the actors were closely related to their characters. Hazel Paleo Havea, Paleo's granddaughter, narrated the action in Kubokota and Pijin. Her elder sister, Grace Nose Sasapitu, played the role of Takavoja, whose performance was so moving that many observers wept along with her as she cried for her lost son. Their younger brother, Costas Paleo, played the role of his grandfather, the missionary James Paleo. Their

elder brother, Dickson Paleo, played Sagela, one of the ancestral priests who opposed James Paleo's arrival. Pienuna village pastor Geoffrey Pinau played Sagobabata, his wife's great-grandfather. Derek Alekera Jirubangara played the role of his grandfather, Jirubangara. Local people also took the role of Australian and Solomon Islander missionaries. Pastor Michael Bensley of New Bare village (himself named after a New Zealand missionary, A.A. Bensley, posted to Vella Lavella in the 1930s) played both Australian Rev. John F. Goldie, who enticed Paleo aboard the mission ship, and Vella Lavella missionary Makapivo, who accompanied him on his journey home. Rev. Manrose Tulumae, grandson of Sagobabata, played the role of Australian Rev. R.C. Nicholson, who was stationed on Vella Lavella through World War II and eventually baptised Sagobabata and Sagela.

The drama opened with the arrival of the missionary. Sagobabata and his companion, Sagela, were tending a shrine, looking anxiously to sea. At the water's edge, old man Noso, Paleo and Tetebule paddled out to a ship that appeared from behind the point. Crew members and Rev. Goldie persuaded Paleo to climb aboard the ship, and then they quickly departed. Old man Noso hurried back to shore and reported the disappearance of Paleo, saying he had been stolen by *tio vaka* 'ship people', the people with white skin. Takavoja wailed for her child, tears streaking down her face.

The next scene was set years later. It included what Geoff White identifies as the performative sequence of commemorations in Isabel: approach, resistance, acceptance (White 1991: 256; see also Young 1997). Sagobabata swung a shell ring in a divination ritual, then announced that evil was arriving. The ship reappeared, and he and Sagela ordered children to run and hide. They rushed to the arriving boat, brandishing their axes, as three men calmly disembarked. All three were dressed in the shirt, tie and Fijian-style men's skirts that were common dress for indigenous male converts in the colonial era. Enraged, these warrior priests leaped at them: "Who do you think you are? Go away! You come to steal children! You land, you die! Go, go back! I will take your heads, right now, today!" Takavoja stood up and slowly walked toward the shore, keening, "My child, my child! Betijama, Paleo! More than ten years ago you left Pienuna and only now you have returned. My child, my child!" As she approached, Sagobabata and Sagela turned their attention to her, furious at her interference. She stopped still, raised her arm, and announced, "I am the chiefly woman of Pienuna. I give permission for my child to come ashore." She resumed her wailing cry and embraced Paleo. "Oh, my child, my child, Betijama, Paleo. You were lost, we said, but today you've come back" (Fig. 4).

After the confrontation on the shore, the tone of the performance shifted and Sagobabata and Sagela took on the role of clowns. Paleo's attempts at evangelism were continually disrupted by Sagobabata and Sagela's antics. When James said "Jesu Karisito", Sagela and Sagobabata yelled "*sisu*", a

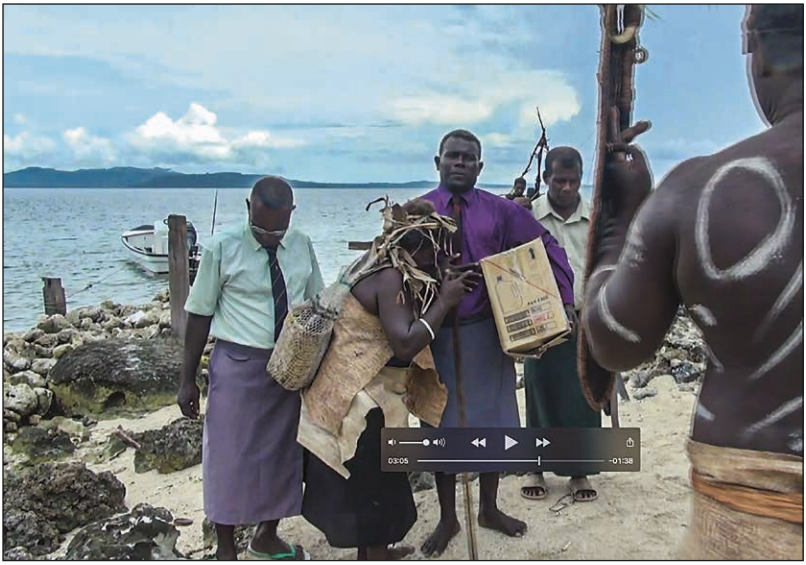

Figure 4. Takavoja greeting Paleo; film still by Dave Tafoa.

local word for a type of yam. As the missionaries bowed their heads in prayer, Sagobabata continued to guffaw at the idea they were praying to a yam, while Sagela jumped up to poke his axe a few inches from one of the missionaries' faces. Paleo tried teaching a song, "Buloqu sage la" ("My Heart Rises" in Roviana, the language of the mission). After the first stanza, Sagobabata poked Sagela: "Ha! They're talking about you!" Sagela was violently enraged at the misuse of his name. James tried to explain the meaning of the song, but Sagela was only calmed when James pulled a bundle of tobacco from his box and handed it to Sagela. James gave them cloth, a steel-headed axe and then a machete, explaining that they would need to clear the forest to build a church and school. When James led the small party in prayer, Sagobabata and Sagela did not bow their heads, but stuck their bottoms in the air in the direction of James's bowed head in what is a customary form of insult. James's prayer could be heard above the peals of laughter from the watching crowd.

The drama moved quickly to the conclusion. The narrator explained that even Sagobabata and Sagela became Christian. Rev. R.C. Nicholson arrived to cover the now subdued Sagobabata and Sagela with white cloth. Raising his hands, Nicholson launched into a short fiery English and Solomon Islands Pijin prayer. The narrator read the names of the first young men who attended James Paleo's school, who travelled to mission headquarters in Roviana

and who served as pastor-teachers; then she named the first generation of young women who attended Paleo's school. Takavoja and Jirubangara led the way up to the church. Midway through the service, red wreaths were laid by descendants of Paleo and Takavoja in their memory. Chief Luke Irapio, a grandson of Sagobabata, presented the bishop with a *bakia*, the fossilised shell rings used for transactions in land and people. It was compensation and atonement for his grandfather's opposition to Christianity.

Ending the drama with the conversion of Sagobabata seems to redeem him. Yet Sagobabata's life as a Christian was short. Before he was baptised, he took leave of his ancestors, who apparently told him he could go over to the church for nine days before they would take him back. Nine days after his baptism, Sagobabata fell ill and died. One of Sagobabata's granddaughters, Zinia Narongo, had taken the lead in organising the descendant group. In the weeks before the centenary, she had compiled a list of the hundreds of grandchildren of Sagobabata who had become pastors or taken up work for the church or the government. In an interview, she told me that she and her cousins were remembering not their grandfather's resistance to Christianity but the fact that he did turn to Christianity before his death. "Those nine days are the legacy we carry," she told me. Of all people at Pienuna in 1916, Sagobabata was the most committed to defending the old way of life. His decision to become Christian involved the biggest sacrifice. He was, according to Zinia, the first born-again Christian, the first true convert.

* * *

Celebrations of conversion are always about the present as well as the past. To quote White (1991) again, they create "identity through history". As John Taylor observed in his study of how people of North Pentecost in Vanuatu have made sense of the Christian "stranger god": "The historicizing of myth and mythologizing of history does not occur in a structural vacuum but emerges in the midst of the relational fabrication of personal and group identities" (2010: 442). Given that relationships and identities are always fraught, it is hardly a surprise that the centenary in Kubokota was a time of contestation as well as celebration.

The centenary marks a temporal rupture. Sagobabata and Sagela's antics in the drama hinted at ways of being in the world that have been eradicated: a heightened sense of the power of naming, a bawdy sense of humour, a refusal to close one's eyes. These performances and other recollections that Kubokota people shared at the time of the centenary serve as reminders of how much of Christianity is taken for granted. One story was repeated several times. James Paleo was going to lead a service in Obobulu and he came across two

old women gathering *ngali* (canarium almonds). "That is forbidden," he told them, "no work on Sunday!" The next week, they were again gathering nuts, and he again chastised them. "Wow, what a lot of Sundays there are," one exclaimed in bewilderment. Time and space were soon to be transformed so that the structure of the Christian week became the structure of daily life.

The dramatic performance on 4 February was effective, but uncomfortable. Errington and Gewertz (1994) suggest that East New Britain people in the early 1990s could laugh at the stupidity of their ancestors because they were sure of their own modern success. In 2016, no one was feeling particularly confident in either Christian unity or modern success. People were despondent about the simmering land disputes; even those involved with the logging company had low expectations about positive benefits. They knew logging had devastated communities and environments in neighbouring areas for decades, but no local actors felt they could avoid what seemed inevitable. The Kubokota church community had been religiously fragmented for decades with the rise of new forms of the faith. Yet these broader tensions might have remained in the background if it were not for the choice to organise the preparations around particular ancestors—not just the missionary Paleo, but also Takavoja. This personalised the drama, making it more difficult for the descendants of Sagobabata to come to terms with their grandfather's legacy.

The return of Paleo is remembered as a "universe-defining moment" (Goldsmith, this issue). Yet it is clear that by the time that young Paleo ventured across the sea to the mission station, his world had already been radically transformed through encounters with the ship people. The story of colonial violence inflicted upon the generation of Paleo's father has no place in commemorations of conversion, in the stories told to children and visitors, or in any of the exercise books I've seen. As is the case for much of Island Melanesia, the arrival of Christianity functions here as a "first contact" story, eliding earlier encounters with Europeans (Dureau 2001; Young 1997). Forgetting colonialism and remembering conversion serves to highlight local people's agency in transforming their own lives. Historical disruption is remembered as moral transformation, a rejection rather than a defeat of ancestral ways. They did not choose to abdicate political authority to imperial powers, but some did actively embrace the foreign god that these Europeans had brought with them. At the same time, if Kubokota people were to remember the violence of colonialism, it would reframe Sagobabata's angry response to the mission. Instead, imperial subjugation is ignored, and the violence of the tumultuous times is displaced onto a local ancestor, whose descendants struggle with his legacy.

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NOTES

1. *Paleo* is the name of a small fish, which apparently young Betijama once played with. Nicknaming is quite common in Ranongga, and original names often fall out of use or are forgotten.
2. This scenario was the central theme of my ethnohistorical study of Ranongga, in which stories of Christianisation in Kubokota and two other regions on the island feature prominently (McDougall 2016: 91–123).
3. White (1991: 39) recounts a case in which a chiefly woman intervened to protect an indigenous evangelist; Kolshus and Hovdhaugen (2010) discuss the possibility that Nukapu women may have sought to protect John Coleridge Patteson, who was killed there in 1871.
4. My account's emphasis on Takavoja's unusual role may have encouraged the church leadership to frame the centenary as they did, though I suspect that an emerging emphasis on gender equity within the United Church and other donor-influenced organisations in Solomon Islands was a more important factor in this depiction.
5. Tafoa used our footage to produce a film (2016) about Paleo as a mission hero, bearing out Michael Young's (1997: 130) prescient speculation that independent Melanesian programmers would be likely to take up stories of missionary heroes in film productions.
6. Against explanations that see violence against missionaries as misplaced retribution for offenses committed in the labour trade, Thorgeir Kolshus and Even Hovdhaugen (2010) highlight the similarity of motives and modus operandi of Anglican missionaries and traders—both sought to remove local youths. Although the Methodist mission did not share the Anglican model of removing youths for centralised training overseas, the Kubokota example shows that removal was also an important part of the evangelism strategy in this region.

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RESCUING HONIARA, RESCUING GWOU'ULU: NEGOTIATING FRICTIONAL VILLAGE–TOWN RELATIONS AND POLITICO-RELIGIOUS (DIS)UNITY IN SOLOMON ISLANDS

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ABSTRACT: Speaking to debates about the management of difference in and between towns and villages as well as secondary conversions and breakaway movements in Melanesia, this article examines the efforts of an Anglican village church to maintain social cohesion through politico-religious unity in Gwou'ulu, a multi-clan village in North Malaita, Solomon Islands, and its urban enclaves in Honiara. It focuses on an Anglican "rescue mission" that Gwou'ulu sends annually to Honiara to remind their urban relatives about the values, interests and priorities of their ancestral Anglican home. An analysis of this "rescue mission" and the controversies that surround it reveals an ongoing struggle between villagers for the politico-religious future of the village within and beyond its immediate geographic boundaries. Gwou'ulu villagers are increasingly questioning the capacity of the Anglican church and its leaders to provide stability in urban–rural insecurities, and, as a result, have begun breaking away from mainstream Anglicanism in a quest for alternative social and moral orders untainted by their religious leaders' apparent spiritual impurity and even corrupt behaviours. By distancing themselves from Anglicanism as the force that has meant to unify the village since its inception as a Christian refuge in the early twentieth century, Gwou'ulu villagers then not only break away but also apart, exaggerating rural frictions with and alienations from (urban) modernity.

Keywords: Social cohesion, insecurity, secondary conversion, Anglicanism, village–town relations, Solomon Islands

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Gwou'ulu residents started preparing for what many considered one of the most important annual events shortly after my first arrival in the village, a predominantly Anglican settlement of approximately 250 adults and 170 children[1] located at the northern border of the Lau Lagoon in Malaita Province, Solomon Islands. The Anglican men's fellowship, commonly simply referred to as "Mens", was planning to travel to the country's capital, Honiara, in June 2014 to visit kin from Gwou'ulu who had temporarily or even more permanently migrated to town, often to attend school or to more actively participate in the cash economy. Gwou'ulu residents described the primary goal of this trip as one of "missionisation". The dual intention was to remind

urban relatives about Christian village values—about what it means to be a man or a woman *of* Gwou'ulu—and to highlight the particular moral dangers of urban lifestyles away from the safety and moral guidance of the village and, at its centre, the Anglican church.

This article examines this so-called "rescue mission" as exemplary for villagers' struggles to maintain social cohesion among Gwou'ulu villagers, irrespective of their location of residence, through a shared belonging to the Anglican village church. My analysis is based on 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork between February 2014 and February 2015 and a follow-up visit in November 2018, including eight months in Gwou'ulu and five months with Lau speakers in Honiara. It reveals not only insecure village–town relations—many Gwou'ulu villagers are concerned about a moral decay among town-based kin—but also, if not even more so, an Anglican politico-religious unity that seems to be in continuous peril, at least from the perspectives of a vast majority of my interlocutors. I show how villagers experience Gwou'ulu as existing in a perpetual state of insecurity and as increasingly in danger of "breaking apart". This is the case, first, because of its increasing extension to town and, second, because of religious breakaway movements in the village that have grown sceptical of Anglican leaders' capacity to provide the foundations for a peaceful social order in Gwou'ulu. For the majority of villagers, those who (for now) maintain their belonging to the Anglican church, rescuing Gwou'ulu residents in Honiara means, thus, also rescuing Gwou'ulu, through what many of my respondents perceive as a necessary process of ongoing reconversion to the Anglican foundations of the village.

There is a growing literature that engages, in particular, with religious breakaway movements, secondary conversions, indigenous churches and periodic revival movements in Melanesia (e.g., see Barker 2012; Burt 1994; Macdonald 2019; Maggio 2016a, 2016b; Robbins 1998; Scott 2005; Timmer 2015). This research has yielded fascinating insights into how social and political uncertainties are expressed through different denominations and ethno-theologies. However, its theological and ritual emphases has also meant that considerably less attention has been paid to how these processes of conversion—including decisions *not* to convert or to seek reconversion of others—are entangled with the role of religious leaders in everyday (village) governance and what this means for experiences of social cohesion and political (in)stability in both rural and urban environments. By following Rodolfo Maggio in "[emphasising] what [Gwou'ulu villagers] actually do and talk about … rather than their theology as a set of ideas and practices" (2015: 316) or the relationship between different theologies and denominations, this article seeks to rectify this shortcoming and to encourage additional research on the everyday dimensions of politico-religious practices.

To this end, I begin with an outline of the historical positioning of Christianity and especially the Anglican Church in Gwou'ulu governance before discussing Gwou'ulu relationships with Honiara. From there I move to an examination of villagers' motivations for "rescuing" Honiara and describe some of the strategies that they deploy, such as a remapping of Honiara settlements to align with village-based prayer groups. Finally, I shift to a discussion of why the rescue mission was deemed to be a failure, and how this failure is linked to a broader disillusionment with Anglican leadership in the village as well as to broader uncertainties surrounding contemporary village–town relationships. Crucially, while I present debates about past and present experiences with social instabilities in Gwou'ulu and how to respond to them, what all my interlocutors shared in common, and what I observed throughout my fieldwork, is the conviction that the village itself is always threatened with falling apart, necessarily unstable and in need of ongoing, and ideally better, "rescue" efforts.

GWOU'ULU: AN ANGLICAN VILLAGE

Gwou'ulu was founded between 1900 and 1910[2] as an Anglican Christian refuge on the Malaitan mainland, removed from the manmade or artificial islands that the Lau had built for centuries and that would remain, for another 30 to 60 years, a stronghold of the ancestral religion.[3] From the arrival of its first settlers, Gwou'ulu was, thus, designed and intended to be governed by the Anglican Christian principles that its Lau founding fathers had brought back from British labour plantations in Queensland and elsewhere in the Pacific.[4] Unlike ancestral villages, Gwou'ulu never had a men's or women's seclusion area (*maanabeu* and *maanabisi*), the most central sites in the ancestral ritual complex (see Maranda 2010). Instead, the village was, and continues to be, organised around the Anglican church building and the liturgy that defines its ritual cycle. Similarly, instead of separate men's and women's houses, nuclear households immediately defined the village landscape, irrevocably violating gendered ancestral pollution taboos and exposing anyone who may consider returning to "old" ways to the wrath of, and likely death by, their *agalo* 'ancestral spirits'.[5] Without a *maanabeu* and its most sacred site, the ancestral skull pit, and based on Gwou'ulu founding fathers' commitment to offer a place to settle to anyone who wanted to leave ancestral ways behind, Gwou'ulu then also became one of the first multi-clan, denomination- rather than descent-based villages in the region and, as such, has faced the challenge of managing difference among its residents from its inception.

The spatial organisation of Gwou'ulu, the way it reshuffled and agitated gender relations (see Hobbis 2016) and the presence of multiple clans has ever since posed its fair share of challenges to residents alongside, and closely

entangled with, the broader spiritual transformations that conversion to Anglicanism have entailed. While, as David Hilliard suggests, the Anglican Church of Melanesia had from early on aspired to "create a self-governing church—'a native one and not a mere exotic'—that would conserve and not destroy the indigenous social order" (1978: 294), the history of Anglican–ancestral syncretism in Solomon Islands has been anything but smooth. This is as much evidenced in how, in some cases, converts had to physically destroy ancestral shrines as a prerequisite for baptism (White 1991) as in the broader anxieties that have accompanied the demise of the ancestral ritual cycle that did, like elsewhere in Melanesia, "much of the work of setting the moral tone of everyday life" (Robbins 2010: 159). The words of one of Pierre Maranda's Lau respondents forcefully illustrate this anxiety:

> Now my guts ache … those that have kept to our ways of life, they still have guts. We, the Christians, have become nobodies. We must forget our genealogies, and we have instead to learn those of Jesus and David and other people that mean nothing to us … My guts ache. (Maranda 2001: 107)

Much can be, has been, and still needs to be said about the history of these frictional and anxiety-generating encounters and the complex relationship between continuity and change that they entail (e.g., see Maranda 2001; Ryuju 2012). What is most significant to note here is, first, that many Lau, like other Solomon Islanders (see Burt 1994; Scott 2005; Timmer 2015), seek to systematically integrate Christianity and its promise of unity in ancestral descent-based disunity in their cosmological and social orders; and second, that these orders entail an unquestionable belief in both the Christian God and ancestral spirits. Simultaneously, revealing the continued challenges that are entangled with Lau commitments to ancestral–Christian integration and ontological preservation, an everyday, at times violent, uneasiness persists about syncretic efforts that have by no means stabilised but that remain open to renegotiation and reinterpretation.

In the case of Gwou'ulu this uneasiness and its potential for conflict are exemplified in regular exorcisms performed by the village priest.[6] During my fieldwork, the Anglican village priest was sporadically called to perform exorcisms for households that worried about the presence of malicious agalo. On other occasions, however, the priest forcefully entered houses whose residents had not requested an exorcism. The priest and his supporters deemed it crucial to clean all houses of ancestral spirits that they, but not everyone in the village, considered to be "demonic" and a fundamental obstacle to peace and wellbeing. Thus, the priest would force his way into any house in which he, or others, expected to find evidence of communication with agalo irrespective of the maliciousness that was or was not the intent behind this communication.

The priest and his supporters considered their work to be one of persistent but essentially always unfinished missionisation with the goal of ideally strengthening but at least maintaining the dominance of Anglicanism as a spiritual as well as a social and political force in Gwou'ulu. Under the mantra of "never look back, never turn back, never go back", displayed in English on the walls of the priest's office and frequently integrated into his sermons, Anglican church leaders worked to achieve this not only through exorcisms but also through a rigid structuring of village life around church activities and governance. Before this priest arrived in Gwou'ulu in 2010, one to two services per week had been the norm. In 2014, there were daily evening services in addition to the mass on Sunday mornings and two weekly morning services, one for men and one for women. To ensure villagers' overall commitment to Anglican worship, the priest recused himself from organising most of these services. Instead, he delegated this task to the youth and women's and men's fellowships as well as to six newly created prayer groups. These groups would spend much of their free time on relevant preparations as well as other church events. For instance, members of the Anglican Mothers' Union, which includes nearly every married adult woman in Gwou'ulu, volunteered their labour each Tuesday to help with elderly villagers' gardens.

Anglican leaders also worked steadily to decrease the significance of clans as sources of ancestral belonging and political power. They sought to realise this by ensuring that at least one Christian leader would be present whenever major conflicts, which usually occurred along clan lines, needed to be resolved. They also framed all conflict resolution with Christian prayers. Additionally, all major decision-making with regards to village governance was shifted to church committees, or alternatively, to public forums that only took place in the church building and immediately following a church service. This meant that, by 2014, all village bylaws, from women's dress codes to a ban on consuming and producing alcohol, had been made by, or adjusted in consultation with, church leaders and were publicly justified based on Christian principles.

Little of this may come as a surprise; after all, there is a plethora of research on the centrality of Christianity in religious, political and social life in the Pacific (e.g., see Tomlinson and McDougall 2012). However, the centrality of Christian governance in Gwou'ulu lifeworlds warrants restating because of how significant, but also somewhat unexpected, this firm Christian leadership was from the perspective of many of my interlocutors. In their discussions about the past and present life in Gwou'ulu, villagers often emphasised that Christian governance and a communal commitment to Anglicanism and Christian morality was never certain and that it had only recently returned to the village. My respondents described the village before the arrival of

the current village priest in 2010 as having existed in a state of continuous upheaval. I was told that past church leadership had failed to adequately guide villagers in their moral decision-making and to unite them under their shared faith. Before 2010, Gwou'ulu was said to have been "haunted" by widespread and uncontrolled alcohol consumption, frequent extramarital affairs, escalating land disputes, and subsequent, at times violent, conflicts between individuals and clans. The new Anglican priest and his supporters, but even some of his more critical parishioners, such as those who were "victims" of undesired exorcisms, repeatedly assured me that the new priest had "returned" Christian order to Gwou'ulu. His arrival and leadership were said to have provided a necessary anchor for this diverse multi-clan village that had required continued dedicated Anglican missionisation since its foundation at the turn of the twentieth century.

The rescue mission to Honiara is a core component of these reinforcement measures implemented by Gwou'ulu church leaders. They, like other villagers I talked to about this, agreed that Gwou'ulu as a source of Anglican belonging should not and cannot be confined to its immediate lands, but that it necessarily extends to the urban environment of Honiara as the most frequent destination for (temporary) migrants and, as such, as a source of both possible strength or insecurity. In the following, I briefly sketch village–town relations. I pay particular attention to the villagers' concerns about the moral challenges of urbanisation and the potential for fracturing therein.[7]

THE VILLAGE–TOWN CONTINUUM

Gwou'ulu residents move regularly between the village and Honiara. The trip includes a flatbed truck ride to the provincial capital, Auki, which takes around six hours, and an equally long ferry ride between Auki and Honiara. Often the journey takes even longer due to irregular road maintenance and unreliable connections between the two modes of transportation (see Hobbis 2019). Still, these arduous circular rural-urban movements have become routinised as a defining and even desired but ultimately also necessary feature of village life. On the one hand, Gwou'ulu villagers recognise (temporary) migratory movements as valuable in their own right, especially for young men. As Rodolfo Maggio suggests, temporary migration has been "a constitutive characteristic of the Malaitan economy as a whole" (2018: 101), one that precedes the arrival of Europeans at Malaitan shores and, as such, does not necessarily disrupt the lives of the migrants or the villages of which they are a part. Historically and today, migrants often leave the village to access goods and services that are otherwise unavailable and that, in turn, help them to solidify their own sociopolitical positions within the reciprocal relationships that are the cornerstones of kin and village networks (Maggio 2018; Moore 2017).

On the other hand, many of my interlocutors noted that this intrinsic value is increasingly subsumed by a growing dependency on migratory movements, which now involve not only men but also women and all age groups. Gwou'ulu villagers have become so dependent on the continuous flow of people and goods to and from town that it has become rare for all or even most members of a nuclear family to be based in the village at any given time and for them to even attempt to meet even basic food needs solely through self-provisioning gardening, fishing and barter activities. Even efforts aimed at decreasing Gwou'ulu dependency on this remittance economy, mostly by attracting development projects or better educational and health infrastructures to the northern Lau Lagoon, require villagers' regular and often continuous presence in town. Because of a gradually solidified centralisation of most government and significant nongovernmental services in Honiara (see McDougall 2014), the capital has become the only location where negotiations for rural development can and do take place. These negotiations often span over seemingly never-ending periods of time and require almost permanent residency in town, at least for those clan and village leaders who lay claim to Gwou'ulu lands. Many of my interlocutors, thus, conceived of regular trips to, and prolonged stays in, town as increasingly unavoidable for the wellbeing of the village as a whole, be it because of the remittances that are generated or the services that these (temporary) migrants may provide, now or in the future—e.g., a university student may one day become a bureaucrat and help Gwou'ulu attract desired development funds.

Prolonged absence from rural environments is not, and has never been, without its moral quarrels and is a potential source of social fracturing. Historically, the foundation of Gwou'ulu and other Christian villages like it are indicative of this uncertainty. After all, the very existence of these villages represents an at times violent process of politico-religious upheaval that swept across Malaita as a result of temporary migrants' conversion to Christianity on labour plantations and their commitment to Christian missionisation upon their return (see Burt 1994; Moore 2017). The memory and continuity of these social, political and religious tensions are now also evident in Gwou'ulu villagers' concerns about the consequences of (temporary) movements to town in 2014. Those who are primarily based in Gwou'ulu fear that their urban relatives, removed from the moral guidance provided by the Anglican village church (rather than any other Anglican church), will forget or even actively reject village values, interests and needs as an ideal and primary motivating force for any stay in town.

Echoing broader research on urban–village relations in Melanesia (Lindstrom and Jourdan 2017), many Gwou'ulu villagers described urban lifestyles as seductive, immoral and in essence "the opposite of 'home' (*hom*)" (Berg 2000: 6–7), threatening villagers of losing their "true identity"

(Gegeo 1998: 293). The urban melting pot is felt to encourage the emergence of new, "modern" sources of belonging beyond village-, kin- and language groups and to provide opportunities for behaviours that fall outside the moral norms of village environments (see Gooberman-Hill 1999; Jourdan 1995; Maggio 2018). Urban spaces allow for excessive consumption of alcohol and gambling, for dancing outside of community-sanctioned, usually religious events, and more broadly for more flexible socialisation based on individual interests and desires. Many villagers are also worried that the urban encourages lazy lifestyles. Young villagers especially head to town as so-called *Masta Liu* ("Masters of Walking"), moving seemingly aimlessly through town and between the households of their more regularly employed urban relatives.

More frequently, however, Gwou'ulu villagers express worries about the effects of urbanisation on the educated and politically more powerful residents of Gwou'ulu in Honiara—bureaucrats, (small) business owners and clan leaders. Because of their long-term stays in town their village-based relatives fear that they get too used to these urban, often immoral freedoms and luxuries while being especially susceptible to building new social networks. Many of these more powerful villagers raise their families solely in town. They tend to reduce their visits home and are suspected of increasingly seeking ways to avoid contributing to reciprocal exchange relationships with extended kin and the village community at large.[8] Rural residents further note that these urbanites struggle to instil in their children an understanding of life in the village and of their ancestral lands as the basis for belonging and social identity. This worry is especially pronounced when urban children fail to learn their vernacular language (see Jourdan 2008).

Crucially, in some cases, this alienation has culminated in religious conversations. Within "the complex and varied religious landscape of the capital city" (Maggio 2015: 317), urban residents leave behind their spiritual Anglican roots and, according to Gwou'ulu villagers' critiques, too frequently align their denominational belonging with that of their dominant urban networks. Reasons for conversions are likely more complex than this proposed realignment of allegiances (e.g., see Maggio 2015, 2016a, 2016b; McDougall 2009). Still, Gwou'ulu villagers' worries that such conversion entails a turning away from village- to town-based identities highlight their suspicion towards urbanisation as an immoral process that threatens Gwou'ulu cohesion. Villagers' concerns may also not be that unwarranted. As Maggio (2016b) argues, some, especially men, convert from mainstream churches to Pentecostalism specifically as a way to overcome seductive urban lifestyles; and as John Barker points out: "Many of the new churches make considerable demands on their members, including tithing and the assumption of various

prohibitions that collectively serve to diminish their connections to members to their natal communities while tightening their identity on their church" (2012: 78). In other words, urban residents, embroiled by the immoralities of town, may be—and are, based on my interlocutors' fears—perpetually pulled away from their village homes, from what it means to be a man/woman *from* Gwou'ulu.[9]

For Gwou'ulu villagers this causes a series of seemingly escalating challenges. Many of my (still) Anglican interlocutors, again irrespective of their respective stances towards Anglican village leaders' everyday interventions in their lives, see a firmer "unification" under the banner of the Anglican village church as the only way to maintain the precarious moral and social order that has been part and parcel of this multi-clan village since its beginning and that seems to be increasingly stretched to its breaking point through geographic extensions to town. This is where the rescue mission comes into play. When I first arrived in Gwou'ulu everyone I talked to described it enthusiastically, filled with hope that the mission would be able to restrengthen Gwou'ulu cohesion alongside a village–town continuum that most contended should be based on, and unquestionably dominated by, rural *Gwou'ulu* Anglican values and interests.

RESCUING HONIARA, RESCUING GWOU'ULU

The rescue mission takes place at least once, and ideally twice, a year. The primary annual mission is led by the Anglican men's fellowship—every married, divorced or widowed Anglican man of Gwou'ulu is automatically included—and headed by the village priest. Church leaders expect all members of the Mens who are of good health and based in Gwou'ulu at the time of the mission to participate in the one-week return trip to Honiara. The second mission, cancelled during my fieldwork in 2014 due to a lack of funds and a scheduling overlap with the national election, takes place under the purview of the Anglican Mothers' Union. Both rescue missions, and their extensive costs, especially travel fees for all participants, are financed by combining weekly church offerings, additional individual donations and at least one fundraiser such as a bake sale.

Organisers and supporters of the mission see its primary goal as affirming village values and needs among Gwou'ulu urbanites. The mission is expected to emphasise, first, village unity beyond the geographic confines of the village and, second, the positioning of the Anglican village church as the cornerstone for this urban–rural solidarity. Simultaneously, the mission is designed to de-emphasise any possible differences and frictions as they may exist between the clans, families or individuals who are participating in the event. At a most basic level, organisers seek to achieve this by requiring

all participants to acquire travel and event uniforms that are to be worn throughout the mission (Fig. 1). In the village priest's words: "We are one community with one mission in one uniform." The travel uniform consists of a pair of blue jeans shorts and a dark green T-shirt, while the event uniform includes a pair of black shorts and a white dress shirt. Both shirts receive a custom-made print applied by the village priest's wife. Participants have to procure the uniforms themselves, usually by leveraging their remittance networks in town. Those who fail to do so are deemed to have shown a lack of commitment to the mission and the future of the village. They are subsequently barred from the mission as well as publicly shunned for not participating in it.

Mission organisers further aspire for uniformity through the structural design of the mission. Everyone who travels with the mission to Honiara has to return to Gwou'ulu with it. In other words, the mission is not to be misused for a "free" church- and community-sponsored trip to town, irrespective of the reasons individual participants may have for staying behind. During the trip, participants are also not allowed to stay with their town-based relatives as is common during other visits to Honiara. Instead, leaders of the Mens coordinated, in 2014, the construction of a temporary shelter for all members

Figure 1. Welcoming Gwou'ulu Mens, who are wearing their green travel uniforms, after their mission to Honiara. Author's photograph, 2014.

of the mission in Burns Creek, a settlement on Honiara's western border and home to several families from Gwou'ulu living in and around the capital. A leader of the Mens travelled ahead to ensure the shelter would be completed in time and to collect funds, materials and volunteers for its construction among current urbanites. Yet, in the spirit of unity, he also returned to Gwou'ulu just in time join the mission for the full circle. Just like the men were to wear the same clothing, the village priest explained to me that they were to move to and through town as one, to sleep as one, to eat as one and to pray as one in a newly affirmed communion with their urban relatives.

Once in Honiara, organisers aspire to reach out to as many Gwou'ulu urban residents as possible. For this purpose, the Anglican church committee has remapped Honiara to evenly distribute Gwou'ulu residents into six groups following a similar six-fold remapping of Gwou'ulu itself that purposefully disregards and cuts across clan lines in settlement patterns. In both contexts, remapping and regrouping is envisioned to increase religious and social connections between Gwou'ulu residents beyond "centralised" meetings during Anglican church services in the village or in town (here muddled in joint worship with Anglican Christians from across Solomon Islands and often significantly reduced overall church attendance). Village-based church leaders then encourage these groups to organise their own, ideally weekly, prayer meetings and occasional fundraisers, jointly prepare dances or food for village-centric events in Honiara or Gwou'ulu, and so on. Simultaneously, Gwou'ulu church leaders seek to exclude anyone who is not immediately linked to Gwou'ulu through close kin networks from these activities. The aim is to prevent the groups from "thinning out" and from becoming part of the broader mix of alternative forms of Christian belonging in town.

The rescue mission acknowledges and reaffirms the significance of these groups by spending one day with each of them, co-organising discussion groups, prayer sessions and joint meals. The rescue mission also distributes gifts among these groups, in particular, *hom kaikai* 'home foods' such as *gara* 'cassava pudding' and *koa* 'mangrove fruits with clams'. Hom kaikai serves as a type of "reverse remittance" (Marsters *et al.* 2006) that emphasises the circular rather than a unidirectional flow of goods between the village and town (see also Maggio 2018). In addition, eating together and reminding urban residents of the tastes of hom kaikai, food grown in Gwou'ulu ancestral lands, literally allows for "incorporating"—from the Latin "in" and "corpus" (body)—all activities of the rescue mission in the history of Gwou'ulu and the lives of Gwou'ulu ancestors who have worked its lands (Hobbis 2017). Similarly, the act of praying together anchors joint activities not only in a shared reminder of Gwou'ulu Anglican heritage but also in a promise, made in the eyes of God, to live their lives based on Anglican Christian principles and the unquestioned centrality therein of the family in and of Gwou'ulu.

Discussion groups, in turn, are designed as opportunities for urban and rural residents to communally identify ways to address moral concerns. The discussions are tailored to focus on the seductive and immoral nature of urban lifestyles, as defined from an Anglican village perspective as a continuous quest for individual monetary enrichment fuelled by easy access to alcoholic excess and sexually promiscuous behaviour.

On the seventh and last day of the rescue mission, all groups come together for the Eucharist, cementing their union with each other in the highest Anglican ritual. Urbanites present their gifts to Gwou'ulu, specifically for the nuclear families of those men who joined the mission and who demonstrated their commitment to Gwou'ulu even though it meant neglecting their responsibilities as food providers at *hom*. In a continued emphasis on unity all participants receive the same gift, a 20 kg bag of rice. This rice is purchased with funds raised by Gwou'ulu urbanites and represents gifts from the urban village to the rural village rather than the usually individualised remittances within immediate kin and clan groups. Finally, once *hom,* Gwou'ulu missionaries to town are welcomed with a day of celebrations. This includes dances prepared by those who remained behind and a small feast in recognition of the significance that villagers attribute to this strengthening of village–town relations in favour of Gwou'ulu rather than Honiara ways of being.

A FAILED MISSION

While much of what I described earlier occurred in 2014, it is also an idealised portrayal, what should happen for the mission to be successful, recounted to me by the village priest and other church leaders who hoped to maintain the positive image of the mission. Other villagers' discussions were much more critical of the achievements of the mission, in particular of its legacies in Gwou'ulu itself. A couple of weeks before the Mens' departure to Honiara a longstanding conflict between two factions, divided along clan lines, resurfaced and openly challenged village unity and its proposed public display during the rescue mission.[10] The village priest immediately asserted that his and the church committee's Christian faith will ensure objectivity and a commitment to peace and unity in the village, and that, therefore, they should be in charge of conflict resolution. However, confidence in this objectivity was quickly scattered. A prominent member of the committee was directly involved in, and blamed by some for, the conflict, and several villagers considered the church committee's suggestions biased in favour of their prominent member's clan.

Panic started taking hold in Gwou'ulu, because of the conflict itself and how it was felt to threaten the rescue mission and with it one of the village's primary tools for strengthening village unity across the distance. In

hopes of saving the situation, representatives from both parties and church leaders eventually agreed to reach out to David (a pseudonym). David was well respected for his capacity as "peacemaker", for finding solutions to conflicts that all parties could accept as morally just and fair in terms of the compensation payments suggested. David's standing in the village was, however, also controversial. Though baptised and occasionally attending Anglican church services, David, in as far as still possible, oriented his life and decision-making alongside the prescriptions of the ancestral religion. Years ago when he took a second wife—an acceptable practice for influential men in ancestral times but now deemed to be an immoral, essentially sinful behaviour—the Anglican village community banished him and his new spouse from the village core to its outermost borders. As a result, even though many villagers express deep respect for David's capacity as a peacemaker, they are wary whenever they need to rely on his mediation skills. After all, so I was told repeatedly, the continued significance of David in village affairs laid bare the limitations of Anglican Christian leadership and morality in the village, while in turn suggesting that, perhaps, the abandoned ancestral ways might have been superior in maintaining a stable social order after all.

This tension between Anglican and (nostalgic memories of) ancestral ways was accentuated further, and eventually undermined the foundations for an effective rescue mission, when David's intervention was successful even though he, like the initial Anglican negotiators, belonged to one of the clans most directly involved in the conflict. When compensation was paid a few days before the Mens' departure, villagers' relief had already been dampened by the repeated inability of church leaders to bring peace to Gwou'ulu at those moments that it mattered the most. Disappointed, several Gwou'ulu men withdrew themselves from the mission. One disgruntled participant emphatically explained to me that "our community is not a true community. We are liars when we present ourselves as one … not everyone here truly follows Christian principles; our leaders say one thing but do another".

The mission organisers quickly chastised those who had withdrawn their support as further destabilising Gwou'ulu and endangering their influences on urbanites. However, I did not notice any public outcry. Instead, in our conversations many rejected their leaders' sentiments, noting that critiques of the rescue mission were valid and that, given the situation, any member of the Mens was within their right not to join the event. When the church committee, thus, decided to go ahead with the mission without, it seemed to some, reflecting on what had just gone wrong, the rescue mission lost much of its proclaimed legitimacy before it even started. Instead for many of my respondents, it revealed continued inadequacies in Anglican leaders' capacity to hold the village together, across the village–town continuum but significantly also within the village itself.

The mission did not end better than it started. Upon the Mens return, organisers wholeheartedly proclaimed the overwhelming success of the mission. They highlighted that many of their urban relatives had participated in the events and that discussions had revealed shared concerns about urban lifestyles. They had also agreed about the dangers that "lost identities" pose to their ancestral home in Gwou'ulu and the survival of moral ways of being in a quickly modernising Solomon Islands. However, organisers ignored a crucial factor in their reports. Unity had not been maintained when concluding the trip. Several participants had used the trip to Honiara as a free ride to town and did not return to the village after the mission's conclusion. Most significantly, one of these men was a powerful member of the church committee who had been especially vocal in his critique of the men who had excused themselves from the mission after the conflict. This man's failure to come back with everyone else was quickly identified by critics of the Anglican church as another indicator for how their proclaimed Anglican leaders fail at providing the moral example and leadership that the village is felt to require to maintain its inherently unstable social cohesion.

After the mission, church attendance dropped for several weeks and regular clan meetings were reinstituted to discuss both important clan and village affairs, including those related to conflict resolution. Church leaders immediately worked to regain villagers' trust and commitment to Anglican leadership. However, the failure of the rescue mission, given its wide-reaching potential consequences as the currently primary tool for communally influencing village–town relations, had opened old and new wounds. It laid bare the continuing, and according to some, intensifying, failures of Anglicanism as a source of stability, wellbeing and social cohesion in Gwou'ulu and across the village–town continuum.

RELIGIOUS UNCERTAINTIES AND FRACTURING

In villagers' discussion of the events surrounding the failed mission, they quickly pinpointed similarly contentious decisions by the village priest and his supporters that illustrate this broader crisis of confidence in the Anglican church despite the seemingly solidified Anglican leadership in Gwou'ulu since 2010. The most prominent example of this is the village priest's effort to establish a "prayer mountain". Villagers' and the priest's explanations of the envisioned prayer mountain echo Joel Robbins's (1998: 310–12) descriptions of "spirit discos" among the Urapmin of Papua New Guinea. The prayer mountain would, similar to spirit discos, be based on "group possession dances" during which "male and female dancers [jump] up and down … to the rhythm of Christian songs" and eventually "shake and flail violently, careening around the dance floor without regard for others or for the … pattern of the dancing" (p. 311). Events on the prayer mountain

would also be exceptional in their length—lasting for at least six hours and overnight—and in how they would allow for villagers' spiritual renewal in individual connections and communications with the Christian God through temporary "possession" by the Holy Spirit.

While many of my interlocutors were enthusiastic about the prospects of this prayer mountain, several others rejected it because its liturgical style moved too far beyond Anglican formal ritual culture. These villagers noted that if they were truly Anglican they needed to seek knowledge among those who had been ordained by the Church of Melanesia rather than through an individual relationship with God (see also Maggio 2016a: 68–73). From this perspective, the prayer mountain would offer not a "true" but a "sinful" interpretation of the Christian God's will and potentially attract his punishment. Additionally, several villagers were concerned that the prayer mountain would bring about the wrath of their ancestors. In his quest to further weaken the presence of ancestral spirits, the village priest and his supporters had chosen a site for the prayer mountain that belonged to an abandoned *maanabeu* at the outskirts of Gwou'ulu land (an approximately 40-minute walk from the village). Another Christian priest had cleansed this maanabeu through an exorcism, which allowed everyone, including women, to visit the site without having to worry about immediate retribution from ancestral spirits. However, transforming the maanabeu into a dedicated site of Christian worship was a different story, and many feared retributions from their ancestors—and justly so, several added.

Some villagers publicly expressed concerns about their priest's capacity to fend off ancestral spirits should they attack at this formerly sacred space. These villagers noted that the priest, along with other Anglican leaders in the village, had violated the Christian God's prescriptions too often to ensure his protection. Evidence for this was found in how the priest experienced a series of personal tragedies around the time he restrengthened his efforts to establish the prayer mountain after the failed rescue mission: his oldest daughter was admitted to the National Referral Hospital, his wife's father died, and his grandchild passed away shortly thereafter. Gwou'ulu villagers described this to me, and discussed this amongst each other, as a further sign for the priest's spiritual and moral failures, in the eyes of God and/or their ancestors (no one knew for sure which one).

The prayer mountain and the rescue mission are prominent examples, but by no means the only ones, for when and how Gwou'ulu villagers publicly and in our more private conversations questioned the capacity of the Anglican church to provide the guidance that was necessary to manage difference within Gwou'ulu and its extensions to town. Following David's example, many contemplated and some chose to return (partially) to ancestral ways. These villagers, and others like them that I met elsewhere in North Malaita, describe

themselves as "neutrals",[11] men and women who do not identify as belonging to any Christian denomination and who seek to follow ancestral prescriptions in as far as possible within the confines of their respective Christian villages. Others become "backsliders":[12] they occasionally attend church services, but they withdraw themselves from any active participation in church events and express sympathies towards the ancestral religion. Again others consider alternative Christian denominations. During my fieldwork, despite most Gwou'ulu villagers' insistence that they are an unquestionably "Anglican village", eight families resident *in* Gwou'ulu had converted to other Christian denominations. Two families had joined a Jehovah's Witnesses congregation with a church building about two kilometres outside of Gwou'ulu. Six families had become members of the Pentecostal Kingdom Harvest Church under the leadership of a Gwou'ulu-based priest. These villagers had, using their priest's influence and the broader sense of discontent with the Anglican church, successfully negotiated for a plot of land at the immediate outskirts of Gwou'ulu to construct their own church building.

The presence of such so-called "secondary converts" or "breakaway movements" in Gwou'ulu is not unexpected. Rather it follows similar trends and motivations across Melanesia (e.g., see Barker 2012; Burt 1994; Eriksen 2009; Maggio 2015, 2016a, 2016b; McDougall 2009), often linked to frustrations and disillusionment with the status quo that mainstream Christianity represents. As Maggio points out in his examination of Anglican conversion to Pentecostal churches in Honiara: "[Mainstream] 'religion', in their [secondary converts'] eyes, misleads the believer to the extent that religious institutions … aim at their own perpetuation rather than the establishment of the Kingdom of God" (Maggio 2015: 320; see also Eriksen 2009; Maggio 2016a). My observations in Gwou'ulu echo this sentiment. Those who are seeking to distance themselves from their Anglican roots question the commitment and capacity of their religious leaders to effectively address the challenges that they face, in this case, in particular, pertaining to the insecurities that accompany the need to manage difference within Gwou'ulu and alongside the village–town continuum. Crucially, as they question this capacity and shift their religious belonging, they both illustrate and exaggerate Gwou'ulu's ongoing struggles with diversity.

In response to this exaggeration through secondary conversions, the Anglican village priest works continuously to reintegrate these "broken away" individuals and families in Anglican activities. During my fieldwork, he was particularly concerned about further conversions to the Kingdom Harvest Church and promoted charismatic worship within the Anglican church such as the prayer mountain as a result. Perhaps most effectively, the priest co-organised weekly charismatic services with Gwou'ulu Pentecostal families *in* the Anglican church building. He described his goals to me as twofold.

First, he wants to show how Anglicanism continues its role as *the* unifying force in the village. Second, he aims to demonstrate the ever expansive syncretic capacities of Anglicanism wherein Anglican worship can entail the Pentecostal "personalized relationship with God" (Maggio 2015: 316) as well as conventional Anglican hymns, liturgy and rituals, thus in essence seeking to create a reformed Gwou'ulu Anglicanism that can account for *both* the priestly and personal connections in Christian worship that used to be a defining feature of the ancestral religion (see Maranda 2010).

Many of my interlocutors welcome these efforts as a way to maintain religious cohesion as a, so perceived, prerequisite for effectively managing the differences in the multi-clan village. However, my conversations with Gwou'ulu villagers further revealed that several worried that it may be increasingly too late to rescue Gwou'ulu, that Anglicanism and with it the unifying founding principle of Gwou'ulu will continue to crumble, despite, but also because of the failures of, efforts such as the rescue mission. Martha, a middle-aged woman who had spent extensive time in Gwou'ulu and Honiara, expressed most clearly what echoed throughout many of the conversations I had with villagers about the mission, secondary conversions and social cohesion in Gwou'ulu more broadly: "Gwou'ulu is like town now—everyone prays for themselves." In other words, Gwou'ulu appears to at least some of my interlocutors to be just as doomed as Honiara, too diverse to be managed effectively and peacefully, multi-clan since its inception but now also multi-denominational, a fractured religious space bereft of any clear and essentially trustworthy spiritual guidance that may be able to unify those who call Gwou'ulu *hom*, in the village or in town.

* * *

The controversies surrounding the Gwou'ulu rescue mission to Honiara raise important questions about Melanesian experiences with politico-religious diversity and the management of difference both in and between rural and urban environments. On the one hand, the mission signifies the importance that Gwou'ulu villagers attribute to a unified politico-religious order as foundational to social cohesion within the village and its extensions to town. The mission also represents villagers' commitment to, and ingenuity in, identifying ways to counter the negative effects of urban dependencies on rural environments. On the other hand, the failure of the mission, despite widespread support and no clear opposition to it among Gwou'ulu residents, reveals forcefully the struggles that villagers face when managing difference both at *hom* and in town; and it shows how these struggles are entangled with the politico-religious uncertainties that have accompanied processes of religious conversion since Christianity first arrived on Malaitan shores.

My research then raises crucial questions for ongoing debates about Melanesian breakaway movements. Much attention has been paid to individuals' and groups' ethno-theological motivations for leaving beyond mainstream Christianity (see Macdonald 2019; Maggio 2015, 2016a; Scott 2005; Timmer 2015). In addition, often the same research has emphasised the theocratic efforts of breakaway movements to "'[take] back the nation' in ways that seem to owe much to the Christian politics of North America" (Tomlinson and McDougall 2012: 9; see also Eriksen 2009; Maggio 2015, 2016a; Timmer 2015). However, far less is known about how secondary (and further) conversions are tied to the management of difference and social cohesion on a village level, potentially without any explicit or primary national or even global aspirations. Future studies should also pay closer attention to the social and political implications of shifts between different denominations and their theological emphases in rural environments. This particular article did not explicitly engage with Gwou'ulu ethno-theologies, instead emphasising the religious dimensions of everyday village governance. Still, it indicated tensions between priestly and individualised relationships with spiritual forces and herein raises questions about how these tensions may be symptoms of, but also contributing to, villagers' overarching sense of insecurity and lack of a strong unified social order that Gwou'ulu villagers (nostalgically) described as characteristic of ancestral settlements.

Simultaneously, Gwou'ulu experiences challenge contemporary engagements with the nature of village–town relations in Solomon Islands and Melanesia more broadly (e.g., Berg 2000; Gegeo 1998; Gooberman-Hill 1999; Lindstrom and Jourdan 2017; Maggio 2018; McDougall 2017; Strathern 1975). Much of this debate has engaged with diversity or the management of difference as first and foremost an urban concern. In so doing, it has often at least implied that it is this very diversity that distinguishes towns from villages, and possibly even that diversity is not a significant topic of investigation in rural environments. This is not surprising. After all, these observations are largely based on the emphasis that Melanesians themselves place on the rural–urban differences, in particular as they pertain to the morality of urban lifestyles and how they transform and essentially weaken kinship ties. As I have shown, Gwou'ulu villagers are no different in their descriptions of town. However, these descriptions are very much situated in a context wherein also the rural *hom* is experienced as a perpetually fractured space and wherein it is this very rural diversity that drives and deepens Gwou'ulu villagers' worries about the immoralities and dividing forces of town. This, in turn, suggests a need to rethink debates about Melanesian urbanities and ruralities. It calls for a more in-depth engagement with everyday

experiences with, and governance of, diversity as a rural phenomenon and as one that is, simultaneously, fundamentally entwined with histories of, at times multiple and in some ways perpetually ongoing, religious conversions.

NOTES

1. Gwou'ulu experiences high fluctuations in numbers of residents, especially due to (temporary) migrations to town.
2. Gwou'ulu land disputes are closely entangled with the founding year. The broad timeline (1900–1910) reflects the uncertainties and competing narratives involved in these disputes about who should be deemed the founding father/clan of the village.
3. See Ryuju (2012) for a discussion about the contemporary "unsettling" presence of these artificial islands in the Lau Lagoon as material evidence for the ancestral past and its, at times, frictional relationship with the Christian present.
4. For a detailed discussion of Malaitan participation in the labour trade, its links to Christianisation, and the broader history of Malaita see Moore (2017).
5. See Köngäs Maranda (1974) for a discussion of gendered relations and taboos in ancestral villages.
6. The village priest is a Lau speaker from an Anglican village in the southern Lau Lagoon.
7. My analysis focuses on the perspectives of Gwou'ulu villagers primarily resident in Gwou'ulu, rather than Honiara, at the time of and surrounding the "rescue mission". This said, I also talked to Gwou'ulu villagers based in Honiara about the mission and about attitudes towards Honiara and urban lifestyles more broadly. Their attitudes echo Marilyn Strathern's (1975) classic study of migrants in Port Moresby. While many of my urban respondents freely admitted to enjoying urban lifestyles, they agreed with villagers' assessment of their immorality and its potentially negative consequences for Gwou'ulu itself and appreciated their support in counterbalancing the "immoral" influences of town and, thus, in maintaining their *hom* 'home' identities.
8. See Geoffrey Hobbis (2017) for a discussion of some of the strategies that urbanites employ to avoid giving.
9. For a more detailed discussion of the complexity of this disconnection between villages and town from the perspectives of urban migrants, see McDougall (2017).
10. I follow villagers' requests not to discuss the particularities of the conflict in writing, acknowledging that the immediate cause for the dispute has been reconciled and compensation has been paid. Instead and sufficient for the purpose of this article, I limit my descriptions to the way in which the conflict was resolved and how this process weakened both parties' (and other villagers') trust in Anglican leaders' commitment to unity, before and above the immediate survival of Anglicanism as the dominant Christian denomination in Gwou'ulu.
11. The English term was commonly used.
12. The English term was commonly used.

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MISSIONARIES AND OTHER EMISSARIES OF COLONIALISM IN TUVALU

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ABSTRACT: This paper examines the similarities and differences between the forms of external rule established in nineteenth-century Tuvalu first by the London Missionary Society and then by the British government through its imperial outreach. These raise the question of whether or not the two forms can be characterised as essentially the same and, if so, what implications are posed for the periodisation of history in Tuvalu and other Pacific societies.

Keywords: Tuvalu, London Missionary Society, colonial rule, governmentality, periodisation

COLONIALISM'S PERIODS

The periodisation of religious and secular forms of colonialism in the Pacific is an underexamined problem. Are they successive or simultaneous moments, and, if they are sequential, does that have any significance? Or is this a non-issue? It could well be argued that externally imposed regimes of either stripe are possibly so similar at base that the terms "missionisation" and "colonialism" are simply taken-for-granted labels for different registers of a common historical process. On that view, any distinction between them is no more than received wisdom. In my view, however, we need to take a closer look.

This paper will attempt to shed some light on the entangled issues of religious and political change by looking at how they have played out in a society on the edge of Polynesia. In Tuvalu (or the Ellice Islands, as the archipelago was called from the mid-nineteenth century to 1975), various forms of government replaced or modified existing powers and institutions from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. These changes took the form of a sequence of historical moments which the literature conventionally labels conversion, missionisation, colonial rule, self-government and full independence. The sequence just outlined is somewhat arbitrary, and a truly synoptic account of Pacific history would reveal a number of variations. It may seem counterintuitive for missionisation to come after conversion but it is attested in the case of Tuvalu, just as colonial rule needed to be established before missions could venture into parts of Melanesia, rather than the other

way around in many Polynesian societies. Each of these labels and the sequence they embody warrants critical scrutiny. In addition, they all involve implicit and explicit ideas and practices of "conversion" and "mission" that destabilise conventional boundaries between religion and politics.

The attitude of locals to their own history sheds important light on this issue, both in terms of fact and of ideology. It is something of a truism but the overwhelming majority of Tuvaluans profess a strong attachment to Christianity. To use Ivan Brady's phraseology (1975), it is their "own" culture, something that resides internally. They may not all practise the same form of Christianity—though the Tuvalu Christian Church, the most recent label for the version of Protestantism planted by the London Missionary Society (LMS), still maintains its hegemony on each island of the group—but Tuvaluans overwhelmingly take the continuing presence of Christianity in their lives as an article of faith. To put it another way, there is no mainstream discourse of *religious* "anti-" or "post"-colonialism in Tuvalu.

Over time, the LMS passed control of the mission to the Sāmoa-based administrators of what became the Christian Congregational Church of Samoa, but the place of Tuvalu in that organisation became one of formal equality with all the other local branches, even though Sāmoan was the language of the mission and the scriptures until translations of the New and Old Testaments were completed in the 1970s and 1980s. Tuvalu sent delegates to general meetings of the CCCS and trained many of its own pastors to work not only in Tuvalu but also in Sāmoa and other parts of the Pacific, including Melanesia. When Tuvaluans eventually sought religious independence to form the Ellice Islands Church in 1958, the transition took place smoothly and without rancour. Some pastors continued to receive training at Malua, the theological school set up by the LMS in Sāmoa soon after it arrived in 1830, and church officials have maintained links through common membership of the Pacific Council of Churches.

By contrast, the colonial administration that was imposed two to three decades after the arrival of the LMS was always seen not as "own" in Brady's sense but as "other". This difference found expression most dramatically when Great Britain decided to exit its Pacific territories in the 1970s and Tuvalu opted, against the objections of Whitehall, *for* full independence from Britain and *against* the proposal to maintain constitutional links to the Gilbert Islands. (The conjoined Colony of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands lasted from 1916 to 1975, having replaced the Protectorate of 1892 to 1916.) This was despite the fact that the Ellice Islanders had experienced a more benign and hands-off form of colonialism than many other parts of the Pacific, perhaps in part because there were relatively few British governmental representatives on the ground by comparison to church representatives. Much of the colonial administration did in fact come from "outside", that is, from Tarawa in the

Gilberts, the Colony's headquarters. But when the time came to cut the cord, it was done with no lingering attachment to the ideology of empire. If anything, anti-colonial sentiment grew after independence because of the way people felt Britain had treated them in the divorce negotiations (Goldsmith 2012). Tuvalu has retained ties to Britain through membership of the Commonwealth and popular affection for the British monarchy (see also Goldsmith 2015), but its recent geopolitical and economic strategy revolves much more around links with a range of other countries.

To sum up, Christianity arrived well before secular colonialism, maintained a certain distance from the latter over several decades and has remained at the forefront of Tuvaluan consciousness, albeit with some fragmentation and institutional change. In contrast, the secular colonial regime began later and came to a formal end, even if it has left traces in the legal, constitutional and political systems of post-independence Tuvalu. And, yet, to treat them as completely distinct amounts to mystification.

A HISTORY OF GOVERNMENT IN POST-CONTACT TUVALU

In discussing Christianity and its intricate relationship to other forms of social, political and cultural control in the Pacific, one of the most useful concepts to wrestle with is "government". Michel Foucault pressed hard to make social theorists reconsider how government works and, through the prism of "governmentality", showed how knowledge (such as the production of statistics) created forms of power characteristic of the early modern state (Allen 1991; Barry *et al.* 1996; Foucault 1979, 1991). In turn those forms came to be applied to methods of control in colonial regimes (Helliwell and Hindess 2002; Kalpagam 2000; Merry 2002; Pels 1997; Scott 1995).

Foucault himself would probably have been the first to acknowledge that his (re)formulation was not a radical overturning of the standard political science conception of government but in some ways an uncovering or rediscovering of ideas of ancient provenance. "Governmentality" may have been his neologism but the terms government and governance have long and overlapping histories, which put the lie to the restricted ways in which they are referred to in much contemporary discourse—for example, "government" as an arbitrarily defined set of institutions and "governance" as shorthand for the efficacy and probity of how those institutions operate (Doornbos 2001; Goldsmith 2000; Larmour 1995).

Even in a small society like Tuvalu, issues of government and Christianity take some complicated twists and turns. The foundational myth is that Christianity was brought to the archipelago in 1861 by a London Missionary Society deacon from the Cook Islands (Goldsmith and Munro 2002). The canonical version of his name is Elekana and, along with several companions, he was blown off course during a canoe voyage between the neighbouring

northern islands of Manihiki and Rakahanga and then drifted some 1,500 km before fortuitously making landfall at the southern Tuvaluan atoll of Nukulaelae. Having found the local community eager to hear about the gospel, Elekana set up literacy classes for all segments of the population. Such was his success that he was asked to remain as their teacher, but as he was not an ordained pastor, he felt he should travel to the LMS seminary at Malua, which he reached in 1862. The white British missionaries running that establishment were so enthused by his story that in 1865 they hired a ship and sent it with one of their senior colleagues, Rev. Archibald Murray, along with Elekana and some Sāmoan "native teachers" to continue the work he had begun. He and the others were separately deposited at various of the southern Tuvaluan islands (though in an early instance of mission control, Elekana was selected to land not at Nukulaelae but at Nukufetau). Owing to their remoteness, these teachers were subsequently left to their own devices for the next five years, untouched by the annual LMS visitations that were standard practice in Sāmoa and the Cooks. That is, until Rev. Stuart Whitmee made a follow-up visit in 1870.

In a discussion of this episode, Goldsmith and Munro (1992) argued that Whitmee's visit revealed an important distinction between "conversion" and "church formation". Briefly, "conversion" stands for a process in which community members, usually with the approval and example of existing leaders and through various forms of local agency, engage with the arrival of new religious ideas and come to more or less embrace them; "church formation" stands for the process adjudicated by a missionary whereby the population, or selected segments of it, are deemed to have become sufficiently and correctly Christian to allow them to become full members of the church (*ekalesia*). Both processes are deeply political but they are analytically distinct. Conversion is a kind of change that remains perfectly compatible with indigenous theological and political control; church formation represents the imposition of external control, as local applicants have to meet the mission's criteria for admission, which the missionary gauges through examination of their literacy, scriptural knowledge and conformity to church standards of morality. Each process represented a universe-defining moment and the universes so brought into being were parallel but separate in form, if not in terms of their underlying constants.

We can say, perhaps provocatively, that Whitmee's formation of churches during his official voyage of 1870 effectively marked the beginning of colonial rule in Tuvalu. This is not how histories of the group have generally referred to the matter (e.g., Laracy 1983). They routinely take for granted Britain's establishment in 1892 of a joint protectorate over the Ellice Islands and their neighbours to the north, the Gilbert Islands, as the starting point of such control. In so doing, they obscure the reality that for a quarter of a century or so the Ellice group was in many important respects administered

by Malua-based British missionaries for whom these islands, along with the Tokelau group to the east, comprised the Northwest Outstations of a large LMS Pacific empire that, earlier in the century, had come to encompass Tahiti, the Cooks and Sāmoa. It would later extend its reach into parts of Melanesia.

The rest of this paper is largely devoted to sketching and highlighting the essential continuity between the moment of church formation and the later consolidation of British imperial administration. I referred above to the distinction between conversion and church formation as *analytical*. The actual historical processes overlapped in time and space so that it is only at certain moments that the distinction comes into high relief.

The issue of agency also complicates the picture, as shown by the ebb and flow of historiographical debates. The Pacific Islander–centric literature that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s placed new emphasis on the choices and strategies made by local change agents and political leaders in relation to the arrival of new systems of government, both religious and imperial.

Here, for example, is James Boutilier on the "the moment of conversion" in Pacific societies:

> The key element ... was the power broker's appreciation of the utility of [the] missionary presence. Only when the traditional system was sufficiently undermined that a new system was required to legitimize transformed local power structures and to explain the expanded universe did Christianity, in its various forms, make sense and have value. It was the islanders' changed appreciation of the validity of the old order that determined the moment when the scales shifted in the missionaries' favor. This was the moment of conversion. The missionaries were only one set of players in a much larger drama. While they were more committed to change than other Europeans and while the latter did play a part, it was the islanders who determined the success or failure of missionary efforts at conversion. (Boutilier 1985: 52)

There are several characteristic and revealing ideas in this statement. Islanders, rather than being the passive victims of external forces, are able to choose their own destiny. However, they are also treated as a global and homogeneous category, partly through the effect of historical and geographic generalisation and partly though the reduction of island perspectives to those of "power brokers" (that is, the local leaders who negotiated missionary access). Lastly, the backdrop to what Boutilier calls the "drama" of conversion is an implicit presumption of rational decision-making, which in many writings of this type implies that conversion came about through politico-economic calculation. Such rationality may be a factor but it is rarely, if ever, a sufficient or even necessary cause. It also risks reducing conversion to the social conditions that underlie it, though the question of what people actually come to believe and why is rarely straightforward and will not be foregrounded in this paper.

I suggest, first, that we are not dealing with a unified phenomenon. The several decades after the beginning of sustained contact with Westerners were temporally marked by ruptures or breaks that force us to reconsider the periodisation of Tuvaluan history. The early years of missionisation were marked by clashes between competing political authorities and value systems. Diverse actors spoke in terms of different agendas, used different models of society and employed all manner of rhetoric to justify their actions.

There is clear evidence of Tuvaluans hearing about Christianity well before LMS intervention, either through their own travels, through visitors from other islands or through traders and beachcombers. In many cases, the news inspired social and religious experimentation. The most striking illustration of this was recorded by the first official LMS expedition led by Murray in 1865. He found on at least two islands that churches and chapels had been built before his arrival. He seems to have accepted this remarkable fact as convenient evidence that the islanders were avidly awaiting LMS teachers. He remarked of Nui that "[t]hey have a very good place of worship, and a school-house in addition" (Murray 1865: 343). At Nukufetau "[t]hey have a chapel, a very decent place, about forty-five feet long by forty broad, which is kept neat and clean. Poor people! thus have they gone on year after year, worshipping God according to their little light, and waiting and longing for some reliable guide" (p. 341).

For a few years, between the first inklings of the new religion and the missionary triumph, the situation was fluid and the possibilities relatively open. A genuine struggle was taking place between indigenous religion (both "traditional" and "syncretic") and mission Christianity, and concomitantly between different sections of the community who supported each. It was in the interests of the LMS to win that struggle as quickly as possible since open conflict could lead to a breakdown of the social unity on which the mission's work depended. Social division not only impeded the process of gathering converts but also threatened church contributions and created possible openings for other missions, especially the reviled Roman Catholics.

That the LMS missionaries saw this period as transitional is reflected in their own language and in their care not to offend established authority. The delicate balance of power and sensibilities is best revealed by the contrast between an account of the conversion of one particular island, Nanumaga, and the missionary records of church formation throughout Tuvalu (drawing on the contrast mentioned above).

Nanumaga, it should be noted, came under LMS influence in the 1870s, along with the other more northerly islands of the group. As in the more southerly islands, conversion preceded church formation. The conversion scene at Nanumaga was comparatively well recorded by the Sāmoan teacher Ioane, who facilitated it (Munro 1982: 131–32). About three weeks after he

landed at the island in September 1875, the chiefs decided to formally abandon their old religion. Ioane's powers of persuasion may have been an important factor in this decision but they are unlikely to have been sufficient. The speed with which events happened suggests that the step had been discussed for some time beforehand, as a result of LMS persistence, the bringing of a deputation of Christians from Nanumea, and so on.

At the request of several of the chiefs, Ioane set about nullifying the power of the old gods and their symbols (see Sissons this issue). At a public meeting, he removed the chiefs' sacred necklaces and suffered no ill effects from the transgression of *tapu* 'sacred, restricted' that this entailed. He was therefore permitted to go and break up the ancestral shrines in which skulls and bones were kept. But this was not an act of simple desecration: he made sure to wrap the remains carefully in *siapo* (bark cloth from Sāmoa, known elsewhere in the Pacific as *tapa*), and these were buried with ceremony and respect along with other paraphernalia of the old religion. The incident was clearly one in which Ioane was dependent on the wishes of the chiefs, in which he was used as a vehicle for the neutralising of sacred power, and in which the people rejected the complete replacement of one system by another. For example, they refused to allow any of the ancestral shrines to be used for Christian worship.

The contrast with the atmosphere surrounding the eventual establishment of LMS-approved churches is remarkable. On Nanumaga the first officially sanctioned church probably came into being in 1877, though the records are tantalisingly vague on this point (Goldsmith and Munro 1992: Table 1). For most of the islands, however, the officiating missionary left a record, most famously Whitmee's report (1871), following the 1870 voyage devoted to checking the work of the teachers landed in the southern group five years earlier. Four islands received this treatment. The scene at Nukulaelae has already been discussed in detail elsewhere (Goldsmith and Munro 1992) so the analysis here concerns two of the three others, omitting Nui, which Whitmee's account treats in cursory fashion (1871: 20). The two remaining cases in question are the acts of church formation at Vaitupu (7 October 1870) and Funafuti (3 October 1870).

At Vaitupu, the missionary found "abundance of work":

> [T]here were 157 candidates for church membership, with whom I had to converse. This occupied till eleven o'clock at night, and the greater part of the next day. The [resident Sāmoan] teacher and I decided on admitting 103 to membership to the church about to be formed. All of these had a clear knowledge of the Scriptural truths all important to salvation, and were all reported well of by the teacher as to outward deportment. The whole 157 candidates had been from two to four years enquirers; and I might without difficulty have admitted a greater number, but I thought it would do them no harm to wait another year. (Whitmee 1871: 15)

The pattern is clear. The visiting missionary had the power to bestow or withdraw the sanction of the church. If time ran out or he did not wish to make admission seem too easy, he withheld his approval. He worked in conjunction with the "native teacher" whose day-to-day influence may have been greater and whose recommendations were crucial but who could not confer the status of communicant. Moreover, as Whitmee demonstrated at Nukufetau, missionaries had the authority to remove teachers (Whitmee 1871: 17). While local people had some influence over individual outcomes, they were not allowed to put the final seal on matters in the absence of a missionary.

The Vaitupu case highlights another aspect of church formation. At the service which followed Whitmee's interviews of the candidates, "[t]hose about to be united in church fellowship, amongst whom was the king of the island, occupied one side of the building, while the rest of the population occupied the opposite side" (1871: 15). This opposition neatly symbolises one of the most important consequences of missionisation, the creation of strict social boundaries by means of which control and discipline could be exerted in Tuvaluan communities over the next several decades. True, the boundaries have always been policed as rigidly by local members of the church hierarchy as by the visiting LMS inspectors. Indeed, as Whitmee himself argued, sometimes the locals were much stricter; but this is arguably not a reflection of their power so much as an expression of their desire to entrench the new dispensation. The new mode of control did not require constant outside supervision, precisely because it produced an internalised government of the self as well as external control.

This point becomes even clearer in the description of the church formation at Funafuti. Whitmee decided to admit 28 of 47 candidates for membership:

> These were all well informed on vital doctrines, and had preserved a consistent outward deportment for four years. I found a strict system of discipline had been carried out by this community of enquirers during the time they have been left to their own resources. (Whitmee 1871: 13)

The missionary went on to gently chide them for this severity (pp. 13–14), but his comments were those of a man secure in his authority and judgement. As in the other cases, it was he who had the final word in accepting the applicants into the church.

Church formation marked an important step in Tuvaluan history and social organisation. It masked the contingency of the conversion process, which was neither uninterrupted nor inevitable. At the beginning of the process of religious transformation we can see manifestations of cultural crisis; as time goes by, we see increasing signs of institutional routinisation. Conversion in the Pacific sometimes stemmed from the quest for cultural autonomy

and creativity but this impulse must be distinguished from the imposition of pastoral power (Foucault 1980). While the process of conversion may have been hastened and eased by cultural affinities between Tuvaluans and the mostly Sāmoan evangelists sent to live with them, the form that the religion took was ultimately the result of managerial imperatives. Religious transformation in Tuvalu and elsewhere in the Pacific involved a contradictory mix of consent and control. That was also true of secular political transformation, though control tended to outweigh consent to a much greater extent. By analogy with the religious moment, empire was all about "church formation" as opposed to "conversion" per se. It is to this political moment that I now turn.

IMPERIAL STATE FORMATION

From May to August 1892, the British naval steamship *Royalist* under the command of Captain Edward Davis sailed from Fiji, the headquarters of the Western Pacific High Commission, to the Gilbert, Ellice and Marshall Islands. In many ways, it was a routine expression of gunboat diplomacy. Davis already had a mandate to proclaim a protectorate over the Gilberts but had authority only to sound out the possibility of doing the same in the Ellice group.

Why did the British Colonial Office approach the two archipelagos differently? The canonical sources emphasise international rivalries and strategic calculations (Macdonald 1982: 70; Munro 1982: 293–96; Munro and Firth 1986). I would argue that mission politics also played a significant, if tacit, role. The LMS had an almost total grip over the Ellice Islands (in effect placing them solidly within the British sphere of influence) while the Gilberts were the scene of contestation between the Roman Catholic Marist brothers and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, a Hawai'i-based Protestant evangelical body. Neither of those could be trusted to foster the interests of the British Empire. The two archipelagos were also acknowledged by Germany to be part of the British sphere in the Pacific, but until they were bestowed with protectorate status, that hegemony could be challenged by German and American traders as well as by French and American missionaries. The Gilberts were the more pressing problem but the Ellice Islanders would be a necessary footnote.

The narrative that follows draws on Davis's daily log ([1892] 1976), which contained narrative summaries of his findings (pp. 30–33), as well as the synoptic descriptions he added to his overall report (pp. 67–69).

Davis briefly visited a couple of islands in the Ellice group on his voyage north to the Gilberts (Nukulaelae on 18 May and Vaitupu on 19 May), but on the return leg of his journey he visited every island in the group and compiled

more complete records. His responsibilities included getting counts of the inhabitants, determining their religious affiliations and assessing their general state of development and health. Almost certainly, he did not have time to conduct even rudimentary demographic and religious censuses himself and so would have relied on the church record books on each island, a fact that he did not acknowledge. Those record books, with their statistics on births, deaths and marriages, marked the bedding in of governmentality and were vital precursors to later colonial-era censuses.

Davis also summed up the state of the leadership and law enforcement on each island and whether or not there was political instability. Wherever there was trouble and discord, he routinely attributed it to Christian missionaries: not, I hasten to add, to those posted by the LMS but those who had previously worked in mission fields elsewhere and who wanted to establish personal theocracies either back in their natal communities or because they saw opportunities in new ones. Davis had no compunction in either removing such men or threatening them with punishment by future visiting naval commanders if they did not shape up.

By contrast, even if Davis may have questioned the effectiveness of some of the approved LMS pastors (by this time, the native teachers had been allowed the status of ordination), he refrained from commenting on their performance. Indeed, he hardly mentioned them at all. The archives tend to show that only in the most egregious of cases would a British officer have directly intervened in the workings of the LMS-appointed teachers. While this may remind us of Protestant missionary societies in the Pacific entering into comity agreements among themselves to rationalise their efforts in defined spheres of influence, there is a crucial difference. In the British Empire of the late nineteenth century, the representatives of secular and spiritual power largely avoided direct intrusion into each other's respective areas of authority; if any intervention took place it was by the secular actors. There was a tacit hierarchy in place in which the navy trumped the mission when push came to shove. Davis was also cautiously scathing about the financial burden placed on the islanders by church commitments. For one island, which he refrained from naming but which from internal evidence was either Nukufetau or Funafuti, he calculated that the upkeep of the pastor and the requirements to purchase Bibles and other publications such as hymn books meant that "the adults have to pay about 8/- [each] per annum for the privilege of being a Protestant" (p. 54).

Tensions clearly arose between church and state from time to time. Nevertheless, whether in reports of deputational visits by mission ships or of gunboat diplomacy on behalf of Queen Victoria, the language that each set of colonial practitioners employed to describe the conditions they encountered was often eerily similar in terms of reference to cleanliness and order (or their

opposites) (Goldsmith 2016). In terms of historical sequence, missionisation may have preceded imperialism but the two systems also worked in parallel. Moreover, the emissaries of imperialism were always Christian by background, even if they disagreed with specific aspects of missionary rule.

After his tour of the Gilberts, Davis proceeded to the Ellice Islands. At daylight on 27 July, he arrived at "Nanomea" (i.e., Nanumea), the northernmost island. His report mentions that he spoke about the proposal to the "King": "Before leaving he said the inhabitants would like to be placed under British protection, the same as the GILBERT Islands" (p. 33).

He left at noon the same day and reached "Nanomana" (i.e., Nanumaga) by 6:00 pm. "I landed and saw the King. […] They asked me to hoist the British Flag. I told them I could not—but I would ask for it when I arrived at FIJI" (p. 33). Davis spent barely an hour on land and reached Niutao at daylight the next day, 28 July. He wrote: "It is eleven years since a Man-of-War visited this Island. The King said he wished the British Flag hoisted. I told him I would try to obtain this request" (p. 33).

Departing at 2:00 pm, Davis proceeded to Nui, landing at 8:00 am the following morning, 29 July: "The King who appears to be a rather weak man, asked for British Protection which I promised to apply for" (p. 33). The report also refers to a man named Tukaike, who seems to have been dismissed as a missionary at Onotoa in the Gilberts and returned to Nui, only to stir up trouble in the "Kaupuli" (i.e., *kaupule* 'island council'), wanting trade to be "tabooed" and to become ruler. Davis considered that Tukaike had no right to be in the kaupule and "told the King he should be guided by him no more".

Once more, Davis left at 2:00 pm in order to arrive at "Oaitupu" (i.e., Vaitupu) by 9:00 am the next day, 30 July: "The King was anxious to have the British Flag hoisted over his Island, but he did not want a white man to come with it." Again, a troublesome former missionary with ties to Vaitupu had returned from Tamana in the Gilberts and was trying to usurp control of the island. David was told that this man, Zachia, had sailed for Nukufetau that very day.

Davis left Vaitupu at noon and arrived off Nukufetau at 6:00 pm, landing a boat ashore at one of the *motu* 'islets' where he encountered a "pilot" who happened to be carrying Zachia in his vessel. "I landed and saw the King. He said he would like the British Flag hoisted. He thought I had come for that purpose." Davis later admonished Zachia for his actions on Vaitupu and warned him of punishment should there be subsequent reports of misconduct.

He left for Funafuti at 8:30 pm, arriving there at 8:30 am the next day, 31 July. Funafuti, because of its accessible and protected anchorage in the lagoon and its potential as a coaling station, hosted a longer stay by *Royalist* and its crew and so received a more detailed description. Interestingly, in his summary report, Davis did not mention any conversations about British

protection, but the more detailed synoptic report does so ("The King said all the people wanted British protection", p. 69). Both sections of the report clearly show the captain taking the opportunity to display his imperial power: "I landed. It being Sunday every one was at Church. After Service I saw the King and Missionary. I decided to remain here two days to clean the boilers and on the following day I carried out gun practice from the boats and landed small arm men and Marines, and Field gun crews for exercise. After which the natives, who were very glad to see the ship here gave a dance in their native costume. Nearly all the inhabitants on the Island visited the ship" (p. 32).

Davis left Funafuti at 2:30 pm on 2 August and sailed for "Nukulailai" (i.e., Nukulaelae), which he reached the next morning at 8:30. "I landed, and found affairs in this Island were in a bad state again owing to an ex missionary. These men are without doubt the cause of the most trouble in the Ellice Group." This time the offender was "Lutello", a Tongan who had worked in "Pele" (possibly Palau in western Micronesia, sometimes called Pelew in accounts of the time) and who had deposed the "King" of Nukulaelae. Davis decided to return the Tongan to his homeland and reinstated the King "with the unanimous consent of the inhabitants. […] The King was anxious that the British Flag be hoisted on his Island and I promised to try and effect this for him" (p. 33).

The *Royalist* weighed anchor at 4:00 pm and by next morning stood off the southernmost island in the group, "Nurakita" (i.e., Niulakita), where it proved impossible to land because of sea conditions, and no one came off. Davis observed buildings, including a church, but the only natives he saw had the effrontery to display an American ensign. He did not comment on the significance of this and one can only speculate on the locals' motive, but without doubt they knew that their flag presented a challenge to the Union Jack flying on *Royalist*.

When Davis returned to Fiji, the plan to establish a protectorate over the Ellice Islands along the lines of the one he had proclaimed in the Gilberts quickly fell into place. Within a remarkably short period of time, another ship was despatched to the Ellice group to formalise this arrangement. It was the *Curacoa*, under the command of Herbert Gibson. This follow-up visit took place in August–September 1892 and proceeded in just as peremptory a fashion as the earlier one. The resulting narrative has the air of a mopping-up exercise, and my extensive quotations of very similar accounts at each island (Gibson 1892) are intended to convey the sense of repetitive banality that was crucial to the outcome.

Arriving at Vaitupu on 9 September, Gibson wrote, "On landing I proceeded to the King's House, who assembled the inhabitants. Through the medium of a German trader named NITZ, who kindly acted as interpreter, I

asked the King if he would like a British Protectorate, he and the people were unanimous in wishing it, I accordingly read the declaration of Protectorate and presented the King with a copy and a Union Jack. […] After remaining on shore about three hours I returned to the ship and proceeded."

The next stop was Niutao on 10 September: "I landed and with Mr. BUCKLAND an English trader here, visited the King and the Missionary. I explained to the King the object of my visit was to declare a British Protectorate. He expressed his willingness to the act, and summoned a meeting of the people in the official House. I there told the people that I had come to declare a British Protectorate, and after a considerable amount of palaver, I asked if they were agreeable to it, and on their replying in the affirmative, I read the act declaring the Protectorate and gave a copy to the King, after which we adjourned to the beach, hoisted a Union Jack, and the ship saluted with 21 guns."

Arriving at Nanumea at 8:30 am on 11 September, Gibson recruited as interpreter an English trader named Duffy, who accompanied him "to the official Government House, where I was received by the King and members of the Government. I informed them the object of my visit, and on asking them and the assembled people if they were agreeable to a British Protectorate, was answered in the affirmative. I then read the declaration, and presented a copy to the King after which we adjourned to the beach and the Union Jack was hoisted. I then presented it to the King." Later the same day, the *Curacoa* reached Nanumaga at 4:30 pm. Gibson "landed and interviewed the King and Government, and told them I had come to declare a British Protectorate and asked them if they would like it, to which they replied in the affirmative. The Proclamation was then read and I gave a copy to the King. We then adjourned outside and the Union Jack was hoisted, and I presented it to the King."

At Nui the next day (12 September), Gibson "landed about 9.30 am. and proceeded to the Court House, where I met the King and people. I informed the King that the object of my visit was to hoist the British Flag, and enquired if he and the people wished it. Being answered in the affirmative I read the Proclamation, and hoisted the Flag, delivering a copy of the proclamation and a Union Jack to the King."

It was almost an exact replay at Nukufetau next day (13 September) when the *Curacoa* arrived at 9:00 am. "I proceeded on shore and interviewed the King and people at the Court House. I asked if they would like a British Protectorate, and being answered in the affirmative I read the Proclamation and hoisted the Union Jack and delivered a copy of the Proclamation and the Union Jack to the King".

Ditto at Funafuti on 14 September where Gibson "proceeded to the King's house and informed him of the object of my visit. We adjourned to the Court House and a meeting of the people was called and I explained to them

what I had already told the King, and on they and the King and the Kaupuli expressing their willingness for a Protectorate, I read the proclamation and gave it to the King, after which we adjourned outside and planted the Union Jack, which I subsequently delivered to the King."

At Nukulaelae on 15 September, Gibson "landed about 9.30 and interviewed the King and told him the object of my visit; he expressed his willingness to a British Protectorate. I asked him to call a meeting of the people which he did and we adjourned to the Court House, and I there explained to the people what I had already told the King. They expressed their willingness to the Protectorate, so I read the Proclamation and hoisted the Union Jack, afterwards presenting it to the King, to whom I also gave a copy of the proclamation."

Things were somewhat different on 16 September at Niulakita, where Gibson managed to get ashore and found no Ellice Islanders but rather a small group of people from other parts of the Pacific working to collect guano for an American who had apparently purchased the island from a German firm. This sheds light on Davis's sighting of the American ensign a few weeks earlier, but if that had been an assertion of independence from the Empire, it was to no avail. "There was no evidence of the Island being under American Protection, so I read the declaration of British Protectorate, and hoisted the Union Jack and delivered it and a copy of the declaration of British Protectorate to the head man."

The speed, efficiency and managerial insouciance of this major territorial enlargement of the British Empire is remarkable. Gibson's description of the procedure at any one island could have stood for the whole but to have restricted my description in that way would have robbed the reader of a chance to be struck by its truly Pythonesque logic. In principle, the Ellice Islanders could have objected to the imposition of imperial rule, but it is hard to see how they could have resisted by any practical means. The outcome was predetermined in ways that missionaries could only envy, even though their contribution to this mopping-up exercise was crucial in maintaining a veneer of local agency.

One more general point about Davis's and Gibson's encounters with Ellice Islanders needs to be addressed. The British captains report meeting the "King" of each island, and this term requires some analysis. For a start, it probably papered over any differences among the leadership positions present in each island. The well-known British doctrine of indirect rule required a paramount leader, however reluctant, token or incompetent, to act as a conduit for naval orders. Reconstructing the 1892 political system of each island from this distance is hard but the evidence we have suggests there was considerable variation within the Ellice group at that time and earlier. More detailed accounts, such as those by LMS missionaries drawing on what they

had learned from the native teachers, point to a system based on collective decision-making by chiefs and/or elders representing kin groups. There may have been genuinely hereditary paramount chiefs (or "kings") on some of the islands but in other cases the men Davis assumed had overarching authority were likely to have been temporary or elected incumbents of that role. Of Nukufetau, he noted, "The King [is] no better in appearance than anyone else on the Island" (p. 68) and of Nui he remarked that, "The King appears a weak man easily led by others" (p. 68). Though the log entries tend to single out the role of one leader on each island, the fuller reports include references to "Kaupuli" (i.e., *kaupule* or island councils) and to the people in general in agreeing to British rule or other decisions Davis had made. Indeed, at Nukulaelae, the "King" who had been deposed was "re-instated … with the unanimous consent of the inhabitants" (p. 33). In short, use of the term "King" simply reflected the default image of monarchy that most naval men adhered to, operating as they did under the British Crown and the "Flag of Queen Victoria" that was the most potent symbol of imperial rule. Interestingly, if the voyage records are accurate, submission to the British monarch does not seem to have been mentioned explicitly by either Davis or Gibson. Perhaps it was just taken for granted (Victoria had been queen for some 55 years by this time so feasibly she represented "ground" rather "figure") but I am inclined to think that the proclamation of a protectorate (rather than, say, annexation) points to a wariness of imposing direct rule where it was more efficient to use existing and/or newly created forms of control through local authorities.

* * *

Reviewing the sequential and/or overlapping religious and secular moments of colonialism in Tuvalu and elsewhere in the Pacific is important for several reasons. First, even with all the usual provisos about arbitrariness and ethnocentrism, dates in the Gregorian system serve as useful signposts, both for historians in the Christian literary tradition and for those who entered into alien calendrical systems as a result of missionisation. Consequently, they become entrenched as cultural understandings of past, present and future. For Tuvaluans and many other Pacific Islanders (see McDougall this volume), the symbolic commemoration of annual and centennial dates has become a powerful statement about the transition from paganism to Christianity and so from "tradition" to "modernity". In Sāmoa, to take one example of this path, *pōuliuli* 'the time of darkness' has become a potent and contested cultural marker of a time when ancestors and spirits were once banished and relegated to the margins to one where they have been given new force. In Tuvalu, that break was even more dramatic. Unlike Sāmoa, *aitu* 'spirits' and

lingering pagan practices are a less salient feature and so their (re)valorisation is more problematic because of the totality of conversion, the desire for island ideological unity and the loss of ancestral knowledge through blackbirding (Maude 1981). Perhaps paradoxically, that means the boundary between pōuliuli and the era of *te lama* 'the light' is an even more trenchant call to mark the distinction between the periods in question. This also lends weight to the notion of Christianity being a more internal part of local culture than colonial government: while Pacific nations such as Tuvalu make great play of anniversaries of national independence, to my knowledge, anniversaries of the arrival of colonial rule are never commemorated.

In a sensible critique of Jacques Le Goff's *Must We Divide History into Periods?*, J.G.A Pocock sums up the issue well. It is not a question, he argues, of whether we "must" periodise; rather it is a question of discussing "who has done so, with what results; what is meant by doing so; and what results it may yield" (Pocock 2018: 331). If religious and political conversion can be construed as "events", then the sequence of other events leading up to and from those events may help to make sense of them. Whether those events are similar or radically different, it may be productive to work out how they get entangled and disentangled. As Pocock notes, "[i]t seems worth entertaining the proposition that, around a certain time, something happened in a certain culture which had widespread results and that these may be pursued until we see that something else has happened that changed the narrative we have been pursuing. The danger is—as we have always known but often disregarded—that we may hypostatize the period between the two, so that the changes during it have a common explanation and may be said to have changed everything" (p. 331). The religious and secular forms of conversion in the Pacific illustrate that conundrum perfectly.

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