

## CHRISTIAN POLITICS IN OCEANIA

## *ASAO Studies in Pacific Anthropology*

General Editor: Rupert Stasch, Department of Anthropology,  
University of California, San Diego

The Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania (ASAO) is an international organization dedicated to studies of Pacific cultures, societies, and histories. This series publishes monographs and thematic collections on topics of global and comparative significance, grounded in anthropological fieldwork in Pacific locations.

### Volume 1

*The Anthropology of Empathy: Experiencing the Lives of Others  
in Pacific Societies*

Edited by Douglas W. Hollan and C. Jason Throop

### Volume 2

*Christian Politics in Oceania*

Edited by Matt Tomlinson and Debra McDougall

### Volume 3

*Big Men and Big Shots: Reciprocity, Disaster,  
and Conflicts about "Custom" in New Britain*

Keir Martin

### Volume 4

*Rethinking Homeland and Diaspora: Women, Wealth,  
and Tongan Tradition*

Ping-Ann Addo

# Christian Politics in Oceania



Edited by  
Matt Tomlinson and Debra McDougall



*Bergahn Books*  
NEW YORK • OXFORD

Published in 2013 by

***Berghahn Books***

www.berghahnbooks.com

©2013 Matt Tomlinson and Debra McDougall

All rights reserved. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purposes of criticism and review, no part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system now known or to be invented, without written permission of the publisher.

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Christian politics in Oceania / edited by Matt Tomlinson and Debra McDougall.

p. cm. — (ASAO studies in Pacific anthropology ; v. 2)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-85745-746-2 (hardback : alk. paper)

1. Christianity and politics—Oceania. 2. Christian sects—Oceania. I. Tomlinson, Matt, 1970– II. McDougall, Debra L.

BR115.P7C245 2012

261.70995—dc23

2012012575

**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Printed in the United States on acid-free paper.

ISBN: 978-0-85745-746-2 (hardback)

ISBN 978-0-85745-745-5 (ebook)

Figures	vii
Maps	viii
Acknowledgments	ix
Introduction. Christian Politics in Oceania <i>Matt Tomlinson and Debra McDougall</i>	1
Chapter 1. Mediating Denominational Disputes: Land Claims and the Sound of Christian Critique in the Waria Valley, Papua New Guinea <i>Courtney Handman</i>	22
Chapter 2. “Heaven on Earth” or Satan’s “Base” in the Pacific?: Internal Christian Politics in the Dialogic Construction of the Makiran Underground Army <i>Michael W. Scott</i>	49
Chapter 3. The Generation of the Now: Denominational Politics in Fijian Christianity <i>Matt Tomlinson</i>	78
Chapter 4. Christian Politics in Vanuatu: Lay Priests and New State Forms <i>Annelin Eriksen</i>	103
Chapter 5. Evangelical Public Culture: Making Stranger-Citizens in Solomon Islands <i>Debra McDougall</i>	122
Chapter 6. Anthropology and the Politics of Christianity in Papua New Guinea <i>John Barker</i>	146
Chapter 7. Chiefs, Church, and State in Santa Isabel, Solomon Islands <i>Geoffrey White</i>	171

Chapter 8. Why Is There No Political Theology among the Urapmin?: On Diarchy, Sects as Big as Society, and the Diversity of Pentecostal Politics <i>Joel Robbins</i>	198
Afterword. Reflections on Political Theology in the Pacific <i>Webb Keane</i>	211
Contributors	224
Index	227

## *Figures*

1.1. Ernie Richert's booklet of Guhu-Samane songs "translated" into Christian terms.	35
1.2. The Lutheran Brass Band at ELC-PNG Day, 2005.	40
3.1. Fiji Police Crusade parade, 21 December 2008.	85
3.2. Fiji Police Crusade parade, 21 December 2008.	85
3.3. Atunaisa Vulaono of the New Methodist Church, Fiji.	86
3.4. Policemen dancing onstage at "Ruggers for Jesus."	86
3.5. "Ruggers for Jesus" program.	87
5.1. Charismatic preacher from Honiara at the market in Gizo.	124

## *Maps*

I.1. The western Pacific.	11
1.1. Garasa area, Waria Valley, Papua New Guinea.	28
2.1. Island of Makira, Solomon Islands.	50

## *Acknowledgments*

This project began as an informal session at the meeting of the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania in Canberra in 2008, and later developed into a panel during the American Anthropological Association conference in Philadelphia in 2009. It finally came to fruition as a two-day workshop at Monash University in Melbourne in July 2010. At the Monash workshop, papers were presented by Hokulani Aikau, Melani Anae, John Barker, Annelin Eriksen, Juliana Flinn, Helen Gardner, Mike Goldsmith, Courtney Handman, Anna-Karina Hermkens, Debra McDougall, Guido Pigliasco, Steven Ratuva, Joel Robbins, Michael W. Scott, Matt Tomlinson, and Geoffrey White, with Webb Keane as the keynote speaker. The editors wish to thank all of the participants and to emphasize that the group efforts and discussions shaped this book as a whole, even though only a limited selection of papers is presented in this volume. We are also grateful to Margaret Jolly for her generous and insightful comments at the workshop, as well as Matthew Engelke, Dan Jorgensen, Martha Macintyre, and Mark Mosko for their contributions at different points in the project's development. The Monash workshop was funded by a generous grant from the Australian Research Council (Discovery Project 0878736) to Matt Tomlinson, and the event was coordinated expertly by Michelle O'Toole. We also wish to thank Rupert Stasch for his generosity and encouragement in the publishing process.

MT & DM, November 2011



## Christian Politics in Oceania

MATT TOMLINSON and DEBRA MCDUGALL

“What difference does Christianity make?” Fenella Cannell begins her landmark edited volume *The Anthropology of Christianity* (2006) with this provocative question, and to the book’s credit, the contributors arrive at different—but always ethnographically vivid—answers. For example, Seventh-day Adventists in Madagascar use the Bible as a basis for “normal science,” continually attempting to harmonize mainstream scientific knowledge with scriptural standards. In contrast, Swedish Pentecostals believe that physical reality can be shaped linguistically, and they expect healthy bodies and worldly success to come from repeatedly speaking the right words. For the Biaks of Papua the difference Christianity makes is comparatively slight, as it simply offers a new “place to capture the foreign” (Keller 2006; Coleman 2006; Rutherford 2006: 259).

Despite the volume’s ethnographic insights, Cannell’s answer to her own question is ultimately less than satisfying. She concludes her introduction by stating: “If we can stop presupposing that Christianity changes everything forever, we may be able to begin to see the experiences of Christianity, in all their diversity, complexity, and singularity, for what they are” (2006: 45). There are two problems with this statement: first, it sets up a straw man, the (nonexistent) anthropologist who treats Christianity as an exclusively transformative force; second, it treats the ground of experience as unproblematic—as if seeing things “for what they are” could ever be agreed upon fully (cf. Scott 1991). If Cannell’s conclusion misses the mark, her question nonetheless remains central, and no anthropologist has yet answered it definitively. What difference, after all, *does* Christianity make?

In this volume, we offer an answer based on ethnographic research in Pacific Islands societies. Thirty years ago, the missiologist Charles Forman stated that Oceania was “in all probability, the most solidly Christian part of the world” (1982: 227). By this, he meant that the overwhelming majority of islanders were members of Christian churches, and that they “were more devoted in Christian belief and gave to the churches a larger place in their life than did the people of any other region” (ibid.). The first claim is easy to prove: of the fifteen countries in the world with the highest percentage of Christian

affiliation in the population, six are Pacific nations or territories, more than any other region (the Americas have five; Europe has four). Every independent Oceanic state except for Fiji and Nauru has a Christian population of more than 80 percent, and most are above 90 percent (World Christian Database 2004). Forman's second claim, regarding devotion, raises a more complex set of issues. What does it mean, after all, to be "solidly Christian"? As anthropologists, we take this question's utility to be the way it prompts us to consider what makes a society "solidly" anything, especially when that "anything" is as labile and shape-shifting a force as Christianity. Yet questions about the solidity of Christian identification, the quality of Christian belief, and the centrality of churches in social life are not only analytical questions; they are also, and perhaps more importantly, the sorts of questions that Pacific Christians increasingly ask themselves.

We suggest that Oceanic societies may be characterized as "solidly Christian" because the political implications of Christianity are often taken for granted: Christianity is the ground and starting point for political action. This is not the same thing as saying that religions always have a political aspect—a banal, if true, point. Rather, it is to call attention to the fact that Christianity's pervasiveness in Oceania can make it seem deceptively apolitical. Only in Fiji, where religious difference parallels other social divisions, has Christianity become politically salient in obvious ways. Across the region, Christianity and politics have redefined each other in ways that make the two categories inseparable at any level of analysis. One can only understand what is Christian in Oceania through understanding what is political, and one can only understand what is political by understanding what is Christian. We do not mean to collapse these categories, but to show how each is irreducibly constitutive of the other. In Oceania, the difference that Christianity makes is always and inevitably political.<sup>1</sup>

To be clear, we are not arguing that the domain of Christianity and the domain of politics are always merged, for this is demonstrably not the case. Yet even in situations where Christianity and politics are bounded as distinct and ideally non-intersecting domains—as is the case among the Urapmin of Papua New Guinea (Robbins, this volume)—we can see that Christianity delimits the potential of political action. Another way of saying that Christianity and politics are analytically inseparable is to suggest that Christianity shapes the contours of "the political" in Oceania and vice versa. Thus, one of the ways that we attempt to unpack the relationship between religion and politics is to pay close attention to how Pacific Islanders conceptualize this relationship and to how these conceptualizations play out in practice.

There is something paradoxical about our claim that Christianity and politics are thoroughly entwined. To the extent that anthropologists and other scholars have tried to discern the difference that Christianity makes, many

have suggested that modern Christianity is distinctive because it insists upon a separation of religion and politics. This point is at the crux of Talal Asad's critique of religion as an anthropological category: he argues that the definition of religion as a distinct domain of ideas and practices has a Protestant genealogy (Asad 1993; see also Ruel 1982; Luria 1996; Pollman 1996). Inspired in part by this line of analysis, anthropologists seeking cross-cultural grounds for the comparative study of Christianity have pointed to the prominent emphasis on meaning in Christian ritual (Engelke and Tomlinson 2006), on the centrality of individual belief (Robbins 2004), and on a desire to separate matters of the spirit from the base materiality of words and objects (Keane 2007; Engelke 2007). Such studies have demonstrated that many Christians (and, we might add, non-Christians who treat religion as a matter of belief) try to keep their beliefs separate from the entanglements of sociopolitical life and the spirit-stultifying structures of bureaucratic institutions. Several contributors to this volume discuss the work of H. Richard Niebuhr as a particularly lucid exposition of this Protestant ideology. Sects, according to Niebuhr (1929), emerge out of frustration with established organizational forms, but after a generation or so they tend to be consolidated into "denominated" churches, opposed to other churches, and associated with the narrow interests of a class, race, ethnicity or nation, thus betraying the faith's radical promise of human unity.

Not all of the forms of Christianity discussed in this volume—let alone all of those practiced by Christians around the world—seek a spiritual life radically delimited from worldly institutions.<sup>2</sup> To take just one example, the Anglicans of the Melanesian Mission formulated a missiology of accommodation that strove to reconcile the traditions of Melanesia with the truths of the Bible. According to David Hilliard, the Mission's "interventions in secular politics combined a judiciously balanced defence of Melanesian interests with a deference to established authorities." The Oxford- and Cambridge-educated men who led the missions "respected the traditions of Melanesian villagers because they revered their own" (1978: 294). This reverence colors the present: as Michael W. Scott has shown, for example, indigenous Anglican leaders in Makira, Solomon Islands, continue to seek out connections and commonalities between Christianity and custom (2007: 268–82).

In this volume, we observe both "church-like" and "sect-like" Christianities, with the former tending toward engagement and integration and the latter tending toward disarticulation and separation. But as Scott points out in his chapter, discourses and practices often "resist clean denominational categorization"; rather than relying on denominational labels to categorize types of Christianity, scholars must attend to the broad precepts of Christianity and to the particular denominational inflections of these precepts, as well as to idiosyncratic individual attempts to make sense of the world in light of both. While this volume gives evidence of the overt political force of clearly "denominated"

forms of Christianity, contributors also attend to the ways that apparently non-confrontational discourses and practices may be pitched against denominational alternatives. Thus Christian politics “need not be located in sermons, institutional church pronouncements, public debates, campaign platforms, or national agendas. Seemingly localized idiosyncratic discourses can carry theologically rigorous internal denominational politics with far-reaching visions for national, international, and cosmic politics” (Scott, this volume). In the face of diversity across dialogically constituted denominational traditions, then, the difference that Christianity makes cannot be manifest in any particular ideological stance toward politics.

It may be impossible to answer Cannell’s question in a fully satisfactory way. But this does not mean that we can do little more than note the “diversity, complexity, and singularity” of Christian experience. Rather than abandon the comparative endeavor, we pursue comparison in two modest ways. First, we focus on Oceania, and specifically on Papua New Guinea (PNG), Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Fiji, four troubled nation-states in the western Pacific whose engagements with Christianity are historically entwined. As we have already suggested, Christianity is the dominant cultural force throughout the region. We would not expect Christianity and politics to be so thoroughly entwined in other places, although we trust that our analysis of these dynamics in the Pacific will offer insights into those dynamics elsewhere. The second impulse in this volume is more subtle. In many of our chapters, we engage in comparative discussions of Christianity (and, in McDougall’s chapter, of Islam) precisely because this is something our interlocutors do themselves, both at metropolitan theological colleges and village kava circles. Most of the people whose lives are discussed in these chapters are engaged in exercises in comparative religion, trying to make sense of the different visions of self and nation that they encounter. They critically evaluate new and old forms of Christianity against each another and make sense of troubling political situations in light of different denominations’ insights. Even the most rural villages—the ones slipping off the map at the self-described “ends of the earth,” the ones that seem thoroughly excluded from economic globalization—are centrally implicated in the swift religious shifts taking place at local and global levels.

### **The limits and contours of Christian politics**

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, when Christianity was still being introduced to much of Oceania, religion had emerged as a salient (indeed, naturalized) category in Europe. Christianity was introduced to Pacific Islanders as a token of a type—as one “religion” among others—and they were encouraged to reflect on indigenous cultural practices in order to distinguish

the religious from the merely secular. A familiar line in missionary writings from the era is a concern about whether converts had experienced a “truly” religious change of heart or whether they had come under mission influence for merely social, political, or material reasons.

If anthropologists have tended to emphasize the role of missions in establishing colonial hegemony, many Pacific Islanders seem to reverse the means and ends, seeing the establishment of colonial administration as a mere prelude to the Christian transformation of their societies. Thus, when a group of Fiji’s leading chiefs ceded their nation to Queen Victoria in 1874, they declared that they were “desirous of securing the promotion of civilisation and Christianity” (quoted in Dean and Ritova 1988: 36). Although government pacification preceded missionization in much of the western Pacific, many narratives of conversion pull the chain of causation in the other direction, claiming that warfare ended because ancestors heeded the Gospel message of peace (Dureau 2001; Errington and Gewertz 1994; White 1991: 138).

Unlike many of the indigenous institutions that Christianity and colonialism partially supplanted, the introduced institutions of colonial church and colonial state were often markedly distinct. To be clear, mission Christianity was never apolitical: colonial administrators gave permission and protection to colonial missions because they helped make colonial subjects governable. But few missions moved in lockstep with government policies, and British colonial administrations in particular sometimes worried that mission teachings would undermine the supposedly “traditional” political structures that enabled policies of indirect rule. As Jean and John Comaroff write of Nonconformist missionaries among the Tswana in Southern Africa, “the evangelists might have wished for potent chiefs and secure polities, but their own actions subverted the very political capital on which Tswana government rested” (1991: 259; see also Etherington 2005). Even as the Methodist Mission educated many of the islanders working for the British district administration in the Western Solomon Islands, for example, longtime mission head Rev. John Goldie saw himself as preventing the exploitation of islanders at the hands of European traders and protectorate officials who sought to alienate their land (Hilliard 1966: 273–334). In the meantime, the Seventh-day Adventist mission in the same region remained aloof from affairs of state, deploying its promising converts not in government but as missionaries elsewhere in the Protectorate and throughout Papua New Guinea (Steley 1989). Whether engaged or aloof, however, missions in the Western Solomons and throughout Oceania shaped the ways that their adherents engaged first with colonial administrations and later with independent national states.

Although many European, white Australian, and Pakeha New Zealander missionaries in the Pacific worked to distinguish the domains of politics and religion, such distinctions were not necessarily salient to converts. Across the

Pacific, once islanders began to make Christianity “their own,” they blurred imported ideological boundaries between religion and politics that did not map onto indigenous categories. In much of the central and western Pacific, would-be converts were evangelized not by Europeans but by other islanders who had converted decades or generations earlier and who brought a Christianity already shaped by encounters with Oceanic understandings of sacred and secular power.<sup>3</sup>

In the present, one of the most remarkable features of Oceanic religious politics is the degree to which Christianity defines the terms of national identity. Throughout the region there are attempts to define the state as a Christian polity, with many countries’ constitutions explicitly equating national identity and Christian identity. For example, Samoa—statistically the most Christian nation in the world after the Holy See—begins its constitution with a ringing declaration:

IN THE HOLY NAME OF GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, THE EVER LOVING[,] WHEREAS sovereignty over the Universe belongs to the Omnipresent God alone, and the authority to be exercised by the people of Samoa within the limits prescribed by His commandments is a sacred heritage[;]

WHEREAS the Leaders of Samoa have declared that Samoa should be an Independent State based on Christian principles and Samoan custom and tradition ... we the people of Samoa in our Constitutional Convention, this 28th day of October 1960, do hereby adopt, enact and give to ourselves this Constitution.<sup>4</sup>

The constitution of Nauru begins with similar sentiments, phrased more simply: “WHEREAS we the people of Nauru acknowledge God as the almighty and everlasting Lord and the giver of all good things: And Whereas we humbly place ourselves under the protection of His good providence and seek His blessing upon ourselves and upon our lives.” The theme of placing trust in God is prominent, with the constitutions of Kiribati and the Marshall Islands mentioning such trust in their first sentences, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands both declaring themselves to be “under the guiding hand of God” as they establish their states, Tuvalu invoking “the guidance of God,” and Tonga beginning its constitution with a “declaration of freedom” that is a theological statement of mankind’s freedom through God’s will.

In many of these documents, Christianity is made to sing in harmony with reified indigenous tradition. The worthy customs of the ancestors are proudly invoked as supportive of Christianity, and in some cases they even merge with it. Tokelau’s constitution begins by drawing the Christian God and the traditional deities Maui and Tui Tokelau together in a single image of the divine: “We, the people of Tokelau, declare, Tokelau is permanently founded on God.

This foundation is made manifest in the villages and when the people cooperate and live together peacefully and happily. At the dawn of time the historic islands of Atafu, Nukunonu, Fakaofu, and Olohega were created as our home. Since the days of Maui and Tui Tokelau the land, sea, and air have nurtured our people, and God has watched over us.” The constitution of Papua New Guinea makes a point of expressing respect for ancestors and honoring “traditional wisdoms” while also invoking “the Christian principles that are ours now” (see Robbins, this volume). Fiji’s constitution asserts that God “has always watched over these islands” while mentioning the ancestors’ conversion to Christianity “through the power of the name of Jesus Christ,” casting God both as the author of traditional religion and its replacement.

The politics of tradition and *kastom* (“custom”) have been intensely, sometimes vehemently, debated over the past three decades, and we do not want to make that troubled journey again. Rather, we want to observe how tradition—like politics—has developed as a category in constant dialogue with Christianity in the Pacific. Writing of the American Revolution, Benjamin Lee has argued that “we see the emergence of a notion of peoplehood concrete enough to apply to every citizen but abstract enough to legitimate a constitution” (1997: 322). In Oceania, the notion of “we, the people” often retains this abstractness at one level while insisting at another level that whoever we are and whatever we become, we do so as Christians.

Yet this fusion is not the only way that Pacific Islanders describe the relationship between religion and politics. Many conceive of Christianity, tradition, and government as three parts of a larger whole. The articulation of these elements is envisioned through different metaphors—for example, the legs of a tripod in Santa Isabel, Solomon Islands (White, this volume), sides in Polap, Micronesia (Flinn 2010), and pillars in Fiji (Tomlinson 2009). In other contexts, however, Pacific Islanders do not emphasize fusion or congruence between Christianity and tradition or the state, but strive to reject ancestral traditions wholesale. Even members of churches that generally value traditions, like Fijian Methodism or Solomon Islands Anglicanism, may invoke an opposition between the darkness of the past and Christian enlightenment. Some also consider Christianity to be opposed to national states which by and large have failed to provide many benefits to their citizens. Against those who have claimed that Papua New Guinean nationalism is underdeveloped, Joel Robbins (1998) has argued that many PNG citizens have very strong ideas about the nation but that their attachment to the nation is profoundly negative. Rather than seeing congruence between “traditional wisdoms” and “Christian principles” (as presented in the PNG constitution), Urapmin see transnational Christianity as an alternative to the nation as a translocal form of imagined community. Being Christian is understood to be a potential means of transcending the troubled nation, as well as blackness as a racial identity and the

vexations of local custom, all of which are negatively valued by Urapmin (see also Bashkow 2006; Eves 2003; Jorgensen 2005; Scott, this volume).

Seventh-day Adventists and some other fundamentalist Protestants see national states and international institutions like the United Nations as the harbingers of a “new world order” that will ultimately persecute true believers. Far from seeing history as progressively fulfilling God’s prophecy, the theology of such visions breaks human history into “dispensations” defined by the type of relationship prevailing between God and humans that are both attested to and predicted in the Bible. According to premillennial versions of this dispensationalism, the present is a time of intensifying chaos and war preceding the Second Coming of Christ. Such theologies may appear to be apolitical insofar as they seem to despair of changing the course of history; instead, they encourage adherents to align their own lives with God’s will so they will be among the saved rather than the damned at history’s end. Premillennial dispensationalism is not, however, the only prophetic vision of end times embraced by evangelical Christians in Oceania. Theological currents that might be labeled Christian reconstructionism, postmillennialism, dominionism, or Kingdom theology seem to be on the rise in Fiji, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, for example (see, respectively, Tomlinson, McDougall, and Eriksen, this volume). Christians influenced by these global theological movements do not see nation-states as Satan’s tools; rather, they believe that Christ has commissioned them to minister to “the nations” and to help bring God’s dominion to the earth. In contrast to the nationalist authors of constitutions, their focus is not on how Christianity can support the shared values of a national community; instead, for many evangelicals, nation-states are the means and not the ends of Christian action.

As the foregoing discussion suggests, we should expect variations in the relationship between Christianity, tradition, and the state not only across societies but also in different contexts within the same society. For example, we might contrast the ways that traditional authority in Fiji has been joined with Christianity in a way that has not occurred in Papua New Guinea. But in doing so, we must also pay attention to the differences between the ways in which this relationship is figured: on the one hand in constitutional declarations and other programmatic statements, and on the other in the everyday rumors, grumblings, and hopes of Christian citizens.<sup>5</sup> Christianity and politics are constituted in relation to one another, but the relationship may be framed as fusion, articulation, disconnection, or a complex combination of patterns.

Whether we are considering the politics of European missionization, Christian nationalism, or evangelical attempts to rescue the nation, we cannot begin our analyses with fixed definitions of religion or politics. The first analytical step must be to ask what sorts of distinctions are locally relevant. One way to do this is to consider the limits of Christian action. What kinds of actions

are considered off-limits for Christians, or at least for those individuals most responsible for representing, acting on behalf of, or speaking for the church as a whole? Is there a distinction between what a pastor can do and what a chief can do? In this volume, Robbins's discussion of the ambivalent role of Christian "big men" and Handman's discussion of the use of village proxies to disguise denominational power struggles clarify such distinctions. Conversely, White's account of the most recent chapter in a decades-long endeavor to integrate the Christianized customary power of chiefs with the formal institutions of government suggests that any distinction between church and government is problematic for the people of Santa Isabel. Eriksen describes the activities of a church founder who defines his mission as organizing congregants into "a new politically and economically conscious generation." Tomlinson's and McDougall's descriptions of contemporary evangelical crusades in Fiji and the Solomons reveal a desire to merge the political and the religious by "taking back the nation" in ways that seem to owe much to the Christian politics of North America.

Another way to trace local distinctions of the religious and the political is to pay close attention to processes of circulation. The things that circulate socially—discourse, ideologies, texts—do not "flow" in free space but help define the contours of their own circulation and the conditions of their uptake. Sometimes the patterns and pragmatics of circulation seem straightforward, but careful analysis usually complicates the picture. For example, consider Romans 13:1–2, which reads: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." Robbins's chapter discusses the verses' unsettled meanings in the context of Urapmin understandings of the relationship between religion and politics, which he describes as a diarchy: "each domain has its own kinds of legitimate leaders, leadership in one domain confers little or no authority in the other, and no one is allowed to occupy leading positions in both domains at the same time." He notes that all Urapmin know and discuss this passage of the Bible. But Urapmin have not reached a consensus on whether the message of Romans 13 supports their diarchical system, giving "politics its own place," or supports an opposing model of politics as "part of the divine scheme of things ... [which could] give them ample ammunition to develop fully fledged arguments about the religious grounding of politics."

Similarly, Tomlinson describes a situation in which Romans 13:1–2 circulates prominently, indexing ongoing concerns with sorting out the relationship between religious and political domains. In coup-era Fiji, the verses have been invoked frequently to support the neotraditional chiefly system nurtured by conservative, ethnonationalist, indigenous-led governments; the Fijian trans-

lation of Romans 13:1–2 explicitly refers to *turaga*, “chiefs,” bolstering such an interpretation. In the event Tomlinson analyzes, however, an evangelical preacher broadens his interpretation of the passage to discuss the general idea of “leadership,” an idea that for him is exemplified by Fiji’s current military-led government, which is distinctly anti-chiefly. In short, the preacher uses the passage to oppose what most other speakers use it to justify. This does not support the fatuous notion that the Bible can prove anything, Tomlinson argues, but rather it reveals the strategies through which indigenous Fijians disentangle competing systems—chiefly, democratic, military—in the act of defining authority always in relation to divine power.

Other chapters discuss similar dynamics of circulation in the categorization of religion and politics. For example, Scott discusses Makirans’ use of passages from Revelation both to understand their situation at the end of time and the end of the world and to recognize the Antichrist, identified by some as the late prime minister, Solomon Mamaloni. McDougall notes the opposition in Solomon Islands between churches that tend to draw on the books of Daniel and Revelation in articulating an antinationalist message and those that draw on books such as Isaiah and Kings to argue that God’s rule must take effect “through the agency of earthly governments.”

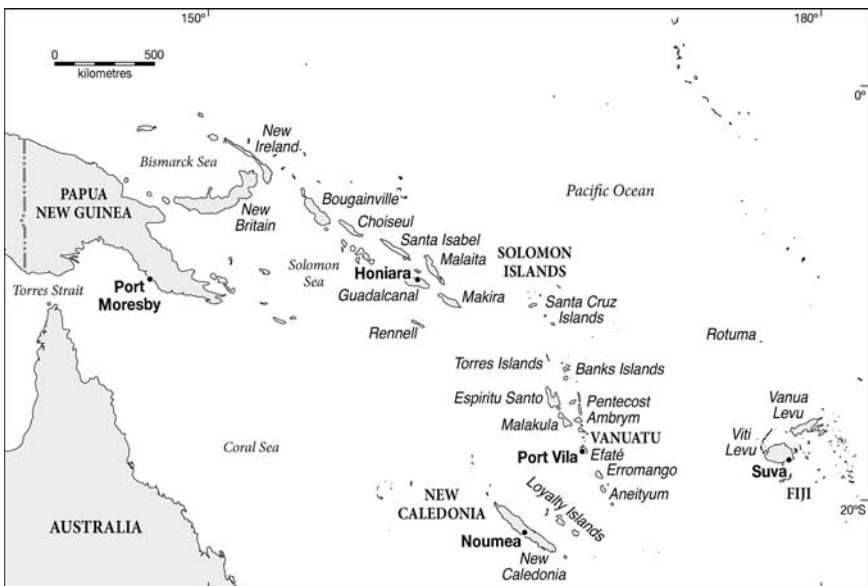
### **Troubled states of Oceania: toward a comparative anthropology of Christianity**

We frame this volume as an exploration of Christian politics in Oceania—not just in Melanesia—for two reasons. First, this publication emerged from a workshop that included contributions from scholars working across the Pacific Islands. Many of the themes discussed in this volume resonate with case studies from Polynesia and Micronesia, but they were discussed most explicitly in the contributions gathered here. Second, like many other scholars, we find “Melanesia” a problematic designation. The term does not designate a coherent linguistic, ethnological, biological, or archaeological zone (Kirch and Green 2001: 63), and it emerged primarily as a category for drawing comparisons and contrasts with Polynesia within evolutionary frameworks (Thomas 1997). Problems with the category Melanesia become most obvious in Fiji, which lies on the boundaries of the region, is populated by indigenous islanders of great phenotypical diversity, and now looks politically toward Melanesia while at the same time fetishizing a classically western Polynesian system of chiefdoms. But the problem of Melanesia should not trouble the borders alone; it should trouble the illusory center, as the term suggests a false homogeneity across diverse regions of the western Pacific and has arguably led to the generalization across the entire “Melanesian” region of models of sociality that were originally

developed with particular reference to Papua New Guinea (Scott 2007: 24–32). We note, too, that the term “Oceania” itself can be similarly destabilized, and an appeal can be made to higher-level unity in the Austronesian world.

Yet there is a compelling reason to put these particular chapters together: the matter of contemporary geopolitical circumstances. Not only do political leaders of Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Fiji describe themselves as Melanesians, institutionalizing their relationship through the Melanesian Spearhead Group, but all are considered to be “weak states” in the policy proclamations of aid donors and regional powers. Fiji has suffered four coups since 1987. The Solomons endured a devastating civil conflict between 1998 and 2003, with a coup in 2000 and ongoing intervention from Australian military forces. Papua New Guinea has struggled with open rebellion in Bougainville and has experienced basic law and order problems almost everywhere else. Vanuatu’s unstable governing coalitions have been challenged by lawlessness, conflict over land, and ethnically inflected urban violence. A widespread failure of postcolonial states to meet citizens’ minimal expectations of infrastructure and service delivery continues to afflict the region. An examination of Christian politics is thus especially urgent for understanding the dynamics of these troubled states, and ought to engage policy-makers and church and political leaders as well as anthropologists and scholars of religion.

In light of ongoing efforts to improve the functioning of these states, one of the most relevant messages of this volume is that many citizens do not think



Map I.1. The western Pacific. Map by ANU Cartographic Services.

that national improvement will come by secular means. The people of Santa Isabel hope to make the state (finally) relevant in their lives by bringing it into connection with the island's Christian chiefs. For the urban Solomons and Vanuatu, McDougall and Eriksen describe the local uptake of widely circulating theologies of the nation and document how particular actors strive to constitute themselves as moral agents and effective citizens. Visions of local polities for Guhu-Samane speakers of Papua New Guinea focus on engagements with churches, the most powerful transnational organizations that penetrate the region. According to the national police commissioner of Fiji, the problems of crime are to be tackled not by a better managed or supervised police force, but by one that follows a "Jesus strategy." One of the reasons that religious institutions have been so effective in Oceania is that states have been inept; religious visions are persuasive in part because secular promises of progress have become unconvincing. We hope that these cases alert readers to the different agendas at play and the sometimes surprising aspirations of Oceanic citizens. While projects of political and social improvement that are not motivated by religion are hardly doomed to failure, projects that do not recognize Pacific Islanders' religious aspirations probably are.

Sacred and secular visions of nations and citizenships are not necessarily contradictory; the resonances between such visions may be both productive and highly problematic. Many Pacific citizens today exhort their leaders to be good Christians, arguing that if politicians live an upright life in God's eyes, they will run governments with some degree of transparency. This was the vision of Father Walter Lini, the Anglican priest who became Vanuatu's first prime minister: "Should the Church play politics? My answer is *Yes*," he wrote unambiguously in 1975. "I believe that the Church must play politics because its role today is not so much concerned with individuals as with governments, which are responsible for changing the system and structures so that justice will come" (Lini 1975: 176–77; emphasis in original). Yet the resonance between secular and sacred visions may also be problematic: it is not difficult to see how many of the Christian projects in these pages will help to solidify exclusive ethnonationalist identities within these multicultural nation states.

Without seeking to exaggerate the distinctiveness of the present or minimize the dynamism of the past, we note that the momentum of religious change increased over the course of the twentieth century. European colonial administrations often sought to control the activities of foreign mission societies, and in multid denominational colonies like New Guinea, Papua, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, they attempted to orchestrate regional divisions among missions in order to minimize denominational competition.<sup>6</sup> Colonial administrations also sought to regulate indigenous religious movements, particularly those that envisioned political futures at odds with those of the government (see, e.g., Kaplan 1995; Keesing 1978–1979). A major mission

push to coastal areas of the western Pacific occurred in the decades around the turn of the twentieth century; what is today PNG was missionized by church personnel who were predominantly British and to a lesser degree German, and what is today Vanuatu was missionized by predominantly French clergy. The large mission churches still central to these societies were shaped by that historical moment, one marked by tensions between high Anglo-Catholicism and low Nonconformist churches that strained taut before the emergence of truly modern fundamentalism. The shock of World War II, with US soldiers promoting their bustling religious marketplace, electrified much of Oceania, as did a 1970s revival which introduced evangelical enthusiasm to mainline churches and gave rise to some of the first local Pentecostal-style churches. Since independence, governments in the western Pacific have taken less paternalistic attitudes than former colonial masters and have not generally sought to “protect” populations from Christian evangelism. But more importantly, these states lack the capacity to provide critical services and infrastructure to citizens, let alone to regulate the influx and circulation of religious ideas. Some government officials in the region have expressed a desire to limit non-Christian missionary work, but the capacity of the state to enforce controls over proselytization is doubtful.

## Overview of the Chapters

Joel Robbins observes in his contribution to this volume that the phrase “Christian politics” is ambiguous, pointing in two directions: first, to political relations between denominations, and second, to “the way Christianity shapes broader political debates about the best way to govern society.” Taken together, the following chapters address politics in both of these senses and across a wide range of social and spatial scales: from the nation (Eriksen, Barker, White, and Tomlinson) to the village (Handman and Robbins) to inter- and even intra-personal levels (Scott and McDougall). As Scott notes, “because denominational categories can in some contexts also be ontological categories, Christian politics can be a dynamic within the person as much as across institutional church lines.”

The first two chapters examine the micropolitics of denominationalism within communities. Courtney Handman discusses a situation in which denominational politics are implicated in struggles over land and control of a mission station that is the conduit of translocal connections. The Garasa area of the Waria Valley, Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea, lies on the border of the Au-Aro and Muniwa regions. An Au-Aro leader, Ulysses, broke from the Lutherans in 1977 to form the New Life Church. Ulysses and his congregation built the Garasa airstrip, which people in the area saw as “the beginning

of a millennial City on the Hill that would transform ... Papua New Guinea as a whole.” A decade and a half later, a Muniwa leader named Mark developed plans for a Bible college. Dissatisfied with New Life’s theological and ritual tendencies, however, Mark established the Reformed Gospel Church in 1994 and aligned his plans with those of Pacific Island Ministries, a mission running an education project in Garasa. With these competing interests, Handman observes, a land dispute became almost inevitable, as “each [church] saw an opportunity for its project to succeed if only ‘their’ side could gain control of the land.” And yet church leaders involved in the dispute are loath to acknowledge that Christian sectarianism drives that dispute, and they act through village proxies in an attempt to keep the land claims and denominational divide seemingly separate. After analyzing the overt politics of land, Handman turns to examine the less obviously political struggles over appropriate sounds of Christian worship. Objections to particular forms of music—singing, drumming, clapping, playing guitars, and brass instruments—are ostensibly objections based on volume, but in fact they offer pointed condemnations of the appropriateness and effectiveness of other groups’ ritual practices. Handman uses the examples of the land dispute and the sounds of worship to complicate Niebuhr’s discussion of the difference between churches and sects. “The question,” she concludes, “is then to ask how local Christians can be embarrassed by the sociality of their Christian forms even as they celebrate these media as the sources of their connection to God.”

In the following chapter, Michael W. Scott analyzes talk of an underground army on the island of Makira in the southeastern Solomons. This secret army is an emblem of Makiran identity, the icon of “a primordial power integral to the island and its truly autochthonous constituents”; it includes people from around the world, but much of its strength and technological sophistication comes from its troops of dwarfish creatures called *kakamora*. Some Makirans see the army in positive terms: it offers the potential to create “heaven on earth,” because it is a force that will restore *kastom* and perhaps “fulfill the destiny of Makira to inaugurate the end times and fight for God at Armageddon.” In contrast to this hopeful vision, a Seventh-day Adventist couple tells Scott that the army—and Makira itself—is Satan’s base and the site where the Antichrist will arrive. Their discourse constitutes a Bakhtinian “internal polemic,” as their talk is “directed toward an ordinary referential object”—if one can call a massive underground army ordinary—while “indirectly striking a blow at the other’s discourse,” namely other denominations’ competing interpretations of this army. Scott traces the consonances and dissonances between the various representations of the Makiran underground in order to analyze broader processes through which an island-wide identity is emerging after a period of intense civil conflict.

The next set of chapters addresses the diverse ways in which Christian denominations shape ideas of the nation and inculcate practices of citizenship. Matt Tomlinson discusses the situation in Fiji, where religion and ethnicity seem to line up neatly, with nearly all indigenous Fijians identifying themselves as Christians and most citizens of Indian descent (Indo-Fijians) identifying themselves as Hindus or Muslims. The nation's largest Christian denomination, the Methodists, supported coups in 1987 and 2000, justifying these coups as efforts to secure indigenous rights. In 2006, however, a new coup led by military commander Voreqe Bainimarama radically shifted the contours of Fijian religious politics: in a jarring instant, many previous coup opponents became coup supporters, and the Methodist Church found itself in the new and uncomfortable position of fighting a coup and defending democracy. Rather than create a Fijian Methodist hegemony, the coups seem to have accelerated movement away from the establishment church and fractured the religious landscape. Tomlinson analyzes an evangelical leader's performance at a public rally sponsored by the police. The speaker, Atunaisa Vulaono of the New Methodist Church, was critical of the mainline Methodists and strongly supportive of Bainimarama's military-led government. Ultimately, Tomlinson argues, what distinguishes the New Methodists from the "regular" Methodists—besides their diametrically opposed stances on the legitimacy of Fiji's government—is their different configurations of the spiritual value and utility of newness. For many Fijian Methodists, newness is inherently suspect; for the New Methodists, befitting their name, newness is inherently positive and is one of the strongest reasons to support the military regime.

In the next chapter, Annelin Eriksen turns to a distinctly Pentecostal kind of "nation making" in Vanuatu. Drawing on alternative theories of the state as well as the colonial and postcolonial history of Vanuatu, Eriksen suggests that projects of governance have never been limited to the state. Indeed, while French and British administrations focused primarily on fostering European commerce, the missions inculcated a profound sense among the broader population that they were the subjects of governance. Eriksen thus counters the widely held assumption that the apparent "failure" of Melanesian states is due to the fact that people have not had experience engaging with statelike forms. She also explores the overlap between secular and theological aspirations for good governance and economic development. Contemporary Pentecostal institutions seem to focus less on worship and prayer and more on what many might consider secular success. The Centreville Christian Centre Inc., for example, runs a "school of the prophets" focused on economics and financial management. Counterintuitively, perhaps, efforts to remake the nation and its citizens according to God's plans are buttressed by secular aid programs that seek partnerships with churches as effective civil society institutions.

Following Eriksen's discussion of churches' "state effects" in Vanuatu, Debra McDougall analyzes present-day Solomon Islands, arguing that even though new sects or religious traditions may fragment rural communities, the incessant evangelism that gives rise to them has also generated a shared public culture that allows citizens of different ethnic and even religious backgrounds to interact with one another. In examining how this generalized evangelical culture has emerged, McDougall pays close attention to the Solomons' civil conflict of 1998–2003 and also to transnational movements of religious innovation, from Billy Graham's historic crusade to Australia and New Zealand in 1959 to the inroads currently being made in the Western Solomons by a charismatic Malaysia-based preacher. Traffic in people, discourse, ideas, and icons makes the Solomons a new crossroads in global Christian journeys, resulting in a situation where "the public sphere of the Solomons is pervaded by Christianity of a type that might strike a secular outsider as extreme." To illuminate the ways this evangelical saturation both unites and divides segments of Solomons society, McDougall describes the experiences of two men: Jeremiah, who has journeyed from church to church in a passionate but never fully satisfying quest, and Akmad, who has converted decisively to Islam but who still speaks of Jesus more than Muhammad and refers to the Bible more than the Quran.

The final three chapters deal most directly with articulations of religion and politics as marked domains—that is, as categories that people configure with explicit reference to each other. John Barker reviews the literature on church and state in Papua New Guinea, a nation with almost 95 percent Christian citizenship that nonetheless bustles with two thousand foreign missionaries from several dozen countries. Their numbers, Barker notes, are swelled by PNG's own homegrown "internal missionaries" who evangelize their fellow citizens. It is a complex denominational landscape where different churches have had distinct zones of influence, as in the Solomons and Vanuatu. Barker argues that anthropologists' enormous overrepresentation in the social scientific literature on PNG has skewed disciplinary understandings toward the local and particular and away from regional and national levels. This is especially unfortunate because in PNG, Christianity is that rare thing: something that most citizens agree on. "Despite differences in theological dogmas, liturgical practices, and moral constraints," Barker observes, "the various churches at base share a common language and a religious commitment that, in turn, provide the diverse groups in PNG with a shared reference point, much more so than appeals to 'traditional' culture" (see also Barker 1990).

In the next chapter, Geoffrey White tracks the articulation of church, chiefs, and state on the island of Santa Isabel since Solomon Islands gained independence in 1978. The relationship between these three domains is described locally as a "tripod," with each leg helping to support the other two,

but in practice it seems to function like a wobbly two-legged stool. The institution of chieftainship is tightly linked to the Anglican church in Santa Isabel, but the relationship between chiefs and the state has been a loose one. Indeed, what is perhaps most remarkable about the situation is the degree to which both the people of Santa Isabel and government representatives have sought to articulate “customary” local leadership with the formal structures of the state and how elusive this articulation has proven. White’s chapter also shows that local, national, and global forces are inextricably entwined, even in apparently remote locales. The latest ritual performance of the triadic relation of church, state, and custom was the 2010 installation of a new paramount chief, a close relative of the first paramount chief, who also just happens to be the assistant bishop of the Diocese of Exeter in England.

In his contribution, Joel Robbins considers the articulation of church and politics for the Urapmin of PNG, focusing on the level of local big man authority. The contrast between Urapmin Pentecostals and Santa Isabel Anglicans is stark: whereas the Anglicans about whom White writes fuse the domains of religion and politics in the very persons of Christian chiefs, Urapmin strive to separate Christianity and the hurly-burly of local politicking. To explain this diarchy—a division that has no analogue in traditional culture—Robbins draws on Niebuhr’s distinction between churches, institutions reconciled with the demands of society to run itself, and sects, which remain critically opposed to society in fundamental ways. Urapmin have adopted a sectarian form of Christianity, but they have adopted it en masse, creating, as Robbins puts it, a “sect as big as society.” Like everyone around them, Urapmin big men are Christians. But much of the work they do—negotiating brideprice, haranguing people—and the personal characteristics they display, such as aggressiveness, are seen as antithetical to Christian virtues and values. Big man politics is thus configured internally as the “outside” against which radically sectarian Christian aspirations are articulated.

Taken together, these chapters make the case that politics in Oceania can only be understood by taking account of Christianity, and vice versa. As we have argued above, the difference that Christianity makes in Oceania is always and inevitably a political one. But rather than create a regional sameness, this has led to a constellation of different outcomes. And even as Christianity has largely maintained its all-pervasiveness, this saturation has in turn become a problem in the opinions of some Oceanic Christians. The resurgent post-World War II evangelical Christianity that has “revived” the faith of established Christians and drawn new converts in the “last places” emphasizes individual belief and the importance of a personal relationship with Jesus. Despite—or perhaps because of—the lack of resonance between this individualism and the more traditional orientation toward relationships or collectivities, many Christians in Oceania are enthusiastically embracing such ideas (Ernst

1994, 2006). Many of these new theologies inspire the development of frames for understanding national and global politics that can otherwise be opaque to ordinary islanders who have relatively limited access to global networks of information. Others suggest that churches and organized religion in general cannot contain “morality,” and that a full-blown revival will affect everyone in the nation—not just members of particular churches—and will transform not only their spiritual lives but also their social, material, and political lives. To track the paths of these rapidly transforming religious ideas and to understand the ways that they cut across local and national political landscapes in “the most solidly Christian part of the world” is the task taken up in the chapters that follow.

## Notes

1. Perhaps this is one reason why, despite the seemingly obvious penetration of Christianity into all aspects of life, it is rarely mentioned in discussions of Oceanic nationalism and the role of the state (see Douglas 2007; Foster 1995). This gap in the literature also follows from foundational scholarship on European nationalism, which considers it to be part of “a package with individualism and secularism, as required by the industrial transformation of an agrarian world” (Van der Veer and Lehmann 1999: 5). The supposed secularity of the European nation is, however, overstated. Van der Veer and Lehman point out that secular nationalism in Europe was shaped by “new and highly original religious organizations” that “proliferated in Britain and Netherlands in the nineteenth century,” and that until the early twentieth century, most Europeans were so thoroughly familiar with biblical narratives that they envisioned political leadership as following Christian models (1999: 7, 10). In this era of “war on terror” when religion seems to motivate conflicts around the world, it is not novel to argue that politics and nationalism involve religion. It is worth noting, however, that this involvement is neither a recent perversion of a once-secular modern nationalism nor a postcolonial aberration of a secular European form.
2. This observation is at the center of several recent critiques of authors who strive to identify the core cultural features of Christianity. Cannell herself begins with Hegel in her critique of scholars who have overemphasized transcendence, immateriality, and internal belief while downplaying the importance of fleshly incarnation. Michael W. Scott (2005) has also called for care in generalizing about Christianity, suggesting in particular that individualism is only one part of a broader tension between the individual and community within Christian tradition. Chris Hann (2007) suggests that the emphasis on rupture that is prominent in anthropological studies of Christianity reflects the disproportionate attention given to fundamentalist Protestantism and points out that little attention has been directed to Catholicism and hardly any to Orthodox Christianity.
3. The widespread use of the Tongan term *lotu* for both Christianity and worship in much of Melanesia is a linguistic trace of the work of islander evangelists. Tongans carried out much of the difficult early evangelical work in Fiji; scores of Samoans, Tongans, and Fijians died in the malarial lowlands of Solomon Islands and Papua New

Guinea. Writing of PNG, John Garrett uses a memorable martial metaphor: “Cook Islanders, as elsewhere in the Pacific, tended to be shock troops of the Christian warfare, Samoans the occupiers and stabilizers” (1982: 211). Seventh-day Adventists from the Western Solomons brought this young sect to the highlands of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islanders of the South Sea Evangelical Church were instrumental in fomenting a region-wide revival in the late 1970s.

4. All of the constitutional texts we quote in this chapter come from the Pacific Islands Legal Information Institute database (2010). For research assistance with church statistics and national constitutions, we thank Liudmila Kirpitchenko.
5. In 1886, a Methodist missionary serving in German Papua New Guinea, R. Heath Rickard, wrote wistfully that in Fiji, “a chief said ‘I am *lotu*’ [that is, ‘I am converting’ or ‘I am Christian’] and hundreds said the same day: ‘So are we’. In New Britain, on the contrary, a so-called chief says he is ‘*lotu*’, but even his wife and children say ‘*we will not*’: therefore we cannot expect here the great things that were witnessed in Fiji” (quoted in Firth 1982: 155–56; emphasis in original).
6. Determined missionaries fought back. For example, Stewart Firth describes how the French Catholic bishop Louis Couppé, of the Sacred Heart Mission in Papua New Guinea, “never resigned himself to official directives which he did not like.” When the German administration divided the Gazelle Peninsula into Methodist and Catholic zones in 1891, he ignored them, kept acquiring land in Methodist territory, and continued “bombarding Berlin with complaints” until the divisions were eliminated less than a decade later (Firth 1982: 142–43).

## References

- Asad, Talal. 1993. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Barker, John, ed. 1990. *Christianity in Oceania: Ethnographic Perspectives*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Bashkow, Ira. 2006. *The Meaning of Whitemen: Race and Modernity in the Orokaiva Cultural World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cannell, Fenella. 2006. “The Anthropology of Christianity.” In *The Anthropology of Christianity*, ed. Fenella Cannell. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Coleman, Simon. 2006. “Materializing the Self: Words and Gifts in the Construction of Charismatic Protestant Identity.” In *The Anthropology of Christianity*, ed. Fenella Cannell. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Comaroff, Jean, and John Comaroff. 1991. *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*, vol. 1. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Dean, Eddie, and Stan Ritova. 1988. *Rabuka: No Other Way*. Sydney: Doubleday.
- Douglas, Bronwen. 2007. “Christian Custom and the Church as Structure in ‘Weak States’ in Melanesia.” In *Civil Society, Religion and Global Governance: Paradigms of Power and Persuasion*, ed. Helen James. London: Routledge.
- Dureau, Christine. 2001. “Recounting and Remembering ‘First Contact’ on Simbo.” In *Cultural Memory: Reconfiguring History and Identity in the Postcolonial Pacific*, ed. Jeanette Marie Mageo. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press.

- Engelke, Matthew. 2007. *A Problem of Presence: Beyond Scripture in an African Christian Church*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Engelke, Matthew, and Matt Tomlinson, eds. 2006. *The Limits of Meaning: Case Studies in the Anthropology of Christianity*. New York: Berghahn.
- Ernst, Manfred. 1994. *Winds of Change : Rapidly Growing Religious Groups in the Pacific Islands*. Suva, Fiji: Pacific Conference of Churches.
- . 2006. *Globalization and the Re-Shaping of Christianity in the Pacific Islands*. Suva, Fiji: Pacific Theological College.
- Errington, Frederick, and Deborah Gewertz. 1994. "From Darkness to Light in the George Brown Jubilee—The Invention of Nontradition and the Inscription of a National History in East New Britain." *American Ethnologist* 21, no. 1: 104–22.
- Etherington, Norman, ed. 2005. *Missions and Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Eves, Richard. 2003. "Money, Mayhem and the Beast: Narratives of the World's End from New Ireland (Papua New Guinea)." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 9, no. 3: 527–47.
- Firth, Stewart. 1982. *New Guinea under the Germans*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.
- Flinn, Juliana. 2010. "A Pollapese Catholicism." Paper presented at the Christian Politics in Oceania workshop, Melbourne, 22–23 July.
- Forman, Charles W. 1982. *The Island Churches of the South Pacific: Emergence in the Twentieth Century*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Foster, Robert J., ed. 1995. *Nation Making: Emergent Identities in Postcolonial Melanesia*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Garrett, John. 1982. *To Live among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania*. Geneva and Suva, Fiji: World Council of Churches and Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific.
- Hann, C. 2007. "The Anthropology of Christianity Per Se." *Archives Europeennes De Sociologie* 48, no. 3: 383–410.
- Hilliard, David. 1966. "Protestant Missions in the Solomon Islands 1849–1942." Ph.D. dissertation, Australia National University, Canberra.
- . 1978. *God's Gentlemen: A History of the Melanesian Mission, 1849–1942*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press.
- Jorgensen, Dan. 2005. "Third Wave Evangelism and the Politics of the Global in Papua New Guinea: Spiritual Warfare and the Recreation of Place in Telefomin." *Oceania* 75, no. 4: 444–61.
- Kaplan, Martha. 1995. *Neither Cargo nor Cult: Ritual Politics and the Colonial Imagination in Fiji*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Keane, Webb. 2007. *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Keesing, Roger M. 1978–1979. "Politico-Religious Movements and Anti-Colonialism on Malaita: Maasina Rule in Historical Perspective." *Oceania* 48, no. 4: 241–61; 49, no. 1: 46–73.
- Keller, Eva. 2006. "Scripture Study as Normal Science: Seventh-Day Adventist Practice on the East Coast of Madagascar." In *The Anthropology of Christianity*, ed. Fenella Cannell. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Kirch, Patrick Vinton, and Roger C. Green. 2001. *Hawaiki, Ancestral Polynesia: An Essay in Historical Anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Lee, Benjamin. 1997. *Talking Heads: Language, Metalanguage, and the Semiotics of Subjectivity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Lini, Walter. 1975. "Should the Church Play Politics?" In *The Pacific Way: Social Issues in National Development*, eds. Sione Tupouniua, Ron Crocombe, and Claire Slatter. Suva, Fiji: South Pacific Social Sciences Association.
- Luria, Keith. 1996. "The Politics of Protestant Conversion to Capitalism in Seventeenth Century France." In *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity*, ed. Peter van der Veer. New York: Routledge.
- Niebuhr, H. Richard. 1929. *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*. New York: H. Holt and Company.
- Pacific Islands Legal Information Institute. 2010. Database information on constitutions, <http://www.pacii.org>, accessed November 25, 2010.
- Pollman, Judith. 1996. "A Different Road to God: The Protestant Experience of Conversion in the Sixteenth Century." In *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity*, ed. Peter van der Veer. New York: Routledge.
- Robbins, Joel. 1998. "On Reading 'World News': Apocalyptic Narrative, Negative Nationalism, and Transnational Christianity in a Papua New Guinea Society." *Social Analysis* 42, no. 2: 103–30.
- . 2004. *Becoming Sinners: Christianity and Moral Torment in a Papua New Guinea Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ruel, Malcolm. 1982. "Christians as Believers." In *Religious Organization and Religious Experience*, ed. J. Davis. London: Academic Press.
- Rutherford, Danilyn. 2006. "The Bible Meets the Idol: Writing and Conversion in Biak, Irian Jaya, Indonesia." In *The Anthropology of Christianity*, ed. Fenella Cannell. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Scott, Joan W. 1991. "The Evidence of Experience." *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 4: 773–97.
- Scott, Michael W. 2005. "'I Was Like Abraham': Notes on the Anthropology of Christianity from the Solomon Islands." *Ethnos* 70, no. 1: 101–25.
- . 2007. *The Severed Snake: Matrilineages, Making Place, and a Melanesian Christianity in Southeast Solomon Islands*. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.
- Steley, Dennis. 1989. "Unfinished: The Seventh-Day Adventist Mission in the South Pacific, Excluding Papua New Guinea, 1886–1986." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Auckland.
- Thomas, Nicholas. 1997. "Melanesians and Polynesians: Ethnic Typifications inside and outside Anthropology." In *In Oceania: Visions, Artifacts, Histories*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Tomlinson, Matt. 2009. *In God's Image: The Metaculture of Fijian Christianity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- van der Veer, Peter, and Hartmut Lehmann. 1999. "Introduction." In *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia*, eds. Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- White, Geoffrey M. 1991. *Identity through History: Living Stories in a Solomon Islands Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- World Christian Database. 2004. <http://www.worldchristiandatabase.org>, accessed 24 November 2010.

Mediating Denominational Disputes  
*Land Claims and the Sound of  
Christian Critique in the Waria Valley,  
Papua New Guinea*

COURTNEY HANDMAN

*Jesus did not organize a church.*  
—E. Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*

*[O]n this rock I will build my church.*  
—Matthew 16:18

In *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (1929), H. Richard Niebuhr describes the cyclic movements between sects and churches that mark the history of American Protestantism. His model of denominationalism has been influential in a number of different cases beyond American Protestantism, particularly for people working in the sociology of religion (see Johnson 1963; Swatos 1998 and references therein). In this model, a group of Christians becomes dissatisfied with a church's organizational form, either because of the ways in which the church has come to exclude certain social categories of people or because of the ways in which the church has come to be simply a bureaucratic organization that has lost its "spirit." This group of dissatisfied Christians then breaks off from the church to form their own group, which Niebuhr calls a "sect." The members of the sect see their voluntaristically formed organization as a utilitarian aid to maintaining the spirit. It is an organization in name only, since the point of the sect is to deny institutionality and to instead provide the minimal conditions necessary for allowing people to worship together.

After the sect-makers reduce the social condition of worship to its barest existence, Niebuhr then describes the Sisyphean tasks they perform to keep the social—the bureaucratic, the institutional, the mundane, the constricting, the arbitrary—as far from their sect as possible. Life gets in the way, though. Sect-formers have children, and the voluntaristic spirit that guided the first generation gives way to the weight of social reproduction, including the need to create systems of education to teach this second generation the stories of

the sect's founding. Niebuhr's story becomes a tale of the slippery slope, as institutions of education beget institutions of role inhabitation (a priestly class is formed, a "normal" member is sociologically identifiable). The sect has become a church, and it can only wait until a segment of the second or later generations become dissatisfied enough to break off and form a new sect themselves.

Greatly inspired by Ernst Troeltsch's *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* and more generally by Max Weber's work, Niebuhr depicts a version of American Protestantism that seems to have taken individualism to an extreme, but one that, for Troeltsch, was expressed in the original gospel ethic. For Troeltsch, "[i]t is clear that individualism of this kind is entirely radical, and that it transcends all natural barriers and differences" (1931 [1912]: 55). In his conclusion, Niebuhr cries out to Christians to form a meta-church, a church that people can congregate in even as they are really members of other churches, a church that can end the cyclic movement between institutionality and individualist freedom of worship that for him defines the church-sect division. As he makes clear in this call to arms, Niebuhr sees real Christianity as only existing in situations where the social world can be excluded and where the sect form that allows for Troeltsch's radical individualism can take hold (in this meta-church form). Everything else—every church—is a reduction of the universality of Christianity to the arbitrary particularity of purely human affairs.

Considered in the light of a number of more contemporary analyses of Christianity (Keane 2007; Engelke 2007; Robbins 2007; see also Latour 1993), it is possible to view Niebuhr's account of schismatic sect formation as one that follows the contours of the many different struggles within modernity to create the context for an individual free from any constraints (with the sense of "constraint" itself fashioned as the domain of the social.) To a certain extent, such a division between Christianity and the social motivates the subject of this volume: the pairing of religion with politics. Following Niebuhr, anything social would count as "politics" and would represent a diminution of Christianity's capacity to bring the individual into God's universalism. Latour (1993)—and following him, Keane (2007)—refer to the work of keeping politics and religion separate in terms of "purification," and both see such projects as central components of modernity. I would like to talk about such projects in this chapter as processes of critique (see also Robbins 2004b). The change in terminology is in part an attempt to use a vocabulary that is more ethnographically focused. Guhu-Samane Christians in the Waria Valley area of Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea, see their denominational disputes as different processes through which they are able to criticize the forms of worship that have emerged since their initial introduction to Christianity through Lutheran missionaries in the 1910s.

But does finding an example of Niebuhr's critical (or purificatory) Christianity in Papua New Guinea mean that we are simply forced to see the ten-

sions of denominationalism as coming from the same source in all cases? Does Niebuhr's explanation alone suffice? And how can we explain the many moments within denominationalism when Christians seem to celebrate the sociality and even the politics of their Christian organization? Here I want to engage with the emerging literature on religion and media or mediation (Engelke 2007; Eisenlohr 2009; Hirschkind 2006; Meyer 2006; de Vries 2001; and also Keane 2007). Rather than focusing on the idea of the individual versus the social, this literature engages with the problems of making immediate a transcendent God. Here, then, is a way to see the variations in Niebuhr's problem: how do local Christians perceive different media of the social? Do they see the social as in all cases antithetical to Christianity? My answer to the second question is no, not for Guhu-Samane and not for Christians anywhere (including Niebuhr).

In this chapter I examine Guhu-Samane denominational disputes from two different perspectives. First, I look at a land dispute at the Garasa airstrip and the adjoining station, where two different denominations fought for control of the area, as examples of local versions of Niebuhr's sense that "politics" forces a reduction of Christian universalism. Embarrassed by their engagement in the worldly domain of land tenure, Guhu-Samane Christians seemed to recognize that "real" Christians would not be concerned with local social issues in the same way. Second, I investigate Guhu-Samane analyses of music and sound, which provokes questions that figure centrally in much of the discourse of denominational fighting. Specifically, can traditional drums be played in church services? Or are non-local Western guitars and tambourines the only appropriate instruments through which to create a proper connection to the divine? How do the moments when drums (or guitars) are celebrated fit into a larger "semiotic ideology" in which forms of sociality are supposed to be excluded? That is to say, when is "politics" not merely "politics"?

I analyze these two moments in two different ways. Where the first moment, seen through a Niebuhrian perspective, suggests a distinct parallelism between the different denominations as two groups equally fighting for control of a piece of land, the second moment suggests a sharp asymmetry between the churches in terms of their differing senses of the origins of Christian authority and histories of critical engagement with them. Understanding the history and structure of these perspectives is crucial to seeing the differences between them. In moments where denominations are compared synchronically, the media of disputes in Guhu-Samane areas (in this case, parcels of land) seem to be opaque barriers to religious practice. In moments where the formation of a single denomination is understood historically, the media of disputes in Guhu-Samane areas (in this case, musical forms) seem instead to be the paths to proper worship. In the former case, the localized land dispute makes the denominational leaders feel themselves to be too much "of this world"; in

the latter case, the sounds of Christianity actually transform the location and locatability of Christianity into an aural medium of worship.

In both cases, we are dealing with “the political” in the sense that both engage with questions of authority and control in this world, even if the goal is to transform or otherwise alter one’s relationship to this world. We can focus on the aspects of sociality that produce, for better or worse, a sense of locality. This sense of locality is a particularly fraught issue in postcolonial Papua New Guinea, where people are often troubled by their relationship to Christianity, the religion of Western white colonizers (Robbins 1998). And while a land claim seems an obvious choice for a discussion of locality, songs are not such obvious elements. However, as will be made clear in the second half of this chapter, songs are as much located, owned, material objects of genealogical importance as land is. But even with these similar stakes in the politics of locality, land and songs are treated vastly differently. The question is then to ask how local Christians can be embarrassed by the sociality of their Christian forms even as they celebrate these media as the sources of their connection to God.

### **Scene I: Garasa and the politics of land**

The Garasa airstrip was opened in the early 1980s, and as is often the case in Papua New Guinea, it has several different origin stories. The Council (a local government representative) petitioned for money from the state to build the airstrip in order to serve the Middle Waria Valley, which at that point was only served by the airstrip at Garaina station, roughly four hours’ walk upstream from the Garasa site. Compared to other areas of Papua New Guinea, a four-hour walk is not terribly long to reach a major transportation node. However, the people of the Waria Valley had long been promised a road into their area—a road that still does not exist but that is annually promised anew by politicians jockeying for support—and the airstrip seemed a consolation prize. With hopes for local coffee production then at a high point, the state found the money for the airstrip.

At the same time, New Life Church, a sectarian product of a 1977 Holy Spirit revival during which many Christians broke off from the (post)colonial Lutheran church, started to actually do the work of building the airstrip. The leader of the church, Ulysses, claimed that he had been told by God (rather than the Council) to build it.<sup>1</sup> He had his church members from his base at Au village move to the airstrip for several weeks and work on its construction. According to Ulysses, everybody laughed at them, “just like with Noah,” and the naysayers taunted them by saying that no plane would ever come to the airstrip. Working at a fast clip, the airstrip was completed over several weeks,

consecrated with prayer, and became the miraculous landing site of a plane the very next morning. According to many New Life members who told this story, a befuddled white pilot exited his plane, map in hand, and exclaimed that he didn't know there was an airstrip there. From that point on, the regional airlines serving this area of Papua New Guinea—including TalAir, North Coast Aviation, and MAF—all had or still have flights in and out of Garasa. For Ulysses, this was the beginning of a millennial City on the Hill that would transform the Guhu-Samane communities and Papua New Guinea as a whole.

With the airstrip in place, other ventures soon followed. J. B. Martin, a Lae-based businessman, opened a trade store and attempted to get another of his unsuccessful cattle projects going on land next to the airstrip. In the early 1990s, Pacific Island Ministries (PIM), a mission organized by two former SIL translators, began an education project at Garasa as well.<sup>2</sup> As with the airstrip itself, the Garasa Bible College (as it was later known) has both a local and a more extended origin. A man named Mark, who was Ulysses' main rival for leadership in the post-Lutheran revivalist movement, started to collect money to build the college at the semi-weekly markets held at Garasa. As he tells the history, Mark had already bought books and pencils when Neal Kooyers and the PIM organization arrived with Christian educational plans of their own. For Mark, the Bible College would be an organizing space from which Guhu-Samane and other Papua New Guineans would be able to engage with a wider theological world.

Already, then, Garasa was crowded, if mostly with aspirations. With plans that ranged from the millennial to the capitalist to the pastoral, Garasa was pushed in a number of directions from several different sources (Ulysses, Mark, PIM, and Mr. Martin). With so many claims to use of the land, a dispute was almost inevitable. Before getting to that dispute, though, I want to lay out two other aspects of local land politics and the relationship they had to the authority of the churches organized around Ulysses and Mark: historical connections and “tribal” affiliations.

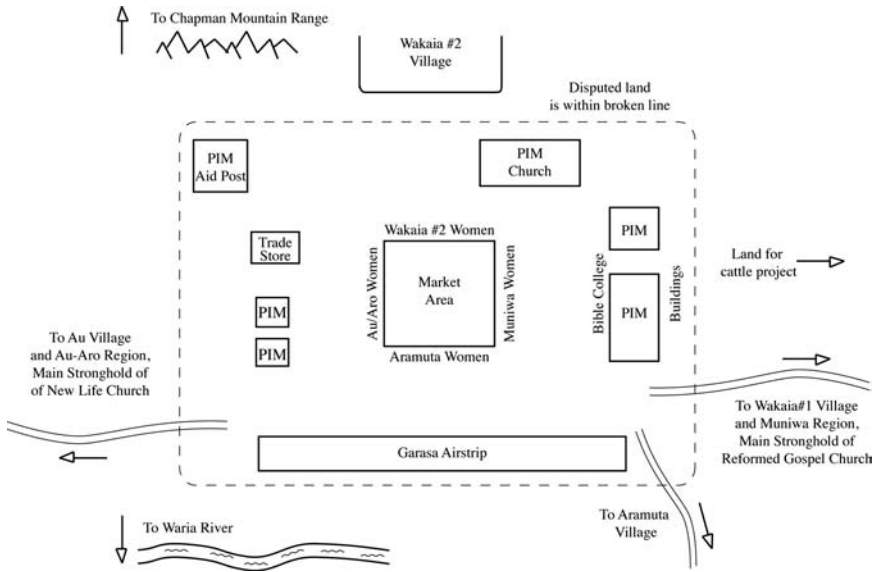
First, Garasa is a border zone between two different regions of traditional political importance. As I have discussed elsewhere (chapter two of Handman 2010b), Guhu-Samane social and political groups along the Waria Valley can be thought of as having a hub-and-spoke organization that centers on men's houses that were built for major feasts in the distant past. Given the tensions inherent in a matrilineal but patrilocal system, villages are prone to schism, and each of the major feast sites is surrounded by villages that previously broke off from it. The boundaries of each such hub-and-spoke grouping are of course fluid, and people often speak of a region as having several boundaries. For example, the leader of Titio village, where I lived, spoke of Muniwa region as having a “number one” (*namba wan*, TP) boundary, a “number two” boundary, a “number three” boundary, etc.<sup>3</sup> The order of the boundaries reflects the

changing shape of Muniwa (or any other region) as new schismatic villages are formed.

Garasa is on one of these later boundaries, forming a dividing line between the Muniwa and the Au-Aro regions. The last undisputed Muniwa village from this direction is known as “Wakaia,” and in an attempt to present the village next to Garasa as having a Muniwa origin, it was named “Bakadza Khata” (lit. “Wakaia’s child,” using a downstream dialect that replaces /w/ with /b/ and /y/ with /dz/) and more often simply referred to as “Wakaia #2” (the earlier Wakaia became “Wakaia #1”). However, there is also a large contingent of people living at Wakaia #2 who come from the Au-Aro region. They maintain their allegiance to their place of origin by referring to themselves with a “tribe” (*traib*, TP) name that comes from the primary Au-Aro men’s house. “Tribe” names refer to organizations of men in men’s houses. A single men’s house could have different tribe names affiliated with it, but these are sometimes spatialized into different segments of a men’s house. That is to say, each “door” (*tete sirasira*, GS) of the men’s house is named for a different “tribe.”<sup>4</sup> Given the almost total destruction of men’s houses, many contemporary Guhu-Samane do not know what their “tribe” is. Nevertheless, partisans vying for Wakaia #2 to be claimed as a part of the Au-Aro region held that they were members (or descendants) of the Neepo tribe, which was paired with the Au tribe at the main Au men’s house. Two different modes of claiming land, then, were at work in the emerging dispute over Garasa, one based on a historical connection to Muniwa territories and the other based on the tribal affiliations that anchored the former men’s house at Au.

This organization of land and regions is played out not only in the primarily male realm of land politics but also in the everyday practices of the women who use the Garasa station during market days. The central Garasa market is formed as a square around which women sit and display their garden produce and their second-hand and store-bought goods. Women sit in groups according to their region of residence, so Muniwa women sit along one side, Au-Aro women sit opposite them, Wakaia #2 women sit perpendicular to these two, and women from Arumuta and other villages near the Waria River sit along the final side. Wakaia #2 women thus are positioned between the two competing sides of Muniwa and Au-Aro (see Map 1.1).

In addition to this organization of traditional land politics, local people were also starting to develop competing church authorities. In the early 1990s, a number of people started to be concerned by some of the ritual practices of New Life church. To these budding sectarians, New Life no longer seemed to be simply acting against the colonial Lutheran church’s liturgical strictures, but to be bending the Gospel too much to their own particular desires for wealth, release from work, and the creation of a New Heaven and New Earth at Garasa. For these dissidents, the old church was too local, both in its as-



Map 1.1. Garasa area, Waria Valley, Papua New Guinea. Map by Kevin Henner.

pirations and in its ritual forms, which seemed to verge on the syncretic. In 1994 the sectarians officially broke from New Life to form Reformed Gospel Church, led by Mark. As Niebuhr might have expected, this new sect saw itself as constituting a proper church unencumbered by the local “social” goals and aspirations of the older church.

New Life and Reformed Gospel were soon at odds over the use of the Garasa land. Ulysses, leader of New Life, is from Au-Aro, and Mark, leader of Reformed Gospel, is from Muniwa. Each church was perfectly poised to have its competing claims to Garasa become a part of the land dispute, since each saw an opportunity for its project to succeed if only “their” side could gain control of the land. As a parochial problem of land tenure, the two churches fit into an already existing structure of opposed political regions of land control.

However, there is another more specifically Christian aspect of this story. Both Mark and Ulysses were important members of the SIL translation project that had resulted in a 1975 New Testament translation into Guhu-Samane language. This translation is locally understood as the precipitating cause of the 1977 Holy Spirit revival out of which New Life—and subsequently Reformed Gospel—were formed. One of the important contributions to Guhu-Samane Christianity was the SIL translators’ efforts to construct and promulgate a sense of Guhu-Samane ethno-linguistic identity. As with other kinds of nation-forming projects, SIL procedure centers on creating a miniature print-capitalist nation at the level of the ethno-linguistic entities the SIL works with

(Handman 2007). As described in Anderson's influential account (1991; see also Silverstein 2000), Bibles, dictionaries, and other mostly Christian books circulated widely in the Waria Valley, as did local SIL helpers who started literacy schools all across the Guhu-Samane speaking areas. Mark and Ulysses were two such helpers who taught in and supervised these schools during the later years of the SIL project, which lasted from 1957 to 1975.

The 1977 revival was experienced as an encounter with the Holy Spirit made possible specifically through the translation of God's revelation into Guhu-Samane language. As a result, the churches that formed out of the revival have likewise worked to maintain an intimate association with Guhu-Samane, albeit in different ways (see Handman 2010a). One such manifestation of this linguistic legacy is that both New Life and Reformed Gospel churches see the universe of their influence as minimally determined by the boundaries of the Guhu-Samane linguistic community (and maximally including Papua New Guinea and the rest of the world). While the Au-Aro region is the stronghold of New Life, it is by no means the only area in which they operate. Reformed Gospel is mainly focused in Muniwa, but it too stretches into other regions, including Au-Aro. In contrast to the local politics of land, where Muniwa and Au-Aro partisans fought to extend the boundaries of their respective regions to include Wakaia #2 and the Garasa airstrip, New Life and Reformed Gospel focused on Garasa as a central node through which a larger Christian world could be constructed for Guhu-Samane communities as a whole.

How did the churches engage in the land dispute? The Garasa airstrip was a central position from which Ulysses' and Mark's visions for Guhu-Samane Christianity were to play out, either in forming a millennial City on the Hill or in being the passage point through which external Christian knowledge could be disseminated through the Bible College. Thus New Life and Reformed Gospel could have acted as churches in the fight for the land, presenting themselves as groups capable of effecting social transformation. Instead, Ulysses and Mark and their respective sects engaged in the land dispute by framing it largely in terms of questions about the origins of the Wakaia #2 villagers and their histories of land tenure over the adjacent Garasa land. As one man, Daro, put it to me during my field research, both Ulysses and Mark acted through village proxies, and the entire question of church control over Garasa played out in terms of a village-based politics-of-land-as-usual.

Mark had the institutional upper hand in this fight, as one of his parishioners, Kevin, was the local land mediator assigned by the state. In Daro's account and others, the Au-based people who aligned themselves with Neepo tribe had longer matrilineal genealogies. As Daro has said at other occasions, land claims should not even be attempted unless one has knowledge of eight generations of women connected to a particular piece of land. The Muniwa-based villagers of Wakaia #2 only had five generations. But the land mediator

was invested in the Bible College and in Mark's continued presence in Muniwa, and he determined that the land should go to the Muniwa-based Wakaia #2 people. Daro and others were well aware at the time of the bias involved in this. Kevin, the land mediator, and the rest of the Wakaia #2 disputants were acting on behalf of Mark, while Ulysses was the motivating force behind the Neepo tribe claims.

The dispute did not end there, however. Although Ulysses had little connection to the state at the time of Kevin's decision in favor of Wakaia and Mark's Reformed Gospel Church, one of his daughters later married a Guhu-Samane man who was the deputy governor of Morobe Province until 2008. Ulysses worked with his son-in-law (a move common in matrilineal systems) to try to regain control of Garasa through a plan to move the district headquarters from the Garaina station to Garasa. However, on the very day when the implementation of this plan was to start by having Morobe Governor Luther Wenge officially declare Garasa a "base-camp" (a bureaucratic first step towards making it a District HQ), some town-based residents of Wakaia #2 had a cease and desist order put in place. The plane carrying the governor, alas, came with the court order instead. As of 2008, the case remained at the land claims courts in Lae City.

Mark and Ulysses both expressed to me a certain discomfort with having had to play out this claim in terms of village politics with their attendant highly local genealogies and "tribal" histories. With both men setting their sights on higher goals, neither was particularly satisfied that they had to be shadowy players in a dispute seemingly based in the villages. Mark in particular prides himself on abstaining from land claims in most cases. For Mark, the necessary multiplicity of stories about land should in no way be confused with the singular truth of the Bible. Stories about land mutate over time and are understood to be partisan. Pastors and church leaders should refuse to take part in them lest the Bible come to be seen as a partisan, partial depiction of man's relationship to God.

Forced into a village-based land claim for the Garasa station, both Ulysses and Mark ended up looking like partisan players in ways that Mark in particular had hoped to avoid. Without a local authorizing structure through which churches could take part in land claims, the church leaders were required to be background movers within the village-based parties. If the social necessarily diminishes the universality of Christianity (even if that universality is, at the most local level, an ethno-linguistic universality), then the "political" machinations of Ulysses and Mark are an embarrassment both to themselves and to many outside observers like Daro. Pushed into the realm of the political, both churches seem to have equally abandoned the spiritual realm, embracing what is locally termed the "body side" of life (*sait bilong bodi*, TP; *samaho neta*, GS) in contrast to the "spirit side" (*sait bilong spirit*, TP; *gisihoneta*, GS).

Embarrassed by their engagement with the social, Ulysses and Mark approach a Niebuhrian perspective on the illegitimacy of locating the worldly in Christian communal life. Both churches, in this perspective, exhibit the institutional failures of spirit that would make them ripe for new sectarian schism. Indeed, new churches are constantly appearing in the Waria Valley, although often through the importation of national and international denominations rather than through schisms of local forms. Yet it is not enough simply to characterize these two churches by their worldly, “body-side” engagements with land. They were still trying to create Christian spaces at Garasa, and they still sometimes revel in the institutions and practices of their worship.

How, then, does this happen? Why are they sometimes embarrassed by the social and sometimes ready to celebrate it? In the next section I will examine one such domain—the soundscapes of worship—in which local sociality is trumpeted.

## Scene II: Drums, guitars, and the sounds of Christianity

Sunday mornings and weekday evenings in the Waria Valley are generally filled with the sounds of Christian practice. But depending upon which Guhu-Samane village you are in and which denomination is present, those sounds might be radically different.<sup>5</sup> Danielle, the wife of Daro (whose comments were featured in the previous section), tells a story involving a radical misunderstanding of the different denominational music traditions of Christianity. Several years ago, Danielle was traveling with a group of women to a village farther upstream from her normal sphere of social relations. Left on their own in the house that they would be sleeping in, the women were excited to suddenly hear loud drumming coming from further down the village line of houses. After some discussion, the women got up to check out the *singsing* (TP, dance) practice that was going on, since dances and their practice sessions are exciting social events around which everyone congregates. Following the sound of the drums, the women drew closer to the commotion. But instead of coming upon a men’s house where performers would be practicing, Danielle and her friends landed in the middle of a New Life church service. Embarrassed for themselves and for the New Life members making so much noise as to be mistaken for a *singsing*, they quickly rushed back to their house. Years later, during my fieldwork, this was still an important story for Danielle to tell when she spoke against the New Life churches. Unlike New Life’s inappropriate use of many drums, Danielle said proudly, her Lutheran church only used a few, and used them to greater effect (I return to the New Life and Lutheran uses of drums below).

In contrast to the previous section, where the engagement with the social was a point of politics-as-usual and Christianity-in-decline, I want to examine

churches during those moments when they are celebrating the very forms of sociality (e.g., the use of a more appropriate “few” drums to New Life’s “many”) that are supposed to be anathema to Protestantism (Keane 2007). Keane argues that there is a specific Protestant “semiotic ideology” that downplays codified social forms—like the conventions of drumming—because these forms are seen by Christians as the locus of personal constraint. When Sumbanese Calvinists note that their eyes remain closed during prayer, they want this to point to the ways in which their prayers come from an authentic, personal “inside” rather than the disparaged, external, and therefore inauthentic prayer books of the Catholics (Keane 2007: 2). Engelke’s (2007) “Christians who don’t read the Bible” have taken the desire to remove the social to such an extreme that they do not even authorize the written canon of Christianity as capable of producing a relation with God. Guhu-Samane sometimes make similar comments to those provided by Keane and Engelke, and through these comments one could locate them within Keane’s semiotic ideology that puts authenticity, personal freedom, and Christian commitment within the individual self rather than in the external (read: social) world. Indeed, the story of Mark’s and Ulysses’ embarrassment about their behavior in the Garasa land dispute—as well as Niebuhr’s entire cyclic story of sect-church formation—should be read in these terms. Mark, for instance, once expressed his desire for Guhu-Samane Christians to practice as he imagined Americans do. In any American family, the father, the mother, and each of the children go to a different church, and nobody pushes them to be a family in their Christianity. Instead, they are all perfect individuals, worshipping and practicing on their own outside of any other mediating form, even that of the nuclear household.

However, as much as Guhu-Samane Christians work to exclude the social world from their worship practice (and thus employ the Protestant semiotic ideology that Keane identifies), they also celebrate moments of the social as representing the very capacity for right Christian practice. I focus in this section on how sounds and soundscapes constitute the medium through which these celebrations happen. In particular, I focus on the ways in which soundscapes offer Guhu-Samane Christians a way to critically engage with the history of their connections to global Christianity and thus to what they think of as “correct” Christian practice. These connections are transformed into the medium of sound and thus made available for use in events such as Sunday services. They remain political in their critique of authority and the proper construction of the self, particularly given (rather than in spite of) the fact that they are Christian throughout.

This transformational process in which music becomes a critical form of worship is a kind of “transduction” (see Silverstein 2003; Helmreich 2007). Silverstein’s use of the metaphor of energy transduction importantly insists upon the “inefficiencies” of translation across languages or, in this case, media

(Silverstein 2003: 83). It is a metaphor that nicely points to the ways in which translations across media will necessarily orient people to certain aspects of the message that may not necessarily be present in the original medium. In this case, critical histories of denominational disputes transduced into the medium of sound will take on new foci, like heat or coolness, that are not necessarily central in the medium of the original debate, which was more focused on issues of localization as such.

As was hinted at in Danielle's story, drums emit a powerfully affect-laden sound for many people in the Waria Valley, capable of calling up memories that can lead listeners into trance-like states. This was made clear to me when I went to a major dance event in 2005. Basebo, whose long-dead, politically important husband had been the owner of several dances, was almost unrecognizable as she circled the dance ground. One of her sons had revived her husband's prized dance for the celebration, and she was participating in a *singing* that had not been performed since her husband's death. Usually slowed by arthritic joints, Basebo was suddenly dancing like a spry young woman, a look of intense concentration on her face. As I came up to the parade ground where the dance was happening, everyone in the audience pointed Basebo out to me, noting the total change that had taken her over. As her friends and kin said, the spirit of the drums had taken over her (*spirit bilong kundu i kisim em*, TP), the drums seemingly transporting her to memories of her long-dead husband and his dances. Much like bird songs among Kaluli as described by Feld (1990), drums are deeply evocative of specific social relations for Guhu-Samane (see also Gell 1996).

This emotional connection to sound is not limited to the instruments of traditional dance. Guhu-Samane often use songs of different kinds to mark ritual moments, whether these moments are happening under the banner of Christianity, traditionalism, or state-sponsored celebrations (e.g., Independence Day festivities). Particularly for adults who wish to look fondly on their youth, the major festivals of Guhu-Samane life—from traditional feasts that ended in the 1970s to the brief heyday of string band dance parties in the 1980s to the current era of yearly church tent revivals—are the musical backgrounds to stories of flirtations and other semi-taboo activities. Music not only evokes these memories, but it is thought of as an aphrodisiac (as well as love magic) that feeds the small intrigues of major multivillage events. Departures are marked through song as well. Farewell events for people off to town or for anthropologists heading back home tend to include renditions of the leaving person's favorite songs. Likewise, the dead are celebrated with all night pre-burial wakes at which songs are used to evoke the life of the deceased. In their more combative moods, several of my Guhu-Samane friends enjoyed relating their participation in a dance competition in Port Moresby, where their intricate dance moves and songs far outclassed what were in their eyes the

mind-numbingly boring and repetitious performances of the much-hated “Chimbus,” the local coverall term for all Highland New Guineans; overall, the dance metonymically represented proof of Guhu-Samane superiority in their eyes. Most importantly, in the Christian context, the strength of the congregation as a whole is often judged by the quality and power of its singing (see Robbins 2004a: 262). When songs are sung well, and when many people participate in the singing, the church has spirit. Christians all seem to have their own favorite songs that they request during especially moving services.

A list of moments at which songs are central to Guhu-Samane memory and social practice could go on and on, but hopefully my point about the importance of songs to specific local social relations can be made with just these brief comments. With this background in mind, I want to go on to look at three different Guhu-Samane denominations, each of which has been in critical dialogue with the others. Lutherans, New Lifers, and Reformed Gospel members each participate in different Christian soundscapes of practice that index historical engagements with Christian others and the processes of localization that they had to undergo. In this history of engagement transduced through sound, we can see a different aspect of the Protestant “semiotic ideology” that Keane (2007), Engelke (2007), and Robbins (2001) use so productively.

### *New Life’s noisy Christianity*

In the later years of the SIL New Testament project, the main American translator, Ernie Richert, produced a booklet of Guhu-Samane songs whose words had been given Christian meanings. Part of this Christianizing project involved transforming these songs from being objects of personal ownership into being objects for universal Guhu-Samane ethno-linguistic use. “Traditional” songs are always owned by specific individuals (men like Basebo’s husband), who may come to own them through a number of routes. They can come to a man during a dream, they can be composed during one’s waking life, they can be songs that are purchased from one’s mother’s brother or a similar kinsman, or they can be purchased from other groups. The middle of the twentieth century saw a great influx of new songs into the Guhu-Samane repertoire, as many young men went down to the coast on labor contracts and lived with a wide variety of coastal ethnic groups whose songs they learned and paid for (see chapter three of Handman 2010b; see also Harrison 2000 on Melanesian “borrowing” cultures). Returning to their villages, these new owners of songs would teach them to other men for major ritual events. Because male matrilineal kin are often spatially far away from each other, men can also become the local owners of songs that are more often performed farther away. Each region (in the sense used in the previous section) might have a different owner of a given song.

During the early 1970s, Ernie Richert assembled a large number of male song owners at his home base on the Kipu Lutheran mission station and arranged to have these songs “translated” into Christian terms (although still in Guhu-Samane language). Given the particular histories of song ownership and inheritance that Richert was dealing with, there are several different versions of particular songs that were “translated” a few times. Richert identified these by village as well as by individual owner. The songs—in either their traditional or Christian forms—were often as short as three lines long, with each song repeated many times during a single performance of it. Figure 1.1 is a photograph taken of the booklet of these songs that one Lutheran couple had kept from their time working with the Richerts. The Aramuta and Kapiso versions are at the top and bottom of the photo, as well as three versions that originated from neighboring ethnic groups (Gazili/Gaziri and Gunimaipa) of the Madzame song. Lyrics from Madzame Gunimaipa (the fourth song) can be glossed as follows: *The spirit takes us, and we all get up, it takes us and we get up oo ee / Get up and life is born inside us oo ee / Born and God gives us power gives us power oo ee.*

Richert was trying to create a local corpus of songs that retained Guhu-Samane singing styles and melodies, and each of these songs was to be accom-

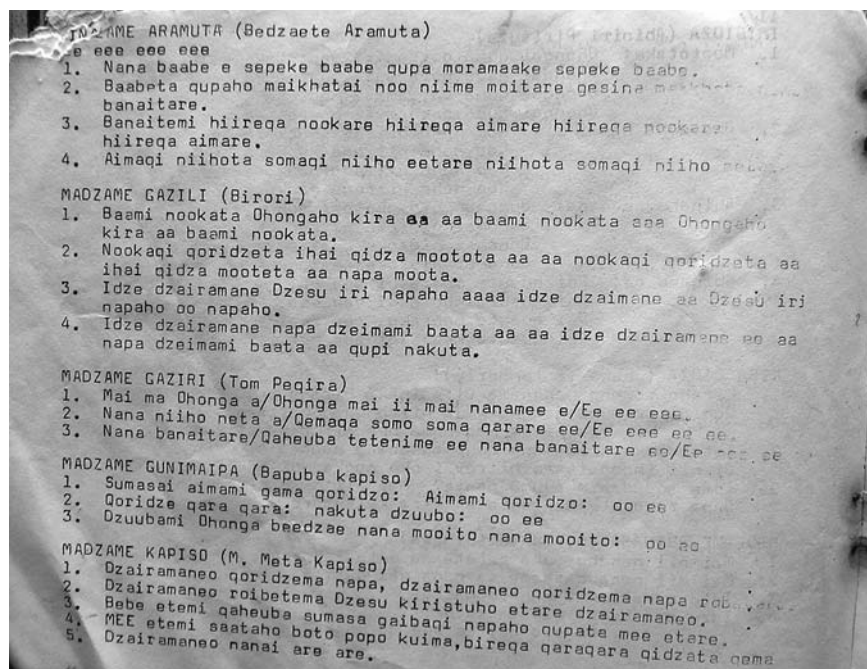


Figure 1.1. Ernie Richert’s booklet of Guhu-Samane songs “translated” into Christian terms.

panied by traditional *kundu* drums that were otherwise used during *singsings*.<sup>6</sup> Richert here distanced himself from what was then the Lutheran practice of having Christians sing a capella from published hymnbooks. Although Lutherans had experimented with local instruments in other places, Lutheran songs were still renditions of primarily German hymns. Richert's emphasis on local song styles was a marked contrast with the Lutheran norm. Note that as this was prior to the 1977 Holy Spirit revival, the Lutherans still had a denominational monopoly on Guhu-Samane Christianity. Richert had a coterie of young men to whom he was teaching new and more evangelical Christian worship practices, but these men were all officially still Lutherans.

After Richert's departure in 1975 and after the Holy Spirit revival began in 1977, these young men started leading church services that were—in contrast to the Lutheran services—extremely noisy. Not only did they perform the new Guhu-Samane-style songs with loud *kundu* drum accompaniment, but people shouted prayers and “amen” at an incredible volume. Kurudza, Mark's wife, remembers that when the revival first started, she sided with the Lutheran hierarchy in thinking that holding one's hands up and loudly shouting “amen” was a sin. It was only later, she said, when she learned that shouting “amen” was just another way to praise God. As Kurudza's comment indicates, the increase in volume coming from both the participants' mouths and their drums struck many people at the start of the revival as contrary to proper Christian practice.

Soon after the revival started, local Lutherans took the revivalists to court. Although the impetus for the court case had to do with the damage done to church walls during particularly violent moments of being caught in the spirit and kicking and flailing around, the exaggerated sounds and exaggerated movements of the revivalists were all of a piece from the point of view of the more sedate, liturgically oriented Lutherans. After the main revivalists were jailed for several days at Garaina station awaiting their trial (which ended with the revivalists having to pay fines for the damages), they were forced to leave the Lutheran church. This group of jailed revivalists—including both Ulysses and Mark—eventually became the core leadership for New Life church and its later permutation, Reformed Gospel.

As Danielle's story from the beginning of this section suggests, New Lifers are still very noisy, and they still use *kundu* drums as central elements of their church practice, so much so that Danielle and her friends thought they were hearing the first rumblings of a *singsing* practice rather than a church service. At every New Life service that I attended, several men held drums and used them to keep time for the songs, and they would also beat the drums when the congregation frequently applauded. The Western courtesy of applause (and for that matter, handshakes; see Robbins 2004a) has taken Papua New Guinea by storm.<sup>7</sup> Not only do people applaud after a speaker has finished a sermon,

prayer, or even an announcement, but the service leader will frequently just tell people between songs or other moments to “clap your hands for Jesus” (*paitim han long Jisas*, TP). This is not simply an expression of thanks, but an integral act of producing the joyous noise that realizes God’s presence at worship services. Although the applause tends to be loudest at New Life events, given the drum accompaniment and New Life parishioners’ particularly loud cries of “amen,” applause is a major sonic feature of Christianity across all of the denominations whose services I attended.

New Life members are well aware that the volume of their worship has become a point on which other Christians criticize them (see Danielle’s comments above), but they insist that this is part of the revival tradition that marks the moment when the Holy Spirit came to Guhu-Samane people through their own language and their own church leaders. Ernie Richert prepared the way for the Holy Spirit to come with his translations of both the New Testament and the local songs. The revival that followed soon after Richert’s departure was a moment when Christianity appeared in local terms and was the moment when Guhu-Samane went from being missionized to being missionizers themselves. The noise that their Christianity produces celebrates the fact that they were finally hearing God’s voice just as God was finally hearing them after too many years of tepid communication via the Lutheran church and its liturgy. New Life members index this history of audibility and create a media-tized presence with God in their loud worship practices, allowing the voice of the Holy Spirit to be transductively revealed through drums, local songs, and loud shouts.

### *Lutherans and the gendering of drums*

New Life is not the only church to use *kundu* drums in services. But as Danielle and many others frequently stressed, Lutherans only use “a few” drums in contrast to New Life’s booming choruses of many loud drums. However, whenever I attended any New Life events, I found that only two or three people were holding drums, while at Lutheran services there might be as many as seven or eight drummers. Rather than a difference in numbers or in volume, I soon realized that the bright line test to distinguish New Life from Lutheranism was the gender of the drummers. At New Life services, drummers are male and female; at Lutheran services drummers are only female. How did gender come to be understood as a matter of volume?

When Ernie Richert started to “translate” local songs into Christian hymns to be accompanied by *kundu* drums, a new question emerged for local practitioners: could drums that are used in “heathen” *singsings* also be used in a Christian context? At first, the Lutherans defended a drum-free worship service against the revivalists, but eventually drums came to be incorporated

into the liturgy as part of a national transformation of Lutheran practice. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of PNG (ELC-PNG) wanted to localize both the pastorate and the liturgy more fully in the 1980s, and allowing local instruments was one way to do this. But given the local history of animosity between New Life and the Lutherans, some distinctive characteristic had to be found to distinguish these two denominations. At first, the Lutherans thought that Christians could have two different drums: one for church services and another for *singsings*, a distinction of the body side (*sait bilong bodi*) and spirit side (*sait bilong spirit*) put into a musical idiom (where these two terms are used to gloss secular versus gospel music, respectively). Eventually, though, Lutherans made drumming in church a specifically female task. Men might have other instruments—for example, guitars are prominent in Lutheran services and are exclusively played by men—but only women use drums in Lutheran services.

The distinction between the “loud” male drumming of New Life and the “quieter” female drumming of the Lutherans can be understood in terms of the characteristics of traditional dances. In almost every dance that I witnessed, men held and beat drums during these performances while women carried other kinds of decorative elements in their hands that they often moved around in time to the music. Also, men danced in circles or rows towards the center of the dance space, while women danced at the peripheries, either circling the men (often moving in the opposite direction of the men) or at the ends of the rows in which the men danced.

This male : center :: female : periphery structure also held in the ownership and teaching of dances. For example, when Basebo’s husband brought a new dance to the Waria Valley after his labor contract on the coast, he taught the dance to other men in a men’s house. Until the dance was officially unveiled at a performance, the men remained hidden inside the walls of the men’s house learning the precise lyrics, melody, drum beats, and dance steps. In the past, when men’s houses were encircled by high fences, this secrecy was an even more pointed aspect of the practice sessions. Men describe practice sessions as intense projects of trying to achieve highly precise, technical performances of intricate coastal dances that require great bodily control. The Guhu-Samane sense of superiority over “Chimbus” mentioned above partly stems from the intensity of these practices and the exacting bodily movements demanded by dance owners. (What are the Chimbus doing during practice, Guhu-Samane ask, if their dancing just consists of bouncing up and down?) In addition to male dancing practices, the owner of the dance deputized his wife to teach certain peripheral parts of the dance to a group of women, often the wives of the co-sponsors of the performance. These women also practiced, but obviously did so outside of the men’s house, often standing directly outside the men’s

house to practice their steps in public to the drum beats of the practicing men hidden within the house itself.

As I have discussed elsewhere (chapter four of Handman 2010b), men's houses and the men living in them were considered "hot," in contrast to women and uninitiated children, who were "cold." The "heat" of a traditional men's house was an index of a group's capacity for fighting, for power, and for the forms of control required by things like dances. Given the postconversion dissolution of men's houses as the primary centers of politicoreligious importance, many men in the Waria Valley take it as axiomatic that as Christians, they are now "cold." "Coolness" is indeed seen as a key Christian virtue, and one of the very first converts to Christianity around 1930 took the name "Ke-baita" (GS, made cool; *keba-* 'cool,' *i-* causative, *ta-* past tense) during baptism as a sign of this transformation.

How the Lutherans read New Life's male drumming as "loud" or as using too many drums now makes more sense. When Lutherans started to use drums in their services, and when those drums were taken over by women, New Life's male drumming started to look in contrast like traditional drumming. It also started to take on, at least for the Lutheran critics of the practice, the power and force—that is, the "heat"—of men's house-based drumming. Female drumming can then be read as a sonic critique of New Life practice, one that shows how it is possible both to be localizing yet still to maintain the "coolness" that is a requisite virtue of Christianity. With female drummers, Lutherans can both adopt the localizing practices that have been instituted by the national ELC-PNG organization and also take a position in the denominational disputes that are so important in the Waria Valley. Female drumming is then read as "quieter," in contrast to the masculine New Life drumming that evokes the "heat" and power of a traditional men's house. In other words, a denominational dispute about the place of local traditions in a Christian context has been transduced, transformed into a medium of aural qualities of heat/coolness and loudness/quiet.

The vocal unison of liturgical prayers is also a central component of Lutheran formation, contrasted with the tumult of the *bung beten* (TP, "group prayer," a prayer where each person says something different at the same time and out loud) that is specific to the Pentecostal churches of Papua New Guinea like New Life or Reformed Gospel. Vocal unity indexes not only a tradition of Christian practice (as well as access to the hymnal), but also a form of communication with God that is audible in ways quite different from the audibility of New Life. Rather than an audibility based on local language and local forms, the liturgy and its regular prayers provide Lutherans with what seems to be a field-tested, internationally accepted route to God. Indeed, Lutherans often scoff at the noise produced by a *bung beten* as too irregular to be heard by God.

(Pentecostals, on the other hand, retort that God is powerful enough to hear each prayer within the cacophony of voices.)

The Lutheran soundscape is also importantly constituted by the local brass band that plays at all major Lutheran events (e.g., Easter, Christmas, ELC-PNG Day), depicted in Figure 1.2. The early Lutheran mission experimented with different kinds of musical groups, including Heinrich Zahn's conch shell band in the Jâbem area (Zahn 1996). Although the conch shell band did not end up being exported to all of the different Lutheran areas, the brass band form has come to be an important part of many Lutheran congregations. Young men and women travel to the trumpet school in Raipinka, outside of Kainantu, to learn to play, and there they are given instruments for use in their home areas.

The brass band plays European/Western songs, most often hymns from the German Lutheran tradition, but also songs like "God Save The Queen." As a mixed-sex, youth-oriented group, the brass band is not only able to provide a set of linkages to national Lutheran institutions like the school at Raipinka, but it is also able to avoid some of the critical discourse that surrounds drumming in church. Like guitars (about which more below), the brass instruments are marked as foreign, but unlike guitars, the brass instruments are signs specifically of the kinds of connections that Lutherans alone have made, connections that are only possible through the sorts of institutional affiliations that



Figure 1.2. The Lutheran Brass Band at ELC-PNG Day, 2005.

national and international denominations are capable of. With male guitarists, female drummers, and young trumpeters, the Lutherans have carved out a unique soundscape that exhibits a local Christian connection to an international denomination.

### *The re-mediations of Reformed Gospel*

The Reformed Gospel Church emerged from a split with New Life as a result of some members' sense that the latter had become overly local in its concerns. As Niebuhr might predict, the sect that formed out of New Life church was concerned with reuniversalizing the Christian message, albeit to the Guhu-Samane in particular. Both New Life and Reformed see themselves as heirs of the Holy Spirit revival of 1977, when the local language allowed for God to become present in a way that was not possible under Lutheranism's liturgical, "external" constraints. While one might expect Reformed Gospel to share quite a bit with New Life, its members work hard to distance themselves from what they tend to think of as New Life's "cargo cult" forms. As with the previous two churches discussed, these forms of embracing the universality of Christianity focus on the sounds produced in Reformed Gospel: the character of voices and the language of songs.

As part of their critique of New Life's overlocalization of Christianity, Reformed Gospel gave up entirely on the use of drums in church services. Instruments in Reformed Gospel services include guitars, tambourines, and voices. Guitars in contemporary Papua New Guinea are the most common instruments of Pentecostal worship, and by using them Reformed Gospel members place themselves within a Pentecostal mainstream that specifically avoids the local arguments about drumming, if only by totally banning their use. They do not sing songs that have traditional Guhu-Samane melodies, preferring instead to use songs that circulate throughout Papua New Guinea Pentecostal circles in Tok Pisin. But Reformed Gospel does not use Tok Pisin exclusively. Rather, they use local members to compose Guhu-Samane translations of the Tok Pisin lyrics, so that most songs will begin with Tok Pisin verses and choruses and then move into Guhu-Samane language verses and choruses that repeat "the same thing" over again. In some cases songs are trilingual, beginning in English, moving to Tok Pisin, and ending in Guhu-Samane. A song with only one verse might be sung for ten minutes at a time as singers are led through multiple iterations of the verse in different languages. As I have discussed elsewhere, Reformed Gospel cannot be characterized as antilocal in contrast to the localizing forms of either New Life or the Lutherans (in their nationally mediated form). Instead, Reformed Gospel uses these compulsive retranslations within each song and many times over again within each sermon to re-create the local that will constitute their Christianity (Handman 2010a).

As I noted above, the strength of any church is generally evaluated by the nature of the singing that takes place throughout the service. This is particularly true for Reformed Gospel. Given the importance of singing to the church's spiritual health, it seems odd at first that songs in the Reformed Gospel church are most loudly sung by informal choruses of little girls. Little girls are by far the least powerful of any category of Guhu-Samane people. For example, they are made to become primary caregivers of small children while still small themselves, at the same time as their brothers are allowed to roam the forest with toy bows and arrows and few responsibilities. Church is the one place where little girls, otherwise entirely silenced by household distributions of power, seem to be most vocally present. Perhaps in recognition of this one instance of publicity, little girls are also likely to sing church songs as they do chores around the village and in the nearby forest. (The only time I heard boys singing Christian songs was when I invited a group of girls over to help me record and transcribe lyrics to the Guhu-Samane verses of the songs sung in church. Then the boys stood outside the house, belting out verses. But this might have as much to do with the excitement of hanging out with the anthropologist and drinking lots of tea as it does with wanting to sing.)

In contrast to New Life's powerful male voices and masculine drums, Reformed Gospel's choruses of little girls produce a form of spirit that does not constitute the same kind of "noise" that has become so associated with New Life practice. The spirit is still transduced by sound, but only if that sound is produced by people who stand in opposition to the "hot" men of New Life's quasi-traditionalist men's house/church complex. Not even the Lutheran critique of New Life, which put drums in the hands of adult women, is enough of a contrast with traditional forms. If Reformed Gospel seems intent on relocating every aspect of Christianity in its practice of compulsive retranslation, little girls might be the only category of people who in a sense do not have to be relocated in Christianity. Having always been at the furthest extreme from centers of traditionality (and male dominance), little girls are already Christian in a way that even little boys cannot be. The Christian virtue of "coolness" is something that little girls seem to have naturally, a product of their relative powerlessness in almost any other context. Girls' voices have become the sound of cool Christianity for Reformed Gospel.

When even the little girls do not sing, people know the church is in trouble. However, little girls cannot create real excitement in the church on their own. This excitement only comes when the adult men, so uncomfortable with what has become a partly feminized form of worship, begin to dance and sing with the same alacrity as the girls themselves. Unlike New Life's masculine Christianity, associated with the precision moves and drumbeats of men's house practices, Reformed Gospel men have a hard time bringing themselves into the spirit, which for Reformed Gospel is signaled by jumping and flail-

ing around without order to the sound of upbeat, guitar-accompanied praise songs. On those infrequent days when the village leader of Titio would hop around and sing in full voice, one knew that the church was really strong. Reformed Gospel men are not recreating traditional drumbeats or dance moves, as they imagine New Life men are, but rather embodying a kind of spasmodic dance that has come to index the presence of spirit within themselves. This, in a sense, is what all of Reformed Gospel's retranslations are after. Reformed Gospel men (and even adult women) are held by the spirit only when they are brought through a history of mediating critiques of Christian forms, in particular Christian songs and soundscapes. When local leaders and big men finally get the spirit and overcome their ingrained bodily comportment of precision and restraint, it is because of the difficult process of transformation that worship constitutes.

Patrick Eisenlohr (2009) has recently argued that religious forms of mediation have a tendency to lose their immediacy over time, to become symbols of rather than indexical links to God. And while this is one aspect of what is happening in the Waria Valley situation (drums and guitars have certainly become symbols of New Life and Reformed Gospel, respectively), it does not totally account for the Reformed Gospel brand of worship. Like Rutherford's Biak Christians (2006) who only value Christianity as an object of the foreign, Reformed Gospel members, especially male members, only make indexical relations to God through these practices of mediation, through the performative invocation of the history of critical discourse about sound and instruments that has been a central part of the denominational disputes for the past thirty years, the same critical history that makes it so unnatural for the members to move to guitar music. The sounds of Christian worship in the Reformed Gospel case—the high-pitched voices of little girls accompanying Western guitars—are not valued for their capacity to produce immediacy, but for their capacity to produce the mediated sonic history of critique that I have sketched out here.

## **Conclusion**

Niebuhr's cyclic story of the progressive de-universalization of sects into the social and political particularities of churches was written in the shadow of Weber's model of secularization in modernity. As Keane has so cogently argued (2007), the semiotic ideologies of modernity seem both to create an individual and to create a bewildering number of pitfalls for that individual to stumble into. That is, as soon as the individual is ideologized as an autonomous entity, he or she is also therefore at great risk of losing the "freedom" of that autonomy in recognizing relationships to other people or objects. Niebuhr's model of

denominationalism is an excellent example of this paradox: if the Christian individual should ever grasp onto any kind of identity, object, or instrument, the universalism of the relation between that individual and God is in great danger of being severely incapacitated. This, for Niebuhr, was politics.

It is also, on occasion, what seems to count as politics for Guhu-Samane Christians. In the often-heard complaints about the Garasa land claim, everyone was clear about exactly how New Life and Reformed Gospel were using local village groups as proxies for their own goals and their own bids to control the buildings and land at the station. The land mediator's flawed ruling in favor of the Muniwa-based claims to Wakaia #2 and the adjoining Garasa land was for many just the sign of Mark's interference in the process. For everyone involved—including, one gets the sense, both Mark and the land mediator—it was not a particularly Christian moment.

However, Niebuhr's model leaves us without much room to maneuver through the rest of the complex story of Guhu-Samane denominationalism. Is it politics all the way down? Is a denomination only Christian in that first moment of sectarianism? The model of mediation gives us some purchase on the ways in which the critical history of denominational disputes is able to maintain the indexical connection to God that local people are after. These forms of mediation, when constructed as a history of contestation, can be celebrated as the routes through which God is correctly hailed. These media do not have to produce a sense of the immediate, but rather can produce a sense of the layers of critique that have brought a denomination into being. Mediation becomes its own form of immediacy, especially for a church like Reformed Gospel, whose sense of being "after" is written into their very name. They have been re-formed (and are re-formed again every week) in God.

But note that what is, from the insider's perspective, a critique of past social forms that moves one into Niebuhr's universalism is, from an outsider's perspective, just sociality. Guhu-Samane see the sonic forms of worship from this insider perspective, and each church understands its musical forms and instrumentation as emerging from a critical history of coming into the proper relationship with God. Most Guhu-Samane see the land claim at Garasa, however, from an outsider perspective in which the churches are simply in competition with one another. But one doesn't even have to shift focus from music to land in order to see this fluctuation between insider and outsider perspectives. Danielle's comments about "good" drumming versus "bad" drumming in church contain within them both the insider's perspective of appropriate Lutheran critiques of noisy, "hot" worship styles and the outsider's perspective of seeing New Life drumming as simply too local and too particular to Guhu-Samane traditional life. Thus it is crucial that one looks at both the critique and the forms through which critique happens (i.e., the fact of denominationalism as well as the particular qualities, senses, or mediations through which

denominational disputes play out). These forms, from an insider perspective, appear as a critique—on a universal(izing) basis—of parochial church forms. But from an outsider perspective, these forms can appear as just another set of parochial church forms that are themselves subject to critique using yet other forms, *ad infinitum*.

There are, then, two senses of politics that are pertinent. The first is the sense of politics as contestation or critique, as found in the story of Guhu-Samane denominationalism that emerges through examining Christian soundscapes. In this sense, Protestant Christianity is fundamentally political because critique is a fundamental part of the religious experience. *Pace* Niebuhr, there is no neat distinction between the religious and the political in that sense. But this is basically the insider's perspective noted above. The second sense of politics—politics as part of worldly social life, opposed to the religious universalism and otherworldliness that Niebuhr focused on—is merely the outsider's perspective. However, as I have tried to show here, both are constitutive of denominationalism and Christian religious experience.

The crucial point is an attention to form, which allows one and the same thing (e.g., soundscape, whether considered as critique or as parochial socio-cultural stuff) to operate in two different but simultaneous perspectives. There are not only two different perspectives for the Guhu-Samane who engage in denominational disputes, but also for the analysts who try to arbitrate this difference by taking one perspective or another, rather than seeing that both are constitutive of the phenomenon. The first half of this chapter suggests that individualist Christianity is present at least in its pointed absences during moments like the land dispute. The second half of this chapter suggests that Christianity can in fact be seen in terms of people's relations of interaction and incorporation with objects or media. I have argued for both of these being moments of Christianity, ones characterized by critique and by the particular forms through which critique happens. While Christians might have to present these celebratory moments of mediation in terms of a history of critique—a *renvoi* to the moment of initial sectarianism—they work within a political world of religious critique.

## Notes

1. All names of Guhu-Samane in this chapter are pseudonymous. Names of public record, including missionaries and a businessman from Lae, are real.
2. SIL is an abbreviation of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, an international literacy and languages NGO that produces Christian literature in vernacular (rather than state) languages. SIL-PNG has been working on New Guinea languages, producing primarily New Testaments and literacy materials, since 1955, and as of 2006 SIL translation teams had published 159 full New Testaments in Papua New Guinea languages. It is not uncommon for SIL teams to become frustrated with SIL's hands-off, translation-

only model of Christian interaction (really missionization), and there are a number of groups, like PIM, that are composed of ex-SIL workers interested in pursuing different kinds of mission methods. Ernie and Marjorie Richert came to Guhu-Samane in 1957, one of the first teams to be allocated in New Guinea, and finished the Guhu-Samane translation of the New Testament in 1975. Aspects of their work will be discussed in more detail below. For more on SILs work in Papua New Guinea, see Handman 2007.

3. Local terms are either in Tok Pisin, the English-based creole lingua franca of Papua New Guinea (identified here with “TP”), or in Guhu-Samane language (identified with “GS”). These two languages appear to be in a stable situation of bilingualism, with most people between the ages of twelve and fifty competent in both. Young children and older women tend to have minimal or no Tok Pisin knowledge. A few Guhu-Samane raised in town and now living in villages have only minimal knowledge of the vernacular. The Guhu-Samane population is roughly 12,000 people.
4. “Tribe” and its Tok Pisin calque *traib* do not have any well-established equivalents in Guhu-Samane. Some of this importation of anthropological terms seems to come from state-mediated land claims, where terms like “tribe,” “clan,” and “sub-clan” are in circulation. Both “tribe” and “sub-clan” have been given local Guhu-Samane definitions that are quite distinct from standard anthropological uses (if any exist).
5. Most villages only have one church building, either New Life or Reformed Gospel. The most common exception to this rule is that there are sometimes Lutheran churches in addition to the local Pentecostal churches (on which, see chapter five of Handman 2010b). Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) churches might also be present in a village, but since SDAs live in compounds that adjoin the main village, it is possible to interpret their presence in terms that follow the above generalization. Just before I left the field, Mark had managed to put a Reformed Gospel church in Ulysses’ Au village, a New Life stronghold, but this was the subject of intense fighting and negotiation, and at least for some it marked a loss of strength for New Life.
6. Richert did include one song that he composed, which was to be sung to the tune of “Row, Row, Row Your Boat.”
7. Many of Robbins’ comments (2004a: 266–67) about the rituals of handshaking hold for Guhu-Samane as well. In the Teptep region on the Morobe/Madang border where I also spent time, handshaking has become so integrated with (Lutheran) Christianity that people generally shake hands with three separate pumps “for Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”

## References

- Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. London: Verso.
- de Vries, Hent. 2001. “In Media Res: Global Religion, Public Spheres, and the Task of Contemporary Comparative Religious Studies.” In *Religion and Media*, eds. Hent de Vries and Samuel Weber. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Eisenlohr, Patrick. 2009. “Technologies of the Spirit: Devotional Islam, Sound Reproduction and the Dialectics of Mediation and Immediacy in Mauritius.” *Anthropological Theory* 9, no. 3: 273–96.
- Engelke, Matthew. 2007. *A Problem of Presence: Beyond Scripture in an African Church*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Feld, Steven. 1990. *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kaluli Expression*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gell, Alfred. 1996. "The Language of the Forest: Landscape and Phonological Iconism in Umeda." In *The Anthropology of Landscape: Perspectives on Place and Space*, eds. Eric Hirsch and Michael O'Hanlon. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Handman, Courtney. 2007. "Access to the Soul: Native Language and Authenticity in Papua New Guinea Bible Translation." In *Consequences of Contact: Language Ideologies and Sociocultural Transformations in Pacific Societies*, eds. Miki Makihara and Bambi B. Schieffelin. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 2010a. "Events of Translation: Intertextuality and Christian Ethnotheologies of Change among Guhu-Samane, Papua New Guinea." *American Anthropologist* 112, no. 4: 576–88.
- . 2010b. "Schism and Christianity: Bible Translation and the Social Organization of Denominationalism in the Waria Valley, Papua New Guinea." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago.
- Harrison, Simon. 2000. "From Prestige Goods to Legacies: Property and the Objectification of Culture in Melanesia." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42, no. 3: 662–79.
- Helmreich, Stephen. 2007. "An Anthropologist Underwater: Immersive Soundscapes, Submarine Cyborgs, and Transductive Ethnography." *American Ethnologist* 34, no. 4: 621–41.
- Hirschkind, Charles. 2006. *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Johnson, Benton. 1963. "On Church and Sect." *American Sociological Review* 28, no. 4: 539–49.
- Keane, Webb. 2007. *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Latour, Bruno. 1993. *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. C. Porter. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Meyer, Birgit. 2006. "Religious Revelation, Secrecy and the Limits of Visual Representation." *Anthropological Theory* 6, no. 4: 431–53.
- Niebuhr, H. Richard. 1929. *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*. New York: H. Holt and Company.
- Robbins, Joel. 1998. "On Reading 'World News': Apocalyptic Narrative, Negative Nationalism and Trans-national Christianity in a Papua New Guinea Society." *Social Analysis* 42, no. 2: 103–30.
- . 2001. "'God Is Nothing but Talk': Modernity, Language and Prayer in a Papua New Guinea Society." *American Anthropologist* 103, no. 4: 901–12.
- . 2004a. *Becoming Sinners: Christianity and Moral Torment in a Papua New Guinea Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 2004b. "On the Critique in Cargo and the Cargo in Critique: Toward a Comparative Anthropology of Critical Practice." In *Cargo, Cult, and Culture Critique*, ed. Holger Jebens. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- . 2007. "Between Reproduction and Freedom: Morality, Value, and Radical Cultural Change." *Ethnos* 72, no. 3: 293–314.
- Rutherford, Danilyn. 2006. "The Bible Meets the Idol." In *The Anthropology of Christianity*, ed. Fenella Cannell. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

- Silverstein, Michael. 2000. "Whorfianism and the Linguistic Imagination of Nationality." In *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Politics, and Identities*, ed. Paul V. Kroskrity. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.
- . 2003. "Translation, Transduction, Transformation: Skating 'Glossando' on Thin Semiotic Ice." In *Translating Cultures: Perspectives on Translation and Anthropology*, eds. Paula G. Rubel and Abraham Rosman. New York: Berg.
- Swatos, William H. 1998. "Church-Sect Theory." *Encyclopedia of Religion and Society*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press. [hrr.hartsem.edu/ency/csttheory.htm](http://hrr.hartsem.edu/ency/csttheory.htm), accessed June 2, 2010.
- Troeltsch, Ernst. 1931 [1912]. *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Zahn, Heinrich. 1996. *Mission and Music: Jâbem Traditional Music and the Development of Lutheran Hymnody*, ed. D. Niles, trans. P. W. Holzknrecht. Boroko: Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies.

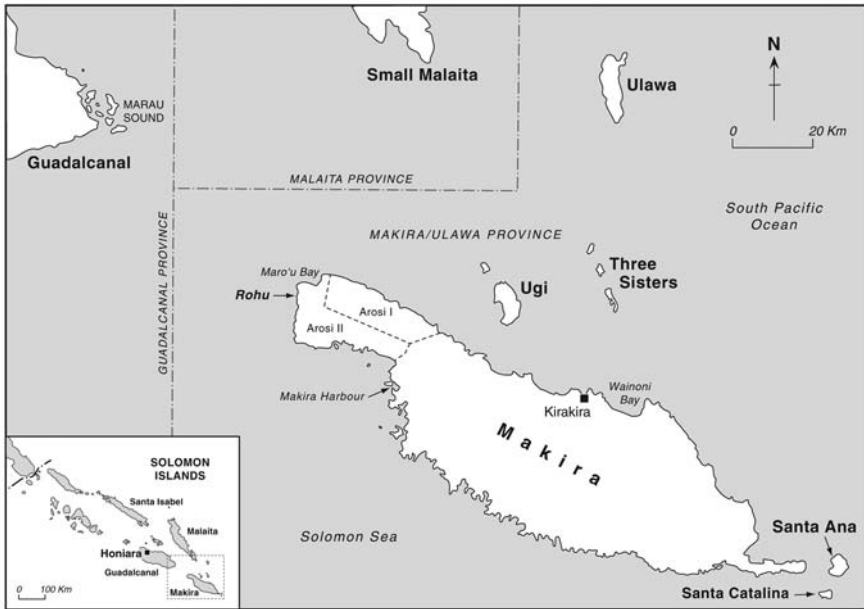
**"Heaven on Earth" or  
Satan's "Base" in the Pacific?**  
*Internal Christian Politics in  
the Dialogic Construction of  
the Makiran Underground Army*

MICHAEL W. SCOTT

In 2006, I spent eight months in Solomon Islands, primarily in the Arosi region at the northwest end of the island of Makira, investigating talk that Makira is the site of a secret subterranean army. As I followed receding leads from one interlocutor to another, I discovered the truth of one Arosi speaker's insight that "these stories have no *ahui*"—no "growing core" or "base" to which they can be traced. Although virtually all Arosi (and many other Solomon Islanders) are familiar with stories about what they call *bahai nai ano* (under the ground), or *gao nai ano* (below the ground), this tradition has no original or master narrative. Nor is confidence—or even interest—in the reality of the underground uniform or consistent.

I interviewed half a dozen people who say—or of whom it is said—that they have been to the underground or encountered its agents. But even these people drew on preexisting discourses about the underground to "frame" (Goffman 1974) their otherwise baffling experiences. I met and heard of others who, although they claim no such experiences, pursue the stories of those who do and collect what they term "evidence" that the army exists. But their inquiries (and mine) are proliferating rather than accounting for ideas about the underground, becoming in turn the sources for other more tentative, puzzled, skeptical, and casual discourses.

Within this proliferation, it is difficult to assess whether or to what extent each contributor takes the underground seriously. I met only a few who seemed certain the army is real. Many more were intermittently hopeful. Strong critics of the idea can be heard too. For most Arosi, however, talk about the underground has become a popular genre that can be a stimulus to earnest or diverting speculations, a mildly exciting entertainment, or fodder for ironic quips.



**Map 2.1.** Island of Makira, Solomon Islands. Map by Mina Moshkeri Upton.

The underground is thus not an orthodoxy, not a consensus, and not a collective irrationality. Yet it is a definite phenomenon. It is generated by what language theorist Mikhail Bakhtin would describe as the “polyphonic” utterances of multiple speakers engaged in collaborative framings of heterogeneous discursive, incidental, and historical elements. It is an acentric, unfinished “concordance” (Bakhtin 1984: 289) of utterances in which “each utterance is filled with echoes and reverberations of other utterances to which it is related” (Bakhtin 1986: 91). Bruce Mannheim and Dennis Tedlock have invoked Bakhtin to model cultures in general as “dialogically constructed worlds” that are “in a continuous state of creation and recreation, negotiation and renegotiation” (1995: 3, 8). As a particular cultural phenomenon well apprehended by this model, the Makiran underground may aptly be described as a dialogically constructed *underworld*. Taking this model of the underground as a premise and likewise drawing on Bakhtin, I explore in this chapter how talk about the underground is, furthermore, the non-obvious site of socially nonconfrontational but personally dramatic experiences of Christian politics.

Arosi has long been a context of Christian plurality, and it is possible—among the rumors, stories, claims, and theories that make up the Makiran underground—to discern discourses that carry denominational inflections of Christian ideology. Such discourses can entail, for example, denominationally informed invocations of Christian teachings, terms, tropes, narratives, proph-

ecies, and the labels of Christian plurality themselves. Accounts of the underground and denominationally colored articulations of Christian themes thus circulate together, often by means of unreconstructable social interactions. In this way, they have come to form a discursive world that, like Christianity itself, is constituted as a constellation of widely though differently understood points of reference (cf. Bakhtin/Medvedev 1985: 133–35; Garriott and O'Neill 2008). Necessarily, therefore, those who speak about the underground both presuppose at least some aspects of this denominationally plural discursive world and respond to those aspects—sometimes deliberately, but also unreflexively across time and space (cf. Bakhtin 1986: 91–92, 124).

Owing to these dialogical processes, many discourses about the underground exemplify what Bakhtin (1984: 195–97) termed “internal” or “hidden polemic,” but in this context the internal or hidden polemic is also *denominational* polemic. “Internally polemical discourse,” according to Bakhtin, is “the word with a sideward glance at someone else’s hostile word”:

In the hidden polemic . . . discourse is directed toward an ordinary referential object, naming it, portraying, expressing, and only indirectly striking a blow at the other’s discourse, clashing with it, as it were, within the object itself. As a result, the other person’s discourse begins to influence authorial discourse from within. For this reason, hidden polemical discourse is double-voiced, although the interrelationship of the two voices here is a special one. The other’s thought does not personally make its way inside the discourse, but is only reflected in it, determining its tone and its meaning (Bakhtin 1984: 196).

Occasionally, Arosi discourses about the underground are marked by overt denominational polemic. More often, however, signs of denominational difference and debate are, as Bakhtin says of internal polemic, “within the object itself.” They are intrinsic to a particular speaker’s representations about the underground wherever these are conditioned by implied dissenting interlocutors. Shaped by various speakers’ internalizations of multiple denominationally inflected voices, talk about the underground condenses complex fields of denominational politics (cf. Bakhtin 1981: 283–84).

Excavating some of the details of this politics, I focus in this chapter on the ethnographic material that most alerted me to the role of denominational orientation in shaping references to the underground. This material consists in interviews I conducted with a middle-aged Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) couple I will call Agnes Sauniasi and Levi Orimanu, whose village lies in the area known as Rohu in northwest Arosi. By identifying consonances and dissonances between this couple’s accounts of the underground and those of other Arosi, I show how such accounts constitute denominationally conditioned reflexive ethno-theologies. That is, they are theological projects through which

people evaluate their ancestral traditions, lands, and themselves in relation to biblical depictions of “the nations” (e.g., Genesis 10; Isaiah 60) and the politics of sacred history (Scott 2005; 2007: 301–6). Two opposed reflexive ethno-theologies emerge from the ethnography. Most Arosi representations cast the underground positively as the locus of a supernormal army that will restore true Makiran *kastom* as a way of establishing what one man termed “heaven on earth,” lead the island to regional dominance, and even—according to some—fulfill the destiny of Makira to inaugurate the end times and fight for God at Armageddon. In contrast, Sauniasi and Orimanu’s Adventist-inflected discourses cast the army and Makira negatively as Satan’s “base” in the Pacific, destined to be the place from which the Antichrist emerges. Christian politics, it transpires, need not be located in sermons, institutional church pronouncements, public debates, campaign platforms, or national agendas. Seemingly localized idiosyncratic discourses can carry theologically rigorous internal denominational politics with far-reaching visions for national, international, and cosmic politics.

Sauniasi says that she has met people from the army who want to take her underground. Turning, therefore, to analysis of what her contacts have allegedly told her, I show how her discourses bring the emergent category “Makiran”—increasingly experienced by many Arosi as both an ethnicized identity and an autochthonous insular ontology—into conjunction with the categories of Adventist cosmology and ontology. I argue that her accounts integrate the Arosi category “Makiran” with the Adventist category “Roman Catholic”—the latter understood as Satanic apostasy—in ways that demonize both Makira and Makirans. Whereas the discourses of those who value the underground positively construct Makira as a holy land and Makiran-ness as a condition of special affinity with divinity, Sauniasi expresses a systematic moral inversion of this perspective. Her discourses innovate a negative reflexive ethno-theology of place with an attendant construction of Makiran-ness as tantamount to categorical demonic possession. What is ultimately at stake in this denominational politics, I conclude, is not so much Christian articulation of underlying social relations and divisions, competition for influence, disputes over resources, or even rival proselytizing, but the nature of the salvation required for the Makiran person, spatially set apart as instantiating either an exceptionally good or extraordinarily evil category of being.

### The underground army as icon of Makira

This agenda requires exposition of the Arosi context, however. In this section, I support the proposition that discourses about the underground army are sites of internal Christian politics because the army is an icon of Makira.

Owing to historical and political processes that include the acceptance of Christianity, Arosi increasingly experience themselves as "Makiran," not only as an ethnicized category emergent among others in Solomon Islands, but also as an insular *ontological* category that coexists in potentially transformative tension with their territory-specific matrilineal categories of being. When attending to either of these scales (the insular or the matrilineal), Arosi experience the relevant categories (islands/regions in the Solomons or Arosi matrilineages in their territories) as more than social or classificatory; for Arosi, they are originary and cosmological—the fundamental kinds of existents that make up the world (Scott 2007). Indicative of an increasing shift toward the insular scale, the army is taking figurative shape as an icon of the new Makiran category, personifying it as the moral agency of a primordial power integral to the island and its truly autochthonous constituents (Scott 2011).

Since European missionaries arrived in the mid-nineteenth century, Arosi have participated in intra- and interdenominational debates about the nature and value of their pre-Christian past. These debates have focused on the nature and value of ancestral powers (*adaro*), recognized as the moral agencies of each autochthonous matrilineage in its land. Although the Makiran underground army is not conceptualized as made up of ancestral *adaro*, it is nonetheless an island-wide analogue to the ancestors as a place- and category-specific tutelary power. For this reason, older debates about the ancestors and the indigenous things of the past now shape discourses about the underground into sites of internal Christian politics.

Arosi experience and talk about their relationship to place in terms of narratives and tropes of matrilineally conferred autochthony. Their sense of themselves as inherently place-based amounts to an autochthonous ontology, one in which the relationship between a person and his or her place is participatory, or nondual. A "true" (*ha'amori*) Makiran person—that is, a member of one of the putatively autochthonous Makiran matrilineages—is a person in whom ancestral land is thoroughly ingredient and for whom such land is infused with matrilineal being and agency.

This experience of autochthonous ontology has usually involved denial of the possibility that all Makirans are homogeneously autochthonous to the island as a whole.<sup>1</sup> Mythic images of primordality, for example, exhibit, not the "complete absence of insularity" Carlos Mondragón (2009) identifies among Loh Islanders (Vanuatu), but the foundational displacement of an original wholeness that might otherwise unite all matrilineages in a single insular category. And in their everyday dealings with one another, Arosi tend to talk and live as though their matrilineages were heterogeneously autochthonous, each ontologically one with its own discrete territory. People's characterizations of their own and other matrilineages point additionally to a general assumption that each matrilineage exhibits distinctive physical and temperamental traits

(cf. Fox 1924: 13, 35) and that each has developed territory-specific traditions (*kastom*) as manifestations of a unique autochthonous ontology.

That said, a number of Arosi appear to be exploring the possibility that the island may be the source of a single common autochthony. Arosi appropriations of Christianity, especially, can easily move in this direction. Typical of past-affirming reflexive ethno-theologies are interpretations of the ancestors and the forms of *kastom* they established in their territories as vehicles of a divine revelation equal to the biblical revelation of God's law. These ethno-theologies assert that God placed his law in the land and appointed the matrilineages to be the custodians of it in their territories. Such formulations allow that God may have given each matrilineage certain unique privileges and taboos, but they also imply that, because all forms of ancestral *kastom* are consistent with the Bible, all must be to some extent alike. The island becomes the medium of a unified autochthonous pan-Makiran *kastom*. Likewise, past-renouncing reflexive ethno-theologies implicate the island in the communication of a single autochthonous *kastom*, but the Christian category with which they correlate this *kastom* is the demonic, not the divine.

Other factors too have encouraged Arosi to understand and experience themselves and their ancestral ways as "Makiran." Geographically, linguistically, and culturally diverse populations in Solomon Islands have long been developing a sense of themselves and one another as distinctive regional, social, and political entities, and have come—like the Arosi matrilineages—to essentialize one another as physical and psychological types (Allen 2009; Dureau 1998; Scales 2007; White 2001). Precolonial regional economies of gift, kin, and conflict exchange; colonial administrative divisions; mission and ecclesiastical rationalizations; and regimes of postindependence provincial organization have all tended to reify particular islands and island groups. At the same time, Euroamerican attempts to classify different Islanders in terms of somatic and moral categories have articulated with indigenous idioms of alterity—such as the widely attested bush/coast dichotomy—to produce current island- and region-specific stereotypes (Bennett 1987: 187). Labor and mission discourses especially have fostered a gendered typology according to which the inhabitants of the island of Malaita are big, strong, warlike, and competitive, while other island-specific populations are small, weak, timid, and indolent (cf. Scott 2012).

Between 1998 and 2003 a period of civil conflict both manifested and intensified these processes of identity formation. Commentators debate the causes of this conflict, which Solomon Islanders as well as Euroamericans have labeled the "ethnic tension" (Kabutaulaka 2001; White 2001). The conflict has been so called in order to describe the two parties widely perceived as the principal antagonists: those who see themselves as customary Guadalcanal landowners and those they see as usurpers, especially economic mi-

grants from Malaita. Responding to grievances on both sides, two militant groups—the Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM) and the Malaita Eagle Force (MEF)—gradually formed up and, in the names of two entire islands, carried out a small-scale civil war, chiefly around Honiara, the national capital on Guadalcanal (Fraenkel 2004; Moore 2004). Despite violence on both sides, discourses about these hostilities have further entrenched the dominating-Malaitans versus meek-others dichotomy (cf. Kabutaulaka 2001). This period of overt civil conflict was brought to an end by an Australian-led regional military intervention.

Precisely in this context, Arosi began to speculate that there may be a secret subterranean army inside Makira. It would be simplistic to reduce Arosi discourses about the underground to either a collective wish or a strategic ruse that Makira harbors an army greater than the IFM and the MEF. Yet it seems clear that Arosi talk about the underground was and continues to be stimulated by “the tension,” which aggravated fears about Malaitans usurping land in Makira/Ulawa Province. A history of interaction and intermarriage with southern Malaitans notwithstanding, the Arosi with whom I work tend to reinforce the stereotype of Malaitans as belligerent, typically representing them as having instigated the problems on Guadalcanal. During “the tension” many Arosi were alarmed, I was told, by rumors that MEF militants wanted to bring the fight to Makira and by reports that Malaitans who had settled by marriage in Makira/Ulawa Province were MEF members dispossessing their in-laws with the aid of an influx of armed Malaitan relatives. In these circumstances, Arosi—and other Makirans—were drawn to the possibility that a mysterious army might be superintending their province. Some took comfort in this idea, some sought to frighten Malaitans with it, and some did both.

But discourses about the underground army draw on models older than the IFM and the MEF. They are updated versions of accounts according to which American servicemen deployed in the Solomons during and after the Second World War built a “town” full of modern infrastructure and manufactured goods inside Makira. These accounts have been familiar throughout Arosi since the time of the Maasina Rule movement, an indigenous alliance active in the central and southeast Solomons between the mid 1940s and early 1950s (Keesing 1978; Laracy, ed. 1983; Scott 2007). With aspirations similar to those of other postwar anticolonial projects, Maasina Rule included civil rights protest, tax and local ordinance resistance, labor advocacy, and calls for increased development and self-governance. Owing at least in part to the scale of US military operations on Guadalcanal and the reputation Americans acquired for camaraderie with Islanders and generosity with supplies, some Maasina Rule participants developed expectations that America would back them in their struggles against British rule by providing material and even military aid. In Arosi, and apparently elsewhere in the Solomons as well (e.g.,

White 1978: 250–51), these expectations included claims that Americans were already present and waiting with the necessary provisions in a secret subterranean base or “town.” The hope was that these allies would soon bring a vast storehouse of goods and machinery to the surface, initiate intensive development, and transform Makira into a wealthy and—as several Arosi put it to me in English—“civilized” place.

Renewed in the crisis of “the tension,” this Maasina Rule figure of an underground town has been elaborated into a high-tech urban-military complex inhabited by a multinational force. Despite its heterogeneous makeup, however, this force, along with the whole underground complex it serves, appears to stand for quintessential Makiran autochthony. Virtually all Arosi discourses agree that the underground army owes its strength and advanced, even paranormal, technology to creatures known as *kakamora*, dwarf-like beings said to be uniquely autochthonous to Makira. Analogous diminutive but potent autochthons are well attested in indigenous traditions throughout Oceania (Forth 2008), and the *kakamora* are undoubtedly elements of a precolonial Arosi folklore (Fox 1924). As elaborated below, these mythic aboriginals have always had the potential to reference the power of Makiran autochthony in its primordial insular integrity (cf. Scott 2008). Accordingly, the dependence of the army on their powers reveals that the underground itself is an ultra-modern transformation of this original condition and its efficacy. Moreover, by one logic or another, all Arosi discourses about the underground cast the Americans and other international army personnel as encompassed by and assimilated into the special ontology and power ascribed to Makira and the *kakamora*.

It makes sense, therefore, that the underground should be a medium of internal Christian politics. As a power identified with pan-Makiran autochthony, the army poses the same question as the *adaro* and the indigenous ways of the past: is God or Satan the agent behind these agents and their ways? The Christian politics evident in discourses about the underground constitute, in fact, a contemporary development of older denominationally configured debates, present since the arrival of missionaries, about the nature and value of the pre-Christian Makiran past.

## Christian plurality on Makira

The history of mission activities on Makira has united Arosi in Christian identity and divided them among three main forms of Christian practice: Anglicanism, South Sea Evangelical Christianity, and Seventh-day Adventism. Until 1999, Arosi was partitioned into two council areas: Arosi 1 in the northeast and Arosi 2 in the southwest. This geopolitical divide mapped an older mission-

ary partition into spheres of influence. Arosi began accepting the Anglicanism of the Melanesian Mission in the 1850s, allowing European missionaries to establish village bases and schools, mainly on the north coast (Hilliard 1978: 82–85; Sayes 1976). Then, in the first decade of the twentieth century, the self-styled “nondenominational” South Sea Evangelical Mission (SSEM) arrived and, avoiding competition with the Anglicans, established schools in the south and west that became the foundation for the present-day South Sea Evangelical Church (SSEC) (Hilliard 1966: 351–54, 383–85; 1969). Seventh-day Adventism—largely coterminous with a small minority of villages—has crosscut this socially porous division since indigenous missionaries from the Western Solomons and Guadalcanal introduced it in the mid 1930s (Hilliard 1966: 448; Steley 1983: 75–76).

To backtrack, however, a fourth element must also be noted. Before the Anglicans, the SSEM, or the SDA reached Makira, Roman Catholics had been there first. In the mid 1840s, the Marist Fathers established a mission on the south coast at Makira Harbour (Laracy 1976: 17–22; O’Brien 1995: 50–70; Verguet 1854). Their station was situated on the indeterminate eastern fringes of Arosi, and some of the Marists made contacts with Arosi villages further west and north. Their efforts lasted only twenty months, however, and failed to create any lasting Catholic communities. A more successful mission, begun in the late 1910s, secured a Catholic presence in areas east of Arosi, but by then Arosi had become the mission field of the Anglicans and the SSEM (O’Brien 1995: 195–210). Today, as a consequence, there are no Roman Catholic churches in Arosi, yet many Arosi are aware of this history and, as explained below, attach divergent meanings to Roman precedence in their vicinity.

Among adherents of the three enduring churches in Arosi, Adventists have been the most past-renouncing, critiquing ancestral *adaro* and everything related to them as Satan’s deceptions (cf. Hess 2009; Jebens 2005; McDougall 2004). Embracing the global Adventist doctrine that the dead remain unconscious until the Second Coming (cf. Steley 1989: 195–201; E. White 1990: 309–15), Arosi Adventists ascribe a demonic ontology to all powers appearing as ancestral *adaro*. “We don’t believe in *adaro*,” Doaniho’asi of the Adventist village of Robo (Arosi 1) explained to me in 1993. “It is just Satan who makes those *adaro*. Satan can deceive us. God threw down a third of the angels, and it is those angels who lie that they are *adaro*.”

In contrast, Anglican and SSEC Arosi have been more likely to debate the ontology and cosmological position of *adaro*. It is true that, especially in the past, some of these Christians have renounced *adaro* as *devols* and stigmatized the pre-mission period as the “time of darkness” (Scott 2007: 172–89, 302), and historically, the SSEM was more past-renouncing than the Anglican Melanesian Mission. But today, relative to their SDA counterparts, Anglican and SSEC Arosi are more past-affirming, interpreting *adaro* as servants of God and

idealizing objectified ancestral values and practices as tantamount to an indigenous Christianity antecedent to mission Christianity (Scott 2007: 268–70, 301–6).

Discourses about the underground broadly reproduce this Anglican/SSEC versus SDA split. Yet it would be wrong to equate any discourse about the army with any Christian denomination. Even though accounts of the underground often carry significant Christian content, explicit stances toward the underground are not part of regular teaching in any Arosi church. In fact, many Arosi discourses about the underground resist clean denominational categorization, not only because they share content common to all Christianities, but also because ideas associated with the underground have always been shaped by interdenominational dialogue, especially the selective integration of SSEC and Adventist eschatologies. Furthermore, while no Anglicans or members of the SSEC with whom I worked ascribed negative value to the underground, I am aware of several Adventists who, unlike Sauniasi and Orimanu, view the underground positively.

### **Consonances: “They stay at the very place that is called Rohu”**

The referential object known as the underground that I encountered in conversation with Sauniasi and Orimanu was descriptively consonant with the underground I encountered in conversation with other Makirans. In this section I indicate the extent of this rapport and highlight several themes that Arosi collaboratively frame as relevant to the possible existence of a Makiran underground. These include: unidentified air and sea craft; *kakamora*; prophecies that the end times will begin in Arosi; claims that a former Solomon Islands prime minister feigned his own death; and traditions about the area known as Rohu. Taken together, these themes develop a picture of the underground as a dialogically constructed reflexive ethno-theology of place.

Among the most avidly discussed phenomena that Arosi relate to the underground are alleged sightings of unfamiliar air and sea craft. Regardless of what they think about the idea of the underground, almost any Arosi person will tell you that, roughly between 1999 and 2003 and sporadically since, they—or someone they know—saw one form or another of remarkable air or seaborne vessel around Makira. With respect to air traffic, the people I interviewed—including Sauniasi and Orimanu—described a variety of vehicles, such as small and apparently unmanned drones with flashing lights, low-flying planes with visible pilots, and at least one spectacular group formation. Of the drones and low-flying planes, it was said that during some intervals, especially at the height of “the tension,” they passed over the island nightly and produced only a muffled noise like a rewinding cassette tape. With respect to ocean-

going traffic, there were supposedly many sightings of a "warship" patrolling the coast and bearing the English name "Motherland" (generally understood to refer to Makira), sightings of vessels that appeared and disappeared out of nowhere, and accounts of marine animals suspected of being submarines operated by unknown white men. "Those people can use sharks, turtles, big fish—those are their ships," said Sauniasi.

Skeptics and those inclined to accept the reality of the underground alike know that the agents behind these phenomena are supposed to be a coalition of Euroamericans and others who have enlisted the *kakamora* in building their extraordinary underground world. Multiple associations support an analysis of the *kakamora* as conceptually available figures of the primordial wholeness and essential power of Makira. As beings thought of as having been formed with the island, *kakamora* (also called *pwapwaronga* and *pwapwaangora*) are said to preserve the original language and *kastom* of Makira, which has become altered and depleted above ground. According to folktales and alleged sightings, *kakamora* are about three feet tall and have long hair that descends from their heads to cover their bodies. They live reclusively in caves and sink-holes but are wondrously strong and endowed with preternatural insight into events on Makira. They are also thought of as able to shape-shift and become invisible. Accordingly, some discourses assert that the underground army has developed cloaking devices, stealth airplanes, and telepathic intelligence techniques through collaboration with the *kakamora*. As Orimanu put it: "They—the people of the underground—use the power of the *pwapwaangora*. The *kakamora* can disappear, can't be shot. The people of the underground live with the *pwapwaangora*."

The underground is not about Makira alone, however; according to diverse discourses, it is the means by which Makira—and Arosi in particular—is destined to become the spatial and temporal turning point between the present and the post-apocalyptic world to come. Most Arosi readily define *arosi* as "completed" or "finished" and the related verb, *ha'arosi*, as "to complete," "to finish," "to make an ending." But from several SSEC consultants, I further heard that the place name Arosi conceals a prophecy that Arosi is "the end," the Omega of "the Alpha and the Omega" of Revelation 22:13; it is a special "boundary" (*tarihana*) between the end of this world and a new beginning. Inseparable from discourses about Makira as the "last island" (Scott 2007: 306; cf. Foster 2002: 132–33), this interpretation is part of a larger set of discourses according to which the development of Arosi, the last place, will signal the completion of human history. These discourses portray the army as safeguarding raw materials and wealth inside the island that will one day be released, triggering economic transformation. In west Arosi especially, people are well acquainted with allegorical decodings of certain *kastom* stories, place names, and landmarks as clues to the presence of resources—such as gold and other

minerals—or as predictive of coming infrastructure—such as airports and roads. As the event that will unleash this denouement of development, the epiphany of the army will be the onset of the end times.

Sauniasi and Orimanu too are cocreators of this reflexive ethno-theology of Makira as the last island.

**Orimanu:** Those people below will come up. ... This is the last island; it wasn't to develop, and the world will end. ...

**MWS:** This island is the last one?

**Orimanu:** This is really the last one, the last development. ...

**Sauniasi:** Makira isn't yet. All the other islands already have done the things we try for. The things they wanted to do they have done. This island hasn't. There's only an airport up there [at Kirakira, capital of Makira/Ulawa Province]. ...

**Orimanu:** It's absolutely in line with the "program" down [underground] there. ... We know it will happen because development is afterwards. They want to develop the island, and the world will end. All the preparations that they've made for the island they haven't used yet. When they start to use them it will be toward the end of the world.

Another theme widely framed as relating to the underground is the allegedly falsified death of Solomon Sunaone Mamaloni. Born in 1943 and raised in and around Rumahui village (Arosi 2), Mamaloni achieved renown in Solomon Islands as the first chief minister prior to independence, prime minister of three governments, and leader of the opposition while member of parliament for West Makira (Moore 2004: 38–63). Since his death in January 2000, an assortment of supposedly suspicious circumstances surrounding his final moments and funeral has coalesced into a conspiracy theory—subject to much doubt and inquiry—that Mamaloni fabricated his own demise. Discussions of this theory often intersect with allegations that the still-living Mamaloni has gone into hiding underground. As one of several people noted for claiming to have spoken with Mamaloni since his official death, Sauniasi emphatically told me: "Mamaloni is with them down there. We story that Mamaloni is still alive." To this, Orimanu added, "They deceived us when they were burying Mamaloni—but no!" Such discourses often include suggestions that, while in office, Mamaloni smuggled weapons and money to the underground in preparation for a time when he would join the army, lead it to the surface, and establish a reign of plenty.

The greatest consonance among Arosi discourses about the underground, however, lies in their reiteration that Rohu is the place where the army is most active. If Arosi in general is the "boundary" marking the spatial and temporal

end of this world, Rohu is the precise location of this boundary, which is simultaneously a threshold between the underground and surface worlds. Many of the stories about strange air and sea craft depict these vessels coming and going at Rohu via hidden openings on the limestone plateau, inside coastal caves, or under the sea. The majority of prophecies about hidden resources and wealth likewise pertain to landmarks in this vicinity. And there is furthermore a tradition according to which "Rohu" is a corrupted form of an original name, Rome. "The island [i.e., local] name is Rohu, but it is Rome," Orimanu asserted. "They stay at the very place that is called Rohu ... That's the place called Rohu, but it is Rome."

To begin to unpack what this Rohu–Rome equation means to Sauniasi and Orimanu is to begin to track the ways in which their discourses about the underground diverge from the rest.

### Dissonances: "Satanic Cult Movement Invisible Soundless"

Attention to the dissonances between Sauniasi and Orimanu's representations of the underground and those of other Arosi reveals how the underground is a new register in which preexisting debates between denominationally informed past-affirming and past-renouncing reflexive ethno-theologies evolve as internal Christian politics. In this new register, however, what is debated is not the nature and value of the Arosi matrilineages, with their territory-specific powers and practices, but the nature and value of Makira as a whole, with its powers and practices cast as pan-Makiran *kastom*. In this section I show how different interpretations of the Rohu-Rome equation correlate with inverse evaluations of this pan-Makiran *kastom* and how these, in turn, correlate with inverse visions of the political and cosmological future of Makira.

Discourses that value the underground positively often articulate variations on the idea that the army and the *kakamora* preserve the original Makiran language and *kastom* that, if properly held to, ensure harmony and prosperity. Some Arosi have developed a mystical linguistics, ascribing magical efficacy to this archaic Makiran language as corresponding with the autochthonous ways of Makira or even as the Adamic language (cf. Eco 1997). Similarly, characterizations of primordial *kakamora kastom*, sometimes referred to as the *baronga goro* (the good disposition or character), cast it as simultaneously indigenous and one with God's law. I heard many intimations that, if the *baronga goro* of the *kakamora* were recovered, Makira could bring peace to Solomon Islands. One man even suggested it could restore prelapsarian immortality.

A corollary to this theme of ideal original language and *kastom* is the idea that both have become corrupted above ground by a long history of "mixing" with "waves of people" said to have migrated to Makira. The Rohu–Rome

equation seems, moreover, to function in such *kastom*-affirming discourses as a glyph for this history. Several older consultants recalled that a principal innovator of this equation and the migration theory it supports was John ‘Araubora, an SSEM village school teacher and influential Maasina Rule leader who died around 1964. Their recollections suggest that ‘Araubora’s theory was based on his interpretation of Arosi *kastom* stories and place names in relation to the Bible and mission history lessons on antiquity and the peopling of the Pacific. He is said to have taught that Hawa’a is a trace of where Hawaiians once lived in Arosi, and that Niuasia—interpreted as a deformation of New Asia—is where Asians had formerly settled. But Rohu, he apparently emphasized, is one of many indicators that Arosi was “ruled by the Roman Empire” during New Testament times.

This theory that Arosi was a Pacific outpost of Rome was probably also informed by assertions—referencing the Marist mission of the 1840s, or even the exploratory incursion of Catholic Spaniards in the 1560s (O’Brien 1995)—that Rome “was here before.” Two discursive practices in ‘Araubora’s milieu may have helped to elide the distinction between classical and ecclesiastical Rome. Non-Catholic mission leaders, often with polemical intent, referred to the Catholic Mission as the “Roman Mission” or simply as “Rome.” At the same time, Adventist interpretations of biblical prophecies, which characteristically assert continuity between imperial and papal Rome, were entering Arosi.<sup>2</sup> In 1945 one of the earliest SDA villages in Arosi, Hangataru, was established at Maro’u Bay near ‘Araubora’s SSEM village just as he was organizing a school there ([Barrow?] 1945). Significantly, the headman of this new village was Orimanu’s father, who became ‘Araubora’s close associate. Accounts of ‘Araubora’s teachings indicate that he appropriated and localized aspects of Adventist eschatology, and it is likely that his relationship with Orimanu’s father was a source of his knowledge of Adventist ideas. Today, however, despite its apparent mixed SSEC and Adventist parentage, ‘Araubora’s Rohu–Rome etymology serves in many *kastom*-affirming discourses as the master trope for all corrupting alien influences that the army will one day eliminate.

A currently developing theory expressed by some Arosi argues that, although a history of mixing has diluted true Makiran *kastom*, this *kastom* remains latent and accessible in Makirans of authentic autochthonous descent (Scott 2011). Some of the most elaborated discourses about the underground, which are often vehicles of this theory, furthermore assert that a main objective of the underground army is to lead Makira to greater autonomy as either a federal or independent state governed by the restored *kastom* of the *kakamora*. When Mamaloni leads the army above ground, these discourses predict, there will be a war to cleanse Makira of foreign ways and reinstate the obscured *baronga goro*. Then the Makiran state—the “Motherland”—will gain dominance and bring peace and prosperity to the whole Solomons region. But this final

"coming up" of the "last island" will signal the onset of apocalyptic crisis in which the army will be allied with God.

Sauniasi and Orimanu's discourses indicate that they too view the underground as a survival of the true things of Makira, but with the distinctively Adventist twist that the true things of Makira follow not the way of God, but the way of Satan and his instrument, the Roman Catholic Church. Whereas other Arosi anticipate the army's restoration of *kastom* as something akin to the inbreaking of God's kingdom on earth, Sauniasi and Orimanu dread this restoration as Satan's attempt to lead them astray. The error into which they fear the army will try to lead them, however, is not return to the ways of the pre-Christian past but observance of Sunday worship, an apostasy they appear to regard as indistinguishable from lapse into ancestral practices:

**Orimanu:** They will bring the final persecution. Therefore we have to tell out the good news quickly. ... The last fight will start here. ... If the SDA aren't plentiful they will be attacked and "Sunday law" will be enforced. ... That's what they're prepared for. They'll kill rich people and will take their money. They were behind the sinking of the Titanic so that they could take money from all the millionaires. They do all these attacks that keep going. There will be the last attack and then the persecution.

**MWS:** Why not pray on Sunday to avoid punishment?

**Orimanu:** Because if they kill us we will go to heaven, but if we change to Sunday we will not. That's why lots of people will join us at that time. ... The underground will discipline you. ... It's a church that will bring the end of the world.

In global Adventist teaching, "Sunday law" refers to legislation prohibiting activities on Sunday (Bull and Lockhart 2007: 195–98). Because such laws criminalize people who do not rest on Sunday (cf. Tomlinson 2009: 166–68), Seventh-day Adventists, for whom faithfulness demands rejection of Sunday in favor of Saturday Sabbath, regard any promulgation of Sunday law as inspired by Satan in his campaign to tempt people into sin.

As we spoke, Orimanu handed me a booklet—A. Jan Marcussen's *National Sunday Law*. In this tract, Marcussen (2004) sensationalizes Ellen G. White's foundational Adventist theology according to which Sunday Sabbath observance is the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:16–17) that will distinguish the apostate from the faithful when Christ returns. Summarizing White's *The Great Controversy*, Marcussen asserts that Satan, acting through the Pope (the first beast of Revelation 13), perverted what is conventionally thought of as Christianity by changing God's law and moving the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. Unwittingly, according to this reading of Christian history, all of

post-Reformation Christianity (excepting Seventh-day Adventism) has followed Rome into this error, making itself into “the image of the beast” (Revelation 13:13–15). From the Adventist point of view, this means that the whole of the rest of Christianity is nothing but one great apostate Roman Catholic Church (cf. Bull and Lockhart 2007: 42; Jebens 2005: 120). Increasingly, Marcussen warns, states will collude with “the great corrupt, Christian coalition of the world ... to decree that those who will not go along with the Sunday law should be put to death” (2004: 64–65), leading to the “time of trouble”—what Orimanu termed “the final persecution.” At the close of this ordeal, only those who have the “seal of God,” the observance of Saturday Sabbath, will inherit the new earth.

Why does it make sense to Sauniasi and Orimanu that an army inside Makira, empowered by the *kakamora* and maintaining the true Makiran language and *kastom*, will impose Sunday law, the practice of the Roman Church in thrall to Satan? It seems that, for them, the Rohu–Rome equation innovated in their parents’ generation is not only the residuum of mixing with merely human others, but is also evidence of a primordial and transformative Satanic infiltration of Makira—a superordinary fall of Makira beyond the fall in Eden. Probably informed, like ‘Araubora before them, by the fact of Catholic precedence, Sauniasi and Orimanu appear to suppose that Makira is an ancient stronghold of Roman Catholicism, a label they treat as synonymous with a worldwide system of outposts claimed by Satan in his bid for cosmic dominion (cf. Jebens 2005: 137–38). Long ago, they seem to reason, Satan got hold of Makiran autochthony and made it Catholic.<sup>3</sup>

“There’s a ‘primary workshop’ down there,” Orimanu said. “That’s where they developed the plane we saw. They are in Australia, America, and the Philippines.” Makira, he specified, is a key “city” or “base” within a “movement.” Referring again to the nearly noiseless aircraft sighted during “the tension,” he gave this global network an English name: “The movement can be called Satanic Cult Movement Invisible Soundless, an *adaro* power.” Just as non-Adventist Arosi tend to regard pre-mission Makira as created by God and always already infused with God’s way, so Sauniasi and Orimanu seem to regard pre-Adventist Makira as claimed by Satan and immemorially infected with Satan’s Roman way.

And this Makiran Rome has its own Pope: Solomon Mamaloni, who is now, according to Sauniasi and Orimanu, head of the underground as “Anti-christ” and “Black Pope”:

**Sauniasi:** Mamaloni replaced the Pope who died last year.<sup>4</sup> The brother of the Pope, the new one, replaces the Pope who died last year. Mamaloni is the “second” to the new Pope now. He is the “second” of him and he lives down here. The “Black Pope” is ours in the Solomon Islands.

**MWS:** What do you mean when you say "Black Pope"? A black-skinned person?

**Sauniasi:** Yes, a black-skinned person, one of us. Just a black-skinned person who is called the "Black Pope." That's Mamaloni.

**Orimanu:** They asked the Pope who died, and he said, "The Antichrist will begin in the Solomon Islands. [He] will come up from Solomon Islands." And it is him.

"Black Pope," as I learned from later reading, is an epithet for the black-robed superior general of the Jesuits in anti-Jesuit polemic that accuses this figure of controlling the bishop of Rome, or "White Pope," and through him the whole world (e.g., Cusack 1896). In transferring this epithet to Mamaloni, Sauniasi and Orimanu emphasized that he is literally a black-skinned counterpart to the Vatican Pope and thus a black Antichrist, in keeping with standard Adventist teaching that the first beast, the Antichrist figure of Revelation 13, symbolizes the Pope (cf. Marcussen 2004: 23–28).<sup>5</sup>

Sauniasi and Orimanu may know the term "Black Pope" from other sources, but Orimanu certainly encountered it in *The Secret Terrorists*, a conspiracy theory essay by American SDA schismatic Bill Hughes (2002). Orimanu showed me this booklet, copies of which—along with *The Enemy Unmasked* (Hughes 2004)—I know several other Adventist Arosi to possess as well. On the title page, he had written:

Levi Orimanu  
[Name of his village]      Makira  
    \                      /  
      V  
      Rohu → Rome  
      Marou Bay Arosi II

Orimanu understands this booklet to be an exposé of the "program" of the underground written by defectors:

**Orimanu:** It describes all the things they've done until now, and there's only the last one now.

**MWS:** And the people below printed it?

**Orimanu:** Some people who were with them at first, but have changed from them, and they brought out this thing to tell out their "program." The people who wrote this have left from them. Only the last one is

still there. They attacked the Pentagon and that was the “second last.” The last one is still to come.

**MWS:** That’s in the book?

**Orimanu:** They tell about it in that book, from when it began up to this day: Titanic, and the presidents who died, and all the things that happen at present. So, they aim to destroy America—that’s the “second last.”

**MWS:** And the last?

**Orimanu:** The last is still to come.

Only later did Orimanu identify “the last one.” “It was that which Mamaloni went to prepare,” he said. “The badness will begin in this island.”

### “We’re Catholic”: Denomination as ontological category

Sauniasi and Orimanu never used the English word “denomination” or any Arosi rendering of this concept, nor is the church to which they most frequently referred, the Roman Catholic Church, a significant presence in Arosi today. What, then, does the Christian plurality conventionally termed denominational difference mean to them? Analysis of Sauniasi’s accounts of encounter with underground personnel shows, I suggest, that she conflates the denominational category “Roman Catholic” with the underground army and—via the army—with the category “Makiran.” This conflation, I furthermore suggest, reveals that, for her, “Roman Catholic” refers not only to an empirical church, but more fundamentally to an ontological category grounded in and one with “Makira.”

Sauniasi says that a young Malaitan man visible only to her has repeatedly approached her to recruit her to the underground. This figure has become, I suggest, like an anti-guardian angel. The man has told Sauniasi that he was taken by the underground as a child and lives inside Makira with scores of people taken from other islands in the Solomons. “We’re Catholic,” he has revealed. “We want you to join with us.” Because Sauniasi and Orimanu’s son works in Honiara, they make frequent trips to Guadalcanal, and it has often been there, Sauniasi reports, that this Malaitan has intercepted her. He has taken her several times up to Holy Cross Cathedral, the seat of Catholicism in Solomon Islands, where she says Mamaloni has attempted to lure her to the underground.

Those who have been “taken” by the underground, Sauniasi explained, are no longer able to appear to people of their home islands; they live instead

inside Makira from where they are sent to entice people of other islands to join the underground. Her accounts imply, in fact, that to be taken by the underground, to become Catholic, and to become Makiranized are identical:

**Sauniasi:** When that person [the Malaitan] was small he was canoeing on the sea, and these people underground took him. It was going toward the evening and his mother and father couldn't find him. He had stayed with them and grown up with them until then. Now, if he comes to them he won't show out. They won't see him ...

Other Islanders in the underground had similar stories:

**Sauniasi:** As we went [to Holy Cross] a woman came down. She was from Guadalcanal. ... They [the underground] had taken that woman when she was small and reached that height [indicating the height]. Until today she hasn't appeared to her relatives. That Malaitan won't appear to his relatives. They'll only appear to different people.

Sauniasi's Malaitan contact has also disclosed to her some of the underground's methods and aims:

**Sauniasi** (quoting the Malaitan): "Around Makira there are twenty women that we've gone to—you're the twentieth. Thirty men. All the islands: Malaita, forty men, thirty women; Guale [Guadalcanal] the same as well; Santa Ana the same as well; Isabel the same as well. We're working, we're doing our work. It is we who are coming up for the last fight. We're Catholic and we'll rule there. We are the ones who live underground at Makira where you live."

The social map of the underground that Sauniasi has received from her Malaitan informant shows that, even within Satan's worldwide network, the ethnicized insular categories coming into being in Solomon Islands remain relevant. In Sauniasi's experience of being pursued by a Mephistophelian Malaitan, the insular moral, political, and ontological distinction most relevant to Arosi today—the Makira-Malaita opposition—is reproduced. At the same time, however, these multiple insular ontological categories are ruptured and unified in the underground by the denominational category Roman Catholic, itself equivalent to the single autochthonous ontological category Makira.

Using imagery that implicitly compares the seizure of a child's shade by powers known as *adaro ni matawa* (deep-sea *adaro*) to Catholic baptism, Sauniasi represents being taken by the underground as an abduction-cum-conversion. It is a transformation that separates people, not only from their relatives, but also from their originary island categories and re-grounds them in Catholicism as Makiran-ness:

**Sauniasi:** He [her Malaitan contact] said to me: “My mother and father cried and cried for me and now I don’t appear to them. ... I won’t appear to them. No. I will appear to you Makirans, you people of Isabel, to you people of West [Western Province]. Your people [Makirans] who have disappeared appear to Malaitans, people of West, Rennellese; they won’t appear to you Makirans. That’s how we are.”

Such separations of people from their home islands seem often, according to Sauniasi, to occur on the water and/or to befall children. The Malaitan was taken as a boy out canoeing: “They capsized his canoe and he fell into a big opening and now he stays with them.” After mentioning that the Guadalcanal woman she says she met at Holy Cross was taken “when she was small,” Sauniasi speculated that the army does not take old people but preys instead on children who have “sunk at sea.” Still, despite being in her forties, she expressed anxiety about travelling unaccompanied by boat between Makira and Guadalcanal for fear of being lost at sea. “These people, the people below, steal people,” she said.

The manner and consequences of this people-stealing recall those associated with shade-theft by deep-sea *adaro*, one of several kinds of nonancestral elemental powers.<sup>6</sup> Many Arosi of all Christian denominations assume that *adaro*—whether they are understood to be elemental, ancestral, or diabolic—occasionally capture the shades of humans, especially those of children who, out of ignorance, have offended them. Such shade-theft induces an illness known as *sigi nunu* (shade separation), a condition in which the body of the afflicted becomes increasingly cut off from human sociality (e.g., is unable to eat) while her or his shade becomes increasingly integrated into the realm of the *adaro* (e.g., is fed by *adaro*). One remedy is to send a dream-curer to retrieve the shade, which is said to be “blocked” (*haʼabwarasi*) by the *adaro* who hold it captive (cf. Fox 1924: 243–45). Deep-sea *adaro* are thought to stalk the shades of people at sea, typically young men out fishing for bonito (cf. Fox 1924: 124–29; Ivens 1927: 199–207). In 1993, I interviewed an Anglican dream-curer who described the condition of one *adaro ni matawa* victim he had rescued in a dream. The shade of the child had acquired a bonito-like grayish-white hue. It sat at the shoreline covered in foam that seemed to fetter it there. “The *adaro* of the sea made him crazy,” the curer said. “They blocked him; they didn’t allow him to come ashore; it’s his shade (*nunu*) that they blocked there.”

Sauniasi’s accounts of how people have been taken by the underground also evoke, I suggest, the sacrament of baptism, constructing a parallel between shade-theft by deep-sea *adaro* and an implicitly perverted form of the Christian conversion rite. Of the Malaitan who pursues her she said, “That person didn’t tell me his name. They said that they had changed his name.” This combination of themes—immersion in water, children, and name chang-

ing—seems to draw, perhaps unconsciously, on the model of baptism as a fundamental transformation, an often socially fractious death and rebirth into another category (Romans 6:3–11; cf. Jebens 2005: 142). It may also entail “within the object itself” (Bakhtin 1984: 196) an internal polemic against Catholic (and Anglican) infant baptism, a practice Adventists reject as perpetrated on uncomprehending children without their commitment.

But if being taken by the underground is a form of Catholic baptism that is analogous to shade-abduction by *adaro*/fallen angels, it is also a process of Makiranization. In one way or another, all Arosi discourses about the underground army represent it as comprising people from diverse parts of the world. Yet they identify the underground with the primordial nature and power of Makira and with a true pan-Makiran language and *kastom*. Given this apparent tension within the constitution of the underground, different speakers attempt to account for how people from elsewhere can become one with something essentially Makiran. Some theorize that underground agents originating from elsewhere, especially Euroamericans, are the returned descendants of Makiran women taken from the island in the colonial past (Scott 2008). Others tell how Euroamericans in the army have become like true Makirans through either instruction from a *kakamora* or acquisition of a *kakamora* stone, the removable external organ where the power of a *kakamora* resides. Although Sauniasi values the nature and power of Makiran autochthony negatively, her accounts similarly supply a mechanism whereby the underground blocks those within it from their originary categories and assimilates them to the Makiran insular category. In Sauniasi's version of the underground, it is an abduction redolent of both shade-theft and baptism that effects this separation and integration. By reason of this sea change, Sauniasi's Malaitan contact “knew the language of this island.”

The nexus that Sauniasi constructs between the denominational category “Roman Catholic” and the emergent insular category “Makiran” discloses that, for her, these are both fundamentally *ontological* categories. Her model of the underground constitutes a project of interpreting these categories in terms of one another, a project that leads to their mutual transformation. For her as a Seventh-day Adventist, the Roman Catholic Church tends to take on the character of a transhistoric category synonymous with all beings who, following Satan, have chosen apostasy (cf. Jebens 2005: 137–38).<sup>7</sup> At the same time, however, for her as an Arosi person, there is no duality between one's moral disposition and one's autochthonous place. The two are aspects of a single ontological category, one that is still modeled as matrilineal and territory-specific but also increasingly as Makiran and insular. Thus, Sauniasi's conflation of the Adventist view of Roman Catholicism as an apostate ontology with her Arosi experience of Makiran-ness as an autochthonous ontology has two consequences. First, to the extent that she represents the underground as essentially

both Makiran and Roman Catholic, she territorializes the Adventist category of Roman Catholicism qua apostasy; she gives Catholicism a particular emplaced substance. But, second, by virtue of this same conflation she demonizes Makira and Makiran ontology.

### Negative ethno-theologies of place

Anthropologists have moved beyond models of Christianity as a force that necessarily deterritorializes believers (e.g., McDonald 2001; Jorgensen 2005). Increasingly, we recognize that Christianity can lead, as Debra McDougall states, “to the articulation of novel types of social groups and new mythical connections to territory” (2009: 8). The contrasting discourses I have presented here well illustrate how different Christianities can impinge on people’s relationship to place. Just as there can be what Joel Robbins terms “negative nationalisms” (1998), there can be negative or place-demonizing ethno-theologies that articulate the presence rather than the absence of such a relationship.

Arguably, the foundational link between Seventh-day Adventism and ideologies of American destiny inscribe a negative nationalism and the demonization of a particular place (apostate America) at the heart of Adventism (E. White 1990: 242–51; cf. Bull and Lockhart 2007). In ways that parallel Adventist identifications of America as the second beast of Revelation 13, the couple profiled here identifies the Makiran underground army—and thus Makira—as a power in the service of the dragon (Satan) and the first beast (the Pope/Church of Rome). But for these Arosi Adventists, place-demonizing ethno-theology is further complicated by a locally autochthonous ontology that can be freed from Satanic power only when Christ returns to purify the earth of apostate elements and bequeath it to the faithful.

Sauniasi’s experiences highlight this Arosi Adventist dilemma dramatically, revealing continuity with the premises of Arosi autochthonous ontology even at the heart of a strongly past-renouncing reflexive ethno-theology.<sup>8</sup> Agents from the underground have told her, she says, that her home lies on their “border,” the place where they come and go. Not only her Malaitan contact, but other beings and visions besiege her there, and she fears that she is going mad. “I’ve seen these things ... and my head is mental,” she said. Her torment is a manifestation of demonic possession, not of an individual but of an island—of Makira as the ground of her being (cf. Keller 2005: 158–59). And her experience of the place where she lives, Rohu, as an area where the army is intensively present expresses her sense that her essential Makiran being is intimate and inescapable. It is as though the very ground in which she is rooted is trying to open up and swallow her.<sup>9</sup>

Sauniasi’s identification of Rohu as a “border” semantically engages those discourses that characterize Arosi as the “boundary” (*tarihana*) between hu-

man history and the end times, but it may also, I suggest, voice the language and sense of a passage by Ellen G. White, much quoted in Adventist literature: "The people of God are nearing the borders of the eternal world" (2005: 148).<sup>10</sup> For Sauniasi, however, as for other Arosi, Rohu is both the spatial and temporal limit of this world and a passage that connects the surface with the underground. The image of a border, accordingly, also conveys her experience of living at an anti-type of Bethel, the place where Jacob saw angels coming and going between heaven and earth (Genesis 28:10–17).<sup>11</sup>

Curiously, although Sauniasi clearly suffers genuine distress from her experiences, both she and Orimanu derive a paradoxically grave glamor from what amounts to their autochthonous bondage to the underground. The couple is well known throughout Arosi for their accounts of the army, and they seem to take pride in the terrible privilege of belonging to an unholy place. Sauniasi almost boasted: "My husband is a really senior mature man. People run to him from Arosi 1, people from down here, out there—they ask him about his stories. It's like he lives with them [the underground] down there." And Orimanu himself said: "Lots of people ask me. Those things are with us, the true core of that thing is with us. It isn't at another place."

Despite the eschatological orientation of their Adventist faith, Sauniasi and Orimanu do not experience themselves as in Makira but not of it, and they are, as much as others, ethno-theologians of place in the dialogic production of the Makiran underground. They too are narrating Makira as a chosen land, but one chosen by Satan. Many apocalyptically oriented Christians, it is true, regard the whole of creation as given over to Satan, "the prince of this world" (John 12:31). Yet Sauniasi and Orimanu are saying that, within his anti-kingdom, Satan has further singled out Makira as his base in the Pacific. The island is consequently an anti-type of Israel, and Makirans are an anti-type of the elect, a doubly fallen people autochthonously vulnerable to Satan's deceptions. Such data confirm that place-demonizing ethno-theologies are not always indications of Christian territorial detachment or the means by which detachment from land advances; they may instead be new—sometimes disturbing—ways of experiencing place-based being and relationship.

### ***Kastom* mysticism versus denominational possession: Christian politics within the Makiran person**

I have argued that the dialogic construction of the underground carries on, as hidden polemic, longstanding Christian debates about the nature and value of the pre-Christian past. And I have pointed, more specifically, to how this hidden polemic constitutes denominational politics concerning the nature and destiny of Makira. It further remains to identify in these dialogic processes a Christian politics concerning the value and salvation of the Makiran per-

son. Just as the majority of Arosi discourses about the underground are past-affirming and exhibit positive constructions of Makira, they are also affirming of the autochthonous Makiran person. In fact, they elevate the Makiran person above others as not merely *on*, but *of* sacred ground and as intrinsically one with a holy power that God has placed in Makira. But the Adventist-inflected discourses of Sauniasi and Orimanu, which assess the pre-Christian past and Makira as the work and abode of Satan, necessarily assess the Makiran person as deluded and possessed by Satan.

Those Arosi who value the idea of the underground positively experience the autochthonous ontology of Makiran personhood as a privileged condition that they seek to embrace and activate in themselves. They look forward to a time when the army will purge Makira of alien influences and restore true *kastom* to its original force. In anticipation of this time, and in order to hasten it, they desire to revitalize Makiran *kastom* not only by codifying what elders remember, but also by incubating its return within themselves. Developing an approach to *kastom* that I have elsewhere described as *kastom* mysticism (Scott 2011), these Arosi assume that any member of a truly autochthonous Makiran matrilineage enjoys continuity of being with the island and with the primordial power instilled in it by God. Accordingly, they hope that the Makiran *kastom* with which they are fundamentally one will renew itself by sending them dreams or insights into prophecies or even encounters with agents from the underground. They hope, in other words, to realize their core Makiran natures, their inner underground.

This goal of the Arosi *kastom* mystics to be, in effect, reduced to their unadulterated Makiran-ness is, I suggest, the inversely valued analogue to what Sauniasi says becomes of Makirans taken by the underground. Sauniasi appears to assume that, whereas people from other islands become Makiranized when taken by the underground, Makirans become reduced to their core Makiran autochthony rather than assimilated to another island category. It is furthermore because Makirans on the surface remain mixed with people from elsewhere that they cannot see Makirans who have been taken.<sup>12</sup> The *kastom* mystics' eschatological hope of returning to Makiran purity is Sauniasi's worst nightmare. Those who wait eagerly for the underground to restore the primordial wholeness of Makiran language and *kastom* see such a state of unalloyed oneness with their island as salvation. Sauniasi sees it as the road to annihilation.

Far from being the foundation for a *kastom* mysticism, unity of being with Makira is, for Sauniasi, a predisposition to demonic possession—a condition she experiences as being “mental.” This madness-inducing demonic possession could also be described as denominational possession. Sauniasi experiences her Makiran ontology as subject to Satan, but subject to Satan by reason of a deep-seated Roman Catholic presence in and control over her island.

As an autochthonous Makiran, she is possessed by Satan insofar as Makira is possessed by Rome. And this denominational possession is the source of agonizing competition between her Satanic Roman Catholic ontology and her faithful Adventist aspirations for a redemption that will remove Satan from Makira and thus from her. In Sauniasi, the image of humanity as a battleground between God and Satan takes on new meaning (cf. Keller 2005: 160). She is a microcosm of Makira as that ground of battle, with Rome and Satan in current occupation of the field. Her situation shows, finally, that because denominational categories can in some contexts also be ontological categories, Christian politics can be a dynamic within the person as much as across institutional church lines.

In sum, the Christian politics that inheres in Sauniasi and Orimanu's discourses about the underground and in themselves as autochthonous SDA Makirans is a Christian politics with a difference. Their predicament of being essential Roman Catholics against their will directs anthropological attention to the fact that the terms of Christian plurality can have different meanings in different contexts. It also reveals unexpected dimensions of what denominational competition can be about and where it can be located. As well as constituting, perhaps, social friction by another name, or contention for influence, or proselytizing rivalry, it may also condense existentially critical theological debates about the moral quality of certain kinds of persons and the nature of the salvation they require. Are Makirans less fallen than others and thus capable of realizing an inner godly being? Or are they more fallen than others and thus susceptible to realizing their inner affinity with Satan? And what—this internal Christian politics ultimately asks—needs to be added to or subtracted from autochthonous Makiran persons in order to make them acceptable to God?

## Notes

Research for this chapter was supported by the Wenner-Gren Foundation and the Economic and Social Research Council (Grant No: RES-000-23-1170). Versions were presented at the 2009 AAA meeting in Philadelphia and the Christian Politics in Oceania workshop (Monash University, Melbourne, July 2010). I thank the participants at these events for sharing stimulating dialogue. For their suggestions and insights, I especially thank Matthew Engelke, Ben Hall, Dan Jorgensen, Debra McDougall, Krista Ovist, and Matt Tomlinson. For designing the map, I gratefully acknowledge Mina Moshkeri Upton. My main debt, however, is to the people of Arosi, especially the couple profiled here. I also thank the members of the Ena Branch Sabbath School for their teaching and generous hospitality—particularly Agnes O'onihā'a, John Avasi, and Reuben Homwara. Special recognition is due to Casper Kaukeni, whose assistance has always been invaluable to my research.

1. This paragraph and the next condense analyses developed in Scott 2007.

2. Such interpretations are central to Adventist Bible study and are reiterated in literature used in Arosi today. I interviewed several Adventists who had completed a seminar series that teaches: "Pagan Rome's power and authority was taken by Papal Rome" (Revelation Seminars n.d.: Lesson 21; cf. Marcussen 2004).
3. For examples of colonized people assimilating recent historical events to cosmogonic events, see Errington and Gewertz 1994; Scott 2008; Turner 1988.
4. Pope John Paul II died on 2 April 2005.
5. Mamaloni was not Catholic; his earliest religious education was in the SSEC, but he later joined the Anglican Church of Melanesia.
6. I thank Ben Hall for prompting me to recognize these similarities. Sauniasi's fears of harassment at sea by demonic agents who want to compel her to forsake her Adventist faith also resonate with narratives of early SDA converts in Marovo Lagoon (New Georgia, Solomon Islands) accosted at sea by "spirits" who threaten to kill them if they do not renounce their new religion (Cormack 1944: 161).
7. Ellen G. White analyzes creation, and Christendom within it, as "divided into two great classes" (1990: 251), the faithful and the apostate. There is, moreover, a tendency within some Adventist literature to assimilate the latter to the Roman Catholic Church, treated as Satan's transhistorical dominion.
8. Similarly, cultural rupture is often legible in strongly past-affirming reflexive ethno-theologies, recommending a both/and approach to the question of continuity and rupture (Scott 2007: 303).
9. Sauniasi's experiences parallel in mood and imagery the persecution narratives found in American Adventist "time of trouble" novels (e.g., Egbert 1999; McLeod 2005). To my knowledge, Sauniasi has not read such novels; her experiences represent a distinctively Arosi expression of a general Adventist anxiety.
10. I interviewed Sauniasi on 25–26 July 2006. It may be significant that this passage is quoted in Lesson 1 (24–30 June 2006) of the quarterly Bible study guide distributed to SDA members (Goldstein, ed. 2006: 9).
11. Whereas Bethel is a passage between heaven and earth, I found no warrant for inferring that Sauniasi and Orimanu regard Rohu as a trapdoor to hell. They said nothing to suggest that they conflate the underground with hell. This may reflect their adherence to Ellen G. White's annihilationism, her teaching that God will destroy rather than eternally torture Satan and his followers (1990: 300–5).
12. It may therefore be the case that Sauniasi's reports of having seen Mamaloni (a Makiran) reveal that, in those moments, she understood herself to have been effectively though temporarily taken by the underground. Alternatively, her experience of being able to see Mamaloni may be a manifestation of her fear that her mental condition is an indication she is succumbing to the state of exclusively Makiran ontology to which *kastom* mystics aspire.

## References

- Allen, Matthew G. 2009. "Resisting RAMSI: Intervention, Identity and Symbolism in Solomon Islands." *Oceania* 79, no. 1: 1–17.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail M. 1981. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press.

- . 1984. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- . 1986. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, eds. C. Emerson and M. Holquist, trans. V. W. McGee. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail M./Pavel N. Medvedev. 1985. *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics*, trans. A. J. Wehrle. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Barrow, G. Lennox. 1945. Tour of Arosi, July. BSIP 9/I/F1. Solomon Islands National Archives, Honiara.
- Bennett, Judith. 1987. *Wealth of the Solomons: A History of a Pacific Archipelago, 1800–1978*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Bull, Malcolm, and Keith Lockhart. 2007. *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Cormack, James E. 1944. *Isles of Solomon*. Washington, DC: Review and Herald.
- Cusack, Mary Francis. 1896. *The Black Pope: A History of the Jesuits*. London: Marshall, Russell, and Co.
- Dureau, Christine. 1998. "Decreed Affinities: Nationhood and the Western Solomon Islands." *Journal of Pacific History* 33, no. 2: 197–220.
- Eco, Umberto. 1997. *The Search for the Perfect Language*, trans. James Fentress. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Egbert, Elaine. 1999. *The Edge of Eternity*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald.
- Errington, Frederick, and Deborah Gewertz. 1994. "From Darkness to Light in the George Brown Jubilee: The Invention of Nontradition and the Inscription of a National History in East New Britain." *American Ethnologist* 21, no. 1: 104–22.
- Forth, Gregory. 2008. *Images of the Wildman in Southeast Asia: An Anthropological Perspective*. London: Routledge.
- Foster, Robert J. 2002. *Materializing the Nation: Commodities, Consumption, and Media in Papua New Guinea*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Fox, Charles E. 1924. *The Threshold of the Pacific: An Account of the Social Organization, Magic and Religion of the People of San Cristoval in the Solomon Islands*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, and Trubner.
- Fraenkel, Jon. 2004. *The Manipulation of Custom: From Uprising to Intervention in the Solomon Islands*. Canberra: Pandanus Books, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University.
- Garriott, William, and Kevin Lewis O'Neill. 2008. "Who is a Christian?: Toward a Dialogical Approach in the Anthropology of Christianity." *Anthropological Theory* 8, no. 4: 381–98.
- Goffman, Erving. 1974. *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Goldstein, Clifford R., ed. 2006. *The Gospel, 1844, and Judgment*. Adult Sabbath School Study Guide, July–August–September. Warburton, Vic: Seventh-day Adventist Church (SPD).
- Hess, Sabine C. 2009. *Person and Place: Ideas and Practice of Sociality on Vanua Lava, Vanuatu*. Oxford: Bergahn.
- Hilliard, David L. 1966. "Protestant Missions in the Solomon Islands, 1849–1942." Ph.D. dissertation, Australian National University.
- . 1969. "The South Sea Evangelical Mission in the Solomon Islands: The Foundation Years." *Journal of Pacific History* 4: 41–64.

- . 1978. *God's Gentlemen: A History of the Melanesian Mission, 1849–1942*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press.
- Hughes, Bill. 2002. *The Secret Terrorists*. Tangerine, FL: Truth Triumphant.
- . 2004. *The Enemy Unmasked*. Eustis, FL: Truth Triumphant.
- Ivens, W. G. 1927. *Melanesians of the South-east Solomon Islands*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, and Trubner.
- Jebens, Holger. 2005. *Pathways to Heaven: Contesting Mainline and Fundamentalist Christianity in Papua New Guinea*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Jorgensen, Dan. 2005. "Third Wave Evangelism and the Politics of the Global in Papua New Guinea: Spiritual Warfare and the Recreation of Place in Telefolmin." *Oceania* 75, no. 4: 444–61.
- Kabutaaulaka, Tarcisius Tara. 2001. "Beyond Ethnicity: The Political Economy of the Guadalcanal Crisis in Solomon Islands." State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project Discussion Paper 01/1. Canberra: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University.
- Keesing, Roger M. 1978. "Politico-Religious Movements and Anti-Colonialism on Malaita: Maasina Rule in Historical Perspective." *Oceania* 48, no. 4: 241–61; 49, no. 1: 46–73.
- Keller, Eva. 2005. *The Road to Clarity: Seventh-Day Adventism in Madagascar*. New York: Palgrave.
- Laracy, Hugh M. 1976. *Marists and Melanesians: A History of Catholic Missions in the Solomon Islands*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Laracy, Hugh M., ed. 1983. *Pacific Protest: The Maasina Rule Movement, Solomon Islands, 1944–1952*. Suva, Fiji: University of the South Pacific.
- Mannheim, Bruce, and Dennis Tedlock. 1995. "Introduction." In *The Dialogic Emergence of Culture*, eds. Dennis Tedlock and Bruce Mannheim. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Marcussen, A. Jan. 2004 [1983]. *National Sunday Law*. Thompsonville, IL: Amazing Truth Publications.
- McDonald, Heather. 2001. *Blood, Bones and Spirit: Aboriginal Christianity in an East Kimberley Town*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.
- McDougall, Debra. 2004. "The Shifting Ground of Moral Community: Christianity, Property, and Place in Ranongga (Solomon Islands)." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago.
- . 2009. "Christianity, Relationality and the Material Limits of Individualism: Reflections on Robbins's *Becoming Sinners*." *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 10, no. 1: 1–19.
- McLeod, Merikay. 2005. *Now!* New York: TEACH Services.
- Mondragón, Carlos. 2009. "A Weft of Nexus: Changing Notions of Space and Geographical Identity in Vanuatu, Oceania." In *Boundless Worlds: An Anthropological Approach to Movement*, ed. Peter Wynn Kirby. New York: Berghahn.
- Moore, Clive R. 2004. *Happy Isles in Crisis: The Historical Causes for a Failing State in Solomon Islands, 1998–2004*. Canberra: Asia Pacific Press.
- O'Brien, Claire. 1995. *A Greater Than Solomon Here: A Story of Catholic Church in Solomon Islands, 1567–1967*. Honiara, Solomon Islands: Catholic Church Solomon Islands.
- Revelation Seminars: A Bible Prophecy Adventure. N.d. Lesson 21: Mystic Babylon the Harlot. N.p.

- Robbins, Joel. 1998. "On Reading 'World News': Apocalyptic Narrative, Negative Nationalism and Transnational Christianity in a Papua New Guinea Society." *Social Analysis* 42, no. 2: 103–30.
- Sayes, Shelley A. 1976. "The Ethnohistory of Arosi, San Cristobal." M.A. thesis, University of Auckland.
- Scales, Ian. 2007. "The Coup Nobody Noticed: The Solomon Islands Western State Movement in 2000." *Journal of Pacific History* 42, no. 2: 187–209.
- Scott, Michael W. 2005. "I was Like Abraham': Notes on the Anthropology of Christianity from the Solomon Islands." *Ethnos* 70, no. 1: 101–25.
- . 2007. *The Severed Snake: Matrilineages, Making Place, and a Melanesian Christianity in Southeast Solomon Islands*. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.
- . 2008. "Proto-People and Precedence: Encompassing Euroamericans Through Narratives of 'First Contact' in Solomon Islands." In *Exchange and Sacrifice*, eds. Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.
- . 2011. "The Makiran Underground Army: *Kastom* Mysticism and Ontology Politics in Southeast Solomon Islands." In *Made in Oceania: Social Movements, Cultural Heritage and the State in the Pacific Islands*, eds. Edvard Hviding and Knut M. Rio. Wantage: Sean Kingston Publishing.
- . 2012. "The Matter of Makira: Colonialism, Competition, and the Production of Gendered Peoples in Contemporary Solomon Islands and Medieval Britain." *History and Anthropology* 23, no. 1: 115–48.
- Steley, Dennis. 1983. "Juapa Rane: The Seventh-day Adventist Mission in the Solomon Islands, 1914–1942." M.A. thesis, University of Auckland.
- . 1989. "Unfinished: The Seventh-day Adventist Mission in the South Pacific, Excluding Papua New Guinea, 1886–1986." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Auckland.
- Tomlinson, Matt. 2009. *In God's Image: The Metaculture of Fijian Christianity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Turner, Terence. 1988. "Ethno-Ethnohistory: Myth and History in Native South American Representations of Contact with Western Society." In *Rethinking History and Myth: Indigenous South American Perspectives on the Past*, ed. Jonathan D. Hill. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Verguet, Léopold. 1854. *Histoire de la première mission catholique au Vicariat de Mélanésie, par C. M. Léopold Verguet, Missionnaire Apostolique, S. M. de 1844 à 1884*. Carcassonne: Imprimerie de P. Labau.
- White, Ellen G. 1990 [1888]. *The Great Controversy*. Silver Springs, MD: Better Living Publications.
- . 2005 [1917]. *The Story of Prophets and Kings: As Illustrated in the Captivity and Restoration of Israel*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press.
- White, Geoffrey M. 1978. "Big Men and Church Men: Social Images in Santa Isabel, Solomon Islands." Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, San Diego.
- . 2001. "Natives and Nations: Identity Formation in Postcolonial Melanesia." In *Places and Politics in an Age of Globalization*, eds. Roxann Prazniak and Aril Dirlik. Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

## The Generation of the Now

### *Denominational Politics in Fijian Christianity*

MATT TOMLINSON

Fiji's Christian landscape is steeply contoured, with eruptions and erosion at the fault lines between churches. The nation's four coups since 1987 have pulsed with the religious motivations and justifications of many participants, and to speak of Fijian politics is necessarily to speak, at least in part, of Christian denominationalism. In this chapter, I analyze a sermon delivered by the senior pastor of the New Methodist Christian Fellowship at an evangelical rally held in Suva in June 2009. The preacher, Atunaisa Vulaono, declared that all styles of worship are acceptable, but his views on the nature of people's relationship with God distinguished his position sharply from those of mainline churches. Moreover, his statements about the conjunction of religion and politics pitted him against the country's largest denomination, the Methodist Church of Fiji and Rotuma.

I begin this chapter with a brief overview of Fiji's recent religious-political history. Next, I analyze the distinctive features of Vulaono's sermon, including his explicit support of the military-led government. In the third section I continue this analysis, focusing on the theme of *newness* which Vulaono emphasizes to distinguish his aims from those of other churches and to align his aims with those of the government. As Robbins (2007) has argued, ideologies of rupture and newness are central to many Christian understandings of time and belief, in contrast to anthropological assumptions of deep cultural continuity. I extend Robbins' argument and develop it ethnographically by examining the different articulations of newness at play in Fijian religious politics. Although both the mainline "old" Methodists and the New Methodists emphasize the force and necessity of Christian rupture, they differ sharply in their evaluations of newness as a source of legitimacy.

#### **Fiji's Christian landscape**

The first known Christian evangelists in Fiji were a Tahitian named Taharaa and two Mooreans named Hatai and Arue. The London Missionary Society

sent them to the Lau islands of eastern Fiji in 1830, but then, inexplicably, failed to support them (Thornley 1995, 1996; see also Wood 1978: 21–24). The LMS then agreed that it would focus its efforts on Samoa and leave Fiji to the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. The WMMS sent David Cargill and William Cross to Fiji in 1835. Like their Polynesian predecessors, Cargill and Cross landed on Lakeba Island in the Lau group. Both men had worked previously in Tonga, so Lau was a logical step not only geographically but also culturally, as it had a vigorous Tongan presence—so vigorous, indeed, that Tongan Christians often combined their early evangelical efforts in Fiji with military campaigns.

In the first two decades of their mission, the Wesleyans made slow gains. They experienced dramatic success beginning with the conversion of the paramount chief Ratu Seru Cakobau in 1854. (“Ratu” is an honorific used for chiefs.) The year after his conversion, Ratu Cakobau’s forces, aided by Tongan soldiers, won the decisive victory at the Battle of Kaba that ended a twelve-year war against the chiefdom of Rewa. His conversion gave the war a “transcendental level” of religious significance (Sahlins 2004: 19 n. 6), exemplified in the statement of one Fijian chief who declared that Christianity “is true or Kaba would not have been taken” (Thornley 2002: 80). Two years before Ratu Cakobau’s conversion, the Methodist Church had slightly more than 5,000 members in Fiji; by the time the islands became a British colony in 1874, the number was almost 125,000 (Thornley 1979: 295). Events of the mid-1850s decisively put Methodism into a central and dominant position in Fijian religious politics.

The missionaries had brought a new religion, one whose sacred text announces its newness in verses such as 2 Corinthians 5:17 (“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”). During the mission encounter, Fijian converts did not necessarily identify Christianity’s newness as a source of legitimacy, however. Elsewhere, I have argued that missionaries and converts debated both truth and efficacy in religious practice, with missionaries seeing the two categories as fundamentally connected and evangelized Fijians sometimes questioning that connection (Tomlinson 2009a); the claim that legitimacy derives from newness does not seem to have arisen. Indeed, in an anticolonial resistance movement of the late nineteenth century, a Fijian prophet argued compellingly that the Bible was really a Fijian book about Fijian spirits in a Fijian landscape, but that it had been misrepresented by foreign missionaries (Kaplan 1995).<sup>1</sup> Below, I turn to the topic of newness and oldness in present-day Fijian Christianity and consider its paradoxes in detail.

Once established as the dominant denomination in Fiji, the Methodists tried to fend off challenges to their authority. Three main sources of competition were Roman Catholic missionaries, Indian immigrants, and new evan-

gical sects. In 1842, a Fijian Catholic catechist named Mosese Monatavai was placed at Lakeba by the French priest Jean Baptiste Pompallier. Two years later, French priests from the Society of Mary came to stay, accompanied by converts from Wallis ('Uvea) and Tonga (Buatava 1996: 174). They were not welcomed initially, but eventually "found that they were welcomed in places that had either been past enemies of Bau [Ratu Cakobau's chiefdom] or resented the growing Tongan influence in Fiji" (Thornley 1979: 295). Catholic gains infuriated the Wesleyans and led to conflict. On the island of Rotuma, Methodists and Catholics fought each other violently during the 1870s, including a seven-month war between the churches in 1878 that led to the deaths of eighty-four people (Thornley 1979: 299; see also Garrett 1982: 284–85). Then, beginning in 1879, indentured laborers from South Asia were brought to Fiji to work on sugarcane plantations, and Methodist missionaries were alarmed at the possibility that these "heathen" arrivals might cause indigenous Fijians to backslide (Thornley 1973: 2). Despite their anxiety, the Methodists were slow to evangelize Fiji's migrants. When they did attempt to convert the "Fiji Indians," their efforts were largely unsuccessful. Finally, the Methodist Church has lost members to evangelical Christian denominations, especially in recent decades, as I explain below. These groups have never had as many members as the Methodists or Catholics, but on a small scale they have made dramatic gains. The Assemblies of God, which arrived in 1926, increased from less than three thousand members in the mid-1960s to more than thirty thousand by 1992; during the same period, Seventh-day Adventist membership in Fiji increased by 400 percent (Ernst 1994: 24, 50).

Fiji became an independent nation in 1970. Seventeen years later, its religious landscape convulsed when Lieutenant Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka executed two coups. In his view and the views of many of his supporters, indigenous Fijian political and economic interests were threatened by the interests of citizens of Indian descent (now generally called "Indo-Fijians" in academic literature). According to indigenous ethnonationalists, the situation became perilous in April 1987 when the multiethnic Labour Party won election and took control of government. Rabuka, a lay Methodist preacher who claimed to be on a mission from God, justified his coups in overtly religious terms: he linked his actions to the Biblical prophecies of Jeremiah and compared himself to the martyr Stephen, his namesake (Dean and Ritova 1988: 162). Regarding Indo-Fijians, Rabuka declared: "I appeal to all the Christian church leaders to concentrate on evangelising and converting the Hindus and Muslims," and he noted: "It will be a big challenge for us to convert them to Christianity ... we either go that way, or they convert us and we all become heathens" (*ibid.*: 121).

The 1987 coups divided the top leadership of the Methodist Church, with consequences that have lasted to the present. Although the church's president at the time, Josateki Koroi, denounced Rabuka's actions, he was ejected from

his own office in a “church coup” by hardliners in February 1989, and ethno-nationalists were elected to fill the top leadership positions at the next annual conference. In contrast, Fiji’s Catholic leaders “criticized the coup and reminded the Fijian leaders of the dangers of overprotecting their people” (Lal 1992: 286; see also Premdas 1995: 106–16). These events seemed to suggest a more aggressively fundamentalist and Methodist-dominated future for Fiji. Indeed, fundamentalists within the Church pushed for—and temporarily won—a ban on most commerce and recreation on Sundays; they also amplified their calls for Fiji to be declared a Christian state.<sup>2</sup>

Fiji’s third coup took place in 2000, publicly led by the civilian George Speight, a Seventh-day Adventist who took Rabuka as his model in some ways. Speight, with some support from a divided military, successfully ousted the government and held parliamentarians hostage for eight weeks, but he was then arrested and convicted of treason. The deposed Indo-Fijian prime minister, Mahendra Chaudhry, said in court that “rebels and armed men called him and detained parliamentarians ‘heathens’ and forced them to convert to Christianity” (Mafi 2002). Newland (2007: 305) notes that the Assemblies of God, Anglicans, United Pentecostal Church International of Fiji, Christian Mission Fellowship, and Seventh-day Adventists (despite Speight’s nominal membership in that church) publicly opposed the coup. The Methodist Church offered token criticism of Speight’s methods, but endorsed the caretaker military government.

The coups of 1987 and 2000 seemed superficially like a moment of triumph for militant Christianity, but they repelled some Methodists. Steven Ratuva (2002: 19) writes that “social and psychological discomfort created by the unsettling political situation in Fiji after the coups of 1987 and 2000 drove many to find spiritual solace in evangelical spiritualism,” that is, outside of Methodism. In the ten years after Rabuka’s coups, membership in the Methodist Church declined from almost three quarters of the indigenous population to two thirds. Between 1996 and 2007, Methodism’s membership declined proportionally further. Although Methodism is still the largest denomination for indigenous Fijians, it has suffered a serious decline over twenty years.<sup>3</sup>

One of the most notable consequences of the 2000 coup was the formation of a new politically active Christian organization. Leaders of the Assemblies of God felt that “the Fijian people were very much fragmented,” and asked the president of the Methodist Church at the time to convene a new meeting of denominations (Newland 2007: 305). This group became the Assembly of Christian Churches in Fiji (ACCF), which came to be “perceived as a think-tank” of Laisenia Qarase, the prime minister who led Fiji from 2000 to 2006 (*ibid.*: 308). An older organization, the Fiji Council of Churches (FCC), seemed to be practically displaced by the ACCF sometime in 2008. Relations between the ACCF and FCC became especially confused when a top Meth-

odist Church leader, Rev. Tuikilakila Waqairatu, chaired both groups at the same time. The important point for this chapter is that the ACCF, born of Speight's coup, became ascendant as a specifically political Christian organization that united the Methodist Church with smaller evangelical and Pentecostal denominations.

*Reversed polarities: The coup of 2006 and Methodist-Catholic rivalry*

Fiji's fourth coup, led by military commander Voreqe Bainimarama, was an aftershock to the events of 2000. In 2000, Bainimarama had attempted to calm the turmoil in Speight's wake by asking the president, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, to abdicate his position, after which he declared martial law (Lal 2006: 203). The armed forces were divided in their loyalties, however, and in November of that year members of an elite squad tried to assassinate the commander. They killed three loyalist soldiers, but Bainimarama escaped, and the mutiny was violently suppressed. Five rebel soldiers died, some possibly beaten to death after being arrested (Pacific Islands Report 2000; see also Field, Baba, and Nabobo-Baba 2005: 244).

The events seem to have galvanized Bainimarama's determination to "clean up" Fiji, but, to his consternation, the government in power from 2000 to 2006 maintained the status quo. Prime Minister Qarase began promoting a "Reconciliation, Tolerance and Unity" bill which seemed designed to pardon the aggressors of 2000, and his government even urged the president not to prosecute the mutinous soldiers who had tried to kill Bainimarama (Fraenkel 2007: 423–24). For these and other reasons, Bainimarama became an increasingly outspoken critic of Qarase's government, although the commander insisted that he would not execute a coup. He did, though, on 5 December 2006.

Now, for the first time, the Methodist Church became an overt and consistent opponent of coups. The church's assistant general secretary at the time, Tuikilakila Waqairatu, described the new coup as a "manifestation of darkness and evil" (Newland 2009: 190). In February 2007, the Methodists published a statement in the *Fiji Daily Post* newspaper titled "Here We Stand," echoing Martin Luther's famous line of protest. In the statement, the Church defended its previous support for the reconciliation bill as "part of the church's support for the concept of reconciliation and restorative justice as defined in Scripture," and argued that humanity's sinful nature meant that the military's "cleanup" efforts were fundamentally unsound: "The Bible is explicit in that Man was corrupt from the beginning. By our very nature, we are imperfect. The church therefore cannot agree with a clean up campaign to rid Fiji of corruption as a basis to justify the military's intervention in the mandate of a government elected by the people" (Methodist Church in Fiji 2007). Church leaders held monthlong prayer and fasting programs in July 2008 and March

2009 for God's will to prevail, and a statement in the program instructions for March 2009 sounded like a threat:

We know from the Bible that God became angry at the land and people [of Israel] because the Israelites neglected the true God. He withheld water from the land and a drought and famine came. He also sent locusts and wasps to eat the plants, and also increased the drought of the [land]. We should pray that our leaders remember that our blessings or our curses in the days ahead will largely depend on their decisions. (Methodist Church in Fiji 2009)<sup>4</sup>

Discourse about "curses" is widespread in Fijian Methodism, both at local levels in which kin groups attempt to extinguish any lingering evil influences of ancestral spirits and at the national level of political discourse. In the mid-1990s, Church officials told members of a constitutional review commission that Fiji should be declared a Christian state, warning, "We are ... of the view that if this is not recognized now then this nation is under a Divine curse" (Ryle 2005: 70). The suggestion that God might curse the country is therefore not a novel or surprising claim in Fijian Methodism, but it does represent a sharp reversal of the Church's previous relationship with the state, which had been intimate and mutually supportive during the years of Rabuka and Qarase.<sup>5</sup>

In contrast, the Catholic Church under the leadership of Archbishop Petero Mataca depicted the events of 2006 in a gently filtered light. The Catholics had not supported Rabuka's or Speight's coups, but several weeks after Bainimarama's takeover, the archbishop wrote an opinion piece in the *Fiji Times* in which he declared: "I wish the new interim government well in its efforts and I call upon all women and men of goodwill to assist in whatever way they can to rebuild our beloved country" (Mataca 2007). In October 2007, he joined Bainimarama as co-chair of the National Council for Building a Better Fiji, a group created partly to produce a blueprint on how to reform Fiji, the "Peoples Charter for Change, Peace and Progress."<sup>6</sup> Predictably, the Methodist Church was vociferously critical of the Charter, and conducted a campaign to get tens of thousands of church members to sign a petition in opposition to it.

Shortly after the coup, Bainimarama also received support from a prominent Catholic priest, the poverty activist Kevin Barr, who co-authored an opinion piece in the *Fiji Times* which implied that the coup was not really a coup because "it was not a swift, sudden and unexpected event" and because Bainimarama had been "very reluctant to take over the reins of government," although, in doing so, had created "a time of great opportunity" for Fiji to become a more just society (Baleinakorodawa, Barr, and Qalowasa 2006). Observing the leadership of Mataca and Barr, one scholar wrote caustically that "One can understand the satisfaction of the head of the Catholic Church, who having watched for decades, the Methodist Church at the helm of Fiji's leader-

ship, has now done his bit in the sun, to ‘take the country forward’. And his clerics will also be happy that ‘their’ charter proposal for electoral reform will be implemented, whatever the impact the coup has on the rest of the country” (Narsey 2008; see also Newland 2009: 196–99).

Archbishop Mataka faced criticism from members of his own church, however. Two Catholic paramount chiefs, the Roko Tui Dreketi and the Tui Namosi, opposed the archbishop’s political involvement (Newland 2009: 198). The president of the Catholic League, a lay organization, wrote to the pope and the Apostolic Nuncio in New Zealand in protest at Mataka’s actions (*Fiji Times* 2007). As a result of these criticisms, the archbishop apologized, but did not give up his post as co-chair of the National Council for Building a Better Fiji (Elbourne and Singh 2007).

The Methodist Church, in publicly opposing the government, found several allies among the evangelical denominations of the ACCF. For example, Suliasi Kurulo, leader of the Christian Mission Fellowship, denounced the coup as “unbiblical, ungodly, unconstitutional, unlawful, and unethical”; he had also criticized Speight’s coup (Newland 2009: 191; Newland 2007: 304–5). But one Protestant denomination explicitly aligned itself with the military-led government: the New Methodist Christian Fellowship, usually referred to as the “New Methodists.” Until recently, the church was led by two brothers, Waisea and Atunaisa (“Atu”) Vulaono. Unlike religious reformers such as Luther and Wesley, who did not actively seek separation from their home churches, the Vulaono brothers had little apparent interest in reforming mainline Methodism: they wanted to start something entirely new. Indeed, they want to start something whose legitimacy is grounded in its newness. For a brief period, they were successful.

## Crusading for God and government

In December 2008, Fiji’s police force launched a months-long evangelical Christian “crusade.” The crusade was a series of public rallies led by the Vulaonos’ older brother, Esala Teleni, a former rugby star and naval officer who had been appointed national police commissioner by Bainimarama as part of a campaign to install military officers in top civil service positions. Teleni was a passionate evangelical Christian who sought to impose his views and practices on nonbelievers, including members of his force. The police crusade, Teleni said in 2008, was necessary because “we are aiming for a 50 per cent reduction [in crime] by Christmas,” but humans could not accomplish this alone: “We firmly believe that this aim is achievable through divine intervention” (Vuruna 2008; see also Trnka 2011). He claimed that his effort had drawn wide support: “When we first sent out invitations to all Christian denominations around the country, we were pleased that none responded negatively” (*ibid.*).



Figure 3.1. Fiji Police Crusade parade, 21 December 2008.

One notable event within the crusade was a five-day rally held in the capital city, Suva, from 17 to 21 June 2009 called “Ruggers for Jesus.” This rally of “ruggers,” meaning rugby players, featured stars such as Vilimoni Delasau and Rupeni Caucau testifying about their faith, followed each evening by a sermon from an evangelical minister. It also included “action songs by police units ... [and] speeches by police officers. ... The volume was high and the wor-



Figure 3.2. Fiji Police Crusade parade, 21 December 2008.

ship style Pentecostal” (Titus 2009). Atunaisa Vulaono of the New Methodists preached on the final two nights of the rally; I attended the crusade on Saturday, June 20, and recorded his sermon. It was a muddy and drizzly night, with rain dripping off the corrugated iron roofs of makeshift pavilions in Sukuna Park, a small park in Suva’s city center.



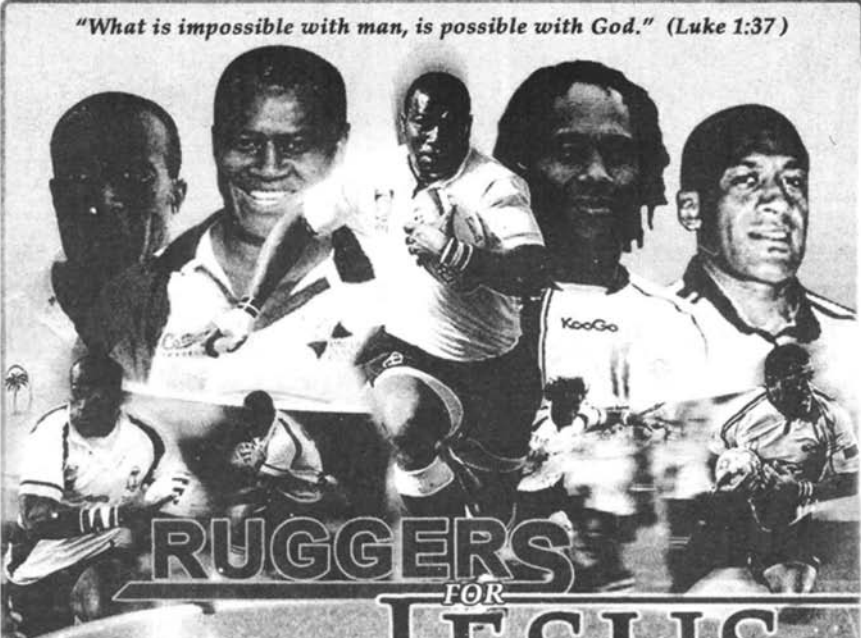
**Figure 3.3.** Atunaisa Vulaono of the New Methodist Church, Fiji. Photo courtesy Fiji Times Ltd.

In his sermon, to which I now turn, Vulaono states that denominational differences should not matter. At the same time, he emphasizes differences between his version of Christianity and the practices of mainline denominations like Methodism. “I can worship silently, I can worship playing the guitar,” he preaches at one point. “I can worship climbing on the roof. Doesn’t really matter. Your mind must be open to the style of worship that you encounter, amen.”<sup>7</sup> On their surface, these statements seem straightforwardly ecumenical, as if Vulaono is embracing all forms of Christian ritual, but as I will show below, he does criticize the practices of other churches. Moreover, the idea of



**Figure 3.4.** Policemen dancing onstage at “Ruggers for Jesus.” Photo by Paul Titus.

*"What is impossible with man, is possible with God." (Luke 1:37)*



**RUGGERS  
FOR  
JESUS**

**VENUE:** *Sukuna Park, Suva*

**DATE:** *June 17<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> 2009*

**TIME:** *11:00am - 2:00pm*  
*6:00pm - 9:00pm*

**PROGRAMME**

*Come and witness Former/Current Rugby  
Heroes testifying that Jesus is Lord.*

Sponsored by Fiji Police Force

Figure 3.5. "Ruggers for Jesus" program.

ecumenism is considered problematic by members of conservative denominations like Fijian Methodism, so to invoke it is to position oneself against them to some extent. The statement “I can worship climbing on the roof,” for example, can sound absurd and disrespectful to those who, like Methodists, emphasize displays of extreme respect and submissiveness to God.<sup>8</sup>

Regarding connections between church and state, Vulaono echoes American-style “dominion theology,” which promotes “the idea that Christians, and Christians alone, are Biblically mandated to occupy all secular institutions until Christ returns” (Diamond 1995: 246). He explicitly declares his support for Bainimarama’s government and justifies his position in religious terms:

*Original [Mixed Fijian and English]*

And I believe, and I believe as a pastor, as I believe as a man of God, it is my duty to take cue from the desire of the leader of the nation. E noqu itavi vakaitalatala na ka e vinakata na ka e vinakata tiko na iliuliu ni matanitu me yacova ko Viti e noqu itavi vakaitalatala meu cakacakataki yau e na vision e vinakata tiko na iliuliu ni matanitu. If not, I’m a rebellion person. Huh? Kevaka iko saqata na ituvatuva ni matanitu iko a rebellion person, go and find another nation. Kaya na Ivolatabu o era sa turaga tu, ko era sa veiliutaki tu, sa mai vua na Kalou. ... Kena ibalebale, ke o iko beca, ko beca tiko na Kalou. Veitalia ko lotu, veitalia ko talatala, veitalia o qase levu, veitalia o qase lailai. Romans thirteen, the Bible says Honor those who are in leadership because those in leadership are selected by God. He promotes, He demotes!

*Translation*

And I believe, and I believe as a pastor, as I believe as a man of God, it is my duty to take my cue from the desire of the leader of the nation. It is my responsibility as a minister, what the leader of the government wants, what he wants for Fiji, it’s my responsibility as a minister to make it happen for the vision the leader of the government wants. If not, I’m a rebellious person. Eh? If you are against the government’s plans, you are a rebellious person, go and find another nation. The Bible says those who are chiefs, they who lead are from God [that is, ordained as leaders by God]. ... This means, if you reject, you’re rejecting God. Never mind that you go to church, never mind that you’re a minister. Never mind that you’re the president of the church, never mind that you’re a minor official. Romans thirteen, the Bible says Honor those who are in leadership because those in leadership are selected by God. He promotes, He demotes!

In supporting the government, Vulaono characterizes it as a guiding light: “it is my duty to take my cue from the desire of the leader of the nation.” In

justifying this position, he refers to the Bible passage Romans 13:1–2, verses which are frequently referred to in Fijian Christian discourse (see also Robbins, this volume). They read, in part: “there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.” The verses are often applied to traditional chiefs—indeed, note that Vulaono begins his discussion of the passage by stating, “The Bible says those who are chiefs” (*Kaya na Ivolatabu o era sa turaga tu*)—but he then moves to discuss “leadership” generally. Indeed, Vulaono actually uses the verses to support the authority of the military-led government, and not the traditional chiefly system. His logic is slippery but clear: leaders are given their authority by God; God has now put Voreqe Bainimarama in charge of Fiji; because church ministers do the work of God, they must support Bainimarama’s government. Although Vulaono does not say so explicitly, one of the targets of his criticism is evidently the Methodist Church, supporters of the chiefly system and leading critics of Bainimarama.

Elaborating his vision of the church’s role in service to government, Vulaono criticizes churches that “discuss government matters. They, they’re not, they aren’t politicians, and they want to talk about things they haven’t studied.”<sup>9</sup> At this point, he explains that his own task is simply to pray, but he also characterizes himself as a prophet—someone with a special message from God that the nation needs to hear. And it is a distinctly political message:

It is our duty as a church to pray and fast and let God be God. Lelevu era nanuma tiko ni, “o Talatala Atu, o koya sa taura tiko na nodra mona na sotia, sa taura tale tiko ga nodra mona na ovisa.” Sega ... O yau, noqu itavi ga, masu tiko, masu tiko, masu tiko. Noqu itavi ga na masu. ... Vanua sara ga oqo o Sukuna Park au a kaya kina, two thousand five, ena dua na one week crusade e ke, “A time will come that the Lord will use the discipline force to take the gospel to the nation.” “Talatala, why?” Because we are disciplined anyway. The gospel is about discipline, emeni. Vanua sara ga qo, vanua sara ga qo au vunau tiko kina. I remember two thousand five, ena yaco na gauna na Kalou ena vakayagataki ira na ovisa

It is our duty as a church to pray and fast and let God be God. Lots of people think, “Rev. Atu, he is brain-washing the soldiers, he’s also brain-washing the police.” No ... Me, my responsibility, is to pray, pray, pray. Prayer is my responsibility. ... In this very place, Sukuna Park, I said in 2005, in a one-week crusade here, “A time will come that the Lord will use the disciplined forces to take the gospel to the nation.” “Reverend, why?” Because we are disciplined anyway. The gospel is about discipline, amen. This very place, this very place I was preaching. I remember two thousand five, [saying] the time will come when God will use the police and the soldiers to carry the good news. I didn’t study this in a school. I didn’t

kei ira na sotia me kauta na itukutuku vinaka. Au sega ni vulica ena dua na koronivuli. Au sega ni lako ena dua na bible school, au sega ni lai vulica mai. Revelation, revelation is the vision e download mai lomalagi to you. It's the download of information from God to you. If God can speak to Moses, If God can speak to Isaac, if God can speak to Jacob, if God can speak to Mary, why can't God speak to Atu? Tarogi ka dabe e yasamu, "Why can't God speak to you?"

go to a bible school, I didn't go to study it there. Revelation, revelation is the vision that heaven downloads to you. It's the download of information from God to you. If God can speak to Moses, If God can speak to Isaac, if God can speak to Jacob, if God can speak to Mary, why can't God speak to Atu? Ask the person sitting beside you, "Why can't God speak to you?"

Bainimarama's coup, as depicted by Vulaono, was arranged by God so that Fiji could receive the good news of Christianity. In one way, this claim seems to echo Rabuka's call more than twenty years earlier for the conversion of Fiji's Hindus and Muslims. After all, most indigenous Fijians' ancestors converted to Christianity more than a century and a half earlier, so the idea of introducing them to the gospel sounds anachronistic. Yet Vulaono does not seem to be explicitly concerned with the nation's non-Christian citizens: he does not rail against heathenism, nor does he poke fun at so-called wooden gods (as Methodists sometimes do in reference to Hinduism). Rather, his target seems to be Christians who do not share his evangelical impulse.

Vulaono rounds out his claim to being a prophet by denigrating education as insufficient for spiritual knowledge: "I didn't study this in a school. I didn't go to a bible school." This is a theme he expresses elsewhere in his sermon, too, declaring at one point, "Gone are [the days when] people hid behind [the reputation of] their bible schools, gone are [the days of] people with their degrees and their knowledge. People are needed who can work wonders, work miracles."<sup>10</sup> Members of many Fijian Christian denominations attend Bible schools, not only Methodists, but Vulaono waves them all away: worship is not a matter of study. Despite its dismissive tone, his core claim is not necessarily controversial. A strain of anti-intellectualism runs through Fijian Methodist discourse, too. But Vulaono goes further, urging his audience to seek inspiration directly from God: "Ask the person sitting beside you, 'Why can't God speak to you?'"

Like many evangelicals, he emphasizes a personal relationship with divinity, one with dimensions beyond ritual's formalism. In his view, prayer is the key practice by which Christians can align themselves properly with God's plans and cultivate their relationship with Him. As he puts it with notable

insistence, “If you want to be a person for the new generation, for the new nation, you need to pray and pray and pray and pray and pray and pray. And pray and pray and pray and pray and pray!”<sup>11</sup> In contrast to his earlier assertion that one can worship in any style, Vulaono now offers a specific model to his audience. He begins by chastising his listeners for not praying enough: “Some church people today, it’s really difficult for you to pray. Yeah. Bible study, you run [to it], yeah. Time for worship, you run [to it]. Crusade, you run [to it]. Time to pray, [you] just relax.”<sup>12</sup> Then he explains the nature of prayer and how it should be practiced properly:

If you want to be a powerful person, then you must be a prayer warrior. Vakasausau mada ena tikina ya. Aleluya. Rogoca: E lai caka, e lai caka na cakacaka mana baleta na masu e ... caka tiko. O rau qo na masu na connection, na masu na relationship, na masu sa i koya e dua na, e dua na isema e tiko, oya na masu. Prayer is the communication between men and God. E sega ni: “Kemuni saka na Kalou mai lomalagi. O ni sa tawatubu, tawamudu.” Sega ni dua na ivalavala, it’s a relationship. “Turaga vina’ valevu, au sa tiko qo e Sukuna Park, sa vakarau tiko na lotu turaga. ... Vina’ valevu.” E sega ni tuvatuva. E sega ni dua na ikabakaba mo kaba vaqo, kaba vaqo, kaba vaqo. It’s a relationship. “Dad, please give me ten dollars. Dad, I’m [inaudible]. Dad, I’m going here.” It’s a relationship. E sega ni dua na ka me vakaisulutaki, vakaoveralltaki, vakalikutaki, vakaisulurataki. Emeni.

If you want to be a powerful person, then you must be a prayer warrior. Put your hands together for that. Hallelujah. Listen: Miracles happen, happen because of prayer. It’s these two things: prayer is a connection, prayer is a relationship, prayer is a, there is a connection, that’s prayer. Prayer is the communication between men and God. It’s not: “You, sir, God in heaven. You are entire, eternal.”<sup>13</sup> It’s not a practice, it’s a relationship. “Lord, thanks a lot, I’m here in Sukuna Park, Lord the service is ready to begin. ... Thanks a lot.” It’s not a structure. It’s not a ladder to be climbed like this, climbed like this, climbed like this. It’s a relationship. “Dad, please give me ten dollars. Dad, I’m [inaudible]. Dad, I’m going here.” It’s a relationship. It’s not something to get dressed for, to put on overalls for, to put on a skirt for, to put on an underskirt for. Amen.

In this part of his sermon, Vulaono is not only critical of other denominations, he is sarcastic. When he says that one should not pray like this—“You, sir, God in heaven. You are entire, eternal”—he is imitating Methodist prayer’s formality and honorific address toward God, and his voice takes on a tone of dopiness. He draws out the syllable *lou* in *Kalou* (God), sounding like a dimwitted dog in a television cartoon. In contrast to this kind of unthinking and formulaic

prayer, Vulaono urges audience members to treat God like a benevolent dad, chatting about where one is going and asking Him for ten dollars. In uttering these lines, Vulaono's tone slides into a casual, conversational groove.

The excerpts I have presented so far are meant to illustrate the evangelical themes that distinguish the New Methodists from mainline Christian congregations in Fiji, and to show that Vulaono's evangelical program is molded to serve the military-led government. As mentioned above, he argues that "If you are against the government's plans, you are a rebellious person," adding the hostile suggestion, "go and find another nation." His sermon resonates with the theme of the police crusade, building a better Fiji through disciplined Christian action with a strongly evangelical cast. But the key distinction of his performance—the thing that most sharply differentiates the New Methodists from the "old" Methodists and that reinforces Vulaono's support of the government—is his repeated implication that newer things are inherently more legitimate than older ones.

### To worship the new

Recently, Joel Robbins has argued persuasively that anthropologists have had difficulty developing a coherent anthropology of Christianity because Protestant emphasis on newness—on radical rupture—violates anthropological expectations of deep cultural continuity (Robbins 2007; see also Keane 2007: 128). Here, I draw on Robbins' argument in order to understand the politicized situation of Fijian Protestantism and the denominational border between the Methodists and the New Methodists.

In the present, many Fijians describe the pre-Christian era in terms of darkness and the Christian era in terms of light—a common metaphor across cultures—but they also emphasize adherence to "tradition" as inherently valuable. Tradition "makes the present flow smoothly out of the past; from this perspective 'the coming of the light' did not violate indigenous cultural practice but revealed the inherent Christianity of the Fijian people" (Toren 1988: 697). Moreover, some claim that Fijian ancestors were ancient Israelites (Ratuvu 2002: 21; note also the Israeli flag in figure 3.1, above).

The equation of oldness and legitimacy is prominent and resonant in Fijian Methodism. In Methodist discourse, saying that something "is not new" means that it is acceptable, reliable, legitimate. For example, in May 1999, the superintendent Methodist minister at Tavuki village, Kadavu Island, ceremonially installed a man in an important church position even though the man was descended from one of Fiji's most notorious early opponents of Christianity. Several years earlier, the man's subclan (*mataqali*) had formally apologized to the Methodist Church for their ancestor's aggression, hoping that they would

thereby escape the lingering effects of his actions. After describing these events, the minister, Rev. Isikeli Serewai, declared: “this position is confirmed through God’s releasing [or rescuing] powers on the family. It isn’t something new, it isn’t a mistake.”<sup>14</sup> By this, he meant that although the nominee was an unlikely choice for the position, his subclan had done the right thing by apologizing in the traditional way, and that his appointment was therefore legitimate.

Another example of Methodist emphasis on the legitimacy of oldness comes from a sermon delivered on Pentecost Sunday, 1999, by the Tavuki village catechist, Tomasi Laveasiga. In a stretch of his sermon during which he discussed the nature of the Holy Spirit, Laveasiga stated that it was a not a new thing, and he extended this claim, declaring that the Bible itself was nothing new: “The Holy Spirit is not something new in the Bible. . . . The whole Bible is not something new. The Holy Spirit is God’s spirit. . . . God’s spirit is the Holy Spirit. In the Bible’s stories, the Holy Spirit is not something new.”<sup>15</sup> I suspect that he repeated this point to reassure his audience that he was staying firmly within the biblical boundaries of orthodox Methodism, while also trying to claim the territory of Pentecostals in case there were any audience members interested in knowing more about the vigorous new sects that emphasize the Holy Spirit so thoroughly in doctrine and practice.

A third and final example shows more clearly how Methodism’s consistent characterization of oldness as a source of legitimacy means that newer denominations are tainted by the simple fact of being new. This text comes from a sermon that Rev. Serewai preached at Nasegai village, Kadavu, in September 1998. He mentioned “the arrival of churches going on now in our land,” adding, “we receive the teachings of some churches, and many teachings get twisted.”<sup>16</sup> He explained:

Au sa vakadreta matua sara vei kemudou na qase: dou tudei, dou kakua sara ni yavalati. . . . Eda sa donumaka e dua na gauna tekivu cadra sara kina vakatotolo e Viti. Kaukauwa na nodra lotu na noda itabagone. Levu na veivuvale era sa moici vakasauri ka vakatotolo sara e na kaukauwa ni nodra toso na gone, ka era sa raica na gone, ka era sa taleitaka na gone. Era curumaka e na loma ni nodra vuvale. Sa laki tamoi kina na usutu kei na uto kei na suitu ni dua na vuvale. Paula vakadeitaka toka e na bogi edaidai:

I very strongly urge you elders: be firm, do not waver. . . . We are in a time [that is] beginning to come up very quickly in Fiji. Our youth’s religion is strong. Many families get twisted [turned around] suddenly and very quickly in the strength of the youths’ movement, and the youth see it, and the youth like it. They bring it into their families. This turns the backbone and the heart and the spine of a family. Paul confirms tonight: you elders, you are spiritual, you are mature. Stand properly. Stand firm. Because when you set

oi kemudou na qase, kemudou sa vakayalo, kemudou sa matua. Dou tu vakadodonu. Dou tudei. Baleta ni dou sa davo donu ka tudei e na donu tiko kina na ilakolako ni Lotu Wesele e Viti kei Rotuma [vei na] gone era na muri mai.

things straight and firm, the journey of the Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma [to the] children of the future will thereby be straight.

In this example, the minister takes the logic of “It isn’t something new, it isn’t a mistake” and applies it, inversely, to the new evangelical and Pentecostal denominations: they are new, therefore they are mistaken. Youth are excited by the new churches’ novelty and enjoy their disruptive power. Against these new denominations’ power to metaphorically twist and turn families about, Rev. Serewai urges elders to stand firm (see also Tomlinson 2009b: 92–93).<sup>17</sup>

In contrast to such emphasis on venerable stability, Atu Vulaono of the New Methodists treats newness as a defining feature of God’s plan. His sermon at Ruggers for Jesus begins with an exuberant declaration:

New people for new generation for new time. Na tamata vou ena gauna vou ena vanua vou. Hallelujah. Sa gadreva o vuravura nikua eso na tamata vou, so na vakasama vou, so na qaravi Kalou vou, and we are the generation of the now and God is counting on someone tonight—that you will make a difference to the nation, that you will impact the people on the street, that you will impact the shoeshine boys, that you will impact the soldiers, you will impact the police, you will impact the people in so—society, because you are the new person. Kaya vei koya e toka e yasamu “tamata vou.” Sega ni tamata makawa, tamata vou. Duatani na nomu rai, duatani na nomu nanuma, duatani na nomu vakasama, duatani! Emeni.

Lako qai lai vakawilika na Cakacaka, na kena wase tolu, tikina e dua me yacova na tikina e tinikarua. New

New people for a new generation for a new time. New people in a new time in a new land. Hallelujah. Today the world needs some new people, some new thoughts, some new kinds of worship, and we are the generation of the now and God is counting on someone tonight—that you will make a difference to the nation, that you will impact the people on the street, that you will impact the shoeshine boys, that you will impact the soldiers, you will impact the police, you will impact the people in so—society, because you are the new person. Say to the person beside you, “new person.” Not an old person, a new person. Your views are different, your ideas are different, your thoughts are different, different! Amen.

Go and study Acts chapter three, verses one to twelve. New generation, Jesus was nailed to the cross,

generation sa mai m—m—vakoti ko Jisu ki na kauveilatai, sa qai duri cake e so na tamata vou ni lotu. Fiji need a new church. Fiji need new mind. The things that are not done before ... We need to have a new mind to do new things. Emeni.

and now some new people of the church are rising, Fiji needs a new church. Fiji needs new minds. The things that are not done before ... We need to have a new mind to do new things. Amen.

In sharp contrast to Methodist preachers, Vulaono presents newness as thoroughly desirable: he demands new people, new thoughts, new worship, in a new Fiji. Among these new people he mentions “shoeshine boys” (young men in Suva who ply their trade on the sidewalks and who are often invoked as an emblem of the underclass) along with police and soldiers. The Bible passage he refers to, Acts 3:1–12, tells the story of an encounter between a lame man and Jesus’ disciples Peter and John. The man begs every day at a temple gate and expects the disciples to make a contribution, but instead Peter commands him to stand and walk in Jesus’ name. The man does, leaping about and amazing his onlookers. After citing the verses, Vulaono summarizes the story for his audience, concluding: “Old mindset, old thinking, old style. Then Peter and John broke through. New generation, new people, hallelujah.”<sup>18</sup>

For Vulaono, newness is both a spiritual and a political project. The two are inseparable. As noted above, he invoked the verses Romans 13:1–2 to argue that God had placed Bainimarama and his soldiers in charge of Fiji. Just before this part of his sermon, he brought Christianity and politics together by aligning his message with that of a speech given by Bainimarama:

Au sega ni kila na draki ni bula e tu e na vanua oqo o Sukuna Park ena bogi nikua. Kevaka ko iko e dua ko biligi tiko, o cati tiko, o iko mavoa tiko, kavoro tiko na nomu bula, you are in a right place at a right time because we have some people here, they are the generation of the now. Na Kalou e se’ni via raica na nomu leqa. Na Kalou e se’ni via raica nona, na, na incomplete tu vei iko. Na Kalou e raica tiko ga na yalomu. Vakasausau mada vua na Kalou. Emeni. Emeni. New generation. New people. New nation! Au vakavinavinaka na prime minister ni noda vanua, na vica na siga sa oti,

I don’t know what the atmosphere is like here in Sukuna Park tonight. If you are not loved, not wanted, you’re hurting, your life is a mess, you are in the right place at the right time because we have some people here, they are the generation of the now. God doesn’t want to see your problems. God doesn’t want to see the, the, the incompleteness you have. God just sees your soul. Put your hands together for God. Amen. Amen. New generation. New people. New nation! I thank the prime minister of our land, a few days ago, or last week,

se na macawa sa oti, e kaya tiko ko koya ena nona malanivosa, according to the Radio Fiji news, we need a new Fiji, and a new Fiji is new people, and a new people is a new mindset, and a new mindset when Christ is the center of our life. Kaya o koya da sa gadreva e dua na Viti vou, eda sa gadreva e dua na tamata vou, eda sa gadreva eso na ituvatua vou. Everything will come new when Jesus Christ becomes the center of somebody's life.

he said in his speech, according to the Radio Fiji news, we need a new Fiji, and a new Fiji is new people, and a new people is a new mindset, and a new mindset is when Christ is the center of our life. He said we need a new Fiji, we need a new people, we need some new plans. Everything will become new when Jesus Christ becomes the center of somebody's life.

Vulaono presents Bainimarama both as an authority whose words must be obeyed and as a speaker whose words validate Vulaono's own message. Their discourse merges in the resonant theme of newness. As the preacher presents it, newness is found not only in the words of the Bible but also in the words of the prime minister, whose rule Vulaono considers to be divinely sanctioned and whose programs must be undertaken as a religious obligation.

The work of the National Council for Building a Better Fiji, co-chaired by Bainimarama and the Catholic archbishop Mataka, was also defined by its orientation to newness. At the council's first meeting, Mataka declared "It is interesting to note how often the word 'new' is used in the Bible: a new song, a new covenant, a new creation, a new heart, a new spirit, a new age, new life, new wine, a new heaven and a new earth. We are told that God wants 'to make all things new'" (Mataka 2008).<sup>19</sup> The quasi-sacred document that the NCBFF produced, the Peoples Charter for Change, Peace and Progress, fired four bullet points on page one of its final draft:

We, the People of Fiji:

- Awake, and we Arise
- To a New Dawn
- To a New Day, and a New Way
- In Our Lives, as One Nation, as One People (National Council for Building a Better Fiji 2008: 1)

As if to underscore their claim to be offering something genuinely new, in June 2009 the government began publishing its own cheerful fortnightly newspaper titled *New Dawn*. In all of this pro-military government discourse, then, to be on the side of the government is to be on the side of novelty. God, humanity, Fiji: all need the prophet-quick promise of the new, freed from the dragging weight of the old.

Such discourse about the need for newness might sound typically American (Wilson 2009), as well as clichéd to readers who are weary of the equation

“newer = better.” As I have shown briefly, however, Fijian Methodist discourse often treats newness as inherently suspect rather than inherently good. Against a resonant backdrop of claims that something “isn’t new, it isn’t a mistake,” texts like Vulaono’s sermon and the Peoples Charter stand out for emphasizing, as Robbins (2007: 10–11) puts it, “the salvational necessity ... of the creation of ruptures between the past, the present, and the future.”

As I noted above, although many Fijian Methodists valorize oldness over newness as a source of legitimacy, they also characterize recent history in terms of a fundamental break between the pre-Christian time of “darkness” and the Christian era of “light,” a common metaphor in Oceania and elsewhere. I have argued elsewhere (Tomlinson 2009b) that Fijian Methodists anxiously admire aspects of the “dark” past, especially the ancestors’ social unity and physical power. To extend Robbins’s argument that Christian theories of culture and history depend on rupture rather than continuity, then, I would add that Fijian Methodist discourse draws on both processes. In Methodist understandings, Christianity changed Fiji by wiping out heathenism, cannibalism, and warfare, but the past had a power which is sorely missed in the present, and newness, in many cases, now means fragmentation, smallness, and weakness. This latter message is the one that Vulaono and Bainimarama oppose as they cultivate a devotion to newness in and of itself.

The stark difference between Methodist affinity for the old and Vulaono’s rapture for the new threatens to obscure significant similarities. As suggested above, Vulaono’s anti-intellectualism resonates to some extent with mainstream Fijian Methodist anti-intellectualism. In addition, his emphasis on prayer is shared by Methodists, although, as noted above, he mocks their formulas and advocates a chatty, informal style of speaking to God. Finally, Vulaono equates social unity with efficacy in a way that Methodists would recognize and endorse. Just before claiming that he could worship while climbing on the roof, he preached: “The success of the police crusade and the ruggers crusade is because some people decided to unite with the police for this Good Word cause. [Inaudible] unity. The first thing there should be for the new people of the new time, the new Fiji: unity. No barriers. Amen.”<sup>20</sup> Similarly, in the sermon quoted above in which the Methodist catechist Tomasi Laveasiga took pains to say that the Holy Spirit was not new, he also focused on unity as an ultimate goal for indigenous Fijians (see Tomlinson 2009b: 177–82).

## Conclusion

As quickly as they rose, so the New Methodists fell: the denomination lost favor with Bainimarama not long after the Ruggers rally. Jon Fraenkel (2010: 420) explains that “The ‘Christian Crusade’ within the police force, and Vulaono’s New Methodist road show ... abated after protests from prominent

Catholic regime supporters led Bainimarama to quash the new cult.” A former editor-in-chief of the *Fiji Times* commented that the New Methodists had been “sat on” by Bainimarama, “because if they were allowed to continue to ridicule the other denominations, there was going to be trouble” (McGeough 2009). The crusades’ drain on the police budget may have been a factor, too.<sup>21</sup>

This chapter, then, describes a fleeting moment. The questions it raises, however, will continue to dominate Fijian religious politics. Two of the core questions, simply put, are: what makes something new, and how does newness matter in denominational politics? In the case of the New Methodists, as seen in Vulaono’s sermon, extreme emphasis on newness as a source of religious and political legitimacy was coupled with overt and enthusiastic support for the military-led government. The denomination’s name is paradoxical in the Fijian context where Methodism is emblematically not new. In other words, while the New Methodists were obviously new, they were not obviously Methodist, at least in Fijian terms. Although the Fijian Methodist Church stands, in Vulaono’s perspective, as a model of everything that needs to be challenged and changed, he did not seem to be interested in reforming them. Rather, he was interested in overcoming them, and for a brief period he had the political advantage over them. New Methodism aimed to negate Methodism in the name of a purified newness, one in service to Fiji’s latest coup.

## Notes

Research for this chapter was supported by Discovery Project grant number 0878736 from the Australian Research Council. Through the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Sophie Rankin organized the transcription of my recording of Atu Vulaono’s sermon, for which I am most grateful. Special thanks go to Sekove Bigitibau, as always, for his insights into Fijian linguistic and cultural dynamics and his expert advice on translation, and to Susanna Trnka, Jon Fraenkel, Lynda Newland, Paul Titus, Debra McDougall, and Michael W. Scott for comments on earlier drafts of this chapter. All errors are my own.

1. The historian Andrew Thornley observes that Methodist missionaries and chiefs held fundamentally different ideas about how Christianity’s new order should reshape Fiji. The evangelists sought “a relationship similar to that between prophets and the Jewish kings of the Old Testament,” which meant displacing traditional priests (*bete*) from their roles and setting themselves up as religious authorities who advised not only chiefs but commoners, too; in contrast, for “most chiefs, the people were theirs alone, not God’s, and decisions affecting a commoner’s well-being could not be independently arbitrated by the church” (Thornley 2002: 225). In sketching this opposition, Thornley draws on H. Richard Niebuhr’s typology of relationships between Christ and culture, suggesting that missionaries wanted a “Christ above culture” system, in which Christ is understood as “the fulfillment of cultural aspirations and the restorer of the institutions of true society,” even as “there is in him something that neither arises out of culture nor contributes directly to it. He is discontinuous as well as continuous with social life and its culture” (Niebuhr 1951: 42). Chiefs, in contrast, sought a “Christ of culture” model, in which Christ “confirms what is best in the past” (1951: 41).

2. In his zeal to convert Indo-Fijians to Christianity, Rabuka allowed more missionaries into Fiji, which led one Latter Day Saint (Mormon) church member to puzzle, “After the coup, our quota increased to forty, fifty, one hundred. That’s funny, it is really a contradiction in a sense that a military government gave us more freedom to bring in more missionaries to spread the Gospel” (quoted in Ernst 1994: 274; see also Newland 2007: 304).
3. Ernst (1994: 206) reports that 74.2 percent of indigenous Fijians were Methodists according to the 1986 census; Ratuva (2002: 19) presents 1996 census figures showing that the percentage had dropped to 66.6 percent. The figures used for 2007 come from the Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics online reports from that year’s census; see [www.statsfiji.gov.fj](http://www.statsfiji.gov.fj). Between 1996 and 2007, the total number of indigenous Fijian Methodists increased by 5,765, but this gain was not proportionally equivalent to the national population increase. In this regard, it is perhaps more appropriate to say that Methodism is stagnating rather than declining.
4. In the Fijian original, this was: “Eda sa kila mai na Vola Tabu ni dau cudruva na vanua na Kalou ena vuku ni nodra sega ni dau vakanamata vua na Kalou dina ko ira na Isireli. Edau bureitaka kina na wai mai na dela ni qele ka yaco na dausiga kei na lauqa. E dau tala mai na vodre kei lago kata mera kania na sovu ni kau drokadroka ka vakatubura talega na dausiga ena dela ni vanua. Meda masu mera nanuma tiko na noda i liuliu ni nodra lewa ena vakatau vakalevu kina noda kalougata se noda kalouca ena veisiga veitaravi sa tu e matada.” I have not corrected minor typographical errors in the text.
5. Bainimarama’s religious affiliation is somewhat ambiguous. He occasionally self-identifies as Methodist but denounces the church’s leaders; he attended a Catholic high school in Suva, and his wife is a Catholic.
6. The document’s title omits the apostrophe in “People’s.”
7. Vulaono’s sermon is a riot of codeswitching between English and Fijian. The line translated here was originally delivered as: “Au rawa ni lotu vagagalu, au rawa ni lotu vaq-iriri. Au rawa ni ... lotu kaba e dela ni kava. Doesn’t really matter. Your mind must be open to the style of worship that you encounter, emeni.” My goal in this chapter is not to analyze his codeswitching, but in extended quotations I present the original and its translation side by side so that interested analysts can follow his stutter-step performance. For comparative purposes, I note that Fijian Methodists tend to preach in either Standard Fijian or a regional dialect, codeswitching into English only occasionally and usually for a fairly obvious reason (displaying special knowledge, enhancing authority, iconically representing the process of translation, etc.). Vulaono, in contrast, hops back and forth between Fijian and English without discernible pattern or purpose, although his overall performance style—loud, aggressive, exhortatory—recalls American televangelists’ style generally. In translating his sermon, I have changed his Fijian English into standard American English. In contrast to sermons I have analyzed in other publications, here I proceed topically and thematically, not following the sequence of the performance itself.
8. For Fijian Methodist discomfort with ecumenism, see Casimira (2008).
9. In the original, “era bose tu na ka ni matanitu. Era, era sega, era sega ni politiki, era qai via veitalanoataka na ka era sega ni vulica.”
10. In the original, “Sa oti ko ira na, o, vuni tu ga ena koro ni vuli ni lotu, sa oti o ira na, kauta tu mai nodra degree kei na ka era kila. Sa gadrevi eso na tamata era cakava na ka veivakurabuitaki, cakacaka mana.”
11. These lines were spoken in English.

12. In the original, “So na tamata lotu tiko nikua sa dredre sara ga mo masu. Io. Bible study ko cici, io. Gauna ni lotu ko cici. Crusade ko cici. Gauna ni masu, relax toka ga.”
13. I am translating “tawatubu, tawamudu” as “entire, eternal” to maintain the poetic repetition of the Fijian original. *Tawatubu* literally means “not growing,” and connotes that God is complete, not going through stages of growth like humankind. *Tawamudu* means “without end” and “eternal” is therefore a straightforward translation.
14. The minister spoke Standard Fijian. His original words were “sa mai vakadeitaki na itutu oqo ena vuku ni kaukauwa ni veisereki ni Kalou e na vuvala oya. E sega ni ka vou, e sega ni ka vacalaka.”
15. The catechist spoke a Kadavu-specific dialect of Fijian. His original words were “I mino walega ni qai je ere vou i na Ivola Tabu na Yalo Tabu.... I mini je ere vou na itukutuku ni Vola Tabu raraba. Na Yalo Tabu na yalo ni Kalou.... Na yalo ni Kalou na Yalo Tabu. I mini je ere vou i na itukutuku ni Vola Tabu na Yalo Tabu.”
16. His original words were “na vakacabe lotu se lako tikoga e na noda vanua,” “na ivavuvuli ni lotu e so eda sa ciqoma, ka levu na ivavuvuli e sa mai moici.”
17. A complicated expression of this ideology comes from a book of songs lauding Rabuka’s coup of 1987, in which the editor writes: “The overthrow of governments is not a new thing, but an old game in the world. But it’s a new thing for us, because this is the first one to happen in our part of the world.” (This is my translation of the Fijian original: “Na vuaviritaki ni matanitu e sega ni ka vou, ia, sa dua na qito makawa vakavuravura. Ia, e ka vou vei keda, ka ni sai koya oqo na kena i matai me yaco e na noda i wase ni vuravura oqo”; Bulicokocoko 1988: vi.)
18. In the original, “Old mindset, old thinking, old style. Sa qai basika mai ko Pita vata kei Joni. New generation, new people, hallelujah.”
19. The bible verse which he quotes is Revelation 21:5.
20. In the original, “The successful of the police crusade and the ruggers crusade because some people decide to unite with the police for this Good Word cause. [Inaudible] unity. Matai ni ka me tiko e na tamata vou ni gauna vou, ni Viti vou: unity. No barriers. Emeni.”
21. In November 2010, Atu Vulaono’s brother Waisea announced that he was leaving the denomination because it “now focuses on material things,” and “The Holy Spirit revealed to me that we are no longer serving God but the church” (Rina 2010).

## References

- Baleinakorodawa, Paulo, Kevin Barr, and Semiti Qalowasa. 2006. “Time of Uncertainty, Opportunity,” <http://www.fjitime.com>, December 19; accessed 22 October 2011.
- Buatava, Vitori. 1996. “In the Footsteps of Mosese: The Foundation Years of Roman Catholic Catechists in Fiji, 1842–1893.” In *The Covenant Makers: Islander Missionaries in the Pacific*, eds. Doug Munro and Andrew Thornley. Suva, Fiji: Pacific Theological College and Institute for Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific.
- Bulicokocoko, Solomone T. 1988. *Na Serekali ni Vuaviri 1987*. Suva, Fiji: Lotu Pasifika Productions.
- Casimira, Aisake. 2008. *Who Do You Say I Am?: Interaction between Bible and Culture*. Suva, Fiji: Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and Advocacy.
- Dean, Eddie, and Stan Ritova. 1988. *Rabuka: No Other Way*. Sydney: Doubleday.
- Diamond, Sara. 1995. *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States*. New York: Guilford Press.

- Elbourne, Frederica, and Monika Singh. 2007. "Sorry: Mataca." *Fiji Times*, October 24, p. 1.
- Ernst, Manfred. 1994. *Winds of Change: Rapidly Growing Religious Groups in the Pacific Islands*. Suva, Fiji: Pacific Conference of Churches.
- Field, Michael, Tupeni Baba, and Unaisi Nabobo-Baba. 2005. *Speight of Violence: Inside Fiji's 2000 Coup*. Canberra: Pandanus Books.
- Fiji Times*. 2007. "Catholic Group Petitions Rome." <http://www.fijitimes.com>, October 30; accessed 22 October 2011.
- Fraenkel, Jon. 2007. "The Fiji Coup of December 2006: Who, What, Where and Why?" In *From Election to Coup in Fiji: The 2006 Campaign and Its Aftermath*, eds. Jon Fraenkel and Stewart Firth. Canberra: ANU E Press.
- . 2010. "Fiji." *The Contemporary Pacific* 22, no. 2: 416–33.
- Garrett, John. 1982. *To Live Among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania*. Geneva and Suva, Fiji: World Council of Churches and Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific.
- Kaplan, Martha. 1995. *Neither Cargo nor Cult: Ritual Politics and the Colonial Imagination in Fiji*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Keane, Webb. 2007. *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lal, Brij V. 1992. *Broken Waves: A History of the Fiji Islands in the Twentieth Century*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- . 2006. *Islands of Turmoil: Elections and Politics in Fiji*. Canberra: ANU E Press and Asia Pacific Press.
- Mafi, Ruci. 2002. "Chaudhry Tells of Coup Abuse." *Fiji Times*, November 29, p. 1.
- Mataca, Petero. 2007. "We Got to Keep on Moving." *Fiji Times*, January 23, p. 7.
- . 2008. "Opening Remarks of His Grace, Archbishop Petero Mataca, Co-Chair, NCBBF, at the Inaugural Meeting." <http://www.fijipeople charter.com.fj/speeches.html>, January 16; accessed 22 October 2011.
- McGeough, Paul. 2009. "An Unholy Alliance of Church and State." <http://www.smh.com.au>, November 29; accessed 22 October 2011.
- Methodist Church in Fiji. 2007. "Here We Stand." *Fiji's Daily Post*, February 3, p. 7.
- . 2009. "Na Porokaramu ni Masumasu e Baleti Viti" [Program of Prayer for Fiji]. Document in author's possession.
- Narsey, Wadan. 2008. "The Charter Charade." *Fiji Times*, December 23, p. 7.
- National Council for Building a Better Fiji. 2008. Peoples Charter for Change, Peace and Progress. <http://www.fijipeople charter.com.fj/finalcharter.pdf>; accessed 22 October 2011.
- Newland, Lynda. 2007. "The Role of the Assembly of Christian Churches in Fiji in the 2006 Elections." In *From Election to Coup in Fiji: The 2006 Campaign and Its Aftermath*, eds. Jon Fraenkel and Stewart Firth. Canberra: ANU E Press.
- . 2009. "Religion and Politics: The Christian Churches and the 2006 Coup in Fiji." In *The 2006 Military Takeover in Fiji: A Coup to End All Coups?*, eds. Jon Fraenkel, Stewart Firth, and Brij V. Lal. Canberra: ANU E Press.
- Niebuhr, H. Richard. 1951. *Christ and Culture*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Pacific Islands Report. 2000. "Autopsies Start to Reveal Fiji Mutiny Death Story." <http://archives.pireport.org/archive/2000/november/11-13-01.htm>, November 11; accessed 22 October 2011.
- Premdas, Ralph R. 1995. *Ethnic Conflict and Development: The Case of Fiji*. Aldershot: Avebury.

- Ratuva, Steven. 2002. "God's Will in Paradise: The Politics of Ethnicity and Religion in Fiji." *Development Bulletin* 59: 19–23.
- Rina, Samantha. 2010. "Religious rift leads to split." <http://www.fijitimes.com>, November 4; accessed 22 October 2011.
- Robbins, Joel. 2007. "Continuity Thinking and the Problem of Christian Culture: Belief, Time, and the Anthropology of Christianity." *Current Anthropology* 48, no. 1: 5–17.
- Ryle, Jacqueline. 2005. "Roots of Land and Church: The Christian State Debate in Fiji." *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 5, no. 1: 58–78.
- Sahlins, Marshall. 2004. *Apologies to Thucydides: Understanding History as Culture and Vice Versa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Thornley, Andrew W. 1973. "The Methodist Mission and the Indians in Fiji, 1900–1920." MA thesis, University of Auckland.
- . 1979. "'Heretics' and 'Papists': Wesleyan-Roman Catholic Rivalry in Fiji, 1844–1903." *Journal of Religious History* 10, no. 3: 294–312.
- . 1995. "A Letter from Oneata: The First Missionary Report from Fiji." *Pacific Journal of Theology*, Series II, 14: 31–34.
- . 1996. "The Legacy of Siloam: Tahitian Missionaries in Fiji." In *The Covenant Makers: Islander Missionaries in the Pacific*, eds. Doug Munro and Andrew Thornley. Suva, Fiji: Pacific Theological College and Institute for Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific.
- . 2002. *Exodus of the I Taukei: The Wesleyan Church in Fiji: 1848–74*. Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific.
- Titus, Paul. 2009. "Fiji Police on Crusade to Cut Crime." *Touchstone*, August, p. 8.
- Tomlinson, Matt. 2009a. "Efficacy, Truth, and Silence: Language Ideologies in Fijian Christian Conversions." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51, no. 1: 64–90.
- . 2009b. *In God's Image: The Metaculture of Fijian Christianity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Toren, Christina. 1988. "Making the Present, Revealing the Past: The Mutability and Continuity of Tradition as Process." *Man* 23, no. 4: 696–717.
- Trnka, Susanna. 2011. "Re-mythologizing the State: Public Security, 'the Jesus Strategy' and the Fiji Police." *Oceania* 81, no. 1: 72–87.
- Vuruna, Lusia. 2008. "Police Launch Crime Crusade." *Fiji Sun*, December 15, pp. 1, 3.
- Wilson, Rob. 2009. *Be Always Converting, Be Always Converted: An American Poetics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wood, A. Harold. 1978. *Overseas Missions of the Australian Methodist Church, vol. II: Fiji*. Melbourne: Aldersgate Press.

## Christian Politics in Vanuatu

### *Lay Priests and New State Forms*

ANNELIN ERIKSEN

Policy literature and development agendas have increasingly focused on “governance” in attempts to solve the problem of perceived “failing” or “weak” states in Melanesia (Dinnen 1998; May 1998). As Eves (2008: 1) points out, in the past decade AusAID has dramatically expanded funding for “governance strategies.” As the term “governance” signals, these strategies of reforming the state also look toward institutions outside of the state, including churches, which are widely regarded as the most successful form of what is defined as “civil society” in Melanesia (see McDougall 2008). This chapter focuses on Vanuatu, where AusAID has recently launched its new Church Partnership Program. I show that in this context, assuming that there is a distinction between state and civil society might preclude an understanding of the dynamics of state power.

The state/civil society distinction is premised upon a very narrow understanding of what the state is and how it operates, an understanding that often draws on a classical Weberian notion of the sovereign who rules within a defined territory. Within such a definition, the nation-state often becomes the privileged form of state and a template for any theoretical understanding of it. The term “civil society” is based on this classical idea of the state: it is viewed as a space outside of the state wherein a public but nonetheless “state-free” form of sociality develops. As a public sphere between the private and the state, civil society is thought to comprise a voluntary space where organizations and institutions such as churches, women’s groups, and youth groups are central (see Hann 1996).

Political philosophy (Deleuze 1992; Fraser 2003) and the anthropology of the state (Kapferer and Bertelsen 2009; Trouillot 2001; Ferguson and Gupta 2002) have questioned the relevance of these conventional definitions of the state, and new ways of conceptualizing the state have been suggested. These conceptualizations take into account the historical conditions of postmodernity and globalization under which the sovereign power of nation-states cannot be taken for granted. These theorists suggest that contrary to the Weberian position, state effects and state-like forms exist outside the idea of the nation-state. These alternative approaches show that the distinction between state and

civil society is artificial, a point that I illustrate through an analysis of state forms and effects in colonial and postcolonial Vanuatu, where the distinction between state and church has never been clear-cut.

In the first part of this chapter I discuss very briefly what the state is and how it can be conceptualized. I then give an outline of the colonial situation in Vanuatu, showing how the church as a disciplinary institution was central to the development of a strong sense of what a state is. I then move on to the postcolonial situation and describe new ways in which the church takes on state forms. I argue that new church movements in Vanuatu today must be understood as filling the gaps left by the colonial state apparatus. With particular attention to two new Pentecostal churches in Port Vila, I consider the new ways in which churches are taking on state forms.

### Conceptualizing the state

Weber's definition of the state as a political organization that claims to hold a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence within a defined territory has been hugely influential (1978: 54). Yet it is clear that this is not an accurate description of how states today actually work. The idea of territoriality is challenged by interstate organizations, religious and economic networks, and corporations; many national states do not have an effective monopoly of violence, with nonstate actors that range from guerilla groups to criminal gangs holding effective power (see Aretxaga 2003). In nations like Vanuatu and the rest of the so-called "developing" world, foreign aid donors, the World Bank, and a diverse range of NGOs are often more influential in determining economic policy than elected state officials themselves (see also Ferguson and Gupta 2002). Yet this does not imply that states are now weak or marginalized. As Aretxaga argues with reference to so-called "war-economies": "there is not a deficit of state but an excess of statehood practices: too many actors competing to perform as state" (2003: 396). In other words, the state is not becoming marginal, but it is taking on new shapes and becoming difficult to recognize *as* a state, particularly if we continue to take Weber's ideal/typical state as the model. Mitchell (1991) has argued that the analytical concepts deployed in an understanding of the state must reveal the state's porous organization. Recent anthropological reconceptualizations of state do exactly this by looking at "state effects" (Trouillot 2001) in addition to state institutions. To analyze the state, these authors suggest, we need not look for a sovereign ruling within a defined territory, but we must focus instead on how actors compete to produce "regulating and differentiating mechanisms" (Kapferer 2010).

This shift in focus from state sovereignty to state effects may be understood as a shift from what Foucault has termed "pastoral power" to what we

can call, following Deleuze (1992), “lay priest power.” Foucault explained the power of the modern state as a genealogical development from the pastoral power of a priest who exercised his will over a flock of people. The priest’s dual task was to address individual salvation and to care for the multiplicity as a whole. Foucault called this art of governing both the individual and the collective “pastoral technology” (Foucault 2007) and argued that it gradually developed into the modern Western state in sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe: “the modern Western state has integrated in a new political shape an old power technique which originated in Christian institutions. We can call this power technique the pastoral power” (Foucault 1982: 782). He argued for a fundamental continuity in sacred and secular power. Indeed, the very idea of a population, according to Foucault, derives from the idea of a pastor managing his flock. Despite the modern state’s pretenses to secularity, it was always based on the theological premise of a “sovereign.”

A number of scholars have suggested that Foucault’s conception of a disciplinary society has become obsolete in recent decades with the rise of globalization and neoliberalism. Fraser (2003) has pointed out that the modern form of political power Foucault was describing in works written in the 1960s and 1970s was losing ground just as he was describing it: “The irony is plain: whether we call it postindustrial society or neoliberal globalization, a new regime oriented to ‘deregulation’ and ‘flexibilization’ was about to take shape just as Foucault was conceptualizing disciplinary normalization” (2003: 160). Foucault’s discipline has several characteristics. First, it was focused on the individual: social regulations were to be internalized to such a degree that external sanctions became symbolic. Secondly, as Fraser points out, disciplinary apparatuses like prisons and schools were controlled by nation-states. One might imagine a number of parallel and similar nation-states operating the same system of social regulation, primarily in Western Europe and America. Thus, according to Fraser, the disciplinary society assumed that social regulation was organized nationally and that a nation-state controlled both a national population and a national economy.

In his “Postscript on Societies of Control” (1992), Deleuze argues that Foucault’s notion of pastoral power assumes “environments of enclosure”; the modern state is assumed to manage its flocks through closed institutions like schools, armies, hospitals, and factories. According to Deleuze, disciplinary society has gradually been replaced by “societies of control.” With globalization and neoliberalization, institutions are in crisis and no longer aspire to discipline subjects. Power is no longer achieved through discipline but through “free-floating control” (Deleuze 1992: 4); thus the state can no longer be conceptualized as a single, sovereign body, but as a number of free-floating bodies. In the words of Deleuze, power can be found among the “lay priests” instead of the single authoritative “pastor” with his institutionalized church (1992: 5).

For the context of Vanuatu, this analogy is very apt. In this chapter I will show how governmentality through state apparatuses has been an integral part of everyday life throughout colonial history and into the present. However, the shift in state structure from the “pastor” to the many “lay priests” parallels an exact shift in church structure in Vanuatu, where the colonial churches are being replaced by myriad new, independent churches. These churches, I will argue, are not outside of state power as it is exercised in “control societies”; rather, state power is integral to the new churches. A notion of churches as elements of civil society that are in principle outside of state power distorts an understanding of the mechanisms of state power in Vanuatu.

### The colonial context

In order to give an impression of how vital the churches and the mission were, not only for the development of the colonial state apparatuses in Vanuatu but also for a very strong local sense of what the state is and does, I will outline the colonial situation. At the end of the nineteenth century, when European states were controlling the Pacific, Vanuatu remained outside any sovereign jurisdiction. First sandalwood and later *bêche-de-mer* and copra drew British and French traders to the islands that became known as the New Hebrides. By the late nineteenth century, settlers from both European nations were expanding their land interests in the islands. As was the case in many other Pacific colonies, the development of a colonial state was very much dependent upon the development of commercial interests: both French and British settlers urged their respective nation-states to protect their interests in the archipelago (Van Trease 1987). The signing of the Condominium treaty in 1906 gave both colonial powers a commercial interest in the colony and shared administrative responsibility.

Condominium government was neither efficient nor effective. The country was divided into three administrative units: the southern district, the central district, and the northern district. Both the English and the French had one district agent in each of these administrative territories. In Port Vila, the French and the English had their own administrative units—the British and the French Residencies—and they oversaw a joint court. Yet this court’s power was limited. For instance, if a planter were to be convicted in the joint court for abuse of the labor force and the local population, the execution of the sentence would be left to the national courts. If a French settler were to be found guilty, the French court, not the joint court, would decide the punishment. Moreover, there were major disagreements between the French and the British Residencies over the joint court’s jurisdiction. According to Van Trease (1987), the French were quite content with the lack of clear demarcations of power

within the joint administration. They took advantage of the situation as far as possible and assisted the French settlers and the French organization SFNH in their acquisition of territories for commercial use.<sup>1</sup> The Condominium government never had a firm grip on the situation in the New Hebrides, and at the local level, the district agents had difficulties administering affairs and arbitrating disagreements between different villages and different chiefs because the French would side with one party and the British with the other (see also Rio 2002).

To some extent, one might argue that the British and French states were enhanced by their “undercover” representatives, the traders and planters (see Kapferer 2010). The colonial state operated as much through the trading companies as through the colonial agents (the district agents and the assessors), with the French SFNH being one example. The colonial period was therefore characterized by a colonial state hiding behind the commercial interests of private persons and trading organizations. The state was first and foremost an administrative and legislative apparatus for the traders. Thus, the bishop of Melanesia from 1896 to 1911, Cecil Wilson, wrote to the Joint Naval Commission and the Condominium governments:

A trader under the French flag, though of British origin, sold gin to some of our people in the Torres group, and I found many of them drunk. I reported him, and was told I must bring my witness two hundred miles to Vila. But as he was under the French flag, I should have had to plead in the French court, and there were sixty cases to be heard before mine, so, for lack of time to waste, and money to follow it was impossible (Wilson, quoted in Brown 2010: 7).

Traders and planters were often left to rule themselves, and the government was disappointingly distant for those who hoped it would protect local populations against the excesses or abuses of the resident Europeans.

However, on the local level, in the many villages on the different islands of the archipelago, the idea of a state encompassing a nation of islands was not merely a commercial project. The idea of the state as an administrative unit became a project of great interest and importance locally.<sup>2</sup> The Presbyterian, Anglican, and Catholic missions of the New Hebrides played a critical role in establishing ideas about how to govern local communities, how to lead a morally good life under the new colonial laws, and how to behave in a “civilized” manner. The first Presbyterian converts on Tanna in Southern Vanuatu introduced new codes of personal conduct and of bodily control, a new style of housing, and the institutionalization of a local court system. This new system of knowledge and practice was called the “Tanna Law” (Lindstrom 1990). More broadly, Scarr has pointed out how important the Presbyterian mission was for the building of local governance: “Wherever Christianity got a foot-

hold, a local government of some sort was set up; with courts of whose decision the missionaries or native teachers were the inspiration” (1967: 236).<sup>3</sup>

One might make a distinction between two different levels within the state hierarchy: on the first level were the district agents (one for each of the three administrative districts) and their relations to the British and/or French Residency in Port Vila, and on the second level were the village assessors (and later the local councils) and their relationship both to the villagers and to the district agents. The first level was characterized by the commercial interests in the archipelago, but also by the Western state idea and what Foucault has called pastoral power. In the forefront of the colonial apparatus—even though it had limited reach through such institutions as the courts—was the idea of managing the population; regulation and “civilizing” were important ideas. However, contrary to what one might assume, this notion did not become “weaker” further down in the governing hierarchy. On the second level, the idea of management, discipline, and regulations became almost purified. The assessors—and, during the 1960s and 1970s, the local councils—were extremely concerned with this form of “governmentality.” Thus, although the colonial state and its regulating apparatus were primarily an expansion of European trading interests, locally the village and area councils often worked very efficiently as moral institutions upholding regulations on (for instance) village housing, dress codes, and livestock. The village and area councils emerged as important institutions that established laws promoting a Christian morality (see Eriksen 2008: 186–90). Thus, in the colonial context, the modern state form was very strongly developed among the local population.

The central importance of the state can be seen from the comments of a retired police officer, Pakeo, from the island of Tongoa.<sup>4</sup> Pakeo was nearly seventy years old when Knut Rio and I interviewed him in March 2010. He was recruited as a police officer in his early twenties and had long experience as a British colonial police officer. However, when explaining to us the regulations of the colonial period and their importance for village life, he did not tell us about his work as a policeman but instead told the story of his grandfather, who went under the name “Gavman” (a Bislama term derived from English “government”). The resident Presbyterian missionary, Rev. Paton, had chosen his grandfather to become the first local agent for Tongoa and neighboring islands in the early colonial period. His grandfather was descended from a chiefly line and had also become one of the first dedicated Christians to attend Bible courses and training with the Presbyterian mission on Tongoa. He is still remembered by people on Tongoa as “Gavman” and is recognized by the islanders as the one who brought Christian morality to the island. His birthday is celebrated each year by his descendants, and in the 2009 celebration, which we attended, he was portrayed as a visionary who built Christian communities.

When explaining to us how his grandfather established and managed Christian communities, Pakeo emphasized that there were a lot more rules in the past. For instance, everyone had to sleep on a bed built above the ground: sleeping on a mat on the ground was forbidden and punished with severe fines and beatings. Gavman regularly toured the different villages to make sure people followed the rules. Once he arrived at a village in Tongoa reputed for having a slack attitude. A man who preferred sleeping on his mat and had never built the prescribed bed spotted Gavman on the beach approaching the village. He ran to his house, and although there was no time to build a proper elevated bed, he put some planks on the floor, hoping that the mere existence of planks would prevent a fine. Pakeo could not remember whether his grandfather had accepted this construction as a proper bed or not, but he liked the story because it illustrated the extent to which people took the local agents, or Gavman, seriously, and the many rules they had to obey (see also Rio 2011).

Similarly, during my first research period in the village of Ranon in North Ambrym in 1995, I was taken on a tour of the village and told about the rules of proper village behavior. One of the most central of them was the regulation of fenced pig yards. I was told that during the colonial period, the pig yards were regularly checked by the district agents and local council representatives. The local councils and the district agents (some of whom were local men of prominence, like Pakeo's grandfather) would to a greater or lesser extent explicate concrete laws and rules that would regulate village behavior. The "law" regulating bed construction is an illustrative example of these rules.

In other words, during colonial times, the "craft" of state regulations and state practices was taken up seriously by the local population, mediated through the mission and the church. On the local level the church *became* the state, both through the local council (often organized by the church) and in the form of the assessor (who was usually recruited from the church). The formation of local councils and local agents who inspected villages and sought to uphold laws and regulations strengthened the idea of the presence of a state on the island and village levels.

People took the state as a project very seriously. The making of regulations and laws to create and sustain social order was not only conducted by the local councils and the mission organizations. There were also a number of "competing organizations" that had the same effect. To some extent these mimicked the work of the churches and the local councils in creating alternative regulating institutions, among them the Nagriamel (Beasant 1984), the Naked Cult on Santo (Van Trease 1987), and the John Frum cult on Tanna (Lindstrom 1990). On North Ambrym, the Nagriamel created an alternative local council and seriously challenged the existing social order by setting up alternative agendas both in terms of production schemes and in terms of their opposition to the independence movement in the 1960s and 1970s (see Eriksen 2008). The most

famous example of these alternative movements is the John Frum movement as it developed on Tanna in the 1940s. Lindstrom (1990) has described how people abandoned their earlier Christian affiliations to join the new movement and gain the new knowledge. Like the Presbyterian-based “Tanna Law,” the new law of the John Frum movement was a system of regulation and discipline that defined adherents by new kinds of dress codes and uniforms. This new law, however, was called “American Law” because America was seen as a primary source of foreign knowledge and goods (Lindstrom 1990: 40). Although this movement revived *kastom*-based knowledge and thus to some degree opposed the established Tanna Law, its institutional practices took the same form as those promulgated by church and government: modern state practices of discipline and regulation structured the form of the movement. The focus was on the law. The Nagriamel Council and John Frum American Law on the one hand and the rules and regulations of the mission and local councils on the other all appropriated the same kind of state perspective. Instead of seeing John Frum as a reaction to Presbyterian Tanna law or Nagriamel as a reaction to the established local council and mission, one might see them as continuations, appropriations, or expansions of the same principles of governmentality.

In sum, a well defined sense of statehood developed during the colonial period, not only among the many local council organizations throughout the archipelago but also as a result of the many “mimicking” organizations like Nagriamel and John Frum that paralleled the local council in form. The craft of state regulations and state practices was taken up seriously by the local population, mediated through the mission and the church. Contrary to claims that the Vanuatu state is “weak,” what developed in Vanuatu was a very strong sense of what a state is and does. People took the state as a project seriously.

## Independence

In the period leading up to independence in 1980, the many area and local councils around the archipelago seemed to merge into one social movement. Local councils sent representatives to island and regional meetings to discuss the setup of a new government system for an independent state (see Bolton 1998; Eriksen 2008). On North Ambrym the founder of the local council, Presbyterian chief Willy Bongmatur, was elected candidate for the new representative assembly. The building of the new nation-state, Vanuatu, was based on two parallel processes: first, the local councils became the political apparatus for selecting a general assembly, and second, the most prominent political party working for independence, the Vanua’aku Pati, became a symbol of a new and independent nation. Although the party was dominated by Anglophones, the movement succeeded in becoming a symbol of unity, especially through the

actions of the charismatic leader Father Walter Lini. This was a democratic and homogenizing movement wherein the different regions, islands, and language groups were assimilated into the idea of the Ni-Vanuatu citizen. *Kastom* and Christianity were the most important factors creating this idea of similarity and equality (see also Bolton 2003).

The new nation-state had as its goal the encompassment of a population of equals who had access to their traditional land and who could replace the colonial planters and traders in the production process. Around the archipelago, many foreign plantation owners and investors, mainly French and British, were evicted from their houses and islands. On Ambrym, a second-generation plantation owner, George Mitchell, was given one day's notice to leave the village and island. The local council decided that he could neither take his equipment nor sell his house and property: everything was to become the property of the local council, and the plantation land would be returned to the *kastom* owners. In an interview with me in Port Vila in April 2010, an old Ambrym man who was a member of the local council at the time explained that local chiefs and elected council members were impatient to assume responsibility for running the plantation locally. A decade and a half after independence, when I first arrived in Ambrym, the plantation was no longer in business. The roads, which had been operational in the early 1980s, were overgrown, and the island had not had a motor vehicle for over a decade. The vision of a new nation-state governing its own plantation and production process seemed to have been forgotten.

To some extent changed economic conditions prevented the new nation-state from filling the gap left by the colonial state. Around the era of independence, declining copra prices made it impossible for the many plantations in the archipelago to run the way they had under expatriate planters. By the end of the twentieth century, these plantations were used for periodic fundraising by church groups and kin groups to pay for building materials and school fees, or to contribute to church projects. Gardening was the most important form of subsistence economy. Furthermore, the local council had lost much of its authority, and at least according to my Ambrym informants, it no longer functioned.

The collapse of the plantation economy prevented the new independent nation-state from becoming the organizational structure it had aspired to be. In other words, the power base of the nation-state evaporated with the plantation economy. Whereas the colonial state had both the economic and the ideological drive to construct an encompassing state structure bolstered by churches and missions, the postcolonial state did not achieve this encompassing unity. The general context for the establishment of the independent state in Vanuatu was the context of "control societies" (Deleuze 1992). Thus the "pastoral power" on which the colonial state had functioned and by means of

which the local government worked (remember Gavman tending his flocks on Tongoa) lost effectiveness. The structural premise for the new nation-state was eradicated by a new economic reality. The new economy was based on new kinds of foreign investors more interested in land speculation than in traditional production and trading. In order to find state effects and state forms, one has to look beyond the independent nation-state. In other words, the new political economy of the present moment, the development of what can be called “casino capitalism” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000, 2002; Strange 1986), sets new premises for how the state operates and also, in this context, new premises for how the church operates.

The proliferation of new church movements in Vanuatu today must be understood in this context. After independence, the churches retained their central role in producing state forms and effects, but they have done so in a very different way than in the colonial period. New church movements in Vanuatu to some extent fill the organizational space opened by the colonial state apparatuses, especially the local councils on the village level, which was never filled by the independent state. Glimpses of the urban scene of Port Vila, where a number of new independent churches are emerging, can give us a sense of how this move from “pastoral power” to “lay priest power” in Vanuatu has taken place.

## The present

In March 2010 the Vanuatu Church Partnership Program (VCP) was launched. The program is a partnership between AusAID and a number of established churches, as well as the Vanuatu Christian Council. As described by AusAID, “The program of support is for \$4 million over 3 years. The objective of VCP is for the Vanuatu Christian Council and churches in Vanuatu, individually and collectively, to play an increasingly recognized and effective role in improving governance and service delivery at national and local levels” (Vanuatu News 2010). AusAID hopes that churches can be the new tool for creating “good governance” in Vanuatu.

To be chosen as one of the recognized churches of the Vanuatu Christian Council—and thus to be trusted as a “Civil Society Organization”—was not a straightforward process. Of the more than fifty different church organizations that I enumerated between December 2009 and May 2010 in Port Vila, a city of less than 50,000 inhabitants, only three are regular members and two are observers in the VCC. These are the “old” mission churches: the Presbyterian, the Anglican, and the Catholic Churches. Assemblies of God and the Seventh-day Adventists are recognized as “observers” in the forum. In addition to these VCC churches, AusAID also includes the Apostolic Church in the partnership

program. Many other churches, however, aspire to become members of the Christian Council and members of partnership programs, which can provide funds for church activities. The recent establishment of the Ministers Fraternal as a complementary but also competing body of Christian churches in Vanuatu must be seen in this context; the Ministers Fraternal includes all kinds of Christian pastors, including lay priests, Pentecostal pastors, and more established pastors.

If the nature of state power is becoming more free-floating in its control than a sovereign ruling his population, then it is not surprising that AusAID and other donors target churches as the agents of “governance.” It is exactly these areas where control is exerted. In the dominant development discourse, however, this aspect of governance is distorted: there, churches are treated as civil society organizations which stand outside of state power, as if state power still remained with the nation-state or with the “pastoral regime.” But state power is already dispersed and free-floating: outside agents (like AusAID), not the Vanuatu Government, effectively hold state power and fund the “lay priest” system of power.

The Christian Council in Vanuatu and individual churches have both been extremely skeptical of the nation-state government for a long time (see Eriksen 2009). The government is not recognized as a sufficiently Christian and moral body to be able to encompass the nation and to lead it. Yet the independent churches and the Vanuatu Christian Council—joined lately by the Ministers Fraternal—are becoming governmental organizations, especially insofar as they are now funded through AusAID and have financial force. They produce state effects through activities like organizing those services usually provided by the nation-state. If the churches worked, in the colonial period, as disciplinary institutions that upheld the state’s pastoral power, they are now becoming a network of a more dispersed form of power. Whereas the colonial churches created rules and regulations and thus created villages, councils, and inhabitants that took specific forms, the new churches provide a much more flexible and adaptable structure; there is always a church that can suit you.

The new church organizations emerging in Vanuatu—and especially in the urban areas—are not a homogenous mass. In 2006, and continuing in 2009, I surveyed new churches in Vanuatu (Eriksen and Andrew 2010).<sup>5</sup> Among the more than forty churches that have been established within the last decade, a majority were Pentecostal. These included both international churches (such as Assemblies of God, the Potter’s House, and the United Pentecostal Church) and independent local churches (including Survival, Father’s House, Glorious Church, and many others). Some of the churches were more inspired by Judaism (such as the Elohim Family Assembly and the All Pacific Prayer Assembly). Some were hooked into global economic networks, in particular

the international churches like Assemblies of God, but also some local independent churches that had partners in Australia, New Zealand, or the US. Such partnerships often enable local churches to undertake various projects. The Bible Church, which was first formed as an independent church organization but which later became part of an America-based evangelical church, has sponsored a Christian primary school in the outskirts of Port Vila. The Healing Ministry has become an ally of the Australia-based mission organization Evidence and has built primary schools both in the Fresh Wota area and the Seaside area of Port Vila town.

I will elaborate on this new “lay priest” form of government in Vanuatu by presenting two specific church organizations that in different ways illustrate the form state power takes today. As I will show, these churches become avenues for the new forms of control and state power; international agents hook onto these churches (as the churches hook onto international agents such as mission societies, AusAID, and American media companies). Thus, the churches cannot be seen as the state’s counterpart and cannot be described as forms of “civil society.”

### *Apostolic Life Ministry: Creating a new Vanuatu*

The Apostolic Church was founded on Ambae in 1949 by John Lulu and a missionary by the name of Mr. Mann. Lulu was originally from Noumea, New Caledonia, and came to Ambae, building congregations in the West Ambae villages of Wallaha and Vilakalaka. After having had contact with another overseas missionary, the church eventually merged with a Santo-based Apostolic church and became the Apostolic Church of the New Hebrides. Stanly Moli and his brother Jimmy came from the Apostolic-dominated area of Ambae, and both moved to Port Vila in their youth. They worked together in the Apostolic Church in town. According to Jimmy Moli, in 1993 he and a small group of seven members were released by the Apostolic Church after disagreement on the matter of “blessed marriages.” In Moli’s opinion, only proper marriages can be accepted by the church.

This disagreement led Moli to found a breakaway group, Apostolic Life Ministry (ALM), a church that is strict on matters of morals and marriages and that sees bringing up responsible citizens as one of its major missions. Jimmy is a charismatic preacher and soon had a growing congregation. Over the past ten years, he initiated the only Christian television and radio broadcasts in Vanuatu through the American-based Trinity Broadcasting Network. Part of a broader effort to build what he calls Christian “moral communities,” such broadcasts remind people of the Christian message and allow them to encounter it in all arenas of their lives. It is not enough to go to church on Sundays, he has argued: one has to be filled with the divine spirit in everyday life.

Jimmy Moli wants to build Christian schools and a Christian hospital in Port Vila and has made these projects the Church's main priority.

Moli established ALM in a period when new independent churches were on the rise. Beginning in the 1970s, new church organizations were established around the archipelago, often at the instigation of visiting Pentecostal missionaries. From the early 1990s, there has been a rapid increase in the number of churches that, like ALM, broke away from mother organizations as a result of disagreement over theological issues, such as blessed marriages in the case of Moli or questions about infant baptism in other churches. These splits also occurred because of financial disagreements, especially over questions about how money from tithing is to be spent. These new and alternative social forms were established at a time when the encompassing state institutions and colonial churches had lost ground in the way I described above. The new churches took on a form that was much more flexible, and breakaway churches have now become the "normal" form of church, outnumbering the colonially established mission churches.<sup>6</sup> New church organizations can fulfill the spiritual, political, and financial ambitions of their new leaders and members without tackling the well-established organizations of the former mission churches.

The breakaway churches have more flexible and simple structures than the former mission churches did, and they can easily make new alliances, as the ALM church did with Trinity Broadcasting. Moli's ambition to establish schools and hospitals illustrates his ambition to take on welfare tasks in ways that might compete with the nation-state. Schools, here, are particularly crucial for training Christian citizens, and Moli argued that public schools are not sufficiently Christian—he thinks that the Bible should be the fundament for teaching in every subject, and his church claims to be able to provide schooling and education of a higher moral standard. ALM is not the only church working toward this goal: several of the other breakaway churches have similar ambitions. The Bible Church, for instance, received funding from an American mission organization in order to establish a Christian primary school.

### *The Centreville Christian Centre: A corporate church*

One of the newest established churches in Port Vila is the Centreville Christian Centre Inc., directed by a man called Pastor Phillipe. Strangely, this organization is not legally a church. Raised in town and educated abroad in economics, Pastor Phillipe registered it as an incorporated business instead of a religious institution because he thought that this would give him more freedom to implement his management scheme. The explicitly stated mission of the church is to enable young people to lead a morally proper life and to succeed in business, thereby building up the nation as a whole. Pastor Phillipe told me about his

vision for the church as he showed me his large church center outside of Port Vila. In addition to the large worship hall, a large conference center with sleeping and toilet facilities was under construction. Pastor Phillipe was very proud of what he had achieved and told me that few other church organizations in Vanuatu had either such an explicit focus on management or the techniques to influence the young generation by improving their conditions of life.

After finishing his education in economics, Pastor Phillipe had trained as a pastor at the Assembly of God's Joy Bible Institute in Vanuatu. As he was finishing his training, he told his teacher, a missionary from the United States, that he had a calling: he wanted to found his own church. This would not be an ordinary church, but a teaching institute where people could learn to live life in the spirit of the Bible. In his vision, a core of twelve families would serve as models for the rest of the population, changing their homes so that they could lead a better life for others to see and follow. These twelve families today make up what he calls the Real Apostolic Partners in Destiny (RAPID). He explained that by calling them "apostles," he was not invoking the term's traditional religious meaning but rather its literal meaning: explorers and pioneers.<sup>7</sup> The twelve core families were pioneers because by leading Christian lives, they would become evidence of the success of Christian belief. This success was strikingly material; it was to be measured in the amount of money each and every family would accumulate. According to Pastor Phillipe, the combination of good morals and business skills is what would create a successful Christian person in Vanuatu.

In order to allow the Centreville Christian Centre Inc. to reach beyond the twelve families, the pastor also started a "School of the Prophet." The school focuses on what he calls the "G2," the second generation—children and the future of the country—and its motto is "changing life, changing community." The school enrolls twenty students in their late teens for each session, with every student carefully selected by Pastor Phillipe himself. He looks for students who come from families that made a conscious choice about their a child's future. Such families are very often among the educated bureaucratic and political middle class in Port Vila. The enrollment fee, although not more than a couple of thousand Vanuatu vatu (perhaps US \$20–30), reinforces the impression that the school is for the already advantaged portion of the urban population. In the "School of the Prophet," these relatively privileged youths gain skills in economics and financial management. The school includes three different youth programs: Local Apostolic and Prophet School (LAPS), Strategic Apostolic Leadershift Training (*leadershift*, not *leadership*; SALT), and the Intensive Business School (IBS). The latter is part of another program, Concepts for Accelerated Financial Excellence (CAFE). The proliferation of acronyms mirrors the discourse of business and management upon which the entire organization is centered.

The goal for the school is for each and every youth to be well off by adulthood—more specifically, for each student to earn his or her first million vatu before age thirty.<sup>8</sup> The strategy for achieving this goal is sought-after knowledge in Port Vila, and there are rumors about the secrets that are taught in this course. Drawing on his education in economics, Pastor Phillipe has created a business manual for the young students. The first step he advocates in this manual is to set up a bank account and to take part in a savings scheme. Each student's parents are to deposit money into the account every month, and the student will try to match that contribution. In addition to the savings scheme, the students learn five financial management concepts: how to create wealth, how to manage wealth, how to multiply wealth, how to protect wealth, and finally how to distribute wealth. Phillipe emphasized these concepts in his interview with me, stressing that his "church" was not any ordinary congregation. His mission was to teach young people the right course in life, to organize them, and thereby to form a new politically and economically conscious generation. In late March 2010, he organized a national workshop for young people from all over the archipelago. They met at the conference center, where they not only prayed and learned business skills but also produced a list of recommendations for the national government. New laws that regulated family patterns, forbid religious institutions other than Christian ones, and made homosexuality and divorce illegal were the most important.

### **Conclusion: The simulacrum regime and the free-floating state**

In his work on how to understand the postcolony, Mbembe (2001) outlines what he calls the "simulacrum regime," a regime wherein ordinary people take part in producing the state and state power. Although the nation-state, its democratically elected government and parliament, and its bureaucratic apparatus have limited reach and limited resources in Vanuatu and are thus often described as "weak" and "failed," this does not imply there are no regulating and differentiating mechanisms or no "state effects." Instead of conceptualizing churches as part of a public space outside of the state and thus independent of the state, I have suggested that churches provide the very foundations of the new kind of free-floating state.

The cooperation between the Vanuatu Christian Council and AusAID is one instance of an emerging governing body producing state effects; independent churches like Apostolic Life Ministry and The Centreville Christian Centre Inc. are also part of this broader phenomenon. This emerging governing body regulates behavior, builds schools and education facilities, and creates the idea of the Christian as the ideal Ni-Vanuatu citizen, thus creating mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. These kinds of organizations and institutional

networks are as much involved in running welfare and communal functions as the present democratically elected government is. Moreover, church leaders, especially charismatic pastors, are often able to influence decision-making processes in the government. For instance, one of the best-known charismatic preachers in Port Vila, Pastor Toboe, had regular morning prayer sessions with former prime minister Edward Natapei.<sup>9</sup> Such meetings help to frame prime concerns of the government as they discuss decision making and pray about key issues like foreign policy and budget allocations. In these meetings, pastors and political leaders seek divine intervention in order to ensure that they make the morally correct decisions. When the new prime minister of Vanuatu, Sato Kilman, ousted Natapei from office in November 2010, he did so with the spiritual help of one of the leading charismatic preachers in Port Vila, Pastor Jude Neru of the Living Water Church.

The form of state that new churches in Port Vila are taking on is very different from the colonial churches. The disciplinary mechanisms of the colonial churches are breaking down and a more fluid form of control is emerging. This form of control is exemplified in idiosyncratic relationships between politicians and pastors: different politicians ally themselves with different pastors, not because the pastors need to secure their connections to the government, but because the politicians need to secure their alliances with the churches. Churches are becoming significant actors not only because of their alliances with outside agents such as AusAID, but also because of their profound appeal to people in Vanuatu. Pastor Toboe, Pastor Neru, and other trained and lay pastors, along with new church organizations like the Centreville Christian Centre Inc. and Apostolic Life Ministries, are trying to create a new morally proper society and nation. Rather than seeing these pastors and churches as civil society alternatives to state power, we can more fruitfully consider them part of a free-floating state in which control is no longer exerted through big institutions and old state apparatuses but through shifting relationships and alliances. When Pastor Phillipe outlines his business concepts as part of his spiritual education, he is taking on this state form. In Mbembe's (2001) words, the churches make "power" their own "perspective." Pastor Phillipe, Pastor Jimmy Moli, Pastor Toboe, and the rest situate themselves as performers of state power, creating visions and plans for the nation. Along with the expanding network of aid and mission organizations, they create new kinds of state effects.

The economic and moral agenda they advocate is oriented to spiritual goals—thus, in the Centreville Christian Center Inc., making money is part of a broader spiritual formation. Like other instantiations of the "wealth gospel" around the world (e.g., Meyer 2004), the networks of these churches are global not only because they have global connections, but also because their scope and agenda is global. They hook into global business discourses and

merge them with a theological understanding of morality. It is not far-fetched to argue that the new phase of “casino capitalism” is integral to the new form of free-floating state power. Within this perspective the merging of business and spirituality is only natural, as the production of money is more dependent on “luck” than on work hours—at least for speculative investments, for instance investments in land, which are becoming common not only among the white expats but also among the emerging Ni-Vanuatu middle class in Port Vila.

To understand the political dimensions of new church organizations in Vanuatu, we must take a longer historical perspective to acknowledge how important mission churches were in cultivating a strong sense of government through such institutions as Presbyterian “Tanna Law” and the Nagriamel. Then and now, churches are not alternatives to formal government that exist outside of the state: they have always been integral to the state.

## Notes

1. Société Française des Nouvelles-Hébrides, an organization established in order to secure French interests in the archipelago.
2. Others have highlighted the degree to which local communities during colonial times internalized ideas about lawful regulation that might be understood as forms of governmentality. Robbins (2004) has described the concepts of lawfulness for the Urupmin population of Highland Papua New Guinea, and Lattas (1998, 2006) underlines the importance of “the Law” for Kaliai cargo cults in New Britain.
3. Former Anglican bishop Terry Brown highlights the role of the missions in providing services to the population: “The British did not do direct medical or educational work in the New Hebrides and depended entirely on the missions” (2010: 10).
4. In this chapter, I am using the real names (not pseudonyms) of contemporary persons and churches because they are all generally well known public figures.
5. This survey was conducted in cooperation with my long-time assistant Rose Andrew at the request of Vanuatu Cultural Center Director Ralph Regenvanu.
6. The former mission churches (Presbyterian, Anglican, and Catholic) are still the largest in terms of membership, but the new independent and international churches are numerous and rapidly expanding.
7. The Oxford English Dictionary’s primary definition is: “One sent on an errand, a messenger” ([www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com)), but Phillipe translated it as explorer or pioneer.
8. Currently equal to about US \$10,000. Per capita annual household income is about US \$1,500, according to Vanuatu Statistical Office data from 2006.
9. Information based on interview with Pastor Toboe in April 2010.

## References

- Aretxaga, Begoña. 2003. “Maddening States.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 32: 393–410.
- Beasant, John. 1984. *The Santo Rebellion: An Imperial Reckoning*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press.

- Bolton, Lissant 1998. "Chief Willie Bongmatur Maldo and the Role of Chiefs in Vanuatu." *Journal of Pacific History* 33, no. 2: 179–95.
- . 2003. *Unfolding the Moon: Enacting Women's Kastom in Vanuatu*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Brown, Terry. 2010. "The Anglican Church and the Vanuatu Independence Movement: Solidarity and Ambiguity." Working Paper No 7, Alfred Deakin Research Institute, Geelong, Australia; <http://www.deakin.edu.au/alfred-deakin-research-institute/publications/workingpapers.php>, accessed 7 February 2010.
- Comaroff, Jean, and John Comaroff. 2000. "Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming." *Public Culture* 12, no. 2: 291–344.
- . 2002 "Second Comings: Neo-Protestant Ethics and Millennial Capitalism in South Africa and Elsewhere." In *2000 Years and Beyond: Faith Identity and the 'Common Era'*, ed. Paul Gifford. London: Routledge.
- Deleuze, Gilles 1992. "Postscript on the Societies of Control." *October* 59: 3–7.
- Dinnen, Sinclair. 1998. "In Weakness and Strength—State, Societies and Order in Papua New Guinea." In *Weak and Strong States in Asia-Pacific Societies*, ed. Peter Dauvergne. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.
- Eriksen, Annelin. 2008. *Gender, Christianity and Change: An Analysis of Social Movements in North Ambrym*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- . 2009. "New Life: Pentecostalism as Social Critique in Vanuatu." *Ethnos* 74, no. 2: 175–98.
- Eriksen, Annelin, and Rose Andrew. 2010. *Churches in Port Vila: A Survey*. Report for the Vanuatu Cultural Center.
- Eves, Richard. 2008. "Cultivating Christian Civil Society: Fundamentalist Christianity, Politics, and Governance in Papua New Guinea." *State, Society, and Governance in Melanesia* discussion paper 2008/8.
- Ferguson, James, and Akhil Gupta. 2002. "Spatializing States: Toward an Ethnography of Neoliberal Governmentality." *American Ethnologist* 29, no. 4: 981–1002.
- Foucault, Michel. 1982. "On the Subject of Power." *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4: 777–95.
- . 2007. *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fraser, Nancy. 2003. "From Discipline to Flexibilization?: Rereading Foucault in the Shadow of Globalization." *Constellations* 10, no. 2: 160–71.
- Hann, Chris. 1996. "Introduction." In *Civil Society: Challenging Western Models*, eds. Chris Hann and Elizabeth Dunn. London: Routledge.
- Kapferer, Bruce. 2010. "The Aporia of Power: Crisis and the Emergence of the Corporate State." *Social Analysis* 54, no. 1: 125–51.
- Kapferer, Bruce, and Bjørn Bertelsen. 2009. *Crisis of the State: War and Social Upheaval*. New York: Berghahn.
- Lattas, Andrew. 1998. *Cultures of Secrecy: Re-inventing Race in Bush Kaliai Cargo Cults*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- . 2006. "The Utopian Promise of Government." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 12, no. 1: 129–50.
- Lindstrom, Lamont. 1990. *Knowledge and Power in a South Pacific Society*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Mbembe, Achille. 2001. *On the Postcolony*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- May, Ron. 1998. "State, Society and Governance: Reflections on a Philippines–Papua New Guinea Comparison". In *Weak and Strong States in Asia-Pacific Societies*, ed. Peter Dauvergne. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.
- McDougall, Debra. 2008. "Religious Institutions as Alternative Structures in Post-conflict Solomon Islands?: Cases from Western Province." State, Society, and Governance in Melanesia discussion paper 2008/5.
- Meyer, Birgit. 2004. "Christianity in Africa: From African Independent to Charismatic-Pentecostal Churches." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33: 447–74.
- Mitchell, Timothy. 1991. "The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics." *American Political Science Review* 85, no. 1: 77–96.
- Rio, Knut. 2002. "The Third Man: Manifestations of Agency on Ambrym Island, Vanuatu." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Bergen.
- . 2011. "Policing the Holy Nation: The State and Righteous Violence in Vanuatu." *Oceania* 81, no. 1: 88–107.
- Robbins, Joel. 2004. *Becoming Sinners: Christianity and Moral Torment in a Papua New Guinea Society*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Scarr, Deryck. 1967. *Fragments of Empire: A History of the Western Pacific High Commission, 1877–1914*. Canberra and London: Australian National University Press and C. Hurst and Co.
- Strange, Susan. 1986. *Casino Capitalism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. 2001. "The Anthropology of the State in the Age of Globalization: Close Encounters of the Deceptive Kind." *Current Anthropology* 42, no. 1: 125–138.
- Van Trease, Howard. 1987. *Politics of Land in Vanuatu*. Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific.
- Vanuatu News. 2010. "Official Launch of Vanuatu Church Partnership Program." <http://www.presse.com.vu/foreign-government/165-official-launch-of-vanuatu-church-partnership-program>, March 11; accessed 29 September 2011.
- Weber, Max. 1978. *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich. Berkeley: University of California Press.

# Evangelical Public Culture

## *Making Stranger-Citizens in Solomon Islands*

DEBRA MCDUGALL

### Introduction: Social sources of denominationalism

Since the beginning of missionary evangelism, the ideals of Christian unity have been undermined by sectarian division. In his classic study, H. Richard Niebuhr called denominationalism a “compromise, made far too lightly” between the radical ideal of Christian fellowship and the “caste-system of human society”:

The division of the churches closely follows the division of men into the castes of national, racial, and economic groups. It draws the color line in the church of God; it fosters the misunderstandings, the self-exaltations, the hatreds of jingoistic nationalism by continuing in the body of Christ the spurious differences of provincial loyalties; it seats the rich and poor apart at the table of the Lord, where the fortunate may enjoy the bounty they have provided while the others feed upon the crusts their poverty affords (Niebuhr 1929: 6).

Theological difference, he argued, cannot explain the fragmentation of God’s church into factions. To understand denominationalism, we must instead understand the ways that Christian sects and churches have been complicit in bolstering social and especially economic division.

In Solomon Islands, 98 percent of the population is Christian, but this large Christian populace is split into five historical churches and an increasing number of new churches and religious movements. Many Solomon Islanders themselves bemoan what we might call, following Niebuhr, the “social sources of denominationalism”—the entwining of religious and sociological schism. Such division is particularly distressing in rural villages on customary land. Villages are comprised of cognatic kin, but insofar as these communities have a corporate and collective character, it is because they have been centered on a single village church. Religious schism in rural areas has social causes, often following the fault lines of other conflicts, especially land disputes. Schism also

has enormous social consequences, as joining another church often effectively entails opting out of the life of a community.

In villages, denominationalism exacerbates social division. On the scale of the nation as a whole, however, religious divisions do not map neatly onto ethnonationalist divisions in this culturally and linguistically diverse nation state. Some churches are strongly associated with particular regional identities: United Church is associated with the Western Province and South Sea Evangelical Church with Malaita.<sup>1</sup> However, church membership patterns crosscut the politicized ethnic identities that were at issue during the civil conflict of 1998–2003 (Scott, this volume). Patterns of church membership do not—or do not yet—reflect divisions of socioeconomic class that have emerged in the last generation, either. Urban elites and a nascent middle class do not belong to different denominations than villagers or poor urbanites.<sup>2</sup> Some evangelical entrepreneurs are also business entrepreneurs and embrace the tenets of prosperity gospel, which teaches that God rewards faith with material wealth. In mainline churches, however, pastors, ministers, and moderators command significant respect but live rather humbly and, unlike other emerging elites, constantly engage with ordinary islanders through their work.<sup>3</sup> Finally, the diverse churches of the Solomons also bridge urban-rural divides. Whereas most infrastructure and services are resolutely focused on Honiara and a few provincial towns, the churches reach every rural villager in the country. Moreover, revivals and crusades move from town to country and bring rural people from different regions into contact with one another.

Thus—despite an increasing degree of denominational fragmentation that many Solomon Islanders, like Niebuhr and perhaps Christians everywhere, consider to be a betrayal of the faith's promise of radical unity—a particular kind of evangelical religiosity pervades the public culture of the Solomon Islands and goes beyond the influence of any single church or movement. Grounded in a specifically Christian kind of evangelism, it even pervades the discourse of those who have rejected Christianity in favor of what is, in the Solomons, a new religious movement—Islam.

In suggesting that this religiosity helps to constitute the public culture of the Solomons, I am not taking culture as a structured set of ideas, practices, or values, but as an interactional ground that makes meaningful social engagement possible and cultural differences comprehensible. When two strangers in the Solomon Islands meet, they share more than schooling, popular culture, or the national lingua franca of Solomon Islands, Pijin, all of which Christine Jourdan (1995) identified as “stepping stones to national consciousness.” They also share common genres of religious interaction: prayer and praise, confession and testimony, text-proofing and sermonizing. If denominational difference disrupts the solidarity of kin-based rural community, it arguably fosters new kinds of sociality in urban areas as people of different islands and differ-

ent churches interact. Colleagues pray together. Visitors to markets listen to noontime sermons from a wide variety of preachers. Foreign evangelists draw curious crowds from all segments of the population.



**Figure 5.1.** Charismatic preacher from Honiara at the market in Gizo, July 2010.

Without denying the schismatic effects of new religious movements, this chapter sheds light on another side of contemporary evangelism by exploring the ways that these movements draw strangers into new forms of translocal communities. To illustrate, I focus on the stories of two troubled individuals who left the Christian churches of their childhoods and engaged with a succession of new religious movements. The first, whom I call “Jeremiah,” is a young man from the island of Ranongga who left the United Church to join a series of Pentecostal churches, most recently the Christian Outreach Centre. The second, Akmad, is a middle-aged Malaitan man living in Honiara who was involved for a long time in his natal South Sea Evangelical Church, as well as in charismatic and Pentecostal parachurch organizations, before he embraced Sunni Islam, a faith that was gaining adherents among men severely affected by the recent civil conflict. Like many men of their generation, both Jeremiah and Akmad have resided in villages and towns. Both felt abandoned by the leaders of their natal churches and both were dismayed by denominational competition within their home villages. Both hoped that their new faith and new communities would keep them from sin and allow them to live virtuously.

Converts like Jeremiah and Akmad are often accused of changing religious affiliation for nonspiritual reasons. Adherents of established churches frequently say that people leave the church because of land disputes or because they just want to be the boss and not listen to what others say. They point to prominent members of new churches who were once pastors in the established church before being disciplined for adultery or misuse of village funds. Some of my interlocutors thought that young people who have grown up in mixed-denomination households are more likely to abandon the faith of their parents. Many dismiss the significance of new religious groups by saying that adherents have joined simply for the money: salaries, funds for buildings, school fees, canoes, engines, fuel, religious study courses, trips to Honiara, trips overseas, and so forth. In many instances, such factors probably do help to account for why some converts are attracted to new faiths. But in many conversations with those who have joined new religious movements, I was struck by the fluency and enthusiasm with which they discussed religious ideas for hours at a time. Solomon Islands is a nation of preachers, and in the absence of other books or education outside of Christian education, the Bible is the main source used for thinking through life’s problems.

Niebuhr, a theologian, called for attention to the social sources of denominationalism. Yet his study is itself theological, driven by a quiet outrage that the radical promise of Christian brotherhood and unity is constantly thwarted as the Church makes concessions to the world and churches and sects become just like other organizations. Exhorting social scientists to attend to the social sources of denominationalism is preaching to the choir, and perhaps we need the opposite message. This study is sociological, driven by an interest in the

centripetal and centrifugal forces in Solomon Islands society. But I find that it has been necessary to engage seriously with narratives of spiritual awakening and transformation. Taking religious ideas seriously does not, of course, mean that I am dismissing the “social sources of denominationalism”—only that I hope not to reduce intellectual or theological motivations to sociology. Niebuhr made a similar qualification: “This does not mean that an economic or purely political interpretation of theology is justified, but it does mean that the religious life is so interwoven with social circumstances that the formulation of theology is necessarily conditioned by these” (1929: 16).

Elsewhere (McDougall 2008a), I have discussed a tension that characterizes recent anthropological studies of Christianity. Some scholars have tended to associate Christianity with modernity and, more specifically, with Western individualism, which conflicts with underlying traditional values, often causing what Robbins (2004) calls “moral torment” in non-European conversion situations. Others, including Michael Scott (2005), suggest that Christianity is not individualistic in any straightforward way and that tension between individual and community sanctification is evident in the texts and practices of the faith tradition. These approaches need not be seen as antithetical; indeed, the examples in this paper are relevant to both approaches.

The men whose stories I discuss here are engaged in new kinds of modern self-fashioning, ones in which the choice of a faith is part of their quest for knowledge and influence in a world that is no longer pervasively shaped by networks of kin and ties to local land. The case of former evangelical Christian converts who have switched to Islam may be seen as a kind of overt abdication of such freedom to make one’s self (McDougall 2009), even as this conversion is only made possible by the individual’s liberty to extricate himself from Christian communities. Although I do not discuss this fact in detail here, it is not a coincidence that the stories here are told by men, who are more prone than women to leave their natal church in part because they have greater freedom of travel and association. At the same time, however, these conversion stories illustrate more than just the dilemmas of masculine individualism in postcolonial Melanesia. My interlocutors are also grappling with the long-standing tension between the ideal of Christian unity and the experience of denominational schism.

## Recent histories of evangelism

Baha’i and Jehovah’s Witnesses, Christian Outreach Centre and Revival Flame, conservative Wesleyans and neo-orthodox Anglicans, even Sunni and Ahmadiyya Muslims: a proliferating number of religious movements are drawing converts from the five historical churches of Solomon Islands. Colonial evan-

gelism has been well studied in Solomon Islands and beyond, but the history of transnational evangelism on the eve of and following independence has received less attention.<sup>4</sup> This history is critical to understanding contemporary religiosity in the Solomons, in Melanesia, and in Oceania generally because without it, we may be tempted to see the evident globalization of religion in places like the Solomons as a recent phenomenon rather than as a new chapter in an ongoing story. So, in an admittedly sketchy way, let me attempt to trace this history's outlines.

Denominational competition existed from the beginning of missionary evangelism in Solomon Islands (Hilliard 1966). Catholics, Anglicans, and Methodists grudgingly divided the country into mission fields and agreed to avoid one another's territory in order to cover the unevangelized regions more effectively. However, the two other historic missions in the islands, the South Sea Evangelical Mission and especially the Seventh-day Adventists, were both sectarian in orientation and did not hesitate to infiltrate the realms of influence of established churches. While the British Protectorate government encouraged missionization, it sought to restrain denominational competition; after the Protectorate was more or less "covered" by missionaries, it discouraged other missions from entering. These five historic churches defined the religious landscape of the Solomons until the middle of the twentieth century. Even today, these churches count some 90 percent of the nation's population as adherents (Ernst 2006).

In the twilight years of colonialism, historic churches gained independence from overseas mission societies. From one perspective, the withdrawal of colonial missions allowed truly independent local churches to flourish. Many departing Europeans and emerging local leaders hoped that "contextualized" indigenous theologies would emerge to unite the best of custom and Christianity (see Bird 2008; Boseto 1994 on the United Church).<sup>5</sup> Yet these localized churches face the same paradox that liberal churches in the developed world do: those churches that have made overt attempts to accommodate themselves to "culture" seem to be losing adherents to more demanding fundamentalist churches. Membership of the four of the historic churches of the Solomons—Catholic, Anglican, United Church (formerly Methodist Mission), and the South Sea Evangelical Church—has been declining relative to the Solomons' population as membership in newer churches, especially Pentecostal churches, has grown. Among the established churches of the country, only the Seventh-day Adventist Church has increased its proportion of the population as adherents (Ernst 2006; McDougall 2008b). Significantly, the Adventist Church never became financially independent and remains incorporated in a global church structure. While some have lamented this ongoing dependency (e.g., Steley 1989: 533), Ernst points out that "this is a system in which churches in the developing countries benefit from the support given to poorer members

by the richer ones” (2006: 184). For other established churches, though, decolonization has often meant decreasing financial support from metropolitan partners.

Today, nostalgia for colonial missions mirrors a broader nostalgia for the structure of the British colonial government. I encountered this most strongly among adherents of a conservative Wesleyan Methodist church that split from the mainline United Church in the late 1990s. They longed for the good order of the Methodist Mission and enthusiastically welcomed the oversight and instruction of Australian Wesleyan Methodists, including some who had taught at Methodist Mission schools decades earlier. Even before decolonization, however, established mission churches were not the only religious forces in the country.

As with so many other aspects of Solomon Islands society, World War II had profound effects on local religion, and the postwar years saw the emergence of new forms of nondenominational revivalism and new religious sects. American soldiers, more devout and enthusiastic than their staid British counterparts, brought islanders into indirect contact with the frenzied religious marketplace of the United States. Several now-significant religious groups were founded in the immediate postwar era. The first indigenous Jehovah’s Witness was a Malaitan man jailed during the independence movement known as Maasina Rule who was able to get copies of Jehovah’s Witnesses publications (Burt 1994: 208–9; Ernst 2006). The Baha’i Faith was brought to the Solomons by a former American serviceman and his wife, Alvin and Gertrude Blum, who established the first Local Spiritual Assembly in Honiara in 1954 (Baha’i World News Service 2004). Smaller churches were also founded around this time. For example, an enterprising young Ranonggan man who lived in Gizo in the 1950s and 1960s, Alekera Jiru, wrote to the California radio evangelist Herbert Armstrong, whom he learned about from an American residing in Gizo. Soon he began receiving publications from Armstrong’s World Wide Church of God, and finally in the 1980s his local World Wide Church elicited a visit from missionaries based in Australia.

A watershed event in the recent religious history of the region was Billy Graham’s Southern Cross Crusade to Australia and New Zealand in the first half of 1959 (Graham 2007 [1997]: 225–337). It is hard to overemphasize the significance of Graham’s visit. Many of the Australian evangelists whose Pentecostal churches expanded into the Solomon Islands in the 1980s and 1990s—including the founder of the Christian Outreach Centre, which I discuss below—were “born again in Christ” during Graham’s Australian crusade. Through a tightly organized campaign, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association brought unprecedented crowds to stadiums (150,000 to one meeting in Sydney) and “religion became front-page news” (*ibid.*: 335). More than three million Australians and one-fifth of the entire population of New Zealand

attended meetings led by Graham and his associate pastors in major cities, but the crusade reached far beyond Australia and New Zealand's metropolises. Hundreds of thousands gathered in rural locations to listen to the meetings broadcast through a system of specially laid landlines. Some sermons, translated into pidgin English, traveled as far as "the jungles of New Guinea" (ibid.: 327). Writing of the origins of the indigenous Christian Fellowship Church of the Western Solomon Islands, Frances Harwood suggested that Graham's crusade, along with circulating Pentecostal literature and the presence of several Methodist missionaries of evangelical bent, helped to spark a revival movement that could not be contained by the Methodist Mission. She reported that village radios were able to pick up revival meetings from Australia during the 1950s, including those from the Graham crusade: "The emotional tone and rapid fire delivery of the evangelist fascinated the islanders" (Harwood 1971: 75). Islander preachers, like their counterparts around the world, came to emulate this style (see Tomlinson, this volume).

In the decades since Graham's crusade, evangelical revivals have moved through Australia and the Pacific Islands region. Joel Robbins has suggested that the 1970s and 1980s "might be seen as something of a Melanesian 'great awakening'" which began within the South Sea Evangelical Church of the eastern Solomons and reached as far as the Min region of PNG's western Sandaun province (2004: 122, 340–41). This revival affected many churches of the Solomons, not only the SSEC; in the United Church, for example, worship style changed significantly in the wake of SSEC-led evangelical revival meetings. Evangelical revival has thus powerfully linked people across regional and national boundaries for several decades. It is also an underanalyzed factor in the formation of national consciousness. In his autobiography, the Solomons' first prime minister and prominent evangelical Peter Kenilorea noted that his first trip away from his home was part of an evangelical outreach (Kenilorea and Moore 2008). People of different islands and different churches come together for rallies; in groups they move outward to unfamiliar provinces and villages to share the spirit.

An Australian evangelist's experience of revival in Solomon Islands provides instructive first-hand observations of such a movement (Waugh 2008). In 2006, Geoff Waugh and a Canadian colleague led an international team comprised of students from the Christian Outreach Centre college in Brisbane along with youth from Pentecost Island in Vanuatu for a four-week long Solomons revival adventure. Waugh marveled at the movement of the Spirit already underway in Honiara when they arrived; the revival there had begun when teachers and students from Bubunuhu Christian Community High School, who came from diverse island and church backgrounds, experienced the "gifts of the Spirit" and conducted crusades around the settlements of Honiara. From Honiara (where they stayed with the Kenilorea family), Waugh

and his team went on to Simbo, where they were hosted by a United Church minister. From Simbo, the Australian team flew to a National Youth Convention in Choiseul, while participants from Simbo made their way by motorized canoe. Rough weather began to swamp their undoubtedly overloaded canoes, and they dumped their provisions, along with a handful of young men who swam back to get help. But according to Waugh, it was all a sign of God's power. In Choiseul, thousands of youths gave their lives up to Jesus and experienced spiritual healing; in services that lasted into the wee hours of the night, youth "fell under the power" and were slain in the spirit, their bodies piling up on top of one another.

It is not a coincidence that Waugh describes crusades that began in and after 2003. Starting in late 1998, Solomon Islands entered a five year period of civil crisis that led to isolation and withdrawal. As violence escalated in Honiara in 1998 and 1999, expatriates gradually left the country. Following the coup of June 5, 2000, panicked Australian and New Zealand governments evacuated most of those who had remained. Among those evacuated were foreign evangelists. At the same time, the breakdown of law and order in Guadalcanal sent town-dwelling Solomon Islanders back to villages and prevented villagers from traveling to Honiara and experiencing the religious diversity of town.<sup>6</sup> In 2003, the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) intervened in an increasingly dismal situation of state collapse, quickly restoring law and order and, incidentally, opening the way for a return flood of expatriates—including a bewildering array of foreign evangelists. During research in Honiara in early 2007, I met Christian evangelists such as a Perth-based pastor and his wife who were "planting" the charismatic Potter's House church, and non-Christians, including Melbourne-based Sunni Muslims who had come to help their Solomons brethren and a Ghanaian who had been sent by the Sydney Ahmadiyya Jamaat. The current era of RAMSI-supported stability is apparently leading to increasing fragmentation of religiosity in the Solomons, providing new possibilities for islanders to hook into new kinds of global religious networks.

Yet in what follows, I want to suggest that in part because of the dynamic nature of Solomon Islands Christianity—the fact that people have not simply remained in their historic churches, that they have been affected by waves of revival that began in the late 1950s, that local and foreign evangelists have toured around the country—a distinctly evangelical religiosity forms a common ground through which Solomon Islanders from different islands and even from different churches can interact. I elaborate this point in relation to the stories of two men who have left the churches they grew up with to join new religious movements. I use the personal narratives of each to anchor the larger and more complex story of the trans-local religious movements that they are tapping into.

## Jeremiah and Apostolic Grace

In February 2007, a young man whom I'll call Jeremiah struck up a conversation with me in a shop in Gizo, the capital of Western Province. Jeremiah is from Ranongga, the island where I have worked since 1998; I had never met him but I knew his extended family well. A month and a half earlier in Honiara I had interviewed Jeremiah's relative, Pastor Belani Tekulu, who has founded an independent Pentecostal church called Gospel Missions International.<sup>7</sup> On the evening of the interview, Jeremiah was working as a security guard for Pastor Tekulu's hotel and private home. When he saw me again in Gizo, he was eager to share his own story of Christian rebirth. In fact, he saw our interview as part of his holy destiny.

Before coming to Jeremiah's story, though, let me say something about Pastor Tekulu, his extended family, and the religious context of his rural home. Tekulu saw evangelism as part of a greater plan that also included worldly wealth ("development") and power ("Christian leadership"). In late 2006, when I met him, Tekulu was frantically completing a hotel that represented his latest business enterprise; our conversation began at nine in the evening and lasted until the wee hours of the morning because he had no other free time. Tekulu explained to me that his decision to leave the United Church was difficult. He loved the Methodist Church he grew up in (it became the United Church in 1968), not least because his father had helped to establish it in Luqa, the southern part of Ranongga Island. But the United Church did not allow him to carry out his ministry. Mentored by a pastor from Australia, Tekulu first joined a Pentecostal church called Kingdom Harvest and then another one called Revival Flame. Eventually, though, working with a fellow pastor from Malaita, he decided to found an independent church, Gospel Missions International. Since our interview, he has continued to travel widely through evangelical Christian networks: to Australia for visits with associated pastors and for a meeting of Campus Crusade for Christ; to Toronto for a meeting of Prison Fellowship International, an organization founded by Richard Nixon associate Chuck Colson, who was born again during his stint in prison following the Watergate scandal; and to Hawaii to participate in a seminar run by the Haggai Institute, which aims to fulfill Christ's great commission by fostering Christian leadership in the Third World. During our interview, Tekulu revealed that once his business ventures were well-established, he hoped to enter politics. In the 2010 national elections, he campaigned to become member of parliament for Ranongga and Simbo, but his bid was unsuccessful.

Pastor Tekulu's family is among the most prominent in Luqa. Like the local culture hero whom Geoffrey White describes for the Anglican island of Santa Isabel (1991: 136), Tekulu's father was responsible for founding a new sociospatial and spiritual order by establishing a coastal settlement around a

Methodist church. One of Belani Tekulu's brothers is a minister with an important national position in the United Church; another brother is a pastor; a brother-in-law is the superintendent minister of Ranongga; a sister-in-law is the head of the United Church Women's Fellowship. The family is now split between the United Church and Gospel Missions International church.

The rise of new churches like Gospel Mission International (widely known by its acronym, GMI) and the spread of churches like Rhema Family Church and the Christian Outreach Centre, which I discuss below, has had dramatic effects on what were, for much of the twentieth century, one-church villages. For instance, the village of Lale is the United Church headquarters for southern Ranongga and is the place where Christianity was first established on the island. Today, though, there are five separate churches in the central village area—United Church, Seventh-day Adventist, Wesleyan Methodist, Rhema Family Church, and Gospel Mission International—plus several other churches represented among in-married spouses and in surrounding hamlets. One Lale resident said that having so many churches makes the village “like town”—no one works together, no one cooperates, and there is no center for social, ritual, or economic activities. These differences were obvious following the 2007 earthquake that struck the Western Solomons. One of the villages most affected by landslides following the quake was the Seventh-day Adventist village of Mondo; when I visited six months after the quake, they had already moved to a new settlement site on more level ground. Villages in Luqa, by contrast, which were also affected, seemed paralyzed and unable to take collective action; residents attributed this to the fact that they were not united around a single church.

Pastor Tekulu's young relative Jeremiah began the story of his religious journey by describing how he became alienated from the United Church in which he was born and raised. Away at school, he began to enjoy what he called “the ways of the world,” and instead of encouraging him or giving him wise guidance, pastors and members of his church simply “looked past me, and gossiped about me.”<sup>8</sup> Eventually, in 2006 (the year before I interviewed him), he joined the GMI church, which was led by his female cousin while Pastor Tekulu was in Honiara. As part of the GMI fellowship, Jeremiah began to read the Bible and think about what it means to follow Jesus. He came to see his own infant baptism as invalid because Christ himself was thirty years old before he was baptized. Soon, Jeremiah was baptized again and he found his mind suddenly opened. Yet the village congregation faltered when Tekulu, too busy in Honiara, failed to return to the village as he had repeatedly promised to do. Without such leadership, Jeremiah said that their fellowship “became cold, weak, and eventually died.”

Nevertheless, Jeremiah's new faith remained steadfast and he prayed: “God, if it is part of your plan for my life, I want you to put me in a situation

where I can grow in your work, where I can work for you, because I know that my body is not mine, my life is not mine, but yours, oh God.” He stayed at home, praying, and then he told his father he would go to the provincial capital of Gizo for two weeks. When the two weeks had passed, he felt the need to remain. Soon afterwards, he met the pastor of the Pentecostal Christian Outreach Centre (COC) in Gizo, a former Anglican originally from Malaita. This pastor mentioned that there was a special “School of the Prophets” to be held in the regional town of Noro. Jeremiah was elated, for he “hungered and thirsted after the Word of God.” This fulfilled Jeremiah’s prayer—God was showing him his destiny and raining blessings upon him, blessings that were manifest in the fact that his new pastor paid all of the course fees for him.

The Solomons Christian Outreach Centre resulted from the 1988 expansion of a church founded in 1974 in Brisbane by Clark Taylor, one of several Pentecostal Australian pastors who were “born again” during the Graham crusade. The COC founded the Balasuna Bible training college in Guadalcanal, and it is among the largest of the new Pentecostal denominations in the country. As Jeremiah was joining the COC, it (or at least the Western Province branch) was in the process of embracing the teachings of a charismatic Indian-born Malaysia-based preacher named Dr. Jonathan David. When I asked Jeremiah’s pastor about the COC’s relationship to Jonathan David, he explained that throughout the 1990s, signs and wonders were common in COC; by 2000, however, spiritual fires had cooled. A Western Province pastor of the COC who came from Vella Lavella made a connection with David and attended his School of the Prophets in Malaysia. Since they had begun to embrace the evangelist’s teachings concerning “Apostolic Grace,” the church began experiencing signs and wonders once again. David was helping them prepare for the acceleration prior to the end times by getting them “tuned into the frequency” of the Kingdom. In David’s theology, like that of much contemporary Pentecostalism, material and spiritual blessings go hand in hand (cf. Bainton and Cox 2009). The founder of a leadership consultancy company and organizer of business training courses, he assured his followers in 2009 that in the coming year “[f]inancial supply will come to us. Live in the pathway of abundance. Every debt will be paid off. God will give us financial supplies so that debts will not hold us back” (David 2009). While this may sound like the crassest kind of prosperity gospel, note that for Jeremiah, the material blessing he experienced in his pastor’s willingness to pay for him to attend the School of the Prophets course was only a means for his spiritual growth.

Later in the week that I interviewed Jeremiah, I joined him and his pastor at the house of another COC member for a fellowship meeting and to watch a video from David’s All-Nations Sanctuary in Malaysia. The fellowship meeting began in a way familiar to me from small prayer groups within the United Church, with a few minor differences. When the pastor finished giving the

prayer points, all twelve or so participants immediately began shouting their prayers in a mixture of Pijin and glossolalia. My United Church interlocutors also occasionally broke into Pentecostal-style glossolalia, especially during meetings of small prayer groups or during enthusiasm-filled rallies like the one described by Geoff Waugh, so this was not entirely new to me. However, the style was distinct because in the United Church, glossolalia and other manifestations of the spirit break out only after relatively calm “united prayer” builds in intensity. After our fellowship, we watched the video; it was the third or fourth time that Jeremiah had watched it, he said, but he got more out of it each time. The video featured David’s sermons and scenes from the spirit-filled congregation; my hosts eagerly pointed out their colleague from Vella Lavella whenever he came into view.

Jonathan David’s influence is not limited to this small network of COC members in Gizo. In 2009, two years after my discussions with Jeremiah, David headlined the Apostolic Revival Crusade in the Solomons’ capital Honiara, the first stop in a global crusade that took him to Papua New Guinea, throughout Southeast Asia, to Australia and New Zealand, Africa, Eastern Europe, the United Kingdom, and the United States. (The crusade was hosted locally not by the COC but also by another Honiara Pentecostal church, Kingdom Harvest International Ministries, led by Pastor Ellison Barko.) David’s “leaders’ forum” in Honiara was attended by the prime minister, governor general, speaker of Parliament, attorney general, and many MPs and permanent secretaries (Tuhaika 2009b). The crusade closed with a session on strategic planning to achieve a “secure future for the nation of Solomon Islands,” in which capacity crowds were told: “We are one united Solomon Islands, one nation, one voice, one people, one tribe, we may be different in colour ... but we are born for the same purpose, we are born for the same destiny” (Tuhaika 2009a).

This Apostolic Revival Crusade bears out what Annelin Eriksen (2009) has recently observed for Vanuatu: new Pentecostal and charismatic churches aim to develop national ministries and articulate a vision of united nationhood. Much existing literature on millenarian Christianity in Papua New Guinea has emphasized the antinationalist character of these churches, which provide an alternative vision of a global order that bypasses a nation state that is viewed in strongly negative terms (e.g., Eves 2003; Jorgensen 2005; Robbins 1998). This difference may be attributable to the swiftly changing nature of the Christian movements that we are describing.<sup>9</sup> Many of the churches and movements described in existing literature were influenced by premillennial dispensationalism, which draws on the books of Daniel and Revelation in interpreting the secular power of governments as instruments of the Antichrist in the years of tribulation preceding the return of the Messiah. “Governing kingdom churches” engage in a different brand of end-times prophesying, finding in the books of the Old Testament (Isaiah and Kings, for example) a

vision of the triumphant return to power of God's people. Rather than asking for blessings, David's followers are exhorted to seize their rightful inheritance; rather than passively waiting for signs of Christ's return, they actively seek to bring about the new millennium. Interestingly, the instruments of God's will are not individuals or communities, but "the nations"—God's dominion on earth will be established through the agency of earthly governments.<sup>10</sup>

With such prominent attendees, extensive and largely uncritical newspaper coverage, and interdenominational appeals, this 2009 Apostolic Crusade underlines the extent to which the public sphere of the Solomons is pervaded by Christianity of a type that might strike a secular outsider as extreme. To conclude this section, though, I want to focus on the way that Christianity pervades public culture in a less dramatic but ultimately more far-reaching way. After he told me his story of Christian rebirth, Jeremiah told his pastor about how he had spent the previous evening. Hanging out in the Gizo market, he said, he met a "mature aged" Seventh-day Adventist man in the market, and they began "storying" about Jonathan David's theology of Apostolic Grace. The "storying" went into the morning, and after the two new friends had prayed together, the Adventist man invited Jeremiah home for morning tea and a bath.

As Joel Robbins has noted (2009), many Pentecostals engage in highly ritualized interactions even as they disavow ritual as "empty." Robbins suggests that such ritualized interactions are intrinsically satisfying and motivate people to commit to Pentecostal institutions even where resources are scarce. In multid denominational but predominantly Christian Melanesia, they seem to do even more than commit people to particular institutions. Evangelical ritual provides a common ground of interaction for stranger-citizens. Jeremiah's experiences exemplify this. He had just spent the previous night talking to someone from a different island, denomination, and generation. When I met him, he was living in the home of his pastor and the pastor's wife—a couple he had met only a month or so before. He addressed them as "mommy" and "daddy." The three churches that Jeremiah has been part of—the mainline United Church, the locally founded Pentecostal Gospel Mission International, and the Christian Outreach Centre—are not identical. Yet members of each engage in testifying and praying, preaching and confessing, even glossolalia (which is less common but still present in the mainline United Church). Such recognizable genres of speech and interaction allow nonintimates to engage fluently with one another. Even as the rise of new denominations fractures the tenuous unity of kin-based villages—making them "like town"—and causes splits within families like that of Jeremiah, the proliferation of evangelism in urban spaces can provide both the topic and the language for interactions among strangers.

There is a postscript to this story. On a research trip in 2010, I unsuccessfully tried to track down Jeremiah. The new pastor of the COC church in Gizo

said that he had not seen or heard from Jeremiah for nearly a year but thought that he was working on a ship. He had, it seemed, fallen back into sin. The pastor and others told me that Jeremiah had nearly died and had lost most of his teeth in a drunken brawl the previous year. At least as his story was told to me, it seemed that he was living in a state of real desperation. Jeremiah's spiritual rebirth allowed him to forge new ties with strangers, but neither his faith nor those new friends seem to have kept him on the straight path. The apparently relentless oscillation between vice and virtue that Jeremiah experienced is exactly what one man from Malaita, born and raised in an evangelical church, was trying to escape by bypassing the blood of Jesus and declaring his submission to God's will directly—as a Muslim.

### **Akmad and Muslim piety**

Most evangelism in Solomon Islands involves some flavor of Christianity, but not all of it. One of the most significant non-Christian religions gaining adherents in the Solomons is Islam. Islam is rejected by the Christian majority, and some Muslims embrace the countercultural and antiestablishment associations that Islam carries (McDougall 2009).<sup>11</sup> For some Muslims, moreover, Islam plays into existing neo-Israelite theologies that configure a particular island identity, that of Malaita, as key to the religious narrative. (My interlocutors speculate that their ancestors had been Muslims, just as other Malaitan Christian groups speculate that their ancestors were ancient Jews.) In what follows, however, I want to underline commonalities among narratives of conversion from one Christian denomination to another and conversion from Christianity to a non-Christian religion. Not only do the new Muslims whose stories I discuss here still speak the language of evangelism, but part of their dissatisfaction with Christianity has to do with its sectarian nature—the fact that Christianity claims to be united but is divided into denominations, that Christians claim to love their neighbors but often overlook them or judge them as sinners.

Conversion to Islam in the Solomons has occurred in two waves (McDougall 2009). In the 1970s and 1980s, some well-educated young Solomon Islanders encountered Islam at regional universities or in Honiara through contacts with Middle Eastern and African expatriates. Islam has spread slowly within the social networks of these men, but it experienced more dramatic growth since the reestablishment of law and order with RAMSI in 2003. This second wave of Islamic conversion has occurred largely among men from North Malaita and North Malaitan-dominated peri-urban settlements in Honiara who were once affiliated with the South Sea Evangelical Church (SSEC). These were men who had been profoundly affected by the conflict—displaced from urban

settlements by Guadalcanal militants, returning “home” to find that land was short, and blamed for social disruptions in villages. North Malaitans of SSEC background—though not, to my knowledge, any of my interlocutors—were disproportionately represented in the Malaitan Eagle Force militia, which aimed to protect Malaitans and others in town but which was also responsible for murder, rape, robbery, and other kinds of chaos (Moore 2004: 127).

Akmd is a North Fataleka man who had converted to Islam two years before our interview in early 2007. He was living in Adaliua, a predominantly North Malaitan urban village on Guadalcanal customary land just beyond the Honiara town boundary. I was also staying in Adaliua with a family from Ranongga who were renting a house from one of Akmd’s cousins, whose father had initially founded Adaliua in the 1970s. Our household included Silas Pio, a young man who stood in a kind of “younger brother” relationship to me (his mother and aunts had looked after me in Ranongga). Silas, who has an interest in social science, accompanied me to the interview with Akmd and other Muslims I interviewed. Thus, Akmd’s audience was not only me but also an interested Solomon Islander. Like other Muslims I spoke to, he drew on the Bible more than the Quran and spoke of Jesus more than Muhammad. He spoke with the cadence and intonation of an evangelical Christian preacher.

All of his life, Akmd had been a devout Christian. He was a lay leader of the South Sea Evangelical Church, worked for the Bible Society, participated in evangelism training sessions run by the (Pentecostal) Rhema Family Church, and toured Solomon Islands with the global parachurch organization “Every Home for Christ.” Akmd was employed by the Malaitan Shipping Company and lived in Honiara until fighting on Guadalcanal forced him home to Fataleka in north Malaita. There, he said, his spiritual life became “weak,” and for the next five years, none of his Christian neighbors came to encourage him. Akmd described the neglect through Biblical parables (compare the following with, e.g., Luke 15:1–32):<sup>12</sup>

One message that they always give, they always say that the prodigal son returned on his own. So I said, the devil likes to use this message of the prodigal son to deceive you. You Christians use this word, “prodigal son,” and you are leading many people to go to hell. The lost sheep and the lost coin are the real message that we Christians should work from.<sup>13</sup> Today there are many lost coins inside of our homes. Today there are many lost sheep inside of our churches. Where is the pastor, where are some of the elders? You people aren’t carrying out your work, to go and look for them, search for them, as Jesus said, I came to seek and save that which is lost.

Like Jeremiah, who was ignored by church members and leaders when he got caught up in the “ways of the world,” Akmd was initially alienated from his

church not because of doctrine but because he was shunned. Another North Malaitan Muslim with whom I spoke at the Sunni Muslim center made this point with more vehemence: “They want angels in church, they don’t like them scratched. But those who think they are angels are disillusioned, all of us are just human beings” (conversation with author, January 28, 2007). That was why some ex-militants had become Muslim: they were ostracized by their supposedly Christian churches but were welcomed by their Muslim brothers. Yet another young convert to Islam told me how he was always spiritually inclined, but that he came from a family split between the Anglican and SSEC churches and found that each church treated members of the other as “devils.” When he himself joined a number of new Pentecostal churches (including Kingdom Harvest and Revival Flame, the same churches that Pastor Belani Tekulu joined), he found himself shunned by both Anglicans and SSEC.

Jeremiah’s spiritual darkness ended, at least temporarily, when he joined the GMI fellowship; Akmad’s time as a lost sheep ended with the visit of some Australian Muslims to North Malaita in October 2005.<sup>14</sup> He explained that they came during their holidays to help a fledging community of Muslim brothers in Honiara and Malaita, and he speculated that this was in order to make up for times that they had missed evening prayers over the course of the year. Akmad was aware that many Christian islanders think that he and others are attracted to Islam because of material rewards. He compared the Australian Muslims to the Australian government—they were just helping a neighbor (RAMSI’s operation call name was “Helpim Fren”). By the time these Australia-based Muslims visited the Solomons, most islanders would have been well aware of the global reputation of Islam in the wake of 9/11. Thus, when Akmad decided to become a Muslim, he realized that his friends and neighbors were going to call him a “terrorist.”

In identifying a disjuncture between Biblical teachings and the behavior of Christians, Akmad differed little from Christians like Jeremiah. Akmad and other Muslims, however, came to reject a central tenet of Christianity: that the sacrifice of Jesus as God’s son atoned for the sins of a fallen humanity. Christians are weak, he said, because they depend far too much on God’s grace. Grace is an attribute of God, he said, but “even though he is a God who is most gracious, most merciful, most kind, as we say, when sin adds up, when sin increases, even God’s grace can have an end.” Many Christians know that God was wrathful in the Old Testament times of Noah and the great flood but think that the God of the New Testament is endlessly merciful. “If God is merciful and graceful,” he asked, “Why then did Ananias and Sapphira die?” Ananias and Sapphira were a husband and wife who were struck dead by God after holding back a portion of the sales of their land from the community of believers following Christ’s resurrection (Acts 5:1–11). The major difference between Islam and Christianity, as Akmad saw it, was that the former laid down

rules for people to live by, while the latter left everything up to an individual's conscience. With Islam, he explained,

Things that are prohibited are prohibited. But with Christianity, it is your own choice to accept it or not. And then people say, oh, it is a trial or a temptation for you to overcome these things. But we cannot sit down with temptation and trials all the time.

Another young Muslim man at the Muslim Center put it this way:

Christianity taught us who created us but didn't give us any rules. That is how Christianity and Islam are different—Islam is a way of life. Christians learn how to pray, but they don't know which hand you should use to rub your backside with and which you should eat with.

Far from leading people into righteousness, Akmad and other Muslims think that Christianity's emphasis on individual freedom leads them into endless cycles of sin.

For many Melanesians, freedom from onerous ancestral taboos was one of Christianity's greatest blessings. In suggesting that Islam is like custom in providing these rules, recent converts to Islam seem to reject this Christian promise of individual freedom.<sup>15</sup> Yet in complaining about the freedom given to individuals within the SSEC that many of them were once part of, these Muslim converts seem to be protesting a bit too much. As anthropologist Ben Burt (1994) has suggested, the SSEC replaced traditional taboos with Old Testament style "thou shalt nots." Far from leaving everything to the individual conscience, as some of the Muslim converts suggest, the church disciplines members who break church rules by banning them from holding church offices and by imposing periods of official social ostracism. Many of the ex-SSEC Muslims were themselves subject to that discipline: far from experiencing endless forgiveness, they felt ostracized or ignored.

This sense of alienation may be heightened by the recent history and complex denominational situation of Malaita. While some other regions of Solomon Islands were initially dominated by a single mission church, Malaita was divided between Roman Catholics, Anglicans, SSEC, and Seventh-day Adventists. Today, the SSEC appears to be particularly prone to fission because of its open congregational structure, with each pastor answerable only to his congregation, and because the church's strict discipline may drive errant members to other churches. Disputes over land often underlie denominational schism, and these disputes have become worse in the years since thousands of Honiara-resident Malaitan families were driven "home" to Malaita (Fraenkel 2004: 61–62; Moore 2004: 115–16, 269). This proliferation of churches—not necessarily theological notions of freedom—may be part of what leads new Muslims to portray Christianity as lawless and anarchic, allowing a kind of

selfish individualism that was not possible in communities following ancestral rules.

Even in rejecting central theological tenets of Christianity, Akmad drew on the same New Testament texts that he would have used as an evangelical Christian preacher. Akmad's discussion of the particular tenets of Islam was focused almost entirely on the proper spatio-social relationships between men and women—especially the notion that both men and women should dress and comport themselves modestly and that unrelated men should avoid the wives, sisters, and daughters of other men. Although unusual in emphasizing male piety, these concerns resonate with longstanding critiques leveled by Malaitan traditionalists against their Christian counterparts (Akin 2004; Akin 1993: 474–512). Even beyond Malaita, however, debates about appropriate gender roles and relations often circle around the relative weight that should be put on custom and Christianity. For however patriarchal Christianity appears to secular Western feminists (and indeed, few Solomon Islands Christians, men or women, question that the man is the head of the family), Melanesian churches and women's fellowship groups have provided the ground for women to take on unprecedentedly prominent public roles. Christianity is locally viewed as having freed women from the constraints of custom. Here again, even in critiquing the way that Christianity transformed gender relationships, Solomon Islands Muslims echo and elaborate common themes within a Solomons-wide shared public culture.

Islam is spreading in Solomon Islands in much the same way that various Christian denominations have spread over the past century: young men move away from their rural villages and encounter new religious practices, which they bring back home. Today, Solomon Islands-based Ahmadiyya missionaries and itinerant Sunni teachers in Honiara and Malaita are not so different from their Christian counterparts who have also flooded into the country since the restoration of law and order in 2003. Ironically, even as they seek to escape such trouble, Muslim converts add to the sectarian conflicts within village communities and undermine the ideology of unity.

## Conclusion

This volume focuses on Christian politics in Oceania, but as I have shown, a pervasively evangelical public culture is not limited to those who identify as Christian. Akmad and the Muslims I interviewed were still speaking within the broad genres of Christian discourse. They share with their Christian neighbors and kin a tendency to view problems “through a moral lens” (Stritecky 2001), seeking spiritual solutions to what might be considered socioeconomic or political problems. Former evangelicals who have converted to Islam share

experiences of revival with former United Church members who have converted to Pentecostalism. Both Akmad, the peri-urban settlement-dwelling Malaitan, and Pastor Belani Tekulu, the entrepreneurial Ranonggan, have had connections with the parachurch organization Campus Crusade for Christ; some of my Ranonggan and Malaitan interlocutors alike have moved through Kingdom Harvest and Revival Flame. Moreover, once they have left the church they grew up with, they seem to move from one church or one movement to another in ways that are shaped but not determined by island origin, ethnic identity, and traditional church affiliation.

Too often, Solomon Islands society is portrayed as a conglomeration of isolated groups, never sufficiently integrated by a colonial state to form a proper nation. As Bronwen Douglas (2007) has suggested, there has been insufficient attention to Christianity (and perhaps an overemphasis on *kastom*) in scholarship on emerging nationalisms in Melanesia. Elsewhere I have examined this from an institutional point of view (McDougall 2008b). Here, I have explored the ways that Christianity provides the common ground for interactions and engagement between stranger-citizens. In some ways, Solomons social life is defined in terms of kinship and clanship, now entwined for a century or more with membership in a postmission church. We must also remember, however, that the country's citizens go to extraordinary lengths and travel extraordinary distances—risking their lives in rough seas, like the youth of Simbo—to “fellowship” with strangers who speak different languages and come from different islands.

## Notes

Research for this chapter was generously supported by Discovery Project Grant #0666652 from the Australian Research Council and was undertaken as part of my ARC postdoctoral fellowship. I am especially grateful to the young man whom I have called “Jeremiah” in this text, pastors of the Christian Outreach Centre Church in Gizo, and Pastor Belani Tekulu; I also thank Akmad and the other Muslim men I interviewed in Honiara as well as Inia Barry and his family who hosted me during the time of the interviews. I continue to be profoundly grateful to my friends in Pienuna village and around Ranongga Island whose companionship has shaped my understanding of Christianity in Solomon Islands and beyond. Mark Edele has helped me find the time for research and writing. The paper has benefitted from comments by Matthew Engelke, Dan Jorgensen, Joel Robbins, Michael W. Scott, Matt Tomlinson, Rupert Stasch, and attendees at our workshop at Monash University and departmental seminars at The University of Western Australia and the London School of Economics in 2010.

1. The Methodist Mission was established in Roviana of the New Georgia Group of the then-Western District in 1902. The Methodist Mission was hugely influential in the region but did not extend to the southeast. Yet Western Province was also the first home of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which remains a powerful force in the region but which is not limited to Western Province, having enthusiastically expanded

to all corners of the country. The South Sea Evangelical Church is strongly associated with Malaita, but its adherents do not constitute a majority on that island, which is also home to significant Catholic, Anglican, and Adventist populations, as well as to newer churches.

2. Annelin Eriksen (this volume) suggests that such a distinction can be discerned in the urban Pentecostal churches of Port Vila, with the middle class and elites being attracted to churches with more international profiles and those of lower socioeconomic status joining more local churches. In contrast, my own somewhat anecdotal evidence suggests that at least some aspiring elites attempt to build sociopolitical influence and status through founding a local church with a base “back at home.”
3. Church pastors, ministers, and even bishops and moderators of the United Church, for example, are modestly paid and, unlike politicians and officials, they do not have access to other sources of cash for consumption and distribution. Even when church headquarters are in urban areas, “big men” (and “big women”) of the church are constantly travelling to church services, rallies, and celebrations hosted by ordinary villagers who, as hosts, gain status by taking good care of their guests.
4. Research on Christianity in the Solomons has focused primarily on colonial missions and, for later eras, the localization of these foreign missions, with less attention to the continuing influx of new religious ideas after World War II and independence in 1978 (see, for example, Burt 1994; Dureau 1994; Garrett 1997; Harwood 1971; Laracy 1976; Tippett 1967; White 1991).
5. Such ideologies were often challenged by indigenous religious revival movements. In the Methodist Church in the late 1950s, a local pastor named Silas Eto was inspired to devise a “New Way” of worship inspired in part by the global rise of evangelicalism. The expatriate church leaders were ambivalent about the highly spiritualist style of worship and Eto’s independent leadership. This movement eventually split with the Methodist Mission to become the Christian Fellowship Church (see Harwood 1971).
6. These years, incidentally, coincided with the longest period during which I conducted research, and thus they form a kind of baseline for me. Only as I return to the Solomons in the RAMSI era am I coming to understand how peculiar life was during that time. Among the most notable peculiarities was that people stayed put, more or less, or they came home. In some ways, religious life was constrained, for large church gatherings require money for food and for transport, money that became increasingly scarce over the crisis years. Yet in other ways, socioreligious life on Ranongga was vibrant, as people were not constantly traveling to Honiara. My Ranonggan United Church interlocutors were troubled by the breakaway of the new conservative Wesleyans as well as the growth of spirit-filled prayer groups within the United Church, which were too “over the top” in their Pentecostal-style glossalalia and spirit possession for the church’s ministers. Retrospectively, though, it seemed that this was a period of relative stability—in part, no doubt, because of the breakdown of order in urban centers, which led both foreign evangelists and local villagers to stay home.
7. Jeremiah is a pseudonym, but Pastor Belani asked me specifically to use his full name and title in my writings about him.
8. This quotation and those that follow come from an interview conducted on February 21, 2007, and are translated from Luqa and Pijin.
9. Note that those influenced by Jonathan David and the doctrine of Apostolic Grace in the Solomons are not members of a single denomination. Two separate churches

are associated with him—the Christian Outreach Centre and Kingdom Harvest International—but the newspapers report that people of all denominations attended the Crusade. My Western Province interlocutors also emphasized the postdenominational nature of the movement.

10. Kingdom Harvest International (whose local branch organized the Honiara Revival) aims at “taking Jesus to the Nations” ([www.khmi.org](http://www.khmi.org), accessed October 28, 2011); the tagline of Jonathan David’s website is “impacting cities, influencing nations” ([www.jonathan-david.org](http://www.jonathan-david.org), accessed October 28, 2011).
11. Although not violently persecuted as they have been in Papua New Guinea (Flower 2008), Solomon Islands Muslims are harassed by their neighbors who call them terrorists, by the Australian government which worries that the Solomons might become a “petri dish” for Islamic terrorism (Wainwright et al. 2003), and by national political and church leaders who have made efforts to limit any non-Christian forms of proselytization.
12. These and other quotations from Akmad come from a conversation with the author on January 27, 2007 and are translated from Pijin.
13. In this passage, Akmad switched from referring to “you Christians” to “we Christians” (in Pijin, he used the first person plural inclusive pronoun form *iumi*). He is recounting his exchanges with his Christian neighbors in Fataleka and perhaps this shift reflects his own shifting identity as he began to embrace Islam. I also suspect that at this point in the discussion, he was slipping into a familiar mode of preacherly discourse, in which pastors frequently exhort listeners using this pronominal form. If so, “we Christians” included himself (as speaker) and Silas and me (as addressees). Other Muslims I spoke to consistently referred to Christians as “they” or “them,” often in accusatory tones, and on reflection, Akmad’s use of *iumi* seems to reflect his more conciliatory stance toward his Christian family and friends and a greater openness in talking with me.
14. I have not been able to learn much about the connections between Australian Sunnis and the Solomon Islands; I met two such visiting teachers in Honiara, but they were not willing to speak to me at any length because I am a woman. An expert on Tablighi Jamaat in Australia has suggested that they are members of this organization (Jan Ali, personal communication).
15. As a number of recent works on the anthropology of Christianity have illustrated (e.g., Asad 2003; Engelke 2007; Keane 2007), secular liberal notions of freedom emerge from Protestantism’s rejection of the supposedly empty ritual forms and meaningless rules of premodern Catholicism.

## References

- Akin, David W. 1993. “Negotiating Culture in East Kwaio, Malaita, Solomon Islands.” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Hawai’i.
- . 2004. “Ancestral Vigilance and the Corrective Conscience: Kastom as Culture in a Melanesian Society.” *Anthropological Theory* 4, no. 3: 299–324.
- Asad, Talal. 2003. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Baha’i World News Service. 2004. “Festivities honor community service.” <http://news.bahai.org/story/291>, accessed 28 October 2011.

- Bainton, Nick, and John Cox. 2009. "Parallel States, Parallel Economies: Legitimacy and Prosperity in Papua New Guinea." State, Society, and Governance in Melanesia Project Discussion Paper 2009/5. Canberra: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University.
- Bird, Cliff. 2008. "Pepesa—The Household of Life: A Theological Exploration of Land in the Context of Change in Solomon Islands." PhD. dissertation, Charles Sturt University.
- Boseto, Leslie. 1994. "Towards a Pacific Theology of Reality: A Grassroots Response to *Winds of Change*." *Pacific Journal of Theology* 12: 53–61.
- Burt, Ben. 1994. *Tradition and Christianity: The Colonial Transformation of a Solomon Islands Society*. Philadelphia: Harwood Academic Publishers.
- David, Jonathan. 2009. "All Nations Sanctuary—Word for 2010" (sermon delivered 25 October 2009), [http://www.jonathan-david.org/ans\\_09](http://www.jonathan-david.org/ans_09), accessed 24 November 2009.
- Douglas, Bronwen. 2007. "Christian Custom and the Church as Structure in 'Weak States' in Melanesia." In *Civil Society, Religion and Global Governance: Paradigms of Power and Persuasion*, ed. Helen James. London: Routledge.
- Dureau, Christine. 1994. "Mixed Blessings: Christianity and History in Women's Lives on Simbo, Western Solomon Islands." PhD. dissertation, Macquarie University.
- Engelke, Matthew. 2007. *A Problem of Presence: Beyond Scripture in an African Church*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ernst, Manfred. 2006. "Solomon Islands." In *Globalization and the Re-Shaping of Christianity in the Pacific Islands*, ed. Manfred Ernst. Suva, Fiji: Pacific Theological College.
- Eves, Richard. 2003. "Money, Mayhem and the Beast: Narratives of the World's End from New Ireland (Papua New Guinea)." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 9, no. 3: 527–47.
- Flower, Scott. 2008. "Muslims in Melanesia: Putting Security Issues in Perspective." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 62, no. 3: 408–29.
- Fraenkel, Jon. 2004. *The Manipulation of Custom: From Uprising to Intervention in the Solomon Islands*. Wellington: Victoria University Press.
- Garrett, John. 1997. *Where Nets Were Cast: Christianity in Oceania since World War II*. Suva, Fiji, and Geneva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific in association with World Council of Churches.
- Graham, Billy. 2007 [1997]. *Just as I Am: The Autobiography of Billy Graham*, rev. and updated. New York: HarperCollins.
- Harwood, F. H. 1971. "The Christian Fellowship Church: A Revitalization Movement in Melanesia." PhD. dissertation, University of Chicago.
- Hilliard, David. 1966. "Protestant Missions in the Solomon Islands, 1849–1942." PhD. dissertation, Australian National University.
- Jorgensen, Dan. 2005. "Third Wave Evangelism and the Politics of the Global in Papua New Guinea: Spiritual Warfare and the Recreation of Place in Telefomin." *Oceania* 75, no. 4: 444–61.
- Jourdan, Christine. 1995. "Stepping-Stones to National Consciousness: The Solomon Islands Case." In *Nation Making: Emergent Identities in Postcolonial Melanesia*, ed. Robert J. Foster. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Kenilorea, Peter, and Clive Moore. 2008. *Tell It As It Is: Autobiography of Rt. Hon. Sir Peter Kenilorea, KBA, PC, Solomon Islands' First Prime Minister*. Taipei: Centre for Asia-Pacific Area Studies, Academia Sinica.

- Laracy, Hugh. 1976. *Marists and Melanesians: A History of Catholic Missions in the Solomon Islands*. Canberra: Australian National University Press.
- McDougall, Debra. 2008a. "Christian Dilemmas beyond Locality" [Review of Keane and Engelke]. *Current Anthropology* 49, no. 5: 945–46.
- . 2008b. "Religious Institutions as Alternative Structures in Post-Conflict Solomon Islands: Cases from the Western Province." State, Society, and Governance in Melanesia Project Discussion Paper 2008/5. Canberra: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University.
- McDougall, Debra. 2009. "Becoming Sinless: Converting to Islam in the Christian Solomon Islands." *American Anthropologist* 111, no. 4: 480–91.
- Moore, Clive. 2004. *Happy Isles in Crisis: The Historical Causes for a Failing State in Solomon Islands, 1998–2004*. Canberra: Asia Pacific Press.
- Niebuhr, H. Richard. 1929. *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*. New York: H. Holt and Company.
- Robbins, Joel. 1998. "On Reading 'World News': Apocalyptic Narrative, Negative Nationalism, and Transnational Christianity in a Papua New Guinea Society." *Social Analysis* 42, no. 2: 103–30.
- . 2004. *Becoming Sinners: Christianity and Moral Torment in a Papua New Guinea Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 2009. "Pentecostal Networks and the Spirit of Globalization: On the Social Productivity of Ritual Forms." *Social Analysis* 53, no. 1: 55–66.
- Scott, Michael W. 2005. "I was Like Abraham': Notes on the Anthropology of Christianity from the Solomon Islands." *Ethnos* 70, no. 1: 101–25.
- Steley, Dennis. 1989. "Unfinished: The Seventh-Day Adventist Mission in the South Pacific, excluding Papua New Guinea, 1886–1986." PhD. dissertation, University of Auckland.
- Stritecky, Jolene M. 2001. "Through a Moral Lens: Morality, Violence, and Empathy in Solomon Islands." PhD. dissertation, University of Iowa.
- Tippett, Alan R. 1967. *Solomon Islands Christianity: A Study in Growth and Obstruction*. London: Lutterworth Press.
- Tuhaika, N. 2009a. "God's Man Challenges Solomon Islanders to Be United." <http://www.solomontimes.com>, January 12; accessed 28 October 2011.
- . 2009b. "Preacher Reminds Leaders to Turn to God." <http://www.solomontimes.com>, January 12; accessed 28 October 2011.
- Wainwright, Elsina, Quinton Clements, Mary-Louise O'Callaghan, Greg Urwin, John Ini Lapli, and Peter Kenilorea. 2003. *Our Failing Neighbor: Australia and the Future of the Solomon Islands*. Barton, ACT: Australian Strategic Policy Institute Policy Report.
- Waugh, Geoff. 2008. "Kingdom Mission, 'Solomon Islands Mission—2006.'" <http://www.facebook.com/topic.php?uid=5839843211&topic=4121>, accessed 9 January 2010.
- White, Geoffrey M. 1991. *Identity through History: Living Stories in a Solomon Islands Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## Anthropology and the Politics of Christianity in Papua New Guinea

JOHN BARKER

Why has so little been written about contemporary religion and politics in Papua New Guinea?

The question is meant to provoke. My main purpose in this chapter is to offer an overview and critique of what is actually a quite extensive literature that deals, directly and indirectly, with political aspects of Christianity in Papua New Guinea (PNG)—a literature penned primarily by anthropologists. Yet the treatment of the topic in PNG differs significantly from how it is treated in other parts of the world, particularly in the neglect of relationships between church and state. In contrast to sub-Saharan Africa, one finds little information on the historical role of missions in training the first generation of political leaders in the postcolonial period, or on the centrality of Christian references in contemporary political discourse (e.g., Gifford 1998; Ranger 2008). In contrast to Latin America, one finds even less information on the role of Christianity in the political economy of the nation (e.g., Freston 2008; Stoll 1990). In contrast to other parts of Oceania, particularly Fiji and Indonesian Papua, one finds virtually no information on the interplay between Christianity and ethnic nationalism (e.g., Newland 2006; Rutherford 2002; Tomlinson 2009).

The immediate explanation for the apparent contrast is that it reflects real differences on the ground, most fundamentally PNG's famed cultural diversity. The argument goes something like this: to begin with, PNG remains incompletely evangelized territory. Acceptance of Christianity may be widespread, but for many observers—including many local Christians—the religion has yet to establish deep roots. Most people's loyalties remain firmly attached to their ancestral lands, languages, kin, and customs. Christianity may augment identity, but it provides a secondary loyalty for most. On top of this, the ever-growing multiplicity of denominations and Christian organizations seems to mirror Papua New Guinea's famed cultural and linguistic diversity. Gibbs (2006) identified close to 200 denominations and associated organizations at work in the early 2000s, a number that is almost certainly an undercount. Over the past thirty years or so, a diverse assortment of Pentecostal and fundamentalist sects have won many converts, most of these from former mission

churches established during the colonial era. The increasingly fierce competition for souls diverts whatever attention church leaders might give to matters of state and society. In any case, many of the newer churches discourage their congregations from direct political involvement, and virtually all denominations forbid clergy from engaging in political campaigns. The volatile diversity of sectarian affiliation thus diffuses Christianity's political presence in contrast to other countries, where most people identify with a handful of long-established churches. In short, the proximate causes that render PNG a "weak state" also apply to the political impact of Christianity at the national level (cf. Douglas 2007).

My sketch is overdrawn, but I believe reasonably accurate. Yet it does not provide an entirely satisfactory reason—let alone an excuse—for the neglect of issues of church and state in the PNG literature. Consider that the 2000 national census reported that some 96.2 percent of the total population of five million citizens claimed membership in one or another church, among the highest rates of Christian affiliation in the world (Gibbs 2006: 98). While the historical roots of Christianity go back less than a century for most of the country, as early as 1966, 92 percent of the population identified as Christian. In other words, the large majority of PNG citizens living today grew up as Christians rather than converting as adults: the church in its various manifestations has for some time been an ordinary part of life in most of PNG. As we shall see below, this claim is borne out in several ethnographic studies of local communities. It is also true nationally. The preamble to the PNG constitution explicitly pledges to "guard and pass on to those who come after us our noble traditions and Christian principles that are ours now" (Latukefu 1988). Christianity has a large presence in the towns in the form of churches, inspirational billboards, and frequent gospel rallies. Christianity is woven into the very fabric of the nation. Churches are deeply involved in education, health delivery, media, and various businesses, including one of the largest regional air services. While church authorities may be reluctant to engage in open politics, there can be little doubt, given its scope, that the church presence in the delivery of vital social services, in the popular media, and in the greater economy significantly influences state policies affecting education, health care, and other matters. Given this presence and the fact that the vast majority of citizens consider themselves Christian, it hardly comes as a surprise that PNG politicians frequently appeal to Christian values to promote pet causes and their own electoral contests (Eves 2008; Gibbs 2000, 2004, 2005; Sullivan 2007).

The articles cited in the sentence above provide abundant evidence of the central role Christianity plays in the contemporary politics of Papua New Guinea. Yet they also suggest the marginal place this topic occupies in the academic literature. With the exception of Eves (2008), who has carried out ethnographic research on this subject in the Southern Highlands Province,

the few publications that have appeared are general surveys that draw upon media reports and anecdotal evidence. While informative, they appear in relatively obscure venues: in low-circulation PNG journals and as online working papers of the State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project based at the Australian National University.

All of these authors are anthropologists. In itself, this is hardly surprising. To an unusual extent, anthropologists dominate the social science of Melanesia in general and PNG in particular. This domination suggests a second, if less obvious, reason why the politics of church and state receive less attention in PNG than elsewhere. This is not because anthropologists are uninterested in Christianity, or contemporary religion more generally. That may have been the case two decades ago, but since then a small industry of scholarship has arisen that focuses on the study of Melanesian experiences and expressions of Christianity. Nor is it the case that anthropologists are uninterested in the political dimensions of religious practice and belief in the lives of Papua New Guineans. Instead, it seems to me that national politics in general takes place within an anthropological blind spot. The methods and theoretical preoccupations of anthropology do not lend themselves to an analysis of the politics of religion at the national level. This obviously does not prevent scholars with anthropological training from writing on the subject, but in the case of PNG, the near monopoly enjoyed by anthropology both reduces the information one can draw upon and, in any case, directs attention elsewhere.

This is not entirely a bad thing. Anthropologists working in PNG have proven especially adept at probing the local experience of Christianity. In what follows, I present a survey of what these contributions reveal about the political dimensions of Christianity in Papua New Guinean communities, attempting to sketch out the main thematic lines and emerging points of debate. Reading this literature conveys a familiar sense of the uniqueness of Melanesia, a uniqueness that extends even to so global a phenomenon as Christianity. However, I suggest in the conclusion to the chapter that this sense is as much an artifact of anthropological preoccupations as empirical reality. The focus on the local community has an obvious appeal, and it allows ethnographers to do what they do best. Yet this strategy neglects important and developing dimensions to Christianity in PNG. The churches are one of the few institutions that continue to operate relatively effectively at both local and national levels. Despite differences in theological dogmas, liturgical practices, and moral constraints, the various churches at base share a common language and a religious commitment that, in turn, provide the diverse groups in PNG with a shared reference point, much more so than appeals to “traditional” culture. And thus Christian politics and a politics of Christianity thrive today in PNG, playing a big—if still largely underexamined—role in the popular construction (and deconstruction) of the nation.

## **Anthropological contributions**

Anthropological studies of religion and politics in Papua New Guinea roughly center upon three points of concern: (1) “traditional” leaders who use esoteric knowledge to legitimate the authority of their person, gender, and age group (e.g., Barth 1975; Lindstrom 1984; Tuzin 1980); (2) millenarian movements as expressions of resistance and micronationalism (e.g., Lanternari 1963; May 1982; Worsley 1968); and (3) vernacular Christianity, as shaped within the dialectic between the local and the global. Even more crudely, the last category can be further distinguished along a continuum that stretches from studies that focus on incorporation into state and church systems to those that examine local configurations of Christian ideology and practice. The further one moves towards the incorporating end of the continuum, the more likely the researcher will focus on the mediating role the institutional church or mission plays in incorporating local peoples within broader colonial and postcolonial political systems. The further one moves towards the local configuration end of the continuum, the more likely the researcher will stress the articulations of Christianity within a particular community’s reconciliation of received traditions and historical contingencies. The continuum I propose, however, does not correspond neatly to the traditional anthropological preoccupation with change versus continuity. In fact, many of those who analyze Christian conversion within the context of hegemonic incorporation portray the process as incremental and in several ways as bolstering “traditional” institutions; in brief, they see the process as change compatible with much continuity. Towards the other end of my continuum, one finds the most prominent student of Melanesian Christianity today insisting that conversion is more often about rupture than continuity, with the most profound changes deriving from the internal logic of the religion rather than from the contingencies of its spread (Robbins 2007; cf. BurrIDGE 1978).

I will return to the perennial issue of continuity and change in the conclusion to this chapter. Here, briefly (and no doubt inadequately), I want to sum up a number of the key contributions anthropologists have thus far made to the question of the political roles and effects of Christianity in Melanesia. I will make my approach from each end of the continuum in turn.

### *Missions, Christianity and political incorporation*

In June 1890, Sir William MacGregor, the recently appointed lieutenant governor of the new colony of British New Guinea, summoned representatives of the London Missionary Society, long established on the south coast, and proponents of new Methodist and Anglican missions to a meeting at Government House in Port Moresby. In short order, the assembled men apportioned the

territory between their respective missions. The Roman Catholic missionaries refused to join in on the principle that all Papuans were in need of the salvation offered by the One True Faith; all the same, the governor tactfully left a blank area in the map on the mainland across from Yule Island as the designated Catholic sphere of operation (Wetherell 1977). The only thing unusual about this meeting was the somewhat more blatant than usual merging of common interests between missionary and state-building projects.<sup>1</sup> Possessing only a tiny steam launch, a skeletal staff, and a small company of Fijian police, MacGregor needed missionaries to secure the peace through their presence and to provide the rudiments of the social services on which a colonial society could eventually be built (Joyce 1971). For their part, possessing their own dreams of wrenching Papuans from eternal damnation and building a truly Christian society free of the corruptions that had wrecked their own, the missionaries were flattered and encouraged by MacGregor's support.

This and similar partnerships in what would eventually become Papua New Guinea turned out to be far more complicated and conflicted than their architects hoped for. Yet they endured and continue to form a key facet of church-state relations. The enrollment of students in government schools only surpassed those run under church agencies in 1985. In 2000, 46 percent of elementary schools and 53 percent of primary schools remained within church agencies. Two-thirds of the teacher training institutions continued to be run by the churches, which also sponsored two universities and a significant portion of secondary and technical schools (Gibbs 2006: 89). In addition, the churches were responsible for 46 percent of the health facilities across the country (*ibid.*: 86). With the significant exception of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the vast majority of these facilities fall under the agencies of the four "mainline" churches, with the Catholics overseeing the largest share. The facilities receive most of their financing from the national government, which sets standards—a situation that has produced tensions in the partnership, as the government has increasingly failed to meet its financial obligations. Judging from recent political campaigns, however, there is little or no interest among the political class in decreasing the participation of churches in civil society. Indeed, the opposite is true, with many politicians calling for direct government funding of the churches (Gibbs 2005).<sup>2</sup>

Until fairly recently, anthropologists tended to classify missionaries as "colonial agents." They could thus be safely ignored, since colonization itself appeared self-explanatory. This situation has changed dramatically, and studies of what used to be called the "missionary impact" have become ever more nuanced and detailed. It is now widely understood that missionaries had their own distinctive "projects" that were in tension—and occasionally open conflict—with the projects of administrators and White entrepreneurs (Thomas 1994). Ethnographers have proven especially adept at tracing the ways in

which converts exercised agency, ways that were sometimes subtle but that often enough directly adjusted mission teaching and routines to fit preexisting cultural orientations and moral and social aspirations. Such articulations have been identified even within fundamentalist communities whose members consciously embraced a complete break with the “pagan” past, such as the South Sea Evangelical “school” villages of Malaita (Burt 1994).

The older view of missionary Christianity as a “colonial imposition” has thus been largely replaced by attention to the agency of local Christians and to the emergence of Melanesian Christianity “in the third space of local-global interchanges” (Biersack 2005: 138). Given the delight Melanesianists have taken in finding the ways in which local peoples have subverted, appropriated, and transformed mission Christianity to their own designs and purposes, however, I wonder if they have at times lost sight of the basic insight underlying older views, simplistic as they may have often been. It seems to me incontrovertibly true that Christianity has an intimate involvement in modern colonial expansion from the West, both in the larger sense of the spread of key Western ideologies and the more immediate sense of Western imperial domination and exploitation of colonial territories and peoples.<sup>3</sup> This expansion has clearly entailed “frictions” of many sorts that lead and have led to local creations, as well as to adjustments (Tsing 2005). While colonial incorporation should not be seen as monolithic, neither should it be downplayed.

Ethnographic and historical research by anthropologists points to three main areas in which conversion to Christianity eased the encompassment of local peoples within the emerging colonial system: (1) the modification of indigenous forms of political leadership, (2) the formation of new patterns of community governance, and (3) the absorption of key values and orientations.

Playing off of the common Christian trope of a movement from darkness to light, many Melanesian Christians recall the first appearance of missionaries as a moment of revolutionary change (Errington and Gewertz 1994; Young 1997). The reality was considerably more complicated. Power confrontations in which enthusiastic converts desecrated shrines and burned cult objects occurred soon after the arrival of missionaries in a number of places, including parts of the western Solomons and Bosavi on the Papuan Plateau (Schieffelin 1981; Tippett 1967). Elsewhere, however, missionaries—and even more so the Polynesian and Melanesian teachers who were placed in charge of most village schools and churches—avoided direct attacks on local customs for the simple reason that they were heavily dependent upon leaders for their material support (Barker 2005).<sup>4</sup> In turn, there are many reports of local leaders inviting missionaries to set up shop in their villages, likely motivated by the desire for European goods and an alliance with the powerful European deity. In short, missionary activities rarely if ever resulted in the overthrow or replacement of

local leaders. However, there is abundant evidence suggesting that they modified forms of leadership in ways both direct and subtle.

During the colonial period, missionary activities contributed to the development of a sociopolitical dynamic that BurrIDGE refers to as the “Triangle” of government officer, missionary, and villager, with each party playing off each other party in a variety of configurations (BurrIDGE 1960; cf. Barker 2007; Huber 1988). Outright resistance to outsiders appears to have been rare. More passive forms of resistance were a different matter. In lowlands Papua and perhaps more widely, Christianity factored into a broader shift in the basis of leadership from violence of both the physical and spiritual varieties to ceremonial exchange, with an equivalent diminution of the absolute power of individual leaders (Gregory 1982; Liep 2009; Young 1971). In some areas, the missions introduced a new venue for competitive exchange in the form of church festivals at which groups competed to give the largest donations to the church (Gregory 1980; Hermkens 2007a; Stewart and Strathern 2001). Moreover, the missions opened up alternative routes for leadership in their insatiable need for catechists and teachers, although—with a few significant exceptions—the actual power of indigenous mission workers in local communities appears to have been limited.<sup>5</sup> The children of the indigenous pastorate made up a significant portion of the emerging national elite in the late colonial period (Oram 1971). The top leadership positions in the missions went exclusively to men, but the ability of women to attend and fully participate in church services and other activities tempered the overall power of men, in places contributing to a quiet—and sometimes not so quiet (Tuzin 1997)—transformation in the political relationship between the sexes (Eriksen 2008).<sup>6</sup> This transformation did not lead to political equality, but it can be understood as a shift toward prevalent Western conceptions of the “proper” relationship between women and men (Jolly 1991). It was a shift that many women embraced, forming as they often did the largest and most enthusiastic members of the new congregations.

Missionaries also contributed to colonial rule by contributing to the reorganization of local settlements in ways that allowed for easier surveillance and administration of the population. In a number of documented cases, the reorganization was direct and swift, as dispersed peoples resettled near mission stations to take advantage of trade and educational opportunities (Gostin 1986; Knauff 2002; Williams 1944). The practice of Christian converts forming their own communities that were separate from “pagan” neighbors appears to have been rare compared to the history of the Solomons (Burt 1994; Whiteman 1983).<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, there is much evidence of fractures and regroupings within communities, particularly in areas where sectarian competition between missions played into local rivalries (Jebens 2005; Wakefield 2001).

The presence of missions reshaped local people's conception of community in more subtle yet profound ways. Attending village churches and schools provided most Papua New Guineans with their most direct and intense experience of Western values and orientations, even if most teachers and evangelists were not Europeans (Rowley 1965). Churches and schools in turn were predicated upon models of community in which family ties were subordinate to individuals' relationships with God. Kinship remained critically important everywhere (Carrier and Carrier 1985), but the presence of the institutional church provided villagers with new possibilities for political association. As early as 1905, the Anglican mission in Papua had adopted a policy of setting up church councils in localities with more than fifty Christians, and in his annual address of 1913, Bishop Sharp spoke on the topic of "Native Self-Government" (West 1968: 227). Impressed, the colonial government launched an ambitious program with its own system of village councils. The councils—both church and secular—seem to have been most successful along the southeastern coast of Papua, where the Congregationalist organization of London Missionary Society village churches provided a template for the new councils. In Anglican regions, village councils generally fared poorly except when under the direct control of white priests. This tended to resonate with the strong Anglo-Catholic leanings of the mission leadership. The missionary priest in the Anglican areas was perceived as a father providing gentle if firm moral guidance to the "wild children" of his parish (Barker 1987).<sup>8</sup> Even so, the simple presence of the church reinforced the notion of the village as a single polity, not only by creating village-wide institutions but also by creating venues in which individuals participated as village members: church councils, women's church groups, and celebrations organized around the Christian calendar (Barker 1996).

These were for the most part subtle and gradual changes. In the decade immediately following the Second World War, Christianity inspired much more dramatic and widespread movements with definite political implications. In one case, the inspiration was direct. In the Northern District, an experimental cooperative begun by a charismatic Anglican priest at Gona village was widely copied. Within a few years, villagers across the District were engaged in rituals of peacemaking, singing hymns over garden tools and coconut seedlings and speaking excitedly of a "New Day" of wealth and equality with the white man (Barker 1996). Elsewhere in the long-missionized areas of Papua and New Guinea, similar cooperative movements arose under the leadership of "new men" who fused in potent ways the practical experiences gained in mission schools, popular understandings of Christianity, reciprocal moralities, and "mythic" knowledge (Burridge 1960; Lutkehaus 1990; Maburau 1985; Maher 1961). The administration looked upon such movements with concern, detecting strains of "cargoism." Yet their general response was not to suppress

but to channel the movements into government-approved ventures such as small-scale cash cropping.

The third area in which mission Christianity contributed to the solidification of colonial overrule needs less comment, mainly because it has been the subject of considerable attention, particularly since the publication of the Comaroffs' (1991, 1997) influential *Of Revelation and Revolution*. With its detailed analysis of mission practices, this study confirmed for many anthropologists that "the influence of the missions on local lifeways stems more from the shape, delivery, and persistence of the conversation [between missionaries and converts] than from the substance of the message itself" (LiPuma 2000: 211). Whitehouse (1998) has made the most embracing claim along these lines, arguing that mission routines—particularly regular Sunday worship—introduced Melanesians to a new form of cognition that made it possible for them to imagine and thus organize politicoreligious movements beyond the level of the local community. Others have avoided grand theory in favor of more modest and empirically grounded studies of the impact of Christianity on a variety of domains. These include: gender, kinship, and spatial order (Jolly and Macintyre 1989); time and labor discipline (Smith 1990, 1994); translation and literacy (Schieffelin 2002); clothing and food (Dundon 2004); and medicine (Frankel and Lewis 1989). While the particulars vary, such studies trace the multiple ways that participation in mission activities—particularly schools and church services—worked to familiarize converts with key Western orientations, thus easing their integration into encompassing colonial and postcolonial systems (cf. Knauff 2002).

In sum, while marked by moments of competition and conflict, the relationship between church and state during the colonial period in Papua New Guinea was very close. Unevenly and incompletely, the missions and the versions of Christianity they introduced served to modify indigenous forms of leadership and the shape and politics of local communities while preparing a small cohort of educated men and women whose children in time came to occupy leadership positions in the independent churches and government. More subtly but perhaps more significantly in the long run, the missions aided colonial integration not only by preaching peace and acceptance of government edicts, but by familiarizing generations of school children with foundational Western conceptions of time, money, and labor discipline.<sup>9</sup> Not surprisingly, many rural villagers associate the churches and Christianity today with values of "modernity" and "civilization," which they contrast to their own imagined past and present-day moral lapses (Barker 1993; Jebens 2005; Robbins 2004). The Papua New Guinea government relies upon a crucial partnership with the churches to this day, particularly for the delivery of educational and medical services. In a striking instance of the past being prologue, AusAID has recently shifted resources formerly destined for the PNG government to the churches

and women's church groups as the former colonial ruler searches for dependable partners in the building of "civil society" (Douglas 2003; Eves 2008; cf. McDougall 2008; see also Eriksen, this volume). The "civilizing mission" is very much alive and well in PNG.

### *Local configurations of Melanesian Christianity*

Those who view Melanesian Christianity primarily in terms of the incorporation of Papua New Guineans into wider sociopolitical systems concern themselves mainly with the social and cultural impacts of missionary efforts. Indigenous agency is not ignored, but is ultimately understood as a response: as resisting, subverting, or acceding to wider mission and state projects. *The focus is largely on what Christianity makes of local people.* Thus for Knauft, Gebusi conversion is of interest mainly as an instance of "recessive agency": "willingly pursued actions that put actors in a position of subordination, passivity, and patient waiting for the influence or enlightenment of external authority figures" (2002: 40). Similarly, Kulick and Willson (1992) interpret skits performed by Gapun villagers ridiculing their ancestors' response to first contact with mission and government agents as evidence of the internalization of racist stereotypes that legitimate colonial rule. Following the same logic, Kahn (1983) perceives the coexistence of Christian worship and sorcery beliefs among Wamirans as evidence of a selective acceptance and rejection of introduced changes that has largely allowed the survival of "traditional" cultural values and actions. In short, from this perspective, local engagement with Christianity is of interest primarily as an index of wider incorporation into the colonial and postcolonial state and society.

Moving to the other end of my continuum, *the key focus of interest shifts to what local people make of Christianity.* The engagement of local Christians in wider sociopolitical contexts is not denied, but analysis centers upon indigenous perceptions, manipulations, and appropriations of Christian symbols and modes of organization in conversation with local cultural traditions and histories. The difference is well-illustrated in Errington and Gewertz's (1994) analysis of the celebration of the arrival of the first missionaries to the Duke of York Islands. Like the Gapun villagers studied by Kulick and Willson, Duke of York Islanders and their Tolai neighbors celebrate the George Brown Jubilee with skits mocking the supposed ignorance and backwardness of their ancestors at the moment of contact. Yet Errington and Gewertz argue that when understood in the wider context of the celebration and its local history, the skits contribute to a creative imagining that fuses culture and Christianity in an assertion of a modern ethnic identity within Papua New Guinea. In short, they examine the ceremony as a performance by East New Britain islanders for East New Britain islanders (one of whom was the PNG prime minister at

the time). Rather than understanding Christianity as a colonial imposition to which local people respond, scholars at this end of the continuum understand Christianity as part and parcel of the local environment—as something with which people identify and engage as they get on with their lives.

I suggest four distinctive patterns by which Papua New Guineans have incorporated Christianity into local political orders: articulation, fusion, mimesis, and adoption.

Articulation is the baseline pattern. The division of social life into three spheres of action—tradition (*kastom*), government (*lo*), and Christianity (*lotu*)—is well documented in long-converted lowland areas. Otto (1992) argues that on Baluan Island these form distinct political arenas. I suspect this specific arrangement to be rather unusual. In much of post-Independence PNG, the former colonial triangle appears to have survived as an ideological framework within which people encapsulate and express their sense of local history and identities as villagers, Christians, and citizens (Barker 2007). The significance of the triangle is likely fading in the consciousness of PNG lowlanders as the result of increasing competition between Christian sects and the growing importance of the cash economy (*bisnis*) as a fourth point of orientation. Further, there is little to suggest that Highlanders ever employed the political rhetoric of the triangle. Still, what appears to be generally true is that Melanesians everywhere formulate their Christian identities in contrast to or conjunction with notions of tradition, the state, and economic development. Christianity has emerged as a distinct category for most Melanesians, but one that articulates with other key points of identity. In a number of documented instances, this ongoing articulation settles into a distinctive political form in which Christianity plays a central part, bringing us to the remaining three patterns.

One such form is fusion, where the points of identity remain distinct but are brought into a stable relationship. Such fusions depend upon a perception that people's identities as villagers, citizens, and Christians are, or should be, complementary. For instance, Kragur Islanders regard themselves as "good Catholics" whose moral universe is mutually defined by Christian and traditional values (Smith 1994). Gogodala equate fundamentalist Christianity with the warrior character of their ancestors, seeking to create a rather puritanical "Christian country" that fuses the two (Dundon 2004; Wilde 2004). Maisin leaders build support for community projects by appealing to memories of traditional "chiefs," Christian values, and the "law" (Barker 2007). Success tends to be rare and fleeting. Yet Maisin recall moments such as the building of a new church or the hosting of a major ceremony as ideals to aim for and from which to criticize the failings of the present (cf. Young 1997).

The Tolai and their near neighbors in the Duke of York Islands have produced the most impressive example found in PNG: a confident fusion of main-

stream Christianity, indigenous institutions like the *tubuan* and shell money, and local and national political offices (Errington and Gewertz 1995, 2004; Tateyama 2006). Like the people of Santa Isabel in Solomon Islands, who present a similar picture, Tolai leaders have long embraced a rhetorical strategy “for finding Christianity in or ‘behind’ the indigenous” (White 1991: 247). Despite internal challenges, particularly from those embracing newer forms of evangelical Christianity, the fusion has proven remarkably enduring. Their confident identification with church and state rests firmly upon a foundational identity as Tolai. There is no contradiction, then, in the fact that a faction of Tolai responded to PNG’s independence with their own nationalist movement.

The Tolai alliance with the forces of church and state has not gone unnoticed among neighboring groups in East New Britain. Resentment of Tolai along with the small elite class of PNG politicians has generated support for one of a handful of long-running religious movements that have become the closest equivalent in Melanesia to African independent churches (Trompf 1990). Followers of the Pomio Kivung, Lattas notes, “emphasize that they do not reject government and mission. They especially value their moral ordering and civilizing projects; they just want those projects more effectively realized in terms of their transformative purposes” (2006: 130). To accomplish this, they have fetishized a notion of law as a set of embracing ethical requirements and social obligations symbolized in the Ten Commandments and vigorously enforced in local communities. The key symbols, rituals, and appeals to hard work and self-discipline mimic those of the state and, especially, the Catholic Church, from which they largely derive. In a different register, the Kivung presents its members with an alternative worldview in which human creativity and economic success rely on successful interactions with ancestors. This underground world mirrors that of the living, providing “clandestine truer versions of modernity” (*ibid.*).

Mimesis of this sort is a common feature of cargo cults. Like the Pomio Kivung, the Paliau movement and the Peli Association employed a mimetic logic that served as a means of coming to terms with the ruling order while maintaining a strong identity and degree of autonomy. All three movements have successfully placed representatives into local governments and the national parliament. All three have promoted local development projects—in the case of the Kivung, generating a bank account that in 1999 amounted to over 400,000 kina (*ibid.*: 140). Finally, all three have enjoyed a level of devotion from core followers that can only be envied by the mission churches.

While the specific theologies of these movements, such as Paliau’s “Story,” are distinctively Melanesian (Trompf 1987), the embrace of the church as a foundation for a total way of life destined to bring material and spiritual well-being is a trait shared by many of the fundamentalist and Pentecostal churches currently sweeping across PNG. It is perhaps not so surprising, then, that the

Peli Association found common cause by joining forces with Canadian missionaries from the New Apostolic Church (Roscoe 1990). Increasingly, however, many local people appear content to take on the particular teachings and moral imperatives of the new churches wholesale, giving rise to the fourth political pattern of adoption.

In some respects, fundamentalist and Pentecostal churches recapitulate the archetypical first—and “fatal”—contact between missionaries and indigenous peoples. The rhetoric employed by proselytizers is often fiercely oppositional, demonizing indigenous traditions and denouncing the sins of modern life. Converts, in turn, are exhorted to adhere to clearly defined moral rules, to organize their lives around frequent and lengthy religious services, and to donate substantial funds and labor to the church. Given the high costs of membership, the recent growth of these sects in much of PNG and the rest of the Pacific has been at the same time impressive and extremely worrisome to the more socially complacent mainline churches (Ernst 1994, 2006).

Ethnographers have noted a range of social and political effects in situations where people adopt Christianity as a total way of life. First, to the degree that they fail to meet the stringent standards of fundamentalist Christianity—and, of course, most do—adherents often experience moral anguish over their failure to abandon their past sinful ways. As Robbins (2004) has documented, this condition is especially pronounced in smaller communities where the new church and everyday life may confront each other as opposed cultures. Second, to the degree that they draw their adherents from the memberships of established churches, the new movements create divisions within communities or—and almost as frequently—accentuate existing ones. Some churches are more aggressively confrontational than others. In general, though, sectarian rivalries tend to be especially heated in communities where new sects challenge the former monopoly held by long-established mainline churches (Errington and Gewertz 1995; Wakefield 2001). More positively, by relying upon regional revivals while giving little ground to local modifications of doctrine and practice, these movements serve to bring people into social groupings that transcend ethnic and linguistic boundaries. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, for some years now the fastest growing denomination in PNG, has been especially successful in this regard (Westermarck 2004).

Officially, most of these churches shun active involvement in politics, citing biblical injunctions for citizens to accept government authority. They express a kind of antipolitics. Yet this is usually accompanied by expressions of “moral outrage towards those responsible for corruption and poor governance.” “Such problems,” Eves further observes, “are seen as evidence that people are not living Christian lives, and the remedy is for people to become good Christians—the emphasis being on individual moral reform rather than broader social reform—and to pray for God’s intervention for a good election

result” (2008: 4). The critique is often expressed in terms of larger apocalyptic narratives in which the many failings of PNG’s political elite join other conspiratorial signs of the impending End Times (e.g., Brutti 1999). Thus many of the new Christians embrace a kind of “negative nationalism” in which citizenship is acknowledged but framed within a larger unfolding moral narrative (Robbins 1998). The nation becomes encompassed within an oppositional racially tinged schema in which local Christians identify PNG with the moral failings of “darkness” against a fantasy of “light” material success in the world and the promise of salvation to come (ibid.; cf. Jebens 2005). This, in turn, recommends political disengagement. Ironically, then, fundamentalist Christianity at the local level appears less politically engaged than some independent religious movements like the Pomio Kivung. Yet this is misleading. Fundamentalist and Pentecostal Christians campaigned as candidates in the 2007 elections, sometimes taking leaves from their churches to do so (Eves 2008). In Oro Province, a Pentecostal pastor famed for his stint in a gospel band and for raising the dead won the race for the regional seat (Susub 2011). Beyond this, there can be little doubt that conservative Christian preoccupations and moral values are increasingly influencing PNG politics at large (Gibbs 2005). Tracking such developments, however, is challenging to do from the perspective of local communities.

## **The bigger picture**

Overly schematic as my survey undoubtedly is, such a survey helps to create a context for reconsidering my opening question: Why has so little been written about contemporary religion and politics in Papua New Guinea? The question is a bit misleading. As we’ve seen, rather a lot has been written that directly or indirectly addresses the play of religion in political activities and discourses. Yet the bulk of this work focuses on local communities. Religious politics beyond the village have received correspondingly less attention.

This can’t be attributed to a lack of interest in the study of Melanesian Christianity on the part of anthropologists. As the survey presented in this chapter demonstrates, the criticisms I and others made two decades ago about the discipline’s systematic neglect of the topic no longer apply (Barker 1992). Further, there is a general awareness among anthropologists of the significant role Christianity plays in national life. Studies continue to focus mainly on small rural communities, but with few exceptions they also reference the wider social and political spheres within which Christians and Christian institutions and discourses operate. Some years ago, for instance, Young (1997: 125) observed that the “entrenched doctrines of Christianity as unifying forces are more salient than the newer ideologies of nationalism” (cf. Foster 1995).

This awareness increasingly informs studies of local situations, making it less likely that an ethnographer would conflate globally distributed features of, say, Pentecostalism with indigenous cultural beliefs and practices (Jorgensen 2005; Robbins 2001). Moreover, a small but significant number of anthropologists have begun to study Christianity beyond the village. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, to date most of the attempts to discuss the politics of Christianity on the national stage have come from the pens of anthropologists. Perhaps more significantly, we are beginning to see a new generation of ethnographers design multisited projects exploring Christianity beyond single village societies, in the context of regional sectarian divisions (Handman 2007), Christian discourses in hospital treatment regimens (Street 2010), women's church groups (Douglas 2003), Marian devotional movements (Hermkens 2007b, 2007c, 2008), and, in neighboring Vanuatu, exchanges between rural and urban churches (Eriksen 2008). Awareness of the wider dimensions of Christian activities and discourses, however, is not a substitute for empirical research. While ethnographers interested in tracing the impacts of national economic policies on local communities can draw on an abundance of research data, those interested in the wider contexts of Christianity in PNG for the most part must rely on personal observation, snippets culled from newspapers, and speculation.

The proximate cause of the relative lack of attention to issues of church and state in PNG can be simply stated: the sorts of scholars who do this work elsewhere have shown comparatively little interest in PNG. Compared to twenty years ago, work on missions and the churches by academic historians—with a few exceptions such as Gardner's (2006) study of George Brown—appears anemic. The only detailed overviews we possess of Christianity in PNG are Trompf's dated *Melanesian Religion* (1991) and Gibbs's (2006) essential but sketchy survey of the memberships, distribution, and theological orientations of Christian churches, missions, and associations. Gibbs's publication speaks to another characteristic of the literature: its marginality. His contribution forms part of a large survey of Oceanic Christianity supervised by Manfred Ernst, a sociologist based at the Pacific Theological College in Suva. In this and a previous survey, Ernst (1994, 2006) advances an important argument that considers the relationships between globalization and the changing complexion of Christianity in the Pacific Islands, an argument that potentially forms a useful counterpoint to ethnographic studies. Yet I suspect that few anthropologists are aware of these volumes, which are published by low-circulation regional presses. The Melanesian Institute, a pastoral research and teaching organization based in Goroka, also publishes on social and political issues from a Christian perspective. The larger national churches have also published in-house histories of their work in PNG. This literature has very limited circulation, and it remains largely unknown to academic scholars. Works by political scientists are even scarcer (e.g., Susub 2011).

The near monopoly anthropologists hold over the study of Melanesian religion provides a less direct but still significant cause for the neglect of religious politics at the national stage. While anthropologists are no longer ignoring PNG Christianity, their typical approaches and governing questions significantly skew the overall picture. The life of Christianity beyond the village occurs largely in an ethnographic black hole. This encourages two tendencies already strongly present in the nascent field of the anthropology of Christianity. The first, as we've seen, is the tight focus on local experience and developments. While providing a unique perspective on Christian experience, ethnographers may at times exaggerate the supposedly unique features of local practices and ideas, in more extreme cases portraying them either as reproducing underlying indigenous structures (e.g., Mosko 2010) or as exercises of anticolonial agency (e.g., Lattas 1998).<sup>10</sup> The second tendency has been to orient the study of PNG Christianity toward debates about the social significance of conversion writ large. Conversion, in turn, is usually understood as a confrontation of opposing forces or entities (Jebens 2011): traditional vs. modern, local vs. global, indigenous vs. Christian, dividual vs. individual, and so forth.

These two tendencies typify the anthropology of Christianity; indeed, they pretty much define its special contribution to wider scholarship (Barker 2008; Cannell 2006; Hefner 1993). In most parts of the world, however, anthropologists are latecomers whose studies complement the work of other scholars writing on the play of religion on national and regional stages, studies that in turn are contextualized by that work. This is generally not the case in PNG and a few other regions, notably the Amazon basin. This is largely because PNG is one of the very few places in the world where the primary conversion from "animistic" religions to Christianity has occurred within living memory and has been directly observed by contemporary anthropologists actually interested in the subject, albeit among small and remote groups (e.g., Knauff 2002; Schieffelin 2007). The general perception that PNG exists in a contact zone on the Christian frontier lends studies from across the region an elevated importance in anthropological debates about conversion, even when (as is usually the case) the missionary period lies in the past.

As someone whose work has benefitted from this perception, I am reluctant to complain! Yet it comes with certain costs. The most peculiar of these costs from the perspective of students in other disciplines is an obsessive concern with questions of cultural continuity and change.<sup>11</sup> Debates on the topic usually owe more to the underlying framing of conversion as a contest between opposing forces than the far messier empirical reality reported in ethnographies. Perhaps because PNG is perceived to lie on the frontier of Christianity, anthropologists from this region are especially prone to debating whether the acceptance of Christianity entails a major departure from the ways of the

past or a continuation of indigenous patterns in a new guise (Mosko 2010; Robbins 2007). The passion expended on such debates is only matched by the unlikelihood of resolution for the simple reason that the judgment of change is sensitive both to timescale and to subjective notions of what comprises core cultural or Christian features.<sup>12</sup> Worse, the debate deflects attention from the more contingent aspects of Christian life: that is to say, those aspects that are actually most accessible to ethnographic methods. Prime among these—to finally return to the main theme of this chapter—are political activities.

We are so accustomed to thinking of PNG as occupying the Christian frontier that it comes as a shock to realize that apart from some remote areas, this has long ceased to be the case. Christianity is the only religious identity most citizens have ever known. To be sure, people temper official church teachings with local assumptions about morality, spirituality, and fate, but so do people in places we generally do not think of as frontier zones, such as Canada or Germany. The current surge of theologically conservative Christian sects at the expense of long-established denominations is hardly unique to PNG. In many respects, the religious landscape resembles the larger African nations or even the United States, where Christian discourse has a strong presence in national politics despite a highly fragmented and unstable pattern of church membership on the ground. I wouldn't wish to take the latter comparison too far. Yet it is useful, if only to shake the increasingly questionable perception that PNG, in this domain as in others, is so unique that we can safely ignore developments at regional and national levels that have been the focus of scholarly research on religion and politics elsewhere.

Once we start thinking of the state of Christianity in PNG as normal rather than exceptional (if not exceptionally normal), avenues for research into its political aspects become apparent. Some are already beginning to be explored: most importantly the appeals to Christian values in electoral campaigns, but also the mediating role played by the churches in conflicts and the injection of Christian themes into national debates concerning such fraught matters as sexuality, access to education, violence against women, environmental conservation, and economic development. Others are suggested by well-established lines of research in other countries, such as the harnessing of Christianity to ethnic identity in campaigns of resistance to national government, the internal politics of national churches, or the ecumenical and parachurch organizations that have such an oversized presence in Papua New Guinea. Anthropologists will no doubt continue to dominate the field for the foreseeable future. Yet there is also a very large opening here for students trained in other disciplines who are better equipped to study Christianity at the national level. Such studies will challenge anthropological conceptions and preoccupations. We should encourage and welcome them.

## Notes

My thanks to Matt Tomlinson, Debra McDougall, Joel Robbins, Webb Keane, Holger Jebens, and Yannick Fer for their encouragement and comments on an earlier version of this chapter.

1. Protestant missions had a long history of forging similar noncompetitive “comity agreements” in Polynesia and eastern Melanesia prior to the establishment of colonial rule. As far as I’m aware, MacGregor’s meeting is the first instance of a colonial officer orchestrating such an arrangement.
2. The state’s stake in the church-run institutions is often justified in terms that conflate Christian and governmental goals. For instance, the PNG government is currently investing millions of kina into a new Lutheran University based in Lae. Handing over a down payment of K2 million, Prime Minister Peter O’Neill stated: “I am serious in telling you that my Government will be working together with churches because churches have done so many things to help develop the country. They have built services like schools, health centers, water supply and many other basic services as well as the Gospel so I will be working in partnership with you pastors and churches to develop the country” (Waima 2011).
3. McDougall (2009: 2) makes a related point in a recent critique of Robbins’s writings on the anthropology of Christianity. She notes the stress on the ideological dimension in much recent work on the subject, which she sees in part as a reaction “to earlier studies of colonialism and Christianity that emphasized the political-economic role of missions.”
4. Missionaries universally opposed certain practices that they encountered or suspected the presence of, notably sorcery, warfare, and cannibalism. There was and continues to be much more disagreement on the compatibility of customary practices such as traditional dancing or puberty rituals with Christian faith (Langmore 1989). The elaborate male cults found across the region posed an almost irresistible target for criticism, but it appears that most missionaries avoided direct confrontations. The collapse of many of these complexes occurred years, sometimes generations, after churches established a presence, and almost always at the initiative of local zealots (Jorgensen 2005; Tuzin 1997; Williams 1940).
5. The key exception appears to have been in the Torres Straits, where London Missionary Society pastors established a short-lived theocracy during the late nineteenth century (Beckett 1978).
6. The Gogodala of the Western Province provide a contrary example of missionary interventions reinforcing male domination (Wilde 2004).
7. The outstanding exception was the Kwato Island “industrial mission” near Samarai, where the Abel family sought to win converts for Christ by isolating them from their pagan neighbors and subjecting them to a regimen of intense Christian devotion, a rigid schedule of “practical” labor in the field, shop, and home, and cricket (Wetherell 1996).
8. The possible influence of variant forms of mission organizations on local political organization is an intriguing but as yet barely explored subject (Barker 2012). It is surely a wonderful historical accident that Methodists, whose ministers served churches organized into circuits, came to occupy the region of the Kula Ring!

9. Familiarization, but not necessarily replacement. Much of the current ethnographic work on Christianity in PNG focuses on people's struggles to square the moral orientations proclaimed in church and school with everyday values based upon kin relationships and exchange (Barker ed. 2007; Errington and Gewertz 2004; Robbins 2004; Smith 1994).
10. I consider these to be extreme cases in which the analyses far exceed the supporting data, albeit in revealing ways. Most anthropologists working on PNG Christianity are more cautious. Mosko's article is accompanied by four critiques that briefly but effectively counter his highly essentialist position. For a devastating critique of Lattas, see Jebens (2002).
11. Thus several historians who commented on Robbins's (2007) critique of "continuity thinking" in anthropological writings on Christianity found the argument of interest mainly for what it revealed of anthropologists' somewhat naïve understanding of the nature of historical change. In fairness, contemporary theologians and missiologists also tend to view contemporary Christianity in non-Western settings in terms of continuity versus change.
12. The conundrum is well illustrated by contrary assessments of continuity versus change in northern Malaita in Solomon Islands. After a lifetime working with the mountain Kwaio, Keesing (1989) concluded that their ardent traditionalism was in part an historically contingent "invention" formulated in active opposition to—and knowledge of—the Christianity practiced by their relatives in coastal villages. Apparent continuity thus masked a deeper change. Meanwhile, further down the coast, Burt (1994) concluded that the fundamentalist Christianity practiced by Kwara'ae members of the South Sea Evangelical Church followed the lines of a deep-seated traditional orientation to the spiritual world. Apparent change thus masked a deeper continuity.

## References

- Barker, John. 1987. "Cheerful Pragmatists: Anglican Missionaries among the Maisin of Collingwood Bay, Northeastern Papua, 1898–1920." *Journal of Pacific History* 22, no. 2: 66–81.
- . 1992. "Christianity in Western Melanesian Ethnography." In *History and Tradition in Melanesian Anthropology*, ed. James G. Carrier. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 1993. "We are 'Ekelesia': Conversion in Uiaku, Papua New Guinea." In *Conversion to Christianity: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation*, ed. Robert W. Hefner. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 1996. "Village Inventions: Historical Variations upon a Regional Theme in Uiaku, Papua New Guinea." *Oceania* 66, no. 3: 211–19.
- . 2005. "An Outpost in Papua: Anglican Missionaries and Melanesian Teachers among the Maisin, 1902–1934." In *Indigenous Peoples and Religious Change*, ed. Peggy Brock. Leiden: Brill.
- . 2007. "Taking Sides: The Post-Colonial Triangle in Uiaku." In *The Anthropology of Morality in Melanesia and Beyond*, ed. John Barker. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- . 2008. "Towards an Anthropology of Christianity." *American Anthropologist* 110, no. 3: 377–81.

- . 2012. "Reflections on the Anthropology of Christianity in Melanesia." *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 157, no.1: 67-87.
- Barker, John, ed. 2007. *The Anthropology of Morality in Melanesia and Beyond*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Barth, Fredrik. 1975. *Ritual and Knowledge among the Baktamin of New Guinea*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Beckett, Jeremy. 1978. "Mission, Church, and Sect: Three Types of Religious Commitment in the Torres Straits." In *Mission, Church, and Sect in Oceania*, eds. James A. Boutlier, Daniel T. Hughes, and Sharon W. Tiffany. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Biersack, Aletta. 2005. "On the Life and Times of the Ipi Imagination." In *The Making of Global and Local Modernities in Melanesia: Humiliation, Transformation and the Nature of Cultural Change*, eds. Joel Robbins and Holly Wardlow. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Brutti, Lorenzo. 1999. "On His Holiness' Secret Service': Representations of Catholicism in Contemporary Evangelised Papua New Guinea." In *Expecting the Day of Wrath*, ed. Christin Kocher Schmid. NRI Monograph 36. Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea: National Research Institute.
- Burridge, Kenelm. 1960. *Mambu: A Melanesian Millennium*. New York: Harper and Row.
- . 1978. "Introduction: Missionary Occasions." In *Mission, Church, and Sect in Oceania*, eds. James A. Boutlier, Daniel T. Hughes, and Sharon W. Tiffany. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Burt, Ben. 1994. *Tradition and Christianity: The Colonial Transformation of a Solomon Islands Society*. London: Harwood.
- Cannell, Fenella, ed. 2006. *The Anthropology of Christianity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Carrier, James G., and Achsah H. Carrier. 1985. "A Manus Centenary: Production, Kinship and Exchange in the Admiralty Islands." *American Ethnologist* 12, no. 3: 505-22.
- Comaroff, Jean, and John L. Comaroff. 1991, 1997. *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 2 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Douglas, Bronwen, ed. 2003. "Women's Groups and Everyday Modernity in Melanesia." *Oceania* 74, nos. 1-2.
- . 2007. "Christian Custom and the Church as Structure in 'Weak States' in Melanesia." In *Civil Society, Religion and Global Governance: Paradigms of Power and Persuasion*, ed. Helen James. London: Routledge.
- Dundon, Alison. 2004. "Tea and Tinned Fish: Christianity, Consumption and the Nation in Papua New Guinea." *Oceania* 75, no. 2:73-88.
- Eriksen, Annelin. 2008. *Gender, Christianity and Change in Vanuatu: An Analysis of Social Movements in North Ambrym*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Ernst, Manfred. 1994. *Winds of Change: Rapidly Growing Religious Groups in the Pacific Islands*. Suva, Fiji: Pacific Conference of Churches.
- Ernst, Manfred, ed. 2006. *Globalization and the Re-Shaping of Christianity in the Pacific Islands*. Suva, Fiji: Pacific Theological College.
- Errington, Frederick, and Deborah Gewertz. 1994. "From Darkness to Light in the George Brown Jubilee: The Invention of Nontradition and the Inscription of a National History in East New Britain." *American Ethnologist* 21, no. 1:104-22.
- . 1995. *Articulating Change in the "Last Unknown"*. Boulder: Westview.
- . 2004. *Yali's Question: Sugar, Culture, and History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Eves, Richard. 2008. "Cultivating Christian Civil Society: Fundamentalist Christianity, Politics and Governance in Papua New Guinea." *State, Society, and Governance in Melanesia Discussion Paper 2008/8*. Canberra: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University.
- Foster, Robert J., ed. 1995. *Nation Making: Emergent Identities in Postcolonial Melanesia*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Frankel, Stephen, and Gilbert Lewis, eds. 1989. *A Continuing Trial of Treatment: Medical Pluralism in Papua New Guinea*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Freston, Paul, ed. 2008. *Evangelical Christianity and Politics in Latin America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gardner, Helen Bethea. 2006. *Gathering for God: George Brown in Oceania*. Dunedin: Otago University Press.
- Gibbs, Philip. 2000. "Religion and Politics in Papua New Guinea (1997–2000)." In *Politics in Papua New Guinea: Continuities, Changes and Challenges*, eds. Michael A. Rynkiewicz and Roland Seib. *Point 24*. Goroka, Papua New Guinea: Melanesian Institute.
- . 2004. "Politics, Religion, and the Churches: The 2002 Election in Papua New Guinea." *State, Society, and Governance in Melanesia Working Paper 2004/2*. Canberra: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University.
- . 2005. "Political Discourse and Religious Narratives of Church and State in Papua New Guinea." *State, Society, and Governance in Melanesia Working Paper 2005/1*. Canberra: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University.
- . 2006. "Papua New Guinea." In *Globalization and the Re-Shaping of Christianity in the Pacific Islands*, ed. Manfred Ernst. Suva, Fiji: Pacific Theological College.
- Gifford, Paul. 1998. *African Christianity: Its Public Role*. London: Hurst & Company.
- Gostin, Olga. 1986. *Cashcropping, Catholicism and Change: Resettlement among the Kuni of Papua*. Canberra: National Centre for Developmental Studies, Australian National University.
- Gregory, C. A. 1980. "Gifts to Men and Gifts to God: Gift Exchange and Capital Accumulation in Contemporary Papua." *Man* 15, no. 4: 626–52.
- . 1982. *Gifts and Commodities*. London: Academic Press.
- Handman, Courtney. 2007. "Speaking to the Soul: On Native Language and Authenticity in Papua New Guinea Bible Translation." In *Consequences of Contact: Language Ideologies and Sociocultural Transformations in Pacific Societies*, eds. Miki Makihara and Bambi B. Schieffelin. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hefner, Robert W., ed. 1993. *Conversion to Christianity: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hermkens, Anna-Karina. 2007a. "Church Festivals and the Visualization of Identity in Collingwood Bay, Papua New Guinea." *Visual Anthropology* 20, no. 5: 347–64.
- . 2007b. "The Power of Mary in Papua New Guinea." *Anthropology Today* 23, no. 2: 4–8.
- . 2007c. "Religion in War and Peace: Unravelling Mary's Intervention in the Bougainville Crisis." *Culture and Religion* 8, no. 3: 271–89.
- . 2008. "Josephine's Journey: Gender-Based Violence and Marian Devotion in Urban Papua New Guinea." *Oceania* 78, no. 2: 151–67.
- Huber, Mary Taylor. 1988. *The Bishops' Progress: A Historical Ethnography of Catholic Missionary Experience on the Sepik Frontier*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.

- Jebens, Holger. 2002. "Trickery or Secrecy? On Andrew Lattas's Interpretation of 'Bush Kaliai Cargo Cults.'" *Anthropos* 97, no. 1: 181–99.
- . 2005. *Pathways to Heaven: Contesting Mainline and Fundamentalist Christianity in Papua New Guinea*. New York: Berghahn.
- . 2011. "Beyond Globalisation and Localisation: Denominational Pluralism in a Papua New Guinea Villege." *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 12, no. 1: 91–110.
- Jolly, Margaret. 1991. "'To save the girls for brighter and better lives': Presbyterian Missions and Women in the South of Vanuatu: 1848–1870." *Journal of Pacific History* 26, no. 1: 27–48.
- Jolly, Margaret, and Martha Macintyre, eds. 1989. *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jorgensen, Dan. 2005. "Third Wave Evangelism and the Politics of the Global in Papua New Guinea: Spiritual Warfare and the Recreation of Place in Telefomin." *Oceania* 75, no. 4: 444–61.
- Joyce, R. B. 1971. *Sir William Macgregor*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Kahn, Miriam. 1983. "Sunday Christians, Monday Sorcerers: Selective Adaptation to Missionization in Wamira." *Journal of Pacific History* 18, no. 2: 96–112.
- Keesing, Roger M. 1989. "Sins of a Mission: Christian Life as Kwaio Traditionalist Ideology." In *Family and Gender in the Pacific*, eds. Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Knauft, Bruce M. 2002. *Exchanging the Past: A Rainforest World of Before and After*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Kulick, Don, and Margaret E. Willson. 1992. "Echoing Images: The Construction of Savagery among Papua New Guinea Villagers." *Visual Anthropology* 5, no. 2: 143–73.
- Langmore, Diane. 1989. *Missionary Lives: Papua, 1874–1914*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Lanternari, Vittorio. 1963. *The Religions of the Oppressed: A Study of Modern Messianic Cults*, trans. Lisa Sergio. New York: New American Library.
- Lattas, Andrew. 1998. *Cultures of Secrecy: Reinventing Race in Bush Kaliai Cargo Cults*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Lattas, Andrew. 2006. "The Utopian Promise of Government." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 12, no. 1: 129–50.
- Latukeyu, Sione. 1988. "Noble Traditions and Christian Principles as National Ideology in Papua New Guinea: Do Their Philosophies Complement or Contradict Each Other?" *Pacific Studies* 11, no. 2: 83–96.
- Liep, John. 2009. *A Papuan Plutocracy: Ranked Exchange on Rossel Island*. Langelandsgade, Denmark: Aarhus University Press.
- Lindstrom, Lamont. 1984. "Doctor, Lawyer, Wise Man, Priest: Big-Men and Knowledge in Melanesia." *Man* 19, no. 2: 291–309.
- LiPuma, Edward. 2000. *Encompassing Others: The Magic of Modernity in Melanesia*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Lutkehaus, Nancy. 1990. "From Charismatic Leader to Anti-Hero: The Life and Legacy of Irakau as Cultural Allegory." *Ethnology* 29, no. 3: 243–59.
- Maburau, A. 1985. "Irakau of Manam." In *New Religious Movements in Melanesia*, eds. Carl Loeliger and Garry Trompf. Suva, Fiji: University of the South Pacific and University of Papua New Guinea.

- Maher, Robert F. 1961. *New Men of Papua: A Study in Culture Change*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- May, R. J., ed. 1982. *Micronationalist Movements in Papua New Guinea*, vol. 1. Canberra: Australian National University Press.
- McDougall, Debra. 2008. "Religious Institutions as Alternative Structures in Post-Conflict Solomon Islands: Cases from the Western Province." *State, Society, and Governance in Melanesia Project Discussion Paper 2008/5*. Canberra: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University.
- McDougall, Debra. 2009. "Christianity, Relationality and the Material Limits of Individualism: Reflections on Robbins's *Becoming Sinners*." *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 10, no. 1: 1–19.
- Mosko, Mark. 2010. "Partible Penitents: Dividual Personhood and Christian Practice in Melanesia and the West." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 16, no. 2: 215–40.
- Newland, Lynda. 2006. "Fiji." In *Globalization and the Re-Shaping of Christianity in the Pacific Islands*, ed. Manfred Ernst. Suva, Fiji: Pacific Theological College.
- Oram, Nigel D. 1971. "The London Missionary Society Pastorate: The Emergence of an Educated Elite in Papua." *Journal of Pacific History* 6: 115–37.
- Otto, Ton. 1992. "The Ways of *Kastam*: Tradition as Category and Practice in a Manus Village." *Oceania* 62, no. 4: 264–83.
- Ranger, Terence O., ed. 2008. *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Robbins, Joel. 1998. "On Reading 'World News': Apocalyptic Narrative, Negative Nationalism, and Transnational Christianity in a Papua New Guinea Society." *Social Analysis* 42, no. 2: 103–30.
- . 2001. "Introduction: Global Religions, Pacific Island Transformations." *Journal of Ritual Studies* 15, no. 2: 7–12.
- . 2004. *Becoming Sinners: Christianity and Moral Torment in a Papua New Guinea Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 2007. "Continuity Thinking and the Problem of Christian Culture: Belief, Time and the Anthropology of Christianity." *Current Anthropology* 48, no. 1: 5–38.
- Roscoe, Paul B. 1990. "The Brokers of the Lord: The Ministrations of a Christian Faith in the Sepik Basin of Papua New Guinea." In *Contemporary Pacific Societies*, eds. Victoria S. Lockwood, Thomas G. Harding, and Ben J. Wallace. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Rowley, C. D. 1965. *The New Guinea Villager: A Retrospect from 1964*. Sydney: F.W. Cheshire.
- Rutherford, Danilyn. 2002. *Raiding the Land of the Foreigners: The Limits of the Nation on an Indonesian Frontier*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Schieffelin, Bambi B. 2002. "Marking Time: The Dichotomizing Discourse of Multiple Temporalities." *Current Anthropology* 43, S4: S5–S17.
- . 2007. "Found in Translating: Reflexive Language across Time and Text in Bosavi, Papua New Guinea." In *Consequences of Contact: Language Ideologies and Sociocultural Transformations in Pacific Societies*, eds. Miki Makihara and Bambi B. Schieffelin. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Schieffelin, Edward L. 1981. "The End of Traditional Music, Dance, and Body Decoration in Bosavi, Papua New Guinea." In *The Plight of Peripheral People in Papua New Guinea*, ed. Robert Gordon. Occasional Paper No. 7. New Haven: Cultural Survival.

- Smith, Michael French. 1990. "Catholicism, Capitalist Incorporation, and Resistance in Kragur Village." In *Christianity in Oceania*, ed. John Barker. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- . 1994. *Hard Times on Kairiru Island: Poverty, Development, and Morality in a Papua New Guinea Village*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Stewart, Pamela J., and Andrew Strathern. 2001. "The Great Exchange: Moka with God." *Journal of Ritual Studies* 15, no. 2: 91–104.
- Stoll, David. 1990. *Is Latin America Turning Protestant?: The Politics of Evangelical Growth*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Street, Alice. 2010. "Belief as Relational Action: Christianity and Cultural Change in Papua New Guinea." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 16, no. 2: 260–78.
- Sullivan, Nancy. 2007. "God's Brideprice: Laissez Faire Religion, and the Fear of Being Left Behind in Papua New Guinea." *Contemporary PNG Studies: DWU Research Journal* 6: 63–91.
- Susub, D. 2011. "The Ijivitari Open Electorate: Women's Participation as Candidates and Voters." In *Election 2007: The Shift to Limited Preferential Voting in Papua New Guinea*, eds. R. J. May, Ray Anere, Nicole Haley, and Katherine Wheen. Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, and Canberra: National Research Institute and the State, Society, and Governance in Melanesia Project, Australian National University.
- Tateyama, Hirokuni. 2006. "Tubuan: History, Tradition, and Identity among the Tolai of Papua New Guinea." PhD. dissertation, University of British Columbia.
- Thomas, Nicholas. 1994. *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Tippett, Alan R. 1967. *Solomon Islands Christianity: A Study in Growth and Obstruction*. London: Lutterworth Press.
- Tomlinson, Matt. 2009. *In God's Image: The Metaculture of Fijian Christianity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Trompf, Garry W. 1990. "Keeping the Lo under a Melanesian Messiah." In *Christianity in Oceania*, ed. John Barker. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- . 1991. *Melanesian Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Trompf, Garry W., ed. 1987. *The Gospel Is Not Western: Black Theologies from the Southwest Pacific*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.
- Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. 2005. *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Tuzin, Donald F. 1980. *The Voice of the Tambaran: Truth and Illusion in Ilahita Arapesh Religion*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 1997. *The Cassowary's Revenge: The Life and Death of Masculinity in a New Guinea Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Waima, K. 2011. "Pm Supports Church." *Post-Courier*, September 20, 2011.
- Wakefield, David C. 2001. "Sectarianism and the Miniafia people of Papua New Guinea." *Journal of Ritual Studies* 15, no. 2: 38–54.
- West, Francis. 1968. *Hubert Murray: The Australian Pro-Consul*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Westermarck, George. 2004. "Converted Worlds, Converted Lives: History and Opposition in Agarabi Adventism." In *Globalization and Culture Change in the Pacific Islands*, ed. Victoria S. Lockwood, pp. 460–75. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

- Wetherell, David. 1977. *Reluctant Mission: The Anglican Church in Papua New Guinea, 1891–1942*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press.
- . 1996. *Charles Abel and the Kwato Mission of Papua New Guinea, 1891–1975*. Carlton South: Melbourne University Press.
- White, Geoffrey M. 1991. *Identity through History: Living Stories in a Solomon Islands Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Whitehouse, Harvey. 1998. "From Mission to Movement: The Impact of Christianity on Patterns of Political Association in Papua New Guinea." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4, no. 1: 43–63.
- Whiteman, Darrell L. 1983. *Melanesians and Missionaries: An Ethnohistorical Study of Social and Religious Change in the Southwest Pacific*. Pasadena: William Carey Library.
- Wilde, Charles. 2004. "Acts of Faith: Muscular Christianity and Masculinity among the Goddala of Papua New Guinea." *Oceania* 75, no. 1: 32–48.
- Williams, F. E. 1940. *Drama of Orokololo: The Social and Ceremonial Life of the Elema*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 1944. "Mission Influence among the Keveri of South-East Papua." *Oceania* 15, no. 2: 89–141.
- Worsley, Peter. 1968. *The Trumpet Shall Sound: A Study of "Cargo Cults" in Melanesia*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Young, Michael W. 1971. *Fighting with Food: Leadership, Values, and Social Control in a Massim Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1997. "Commemorating Missionary Heroes: Local Christianity and Narratives of Nationalism." In *Narratives of Nation in the South Pacific*, eds. Ton Otto and Nicholas Thomas. Amsterdam: Harwood.

## Chiefs, Church, and State in Santa Isabel, Solomon Islands

GEOFFREY WHITE

In April 2004, I accompanied Dudley Tuti, paramount chief and retired bishop of Santa Isabel, on a trip to the village of Gnulahaghe to bless four chiefs being appointed to the district “House of Chiefs.” Just a short canoe trip from the island center where Tuti lived prior to his death in 2006, the event was, like so many similar events, an occasion for a church service, feasting, entertainment, and speeches. With four new members of the House of Chiefs and the paramount chief as the focus of attention, the ceremony, conducted in the course of a church service, was also an occasion for the performative affirmation of the very category of “chief” and its place in local life. In this respect, this little excursion replayed a century-long history of ritual practices that have worked to conjoin church and *kastom* in the figure of Christian chiefs. The new feature, perhaps, was the injection of an element of bureaucratic rationality—a kind of legal witnessing, complete with a sworn “oath”—that would connect the moment to wider spheres of the state and governmentality, most immediately the provincial government of Santa Isabel, Solomon Islands.

I have elsewhere remarked on the conundrum of decades-long efforts in Santa Isabel to empower “traditional chiefs” in the apparatus of modern governance with little effect on the operation of government and the distribution of power in Isabel society (White 1997). In this chapter, taking a cue from the persistent enthusiasm of local Isabel communities to recognize and empower traditional leaders with Christian ceremony, I examine the seeming paradox of a robust ritual life that recognizes Christian chiefs existing at the same time as uncertain and ambivalent efforts to formalize positions for traditional chiefs in local government, such as the formation of an island-wide council of chiefs and regional houses of chiefs. To do this, I look more closely at points of connection and disconnection between the spheres of custom, church, and state as they converge in the figure of the chief. It is important to note, however, that the category of “chief” and its many contemporary manifestations, including “paramount chief,” “council of chiefs,” and “house of chiefs,” are themselves emergent and contested categories that have become vehicles for connecting

local interests with the state. Addressing the theme of this volume, the politics of Christianity, this chapter looks at the cultural politics of the often-sharp contrast between the church-chief relationship and that of chiefs and the state.

Reflecting the views of many in the arenas of local politics in Melanesia, cultural theorists have frequently noted the importance of three influential institutions in local society: *kastom*, church, and government. This “holy trinity” emerged in different forms throughout Oceania, in every place where missions and churches established themselves in parallel with the advent of colonial regimes. Although the specific terms and relevance of these institutions vary widely from one place to another, the postwar rise of nation-states extending influence into daily lives already shaped by Christian identity assured that this triumvirate would broadly frame local political discourse throughout the region. The issues that I address here concern the unsettled and shifting relations between church, state, and *kastom* in one island society (Santa Isabel) where Christianity is well established in nearly all aspects of traditional life, but where a decades-long interest in finding a role for *kastom* in local government has produced few results.

The problem with this unrequited relationship between *kastom* and the state is that since the independence of Solomon Islands in 1978, agencies of the state function as conduits to new sources of wealth and power (under the rubric of “development”), but the specific means for accessing those sources remain distant and weakly connected to local society. Indeed, the sense of distance and alienation that characterized relations between the colonial regime and rural Isabel communities prior to independence continued and even intensified after 1978 as Solomon Islands famously acquired the reputation as Oceania’s first “failed state.” In contrast, in Isabel the Anglican Church of Melanesia has built wide and deep connections to the social and religious fabric of daily life for more than a century. In this sense, church and *kastom* are extensively intertwined, creating a strong sense of significance or relevance for Isabel islanders’ involvement in Christianity, whereas the state (“government”) remains distant and dimly understood.

In this chapter I examine this disjunction in relation to recent efforts to rationalize customary political practice so as to connect it more directly and effectively to the state, with its specters of power and global wealth. Behind (or alongside) these efforts, the interrelation of *kastom* and Christianity continues to be reproduced in manifold ways through ritual practices and ceremonial events. In what follows, I describe several such events, including the ordination of a new bishop of Santa Isabel in 2004 and the installation of a new paramount chief in 2010. Although on the surface these are very different types of activity, each draws upon well-known cultural tropes to re-create connections between Christianity and *kastom* through the person of Christian leaders, particularly the figure of Christian chiefs. For more than a century, ritual and

ceremonial events such as the installation of Bishop Dudley Tuti as paramount chief in 1975 have narrated the place of Christianity in local culture and history. Whereas events such as the Gnulahaghe ceremony make use of the same kinds of ritual practice to renew images of Christian chiefs, they have had little effect on the role of “traditional chiefs” in island governance.

While the Gnulahaghe chief-blessing may have reproduced long-running themes in Isabel politics, it was also the product of a unique historical moment—one that had seen the collapse of national government following a coup in 2000 and an Australian-led multinational intervention in 2003 called Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI). The plan to more systematically institutionalize the houses of chiefs was, at that point, supported by a United Nations Development Program (UNDP) project that aimed, among other things, to strengthen the role of traditional leaders (chiefs) in governance. The word “governance” here should be a tip-off to the operation of a wider discourse of development, one that leads into the planning rooms of regional donors and financial institutions concerned with strengthening the administrative capacity of aid recipients (Hegarty et al.: 2004).

With Solomon Islands labeled the Pacific’s first failed state, issues of governance had reached crisis proportions, leading to proposals for constitutional reform that would rekindle interest in creating a federal system of government that would devolve greater powers to provinces as “states” in the new system. A related stream of regional and international commentary (as in papers and seminars at the Australian National University’s State, Society and Governance in Melanesia project) looked to “civil society,” especially churches, to support social services and development in the absence of functioning government institutions. As Sinclair Dinnen wrote, “Recent developments raise important questions about the relevance of the centralized state and other aspects of formalized government inherited at independence. Greater appreciation is needed of the critical role of non-state and sub-national institutions in ordering the daily lives of most citizens” (2004: 3).

As these macro perspectives look to the local level, however, they encounter practices where distinctions of “state” and “civil society” or “church” and “state” no longer map onto indigenous constructs.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter I use the case of Santa Isabel to explore issues of articulation (or disarticulation) that become most evident as people and ideas move across local, national, and regional spheres of interest. The result is a certain degree of confusion or ambiguity as the lexicons of the state, of churches, and of indigenous practice collide. Rather than see *kastom*, church, or state as somehow given or as bounded institutions, it is more productive to attend to the problems of articulation and the bridging practices actors positioned variously in the structures of church, state, and tradition use as they work to fashion tools for use in contemporary political projects.

With the advent of independence, Melanesian states moved deliberately to remake the state formations put in place for purposes of colonial administration. In doing so, they inherited many of the problems and contradictions inherent in colonial policies that had sought to subsume indigenous political practices within modern nation states. One set of responses to these problems, evident in nationalist rhetorics of *kastom*, was described in early writings on discourses of tradition in postcolonial Melanesia (Keesing and Tonkinson 1982). But with few exceptions (Jolly 1997), these accounts remained tightly focused on local ethnography, with little attention paid to articulations with colonial, national, and transnational connections. Yet in Solomon Islands, and I suspect nearly everywhere in Melanesia, local actors are often closely involved with urban and (trans)national institutions, and they regularly traverse those wider zones in pursuing their own interests. To understand such transactions requires close attention to local context in relation to the operations of the state, of churches, of transnational organizations, and so forth. Although cultural theory tells us to look at the edges—the border zones where identities, boundaries, and rules of the game are negotiated—few studies have managed to encompass these areas of articulation.

The blessing of local chiefs mentioned above is a case in point. Whereas that event was deeply embedded in local thinking about issues of power and person, it may also be seen as the product of island-wide transformations (or “negotiations”) unfolding in relation to national and international efforts to develop and stabilize a famously failing nation state. It was in that wider context that the UNDP decided in 2003 to locate a project at the level of provincial government (the Isabel Province Development Project, IPDP), with Santa Isabel as the initial choice. The UNDP project was a broad-gauged effort to strengthen the capacity for economic, political, and social development. The interest in chiefs and local governance was only one aspect, but it was one that resonated with the situation in Isabel, where decades of discussion about the status of “chiefs” preceded it. The predicament of chiefs—recognized at the local level but largely invisible to the state—had been a constant theme for the paramount chief, the retired bishop Sir Dudley Tuti. Indeed Tuti himself, who was the most prominent embodiment of the conjunction of church and *kastom* in Santa Isabel, had long been an advocate for greater governmental recognition of traditional chiefs.

The seeming contradiction between frequent talk of “chiefs” in the face of continuing marginality in government suggests a degree of incommensurability between indigenous political practices and the legal-bureaucratic structures of the state.<sup>2</sup> But the possibility of there being deeper cultural or epistemological reasons for the inability to connect local forms of leadership with the apparatus of the state has rarely been voiced. Rather, the focus of Isabel political actors in the last decade has been to seek more direct ways to give chiefly

authority the same kinds of rational, bureaucratic foundations that are available both to church and state. Indeed, the UNDP project helped to recognize and formalize use of the term “Tripod” that had been in use for some years as a way of referring to the three legs of local governance in Santa Isabel: chiefs, church, and government. Despite occasional objections to the term (and its implication that these three spheres enjoy equal political status), it appears to have stuck, having been recently reaffirmed by the provincial premier in the context of a visit from the head of RAMSI.<sup>3</sup>

As John Barker notes in this volume for lowland areas of PNG (and as is evident in many other areas as well), “The division of social life into three spheres of action—tradition (*kastom*), government (*lo*), and Christianity (*lotu*)—is well documented.” Indeed, examples of the tripartite cosmology of Melanesian sociopolitical life are not hard to come by. In speaking at a recent UNDP seminar on “National Parliament Strengthening” in Honiara, Solomon Islands scholar Alice Pollard Aruhe’eta stated that “there are three pillars of leadership in Solomon Islands, the church, politics and custom” (Dawea 2010). While it is useful to note the relevance of this tripartite model as a regional pattern in contemporary Melanesia, it is also susceptible to reification that mystifies more than it reveals. As several contributions to this volume make clear, denominational politics and differences between established and evangelical churches are hardly well represented by singular references to “the church.” This tripartite model might best be regarded as a heuristic device for listening to the ways in which churches are constituted in these zones of articulation.

### **Ordaining a new bishop: The ritual politics of *kastom* and Christianity**

Religious and political transformations throughout Oceania have often been mediated by the figure of the “chief”—a personification of local ideologies of power and of the problems posed by the politics of colonization and globalization. Whereas chiefs proved instrumental to the conversion projects of early missions and the indirect rule strategies of colonial regimes, once both Christianity and state structures were established (in Melanesian societies at least), chiefs and the very idea of the chief receded into the margins of the modern church and state. In the postcolonial era, however, talk of chiefs reemerged in the context of local and national moves toward decentralization and political reform. In Santa Isabel, this renewed interest articulated with a longer history of efforts to empower local leaders, one that drew on Christian practices and indigenous ideologies. Having elsewhere noted the irony in the public discussion of Isabel chiefs despite their continuing marginality in the apparatus of government (White 1997), I want to suggest that it is the other side of the tri-

partite relationship—the one that exists between chiefs and the church—that largely sustains the long-running discourse of chiefs in Santa Isabel. It is, in particular, the ritual practices of the church that afford a means of regularly enacting social and moral histories that conjoin *kastom* and Christianity in relation to indigenous structures of feeling.

The role of the church, specifically the Anglican Church of Melanesia, in supporting chiefs in Santa Isabel entails material and economic support as well as symbolic affirmation. As people in Santa Isabel well recognize, the Church of Melanesia, through its bishops and clergy, has been a constant source of support for the activities of chiefs. Ironically, the various moral, ritual, and economic supports of the church have generally remained in the background in comparison with efforts to gain government recognition for chiefs. And yet the Solomon Islands government and the province of Santa Isabel have been an uncertain and shifting presence, with elected or appointed leaders rotating through their positions at a rapid rate, usually coming to power by virtue of their credentials of Western education and success in the wage economy.

This historical alliance of church and chiefs is most prominently established in the paramount chief. In characterizing the paramount chief as “established,” however, I am talking more about symbolic and political potentials than about a well-institutionalized status with clear roles in relation to church or state. Indeed, the very idea of the paramount chief requires regular renewal and validation in order to remain significant. And it is, especially, in public events such as village meetings and periodic ritual and ceremonial occasions that narratives of Christian history and subjectivity gain wider currency. For a society in which print culture, much less electronic culture, is only dimly relevant in rural life, such occasions are perhaps the most visible index of what is important in everyday life.

As an example of the ritual practices that valorize chiefs, I briefly discuss two events in which the interrelation of Christianity and *kastom* was brought to life in public ceremony: the ordination of a new bishop of Santa Isabel in 2004 and the installation of a new paramount chief in July 2010. To consider the manner in which the Church and chiefs mutually constitute themselves in such events sheds light on the dilemma of state recognition, which appears even more disconnected from the kinds of personal (and personalized) histories invoked in these moments of ceremonial validation.

Everyday life in Oceanic societies is punctuated by a near constant round of social events and ritual occasions marked by feasting, exchange, and performance. In Isabel, most of these events are associated with the church. When returning to Isabel in 2004, I timed my arrival to coincide with the ordination of the new bishop of the diocese of Santa Isabel (spelled Ysabel by the Church), Richard Naramana.<sup>4</sup> That event—held at St. Paul’s Church in Buala village, the administrative center of Santa Isabel Province—was the largest occasion

for feasting and celebration on the island that year. Insofar as the importance of such occasions is marked by the status of guests who gather for the occasion, the significance of the ordination was evident in the presence of the then prime minister of Solomon Islands, Allan Kemakeza, and various members of his cabinet, as well as an array of bishops from other dioceses and offices of the Church of Melanesia that spans Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

Space does not permit an account of the many parts of this event that made it significant both for residents of Santa Isabel and for a variety of constituencies related to the new bishop through kin or residential ties. What I do want to note, however, is the manner in which the ordination ceremony made use of indigenous ritual practices to honor Naramana and to give the ceremony meaning in relation both to local genealogy and to larger narratives of Christian conversion. In particular, the architects of the ceremony included the performance of sung laments (*tharu*) that narrated Naramana's personal history. *Tharu* are typically performed at feast occasions in order to honor the recipients of gift giving and ceremonial exchange. The song lyrics often address the recipient as "child" or even "grandchild" in a nostalgic tone that recalls that person's ancestors and traces his or her own life history up to the present moment.

Naramana and his relations composed two *tharu* for this occasion (see the appendix to this chapter), to be performed at the opening of the ordination ceremony by an entourage that accompanied the bishop-to-be as he entered the church. It is in these songs that the personal nature of the occasion—or rather the connections between the personal and the collective—was most clearly articulated, creating a frame for the "high ceremony" of Anglican ordination to come. *Tharu* are usually performed at exchange ceremonies that express shared histories and emotional ties between those engaged in the exchange (i.e., weddings, compensations, and so forth). They are composed to speak in the voice of one party to the exchange such that the chorus becomes the person whose memories and feelings are expressed in the lyrics, and they are sung in a lilting, melancholy tone associated with the sentimentality of close familial relations.

At the very beginning of the ordination ceremony, after the full procession of dignitaries with bishops and priests had entered the church to musical accompaniment and taken their seats at the front, Richard Naramana—dressed as a chief in elaborate shell decorations (armlets, necklace, belt, headband) and a tapa cloth waistcloth, as well as holding a shield and axe—entered the church flanked by an elderly man on one side and woman bedecked with shell finery and tapa skirt on the other. This dignified procession proceeded to walk slowly up the aisle with long pauses between steps, accompanied by the slow rhythmic cadence of the two *tharu* sung by a trailing choir.

The first *tharu* gave voice to the sentiments of the bishop designate, Richard Naramana, recalling his own personal journey to the day of ordination,

interspersed with chorus lines in the voice of his parents and grandparents that addressed him as “my son” or “my grandson.” Opening with a stanza asserting that from the time of his birth he had no idea that he would become bishop (“and that’s the way it was, fathers”), the song reflected on his school years, his becoming a catechist, and his decision to go into priest training. The move to priest training is expressed through the device of someone telling Naramana to follow in the steps of his grandfather, Ben Hageria, the second Isabel man to be ordained a priest. Next, reaching back to a longer history, the *tharu* recalled that Hageria was following the command of another of Naramana’s ancestors, a renowned chief named Figrima—referred to in the song as “grandfather Figrima”:

Puhi gloku Prisi teu gne ba?	So is it the way, the work of the Priest?
Mala legui iago u nathapla gna	You should follow the steps of
Ku’e da mama Ben Hageria	Our grandfather Father Ben Hageria
Legui nogna khuru ku’e Figrima	(Who) followed the order of grand- father Figrima

In this way, the song located the new bishop in a longer lineage of power and mana identified simultaneously in terms of local genealogy and church history. The lyrical contextualizing continued at the end of the song as the singers reflected on connections to the host community, whose ancestor, Hugo Hebala, had been the first person to be ordained priest and whose gravesite is located just outside the church where the ceremony was taking place:

Ke lamna gna khilo’au igne	Inside this church here
U namono tuthuana gne	This ancestral home
Namono gna mama Hebala	The place of Father Hebala
Mama re ba ido re	(chorus): Fathers and mothers
Taji fakeli ni thuguo	Take care of it well, my son
Nangha thofno bobroknana	This genuinely famous name
Teke tusu ari, God ke kligna mu	That has touched God above you
Gu iago egu is thuguo	This is what you do, my son

The second *tharu*, sung as the procession proceeded step by step further into the church, provided the narrative accompaniment to a short ritual drama in which Naramana was transformed from *kastom* chief to Christian priest by redressing him in priest’s garb. After proceeding halfway to the altar, Naramana stepped forward to meet a priest and catechist walking up the aisle from the altar. Then, standing in the middle of the church, the priest and catechists proceeded to remove Naramana’s chiefly ornaments and garments and to dress him as a priest. The lyrics describe the redressing as a kind of one-to-one replacement of the icons of *kastom* with those of a Christian priest.

This replacement begins by “throwing away” the most iconic signifiers of the violent power of *kastom*: the axe and shield. The lyrics direct him to throw away the shield and axe because “now the Church is here”:

Koko iago Grereo ana	Throw away your shield
Koko iago khila na	Throw away your axe
Goignaro gne Khiloau na	Now the Church is here
Egu gnea Thuguo—guo	And so it is my son

After systematically removing Naramana’s shell decorations and tapa waist-cloth, leaving him in black trousers, the agents of the Church then dressed him in the clothes of a modern priest, first putting on a white shirt and then a Christian cross necklace, followed by the white outer garment (amice) and the priestly belt and sash:

Jau nou grereo iago na	The same with your shield
Te gaibabala ana nala	Put on that cross
Jau nou khila iago na	The same with your axe
Te amice ana nala—nala	Put on that amice

Having progressed through shield, axe, tapa cloth, shell belt, porpoise-tooth necklace, and woven charm, replacing each with something of the Christian priest, the *tharu* concluded with a final substitution of *kastom* magic (referred to with the Pijin term “mereseni,” literally “medicine”) with the Bible:

Jau nou mereseni teu na	The same with your medicine
Buka baebolo ana nala	[You have] the bible
Egu nala iago ia thuguo	And so it is my son
Egu nala iago ia Graguo—guo	And so it is grandson

In this manner, the *tharu* reminds the audience of the continuing relevance and power of Christian knowledge and practice (indexed by the Bible) in containing the still dangerous effects of customary magic and sorcery.

Now dressed as a priest, Naramana was then led up the aisle to be presented to the archbishop of the Church of Melanesia with the words: “Most Reverend Father in God, we now present to you the Reverend Canon Richard Naramana, and ask you to consecrate him as a Bishop in the Church of God.” Taken together, the songs and the ritual drama performatively re-presented Naramana as Christian person, one embedded in the social order(s) of ancestral home, church, and modernity.

This particular ritual drama struck me as the same transformation, in reverse, that I had witnessed when Bishop Dudley Tuti was installed as paramount chief in a grand ceremony held at the southern end of Santa Isabel in 1975. On that occasion, a sitting bishop was installed as paramount chief,

effectively reviving a position that had been dormant for decades. The status transition then was symbolized in a change of dress that saw Dudley Tuti beginning the ceremony in bishop's robes but re-emerging as paramount chief in a tapa waistcloth and chiefly shell decoration. In both cases, whether from bishop to paramount chief or from chief to bishop, the ritual drama vividly represents linkages between *kastom* and Christianity through a narrative of transformation embodied by a recognized island leader. The collective significance of the status transition is constructed through narratives of the island's conversion to Christianity (one hundred years ago), while this larger history is made real in the presence of the person being installed.

In the case of Naramana—who in fact was most immediately transitioning from the status of priest to bishop—the ritual dramatization of the transformation from *kastom* chief had to reach back to more longstanding images and stories to first re-create Rev. Naramana as a traditional chief. Wearing shell decorations associated with chiefly status and walking beside an elderly female relative wearing a tapa cloth skirt effectively repositioned him in a frame of customary authority associated with ancestral knowledge. Later in the service, as if to further underline the salience of the historic conversion experience for the bishop's ordination, there was a short five-minute skit reenacting a first encounter between a Christian missionary and Isabel natives. These skits, commonly performed in many parts of Oceania (Errington and Gewertz 1994), are a regular feature in Isabel church festivals and ceremonies (chapter seven of White 1991).

Here, in the Bishop's ordination service, the basic elements of the missionary story of overcoming warlike and threatening natives with a quiet presentation of the Christian message of love and peace was reenacted (using English) in the aisles of the church. Accompanied by traditional music intoned by a village chorus, a group of six warriors dressed in body paint and moving in unison with axes and shields proceeded to challenge a procession comprised of a deacon and five acolytes who carried the cross and candles. In response to a lead warrior who loudly threatened the deacon by brandishing his axe and saying "Who are you?" and "Why have you come?", the deacon replied calmly, "We do not come to kill you. We bring the good news [of] love, peace, and joy in our Lord Jesus Christ." Turning then to a reading from the Bible (John 20:19–23), the warriors knelt down and, at the end, set their axes and shields on the floor before standing up to clasp hands and walk to the front of the church, following the deacon and his procession.

In this manner, the ceremony to consecrate the new bishop drew upon well-established ritual practices to inscribe the significance of the ordination in localized spheres of ancestral power as well as in the longer history of Christianization. The *tharu*'s substitutions and the skit's dramatization both worked to reinscribe narratives that grounded the story of Christianity in local histo-

ries while also representing Christian practice in relation to the logic of ancestral power. These ritual occasions make it clear that for two spheres of the custom-church-state trilogy (*kastom* and Christianity), the sources of social and moral authority are closely intertwined, extending deeply into local histories and cosmologies.

### **Routinizing chiefs: The bureaucratic politics of *kastom* and state**

What, then, of the state? In 2004, when Dudley Tuti as paramount chief was touring Isabel to recognize and bless local chiefs and when Richard Naramana was ordained as bishop, there was little if any evidence that the status of “chief” had gained any greater degree of governmental recognition despite twenty-five years of postindependence talk about empowering “traditional chiefs.” In this section, I briefly update this history, beginning in 2004 when efforts to rebuild the Solomon Islands’ “failed state” were looking to the resources of “tradition” to strengthen local governance.

When I returned to the Solomons in 2002, the country remained in crisis. The capital Honiara and the surrounding area on Guadalcanal were still embroiled in violent conflict, the discredited police force had become something of an ethnic militia, and national services had virtually collapsed. Given the implosion of the centralized state operating out of Honiara, rural communities in the rest of Solomon Islands, including Santa Isabel, relied on subsistence economies and local modes of governance, as well as on the institutional strength of churches, to sustain themselves (McDougall 2008). Placed in a longer historical perspective, however, it is possible to see these years of crisis as an extreme case of what had always been an uncertain and detached relationship between rural periphery and the centralized offices of (post)colonial administration.

Furthermore, the ambivalent distance between rural villages and the centralized state contrasts sharply with the close integration of the church (mostly singular) in the daily lives of Isabel people. It should be remembered that the colonial administration did not, for the most part, even assert its presence on the island until well after Christian conversion was complete and a new social order of Christian leadership involving chiefs, priests, and teachers was in place. And that first presence was resisted with a message to the British resident commissioner to this effect: “we don’t need you” (White 1991: 184).

One of the distinctive features of the church-state-tradition nexus in Santa Isabel is that a single church, the Anglican Church of Melanesia, encompasses about 96 percent of the island population. This unusual match between a single church and a single state administrative and territorial unit has given lead-

ers in the church an unusual degree of political legitimacy as island leaders.<sup>5</sup> Certainly the idea of an island-wide paramount chief would not have obtained currency without the dominant role of a single church. The paramount chieftainship in Santa Isabel originated in a nineteenth-century alliance between missionaries and the first powerful chief to convert and support the mission's project. Since then, the position of paramount chief has been re-created whenever influential and charismatic leaders emerge and are given the status. That occurred in 1975 with Dudley Tuti, the first bishop of Santa Isabel, and after his death in 2006 with Bishop James Mason in 2010. (I discuss below the obvious conjunction of *kastom* and Christianity in these latest incarnations of paramount chief.)

Whatever the importance of the church for local politics, by the time of national independence in 1978 a new world of resources and power had opened up through structures of the state and the development plans and budgets controlled by the offices of national government. Furthermore, as global logging and mining companies made their way into local areas through the approvals of national ministries, the importance of the state as a mediator and conduit for global capital was on the rise, as was the prevalence of land disputes concerning the authority to regulate access to customary lands. It was this as much as any single factor that fueled interest in rationalizing the place of traditional leadership in modern structures of governance.

When the Solomon Islands gained independence in 1978, the new constitution made note of the importance of traditional leaders, suggesting a role in provincial government: "Parliament shall make provision for the government of Provinces established under this section and consider the role of traditional chiefs therein" (sec. 114b). A few years later, in 1984, the Santa Isabel Provincial Assembly did its part by passing a resolution that set up the Isabel Council of Chiefs (ICC) as a body of traditional leaders charged with advising the Provincial Assembly on matters pertaining to custom. The first meeting of the Isabel Council of Chiefs was convened in March 1984 with members from five districts. Even though a constitution for the ICC was drawn up two years later, the role of traditional leaders in governance remained vague, and the ICC slid into dormancy.<sup>6</sup>

Even before the collapse of government during the "tension," by the 1990s the national government, international agencies, and aid donors could all see that local level government had become dysfunctional. The Provincial Government Act of 1997 disbanded area councils and recommended filling the gap with traditional leaders, asserting that "the roles of chiefs and traditional leaders" continue to be recognized and their decisions should be "protected by the constitution" (schedule 3, sec. 8(i)).<sup>7</sup> It was against this background, then, that the problems of the Solomon Islands' "failing state" and the precipitous decline of government services in the years following a coup in 2000 inten-

sified interest in the role of traditional leaders and the churches (“civil society”) in local governance. The UNDP project launched in 2003 noted a “gap in government” that was being filled by “traditional leaders and church leaders [who] continued their support at the level of local government” (2003: 29).

Hence, one of the primary goals for the UNDP project was improving the “participation of traditional leaders in government” (2003, Activity 1.3.3). This translated into a significant investment in administrative support for the activities of Isabel chiefs and most importantly for Dudley Tuti as paramount chief. The paramount chief gained the support of a “chiefs desk officer” with office support, an expatriate advisor, and even an anthropological consultant (myself) who worked for one month as a “traditional institutions specialist.” Invoking the trilogy of government, chiefs, and church, the terms of reference for the traditional institutions specialist illuminate the level of national and transnational interest in the chiefs and their connections with churches and government:

Governance in Santa Isabel is based on three institutions—the elected government, the chiefs and the Church of Melanesia—of which 96 percent of the population are members. Through its five-year development plan, formulated with assistance through this Project, the Santa Isabel Provincial Government seeks to forge a development partnership with the chiefs and all the churches, of which the Church of Melanesia is the only one with a Province-wide network (UNDP 2003).

With an active “chiefs desk officer,” the project worked to organize meetings, appoint chiefs to regional houses of chiefs, and even organize a “chiefs study tour” that sent a delegation of five chiefs to Fiji and Vanuatu in August 2004 with the aim of learning about the ways in which those states had institutionalized bodies of traditional leadership within the matrices of national government. Although the study tour had little long-term effect and although proposals for constitutional reform that devolve greater powers to the provinces seem unlikely, the increased level of activity did produce several moves both by the Church of Melanesia and the provincial government to formalize relations with Isabel’s traditional leaders. These included formalizing the structure of the island-wide Council of Chiefs and district houses of chiefs by creating constitutions for both, initiating a legal oath of loyalty for members of the houses of chiefs, and creating a legal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that spells out the terms of cooperation between the Council of Chiefs, the Church of Melanesia, and the provincial government as a “Tripod” of leaders made up of paramount chief, the provincial premier, and the diocesan bishop.

One of the ironies of the Isabel movement to recognize chiefs is the evident ambivalence many expressed toward the rational-legal-bureaucratic dis-

course of the state as the means to legitimize a place for chiefs in local governance. Shortly after the Isabel Provincial Assembly created the Isabel Council of Chiefs, the Council drafted a constitution with legal advice from the province. That document, at least in draft form, provided guidance for selecting a new paramount chief. However, when a draft of the constitution was reviewed in 2004, it was rejected by Dudley Tuti because it made reference to terms and elections, practices he regarded as contrary to traditional leadership. Even though elections and terms were rejected, other moves toward bureaucratization have been embraced, seemingly as a means to create structures for chiefly governance that can articulate with the apparatus of a democratic nation state.<sup>8</sup>

The attempt to formulate a bureaucratic structure for the ICC and the district houses of chiefs required a formal procedure for designating member chiefs. Each district was asked to devise its own procedures, with uncertain results.<sup>9</sup> The Gnulahaghe blessing described at the outset of this chapter was in fact one in a series of such events undertaken by the paramount chief with the support of the newly staffed UNDP office. Previous blessing ceremonies had “anointed” sixty chiefs in the Bugotu house of chiefs in July the previous year (by coincidence, the very moment that RAMSI troops were landing in Honiara) and twenty-five chiefs in the Kia house of chiefs in November.

In most cases, the procedures devised for installing chiefs in the district houses of chiefs have been very inclusive. For example, Bugotu district, with a total population of about 4,000 (1999 census), appointed at least 60 (records of the meeting indicate more than 90; list compiled at Bugotu house of chiefs meeting, 7–11 July 2003). The demographic implications of these figures are that district houses of chiefs provide for representation on a scale that includes a leader for every landowning descent group and nearly every extended family in local villages. While these numbers are consistent with egalitarian Melanesian models of leadership, the proliferation has also evoked complaints. For example, “There are now so many chiefs that we are running short of soldiers!” (Tripod in Practice draft, 10 November 2003: 4). There is also some evidence of doubts about the individuals appointed as chiefs, which are expressed in worries that the “wrong people” are sometimes selected.

The current process of appointing chiefs entails an oath, reviewed by a lawyer or commissioner of oaths and administered by the paramount chief in the course of blessing the chiefs in a church service. Adding a formal oath composed in the language of a legal document (reviewed, ideally, by a lawyer to the province or to the Council of Chiefs) and administered in church links the status of chiefs both to church and to state. The ritualistic aspect of blessing members of the houses of chiefs in a communion service is of course facilitated by the fact that the paramount chief, then and now, is also a bishop in the Church of Melanesia. The practice of administering blessings and oaths

reflects the interest local actors take in utilizing the ritual practices of both government and church to empower chiefs.

The more I learned about the use of oaths in blessing local chiefs, the more I was reminded of the efforts of Richard Fallows, an English missionary with the Melanesian Mission in the 1930s, to install “church chiefs” in local communities throughout the island (White 1991: 190). Fallows encouraged the connection between chiefs and the church by appointing village chiefs as church chiefs in ceremonies with signed certificates. His activism later developed into a broader political movement that involved both church and secular leaders and that aimed at gaining more state-like legitimacy by establishing a native “Parliament.”<sup>10</sup>

To some extent following the pattern of the 1930s church chiefs, Paramount Chief Tuti asked each house of chiefs to prepare such an oath. Not all complied. In the Hograno district, where strong sentiments of autonomy have prevailed from the time of the first missionary-based paramount chief to the present, the chiefs rejected the idea of signing oaths. According to Richard Naramana, they take the view that they are respectful “observers” to the institution of paramount chief (recorded interview, 12 July 2010). The Hograno response is a useful reminder that however much momentum the chiefs’ movement may have gained in the most recent phase of activity, each of the developments also evokes anxious doubts about their validity or desirability. A survey of local attitudes toward political reform that documented concern with the “abuse” of chiefly status picked up such attitudes in Santa Isabel: “Concern of the People . . . They abuse their chiefly status for their own financial gains and pleasure” (Report of Provincial Government Review Committee to the 1999 Isabel Leaders Convention: 6).

Incorporating chiefs in the framework of government may have the effect of creating a new kind of chief whose authority is more like a government official’s, based on appointment to a position rather than on a history of involvement with local communities. This dilemma poses questions: What are the risks for the *category* of “chief” when traditional leaders are incorporated within the institutions of the state? How would a formal appointment affect the local meaning of “chief”? Will it transform the figure of the chief into a bureaucratic position, similar to the elected members of provincial or national government, who are often regarded as opportunists who use their position to “quarry” state resources? In my conversations with Isabel residents I have heard the same skepticism, if not cynicism, that was reflected in surveys taken at the time of the UNDP project that report people making a distinction between “real” chiefs and others. Isabel islanders are quick to see opportunism in individuals who desire political status without the knowledge and respect that derives from a history of involvement with local society. A national survey on constitutional reform in 2003 included this statement from a respondent in

Santa Isabel: “Lack of respect for chiefs is a result of ‘new’ practices of appointing chiefs in non-traditional ways” (Solomon Islands Constitutional Reform Project 2003: 24).

More recently, in a 2010 report about a recent “Cultural Heritage Workshop” convened to stimulate public education on matters of *kastom* (and especially on customary valuables such as those held in museum collections), an expatriate member of the Isabel community and former advisor to the province wrote that the Isabel Council of Chiefs “needs to face up to a growing sense among ‘non-chiefs’ that chiefs are less relevant to them now than before. So, one of the challenges will be to shift chiefs’ thinking towards bridging the growing divide between them and others” (Graham Baines, personal communication, 26 March 2010).

Throughout this recent period of experimentation in which new ideas have been tried out regarding the structure and role of the Isabel Council of Chiefs, one of the driving forces behind these developments was the active role and voice of Dudley Tuti. Given that the institutions of church and state in Isabel both have representative leaders (in the bishop of the Diocese of Ysabel for the Church of Melanesia and the in the premier for Santa Isabel Province), it proved to be important that the chiefs also have a well-recognized leader in the person of a paramount chief. However, insofar as the institution of paramount chief on Santa Isabel is itself a product of missionary and church history (White 1991, 1997), the *idea* of the “Tripod” was already partly constituted prior to the coining of the term. The conjunction of church and *kastom*, in particular, had long been apparent in the persons, lives, and biographies of the island’s paramount chiefs.

When I arrived to work with the UNDP project in 2004, the term “Tripod” was gaining more visibility (it appeared in a 2003 Isabel Province Development Plan; see Baines 2003) and was being used to focus attempts to legitimize and formalize relations between traditional leaders (“chiefs”) and the organs of church and state in Isabel. No one was quite sure how to do this, but a number of steps were being taken to create formal ties between the ICC and both the Anglican diocese and the province.<sup>11</sup> As attempts to institutionalize the ICC took shape, the parties to the Tripod attempted to regularize their relationship with meetings between the leaders of the three bodies. In 2004 and 2005, the paramount chief for the ICC, the premier of Santa Isabel Province, and the bishop of the Diocese of Ysabel met regularly, producing the MOU that called for regular meetings and the creation of an Indigenous Development Trust to be established under “Tripod authority.” The leaders asked the provincial lawyer to review the document, and, as I understand it, they eventually signed it. But even as I was writing this chapter, I received multiple email requests from consultants and students asking for copies of the MOU, which suggests that it had slipped into the phantom archive of documents produced according to

the best strictures of bureaucratic rationality but largely forgotten in the oral sphere of Isabel politics.

In contrast with the ephemeral quality of many of the written documents that emerged from discussions and meetings of Isabel's traditional leaders, it is in the person of the most visible leaders that the image and influence of "chiefs" is reproduced in everyday life through talk about political events and their social and moral underpinnings. As already noted, Dudley Tuti, during his life, was the most influential personification of the conjunction of church and custom and, through the Tripod, the state. His passing created a state of uncertainty about the possibility for reproducing such a condensation of power as that which inhered in the "paramount chief." Subsequent moves to recreate the position of paramount chief, described briefly below, suggest that the idea of paramount chief and its attendant social-emotional symbolism remains strong.

### **Enthroning a paramount chief: The tradition of (re)invention**

Through its installation of the sitting bishop for Santa Isabel as paramount chief, the 1975 paramount chief ceremony proved to be a significant moment for linking chiefs and the church in island politics (White 1991). With the passing of Tuti in January 2006, however, not only was that linkage up for grabs, but the status of paramount chief itself was in some jeopardy. In that light, the process of discussing, debating, and deciding the succession for a new paramount chief has also worked to keep the status itself relevant in Isabel political discourse. After considerable discussion around the island, an island-wide meeting of chiefs in Samosodu in November 2008 announced the selection of another sitting bishop: James Mason, a man from Kia who is related to Tuti and other prominent Anglican leaders from that region. Mason has served as the first bishop for the diocese of Hanuato'o and is well known in Isabel.

Thus the move to install a new paramount chief for Santa Isabel in 2010 repeated several elements that had converged in the previous incarnation with Tuti: primarily the choice of an Anglican bishop, but also, significantly, a leader who is related genealogically to a line of important leaders from the Kia region, well known in the history of the island and the Church of Melanesia. The wrinkle this time, however, is that Bishop Mason's current position is in England, where he is the vicar of Plympton Saint Maurice Church and an assistant bishop of the diocese of Exeter, Church of England. To deal with the problem of his absence from the island for meetings and day-to-day decisions, the gathering suggested that such matters would be handled by the deputy chairman of the ICC, Ambrose Bugotu, who was subsequently appointed as "Deputy Paramount Chief." Conceiving of a position such as "Deputy," like the

position of ICC “Secretary” that preceded it, signals the progressive bureaucratization of chiefly authority with state-like forms—forms that often attract skeptical criticism from onlookers wary of ascribed power associated with (newly created) positions rather than the person-centered models associated with local chiefs.

Bishop Mason was installed as paramount chief (and Ambrose Bugotu as deputy) in a ceremony held Sunday 25 July 2010 in Sepi village, the home of the first paramount chief, Monilaws Soga, and the same place where Dudley Tuti had been installed as paramount chief in 1975. The installation, as with the one in 1975, was the occasion for a large gathering of people from across Isabel as well as other islands to recognize the new Isabel leader in a day-long church service and celebration with *kastom* dancing. Supported substantially with funds from the Church of Melanesia, participating dignitaries included the present and recently retired archbishop of the Church of Melanesia, the Spiritual Authority of the Christian Fellowship Church (CFC) in New Georgia (Ikan Rove, eldest son of the late religious leader Silas Eto, known as “Holy Mama” and founder of the CFC; Tuza 1977), as well as leaders from other islands and the premier of Isabel Province.

Although I was unable to attend the 2010 ceremony, I did have the opportunity to discuss it with one of its principal architects, Ambrose Bugotu, and I have benefited from accounts from others who participated. As the person who had been acting as secretary of the Isabel Council of Chiefs following the passing of Dudley Tuti and the person whom the Council had selected to become the first deputy paramount chief, Ambrose Bugotu provided a knowledgeable and enthusiastic preview of events when I talked with him in Honiara about two weeks beforehand. He shared a copy of the printed program that to some extent was modeled on the program for the 1975 installation. It also typified a format commonly used for major church occasions (such as the installation of Bishop Naramana six years earlier). Ambrose Bugotu knows this format well from his years as secretary to the Church of Melanesia in its headquarters office in Honiara.

The installation ceremony consisted of a Sunday morning church service followed by a celebration with feasting and dancing until late afternoon. Prior to that, two days of meetings were scheduled, the first of the Isabel Council of Chiefs and then of the Tripod and the Isabel parliament members. Whereas the legitimacy and significance of the installation of the new paramount chief and deputy paramount chief were and continue to be matters of wide discussion and debate in Santa Isabel, here I focus mainly on the ritual apparatus mobilized for the occasion, which, despite (or even because of) the uncertainties surrounding the status of paramount chief, constructs a remarkable set of continuities in Isabel collective history.

This 2010 paramount chief ceremony, much like the grand installation of Tuti in 1975, was scripted as a church service, with an opening phase for installing the new paramount chief followed by communion. As ritual performance, the event appropriated the register of Anglican ceremony, utilizing call-and-response routines, hymns, and recitations. In this manner, all Isabel participants gathered for the occasion would understand precisely the structure of the event, beginning with processions into the church accompanied with hymn singing and proceeding through the liturgy of a communion service.

The distinctive aspect for this event was the blessing of the paramount chief and deputy paramount chief, billed in the English-language program as “Traditional Installation Ceremony.” This part of the ceremony, following the procession of church leaders, began with a procession of chiefs with custom singing/chanting in accompaniment. The paramount chief appeared dressed as a chief for the first part of the ceremony and then reappeared as bishop for the communion service, as Tuti did in 1975. Somewhat jokingly, Ambrose Bugotu told me that Bishop Mason had rejected the idea that the two of them would dress up in loincloths for the occasion (interview with the author, 17 July 2010). They did, however, opt for waistcloths and adornment with shell valuables that indicated chiefly rank.

The installation began with an “introduction” of the now mythic story of the conversion of the first paramount chief followed by a kind of elicitation of vows conducted by the bishop of Santa Isabel, Richard Naramana, and it concluded with the presentation of gifts from four constituencies: church, chiefs, government, and people. Whereas the story of the conversion of the powerful Bughotu chief Monilaws Soga and of his alliance with the English missionary Henry Welchman is an important and complex story that is well established in island histories, the introduction for the 2010 installation deployed what has become a canonical text, the same text used for Dudley Tuti’s installation in 1975 (White 1991: 225) and in Gnulahaghe village in 2004 when Dudley Tuti blessed four local chiefs who were being inducted into the Maringe house of chiefs:

Before Christ was born the Jews offered lambs for sacrifice to God, whom we worship. But our forefathers offered human beings for sacrifice to their gods.

Soga, before he converted to the Christian religion offered a human sacrifice to his gods, by cutting off a child’s head, and with his warriors drank the blood of the Child to mark his conversion to Christianity, and renounce his allegiance to his god.

Soga turned his warlike spirit to win men and women for Christ. He made a Treaty of peace with all others chiefs to end warfare, and

asked them to follow his religion. Soga became the first Paramount Chief. On his death bed, he summoned some of his chiefs and subjects, and asked them to keep the Church Teaching and the schools; to live in peace, and to care for the land and sea.

Isabel has now realized their great leader's faith and aspiration. All our people are Christians, all our children have gone to schools, the island is begin[ning to be] developed, and above all our people live harmoniously and peacefully.

Thus, with the vivid image of a warrior chief performing a ceremonial killing of a child, the imagined violent force of unrestrained pagan warriors is ritually contained by and directed toward the presumably peaceful ends of Christianity. In my reading, these words, theatrical and repeated verbatim over the course of decades, work to (re)situate the idea of paramount chief at a prominent juncture between *kastom* and Christianity. The narrative frames the present event with reference to a critical historical moment of transformation when multiple strands of power and knowledge, *kastom*, and Christianity intersected. Although Bishop Naramana's ordination did not use this specific text, the narratives of conversion and personal transformation that opened that ceremony—the songs and change of dress, as well as the short skit about the conversion of pagan warriors—told a parallel story of Christian transformation.

At the 2010 ceremony to install a new paramount chief, the history of the conversion of Soga provided a kind of origin story that seems to authenticate the present by invoking the shared past of Isabel's Christian conversion: "It is our duty to perform the 125 years old ceremony handed down from Soga to his successors, and today our Chiefs James Philip Mason and Ambrose Huhugu Bugotu will be blessed and anointed as their predecessors, and they will keep the Promises made by Soga." Those promises were given in the program script in order to carry out duties in the church, in government, and in relation to customary lands and sea:

1. That they will teach God's people through the Bible and his Church
2. that they will maintain Law and Order for the Government of his People
3. that they will take care of their people's land and sea.

This same sequence of three parts is repeated in other phases of the installation ceremony that affirm the role of the paramount chief in relation to these various modalities of authority. In doing so, the paramount chief becomes himself an embodiment of the "Tripod" idea, a person whose responsibilities span spheres of authority that, at another level, are the motivating force for

creating a structure with representatives of church, state, and tradition. It is important to note, however, that in the *performative* enactment of the installation ceremony, these are not equal parts. After opening with the narrative of Soga's mythic conversion, it is Bishop Naramana who orchestrates and directs the remaining parts of the ceremony, including the elicitation of "vows" to uphold duties in the three spheres of responsibility.

By contrast, the presence of the state appears almost as a technicality in the person of the "Legal Advisor" to the Isabel Council of Chiefs who was asked to read a "Document of Appointment" for the paramount chief and his deputy. Later, when a series of gift presentations again performatively inscribed the convergence of church, state, and *kastom* in the person of paramount chief and deputy, the sequence began with the presentation of a Bible by the bishop followed by gift presentations by representatives of the Council of Chiefs (giving a walking stick or "Staff of Power and Authority"), local chiefs (*Kokoloi Vunagi* in Bughotu language) and women as "Tribal" representatives. Whereas a minister in the national government presented a walking stick to Dudley Tuti in 1975, the absence of any elected official in this phase of the ceremony was a reminder that the paramount chief has no formal authority in contemporary government, except through the minor and somewhat tentative arrangements negotiated between the Council of Chiefs and the province in recent years.

Unlike the situation in 1975 when there was never much doubt about who was, in fact, already "paramount chief," in 2008 there were competing choices and a new context for considering the relevance of "chiefs" and "paramount chiefs." In both historical moments, the significance of a paramount chief for Santa Isabel has been a project in the making, a category that only takes shape as it is occupied and embodied by a person with a known social history. If Tuti's own personal history and reputation made the paramount chief what it was for three decades, the choice of Rev. James Mason to be the new paramount chief in 2008 suggests something similar, pointing to the importance of genealogy, personal reputation, and religious authority for the paramount chief. The fact that island leaders made a decision to select someone not resident on the island is, however impractical, one more indication that these considerations are very much at play in the new millennium.

## Conclusion

For some local commentators, the appointment of an absentee paramount chief was interpreted as evidence of wariness about the idea of the position in the first place and about its potential for abuse of power. In addition to anxieties about the exaggerated concentration of influence in one position the idea of a paramount chief entails, recent efforts to further institutionalize the

paramount chief (and now deputy paramount chief) along with a Council of Chiefs have the potential to distort the concept of traditional leadership by redefining the status of “chief” as a position in government. What happens to traditional leadership when one attempts to formalize the informal? Does legislating custom diminish its authority, shifting it to the otherwise distant locus of centralized government?

In raising these questions, it is important to ask what is at stake in regard to the authority of custom “chiefs.” The primary area of political decision-making that falls squarely within the domain of chiefs today is the regulation of customary land. As much as any single factor, it is the desire to find appropriate ways to resolve land conflicts that has motivated efforts to institutionalize traditional leadership so that indigenous knowledge of custom and history can more effectively inform decisions about land use. But these are intractable problems associated with the often incommensurable differences between indigenous and Western knowledge practices. Each proposal to solve them using the promise of Western rationality raises the possibility of creating conflicts in the social and moral order of local communities. Many in Isabel fear that land disputes pursued in the bureaucratic structures of the state will create entanglements that may have dangerous consequences for all concerned. As Debra McDougall has observed for Ranongga in the Western Solomons, the belief that “engaging in legal battles over land was a moral infraction serious enough to invoke supernatural retribution suggests that state-sponsored projects of clarification may be morally, as well as logistically, problematic” (2004: 4).

In other words, the political in Santa Isabel is also personal and religious. Hence, in addition to the obvious stakes of empowering legitimate leaders to speak on behalf of their descent groups and villages, there are pressing reasons for power to be conjoined with personhood, moral history, and reputation. In this chapter I have argued that the persistent production of ceremonial events draws upon collective historical imagination to reinscribe the place of local leaders (“chiefs”) in the moral order of contemporary Christian society. At the same time, it is in the telling of local stories of the church and in the conduct of ritual practices that such collective imagination is most clearly produced. In answering the question of how the movement to empower Santa Isabel chiefs has sustained itself over a period of several decades, this chapter has pointed to the importance of Christian (and specifically Anglican) ritual practices that center on Christian chiefs (and indigenous clergy) in renewing the terms of that movement, even if these practices have not produced practical outcomes for chiefs in governance.

The efforts to incorporate Santa Isabel chiefs in local government illustrate the predicament of the local or the indigenous in projects of nation (re)building and globalization. Is the failure to “solve” the problems of land and the authority of chiefs itself a kind of resistance? In practice, such would appear to be

the case. Certainly these are problems that many Isabel people would like to solve, especially as they face immanent risks associated with logging and mining that threaten to radically alter land and life in the island. Whatever new forms emerge to legitimize chiefs in relation to the state, the underlying discourse of *kastom* and Christianity will continue to shape the terms for political legitimacy in Santa Isabel. The latest incarnation of the paramount chief in the person of Rev. Bishop James Mason illustrates this well, both as an example of the continuing force of the history of that discourse, as well as of its uncertain and contested future.

## Notes

This chapter owes a continuing debt to island friends and hosts. For this topic, I want to acknowledge especially the late retired bishop and paramount chief Sir Dudley Tuti, who generously supported and informed my work over many years, as well as the other “Tripod” leaders during fieldwork in 2004 and 2005, Premier James Habu and Bishop Richard Naramana. I want to thank Graham Baines for inviting me to consult with the UNDP project in 2004 and for continuing a conversation about Isabel culture and politics, most recently in the form of detailed comments on a draft of this paper. I am grateful to all those involved with the UNDP project, including project advisor Bill Pryer and chiefs secretary Henry Marau. More recently Ambrose Bugotu, the deputy paramount chief, has been generous in discussing ongoing developments involving the Isabel Council of Chiefs. Finally, I want to thank participants in the Christian Politics conference for their comments on this paper, especially Debra McDougall for her close reading and constructive suggestions.

1. Examples of the misapplication of macro political concepts are not hard to find in the case of Solomon Islands. With the Australian-led intervention in 2003, the Solomons became a magnet for commentary from political scientists and journalists who were quick to see another case of “ethnic warfare” and a failing state. Thus:

It is these divisions—between language group, clan, and region—that are increasingly coming to the fore as sources of ethnic conflict. . . . Despite its much more fragmented nature, ethnicity in the South Pacific remains similar to that of Africa: an easily manipulable and combustible resource. . . . This was the case . . . more recently in the Solomon Islands, where ethnic tensions between different island populations have been ruthlessly exploited (Reilly 2000: 264).

These commentaries tend to see conflict from a state-centered perspective that reads ethnic diversity as disunity, using metaphors of “fracture,” “breaking,” and “fragmenting” to characterize political conflict. These analyses have been challenged by scholars who seek greater engagement with the local. As Chappell has written, “What is particularly lacking in the doomsday scenarios about Africa or Oceania (especially Melanesia) is thus attention to local circumstances, the ongoing role of outside economic forces, and the concern of many indigenous peoples to protect their cultures from relentless globalization” (2005: 314). Others have questioned the relevance of conventional concepts of ethnicity for interpreting the Solomons conflicts (Kabutaulaka 2001; White 2001).

2. The record of inconsistent implementation, while understandable in light of the problems of government during the last ten years, suggests deeper cultural and political

tensions that unsettle attempts to re-create chiefly leadership within institutions of the state. One of the most important areas in which to look for such disarticulations is in relation to land disputes, which, like the status of chiefs, remain the most important topic of unresolved conflict in Isabel (and Solomon Islands) communities. Debra McDougall's writing on this point for Ranongga identifies the kinds of epistemological and (meta)communicative gaps likely to emerge: "Thus, in situations of resource exploitation or conservation, local people are often encouraged or forced to assert what otherwise might be left implicit. Such clarification often causes serious social conflict ... aggressively asserting ownership and excluding all others is seen as inimical to both Christian and customary ethics" (McDougall 2004: 7).

3. "The Premier outlined the special tripartite arrangement in Isabel between the Provincial Government, the church, and traditional chiefs who worked effectively together to run the affairs of the people as a whole" (Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation 2009).
4. In the tradition of the missionary scholars from the Melanesian Mission that preceded him, Bishop Naramana is a scholar of cultural history and has published his own studies in a Solomon Islands journal (Naramana 1987).
5. In reality, the Ysabel Diocese of the Church of Melanesia extends beyond Santa Isabel island, a fact underlined by church leaders who observe that the "Church of Melanesia is bigger than the Tripod." At the same time, 4 percent of the Isabel population are not members of the Church of Melanesia. It is likely that estimates as to the percentage of Church of Melanesia membership would need to be lowered for the Isabel population in Honiara, where anecdotal evidence suggests more diversity. In Isabel itself, this estimate apparently reflects the existence of a breakaway Anglican group(s) in the Hograno region that formed in response to the dismissal of the diocesan bishop from that region for reasons of fiscal impropriety. The resulting schism led to the creation of the Anglican Episcopal Church of Santa Isabel, and now that group has itself split to form the Anglican Orthodox Church (of Solomon Islands), led by the deposed bishop.
6. A report to the ICC in 2000 noted that none of the chiefs were aware of the 1984 resolution that established the ICC ("99.8% of the chiefs do not know or are not aware of the existence of the document and its use"; sec. 2.7.4, "Report Two," ICC meeting, Buala, June 2000). It would be another four years before the ICC would convene its next meeting (in June 2004, with the advent of the UNDP Isabel Province Development Project).
7. Despite the lack of political reform, traditional chiefs were also a topic of national interest during the 1980s. In 1987, a report of the Provincial Government Review Committee recommended that the constitution should be amended to "legislate the roles and functions of the chiefs" in order to get them more effectively involved in development (Report of the Provincial Government Review Committee, 1986–87).
8. Not only the ICC but also the district houses of chiefs have been asked to develop constitutions to guide their work in relation to provincial governance. A memo from the paramount chief to a special select committee recommended that all district houses of chiefs "have one standard constitution with some variations." Given the relative lack of resources and capacity with local houses of chiefs, these ideas remain largely an idealistic vision for translating traditional leadership into state-like practices at the local level.

9. As an indication of some of the ways in which chiefly status is being adapted to contemporary purposes, one of the chiefs being blessed was in fact a man from Malaita, an inmarrying spouse who was thought to be well positioned to mediate relations with a growing number of Malaitan migrants who presented a problem to local chiefs. Indeed, this issue is part of a much larger problem that goes to the very heart of the ethnic “tension” that erupted first in disputes between Malaitan migrants and landowners around the capital on Guadalcanal. Hegarty et al. observe that the push for a federal system of government is connected in part with the wish of Guadalcanal and other provinces to regulate migration across their borders: “The proposed federal arrangements (and other aspects of the proposed reforms) are seen by most Malaitan leaders as directed against Malaitan interests. They are seen as likely to limit Malaitan rights to migrate to and hold land elsewhere, and limiting Malaita’s shares of national revenues. There is already talk among Malaitan leaders of organising a block vote of Malaitan MPs against the amendments when (or if) they are presented to Parliament” (Hegarty et al. 2004).
10. Those activities, seen by some as a precursor to the postwar Maasina Rule movement (Keesing 1978), ultimately got Fallowes deported from the Solomons.
11. In June 2004, a meeting of the ICC passed a resolution to require that a representative of the Provincial Assembly and one from the Church of Melanesia Diocesan Synod be present in future meetings of the ICC. For their part, both the provincial government and the Church of Melanesia had already established means for involving chiefly representation in their voting bodies. The provincial assembly did this in a provision of the 1984 resolution that called for members of the ICC to sit as appointed members of the assembly, and the Church passed a bill at the September 2000 meeting of the Diocesan Synod in Jejevo that called for involving “One representative from the Ysabel Council of Chiefs who shall be chosen by their meeting and shall have power to vote, move motion or resolution” (Minutes of the Diocesan Synod meeting, Jejevo, September 2000).

## References

- Baines, Graham. 2003. “Putting the ‘Tripod’ Idea into Practice: Issues to Be Discussed.” Buala, Santa Isabel, Solomon Islands: UNDP-SIG Isabel Province Development Project paper, 7 October 2003.
- Chappell, David. 2005. “‘Africanization’ of the Pacific: Blaming ‘Others’ for Disorder in the Periphery?” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 47, no. 2: 286–317.
- Dawea, Elliot. 2010. “Vital Pillars in Solomon Islands Leadership.” *National Express*, July 2, p. 3.
- Dinnen, Sinclair. 2004. “Lending a Fist? Australia’s New Interventionism in the Southwest Pacific.” State, Society, and Governance in Melanesia Discussion Paper 2004/5. Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, Canberra.
- Errington, Frederick, and Deborah Gewertz. 1994. “From Darkness to Light in the George Brown Jubilee: The Invention of Nontradition and the Inscription of a National History in East New Britain.” *American Ethnologist* 21, no. 1: 104–22.
- Hegarty, David, et al. 2004. “Rebuilding State and Nation in Solomon Islands: Policy Options for the Regional Assistance Mission.” State, Society, and Governance in Melane-

- sia Discussion Paper 2004/2. Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, Canberra.
- Jolly, Margaret. 1997. "Woman-Nation-State in Vanuatu: Discourses on Kastom, Modernity and Christianity." In *Narratives of Nation in the South Pacific*, eds. Ton Otto and Nicholas Thomas. Amsterdam: Harwood.
- Kabutulaka, Tarcisius Tara. 2001. "Beyond Ethnicity: The Political Economy of the Guadalcanal Crisis in Solomon Islands." State, Society, and Governance in Melanesia Project Discussion Paper 2001/1. Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, Canberra.
- Keesing, Roger M. 1978. "Politico-Religious Movements and Anticolonialism on Malaita: Maasina Rule in Historical Perspective." *Oceania* 48, no. 4: 241–61.
- Keesing, Roger, and Robert Tonkinson, eds. 1982. "Reinventing Traditional Culture: The Politics of Kastom in Island Melanesia." *Mankind* 13, no. 4.
- McDougall, Debra L. 2004. "The Shifting Ground of Moral Community: Christianity, Property, and Place in Ranongga (Solomon Islands)." PhD. dissertation, University of Chicago.
- . 2008. "Religious Institutions as Alternative Structures in Post-Conflict Solomon Islands: Cases from the Western Province." State, Society, and Governance in Melanesia Project Discussion Paper 2008/5. Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, Canberra.
- Naramana, Richard Basil. 1987. "Elements of Culture in Hograno/Maringe, Santa Ysabel." *O'O: Journal of Solomon Islands Studies* 1, no. 3: 41–57.
- Reilly, Ben. 2000. "The Africanisation of the South Pacific." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 54, no. 3: 261–68.
- Solomon Island Broadcasting Corporation. 2009. <http://www.sibconline.com.sb>, April 14, accessed 10 June 2010.
- Tuza, Esau. 1977. "Silas Eto of New Georgia." In *Prophets of Melanesia: Six Essays*, ed. Garry Trompf. Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea: Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies.
- United Nations Development Program. 2003. Draft Terms of Reference, "Traditional Institutions Specialist" ed. I.P.D.P. Suva, Fiji: UNDP-SIG (Solomon Islands Government).
- White, Geoffrey M. 1991. *Identity through History: Living Stories in a Solomon Islands Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1997. "The Discourse of Chiefs: Notes on a Melanesian Society." In *Chiefs Today: Traditional Pacific Leadership and the Postcolonial State*, eds. Geoffrey M. White and Lamont Lindstrom. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- . 2001. "Natives and Nations: Identity Formation in Postcolonial Melanesia." In *Places and Politics in an Age of Globalization*, eds. Roxann Prazniak and Aril Dirlik. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

## Appendix to Chapter 7

*Tharu sung at the ordination of Bishop Richard Naramana.  
Buala, Santa Isabel, April 2004*

- |                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 1. La posa nagaè ia         | The day has arrived                            |
| Nagaè nasnagla ia           | The day is clear                               |
| Ranhi nigo thuguo           | For you my son                                 |
| Ranhi nigo gragou           | For you my grandson                            |
| 2. Koko iago grereo ana     | Throw away your shield                         |
| Koko iago khila na          | Throw away your axe                            |
| Goignaro gne Khiloau na     | Now the Church is here                         |
| Egu gnea thuguo—guo         | And so it is my son                            |
| 3. Koko iago nhuga na       | Throw away your shell belt                     |
| Koko iago phono na          | Throw away your custom decoration              |
| Goignaro gne Khiloau hi     | Now the Church is here                         |
| Egu gnea graguo             | And so it is my grandson                       |
| 4. Koko iago khome are      | Throw away your shell armlet                   |
| Koko iago grade na          | Throw away your porpoise-teeth valuables       |
| Goignaro gne Khiloau hi     | Now the Church is here                         |
| Egu gnea gleguguo—guo       | And so it is my young one                      |
| 5. Jau nou grereo iago na   | The same with your shield                      |
| Te gaibabala ana nala       | Put on that cross                              |
| Jau nou khila iago na       | The same with your axe                         |
| Te amice ana nala—nala      | Put on that amice [priest's cloth]             |
| 6. Jau nou phoga iago na    | The same with your tapa cloth                  |
| Te fa hage albu ana nala    | Put on that cloak                              |
| Jau nou nhuga iago na       | The same with your shell belt                  |
| Te reri iago girdle ana—ana | Put on that waistband                          |
| 7. Jau nou grade iago na    | The same with your porpoise-teeth<br>valuables |
| Te bao hage sifolo ana      | Put on that priest's collar                    |
| Jau nou pohe mata iago na   | The same with your bush cloth                  |
| Te chasuble ana nala—nala   | Put on the priest's garment                    |
| 8. Jau nou glapa iago na    | The same with your [woven] bag                 |
| Te loku pateni ana nala     | Take hold of the chalice lid                   |
| Jau nou bibinu iago na      | The same with the leaf container               |
| Te loku hinao ana nala—nala | Take hold of the chalice                       |
| 9. Jau nou mereseni teu na  | The same with your [ <i>kastom</i> ] medicine  |
| Buka baebolo ana nala       | [You have] the Bible                           |
| Egu nala iago ia thuguo     | And so it is my son                            |
| Egu nala iago ia graguo—guo | And so it is grandson                          |

## Why Is There No Political Theology among the Urapmin?

### *On Diarchy, Sects as Big as Society, and the Diversity of Pentecostal Politics*

JOEL ROBBINS

*Christian Politics in Oceania.* It is interesting to note that this volume's title, despite its apparent simplicity, is in fact ambiguous. The rub is in the phrase "Christian politics." This could refer to the political relations that hold between different Christian groups—the politics of theological debate, schism, and drawing denominational boundaries. Or "Christian politics" might refer to the way Christianity shapes broader political debates about the best way to govern society. This ambiguity is productive for this volume, as many of the contributors take up topics that address Christian politics in both senses—looking at how intra-Christian politics intersect with Christian political claims on the wider society. But I bring up this ambiguity here to point out that this chapter concerns only Christian politics in the second sense: the Christian contribution to, or claims on, people's more general understanding of politics.

The primary empirical finding I have to report is that a Christian politics in this second sense has largely failed to develop among the Urapmin, the Papua New Guinea group with whom I work. This is to say, the Urapmin tend not to define politics in Christian terms at all. This must seem, on the face of it, to be a pretty uninteresting point to make in a volume on Christian politics in Oceania—almost an admission that I have nothing to say of relevance to the book's themes. But I hope that as the chapter unfolds I can convince you that there is in fact something of interest in the Urapmin case. There is something of interest on the face of things because there are many good reasons to expect there to be a flourishing Christian politics in Urapmin. Urapmin is a thoroughly Christianized society and one in which Christian ritual and conversation dominate both public and private life. Furthermore, it is a society embedded in the larger PNG nation-state which, as it is so often troubled in secular terms, regularly flirts with legitimizing itself in Christian ones. Finally, even a little knowledge of the Urapmin Christian view of the world would

suggest that all the cosmological pieces are in place for the Urapmin to have developed a thriving political theology. As Hartwich and the Assmanns have suggested, whatever else the highly unstable term “political theology” points to, it certainly presupposes the “nonautarchy of human being, the insufficiency of human innate and acquired capacities” to ground on their own the ways humans live together (Hartwich et al 2004: 140). If we follow them in this assertion, then it is clear that the Urapmin—who stress human depravity in contrast to God’s goodness and human weakness in contrast to God’s power, and who see evidence of nothing but human limitation in the failure of the PNG state to provide them with the “developed” lives they hope to lead—have adopted the kind of basic view of things they would need to have in order to develop a flourishing theological understanding of political life. But even as all of these factors point toward the Urapmin embrace of some or other kind of Christian politics, people have largely left it to one side. I want to suggest here that if we can figure out why and how they have done so, we can learn some important lessons about one kind of relationship that can hold between Christianity and politics.

Along with the largely ethnographic argument I will make about the relative absence of Christian politics in Urapmin, I also want to build toward another argument of a more general nature. The Urapmin are charismatic Christians. From the outset of social scientific writing about the Pentecostal and charismatic movements, the debate about the political ramifications of these forms of Christianity has been marked by radically divergent arguments and a distinct lack of conclusiveness. On the one side are those who follow Lalive d’Epinay’s (1969) original argument that these forms of Christianity support authoritarian politics. On the other are those who follow Willems (1967) in seeing their churches as cradles of democratic culture. The early and continuing debate between those who hold versions of these two positions has been joined by another between those who see Pentecostal and charismatic Christians as tending to critique the nation-states to which they belong from the point of view of their global and ultimately heavenly position of Christian citizenship (e.g., Robbins 1998) and those that see them as devoting themselves to finding Christian ways to support the nation-state (e.g., McDougall this volume, O’Neill 2010). And both of these broad sets of arguments are crosscut by those that see Pentecostals and charismatics as basically quietist and world-withdrawing—and so in effect politically irrelevant or conservative—and those who imagine they may be sources of committed political activism. Of course, with over 600 million Pentecostal and charismatic Christians in the world, we might expect there to be enough diversity between different churches that each of these positions could be right in at least some cases. And surely this is in part true. But I also want to use my ethnographic discussion of the Urapmin case here, in combination with some other recent works on Pentecostal and charismatic politics, to argue that perhaps we should see our social scientific

inability to stabilize a picture of Pentecostal and charismatic politics as a clue that we are asking the wrong questions about it, or at least missing some interesting answers to our questions by virtue of the way we want our answers to fit pre-established boxes that are not cut to the shape of what it is these kinds of Christians are doing politically. This argument will lead me to conclude by making some quite general claims about ways we might move forward in examining Pentecostal and charismatic politics both in Oceania and elsewhere.

### The Puzzle of Urapmin Diarchy

The Urapmin are a language group of roughly 390 people living in the West Sepik Province of PNG. Never directly missionized by Westerners, in the 1960s many Urapmin parents sent their sons off to study with Baptist missionaries living with nearby groups, and these boys, upon completing their studies, brought the gospel back to Urapmin and began to teach it to those who had remained at home. In the late 1970s, a charismatic Christian revival movement swept through the highlands of Papua New Guinea. When it reached Urapmin in 1977, it ignited a year-long period during which many members of the community were “kicked” by the Holy Spirit (*Spirit i kikim*), becoming possessed as their bodies shook and they felt an overwhelming sense of their own sinfulness. Once the possessions began, people quickly started to convert, and within a year Urapmin had become a completely Christian community marked by its devotion to a recognizably charismatic form of the faith. Since that time, all Urapmin understand themselves to be Christian, and attaining salvation is the most important personal and collective project in the community.

By the time of my fieldwork among the Urapmin in the early 1990s, people’s understandings of their lives were marked by a strong distinction between what they understood as the religious realm (a realm they often referred to simply as “church” or as “matters that belong to God” or to “heaven”) and the realm of what I will here call, for reasons that should become apparent as I go on, the political realm (generally referred to as “matters that belong to the earth”). Concerns about the state of one’s own or other people’s souls, prayer, attendance at various public and more private Christian rituals, and careful attention to the appearance of signs that could indicate that Jesus’ return is imminent belong to the religious realm. The political realm, by contrast, encompasses negotiations over marriage and bridewealth, land disputes, the coordination of labor efforts and the formation of villages, and attention given to and activities associated with economic “development.”

For present purposes, what is most important about the crisp distinction Urapmin make between the religious and the political domains is that it grounds a system of bifurcated authority or diarchy such that each domain has

its own kinds of legitimate leaders, leadership in one domain confers little or no authority in the other, and no one is allowed to occupy leading positions in both domains at the same time. In the religious domain the leaders are pastors and deacons who possess authority on the basis of their Christian training and their moral rectitude, while in the political domain the leaders are big men (*kamok*) who achieve power on the basis of their possession of various kinds of social and mythological knowledge and their display of specific personal characteristics such as self-assertiveness.

Leaders in each domain have their power severely restricted when they enter the other. For example, pastors and deacons who become overly involved in the political domain—as they are often tempted to do when their own children or other close relatives are involved in negotiations over marriage or land—risk being stripped of their pastoral credentials, and at the very least are often temporarily forced to resign their positions of religious leadership until they are able to disentangle themselves from the heated arguments that so often make up the substance of political maneuvering over things of the earth. Similarly, during church services big men routinely sit toward the back of the men's side of the church. This area is furthest from the pulpit and closest to the entrance/exit of the building, making it the least sacred part of the sanctuary. It is also near the place where those who have committed major sins and who are awaiting full reintegration into the congregation are forced to sit. Even as they sit on the edges of the congregation in this way, however, big men are given a time to speak during “information” periods that take place during most Sunday services—something it is hard to deny them because in normal circumstances these are the largest gatherings of people during the Urapmin week. But these information periods are placed near the beginning of the service, well before the sermon that is the sacred high point of the ritual. Moreover, to the extent that big men use these times not simply for community announcements but to press partisan political claims, they are roundly criticized for bringing “outside” matters “inside” the church and thereby exposing the congregation to sin. Big men have their rightful place on the village square or in the politicking rounds they make from house to house and village to village, and church leaders have theirs in the church, or in people's homes when they have been called to pray with those who are troubled. Neither kind of leader should attempt to crowd into the space of the other. To deploy a Urapmin metaphor, instances of jumping over the fence that separates the religious and the political realms are met with censure and a rapid, if often only temporary, loss of authority.

The diarchy I have described is so sharply drawn in Urapmin life and so taken for granted by people there that it is easy to imagine that its presence might for some or other reason be inevitable. But in fact this is not the case. I want to suggest instead that we see its existence as a bit of a puzzle. Let me briefly discuss some reasons why this approach makes sense.

First, traditional Urapmin patterns of leadership were not in any respect diarchic. Instead, big men took leading roles both in matters of the kind now seen as religious and in those now seen as political. In the past, no man became a major political leader without also serving as a leader of the men's cult that was at the center of "religious" life. Indeed, in a way at once too subtle to develop here and too anthropologically commonplace to require full ethnographic elaboration, there was no clear distinction between religious and political matters among the Urapmin in the past; the men's cult was as crucial to "political" matters of war, for example, as it was to "religious" ones of fertility. There has thus been no push from anything like "tradition" for the creation of current state of dual authority in Urapmin.

Second, Urapmin are sophisticated Christians and regular readers of the Bible. All adult Urapmin know well and frequently discuss the opening verses of Romans 13. Translated from the Tok Pisin Bible the Urapmin use, these read "Everyone has to live under the authority of a government. We know there is not a single government that has arisen on its own. No. All the work of the government comes only from the hand of God. All of the governments that exist, God himself put them in place." Urapmin interpretations of these passages are not fully settled. Sometimes people seem to read them as suggesting that God gave politics its own place, the one it occupies in their diarchic scheme, and that it should keep to that place. But they also read these verses as suggesting that politics are part of the divine scheme of things. This should give them ample ammunition to develop full fledged arguments about the religious grounding of politics (see Tomlinson, this volume). Yet in spite of having the conceptual resources to do so at hand, they do not develop these arguments.

The Urapmin failure to take the easily available road to the formulation of a political theology becomes even more difficult to explain when we look at a third set of issues, this one having to do with the nature of the PNG state as the Urapmin experience it. You may have noticed that I have not to this point placed the PNG state and its apparatus of government in the Urapmin diarchic scheme. I had set it aside because I think in some respects its place is a complicated one. On the one hand (and this is the dominant sensibility), the Urapmin do see the state unequivocally as part of the political realm. One among many indications of this is that the state's local representative, the elected *kaunsil*, is regularly stymied in his efforts to take up informal positions of church leadership along with his important political role (Robbins 2003). But on the other hand, the state itself—governing as it does a national population that is riotously diverse in terms of culture and language, but that is largely at least nominally and often much more than nominally Christian—sends various signals that suggest that it would not mind its citizens understanding it to be a Christian institution. Respect for the "Christian principles

that are ours now” is enshrined in its constitution, and many of its representatives are quick to take recourse to Christian idioms and Christian practices in their efforts to solidify their authority. In 1992, for example, the then prime minister announced a “national prayer breakfast” that he asserted would help heal the country’s ills. Broadcast over the radio, it was framed as an event of truly national participation. The elected representative of the state government in Urapmin, the local *kaunsil*, was gripped by the promise of this event, and he invited everyone who wanted to participate to join him in his village to listen to it on his radio, one of the few in the community. I had rarely seen him so excited about anything having to do with the government as he was by this appeal to take part in the nation on the basis of his Christian identity. His response helps us understand why state leaders are so quick to frame their practices of governance in Christian terms.<sup>1</sup>

Along with the state’s own efforts to wrap itself in Christian clothing, its general weakness and lack of ability to deliver services—particularly to rural areas—further helps to create conditions favorable to its absorption into the religious realm in Urapmin understanding. As in many PNG communities, the church is the most highly functioning introduced institution in Urapmin. When the state fails to deliver on health, education, and other kinds of promises, the church often steps into the breach (see Douglas 2007). This cannot help but lend the state a Christian tinge. This point was brought home to me in a humble but quite forceful way during the two PNG Independence Days I spent in Urapmin. In the lead-up to Independence Day both in 1991 and 1992, the Urapmin had high hopes of celebrating the anniversary as a proper government holiday. By their reckoning, in order to do so they needed the government to put up a modest amount of prize money so that they could organize the kinds of competitive competitions—races, contests to climb “greasy poles,” etc.—that they remembered from government celebrations during the colonial and early independence era. Both years, the *kaunsil* was sent to the district office in Telefomin, six hours’ walk to the east, to secure these funds. Each time he returned empty handed. Disappointed, people were left to celebrate the holiday with lengthy church services in which they discussed Romans 13 and prayed for the nation. In very vivid terms, the church stepped in to cover for an obligation the state was unable to meet: in this case, an obligation to celebrate itself.

I hope I have said enough at this point to demonstrate why I think the existence of Urapmin diarchy is an interesting puzzle. It has no traditional basis. The Urapmin possess many conceptual resources for the creation of a political theology. And the state itself behaves in ways that invite people to understand it in religious terms. Why, in the face of all of these supports for a merging of the political and religious, have the Urapmin adopted such a strict diarchical model of the relation between the two realms?

In answering this question, I want to consider the possibility that Urapmin have created their diarchy out of the resources provided for them by the kind of Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity they have adopted. But the point I want to argue is not that the Urapmin have simply applied to their situation a clear model of diarchy that they adopted fully formed from the charismatic tradition (which does not supply a single clear model along these lines in any case). Rather, their diarchy has arisen out of the dynamics that come from acting on that Christian tradition in a social setting quite different from the one in which it originally developed.

To make this argument, I want to bring in church-sect theory, an admittedly rather old fashioned tradition of sociological discussion that I think might have some unexpected things to offer if imported into anthropological discussions of Christian politics in Oceania (as attested to by many of the chapters in this volume, including those by Handman and McDougall). After the founding works of Weber, Troeltsch and Niebuhr, discussions of church-sect dynamics tended to become primarily classificatory and highly scholastic, and one senses this is why they have largely died out in the scholarly literature. But for my purposes, I need to borrow only a few of the key, relatively uncontroversial aspects of this framework of analysis, which I will lay out quickly here.

In classic church-sect theory, a church is a Christian institution integrated with the dominant society, supportive of its values, and focused on the creation and maintenance of a stable social group in the form of a congregation. Sects arise in opposition to the worldliness of churches and demand that their members display a high level of commitment to values and rules of conduct that tend to be in conflict with those of the dominant society. Because they reject reigning social mores in this way, sects are, as sociological cliché has it, “in tension with society” (Wilson 1990: 46–68, Stark and Bainbridge 1985). Or, put otherwise, a sect is generally a “protest group,” one that stresses not only its own values and codes but that also attends quite vocally to those it rejects (Wilson 1982: 92). Wilson, who has been a key player in the move toward viewing sects primarily from the point of view of their relationship of tension to dominant values, has argued that with churches losing their once privileged social positions in the contemporary pluralist world, sects are focusing less and less of their critical energy on condemning the churches from which they break and are more and more directly attacking the secular society that provides those churches with their values (Wilson 1982: 92). Sects continue to remain focused in important ways on what they reject, but they now more often than not tend to see themselves as being in direct conflict with the societies that surround them.

To this picture of sects as groups in high tension with their surrounding society, I need to add one further widely accepted detail: as Wilson (1990:

113) puts it, “By definition, sects are minority groups.” Niebuhr (1957 [1929]: 18) makes the same point. Sects depend on a majority group to constitute the churches and societies from which they break. Without a dominant outside to attack, they lose the conditions of their own agonistic self-definition.

Although I do not have space to document this in any detail, the Pentecostal movement that birthed the kind of charismatic Christianity the Urapmin have adopted was in its origins very much a sect in the ways I have defined that term here: it was in tension with the churches from which it recruited its members and with the wider society that surrounded it, and its members were very much a minority within the American society in which it arose and in the many societies around the world to which it spread.<sup>2</sup> And crucial to my argument, Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity maintained its sect-like emphasis on social rejection when it arrived in Urapmin. Urapmin charismatic Christianity has been strongly pitched against the previous “church” to which the Urapmin belonged—that is, traditional Urapmin religion—and it has demanded that people discard that religion. It also condemns as evil the ancestral and nature spirits that populated the ontology of that religion, and it continues to rail against them vigorously even long after all Urapmin have converted. Furthermore, Urapmin Christianity is also strongly critical of wider Urapmin social values, particularly those of creative self-assertion that were and in many respects still are at the heart of Urapmin social life and which underlie the big man form of political leadership.<sup>3</sup> As it was in its origin in the United States, so too in Urapmin the Pentecostal-charismatic tradition has been strongly in tension with society and with the previous religious system that had expressed society’s values.

But there is one marked difference between the way the Pentecostal-charismatic tradition has been socially located in Urapmin and the way it has been socially located in the society in which it arose and in many of those to which it has traveled. In Urapmin, charismatic Christianity is not the religion of a minority. Instead, it is the dominant religion, and it counts all members of the Urapmin community as its members. In the Urapmin case, we have the oddity of what I have elsewhere called a sect as big as society (Robbins 2002: 9). For the theme of Christian politics, this turns out to be a difference of great moment.

To see why this is so, we have to consider the fact that where sects form a minority group, they can count on nonmembers to operate the social system they mostly criticize but still draw from as they need to. As Wilson’s (1990: 52-61) influential account of sectarian tension with society makes clear, sect members can count on nonmembers to run the economic systems they reluctantly participate in because they need the resources such systems bring, and they can similarly count on others to operate the political systems they often do their best to shun. They can, that is to say, afford to withdraw quite far from

the world they reject because when they do so, others outside their boundaries are available to do the work of keeping that world alive.

The Urapmin do not have that option. Since all Urapmin are members of their sect-like church, if all of them subscribed fully and simultaneously to the church's counsel of world rejection, Urapmin society would cease to operate. The Urapmin are fully aware of this problem. It presents itself to them in their enduring sense of themselves as sinful people who regularly fall short of meeting the demands of their Christian morality by virtue of the ways they need to act in order to meet the requirements of their social system (Robbins 2004). It finds further expression in the form of periods of collective millennialism in which the Urapmin sometimes participate. During these periods, everyone spends all their time in church preparing for Jesus' return, which they expect might occur at any moment. No one works in his or her garden, or arranges marriages, or settles local court cases, or builds villages, or in other ways does the routine political work that gives Urapmin society its shape, and this withdrawal from the political world allows the people to concentrate fully on overcoming their sinfulness. After these periods have gone on for several weeks, people invariably begin to talk about the hard times to come if everyone does not return to their gardens. They raise the specter of the lawlessness that will result if people who have not been securing their future subsistence eventually find themselves with nothing to eat. Jesus, they say, would much rather return to find you not in church but working in your garden than he would want to find you stealing someone else's crops. In light of considerations like these, the Urapmin wind down their full-time pursuit of the millennium, reminded once again that an entire society cannot forgo social life without courting grave social difficulties if the millennial future does not arrive in the near term.

It is the same kind of consideration, though admittedly not so explicitly formulated, that I suggest lies at the root of the development of Urapmin diarchy. The Urapmin church counsels all of its members—that is, the entire Urapmin population—about the danger that participation in politics presents to their efforts to achieve salvation. The kind of self-assertion and conflict that politics demands is a key aspect of Urapmin society with which their Christianity is in tension. But at the same time, that Christianity cannot afford to push for comprehensive withdrawal from the social world without courting that world's complete disappearance. For that reason, it has developed a discrete place for politics—given it a domain of its own. As long as politics does not bring the concerns of its domain into the church, and as long as its leaders do not try to lead the church or draw the church leaders into the political realm, Urapmin Christianity tolerates the existence of politics and gives it room to move. This arrangement is not without tensions in practice—some of which I hinted at in briefly mentioning the kinds of trouble both political and religious leaders sometimes find themselves enmeshed in when they stray on

to one another's turf, and others that I have discussed at length elsewhere in documenting the moral struggles most Urapmin feel themselves to be routinely faced with as they try both to lead successful Christian lives and to function appropriately in society (Robbins 2004). But it appears that this diarchy is nonetheless quite a stable structure in Urapmin social life, and one that has allowed people to maintain both the world-rejecting tenor of their Christianity and a social world that continues to function despite the Christian commitments of all of its members.

## Concluding Thoughts

I return in conclusion to considering some ways in which the Urapmin case I have just analyzed and some other recent work from Africa and the United States can help us get beyond sterile debates over the authoritarian or democratic, nationalist or antinationalist, and quietist or activist nature of Pentecostal-charismatic politics. If the Urapmin case makes anything clear, it is the extent to which that tradition has important general characteristics that turn up in many of the places in which it is adopted, while at the same time it reminds us of how important the specificities of each case turn out to be in shaping how such general characteristics will be expressed. The sect-like character of Urapmin charismatic Christianity—its commitment to fostering tension with the previous Urapmin religious regime and the traditional social norms of the Urapmin community—is common to this form of Christianity in very many places. But in most places, charismatic Christianity is not able to set itself up as a sect as big as society. The fact that it has done so in Urapmin is what has led it to create a well-ordered diarchy there. But in places where Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity is just one among several religious options, it often either divorces itself from politics altogether, as it sometimes does in large urban areas throughout the world, or it makes itself a political force, as it has among the Guhu-Samane that Handman discusses in this volume. Only detailed ethnographic discussions will allow us to determine how a Pentecostal-charismatic church approaches politics in any given case, even as its sect-like rejectionist tendencies may at a very general level remain constant and help us explain both the range of variation in and the limits on the approaches various churches can take.

Another point to draw from the Urapmin case is that notions like world-withdrawal and quietism are probably too broad to be useful when considering Pentecostal-charismatic politics. If forced to use these terms, we might be tempted to see the Urapmin church's refusal to involve itself in politics as making it a good fit for these categories of apolitical noninvolvement. Examined more closely, however, Urapmin diarchy is not a complete rejection of politics.

It is not a quietism that forgoes all relation to the political realm, but rather a quite assertive way of handling politics, one that carefully circumscribes the scope for legitimate political action. To misread this as political withdrawal is to badly misunderstand its character.

Two other recent discussions similarly suggest that a close examination of the way Pentecostal-charismatic churches handle political issues complicates any attempt to see them as politically uninvolved. These studies also warn us not to assume we can exhaust the political creativity of these churches by seeing them as pursuing the realization of one or another easily recognized Western political form, such as democracy or authoritarian government. Bialecki (2009) has worked with middle class, third-wave Vineyard charismatics in Southern California. The charismatics he studies—all highly educated middle or upper middle class professionals, or students at elite universities who have good reason to expect to attain these social heights—believe in the work of the Holy Spirit in the world. They also lean politically to the left and spend a good deal of time talking about social justice issues. But even as their political commitments point in this leftward direction, they have trouble organizing to take political action for change. What holds them back is their belief that real change will have to come from God and to take the form of a movement that constitutes an inbreaking of his transcendent power brought by the Holy Spirit. By definition, humans cannot themselves initiate such a movement, for if they do, its origin will not be transcendent. These churchgoers therefore find themselves stuck, unable to take action because the very fact of their taking it will invalidate any claims it might have to transcendent justification. In delving deeply into their political theology to make this argument, Bialecki shows us that like the Urapmin—although for different reasons—the members of the church he studies are not apolitical or quietist. They adopt political positions and endorse a model of political action they find wholly legitimate. It is true that to this point they have not often found the conditions for taking such action to be met. But we would misunderstand them if we imagined that they were not deeply engaged in thinking about politics and preparing to involve themselves in it should these conditions present themselves in the future.

My final example comes from Marshall's (2010) recent searching and complex account of Pentecostal political theology in Nigeria. Toward the end of her discussion, she points to "the ambivalence" of Pentecostal "political theology, [caught] between a theocratic or foundational impulse and a prophetic, quasi-democratic potential" (2010: 215). But I think her positive discussion of this political theology in its Nigerian form actually encourages us to look beyond these two options for understanding its goals. On her description, this is a political theology that focuses not on the power of the state to control evil and chaos, but rather on the need for believers to work individually on controlling the evil that is part of their own interior self. It is also a political theology

that invests each believer with the potential capacity to determine for him- or herself the legitimacy of miracles that point to the fulfillment of the messianic promise of a better world to come. The ability personally to discern the miraculous is a fruit of ethical work on the self and gives believers a sense of their own freedom. By providing each believer with the potential to claim such powers of discernment, Pentecostalism provides a strong bulwark against authoritarianism (and this despite the fact that pastors often attempt to set themselves up as autocratic leaders). At the same time, however, this very individual-centered political theology renders problematic efforts to make community. How are people to turn their efforts to care for and develop their interior Christian selves into a project for relating to others? Marshall (2010: 215–218) sets this as a key problem for Pentecostal political theology, in effect defining it as the horizon of their politics. By doing so, she leaves us once again with the task of stretching our own definition of politics to encompass this as another of its forms.

In discussing Christian politics, there is a tendency for us as social scientists to want ultimately to read the effects of Christianity on politics as defined in our usual ways. That is to say, the variables we track and the terms we use in gauging the politics upon which Christianity has its impact come from our own definitions of the political realm. When we operate from this point of view, there is a natural tendency to fall into a kind of scorekeeping: this church counts as a point for Christianity as democratizing, this one for it as authoritarian, etc. When we adopt this mode of analysis, we lose sight of Dumont's crucial observation that "politics as we know it is not, as is often assumed, a universal category and, I believe, not a category capable of being generalised" (1971: 32). Even as many of our own Western political categories may be secularized versions of originally Christian notions—a point central to contemporary debates on political theology, and one not foreign to Dumont's work either—we still owe it to ourselves as scholars of Christian politics in Oceania to open ourselves to the unfamiliar aspects of Christian politics, as well as to find ways, at least in the first instance, to evaluate these politics in their own terms. I hope this chapter might make a contribution to this effort.


## Notes

1. Despite the excitement that greeted the initial announcement of the National Prayer Breakfast of 1992, in the end it served as just one more example of the way the state fails the Urapmin. On the day of the event, a number of people got up early to join the *kaunsil* around his radio. As the broadcast began, it became immediately apparent that it would be held entirely in English, a language no Urapmin use with any regularity and in which no one approaches even rudimentary fluency, rather than in Tok Pisin, a lingua franca that is widely spoken in Urapmin and elsewhere. Those in attendance at the *kaunsil*'s house felt firmly excluded from the event and quickly drifted off. I do not remember anyone, the *kaunsil* included, staying to the end.

2. See Anderson (1979) for a classic statement, and Wilson (1970) for a sociological treatment of Pentecostalism as a sect.
3. I cannot develop this point here, but it is at the heart of my 2004 book on Urapmin and is discussed in great detail there.

## References

- Anderson, Robert M. 1979. *Vision of the Disinherited: the Making of American Pentecostalism*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.
- Bialecki, Jon. 2009. "Disjuncture, Continental Philosophy's New "Political Paul," and the Question of Progressive Christianity in a Southern Californian Third Wave Church." *American Ethnologist* 36, no. 1: 110–23.
- d'Epina, Christian Lalive. 1969. *Haven of the Masses: A Study of the Pentecostal Movement in Chile*. London, Lutterworth Press.
- Douglas, Bronwen. 2007. "Christian Custom and the Church as Structure in 'Weak States' in Melanesia." In *Civil Society, Religion and Global Governance: Paradigms of Power and Persuasion*, ed. H. James, pp. 158–74. London: Routledge.
- Dumont, Louis. 1971. "Religion, Politics and Society in the Individualistic Universe." *Proceedings of the Royal Anthropological Institute for 1970*: 33–41.
- Hartwich, W. D., A. Assmann, et al. 2004. Afterword. In *The Political Theology of Paul*, ed. J. Taubes, pp. 115–42. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Marshall, Ruth. 2010. "The Sovereignty of Miracles: Pentecostal Political Theology in Nigeria." *Constellations* 17, no. 2: 197–223.
- Niebuhr, H. Richard. 1957 [1929]. *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*. New York, Meridian Books.
- O'Neill, Kevin L. 2010. *City of God: Christian Citizenship in Postwar Guatemala*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Robbins, Joel. 1998. "On Reading 'World News': Apocalyptic Narrative, Negative Nationalism, and Transnational Christianity in a Papua New Guinea Society." *Social Analysis* 42, no. 2: 103–30.
- . 2002. "On the Critical Uses of Difference: The Uninvited Guest and The Invention of Culture." *Social Analysis* 46, no. 1: 4–11.
- . 2003. "Dreaming and the Defeat of Charisma: Disconnecting Dreams from Leadership among the Urapmin of Papua New Guinea." In *Dream Travelers: Sleep Experiences and Culture in the Western Pacific*, ed. R. Lohmann, pp. 19–41. New York, Palgrave.
- . 2004. *Becoming Sinners: Christianity and Moral Torment in a Papua New Guinea Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Stark, Rodney, and William Sims Bainbridge. 1985. *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Willems, Emilio. 1967. *Followers of the New Faith: Culture Change and the Rise of Protestantism in Brazil and Chile*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Wilson, Bryan R. 1970. *Religious Sects*. New York, McGraw-Hill.
- . 1982. *Religion in Sociological Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 1990. *The Social Dimensions of Sectarianism: Sects and New Religious Movements in Contemporary Society*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Afterword 

## Reflections on Political Theology in the Pacific

WEBB KEANE

Matt Tomlinson and Debra McDougall open this volume by invoking Fenella Cannell's question, "what difference does Christianity make?" Depending on how we take the question, it opens up several possible lines of inquiry. First, to ask what difference Christianity makes can turn on a larger framing question: what difference does "religion" make?—for instance, "as opposed to culture" or "when we think about politics." Or the question may direct us to the distinctiveness of *this* religion, to ask what difference Christianity makes, as opposed to the old gods and spirits, or Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and so forth. Of more immediate pertinence for many people in the Pacific is a fine-grained version of the latter question: what difference does it make that a society is Catholic or Pentecostal, Fijian Methodist or New Methodist? And then there is that simple word "difference." Different as opposed to what? Does the answer demand a historical narrative, one with a before and an after—that is, are we asking what followed from the establishment of Christianity in Pacific societies? If so, does it require us to accept some particular notion of causality? In that case, the question seems to depend on another one: what manner of historical entity is this thing we call "Christianity" such that we can claim that it is a plausible candidate for being the cause of observable consequences? But perhaps the difference in question is a matter of setting the terms of relevance, establishing our independent variables—what difference does it make to frame our observations as being about Christianity rather than political parties or economic development? And with these last questions, about causality and framing, we seem to circle back to the first.

In starting this way, I do not intend to play that familiar anthropological gambit: "I'm going to complicate the picture." After all, one of the valuable things about a tight regional comparison like that presented in this volume is the possibility of finding patterns rather than a cluster of unrelated particularities. The point of unpacking Tomlinson and McDougall's question is to suggest that its different aspects are interlocked in ways that may allow them to shed light on one another as we work through the empirical details. Moreover, the chapters in this volume make clear that *these are versions of the same questions*

*people in the Pacific are asking themselves.* So the ethnographer can take some assurance that the questions are real ones; they matter for people beyond our own disciplinary turf, and we can seek guidance from the conversations in which they are engaged with one another—and no doubt with the ethnographers as well. Indeed, our interlocutors include preachers, teachers, politicians, and other text-readers whose own endeavors at comparative religion and scriptural hermeneutics confound easy distinctions between expert and lay person, observer and observed. And however much the categories of “religion,” “culture,” and “politics” have their historical roots in the Euro-American world (for the implications of this point, see Asad 1993), today they are not utterly alien to people in Oceania. Just as the enthusiastic embrace of Christianity by Pacific Islanders confounds the more familiar narratives of empire that see the faith as nothing more than a foreign imposition, so too we can no longer assume that the analytic categories of the outside observer necessarily do violence to indigenous ones. In certain respects, although of course we must always remain wary of conceptual false cognates and cultural *trompe l’oeil* effects, the circulation of ideas means that sometimes it turns out we are speaking the same language, or at least share a workable pidgin (see Keane 2003).

In this essay, I want to glance at four issues raised by the authors in this volume. First is the place of theology in sociological and cultural analysis. Second is the nature of religion as a category of political analysis. Third is the distinctiveness of Christianity *per se*. And fourth is the relationship between religion and morality. In particular, I want to ask what the political consequences are when religion comes to be identified with morality, or when morality comes to be seen as demanding a religious foundation. By raising the question of the relations between religion and morality—that is, by not taking that relationship for granted—I want to suggest ways in which our understanding of politics should also involve an understanding of moral claims and the assumptions about persons those claims presuppose.

It is striking that the nascent anthropology of Christianity has had to make an argument for paying attention to theology. After all, the case for taking Melanesian spirits seriously was won several generations ago in all but the most positivistic styles of ethnographic analysis. By taking theology seriously, I mean that there is a degree of autonomy to the ideas and values that theology expresses that we shouldn’t try to reduce to some prior or supposedly more fundamental level of explanation. As every chapter in this volume makes clear, the goals, hopes, worries, concepts, and forms of judgment that we call Christianity play a crucial role in people’s worldly actions that can challenge the preconceptions on which secular political analysis depends. For instance, as Tomlinson and McDougall observe, “for many evangelicals, nation-states are the means and not the ends of Christian action.” Notice that although this claim inverts conventional social scientific understandings of means and ends,

it still preserves some version of instrumental rationality: we're not necessarily talking about utterly otherworldly mystics. In terms that can be quite literally concrete, Christian aspirations may guide infrastructural development in impoverished regions along priorities and following rationalities that no secular economist or politician would be likely to accept. Thus Courtney Handman describes ambitious plans to erect a Bible college in the kind of isolated place where development experts might be more likely to start with agricultural implements and medical facilities. Aiming at unworldly goals, Christianity can demonstrate an impressive pragmatic capacity to mobilize people to apparently impractical ends.

Again, to take theology seriously means that even when it bears on political life, we should not too quickly reduce it to cynical self-interest or false consciousness. When Fijian police fight crime by embarking on moral crusades, they are drawing on a distinct theological anthropology—a fundamental understanding of what humans are—that shapes the means available to them. Such crusades do not take our postlapsarian contemporaries to be beyond redemption, as a darker theological vision might, but they seek the sources of criminality and the solutions in moral transformation, not in social conditions. The means are vastly different from those available for policing nation-states under classically social welfare or liberal forms of governance. The risks too are inherent to a moralized vision of the public that regards criminality as a failure of the moral person. Within the terms of a secular understanding of agency, it is usually far harder to transform the moral character of persons than it is to transform the economic and juridical circumstances in which they live—easier, and perhaps more realistic, to try to bring about equal opportunity of employment and housing in a legal system than to remove deep feelings of racism in a population. On the other hand, divine agency brings in a new range of pragmatic possibilities that secular governance cannot consider, including the hope and expectation that humans can serve as media to channel that sacred power through preaching and prayer. At the same time, any religion is likely to impose limits on possible forms of agency as well. These limits might involve specific moral injunctions, or they might even exclude entire fields of endeavor, such as party politics, as hopelessly corrupted by worldliness. Notice that this exclusion turns on the precise specification and deployment of the metacultural categories I pointed to above. The distinctions among religion, culture, and politics are not always mere academic questions.

Reflection on divinity has long been a way to think about the nature of power and to explain the sources of political legitimacy. In recent European debates, political theology has emerged as a response to a crisis provoked by the demise of familiar assumptions about the inevitable secularization of public life (de Vries and Sullivan 2006). The Pacific clearly presents a different situation; for one thing, the secularization thesis was never taken for granted

either by elites or by the population at large. Some political theologies can seem quite self-serving. That is one way of taking Vulaono's assertion, reported by Tomlinson, that Fijians must accept those in power because power comes from God. Others are less evidently so, as when, according to Michael Scott, some Makirans have concluded that their former prime minister is the Antichrist, surely a delegitimizing inference. And others are merely implicit in institutional histories. As Annelin Eriksen shows in Vanuatu, since the concerns of colonial rule lay elsewhere, villagers' education in the norms of citizenship lay in the hands of the church. Although this might seem to situate governance within an ecclesiastical frame, present-day Pentecostals consider an important part of their mission to be inculcating the practical requirements of success. Political theology not only means that politics is religious; it can impart a distinctly this-worldly character to religion as well.

Anthropologists must be clear about this simple point, if anyone is: questions of legitimation are not necessarily simple instrumental assertions of ideology directed by the powerful to those over whom they exercise their power. First, because there is no view from nowhere from which the purported user of ideology can see all his or her options as objective tools to be wielded in the service of objective interests. Second, because ultimately ideology constitutes those interests as much as it serves them. A nice example is found in Courtney Handman's chapter. Two leaders, Mark and Ulysses, are unhappy about taking part in village politics. As Handman observes, they are embarrassed by their own political machinations because those machinations seem to diminish the universality to which their Christian faith commits them. Although they ultimately do engage in land politics, one can surmise that their Christianity imposes real constraints on what they're willing to do and what they can get away with, to say nothing of the fact that their motivations cannot be understood without the values with which Christianity has endowed them. How could it be otherwise? Ultimately, the concept of political theology may be of less interest in the context of the secularization thesis than as an attempt to grapple with the limits of instrumental rationality as a way of understanding what motivates politics and what determines the outcomes of political actions.

A second distinctly theological dimension of Christian politics concerns the temporal imaginary. As Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) has argued in the context of sacred time in India, alternative temporalities pose real challenges for any history in which the major actors do not orient themselves to the same sense of linear secular time that organizes the historians' narratives and underwrites their explanations. In Oceania, Seventh-day Adventists see nation-states and the United Nations as harbingers of a new world order. On Makira, Scott says, people are convinced that an underground army awaits the imminent arrival of end times, and they scrutinize the Book of Revelation in order to interpret current events. And according to Robbins (2004), when Urapmin,

who constantly seek signs of the millennium, decide the end is near, they stop working the fields and take to prayer meetings, bringing everyday provisioning to a halt.

Christianity is obviously not the only religion given to millenarian enthusiasms, nor the only one to invite the faithful to put their daily affairs in an eschatological perspective. But these are both strong forces in the Christian world with real political implications. Less dramatic temporal imaginings may have even more powerful political consequences. As Tomlinson remarks, different kinds of Methodism encourage opposed stances toward newness, with distinct implications for the willingness of church people to accept or reject new political orders; here the temporal imaginary has direct implications for political legitimacy. The very origin of the nation-state can be seen in light of the temporal imaginary I have called the moral narrative of modernity (Keane 2007). As Tomlinson and McDougall write, “when a group of Fiji’s leading chiefs ceded their nation to Queen Victoria in 1874, they declared that they were ‘desirous of securing the promotion of civilisation and Christianity.’” Note that in this case the historical vision of Christian modernity seems to have catalyzed a strong and self-conscious exercise of historical agency. So theology does not necessarily produce radically otherworldly visions of time. But that it can shape the temporal imaginary and thus the kinds of actions that people find plausible, compelling, possible, or impossible, must enter into our accounts of politics.

Both missionaries and anthropologists have long been attentive to the localization of Christianity. For the former, localization can be both a threat and a promise. The threat is that Christianity will become absorbed into some pre-Christian set of beliefs or be transformed into a new syncretic religion. The promise is that localization may be an effective means by which Christianity comes to be accepted and internalized by those who are being evangelized. Over the course of mission history, a vast amount of theological debate and ethnographic scholarship has been devoted to working out these alternatives (see chapter three of Keane 2007). Not surprisingly, anthropological accounts of non-Western Christians have tended to dwell on the results of localization, a disciplinary predisposition in favor of cultural difference that is reinforced by the spatially and temporally limited perspective that traditional fieldwork can encourage. But many—perhaps even most—Christian communities would resist claims that they practice a distinctively local form of the religion. Often such an assertion would be seen as tantamount to an accusation of heterodoxy, or at least of an incomplete grasp of their faith. For Christianity is a universal religion whose truth should, at least in principle, hold for all Christians regardless of location or social affiliations. Moreover, an important part of the appeal of Christianity has often been its implicit cosmopolitanism. Joel Robbins holds this to be an important part of Urapmin acceptance of Pentecostalism. They

find Christianity to be an attractive alternative to the distant and largely ineffectual nation-state, a passage to a powerful translocal community. If that community is largely imagined, in the Urapmin case, it takes far more immediate forms elsewhere. The Solomon Islands, for instance, have been swept with transnational movements like the Billy Graham crusade, and they have been touched even by Islam. Geoffrey White shows that the concrete ties that international churches create result in some very real cosmopolitans, evident in the actual kinship relations that connected Santa Isabel's paramount chief to a bishop in England. If universal truth claims provide the church with powerful cosmopolitan imaginings, the churches' transnational institutions can take very specific practical forms.

But if universality is a commanding value, it is also, at the limit, an impossible project. Thus to rest one's legitimacy on a universalizing religion may impose paradoxical demands on local leaders. The resulting lack of a secure resting point may be one driving force behind the endless factionalism and denominationalism of Christian churches. In many cases, this factionalism focuses on forms of mediation and the persistent dream of immediation (often identified with localization and universality respectively). Thus we have the recurrence of purifying reform movements from Calvinism to early Buddhism to recent Islam, often accompanied by bouts of iconoclasm, antiritualism, and attacks on custom in the name of direct contact with the divine. To the extent that religions propose utopias, forms of transcendence, and new social imaginaries, their conceptual and emotional appeal to possibilities that are not apparent in immediate social arrangements makes them the preeminent real-world condition for critique, a fulcrum on which Archimedes can rest his lever and move the social world. Thus the problem of mediation and that of social existence are two sides of the same coin. One reason Muslims historically insisted that the Qur'an exists only in Arabic was to separate it from the factional world in which people were divided by mutually incomprehensible tongues, the very media of social conflict. Religious attacks on the forms of mediation can often become attacks on social bonds. What might seem to be aesthetic politics, such as the attack on loud music that Handman describes, is likely to be simultaneously a struggle over the semiotic ideologies that sustain conflicting theological visions and a challenge to the social bonds that semiotic form mediates and the modes of circulation it facilitates.

Another way of looking at the paradox of universalism is to focus on the category of religion as such. Even seemingly abstruse metalevel reflections on conceptual categories may turn out to be quite pressing. If, for example, religion ought to be kept apart from the corrupt or compromised worldly domain of politics, then it becomes important to be clear on what counts as "religious" and what as "political," since that ought to dictate what acts, movements, and institutions the pious may or may not be involved in. As I suggested above, the

questions and even worries with which anthropologists wrestle may turn out to be thoroughly entangled with those of their local interlocutors. Not only do local actors share these categories with anthropologists, they may also be drawing them from the same literatures, which can result in an epistemological confounding of the framing and the framed that Gregory Bateson (1972) would surely have found delightful.

By the time Christianity arrived in the Pacific, religion was, for Europeans, already a distinct element within a secular system of categories. Christianity was therefore inseparable from a well-established category of religion as a domain of life distinct from government, political economy, family, and, by the end of the nineteenth century, culture or custom. The deployment of these categories can itself be highly consequential. It is commonly self-defined secular regimes that have defined religion as the functional domain of moral values, both as an explanation for the existence and validity of those values and as a mechanism for their reproduction and enforcement.

Here I want to stress the tensions that arise even in avowedly nonsecular regimes such as Fiji between the church, on the one hand, and the political institutions inherited from largely secular models of the state (with representational rule, voting, and competing parties) on the other. First, there is the question of identifying the nation or the ethnicity with a particular religion or, as in the case of Fiji, a denomination. To the extent that politics is seen as necessarily contestatory, it would seem to challenge the universal claims of religion. One reason religion has been separated from state in some secular regimes is precisely to protect it from factional contention. For if a government falls, what does that say about the state of the religion with which it is identified?

Within the category of religion, we may ask what is it about Christianity in particular that helps us understand politics in the Pacific. Here of course the first answer is to point out the wide range of Christianities on offer, from Roman Catholic to Pentecostal. Neither universalism nor purification serves to distinguish Christianity from other universalizing religions with strong purifying movements, such as Islam or Buddhism. Here the domain of institutions and practices becomes pertinent. Unlike Islam, for instance, Christianity in most cases involves priesthoods and congregations. Against the Pauline model of individualistic conversion is the institutional history identified with Peter—both can be seen as affordances that may be taken up and elaborated, or ignored, in particular circumstances.

What is really striking in many of the new churches are the low barriers to entry at the leadership level, even if these are sometimes combined with high barriers to entry at the level of membership. Some congregations come into existence only by virtue of what Michael Warner (2005) has called counterpublics. They comprise those who feel themselves summoned by a preacher

or by divine intervention, defined over and against the dominant public forms of worship and self-identification. This correlates with evangelical practices of public speaking. In contrast to Catholic and Anglican, churches where anyone can preach, witness, or testify make possible the ongoing interpellation of a potentially indefinitely open-ended public that can form around those acts of speaking. When preaching is open to anyone, this will tend to reinforce a highly voluntaristic sense of religion, one that stresses the role of choice. Moreover, to the extent that it is above all Christianity that constitutes the public in many places, then public discourse will tend to draw on implicit frames that will shape how people can successfully speak and how they will be interpreted. As McDougall remarks, the public arena in many Pacific societies is soaked with evangelical expectations. Once such expectations predominate, even the most neutral speech or event can take on a theological reading.

The global circulation of preachers and their texts separates denomination from local community without thereby eliminating local community, instead introducing a crosscutting dimension to political life and agency. In Papua New Guinea, John Barker points out, in the absence of other powerful state institutions and national myths, it is Christianity that garners the most secure collective agreement. Yet at the same time that people are united in their Christian faith, one that makes available new forms of association and organization, their religion also introduces new forms of factionalism. Although religious factionalism may simply follow existing lines of social difference and conflict, such as those marked out by linguistic or kin groups, it may also introduce new ones. Moreover, given the association of Christianity with the public sphere, sectarian differences may become highly salient, especially when energized by the proselytizing urge with its implication that one's fellow Christian neighbors may not be up to the mark. Communities remain, but now feature highly explicit forms of plurality as people manifestly live within village and kin groups that are crosscut by different affiliations, responses to different interpellations.

Moreover, these are communities in motion: Susan Harding (2000) observed some time ago that evangelical conversion, being born again, is often less a matter of new convictions than of new speaking possibilities. This is precisely that moment, in Handman's words, "when Guhu-Samane went from being missionized to being missionizers themselves." Barker points to one outcome: PNG is full of internal missionaries, which works against any simple idea that a hegemonically Christian nation-state is going to be unified by virtue of its hegemonic religion. Proselytization is perhaps inevitably political since groups take on an agentive relation to others predicated on a moral obligation to save them.

Preaching and congregation-forming practices are inseparable from mass media and their publics. A public can itself become a potential set of preachers,

blurring the boundary between leader and congregation. Evangelical leaders are thus also rather loosely tied to their constituency, in contrast to the lifelong ties of the parish priest in the mainstream cases. Yet we have examples of shunning, which is one correlate of the voluntaristic nature of new congregations. The category of religion invites people to see a plane of alternative possibilities that can be compared, different members of the same set. People shunned in one can take up with another, or even with Islam, as in McDougall's chapter. Here is the forward propulsion of conversion: the convert should convert others.

These practices are as much among people as between people and God. They form the interactive styles of self-revelation, persuasion of others, and so forth that McDougall identifies as the public culture of the Solomons, when she says that evangelical ritual form "provides a common ground of interaction for stranger-citizens." Others are there to be witnessed to. Rendered into institutions, these interactive styles become the objectifications of new social imaginaries. These interactive possibilities are at least as important as emblematic or organizational models of identity.

Ordinary social interaction typically involves faces, bodies, and voices. Faces, bodies, and voices are preeminent media for the expression—and, perhaps even more, the evaluation—of moral worth. This brings me to my fourth point. In the division of functional domains typical of secular regimes in the West, religion doesn't go away, but it is often accorded a distinct purpose and form of reason: to serve morality. Consider McDougall's convert to Islam in the Solomons. What motivates him? The push comes from being shunned by his original community for unspecified but presumably immoral behavior. The pull comes from this: Islam offers clear moral guidance in the form of rules, rather than leaving matters up to the confused and fallible individual. There are knowable moral rules.

The moralization of politics has been evident in everything from the divine right of kings in early modern Europe to the Cultural Revolution in China and America's "Civil Religion." In the process of European secularization, the effort to associate moral judgment with the religious domain was meant in part to protect politics from moralization. One version of the argument goes that when one sees one's opponents not just as working toward competing interests but as immoral, then compromise—or even just recognition of one's opponents' legitimacy—are likely to become all the more difficult to achieve. But in the context of Oceania, another view seems to be predominant. It seems to focus on the religious modes of subject formation as contributions to the body politic. Here the basic premise seems to be that Christianity offers an alternative to the self-interest that leads to corruption, incompetence, and social strife, as well as the general instability that is endemic in many of the nation-states of the region. As I noted above, moral crusades against crime, such as those in Fiji, are predicated on the idea that social problems require

above all the transformation of persons, not just of social conditions. So too, the fight against political corruption and ineptitude depends on the cultivation of certain kinds of subjectivities, the production of people committed to and capable of fulfilling the demands of an upright life. This is why, as Tomlinson and McDougall note in their introduction, the first prime minister of Vanuatu, an Anglican priest, insisted that religion should play a role in politics.

To see politics as requiring a certain kind of morality, in the highly Christian context of Oceania, presumes that morality is above all a matter of religious faith. The latter association typically derives from a nested set of assumptions: that theology offers an ultimate foundation for morality, that appeal to that theology is the necessary and sufficient justification and authorization for moral actions, that doctrinal teachings offer moral guidance, and that religious institutions and practices are the chief practical means by which that moral guidance is inculcated and those ethical demands made inhabitable. It is in part for such reasons that Americans often assume religion to be the necessary foundation for morality: on these grounds, I have heard it said that it would be easier for a Muslim to be elected president of the United States than an atheist. The assumption that morality requires a religious basis seems to be an important factor (if, no doubt, only one of several) driving the present global transreligious revival, whose effects in Oceania are clearly evident throughout the chapters in this book. Conversely, to the extent that religion is treated as preeminently a source of morality (rather than, say, of ritual procedures, metaphysical descriptions, communal identity, mystical transport, eschatology, or theodicy) and that morality is seen to bear a law-like character, then it is likely to seem either to compete with the juridical side of politics or to encompass it.

As general claims about human social existence, these assumptions might be resisted by anyone familiar with the classic ethnographies of the Pacific. Consider an alternative view of the foundations of morality and of political life: the Maussian total social fact. The preeminent expressions of this concept, the Trobriand *kula* and the Maori *hau*, have roots in pre-Christian Oceania. The gift, Marcel Mauss writes, involves “an enormous complex of facts. . . . Everything intermingles in them, everything constituting the strictly social life of societies that have preceded our own. . . . In these ‘total’ social phenomena . . . all kinds of institutions are given expression at one and the same time—religious, juridical, and moral, which relate to both politics and the family” (1990: 3). Although Mauss characterized his essay as a study of the origins of contract, it is also a treatise on the moral foundations of social life as mediated by law. Thus he refers to “a permanent form of contractual morality, namely, how the law relating to things even today remains linked to the law relating to persons.”

Viewed as a constitutive dimension of the total social fact, morality saturates everyday life in what Mauss considered an “archaic” community. We

might take him a step further to suggest that morality—some shared, compelling intuitions about right, wrong, and the values that motivate and guide actions—is a dimension of what the anthropological tradition came to call culture. As such, morality takes the form of culturally specific embodied instincts and responses, ones that involve observable patterns that the possessor of these instincts is largely unaware of. In other words, if we accept that the ethical life of a community, absent some purposeful, energetic effort at rationalization, is something like Mauss's total social fact, then what Pierre Bourdieu (1977) calls *habitus* is likely to be its primary mode of existence. In Bourdieu's view, the structure of *habitus* does not require the mediation of any *knowable* principle, such as a general ethical precept or a theological doctrine. Quite the contrary: its orderliness emerges most powerfully to the extent that the structuring structures remain beyond people's consciousness. This does *not* mean that those structures can be understood without reference to evaluation, judgment, and self-consciousness; it only means that as with the Maussian total social fact, these qualities do not require *conceptual totalization* in order to mediate social existence.

So what might instigate conceptual totalization of moral life? In the context of Oceania, I would suggest that the effort to organize morality under a knowable, objectified organizing principle is a distinctive project of a scripture-based monolithic religion like Christianity. At the least, the positing of a transcendental perspective, the God's-eye point of view, is likely to provoke such an effort. This is because such a point of view invites a universalization that seems to demand principles sufficiently general to hold across an indefinite number of cases and contexts. (This demand is reinforced by the needs of any evangelizing project that aims to function in any and every possible social context.) To illustrate this point, consider Urapmin conversion. In pre-Christian Urapmin (Robbins 2004), different prohibitions and requirements applied to different clans, different genders, and people at different points in their ritual progression through the life cycle. The advent of Christianity introduced the point of view of a transcendent deity, offering a position on which to stand from which one may survey the whole range of known moral values available in any given cultural world, such that their inconsistencies become visible. It is the pressure exerted by this asymptotically transcendental point of view that provides at least one important conceptual and moral motivation for the kind of purification or reform movements that form the context for much of political life in Oceania today.

Religious reform movements and revivals often aspire to reconstruct ethical life in purified and totalizing terms, creating a life in which one's domestic, economic, and political life should be harmonized with reference to a unitary set of pious principles. Such movements turn on the capacity to posit those pious principles in explicit terms. Thus Urapmin, like many Christians, think

of the upright life as adherence to what is, at least in principle, a fully knowable and internally consistent set of rules. These rules are objectifiable, more like laws than habitus. The more objectified their form, the more general their scope and abstract their formulation, the more they are likely to stand apart from the habits and demands of everyday labor and sociality. It is hard to render high principles into inhabitable practices. This tension is one source of what Robbins calls the “moral torment” of the Urapmin.

This brings me back to one of my opening questions: what difference does the very idea of religion make in political life? Christianity appeared on the scene in Oceania as an evangelizing movement that promoted a self-conscious stance toward something known as religion, set in some kind of contrast to alternatives such as custom, culture, and government in terms that ranged from accommodation to rejection. The divisions among these spheres of social action—the outcome of disassembling the Maussian total social fact—were characteristic of European modernity both as a set of institutions and as a form of historical self-awareness. The idea that morality depends on a religious foundation and that it requires a knowable, coherent system of rules and principles depends (in its modern forms) on this division among spheres. Religion plays a wide range of political roles across Oceania, but underlying them seems to be some version of these assumptions: that only morality can provide the basis for functioning, secure, and legitimate governance, and that only religion can ground morality. Yet the vision of morality in question—especially in the case of the more energetic and self-conscious reform movements—often has an objectified character to it that sets it apart from the taken-for-granted flow of everyday life. The result of trying to reconcile domains whose tendency to diverge is a characteristic feature of contemporary life is often what Louis Althusser (1971: 150) famously called teeth-gritting harmony. Herein lies a paradox: although the goal of Christian politics is often totalization, a quest for a holistic world in which faith, morality, and political order work in harmony, the very terms through which that goal is sought derive from the characteristically modern and secular divisions among domains that set religion as a sphere apart from others. But the fact of being paradoxical hardly disqualifies a political theology from social success, and indeed, it may serve as a goad to yet more strenuous efforts. As this volume makes clear, there is a striking lack of complacency in the religious politics of Oceania. This paradox may be one reason why.

## References

- Althusser, Louis. 1971. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. B. Brewster. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Asad, Talal. 1993. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

- Bateson, Gregory. 1972 [1955]. "A Theory of Play and Fantasy." In *Steps to an Ecology of the Mind*, pp. 177–193. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977 [1972]. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. R. Nice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- de Vries, Hent, and Lawrence E. Sullivan, eds. 2006. *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Harding, Susan Friend. 2000. *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Keane, Webb. 2003. "Self-Interpretation, Agency, and the Objects of Anthropology: Reflections on a Genealogy." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, no. 2: 222–248.
- . 2007. *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Mauss, Marcel. 1990 [1925]. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W. D. Halls. New York: Norton.
- Robbins, Joel. 2004. *Becoming Sinners: Christianity and Moral Torment in a Papua New Guinea Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Warner, Michael. 2005. *Publics and Counterpublics*. New York: Zone Books.

## Contributors

**John Barker** is professor and department head of anthropology at the University of British Columbia. Over the past three decades, he has published extensively on Christian missions and contemporary Christianity among indigenous peoples in Oceania and British Columbia, with forays into Christian creationism, the history of anthropological fieldwork, and Melanesian art. His edited works include *Christianity in Oceania* (1990), “Regional Histories in Oceania” (with Dan Jorgensen, special issue of *Oceania*, 1996), *At Home with the Bella Coola Indians* (with Douglas Cole, 2003), and *The Anthropology of Morality in Melanesia and Beyond* (2007). His recent research has focused upon the impact of the international environmental movement on Oceanic societies, the subject of *Ancestral Lines: The Maisin of Papua New Guinea and the Fate of the Rainforest* (2008).

**Annelin Eriksen** is an associate professor at the University of Bergen. Since 1995 she has worked in Vanuatu, first on Ambrym Island and later in the capital, Port Vila. Her work deals with social and cultural change, Christianity, and gender relations. Recent publications include *Gender, Christianity and Change in Vanuatu* (2008) and *Contemporary Religiosities: Emergent Socialites and the Post-Nation-State* (coedited with Bruce Kapferer and Kari Telle, 2010). She is currently leading a four-year research project funded by the Norwegian Research Council on Pentecostal Christianity and gender, with comparative perspectives from Melanesia and Africa.

**Courtney Handman** conducted research from 2005 to 2006 in Papua New Guinea with Guhu-Samane community members in the Waria Valley and at Ukarumpa, the headquarters of the Summer Institute of Linguistics of Papua New Guinea. She received her PhD from the University of Chicago after completing her dissertation, *Schism and Christianity: The Social Organization of Denominationalism in the Waria Valley, Papua New Guinea*, in 2010. She is currently an assistant professor of anthropology at Reed College in Portland, Oregon.

**Webb Keane** is a professor of anthropology at the University of Michigan. He is the author of *Signs of Recognition: Powers and Hazards of Representation in an Indonesian Society* (1997) and *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter* (2007), as well as a coeditor of *Handbook of Material*

*Culture* (2006) and numerous articles on theoretical and comparative aspects of religion, ethics, language, materiality, and the conceptual foundations of social science.

**Debra McDougall** is an assistant professor of anthropology and sociology at the University of Western Australia. From 2006–2010, she was the chief investigator and a postdoctoral fellow for an ARC Discovery Project on Christianity and politics in Solomon Islands. She has conducted fieldwork in Solomon Islands since 1998, primarily among people of the island of Ranongga in Western Province. In addition to articles on anthropology and Christianity, she has written about the contestation of property rights in logging and conservation projects, Christianity and customary forms of dispute management, women's Christian fellowship, and men's conversion to Islam. She is completing a book titled *Engaging with Strangers: Kinship, Christianity, and Capitalism in the Western Solomon Islands*.

**Joel Robbins** is a professor of anthropology at the University of California, San Diego. Much of his work has focused on the anthropology of Christianity and on other topics in the anthropology of religion. He is the author of *Becoming Sinners: Christianity and Moral Torment in a Papua New Guinea Society* (2004), winner of the J. I. Staley Prize from the School of American Research. He has recently coedited a special issue of the journal *South Atlantic Quarterly* titled "Global Christianity, Global Critique." He is also coeditor of the journal *Anthropological Theory*.

**Michael W. Scott** is a senior lecturer in anthropology at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Since 1992, he has been conducting fieldwork among the Arosi of Makira/Ulawa Province, Solomon Islands, and has written on such themes as matrilineal land tenure, historical transformations of ontology and cosmology, and Arosi interpretations of Christianity. His publications include "The Matter of Makira: Colonialism, Competition, and the Production of Gendered Peoples in Contemporary Solomon Islands and Medieval Britain" (*History and Anthropology*, 2012) and the monograph *The Severed Snake: Matrilineages, Making Place, and a Melanesian Christianity in Southeast Solomon Islands* (2007). He is currently writing a book about wonder and the Makiran underground army.

**Matt Tomlinson** has conducted research in Fiji since 1996 and is currently an Australian Research Council Future Fellow in anthropology at the College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University. Along with numerous journal articles on Fijian Methodism, politics, and ritual performance, he is the author of *In God's Image: The Metaculture of Fijian Christianity* (2009)

and coeditor of *The Limits of Meaning: Case Studies in the Anthropology of Christianity* (2006) and *Flows of Faith: Religious Reach and Community in Asia and the Pacific* (2012).

**Geoffrey White** is a professor of anthropology at the University of Hawai'i. His research interests include the politics of tradition, cultural policy, and historical memory, especially memory of World War II. His work on Pacific Christianity is based on long-running research in Santa Isabel, Solomon Islands. Publications from that work include the book *Identity through History: Living Stories in a Solomon Islands Society* (1991) and the coedited volume *Chiefs Today: Traditional Pacific Leadership and the Postcolonial State* (1997), as well as numerous articles.

- Abel family, 163n7  
 Acts of the Apostles, 95, 138  
 Adaliua, 137  
 adaro, 53, 56–58, 64, 67–69  
 adoption (political pattern), 156, 158–159  
 Akmad, 16, 125, 136–141, 143nn12–13  
 All-Nations Sanctuary, 133  
 All Pacific Prayer Assembly, 113  
 Althusser, Louis, 222  
 Amazon basin, 161  
 Ambae, 114  
 Ambrym, 109–111  
 Ananias, 138  
 Anderson, Robert, 210n2  
 Andrew, Rose, 119n5  
 Anglican Church of Melanesia. *See*  
   Anglicanism in Solomon Islands;  
   Anglicanism in Vanuatu  
 Anglican Episcopal Church of Santa  
   Isabel, 194n5  
 Anglicanism  
   in Fiji, 81  
   in Papua New Guinea, 149–150, 153  
   in Solomon Islands, 3, 7, 16–17, 56–  
     58, 74n5, 126–127, 131, 138–139,  
     142n1, 171–195  
   in Vanuatu, 12, 107, 112, 119n3,  
     119n6, 220  
   *See also* Melanesian Mission  
 Anglican Orthodox Church, 194n5  
 Anglo-Catholicism, 13, 153  
 Antichrist, 10, 14, 52, 65, 134, 214  
 Apostolic Church, 112, 114  
 Apostolic Life Ministry, 114–115, 117–118  
 Apostolic Revival Crusade, 134–135  
 ‘Araubora, John, 62, 64  
 Aretxaga, Begoña, 104  
 Armageddon, 14, 52  
 Armstrong, Herbert, 128  
 Arosi, 49–73, 74n2  
 articulation, 156  
 Arue, 78–79  
 Aruhe’eta, Alice Pollard, 175  
 Asad, Talal, 3  
 Assemblies of God, 80–81, 112–114, 116  
 Assembly of Christian Churches in Fiji,  
   81–82, 84  
 Assmann, Aleida and Jan, 199  
 Au-Aro, 13–14, 25–31, 46n5  
 AusAID, 103, 112–114, 117–118, 154–155  
 Australian National University, 148, 173  
 Baha’i, 126, 128  
 Bainimarama, Voreqe, 15, 82–84, 88–90,  
   95–98, 99n5  
 Bakhtin, M.M., 14, 50–51  
 Balasuna Bible College, 133  
 Baluan, 156  
 baptism, 67–69, 115, 132  
 Barko, Ellison, 134  
 Barr, Kevin, 83–84  
 Basebo, 33–34, 38  
 Bateson, Gregory, 217  
 belief, 2–3, 17, 18n2  
 Bethel, 71, 74n11  
 Bialecki, Jon, 208  
 Bible  
   in evangelism, 29–30, 137  
   and Fiji coups, 80, 82  
   and newness, 93, 96  
   and political authority, 9–10, 82–83,  
     88–89, 95, 158, 190–191, 202–3  
   predictions of, 8  
   study of and familiarity with, 1, 18n1,  
     74n2, 74n10, 89–91, 115, 125, 202  
   and tradition, 3, 52, 54, 62, 79, 139,  
     179  
   translation of, 28–29, 37, 45n2, 89  
 Bible Church, 114–115  
 big men, 9, 17, 142n3, 201–2, 205  
 big women, 142n3  
 Blum, Alvin and Gertrude, 128

- Bongmatur, Willy, 110  
 Bosavi, 151  
 Bourdieu, Pierre, 221  
 Brown, George, 155, 160  
 Brown, Terry, 119n3  
 Buala, 176, 197  
 Bubunuhu Christian Community High School, 129  
 Buddhism, 216–217  
 Bugotu, 184  
 Bugotu, Ambrose, 187–190  
 Burr ridge, Kenelm, 152  
 Burt, Ben, 139, 164n12
- Cakobau, Ratu Seru, 79–80  
 California, 208  
 Calvinism, 32, 216  
 Campus Crusade for Christ, 131, 141  
 Cannell, Fenella, 1, 4, 18n2, 211  
 Cargill, David, 79  
 casino capitalism, 112, 119  
 Catholic League, 84  
 Caucau, Rupeni, 85  
 Centreville Christian Centre, 15, 115–118  
 Chakrabarty, Dipesh, 214  
 Chappell, David, 193  
 Chaudhry, Mahendra, 81  
 chiefs, 9, 175, 185, 191–192  
   in Fiji, 9–10, 79, 88–89, 98n1  
   in Papua New Guinea, 156  
   in Solomon Islands, 9, 16–17, 171–193, 194n7, 195n9  
 Choiseul, 130  
 Christian Fellowship Church, 129, 142n5, 188  
 Christianity  
   anthropology of, 3–4, 70, 92, 126, 143n15, 146–162, 211–222  
   “difference” of, 1–4, 17–18, 211–212, 222  
   universalism of, 215–217, 221–222  
 Christian Mission Fellowship, 81, 84  
 Christian nationalism, 6–9, 11–12, 15–18  
   in Fiji, 8, 15, 80–83, 88–98  
   in Papua New Guinea, 7–8, 16–17, 146, 148, 159, 162, 202–3  
   in Solomon Islands, 8, 12, 16–17, 134–135, 141  
   in Vanuatu, 8, 12, 15  
 Christian Outreach Centre, 125–126, 128–129, 132–136, 143n9  
 Church of Melanesia. *See* Anglicanism in Solomon Islands; Anglicanism in Vanuatu  
 church-sect theory. *See* Niebuhr, H. Richard; Weber, Max; Wilson, Bryan  
 circulation, 9–10, 29, 212, 218  
 civil society, 103–6, 112–119, 150, 155, 173, 183  
 clapping, 36–37  
 codeswitching, 99n7  
 Colson, Charles, 131  
 Comaroff, Jean and John, 5, 154  
 Condominium treaty, 106  
 constitutions, 6–8, 147, 182, 185–186, 202–3  
 Corinthians, Second Epistle to the, 79  
 Couppé, Louis, 19n6  
 Cross, William, 79  
 curses, 83  
 custom. *See* tradition
- dance, 31–34, 38–39, 42–43, 86, 163n4, 188  
 Daniel, Book of, 10, 134  
 Danielle, 31, 33, 36–37, 44  
 Daro, 29–31  
 David, Jonathan, 133–135, 142n9, 143n10  
 Delasau, Vilimoni, 85  
 Deleuze, Gilles, 105  
 d’Epinay, Christian Lalive, 199  
 dialogism, 50, 58, 71–72  
 diarchy, 9, 17, 200–209  
 Dinnen, Sinclair, 173  
 dispensationalism, 8, 134–135  
 Doaniho’asi, 57  
 dominion theology, 8, 88  
 Douglas, Bronwen, 141  
 Duke of York Islands, 155–157  
 Dumont, Louis, 209
- education, 22–23  
   in Fiji, 90  
   in Papua New Guinea, 26, 147, 150–155, 162, 163n2, 200  
   in Solomon Islands, 125, 190

- in Vanuatu, 115–118, 119n3  
 Eisenlohr, Patrick, 43  
 Elohim Family Assembly, 113  
 Engelke, Matthew, 32, 34  
 Eriksen, Annelin, 134  
 Ernst, Manfred, 127, 160  
 Errington, Frederick, 155  
 Espiritu Santo, 109, 114  
 ethno-theology, 51–73, 74n8  
 Eto, Silas, 142n5, 188  
 Evangelical Lutheran Church of PNG. *See*  
     Lutheranism  
 Every Home for Christ, 137  
 Eves, Richard, 103, 158  
 Evidence (mission organization), 114  
  
 failed states. *See* “weak state” discourse  
 Fallowes, Richard, 185, 195n10  
 Fataleka, 137, 143n13  
 Father’s House, 113  
 Feld, Steven, 33  
 Figrima, 178  
 Fiji, 8–11, 78–100, 183, 213–214, 217  
     cession of, 5, 79, 215  
     Christian population of, 2, 15, 79–81,  
         99n3  
     constitution of, 7  
     coups in, 9–11, 15, 78, 80–84, 90, 98,  
         100n17  
     Indians. *See* Indo-Fijians  
     missionaries in. *See* missionaries in  
         Fiji  
     police, 12, 15, 84–86, 89, 92, 94–95,  
         97–98, 213  
 Fiji Council of Churches, 81–82  
 Firth, Stewart, 19n6  
 Forman, Charles, 1  
 Foucault, Michel, 104–5, 108  
 Fraser, Nancy, 105  
 fusion, 156–157  
  
 Gapun, 155  
 Garaina Station, 25, 30, 36  
 Garasa, 13–14, 24–45  
 Garasa Bible College, 26, 30  
 Gardner, Helen, 160  
 Garrett, John, 19n3  
 Gavman, 108–9, 112  
  
 Gebusi, 155  
 Genesis, Book of, 52, 71  
 Gewertz, Deborah, 155  
 Gibbs, Philip, 146, 160  
 Gizo, 124, 128, 131, 133–136  
 Glorious Church, 113  
 glossolalia, 134–135, 142n6  
 Gnulahaghe, 171, 173, 184, 189  
 Gogodala, 156, 163n6  
 Goldie, John, 5  
 Gona, 153  
 Goroka, 160  
 Gospel Missions International, 131–132,  
     135, 138  
 governance and governmentality, 15,  
     103–119, 119n2, 171–175, 181–187,  
     202–3, 214  
 Graham, Billy, 16, 128–129, 133, 216  
 Guadalcanal, 54–55, 66–68, 130, 133, 137,  
     181, 195n9  
 Guhu-Samane, 12–14, 23–45, 45nn1–2,  
     46nn3–5, 46n7, 218  
  
 habitus, 221  
 Hageria, Ben, 178  
 Haggai Institute, 131  
 Hangataru village, 62  
 Hann, Chris, 18n2  
 Hanuato’o, 187  
 Harding, Susan, 218  
 Hartwich, Wolf-Daniel, 199  
 Harwood, Frances, 129  
 Hatai, 78–79  
 hau, 220  
 Healing Ministry, 114  
 Hebala, Hugo, 178  
 Hegarty, David, 195n9  
 Hegel, G.W.F., 18n2  
 Hilliard, David, 3  
 Hograno, 185, 194n5  
 Holy Mama, 188  
 Holy Spirit, 46n7, 93, 97, 100n21, 208  
 Holy Spirit revival, 25, 28–29, 36–37, 41,  
     200  
 Honiara  
     churches and evangelism in, 66, 123,  
         128–130, 132, 134, 188  
     conflict in, 55, 130, 181, 184

- infrastructure, 123  
 Islam in, 136–140, 143n14  
 residents and visitors, 66, 125, 130–131, 142n6, 194n5  
 UNDP in, 175  
 Hughes, Bill, 65  
 hymns. *See* music, vocal
- India, 214  
 Indo-Fijians, 15, 79–80, 90, 99n2  
 Isaac, 90  
 Isaiah, Book of, 10, 52, 134  
 Isatabu Freedom Movement, 55  
 Islam, 216–217  
   in Fiji, 15, 80, 90  
   in Papua New Guinea, 143n11  
   in Solomon Islands, 16, 123, 125–126, 130, 136–141, 143nn11–14, 216, 219  
 Israel, 71, 83, 92, 136
- Jacob, 71, 90  
 Jehovah's Witnesses, 126, 128  
 Jejevo, 195n11  
 Jeremiah (prophet), 80  
 Jeremiah (Solomon Islander), 16, 125, 131–136, 138, 142n7  
 Jesus Christ  
   “great commission” of, 8, 131  
   Second Coming of, 8, 57, 63, 70, 134, 200, 206  
 Jiru, Alekera, 128  
 John (disciple), 95  
 John Frum, 109–110  
 John, Gospel of, 71, 180  
 Jourdan, Christine, 123  
 Joy Bible Institute, 116  
 Judaism, 113, 136, 189
- Kadavu, 92–94  
 Kahn, Miriam, 155  
 kakamora, 14, 56, 58–59, 61–62, 64, 69  
 Kaliyai, 119n2  
 Kaluli, 33  
 kastom. *See* tradition  
 Keane, Webb, 23, 32, 34, 43  
 Kebaita, 39  
 Keesing, Roger, 164n12  
 Kemakeza, Allan, 177  
 Kenilorea, Peter, 129  
 Kevin, 29–30, 44  
 Kia, 184, 187  
 Kilman, Sato, 118  
 Kingdom Harvest International  
   Ministries, 131, 134, 138, 141, 143nn9–10  
 Kings, Book of, 10, 134  
 kinship, 141, 153–154, 164n9, 217–218, 220  
 Kirakira, 60  
 Kiribati, 6  
 Kivung, 157, 159  
 Knauft, Bruce, 155  
 Kooyers, Neal, 26  
 Koroi, Josateki, 80–81  
 Kragur, 156  
 kula, 163n8, 220  
 Kulick, Don, 155  
 Kurudza, 36  
 Kurulo, Suliasi, 84  
 Kwaio, 164n12  
 Kwarāae, 164n12  
 Kwato, 163n7
- Lae, 26, 30, 45n1, 163n2  
 Lakeba, 79–80  
 Lale, 132  
 laments. *See* tharu  
 land, politics of  
   in Papua New Guinea, 13–14, 24–31, 44–45, 200–201  
   in Solomon Islands, 122, 125, 139, 182, 192–193, 194n2  
 Latour, Bruno, 23  
 Lattas, Andrew, 119n2, 157, 164n10  
 Lau Islands, 79  
 Laveasiga, Tomasi, 93, 97  
 “lay priest power.” *See* governance and governmentality  
 Lee, Benjamin, 7  
 Lindstrom, Lamont, 110  
 Lini, Walter, 12, 111, 220  
 Living Water Church, 118  
 Loh, 53

- London Missionary Society, 78–79, 149–150, 153, 163n5
- Luke, Gospel of, 137
- Lulu, John, 114
- Luqa, 131–132
- Luther, Martin, 82, 84
- Lutheranism, 23–27, 31, 34–42, 44, 46n5, 46n7, 163n2
- Maasina Rule, 55–56, 62, 128, 195n10
- MacGregor, William, 149–150, 163n1
- Madagascar, 1
- Maisin, 156
- Makira, 3, 10, 49–73, 74n2, 74n12, 214  
underground army in, 14, 49–56, 58–73, 214
- Makira Harbour, 57
- Malaita, 123, 151, 164n12  
in civil conflict, 54–55, 136–138, 195n9  
denominational complexity of, 139–141, 142n1  
gender in, 140  
as Jewish or Muslim homeland, 136  
spirits from, 66–68
- Malaita Eagle Force, 55, 137
- Mamaloni, Solomon, 10, 60, 62, 64–66, 74n5, 74n12
- mana, 178
- Mannheim, Bruce, 50
- Maori, 220
- Mara, Ratu Sir Kamisese, 82
- Marcussen, A. Jan, 63–64
- Marianism, 160
- Maringe, 189
- Marist Fathers, 57, 62, 80
- Mark (PNG church leader), 14, 26–32, 36, 44, 46n5, 214
- Marshall Islands, 6
- Marshall, Ruth, 208–9
- Martin, J.B., 26
- Mary, 90
- Mason, James, 182, 187–191, 193
- Mataca, Petero, 83–84, 96
- Mauss, Marcel, 220–221
- Mbembe, Achille, 117–118
- McDougall, Debra, 70, 163n3, 192, 194n2
- meaning, 3
- mediation, 24–25, 32–33, 37, 39, 43–44, 216
- Melanesia, 10–11, 148, 155–157, 174–175, 184
- Melanesian Institute, 160
- Melanesian Mission, 3, 57, 185, 194n4
- Methodism  
in Fiji, 7, 15, 78–84, 86–98, 98n1, 99n3, 99nn7–8  
in Papua New Guinea, 149–150, 163n8  
in Solomon Islands, 5, 123, 125–132, 141n1, 142nn5–6
- millennialism, 8, 149, 214–215  
in Papua New Guinea, 14, 26, 153–154, 159, 206, 214–215  
in Solomon Islands, 10, 14, 52, 58–66, 70–71, 133–135, 214
- mimesis, 156–157
- Ministers Fraternal, 113
- miracles, 90–91, 209
- missionaries, 4–6, 12–13, 215  
in Fiji, 18n3, 19n5, 78–80, 98n1, 99n2  
Pacific Islanders as, 6, 18n3, 151, 153  
in Papua New Guinea, 5, 12–13, 16, 18n3, 19n5–6, 23, 146–161, 200, 218  
in Solomon Islands, 5, 12, 18n3, 53–58, 124–141, 141n1, 142n4, 151–152, 180, 182, 189  
in Vanuatu, 12–13, 106–110, 114, 116, 118–119, 119n3, 119n6
- Mitchell, George, 111
- Mitchell, Timothy, 104
- modernity, 23, 43, 126, 154, 157, 215, 222.  
*See also* newness
- Moli, Jimmy, 114–115, 118
- Moli, Stanly, 114
- Monatavai, Moses, 80
- Mondo, 132
- Mondragón, Carlos, 53
- morality, 18, 140, 206–7, 212–213, 219–222
- Mormons, 99
- Morobe Province (PNG). *See* Waria Valley
- Moses, 90

- Mosko, Mark, 164n10  
 Muhammad, 137  
 Muniwa, 13–14, 26–31, 44  
 music, 14, 24–25, 31–45  
     brass band, 40–41  
     conch shell band, 40  
     drums, 24, 31–33, 36–44  
     gender in, 37–43  
     guitars, 24, 38, 40–41, 43, 86  
     string bands, 33  
     tambourines, 24, 41  
     vocal, 33–38, 41–42, 177–181, 189  
 Muslims. *See* Islam
- Nagriamel, 109–110, 119  
 Naked Cult, 109  
 Naramana, Richard, 176–181, 185, 188–191, 194n4, 197  
 Nasegai, 93  
 Natapei, Edward, 118  
 National Council for Building a Better Fiji, 83–84, 96  
 nationalism. *See* Christian nationalism  
 Nauru, 2, 6  
 Neru, Jude, 118  
 New Apostolic Church, 158  
 New Britain, 19n5, 119n2, 155–157  
 New Georgia Group, 141n1, 188  
 New Life Church, 13–14, 25–44, 46n5  
 New Methodist Christian Fellowship, 15, 78, 84–92, 94–98  
 newness, 15, 78–79, 92–98, 215. *See also* Bible and newness; modernity  
 Niebuhr, H. Richard  
     on Christ and culture, 98n1  
     on churches, denominations, and sects, 3, 14, 17, 22–24, 31–32, 43–45, 122–126, 204–5  
 Nigeria, 208–9  
 Noro, 133  
 Northern District (PNG), 153
- oaths, 184–185  
 Oceania  
     Christian influence in, 1–2, 4, 17–18, 211–212, 222  
     regional coherence of, 10–11
- O’Neill, Peter, 163n2  
 Orimanu, Levi, 51–52, 58–66, 71–73, 74n11  
 Oro Province (PNG), 159  
 Orthodox Christianity, 18n2  
 Otto, Ton, 156
- Pacific Island Ministries, 14, 26, 46n2  
 Pacific Theological College, 160  
 Pakeo, 108–9  
 Paliau, 157  
 Papua, 1  
 Papua New Guinea, 11–14, 16, 22–46, 146–164, 198–210, 218  
     Christian population of, 147, 202–3  
     constitution of, 6–7, 147, 202–3  
     denominational complexity of, 146–147  
     law and order problems in, 11  
     as Melanesian model, 10–11  
     missionaries in. *See* missionaries in Papua New Guinea  
     *See also* Guhu-Samane; Urapmin  
     “pastoral power.” *See* governance and governmentality  
 Paul, 93, 217  
 Peli Association, 157–158  
 Pentecostalism, 13, 135, 160, 199–200, 205–9, 210n2  
     in Fiji, 86, 93–94  
     language ideology of, 1  
     in Papua New Guinea, 17, 39–44, 46n5, 146–147, 157–159, 199–209  
     in Solomon Islands, 125, 127–129, 131–138, 141  
     in Vanuatu, 15, 113, 115, 134, 142n2, 214  
 Pentecost Island, 129  
 Peoples Charter for Change, Peace and Progress, 83–84, 96–97, 99n6  
 personhood, 71–73  
 Peter, 95, 217  
 Phillipe, Pastor, 115–118  
 Pio, Silas, 137, 143n13  
 plantations, 80, 111  
 Pomio, 157, 159  
 Pompallier, Jean Baptiste, 80

- Port Moresby, 33, 149  
 Port Vila, 104, 106–8, 111–119, 142n2  
 Potter's House, 113, 130  
 prayer, ideologies of, 39–40, 89–92, 97  
 Presbyterianism, 107–110, 112, 119, 119n6  
 Prison Fellowship International, 131  
 Protestantism, 3, 8, 18n2, 22–23, 32–34, 45, 92, 143n15  
 publics and counterpublics, 217–219  
 purification, 23
- Qarase, Laisenia, 81–83  
 Quran, 137, 216
- Rabuka, Sitiveni, 80–81, 83, 90, 99n2, 100n17  
 Ranon, 109  
 Ranonga, 125, 128, 131–132, 137, 141, 142n6, 192, 194n2  
 Ratuva, Steven, 81  
 Reformed Gospel Church, 14, 28–31, 34, 36, 39, 41–44, 46n5  
 Regenvanu, Ralph, 119n5  
 Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, 55, 130, 136–138, 142n6, 173, 184, 193n1  
 religion as a metacultural category, 2–10, 16–18, 211–212, 216–217, 222  
 Revelation, Book of, 10, 59, 63–65, 70, 100n19, 134, 214  
 Revival Flame, 126, 131, 138, 141  
 revivals, 13, 17–18, 19n3, 129, 158, 220–221  
     in Solomon Islands, 123, 128–130, 133–135, 141, 142n5, 142n9, 216  
     *See also* Holy Spirit revival
- Rewa, 79  
 Rhema Family Church, 132, 137  
 Richert, Ernie, 34–37, 46n2, 46nn5–6  
 Rickard, R. Heath, 19n5  
 Rio, Knut, 108  
 Robbins, Joel  
     on the anthropology of Christianity, 163n3  
     on lawfulness, 119n2  
     on “negative nationalism,” 7, 216  
     on revivals, 129  
     on ritual, 46n7, 135  
     on rupture and continuity, 78, 92, 97, 164n11  
     on semiotic ideology, 34  
     on sin and moral torment, 126, 158, 214–216, 221–222
- Robo village, 57  
 Rohu, 51, 58, 60–61, 64, 70–71, 74n11  
 Roko Tui Dreketi, 84  
 Roman Catholicism, 18n2, 32, 143n15  
     in Fiji, 79–84  
     in Papua New Guinea, 19n6, 150, 156–157  
     and Seventh-day Adventism, 52, 57, 62–73, 74n7  
     in Solomon Islands, 57, 127, 139, 142n1  
     in Vanuatu, 107, 112, 119n6  
 Romans, Epistle to the, 9–10, 69, 88–89, 95, 202–3  
 Rome, 61–62, 64, 73, 74n2. *See also* Rohu  
 Rotuma, 80  
 Rove, Ikan, 188  
 Roviana, 141n1  
 Ruggers for Jesus, 85–92, 94–98  
 Rumahui village, 60  
 Rutherford, Danilyn, 43
- Samarai, 163n7  
 Samoa, 6, 79  
 Samosodu, 187  
 Sandaun Province (PNG), 129  
 Santa Isabel, 9, 12, 16–17, 67–68, 157, 171–195, 197, 216  
     Council of Chiefs, 171, 182–188, 191–192, 194n6, 194n8, 195n11  
     houses of chiefs, 171, 183–184, 189, 194n8
- Sapphira, 138  
 Sauniasi, Agnes, 51–52, 58–61, 63–73, 74n6, 74nn9–12  
 Scarr, Deryck, 107–8  
 schools. *See* education  
 Scott, Michael W., 3, 18n2, 126  
 secularization thesis, 213–214  
 semiotic ideology, 24, 32, 34, 43, 216  
 Sepi, 188

- Serewai, Isikeli, 93–94
- Seventh-day Adventism, 8, 74n7, 74nn9–11, 214  
 in Fiji, 80–81  
 in Madagascar, 1  
 in Papua New Guinea, 5, 19n3, 46n5, 150, 158  
 in Solomon Islands, 5, 51–52, 56–73, 74n2, 127–128, 132, 135, 139, 141n1  
 in Vanuatu, 112
- Sharp, Bishop, 153
- Silverstein, Michael, 32–33
- Simbo, 130–131, 141
- singing. *See* music, vocal
- Société Française des Nouvelles-Hébrides, 107, 119n1
- Soga, Monilaws, 188–191
- Solomon Islands, 5, 8–12, 14, 16–17, 49–74, 122–143, 171–195  
 civil conflict in, 11, 16, 54–59, 123, 130, 136–137, 142n6, 181–183, 193n1, 195n9  
 constitution, 6, 182, 185–186  
 coup, 11, 130, 173, 182  
 evangelical public culture in, 16, 123–141, 219  
 law and order problems in, 130, 142n6  
 missionaries in. *See* missionaries in Solomon Islands  
 Pijin, 123, 134  
 police, 181  
*See also* Guadalcanal; Honiara; Makira; Malaita; Ranongga; Santa Isabel
- songs. *See* music
- sound. *See* music
- Southern Highlands Province (PNG), 147
- South Sea Evangelical Church, 19n3, 56–59, 123, 125, 129, 136–139, 142n1, 164n12
- South Sea Evangelical Mission, 57, 62, 127, 151
- Speight, George, 81, 84
- state effects and statelike forms, 15, 103–119, 188, 194n8
- State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project, 148, 173
- Stephen, 80
- Summer Institute of Linguistics, 26, 28–29, 34, 45n2. *See also* Richert, Ernie
- Survival (church), 113
- Suva, 78, 85–86, 95, 160
- Sweden, 1
- Taharaa, 78–79
- Tanna, 107, 109–110, 119
- Tavuki, 92–94
- Taylor, Clark, 133
- Tedlock, Dennis, 50
- Tekulu, Belani, 131–132, 138, 141, 142n7
- Telefomin, 203
- Teleni, Esala, 84
- Ten Commandments, 157
- tharu, 177–181, 197
- Thornley, Andrew, 98n1
- Titio, 26, 43
- Toboe, Pastor, 118
- Tokelau, 6–7
- Tolai, 155–157
- Tonga, 6, 18n3, 79–80
- Tongoa, 108–9, 112
- Torres Islands, 107
- Torres Straits, 163n5
- tradition, 3–8, 148–158  
 as basis of legitimacy, 92–94, 97–98  
 and Bible. *See* Bible and tradition  
 and objects, 186  
 and place, 53–54, 59–64, 69–72  
 restoration of, 14, 61–66, 72, 110  
 and ritual, 33–34, 38–39, 44, 172–193  
 survival of, 155, 161–162, 163n4, 164nn11–12  
 triad with Christianity and government, 7, 16–17, 152, 156–157, 171–193, 194n3  
 and women. *See* women and tradition
- transduction, 32–34, 37, 39, 42
- tribes, 26–27, 29–30, 46n4
- Trinity Broadcasting Network, 114–115
- Trobriand Islands, 220
- Troeltsch, Ernst, 22–23, 204

- Trompf, Garry, 160  
 tubuan, 157  
 Tui Namosi, 84  
 Tuti, Dudley, 171, 173–174, 179–189, 191  
 Tuvalu, 6
- Ulysses (PNG church leader), 13, 25–32, 36, 46n5, 214  
 United Church, 123, 125–135, 141, 142n3, 142n6  
 United Nations, 8, 214  
 United Nations Development Program, 173–175, 183–186, 194n6  
 United Pentecostal Church, 81, 113  
 Urapmin, 7–9, 17, 119n2, 198–209, 210n3, 214–216, 221–222
- Van Trease, Howard, 106–7  
 Vanua'aku Pati, 110  
 Vanuatu, 8, 11–13, 15–16, 53, 103–119, 160, 183, 214  
     British and French colonial influence, 106–110, 119nn2–3  
     independence era, 110–112  
     law and order problems in, 11  
     missionaries in. *See* missionaries in Vanuatu  
 Vanuatu Christian Council, 112–113, 117  
 Vanuatu Church Partnership Program, 103, 112  
 Vella Lavella, 133–134  
 Vilakalaka, 114  
 Vineyard Churches, 208  
 Vulaono, Atunaisa, 15, 78, 84–92, 94–98, 99n7, 100n21, 214  
 Vulaono, Waisea, 84, 100n21
- Wakaia villages, 27–30, 44  
 Wallaha, 114  
 Wallis ('Uvea), 80
- Wamira, 155  
 Waqairatu, Tuikilakila, 82  
 Waria Valley, 13–14, 23–46  
 Warner, Michael, 217  
 Waugh, Geoff, 129–130, 134  
 “weak state” discourse, 11, 103, 147, 172–174, 181–183, 193n1  
 Weber, Max, 23, 43, 103–4, 204  
 Welchman, Henry, 189  
 Wenge, Luther, 30  
 Wesley, John, 84  
 Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, 79–80  
 Western Province (Papua New Guinea), 163n6  
 Western Province (Solomon Islands), 123, 129, 131–133, 141n1, 143n9  
 West Sepik Province (PNG), 200  
 White, Ellen G., 63, 71, 74n7, 74n11  
 White, Geoffrey, 131  
 Whitehouse, Harvey, 154  
 Willems, Emilio, 199  
 Willson, Margaret, 155  
 Wilson, Bryan, 204–6, 210n2  
 Wilson, Cecil, 107  
 women  
     church groups, 103, 132, 152–153, 155, 160  
     in Garasa, 27, 29, 31, 38–43, 46n3  
     and Makiran underground, 67, 69  
     and tradition, 29, 46n3, 140, 191  
     violence against, 162  
     *See also* music, gender in  
 World War II, 13, 55, 128, 142n4, 153  
 World Wide Church of God, 128
- Young, Michael, 159  
 Yule, 150
- Zahn, Heinrich, 40