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SCIENCES HUMAINES

CULTURE CONTACT AND THE JOHN FRUM MOVEMENT ON TANNA (NEW HEBRIDES)

par

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## CULTURE CONTACT AND THE JOHN FRUM MOVEMENT ON TANNA

### NEW HEBRIDES

As he is called in the New Hebrides pijin, "Man Tanna" has had, since the advent of Captain Cook, on August 6th 1774, close to two hundred years contact with the white man's culture. The detailed study of this contact, if not a really revealing one, is nevertheless one of the most interesting chapters of the history of culture contact in Melanesia.

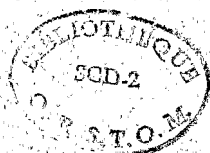
Tanna is a volcanic island, mountainous at the north and the south, with rich and densely inhabited tablelands in the middle. The sea approaches are of coral formation on the western coast: of volcanic rock on the eastern coast, which boasts a diminutive and tame volcano. Streams are numerous, but in most cases, dry up before getting very far and rarely come down to the sea.

The population actually of 6.950 inhabitants, as far as I could make out, has been steadily growing in numbers during at least the last twenty years.

The first contacts made by the native people were with adventurers and fortune-seekers of all kinds, whalers, dealers in alcohol, fire-arms and ammunition which they traded for bêche de mer, sandalwood, sulphur and coconut oil. Tradition says it was a time of strife, of unforgiving wars and of great loss of life; violent death was a normal one for man. Very little is known of these times, as very little has been written about them.

The situation became clearer and somewhat more stable in relation with what had been happening until then, when the sandalwood era ended and the Presbyterian form of Christian missions and the building of copra as the basis of the new money economy to be, were established.

The early history of Christianity on the island may be said to give the key for the times ahead. It was a very troubled and difficult establishment, after the death of John Williams on Eromango. Six Samoan teachers and one of their wives, two European Missionaries, two missionaries wives and one child died before any successful Christian settlement could be spoken of, these being commenced in 1869 at Port Resolution and Kwamera. They all died from sickness and



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curiously only one man died a martyr to his faith, a native of the island, Numwanyan of Lenakel, at a much later date, in 1899.

Christianity took thirty years to gain something of a foothold on the island. During these thirty years missionaries came in and out, feeling more or less all the time that their lives were in danger, and being now and then unable to bear the strain. Grown wise, the second generation of missionaries gained some foothold and worked quietly tutoring their first followers. Men such as Neilson, Watt and Frank Paton were patient people. Their first baptisms took them twelve years (1881) to negotiate. They tried their way, seeking friendship as a means of advancing their cause, campaigning against the Queensland slave labour traffic, buying small plots of land for the establishment of mission posts, striving to organize peace on the island through persuasion. No "Man Tanna" will speak against them, although they were intolerant, often hasty in their dealings with native custom and the most hateful aspects of it; the traditional whore whose job was the young man's sexual initiation and the drinking of Kava. The missionary was then relatively a rich man, his salary being a good one -£400 sterling -; moreover, he received from the friends of the mission in Scotland, Australia and New Zealand valuable goods such as cloth or European clothes which he could give away from time to time and thus gain valuable prestige. Which was a much better method of gaining friendship than the threat of the eternal fire freely made use of by his native teachers.

The next generation of missionaries brought in around 1900 young, energetic and harsh men, Macmillan and Dr. Nicholson who set themselves to the task of realising a wholly Christian Tanna in a matter of a few years. This brought a time of crisis between the Christians and the heathen, between the missionaries and the traders, and between the two national powers, France and England, striving to add the New Hebrides each to its own sphere of influence.

During the preceding years, laymen had come to Tanna more or less on the side of the Mission, but on trading business. At one time, there were up to three of them on the island: Forlong, Carruthers and McKenzie, traders at all times when they were not doing some evangelising work of their own. Traders they were, on their own account, and maybe because of that they failed to get any hold on the people; there is nothing to tell us that the commercial deals they made were not similar to those of their non-Presbyterian colleagues. On the other side, the missionaries, thinking in terms of a money economy for their converts, strongly encouraged the planting of coconuts on a large scale. One can say that both on the production and on the commercial side, the mission was a powerful element in the establishment of the copra economy on Tanna.

It is difficult to know if the plan of having missionary

traders was recognised as a failure. In any case, the evangelical trader disappeared from the picture at the time of Macmillan's and Nicholson's taking over of the mission work. In a way, their activity started by a struggle with the ordinary traders for influence over the native society.

It must be remembered that the first locally written document of international value referring to Tanna is dated 1875, it being a letter signed by the European residents, mostly Britishers, asking for French protection. This letter is a sign of the times. Up to now the European trader on Tanna plays any card which comes in helpful. British traders will represent French firms and British firms will have locally French agents, any one nationality, that of the man, or that of the incorporated society will be made use of as the necessity requires. The only difference to-day is that there remains next to no quarrel between the traders and the mission, which has long forgotten its erstwhile commercial temptation.

In reading the published missionary literature and the unpublished official correspondence between the missionaries and the British side of the New Hebrides administration, and remembering reasons which were often given by the missionaries to explain the slowness of their work, one gets the impression that two external factors were at least partly responsible for the mission policy in the first years of our century. Presbyterian churches at home were tired of this hard island, of the so many years of missionary labour with so very few results to show; as a consequence of this feeling, funds were coming in lesser amounts; results had now to be shown to keep up the giving fervour of the mission's friends and the Tanna mission had, as a body, the first feeling that in some ways at least it should try to become self-supporting.

The prudent and seemingly wise attitude of the older missionaries was discarded and the Christian conquest of the island was organized politically. It must be said that the young native Christian communities, with their tendency to be more intolerant than their masters, were quite ready for the new policy and put into it much of the aggressiveness it came to bear.

These Christian groups were made of coastal communities, which had the only workable anchorages of the island: Port Resolution, White sands, Waesisi, Lenakel, Kwamera. They were the first to have come in contact with the white man and now the principal ones to suffer from the acts of the recruiters, plying their trade at the time for the benefit of the new settlers on Efate or Espiritu Santo, or the young mining concerns in New Caledonia. Dissatisfied with the traders whom they already accused of cheating them, resentful of the women recruiting activities indulged in mostly by the masters of French ships, they were ready to lean on the mission, as much to resist European intruders as to push into political and religious submission their still heathen neighbours. Moreover, there was a general feeling

that it was time some law and order was established on Tanna to put a stop to the persistent killings of native wars and guarantee the lives and belongings of the European residents. There was at that time no Government to take on the job; the two Resident Commissioners in Vila were still haggling over minor disputes and the Condominium administration had not yet been formally organised. So the missionaries took upon themselves the establishment of law and order; it can be said that they gave the thinking and the guidance, but left their most trusted followers, Brown at Port Resolution, Kourare at Whitesands and Lohmae, at Lenakel, more or less at liberty to act according to their own views in the practical carrying out.

This was the time of the so-called Tanna law. The Christian chiefs presided over native courts which enforced an unwritten and strict moral code: no wars, no fighting to settle quarrels, no thieving, no adultery, no drinking of Kava; the use of the customary prostitute and the practising of death-magic were banned. Most of these measures had popular appeal and were agreed to more or less generally. But the outlawing of the prostitute and of Kava drinking inflamed the heathens, who resisted, at times violently, the enforcing of the Court's decisions on these points.

The Courts had police for arresting the culprits. In the matter of a few years their action, in the relation with the frequent visits of men-of-war, practically put a stop to warring as a way of getting justice. The outlawing of the prostitute, if unpopular, was rather easy to enforce in the coastal districts. But as regards Kava, the situation was different and the forbidding of the carrying of Kava roots on the roads outraged the pagan group. Another aspect of the question was the punishment inflicted, fines which were used for church purposes, compulsory work on the cutting of horse-tracks across the island; the generous amount of flogging done by the over-enthusiastic police was made use of by the Christian chiefs to force any kind of culprits into conversion.

Once the effect of the satisfactory stop to the internecine wars had somewhat worn out, the aspect of the native courts used as a political weapon, where Christian judges sat over the cases of heathen culprits whose condemnation they had decided in advance, this unfavourable side of the picture came out strongly in the minds of the people. They came to be so aroused about the issue, getting traders to write letters for them to the Government in Vila, that finally it ended with the sending of a formal deputation to the two Resident Commissioners, who then jointly decided the appointment of a Condominium district agent on Tanna (1912).

The first agent, a Mr. Wilkes, a man with legal training, got very quickly in trouble with the missionaries, because of their extraneous activities nullifying any of his attempted actions to deal with the heathen on the basis of the traditional custom. The haggling

between the missionaries and the traders was replaced by strained relations between Wilkes and Macmillan or Nicholson. In 1915, Wilkes got an Officer's Commission in the Army and a new Agent was sent, Mr. Nicol who was to rule the island until his death in 1944, this time in close co-operation with the Presbyterian mission.

It is evidently impossible in the little time at our disposal to go through all the incidents, some at high level, between Paris and London, which filled up the years of the "Tanna Law" and the first years of the direct Condominium administration. One important development has nevertheless to be mentioned; in 1914, the campaign of the Presbyterian mission to persuade the natives to let their land be surveyed and put in the trust of the Mission. There had been talk of partition of the New Hebrides. Native land going over to the Mission would be a valuable asset in partition discussions; in any case, it would help prevent any land grabbing on the part of traders or settlers to come. The land which was taken in trust, not so important as it could have been, so great was the opposition on the native side, is to-day let at a nominal rate (4 shillings per year) to the previous native owners; the lease stipulates that under no circumstances could heathen practices be held on trust land.

This direct interest in land matters was another facet of the activities of the mission. Internecine wars had left a legacy of land quarrels. Macmillan decided that the situation should be cleared and definitely so; his stated policy, for which he got official approval, was recognition of land occupation, that is land conquest in some cases, as it stood at the time of the Mission's coming. This was in contradiction with native custom which does not recognise military conquest but only very temporary occupation; land must be handed back to its traditional owners, against formal presentation of gifts for having looked after it, as a result of negotiations which can last over years. Each of the land troubles settled in his way at the time by Macmillan, and later confirmed by decisions of the District Agent, are still to-day a thorn in everybody's side and particularly the administration's and the Mission's. As a matter of fact, at Lenakel and Whitesands, the first Christians were in each case conquerors and thus got official backing for the land-grabbing of their own in which they felt they could now indulge, with the unconscious complicity of the Mission.

All this active prosecution of Man Tanna's Christianisation lasted until 1920, when the Missionaries could sit down and consolidate their conquest. Except for a few difficulties about divorces granted by the District Agent Mr. Nicol's administration gave full satisfaction to the Missionaries who did not have more to attend to the preservation of law and order. Adultery was severely punished; the last prostitute was married, and although it had theoretical legal recognition, polygamy was banned from the island. The Mission's land policy was sustained and Nicol went on with their policy of

regrouping people in large villages. Mr. Nicol's time lasted for the best of a quarter of a century, ending with his violent death on the island in 1944. Inasmuch as the administrative reports he sent were few, the greater part of his time seemed to have been a happy one as we say in French "happy people do not have any history". Nevertheless, it ended in a kind of fiasco, with the outburst in 1940 of the John Frum movement.

The 1940-52 so-called John Frum happenings seemed to have come as a shock, and until now, no one has related them to any previous events. As facts go, there evidently had been signs of the change to come.

It seems that at the height of the Mission's influence, around 1920, the proportion of Presbyterian converted natives to the heathen was of nearly four to one, about 4,000 against 1,500. The Pagan remnants were scattered in small groups in the north and along the central ridge of the island. Organised opposition to the Church had practically disappeared. Nevertheless, from Nicol's first years and over nearly two decades, until the mass desertion of May 1941, one could notice signs of growing disaffection towards the Mission. The individual disgruntled people took the habit of going back to Kava drinking which was no more out-lawed. Entire local groups quietly got out and stayed out of the Mission. The presence, after 1930 of a French District Agent, jointly responsible with Nicol, gave the native people the assurance that there was little risk left in leaving the Church. Important Christian villages broke up for good.

In 1932, the settling on Tanna of the Seventh Day Adventist Mission, brought the matter to a first climax, whole communities leaving the Presbyterian for the other Mission; in many cases, they were old opponents of the Presbyterians, who had only been converted of late when they thought no other way open to them. In the words of Nicol, "all the trouble-makers went Seventh Day Adventist", that is, all those who had a grudge and saw a hope in following this dynamic, rich and apparently powerful Missionary body.

At the same time, in 1933, the Marist Fathers too, established a Mission Post on Tanna, but with little success.

In 1939, Nicol gives the following numbers for the island as a whole; Presbyterians: 3,381; S.D.A.: 656; Catholics: 72; Heathen: 1,659. At this time, the unrest between the two Missions, Presbyterians and Seventh Day Adventists, had cooled down. At the beginning of 1940, Nicol complains of too much Kava drinking even inside Christian groups. Unhappy war events had resulted in a slump in the price of copra and production was very low. At the end of the year, the District Agent got annoyed with persistent rumours of the existence of a supernatural being, John Frum by name, who, it seems had made wild promises about a golden age to come soon, the preamble of which was the abandonment of Christianity. The drinking of Kava and the shedding of European produced customs, particularly of money, which was to be spent to the last farthing, if not thrown in the sea. It seems

that all this talk had been going on, spreading slowly for at least three years. Nicol's interest in it, once both missionaries and traders had become alarmed, and the subsequent repression brought the affair to a climax. On the 11th May 1941, Nicol being on Aneytum, and it being said that his launch had capsized, nobody was present at the normal Sunday office in the Lenakel Presbyterian Mission Church. The Missionary, then on leave, later found on his return, his flock reduced to seven men. Teachers, elders and ordinary church members had all "gone John Frum", and started drinking Kava on the old ritual grounds. They will never come back.

On the Whitesands side of the Island, there remained a small group of faithful: ninety-one communicants instead of 900 in Mr. Macmillan's time. The big Christian villages disappeared from the map, having disintegrated into small groups, each of which had gone to live on its traditional land.

As regards the administrative side, only one assessor - an assessor would be the equivalent of the paramount chief elsewhere - Koukare of Whitesands remained behind the District Agent, whose careful organisation of the Island had too disappeared overnight. It seemed to every white man there that man Tanna had united in an anti-white front. This fear and Nicol's own annoyance at the whole affair, made for the drastic repression. Bunch after bunch of previously honoured leaders were sent into exile and to jail on Efate, some of whom were not to come back until seven years later. It must be said there was no intimation of resistance to the arrests.

Nicol thought he would kill the story in exposing, tied to a coconut tree the man given to him as the one posing as John Frum. Unfortunately, the real culprit had not been caught such and everyone knew ManeheWi had been handed to the District Agent to put a stop to his enquiry.

The repression brought only a temporary lull. The coming of the American troops to the New Hebrides was hailed as John Frum's doing and raised great hopes. Happily, at that stage, the greater part of the male adult population volunteered to go to Vila and work for their American friends, which kept them out of mischief. Some disillusion about the American troops helping, the matter seemingly had cooled down; some of the exiles were even repatriated.

In October 1943, Nicol coming back from leave was faced with a new outburst. In the north of the island, until then apparently quiet, a new leader was having an aerodrome built, in the name of John Frum, to enable the new God's planes to land with their cargoes of soldiers. This new version of the movement was organized on very modern lines; compulsory labor and armed guards. Nelawiyang, the leader, having come down to Lenakel to see Nicol, and being held in jail, an armed expedition came to his rescue, and for half a day the District Agent had good reason to believe his life was in danger. The sending of military reinforcements from Vila was necessary to



repress the rising. The punishments however were the less harsh than in the previous instance.

Nothing happened next until 1947 when a few people raided an European store at Whitesands to destroy coloured price labels; a vision had told one of them John Frum did not want any colour except black and white. The very severe repression was this time the responsibility of the new French District Agent.

At this stage, a new idea began to bear on the minds, parallel to the myth of John Frum, the organization of co-operatives, the existence of which, if realized, would help the natives out of the hands of the local traders. A first try, which very soon fell flat, was organized on a large scale with the co-operation of an European who, after a few weeks, let down the show to set himself up as an independant trader.

After the death of Nicol in 1944, his joint French and British successors reorganized the administration of the Island with most of the assessors being ex-John Frum secondary leaders. The consecration thus given to the personal ambitions of a few influential men, probably helped to consolidate the lull which went on until 1952. On the other side, this was too a time of consolidation for the John Frum new paganism. The new heathen groups settled down in their diminutive villages. Kava drinking became more orderly, being restricted to adults. Dancing was no more an everyday haphazard affair, but organized either on a big scale in the frame of the ceremonial complex of the nekowiar, or only for such events as were considered as traditionally warranting it: name-giving ceremonies, circumcision, marriage, end of the mourning period, first fruits ceremony. The garden magic was reintroduced on a big scale. But compared with the pre-war period, there was little talk of the action of death-magic.

In the Whitesands area where a full return to previous pagan conditions was difficult, owing to the lack of knowledge in a number of instances, the people tried out a loose affiliation with the Catholic Mission, coupled with dances and kava drinking. Moreover it was hoped that the Marist Father could eventually be used to placate the French District Agent.

In July 1952 a series of judgments spelt terms of up to three years jail to a number of natives for having endangered public order. These decisions had followed a joint visit of the two Resident Commissioners, who were under the impression that events which might have been grave had only just been prevented. The happenings were circumscribed to the Lenakel area.

A sick woman, Nowanae by name, had the vision of her husband's dead father, come to take her away to Ipay, the subterranean land of the dead. Helped by her husband and her father who spat on her the necessary chewed magic leaves, she came back to life. A few days

later came a new vision this time of an unknown being called Sam Nikeru. After her recovery, she did not see him any more, but only heard his voice. She thus got to have the reputation of a clairvoyant, a clever as they say Pidjin: her reputation was enhanced once she had revealed an adultery affair of which no one knew. Her success seems to have started a craze. Nowanae's husband, too, started to have visions of this same Sam Nikeru. Another woman had visions of her dead son. This was normal enough in the native society, but it had been unheard of for a long time.

At the end of February 1952, at a name-giving dance at Loone-lapen, the village of one of the principal assessors of the Island, Nagat, a number of people revealed having had similar visions; one of them being about a person called Jack Navy whose name was, if I am not mistaken, taken from a cigarette advertisement. The gist of all this was that warships had come from the land of the dead and were, for the present, staying at the bottom of the sea. They would soon come to the surface. They were evidently the warships of John Frum and the long-awaited day of his glory seemed near. Scouts were sent to the top of a hill and they reported back having seen lights on the sea. The next day everybody, men from eight different tribal groups, went down closer to the sea and awaited the coming of the warships. They hid in the bush by day and reassembled at night. Nobody was to go to buy in the stores except on permission of the elders. It had been said, by an old man, Noklam, who had an old reputation of clairvoyance, enhanced by the fact he was from the south of the Island, that the visions were true, that out of the warships would come a man, with long hair following the custom of Tanna, and the body entirely covered with leaves of nesey, odoriferous plant the leaves of which are normally worn in armlets on ceremonial occasions. In February the young men and even children wore such armlets every day and this aroused comment which went to the French and British District Agents. The collective expectation lasted for nearly a month and a half; then the meeting broke down, nothing having come and the general fear of administrative action helping the leaders, at first obliged to follow their people, to disband them now. At the beginning of June everybody had gone back and the situation was calm. It is then only that factual denunciations enabled the District Agents to strike.

In the Districts more to the south, wild stories on the same theme had circulated, too, and the responsible ones for the rumours were severely punished. On the Whitesands side, the elders of the Sulphur Bay people, only just back home after seven years' exile, were sent back to Efate, for not having abandoned, if not their convictions, at least for having expressed them again in the terms of the now long-cherished myth of John Frum.

The problem, which to-day faces the observer and the adminis-

tration, is best given by the double aspect of the affair: thirteen years at least of existence and twelve years of more or less intense and apparently useless administrative repression.

The situation in which the people were placed and the way in which they reacted towards it, can evidently give us the reasons which conditioned the existence of the movement itself.

A hundred years of progressive Christianisation and forty years of direct administrative control had brought to the people very little they considered of value to them, very little to help them in the daily problems of their material life. On one side: suppression of dances and feasts, suppression of the tradition of prostitution, of polygamy, of kava drinking, partially-successful attempts of suppressing any form of magic. On the positive side: establishment of peace; action against the abuses of recruiters and traders; both elements being of a temporary value to the mind of the people and of very slight importance to the actual generation: the teaching of literacy in the vernacular, and up to a certain extent some teaching of English. The building of huts with elevated plaited bamboo or cane work, instead of having the roofs sliding down to the ground.

On the debit side: no provision of water in a land where it is a rare thing, despite the Mission's teaching of the rules of hygiene which, of course, involved the use of large quantities of water; there was the money available and willing labour to build tanks but nobody ever cared to give the necessary technical and organizing help. No valuable teaching of english or of the arts and crafts. The people would have liked their children to learn: it is only now that the Presbyterian native teachers are taught the art of making very simple furniture. With the exception of copra, no new crop introduction; the people had been taught to satisfy their money wants through copra-making but were left without any other answer than passiveness, non-production, when there was a slump in the prices.

The tentative political organization put up by the mission, with its character of autonomy towards the rest of the European organization in the Islands, was replaced by district administration of a rather heavy kind: two European District Agents, for less than seven thousand native people.

It must be said that if both the Presbyterian Mission and the Condominium Government seemingly erred in the organization of this islands administration, they had good justification for that; the traditional political structure is so scattered and "atomistic" that something had to be done about it. When the Missionaries tried to find who were the Tanna equivalents of the polynesian chiefs they had experience of, they were confronted with a situation where one man

in ten was claiming chiefly rank (1). Even if they had recognised the implications of such a state of things, they were bound to make a choice, for the sake of the practicalness of their work. It is a case of a few ambitious individuals recognising the possibilities of the new christian set up, and of the Missionaries leaning too heavily on their first converts, and being incapable of remaining neutral in the former's very secular quarrels.

Then came the administration and <sup>the</sup> native political structure it superimposed upon the traditional one, not without success.

The fault of the chosen solution was that theoretically, all had to go through the hands of the District Agent, and that the powers of his local native representatives had never been fixed; they were, in fact, only meant to be his assessors at the native tribunal. This organization left the people no other hope of attaining autonomy in their local affairs, then without or against the condominium structure. One could even say that any amount of local autonomy had to be acquired against the Mission whose hierarchical structure: pastors, teachers, elders, nominated and directed by the Missionary, was very closely patterned on the local Christian society, as organized inside the villages, modelled by the Mission's and the Administration's influence.

Thus any new step, in the absence of any hope of bettering their material life, had to be directed towards recovering political autonomy at the lowest level. This was almost obtained through the abandonment of the Mission and the breaking up of the Christian villages. The years passed have helped to reorganize, in a traditional way, what had seemed to be at a time an almost anarchious state of affairs.

To-day the Condominium Government is more or less considered as a nuisance, although as an existing fact which must for the present be taken into account. Native leaders are influential and

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(1) These so called "chiefs" are of two kinds:

- yèréméré (yèlmalù) who boast the prerogative of carrying, helped by their people, very high plumed head dresses called kweriya. They are the more numerous and yield very little apparent political power.
- yani niko (yani nèngo = master of the canoe) whose privilege is of speaking on the matter of peace or war. Negotiations pertaining to this vital problem must go through them, and some of these office holders appear to be influential over wide areas.

popular only in as much as they play along with the District Agents, to the best of the interests of their people, that is ~~they~~ strive to reduce in the greatest possible measure the practical role of the European Administrators.

We have just spoken of a reorganization of the native society. After May 1941 this was done with a very traditional bias: the Presbyterian Christian Society with its hierarchy of dignitaries under the control of the missionaries was replaced by the normal Melanesian gerontocracy with an insistence on the traditional sets of feasts, dances and pig-killings, where the important people come to the fore, but with very little predominance anywhere of an individual man.

The desertion of the mission came as the crux of a long developing crisis, for which the John Frum myth gave what was considered an answer. Its irrational aspects hides certain facts about it from us. We know "John Frum" or "John Brown", the one who will "broom" the white man out of the Islands, is said to be the reincarnation of the former god, Karapenmun, whose name was invoked in the last century by the enemies of Christianisation.

This gives us the link: the message of John Frum provided for decisions, for acts which were already in the minds of people and for which some had already shown the way. The myth here gave an opportunity for the crystallization of long kept-down feelings, and as far as can be seen, helped towards a positive, if very partial solution. Moreover who could say that John Frum did not exist when the whole Island had followed his word? Under his new form, the god had provided for the first organic structure of the movement, by the appointment of se-called "ropes", messengers who carried his words and thus were his local representatives. In the same way, be they at Sulphur Bay with the sons of John Frum or at Ikolau in the north with the building of an aerodrome, the later versions of the myth fitted in with the local conditions, or followed the necessities of a moving picture, offering in each case, if not a way out of the problem, at least a frame work in which the life of the movement could be further organized; on a military like basis for instance, or kept alive through the activities of a team of youngsters when the older people were all in exile.

In the little space at my disposal, it is not possible to discuss the general problem of cargo cults at large. I would like only to stress one final point. This is the value of the myth for a Melanesian society in transition, not only as a way out of the problems felt, but in the first instance as a means of apprehending the contact situation, when the white man responsible has revealed his incapacity to offer a rational solution which would have seemed of value to the people. In this case at least it is as if "Man Tanna"

had only accepted Christianity and European supremacy as a temporary state of things, as a solution to the necessities of change which could any day be reviewed and rejected.

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