First Contact with God: Individualism, Agency, and Revivalism in the Duke of York Islands

Deborah Gewertz
Amherst College
Frederick Errington
Trinity College

Perhaps the most vivid images of first contact in the Pacific are photographs taken by Michael Leahy, leader of the first European expeditions into the hidden and densely populated valleys of the Papua New Guinea Highlands during the 1930s. Interestingly, Leahy's pictures "captured brilliantly the drama, the fear, the elation of first contact, of the highland people responding to *him*" (Connolly and Anderson 1987:99). Indeed, highlanders could hardly have encountered a more concentrated embodiment of colonial individualism than Michael Leahy: Mauser slung over one shoulder and Leica over the other—his person in this way augmented by the most technologically advanced of Western mechanisms of domination and objectification—he felt fundamentally superior to, and detached from, the contexts through which he moved in his entrepreneurial pursuit of treasure and fame.

It is clear from the unusual care he took in recording his expedition that Michael Leahy thought of himself as an intrepid agent of colonial transformation. Many other Europeans who initiated first-contact encounters also viewed themselves as agents of transformation, albeit sometimes with differing views of treasure, fame, and the course of history. Consider in this regard the journal entry of the Reverend George Brown written on August 14, 1875, as he approached the Duke of York Islands, later to become part of the East New Britain Province of Papua New Guinea:

> By 1PM we were well within the straits. The weather thick with rain squalls . . . New Ireland on our right and New Britain sketchy away on our left. What is before us? How long before these lands receive the Gospel? Not *will* they receive it! Faith repels such a question. But when? How long? How many will fail. . . . [We] are sure but it may be

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> that a soldier's grave awaits some of us here. Be it so the Victor's crown will follow. [Brown 1875]

Brown would probably have regarded adventurers like Michael Leahy as misguided in their search for worldly rewards and as irresponsible in their influence on future events.[1] Brown possessed a vision of a better society that Leahy, we suspect, lacked; nonetheless, he shared with Leahy a sense of the portentous: a heroic sense of making history and precipitating *events*.

In this article, we wish to explore what we see as one (among many) of the delayed consequences of these first-contact encounters. With the emergence of Papua New Guinea as a nation-state, some of the descendants of those who were so contacted have adopted a stance toward history and person—toward event—such that they have come to see themselves as critical commentators on, and heroic transformers of, the social field. Specifically, we discuss the presence in the Duke of York Islands of a contingent of evangelical Christians who, relative to their neighbors and kin, have come to see themselves in important respects as both experiencing and propagating George Brown's first-contact encounters with their benighted ancestors. As we shall see, these evangelicals believed, with Brown, that their Duke of York neighbors were locked in anachronism—locked in an outmoded past. And they believed that they could assist them to progress, to become free.

We see in this case the emergence of Papua New Guineans who, more than a century after Brown's arrival, have come to share in significant measure his sense of the portentous making of history.[2] Through a discussion of who these evangelicals were and why they emerged when they did, we explore the way that the "structure(s) of the conjuncture(s)" (Sahlins 1985:xiv) during the colonial and postcolonial periods played out so as to affect and empower a specific kind of person: a Christian citizen, operating in the context of a nation-state, who envisioned a society of like-minded persons and a self capable of effecting that society. In this exploration, we extend and ethnographically embody Chakrabarty's contention that the idea of " 'history' [and its concomitant concept of anachronism] was absolutely central to the idea of 'progress' (later 'development') on which colonialism was based and to which nationalism aspired" (1992:57). Along the way, we draw certain perhaps surprising comparisons among disparate characters and contexts in the contemporary nation-states of Papua New Guinea, the United States, and beyond.

In sum, our goal is to provide a social history (albeit partial) of the development of a particular sense of history: the acceptance by *certain* Duke of York Islanders, within the institutional context of the Papua New Guinea state, of central aspects of the view of individualism and agency that brought George Brown (and Michael Leahy) to Papua New Guinea.

The World Turned Upside Down

Significantly, even though Europeans had been visiting the Duke of York Islands since the latter part of the 18th century,[3] it was Brown whom Duke of York Islanders regarded as having initiated first contact, as having transfigured social life.[4]

Indeed, in a recent performance of what have become annual, indigenously orchestrated reenactments of his arrival (Errington and Gewertz in press), a local preacher credited Brown with "turning the world upside down . . . bringing the people from darkness into light."[5] Moreover, in this reenactment as well as in frequently told local accounts, the transforming effects of Brown's arrival were virtually instantaneous: so powerful was this first contact that savage hearts became Christian souls in the course of only three days.

The language of contemporary exegesis concerning first contact seen in these reenactments and local accounts was well established early in the mission encounter with Duke of York Islanders. Thus by 1892, Aika Mitaralen, a local student in missionary training, had already learned the rhetorical dimensions of "then" and "now," a contrast still persisting today. In a letter written to the general secretary of the mission board of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Australasia, he testified as follows:

> This land was full of darkness, the people did not agree together, and they fought with one another every day, never resting, but continually carried their tomahawks, spears, slings and sling stones. When they fought and killed then they ate the bodies of the slain and there was no brotherly love at that time. The character of the chiefs was bad when they acted like that. When the "Lotu" [church] came to this land these things were not done away with at once, but now have ceased and the "Lotu" grows daily. [As quoted in Brown 1892]

There has been, as we shall see, ongoing argument over what "things" were meant eventually to be "done away with" and what "things" properly belonged to the time of light. Nonetheless, George Brown and the missionaries who followed him were remarkably successful at converting Duke of York Islanders.

The church succeeded for complex reasons. Among these, we believe, was an indigenous view of sociality. According to this view, powerful men—including missionaries—generated social order through their transactions (see Errington 1974; Gewertz and Errington n.d.; and below). Another reason was recognition that missionaries minimally supported social justice in a colonial world where officials favored labor practices serving plantation and other commercial interests (see Threlfall 1975). Certainly, by Fred Errington's first field trip to the Duke of York Islands in 1968, the church had succeeded: all islanders had long been converted. (We recognize that we are truncating considerable colonial history here.) Most embraced George Brown's Methodist Church—subsequently the United Church[6]—as the religion of tradition. On Karavar Island, where everyone was a United Church member, to be anything else would have been alienating and isolating: one in-marrying man had tried to maintain his allegiance to the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, but was shunned into abandoning it for the United Church.

This unity had ceased, however, shortly before we came to Karavar in 1991.[7] During our first extended conversation there, we were told with considerable consternation that the matter of greatest importance occurring in the 20 years since Fred had last visited (in 1972) was the appearance of the New Church, an evangelical church that challenged the preeminence of the United Church. Our informant

thought the New Church illegitimate because it was not the mother church. Indeed, with its emphasis on guitar playing, hand clapping, praising, and providing spontaneous testimonies rather than on hymn singing and formal preaching, it was inappropriate—almost disgusting.

But certainly not all people felt this way. A small but vocal minority claimed not only legitimacy but primacy for their evangelical teachings. They argued that local United Church members had strayed from George Brown's lessons: they had fallen, perhaps not quite into the darkness of paganism, but certainly into the twilight of serious apostasy; they spoke against sin, but freely engaged in it nonetheless. These United Church members were in dire need of revival through a startling personal contact with God.

The evangelicals believed that it was the message of the early missionaries that had startled the benighted into enlightenment: it was the message that had in effect turned the world upside down. Several of them were therefore eager to help us when we undertook the translation of one of the earliest sermons given in the Duke of York language.[8] This sermon had been delivered on November 15, 1881, by Isaac Rooney, Brown's immediate successor in the Duke of York Islands. They hoped, one evangelical told us, that the sermon would have the capacity to awaken their fellow Karavarans from their religious lethargy and apostasy.

A few paragraphs from Rooney's text will be sufficient to explain why the evangelicals were ultimately to be somewhat disappointed. Rooney drew his inspiration from Paul's second epistle to Timothy, verse 4, stanza 8, where—in our King James Version of the Bible, at least—Paul told Timothy that "henceforth there is laid upon me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but onto all them also that love his appearing." That Rooney referred to this passage suggests that (as with Paul) he saw his work to be one of heroic portent, work that might be rewarded—to cite again Brown's thoughts on approaching the Duke of York Islands—with the Victor's crown. Yet Rooney's Duke of York version of this passage from Timothy sounded as flat to our assistants as it did in translation to us: "The church is transcendent; it informs about things that are paramount in our life here and in the after life" (Rooney 1888).

Rooney continued in language that had become largely commonplace:

> The church is mature. No person is the basis of the church. The church belongs to God. Jehovah is the basis of the church. God looks at us. We are lost; we go astray; we feel worried; we feel weak. God feels compassion for us and sends us a church so that we may live within it. . . .
>
> The church teaches us that we believe in customs that are bad—we believe in fighting; we believe in sorcery, in theft, in lying; we believe in working destruction.
>
> A church unites us in love; a church unites our understandings. Fighting is finished; we live in the light. Sorcery, stealing, lying: all are finished. The working of destruction is finished. We are free; we rest; we go freely. We are afraid of nothing. Why? Because of the church.
>
> There is no more half light. No fighting. No shirking. No public leaf coverings. [This is not a statement favoring nudity!] No fear of death. We die here, but then later, no.

> Later, we live. We are entirely happy. We are entirely complete. We are complete without end, without end.
>
> The truth is with us now. The church has come to us. It has come to all people. It has come to all humans. It comes to everyone. [Rooney 1888]

Our assistants were disappointed with this sermon because they found it standard fare—not particularly revitalizing to their lives. True, they agreed, one should inveigh against continuing sorcery, theft, and lying, but attacks on these had long been the staples of weekly United Church preaching. However novel or portentous it was in its time, the "good news," as Rooney presented it, was no longer news. Though not fully anachronistic, the sermon was certainly passé.

The Past Displaced

It must be granted that the evangelicals were a rather hard crowd to please. Most of the 22 adult New Church members on Karavar were in early middle age. Of the men, all but two had spent considerable time away from Karavar working as, for example, heavy-vehicle mechanics, electrical engineers, or teachers. Many of the men had a secondary school education; a few, tertiary. All of the men were literate except for the elderly father of one. In all but two cases the men had joined evangelical sects when living away from home. Their wives, for the most part, had converted after their husbands had. In addition, scattered relatives of the converts (a few widowed mothers and unmarried sisters) had been "reborn." In other words, New Church members—especially the men—were among the most sophisticated, most broadly traveled, and most cosmopolitan of Karavarans.

All members of the Karavaran New Church saw evangelical sects as new, exciting, and progressive—the religion of the educated, contemporary Papua New Guinean. They would, for example, claim that most of the contemporary Papua New Guineans of influence were evangelicals, enumerating many instances. (In this regard, evangelicalism in Karavar and in the rest of East New Britain, and perhaps in Papua New Guinea more broadly, seemed to appeal to those in a higher class position than it often did elsewhere.)

Several of the Karavaran evangelical men had been forced to return home when, with the closing of the Bougainville copper mine,[9] they had lost their jobs. Others, working on resettlement (primarily oil palm) blocks or in towns in other provinces in the country, had come back to Karavar because life away—with increasing law and order problems—had become too stressful and dangerous. A few had applied for new work, but had been unable to find any, given fierce competition for a declining number of jobs. For instance, in East New Britain, one of the more prosperous areas of Papua New Guinea, employment had plummeted by 24 percent during 1989–90 (East New Britain Economic Newsletter 1991b). Nevertheless, many still hoped to find new work eventually, and they were not depressed or demoralized; they were sustained by both a viable subsistence economy at home and their religious calling.

The Karavar these evangelicals returned to had been changing as well.[10] The principal source of cash income for Duke of York villagers had been, and still was, copra production. After peaking during the early 1970s, however, copra prices had fallen markedly (World Bank n.d.). (In 1991, all agricultural commodities produced in Papua New Guinea were trading at levels lower than ten years earlier: coffee at 74 percent, palm oil at 64 percent, copra at 60 percent, and cocoa at 59 percent [East New Britain Economic Newsletter 1991a].) Karavarans, while still well fed, thought themselves poorer than they had been at the time of Fred's first visit in 1968, and certainly, in obvious ways, they were. For example, although many owned radios and flashlights, few had batteries for them. Indeed, most walked about at night by the light of burning palm fronds or glowing embers.

One of the most significant changes, a change often commented on by the Karavarans themselves, was the shift away from a social organization centered on the integrating activities of big men (cf. Epstein 1992:52). This social organization had been at least partly created—certainly fostered—by a colonially imposed system of indirect rule based on the appointment of local headmen, the *luluai*. It also rested on an indigenous context of fluid land tenure and kinship (Errington 1974). Under these circumstances, big men, many of whom were luluai and hence verified and sustained by colonial law, were able to control strategic resources, including labor (cf. Foster 1988:22–70). In particular, they had access to large numbers of coconuts and from their kinship following they had sufficient labor to process them. The cash thus received could, in turn, be readily converted into the locally more salient shell money (*divara* or *tambu*), the basis of transactions essential to forming groups and alliances (cf. Simet 1992).

Duke of York Islanders, and the neighboring and closely related Tolai, viewed social life as generated by the use of shell money, especially through the shell money exchanges and other transactions of big men. These exchanges and transactions focused especially on ceremonies featuring the *dukduk* and *tubuan* ritual organization.

Members of this exclusively male organization engaged in the secret preparation of conically shaped dukduk and tubuan figures, which they publicly displayed on various ritual occasions. Any violation of the extensive rules and prohibitions of the organization, especially those of secrecy, were punished with heavy fines of shell money. Youths passed through a series of initiation grades whereby they paid fees in shell money so as to obtain knowledge about these figures and the rituals in which they appeared. Eventually, a few men of each generation became adepts, with the rights and ritual skills necessary to sponsor and control the more important of these figures, the tubuan. The tubuan was not only the repository of a powerful and dangerous spirit, but was central to the major mortuary ceremony. This was the primary context in which big men—almost invariably adepts—displayed and dispersed their resources of shell money and mobilized their large followings.

The shell money expenditures of big men for these and other activities comprised the politics of both self-aggrandizement and social reproduction. This is not to say that big men could not act asocially as, for example, with the practice of sorcery; the possession of shell money, however, seemed to be regarded as inherently

socializing.[11] As Salisbury said for the Tolai, a big man "creates a name, not for himself alone, but in terms of which other people can organize themselves" (1970:30; see also Bradley 1982; Epstein 1992; Errington 1974; Neumann 1992; and Simet 1992).

By the time of our 1991 visit, the big men around whom Karavarans had organized themselves in the late 1960s and early 1970s had all died—the last in 1986. They had not been replaced, largely because of the collapse of world copra prices on which their political power at least partly rested.

So great had been the fall of copra prices that few Karavarans regularly bothered to process coconuts at all, and the stands formerly controlled by big men were untended, open to anyone wishing to gather the nuts. Although contemporary mortuary ceremonies involving the creation of dukduk and tubuan figures were still staged with the previous frequency (about once every two years), they had come to be funded only minimally by their sponsors. Instead, these sponsors often depended on modest remittances from employed Karavarans (cf. Carrier and Carrier 1989) and on occasional gifts from non-Karavaran, often non–Duke of York Island government officials sporadically trying to please their constituents (cf. Bradley 1982).

No longer as able as the big men of the past to muster impressive resources and extensive followings, and increasingly dependent on outsiders for precarious and somewhat demeaning patronage, present sponsors were likely to derive only moderate prestige from what were often only adequate ceremonies. Indeed, many Karavarans noted with accurate nostalgia that the big men of the past comported themselves more forcefully, that they made more happen socially. In effect, social relations had become less focused on the persons and activities of big men: individuals had become less controlled by big men who displayed their power in ceremonial contexts; mortuary ceremonies in particular and male ritual in general, while still important, had become less compelling.

With these changes occurring in their social life, members of the New Church felt they could risk attacking beliefs and practices focusing on the dukduks and tubuans. They explicitly labeled the figures false gods, as among the things George Brown and the early missionaries meant to do away with. (Brown and his immediate successors were, in fact, strongly opposed to the dukduk and tubuan complex, but found it impossible to eradicate: they objected to it because it was not only pagan but also tyrannical in its proclivity to levy fines [see Threlfall 1975:58].) As one of our New Church informants put it: "Those who continue to worship these false gods are following the laws of the devil and not of God; they will burn in hell." (He continued by telling us that geologists, boring into the ground to explore for Papua New Guinea's mineral resources, had heard the cries of the damned emanating from the center of the earth.) Until recently, such an attack would have been strongly condemned by very powerful men and visited with heavy fines by the dukduk and tubuan organization they controlled—until recently, such an attack would have been virtually suicidal. However, with the decline of the political economy focusing on copra and big men, such an attack, while still decidedly hazardous, was feasible. From the point of view of some, it was admirable.

Significantly, none of the Karavaran evangelicals suggested revealing the ritual secrets—although there were fears that they might. Such revelations had been made elsewhere in Papua New Guinea by Christian revivalists (Leavitt 1989, Tuzin 1989). Instead, they spoke about religious freedom in a modern democracy, arguing that all people should be allowed to practice the religion of their choice without the constraint of tubuan fines. As we shall see below, when the New Church members discovered that other Karavarans would resort to violence to protect the religious homogeneity of their community, the evangelicals remained staunch, even cheerful. At least in talk, they were prepared to become heroic martyrs in defense of their faith (although they may well have hoped to receive at least some support and protection from the police). While they had been rather disappointed with Isaac Rooney's speech, they insisted, with him, that: "We are free. . . . We are afraid of nothing."

The Conversion of the Methodists

The anthropological literature on religious revivalism in Papua New Guinea has not yet become that extensive (see, however, Barr 1983a; Counts 1978; Eyre 1988; Leavitt 1989; Ryan 1969; Schieffelin 1981; and Tuzin 1989). Most of these studies have followed from Lawrence's brilliant analysis of the Yali cargo cult. Lawrence (1964) held that the cult strongly reflected indigenous intellectual assumptions and concerns about knowledge, power, and material goods. Hence, Tuzin, examining a vision of the religious leader of the Ilahita Christian revivalists, stated that it was convincing to the community at large because it was a "blend of traditional ontological understandings concerning dreamlike states, images of local personages and settings, Christian clichés and messages, ideas derived from the immediate political scene, and a dash of cargo cultism" (1989:199).

Much of this literature—emphasizing as it did continuities with a pre-Christian or early Christian past—regarded revival movements as largely conservative, a perspective that was inclined to be (but did not have to be) rather ahistorical. Leavitt, in a recent example focusing on psychosocial continuities, thus suggested that the Christian revival he studied in the East Sepik Province was based on long-term "cargo thinking," which helped resolve certain deep-seated existential "anxieties over establishing ties of intimacy and deep sensitivity to a perceived threat of being abandoned emotionally" (1989:522).

Without contesting that revival movements might embody long-standing assumptions and concerns, the data we have so far presented suggest that Karavaran evangelicals were strongly influenced by important postcolonial transformations—including, as we shall see in more detail, the appearance of the state as a source of support. These transformations both shaped their agenda and affected their capacity to pursue that agenda locally. Moreover, the brand of revivalism they were proposing was somewhat radical. They proposed a return not to their own past sensibilities at the time of contact, but to those of George Brown, who had accepted the challenge of a soldier's grave and the Victor's crown. In other words, we think that these evangelicals had accepted the challenge of becoming individualists of a specific kind.

They had embarked on becoming persons of an altered sort, persons who would become intrepid historical agents.

It is, of course, difficult to know the extent to which Karavaran evangelicals actually had become different from other Karavarans, but certainly their perspectives about who they fundamentally were—their ideas of identity and agency—had changed significantly.[12] Although we will not here launch into a full analysis of the complexities of Karavaran views (both "traditional" and "transformed") of self and person, we will nonetheless suggest that the evangelicals were correct in thinking that a shift of considerable portent was underway.

While not wishing to exaggerate the extent of the shift—such that the cultural and social contrasts appear essentialized—it seems to us that identity and agency as understood by the evangelicals can be accurately regarded as contrasting significantly with an indigenous background similar to that which White described as widely reported throughout the Pacific:

> In the tightly interwoven and constantly public arenas of village life where persons are conceptualized as enmeshed in interdependent relations of all sorts . . . , social and moral thought frequently de-emphasize the individual as the primary locus of experience. [White 1991:6]

(For other Pacific examples of the burgeoning and varied literature about the self, see Battaglia 1990; Clay 1986; Errington 1974; Kirkpatrick 1983; Leenhardt 1979; Munn 1986; Read 1955; Shore 1982; Strathern 1988; Wagner 1986; White and Kirkpatrick 1985.)

White's characterization should not, however, be taken to mean that communally oriented Pacific persons failed to assert themselves with respect to others, or failed to resist being controlled by others. Certainly there was considerable self-assertion in indigenous Karavaran culture. The mark of a big man—the degree to which he had achieved personal eminence—was, in fact, his assertiveness, his forceful efforts to have his agenda accepted. Neither submerging himself in social life nor standing apart from it, he sought to shape sociality by having himself as its focus. As we have characterized above, self-aggrandizement and social reproduction came together in the big man.

It might be noted, as well, that this Melanesian big-man system only partly conformed to Shweder and Bourne's (1984) characterization of "sociocentric organic cultures." According to Shweder and Bourne's argument, the "traditional" (pre–New Church) Karavarans would have felt isolated and alienated if cut off from social relations; yet at the same time, we contend, they would have sought to control rather than acquiesce to various forms of social regulation. Such a circumstance of what might be called *socially embedded individuality* should, moreover, be understood as very different from that characteristic of the recent West where individuality has been marked—at least ideologically—by the sense of self-sufficiency that allows a person to remove himself or herself from social contexts (cf. Varenne 1977). In this regard, we agree with Obeyesekere's (1992) distinction between in-

dividualism as a social movement associated with the development of Western capitalism and ideas of the "individual" and "individualism."

As he states,

> [A] person who lives in a society that values collective responsibility can still have a sense of his own self-separateness and individuality. His sense of himself as an individual is, however, partially constituted out of his communal values. [Obeyesekere 1992:204]

Furthermore, we would add that, for Melanesia, this sense of oneself as an individual is also constituted out of one's social transactions.

This having been said, however, we think that Epstein, writing about both the Karavarans and their immediate neighbors the Tolai, still did not adequately account for the *variety* of forms "individuality" might assume when he somewhat too broadly categorized the Tolai as "closer [on a continuum] to Homo Aequalis than they are to Homo Hierarchicus" (1992:211). Our view is that Karavarans—as well as Tolai—and members of Western society might have recognized personal accomplishment and efficacy, yet have done so in qualitatively different ways.

The Karavaran "traditional" rendering of this general view of identity and agency was further illuminated for us in a conversation we had with a local evangelical. The conversation was not directly about religion, but, oddly, about fish traps. We had been told by several people that it was necessary to have the cut ends of the outer binding on a wicker fish trap all in the same plane. Moreover, the fish trap, when placed in the sea, had to have these aligned ends down on the ocean floor. If this procedure were not followed, no fish would enter the trap. Our evangelical informant confirmed that such a technique was essential to the catching of fish. We then asked him what difference it would make to the fish where the cut ends were? He replied—stepping outside of his sociocultural context—that it did not make any difference to the fish per se, but that if people *believed* that fish would not enter the trap under these circumstances, then fish would not do so.

One additional, clarifying story. During his first field trip in 1968, Fred asked a United Church member to help him gather a native green on Sunday. The man replied that he would be happy to do this for Fred, except that if people saw him work on Sunday, they would gossip. And their gossip would "reach out and touch [him] like a string and make [him] sick."

These beliefs about the efficacy of concerted thought and censure (an efficacy that did not, of course, presume a sort of collective identity, an absence of individual distinctiveness) made going against the social grain very difficult. Yet, it was the willingness to oppose what was widely considered reasonable and moral conduct—to choose to set oneself in opposition to the rest of the community regarding the proper way to live—that characterized Karavaran evangelicals. Furthermore, these evangelicals sought to transform public opinion and practice. In so doing, their efforts were very different from the leadership exercised by traditional big men. Not only were the evangelicals attempting to alter centrally important Karavaran beliefs and practices concerning the United Church and the dukduk and tubuan complex,

but they were doing so from a very different social position. Whereas big men influenced through embodying the social grain, the evangelicals attempted to influence through standing apart—by confronting public opinion as intrepid agents of transformation.

To be sure, we do think that evangelicals wanted to determine the social grain such that Karavaran life would eventually become, as it had been for big men, the manifestation of their influence. However, the social order they envisioned—perhaps the only one possible given the collapse of copra prices on which the big-man complex largely depended—was a transformed one. In fact, they envisioned a society in which freedom of religion (at least *their* religion) would be guaranteed—presumably by the state—rather than a sociality generated and constrained by the transactions of big men (cf. Strathern 1988). The evangelicals, at least in their rhetoric, explicitly repudiated a social life in which personal worth was a product and a manifestation of wealth, personal following, and coercive ritual authority.

Those Karavarans who were to become evangelicals had not initially seen themselves either as dissidents or as agents of transformation, judging by the conversion stories they related to us. Indeed, they described themselves in these stories as resisting the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. Thus, Wilson Tovalaun (who eventually did convert) was approached by two members of his family who had converted: his brother, who converted while working away from home on his oil-palm holding; and his daughter, who converted while working as a seamstress in the nearby provincial capital of Rabaul. When questioned by his daughter, Tovalaun had to admit that he did not experience strong religious feelings when attending United Church services—that neither was his "skin moved" nor was he compelled to "shed sin." Nonetheless, he forbade her to attend evangelical services. His argument was that it was important to "uphold the mother church."

Henry Landi conveyed to us the same initial resistance to conversion. While working in Bougainville as an electrician in the copper mine, he had become interested in, although not committed to, revivalism. However, on his return to Karavar after the mine closed, he attended United Church services as he had before his departure. But he became increasingly concerned that the pastors were poorly trained and that they and the members of the congregation were hypocritical: the sermons muted the revelation of Good News. They did not, for example, reveal that the water Jesus offered from the well to the woman of Samaria in John 4:9 was not primarily to sustain physical life, but to give spiritual and everlasting life. Moreover, despite injunctions from the pulpit against such sins as theft, both pastors and parishioners alike continued to steal from each other's gardens. Although increasingly disillusioned with the United Church on Karavar, Landi felt compelled to support his friends and relatives in their religious practices and, for a long time, said nothing.

Eventually—always after much misgiving and vacillation—Tovalaun, Landi, and the other New Church members to whom we talked made the hard choice to go against accepted beliefs by converting. Invariably, they described this choice as precipitated by especially troubling personal circumstances, circumstances that became comprehensible and bearable through visitation of the Holy Spirit. They

experienced a revelation—a compelling enlightenment that changed their lives. In other words, they described their conversion in the same way that first contact was described: they suddenly encountered the Holy Spirit with a startling and transforming immediacy. Furthermore, the change in their lives had more than personal significance. It was portentous for them of other changes in the world. They would be the nucleus of a new and exemplary community of like-minded fellow believers who had also chosen to let the Holy Spirit into their lives. As such, they would become agents in a larger process of worldwide historical transformation.

Concerning the transformation Tovalaun experienced: soon after Tovalaun prohibited his daughter from attending the evangelical church, two of his younger children died. He began to think that perhaps his strong words to his daughter had caused their illnesses.

> This thought stayed with me and eventually my thinking became clearer. Jesus was telling me that I had to change my life if I were to be saved. And then I talked to my brother and others who knew more about how to bring Jesus into their lives. They showed me the way, and now I must testify to show others the way as well.

In Landi's case, his wife and children became desperately ill. His description of conversion followed much the same pattern:

> But I thought of Isaiah 53:4–5, where it speaks of how Jesus bore sorrows which weighed him down, how he was wounded and bruised for our sins, how he gave his flesh so that we could be healed; and I also thought of Matthew 8:17, where Jesus takes our sicknesses and bears our diseases; and Peter 2:24, where Jesus carries the load of our sins on his own body and then dies on the cross so that we can be finished with sin and lead a good life. And then I had a marvelous result. Once I based my faith on God's talk, once I built the word of God inside my consciousness, then my family was healed. And now, together with my family and friends, I praise His name.

As one last, perhaps synoptic example, Bobby Alden, another Karavaran evangelical, told us about his life before Jesus entered it. While attending high school in Rabaul, he fell into bad company. He ignored his studies, led a dissolute and criminal life, and was eventually arrested for theft. Jesus came to him when he was in jail. As Alden put it, "Jesus changed my life, cleansed me of sin and made me whole. And now I have found others who wish to praise His name here on Karavar and who want to help others find the one, true way to salvation."

These Karavaran accounts of personal tribulation followed by the illuminating transformation of the Holy Spirit were typical—formulaic—among evangelicals more generally. And so was their reported discovery of the joyful coming together with like-minded others to give praise (see, for example, Barr 1983b; Calvert 1983; Christianson 1979; Hollenweger 1972; Namunu 1983; and Taruna 1983). Barr (1984), in a volume about religious movements in Melanesia, characterized those movements that emphasized the Holy Spirit as providing a "new relevancy" to the participants. They placed emphasis on "experience rather than doctrine, on testimony rather than theology, on personal encounter rather than ideas about God. Faith

is related more to a person's conscious life. God is discovered within one's immediate context" (Barr 1984:171). Furthermore, Barr suggested, "those who experience a spirit baptism share a common experience while others may be kept outside because they have not received the Spirit" (1984:163).

That these Karavaran conversion narratives were similar to each other as well as to those told elsewhere is not surprising. From the evangelical perspective, their tellers had all been affected by the same transcultural phenomenon: that of the Holy Spirit. As Namunu explained, "The Holy Spirit . . . cannot be programmed nor structured by men within time, tradition, theology or philosophy of any sort" (1983:54). From our anthropological perspective, however, these narratives were similar because they employed what had become an established form. We would suggest that what distinguished these Karavaran evangelicals from their United Church neighbors was, therefore, not the tribulations they encountered (most Karavaran parents have had children become seriously ill), but that they responded to these experiences in a certain way, using an available, *but not culturally obligatory,* rhetoric.

To clarify the nature and extent of the shift in ideas about identity and agency—and, by extension, about the basis of social life—that is revealed in these conversion narratives, consider what might at first seem a surprising analogy: the rhetoric of Karavaran evangelicals was strikingly similar to that Weston (1991) found in the coming-out stories of American homosexuals. In both cases, the narratives conveyed a "personal struggle," an "odyssey of self-discovery," that put "established social ties to the test" so as "to lay claim to" a new kind of "community membership" (Weston 1991:77–78). Narrators in both instances saw themselves as different from others and as "heroic figure[s] with definite task[s] to accomplish" (Weston 1991:78), including the task of creating communities of like-minded individuals.

In the case of American homosexuals, these communities were comprised of persons who had often been rejected by kin and whose coming together was based on choice rather than on biologically based obligation. They were, as the title of Weston's book suggested, "the families we choose." In the case of Karavaran evangelicals, the communities envisioned were of Christians who had encountered resistance—in their view, persecution—from other Karavarans. (In fact, shortly before our arrival in 1991, the police had been summoned to Karavar after United Church youths had stoned and damaged a house in which New Church services were being held.) Their coming together, therefore, was based on (often painful) choice rather than on social habit or compulsion.

We do recognize that this analogy is imperfect: the sociocultural context that compelled American homosexuals to come out differed in numerous and important respects from that which enabled Karavarans to embrace the New Church. Most significantly, American homosexuals lived in a nation-state that, if it granted freedom of sexual preference at all, did so not because this freedom was generally regarded as desirable in itself, but because it was the logical extension of other "freedoms" such as that of religion. Karavaran evangelicals, on the other hand, could rely on considerable state support for their agenda.

Yet, we do intend the analogy between these sets of lives to be more than provocative. As we have said, it is also instructive of what we see as a shift in the cultural grounding of Karavaran evangelicals. This shift, it seems to us, made the evangelicals, in certain ways, more akin to George Brown, Michael Leahy, and American homosexuals than to members of the Karavaran United Church.[13] They had become increasingly willing to differentiate themselves from and to confront their neighbors. Moreover, that George Brown, Michael Leahy, American homosexuals, and Karavaran evangelicals all shared important characteristics was not only a postmodern irony, but suggests important processes of convergence. Specifically, what all these different persons shared—albeit in differing degrees and with different political effects—is a commitment to "Homo Aequalis" in the Western individualist sense: they all embraced choice, autonomy from ascribed social constraints, and the efficacy of personal agency in the historical process. Moreover, they all regarded the state as the context that would, or should, enable them to be (historically) effective actors.

Historical Agents Meet the Tubuan

On the evening of August 19, 1991, we were in our Karavaran house listening to a BBC World Service report of an attempted coup underway in the Soviet Union. As we contemplated what was presented as a historically reactionary effort to suppress new-found freedoms, we became caught up in events New Church members would regard as analogous. Suddenly, from the men's ground—a quarter-mile section of beach prohibited to women—came a late-night chorus of *wuk-wuk,* indicating that the "forest had come alive": the tubuan was afoot (see Errington 1974 for an analysis of this ritual). The ritual court had convened and the tubuan, escorted by a posse of young men, was going out into the community to collect a substantial shell-money fine for a ritual infraction. Fred immediately went to the men's ground, where he was told with some satisfaction that the tubuan was proceeding to the houses of New Church members. The women in these households had gone to the gardens that day despite a ritual prohibition on travel; if payment was not immediately forthcoming, their houses would be destroyed, according to custom. Moreover, they would have no redress for the fine and/or damage in the government court or any other place, because the tubuan was supreme on these occasions.

As the men talked to Fred and each other about these infractions and fines, the progress of the posse from one New Church house to another could be clearly heard and charted. The fines in most cases were quickly collected from the women, who happened to be alone in their houses at the time, and the posse returned to the men's ground. In one case, it was announced triumphantly that, since no payment was made, the tubuan and its supporters had been forced to destroy property: they had knocked down a cookhouse, overturned water tanks, and cut down banana trees. As it turned out, there had also been talk of burning the house down.

Fred was also told that Kiapbong Mosley was in real trouble. Mosley was one of the most active—indeed, militant—members of the New Church. There was thought to be strong evidence that he had revealed fundamental ritual secrets to

some United Church women. In the past, Fred was told, he would have been killed. He could still expect immense fines to be leveled against him not only by the Karavaran ritual court, but by ritual courts throughout the sizable area in which the ritual was practiced. In addition, the copra drier he had recently established on communally owned property would be closed down.

A few minutes later, an event took place that was upsetting to virtually all. Although discord of any sort at the men's ground was a serious ritual infraction when a tubuan was present, a terrific ruckus began among those at one end of this area. As the other men rushed there, they discovered an altercation in progress. Mosley and his two brothers—all New Church members—had just learned of the tubuan's expedition. They were raging about the fines, the destruction of property, and what they claimed was the threat to life. They insisted that they—and their wives—were not bound by the laws of the dukduk and tubuan; therefore, the fines and the damages were illegitimate. Moreover, the talk had been of "murder" (English word used): those threatening to burn the house had been aware that a terrified woman and her children were inside. No men had been home to protect this woman or the other women or to deal with the tubuan and the posse. They hotly denied that ritual secrets had been revealed, and said that the tubuan was a false god.

Some of the United Church men began to shout back that the New Church should leave Karavar. The tubuan was not a satan; its laws were strong, important, and central to custom. If women knew the secrets, all the men would be ashamed. Mosley, spectacularly intransigent throughout, said that he had not brought the New Church, but God had. His adversaries snorted derisively. Then, an event took place that was perhaps unprecedented in Karavaran history. Tuembe Simel, a United Church member and an active participant in the tubuan organization, physically attacked Mosley, punching and kicking him. This was not only a serious breach of the ritual peace, but a shocking violation of kinship: Simel was Mosley's close, junior matrilineal kinsman, his *actual* sister's son. Simel was younger and bigger, yet Mosley fought back with ferocity and was more than his assailant's match. Although Mosley's two brothers and coreligionists joined him and several others joined Simel, the fight did not escalate much, nor did it continue long. After a few minutes Simel was winded and Mosley was restrained by his affines.

The matter was far from over, however. Later that night, Mosley's brother paddled to a neighboring island to use the Duke of York Islands Community Government radio-phone to summon the police: the New Church members were convinced that the power of the state had to be invoked to ensure the protection of their property, lives, and freedom of worship. The next morning, two police officers arrived at a badly divided Karavar. They had come, they insisted several times, "not concerning any of the difficulties about custom, but to check the reports regarding damaged property and threats to life." They then inspected the damaged premises accompanied by the Karavaran magistrate—a tubuan adept and United Church member (one who had been quite inconspicuous the previous night)—and by New

Church members. The police said they would return in two days to hold a hearing. In the meantime, they wished those whose property had been damaged to itemize their losses. Moreover, they warned that any more damage by the tubuan and its supporters prior to the hearing would result in arrest.

The same two police officers arrived on the appointed morning. Smartly uniformed, both carrying tear gas canisters, and one carrying a shotgun, they were greeted with considerable respect, if not deference. To a group of assembled men—no women were present given that ritual matters might be discussed—the senior officer began by apologizing that the conversation would have to be in Pidgin English rather than in the local vernacular, because he was from Madang and his colleague, from the Sepik. He came, he said, to investigate the matter of the destroyed property and wanted to hear both sides of the story so that he could weigh them and try to find a solution. "I am on the side of the law," he said, "but here there are really two laws at work: one of custom and one of the government. We must try to coordinate these two. I don't know how, but we must try."[14]

A senior adept then responded to his invitation to present the side of custom. He explained why the women were not allowed to visit their gardens when the tubuan was active in the village, and concluded by saying,

> When the Australians controlled the government, if someone protested a decision of the ritual court, the Australians would send the case back to us and tell us to straighten the trouble by our traditional means. The law of the tubuan and the law of the government have always been the same.

Mosley responded, explaining that as members of the New Church, the women were free to garden as they chose. Moreover, he argued, the ritual procedure had not been properly followed or equitably enforced. For women to go to the gardens under these circumstances was actually a very minor infraction of tubuan regulations, not one that warranted heavy fines and destruction of property. In addition, although United Church women had also gone to the gardens, New Church women were the only ones fined. Furthermore, advance notice of the fines should have been given so that the men would be present to pay them: a "summons" (English word used) should have preceded the fines.

Considerable debate then ensued about proper procedure. A policeman eventually interrupted, stating:

> The complaint which has come before the law is clear. There has been an attack on a house, on property. I have the report of the damages written out and I can take this report to court. . . . I can't say that custom is wrong or that the law of the government is wrong. I come from a place of custom too. All of us in Papua New Guinea do. We two come here to represent the government, but we respect custom. We can take you to court but there will be ill feelings when you return from jail. . . . But if I decide to support custom, then there will be ill feelings on the other side, from those who claim freedom to worship as they choose. These disagreements should stop. We want to reach a compromise. . . . I can't force one. Papua New Guinea is a democratic government where people have freedom to do what they choose.

Discussion followed about the importance of a compromise. One man supported the police by saying, "Custom is very important, but so is property. Let us come up with a compromise we can agree on." Efforts to compromise failed, however, in part because no one seemed to have much idea of what a compromise would look like in this circumstance of polarization. Moreover, Mosley remained unmoved: after brief consultation with his brothers, he said that he wanted to take the matter to court, especially because this was the second time that the police had to be summoned. His adversaries, as well, were adamant. One said:

> As long as the New Church is inside Karavar, there is going to be trouble. On Saturday the Prime Minister came [for a phase of the ceremony for which the *tubuan* had appeared]. He said in his speech that we must hold on to custom and tradition. . . . We must instruct our children in them. . . . The teaching of the New Church deprecates custom. . . . And I warn Mosley that he did not ask permission to build his copra drier on our land. I am talking about this because there is going to be trouble. Something is going to be burned down. The *tubuan* can't be flouted.

After almost three hours, the policeman closed the hearing. He said he was going to leave and give people time to think about how to reach a "balance between law and custom."

Those United Church members to whom we spoke found the whole episode, particularly the fight, extremely distressing. Many said that if Ambo—the last of the big men—were still alive, none of this would have happened. He would not have allowed the New Church to come to Karavar, much less have allowed neighbor to be turned against neighbor, kin against kin. United Church members who had affines in the New Church were especially upset: the breach between sides had become too great to mediate. They saw no compromise as feasible and feared that the New Church would have to leave Karavar and its members with it, unless they rejoined the United Church.

The members of the New Church were far less distressed. They were, however, frightened at the possibility of further retribution, especially at the prospect of continuing heavy fines levied by those in the tubuan organization, both local and regional. But they also felt elated by their engagement in a portentous activity, one that might ultimately grant them the "Victor's crown." As an evangelical put it,

> Nothing is strong enough to stop the church. The church moves ahead. Its members are sometimes persecuted, but it moves straight ahead. Its members are disciplined and have begun to resist. The Holy Spirit is within them. It will direct them.

They, too, saw no compromise as possible, but were convinced that the present breach in kinship and community would eventually become resolved as a new community of believers was created by the Holy Spirit. Until that time, however, they had to remain vigilant: "People," one member said, "must fight for the freedom to worship as they choose."[15]

Conclusion: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Individualism Revisited

As we described above, the tubuan and the posse attacked New Church members at the same time the BBC reported that the leaders of a reactionary force in the Soviet Union were attempting to undermine the newfound personal, political, and economic freedoms of people there. In listening to this report, we wondered whether these new freedoms might themselves prove repressive; if so, it was unclear which faction would prove ultimately reactionary and which truly liberating. We also simultaneously found ourselves ambivalent in our response to the conflict erupting that night on Karavar between those of the New Church and those of the United Church.[16] On the one hand, our experience of evangelical Christians had made us wary of those who used a literal reading of the Bible to chart their life courses: not only in America, but in Karavar as well, we had seen that the insistence on religious freedom led to an intolerant spiritual elitism.[17] On the other hand, our sympathies, at least initially, were strongly with the New Church members. They were being attacked by a force that aroused for us images of vigilantes and night-riders: under cover of darkness, our friends were being terrorized by the masked tubuan and its accompanying posse. (Coincidentally, the tubuan looks somewhat like a Ku Klux Klan figure.)

We also found ourselves sympathetic to the evangelicals because some of their rhetoric touched on important American cultural values. In particular, some of it evoked an interrelated set of long-standing (although hardly unproblematic) liberal cultural themes focused on the value of a certain sort of individuality—an individuality regarded as relatively unfettered by social and cultural context or other forms of constraint. These themes encompassed the following: freedom of choice, including religious choice (and, in the view of some, sexual preference); the capacity of individuals to effect both personal and social change; the importance of individual rights and liberties; and, we must stress, a view of the state as guarantor of those rights and liberties.

These themes not only linked us as Americans with Karavaran evangelicals (indeed, much of their religious literature came from the United States) but linked us all (in certain regards) with Michael Leahy, George Brown, Isaac Rooney, and American homosexuals. All understood that it was possible and desirable to engage in personal—perhaps even heroic—odysseys so as to make history. All understood that to the extent these odysseys went forcefully against the social grain, they could shock in such a way as to generate and supplant anachronism. They were, in other words, first-contact encounters.

However, while Barr might be correct in saying that the "rediscovery of the Holy Spirit has liberated missionized Christians, enabling them to break with sincere but irrelevant ways of understanding faith and to assert new culturally appropriate ways" (1984:171–172), it is important to understand that these new ways for Karavarans were old ones for many of us. In certain respects, the local evangelicals—who, it will be recalled, were among the best educated and most cosmopolitan of Karavarans—had become the proximate colonizers.

The process by which these Karavarans had, at least partially, replicated George Brown was a complex one. It had involved more than a century of multifocal conjunctures in Papua New Guinea: direct colonial rule, economic extraction of primary resources (such as Karavaran coconuts and Bougainville copper), a devastating world war, the imposition of a Western-style educational system (which, among other things, taught about individualism, history, and the importance of the nation-state [cf. Chakrabarty 1992]), and continued missionization, including the direct influence from American evangelical and other churches.

In addition, since Independence (in 1975), Papua New Guinea politicians had adopted an especially portentous conjuncture from the last of their colonial predecessors: the articulation of local models of person and polity with those taken from modern nation-states. These adopted models posited the existence of "citizens": formally equal individuals (sharing, and recognizing that they shared, the same rights and responsibilities) who joined together to form the nation and to shape its trajectory[18] (see, among others, Anderson 1983; Foster 1992; Gewertz and Errington n.d.; Handler 1988).

In Papua New Guinea, this imported definition of the citizen as a particular sort of progressive individual was promulgated by politicians in state-sponsored campaigns, such as National Law Week, designed to produce and disseminate "in relatively self-conscious fashion, collective representations—images and ideals of the collectivity and of the persons who compose the collectivity" (Foster 1992:33). These representations, however, were often in conflict with local, customary definitions of person and polity, which some saw as conservative and anachronistic. The state must reconcile modernity with tradition through, as Foster argues,

> producing and disseminating ideals and images of the nation. On the one hand, the state must produce representations in conformity with [imported] models of nation and citizen already in place; on the other, it must produce images and ideals that [build on tradition so as to] represent a distinct and unique identity for the nation and its citizens. [1992:44]

In the Karavaran case, this collision of imported and modern with local and traditional models formed an important aspect of the contention between the members of the New Church and the United Church. Significantly, in the police inquiry already described, this conflict was represented as being between law and custom and between property and custom. As we have seen, the efforts to achieve reconciliation proved ineffective: the balance remained elusive.

It is clear that contemporary Karavaran United Church members were no longer willing to have their world turned upside down by those we might call George Brown look-alikes. Despite the early years of strong mission disapproval, they had been able to articulate Christianity with their men's ritual organization: for example, grace was routinely said before ritual feasts at the men's ground.[19] Likewise, members of the New Church did not wish to change their position. In their embrace of what were, in fact, many of the values of Western individualism, local evangelicals were striving for change rather than compromise. They saw them-

selves as the wave of the future: one told us that "revivalism is sweeping Papua New Guinea; when the older generation at Karavar dies, it will become strong there as well."

It is important to note that this problematic conjuncture, whereby Western liberal models of person and polity were superimposed on existing models, implied other transformations, especially in the economy, in Papua New Guinea, and, we might add, in the Soviet Union.[20] For instance, in recent decades as Papua New Guinea developed as a free-market economy, class differentiation grew to such an extent that many villagers increasingly found themselves disadvantaged and peripheral.[21] Thus, for instance, at least in the perception of many local people, the sale of Papua New Guinea's considerable mineral and timber resources by those well-positioned within the state seemed to have contributed to ecosystemic degradation and economic inequality without significantly raising the local standard of living.

Given this direction of change in Papua New Guinea, Karavaran evangelicals might not be served all that well by the economic and political system into which they were indirectly buying. Although they were the most sophisticated of Karavarans, they were not—in national or international terms—very well placed. It will be recalled, for example, that many had returned home because they had lost their jobs in a recession economy. For people so placed, peripheral in what was itself a peripheral country within a world system, local models and local resources might in the long run prove more reliable. While sympathizing with the personal dilemmas of these evangelicals, we have come to view their transformative project as far from an unambiguously liberating one. Indeed, as we write, less than a year after the attempted coup in the (now former) Soviet Union, many there were having second thoughts about the cost of their recent first contact with free markets.

Epilogue: Nostalgia of First Contact

It is not surprising that at the time a postcolonial Papua New Guinea was attempting to establish itself as a viable nation-state based on a free-market economy, some of its citizens had begun to see themselves as heroic transformers of the social field, as the makers of history. Correspondingly, it is not surprising that at a time postmodern America was attempting to reestablish itself in the face of economic decline and social fragmentation,[22] some of its citizens experienced nostalgia for the heroic transformers of yesteryear. Thus, more than half a century after the already somewhat anachronistic Michael Leahy (Papua New Guinea was described as the *last* frontier) carried his Mauser and Leica into the Highlands, Americans were seriously considering electing for president, Ross Perot, a man widely esteemed for his entrepreneurial success in pursuit of treasure and fame. Despite a purported postmodern distrust in the capacity of metanarratives (both personal and social) to convince and compel, and despite proclamations that with the triumph of capitalism the end of history had arrived, Americans appeared to admire—in fact, yearn for—someone who in his efficacy could act as personal exemplar and collective leader. Might this be why evangelical Christianity was sweeping America as well?[23]

Notes

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1. Early missionaries in the Duke of York Islands strenuously objected to the unscrupulous practices of, for example, labor recruiters.

2. This circumstance was perhaps analogous to the highlanders producing their own Michael Leahys (such as Joe Leahy?—see Connolly and Anderson 1988) or the Hawaiians producing their own (non-Lono) Captain Cooks (see Sahlins 1985).

3. In 1776, Carteret, on the Swallow, had observed many " 'Coconut plantations', houses, and inhabitants with handsome well made canoes" (Rubel and Rosman n.d.:77) on the Duke of York Islands. In 1791, Bradley, on the Sirius, had "exchanged some Cocoanuts and pieces of Iron hoop" (1969:256) with locals there. In the several decades prior to Brown's arrival, other Europeans

> came in naval vessels on exploring expeditions and in trading or whaling ships. In addition, Duke of York Islanders had been taken as crew members "for a whaling cruize or pearl shell expedition," and observers in the 1870's noted their ability to communicate in English. [Neumann 1992:50]

4. Neumann, who worked among the neighboring Tolai, likewise reported that he "was not told any story about explorers, whalers, or early traders that described their visits from a Tolai point of view . . . [while there] are detailed accounts of the arrival of Methodist and Catholic missionaries" (1992:50).

5. This language, describing conversion as a move from darkness to light, was introduced by missionaries and was widespread throughout the Pacific. See, for example, Shore 1982:158, White 1991:138–139, and Young 1977.

6. The Papua Ekalesia, Kwato Extension Association, United Church of Port Moresby, and Methodist Church of New Britain amalgamated to form the United Church of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands in 1968.

7. The denominational split more created than followed lines of cleavage on Karavar. As will be seen, it often divided families.

8. Although it was in a dialect of the Duke of York language different from that spoken by Karavarans and containing archaic words, our informants had little trouble understanding the sermon.

9. The copper mine at Bougainville, one of the world's largest, was closed by sabotage in May 1989 after years of protest by locals who claimed the compensation they had received for yielding their lands to the mine had been inadequate. The conflict subsequently spread such that Bougainville became a war zone, with the Bougainville Revolutionary Army locked in combat with the Papua New Guinea Defense Force.

10. More fortunate in this regard than other Duke of York Islanders for whom land was becoming scarce, Karavarans were gardening on a neighboring island recently restored to them after its European appropriation in the late 19th century for use as a plantation.

11. In one remarkable story, a wild, almost precultural Duke of York Islander—described as dirty, incestuous, and a thoroughgoing troublemaker—became a highly respected leader when a nature spirit gave him large amounts of shell money. Indeed, this individual was then credited with bringing laws to the German colonists.

12. Because ideas about identity constituted aspects of identity, a change in those ideas was, perforce, a change in identity. In a whole range of ways, Karavaran New Church members insisted that they were significantly different from United Church members. Thus, the New Church members said they were unafraid of sorcery—in part because God would protect them from evil. They eschewed matters of competition and display, also, because these fostered personal vanity and the disparagement of others. On the other hand, many areas of Karavaran life remained acceptable: kin ties were still regarded as important because these could be valued as constituting family. However, New Church members also talked about (and sometimes engaged in) "backsliding"—and in so doing, gave recognition of the extent to which traditional concerns, such as those focusing on male prestige, still exerted power over them.

13. For an interesting analysis of the association of evangelism with broader American values, see Hvalkof and Aaby 1981. In fact, the Karavaran evangelical discourse was heavily influenced by American sources; many of the religious pamphlets Karavaran evangelicals consulted were published in the United States.

14. Throughout East New Britain at this time, police officers were intervening in conflicts between members of evangelical churches and those claiming to be followers of custom. These conflicts had become sufficiently chronic and acute that one government official characterized them to us as "the holy wars." For a fascinating analysis of the complex relationship more generally between law and custom in Papua New Guinea, see Aleck n.d.

15. An anonymous reviewer of this article suggested that it

> seems not improbable that these men have an agenda far beyond "freedom of religion." Religion may be important here because it has become a marketable and relatively safe discourse which can be applied to help unhinge current power structures among the islanders.

It may well be that the New Church agenda did seek to replace the influence of big men by that of the evangelicals. However, despite the (qualified) support of the state, the New Church challenge to custom, especially as it focused on the dukduk and tubuan rituals, did, in the perception of both the evangelicals and the others, incur most significant risks.

16. Our responses to these Karavaran evangelicals was considerably different, therefore, from Harding's (1991) reaction to the American fundamentalists she studied.

17. Even those well-disposed to evangelical Christianity noted this possibility. Barr, for example, wrote:

> People who experience a spirit-baptism may see themselves as being above the cares and needs of this world. They may perceive of themselves as being specially favoured by God, as being an elite or an elect people who have passed through a second (and more superior) conversion experience. [1984:172–173]

18. There were, of course, important internal debates within Papua New Guinea as to what kind of nation it would become—what sort of blend of new and traditional would best serve the future nation or region. For a discussion of aspects of this debate as it occurred in East New Britain, see Grosart 1982.

19. An anonymous reviewer of this article raised the interesting question of whether the resistance by United Church members to New Church members was, in fact, comparable to the response by Karavarans to George Brown at the time of his arrival. The accounts by Karavarans and other Duke of York Islanders about this first contact soon became heavily affected and distorted by missionization, as the letter (previously cited) written in 1892 by the recent convert, Aika Mitaralen, indicates. Yet, it is also evident that the Karavarans and other Duke of York Islanders remained unmoved by mission teaching concerning the dukduk and tubuan rituals. Moreover, the missionaries themselves often commented on the initial obdurance of their perspective flock.

20. Hence, as Burke made clear,

> the fact that an activity is capable of reduction to intrinsic, autonomous principles does not argue that it is free of identification with other forms of motivation extrinsic to it. . . . Any specialized activity participates in a larger unit of action. [1969:27]

21. For an analysis of class formation throughout the Pacific, see Hooper et al. 1987.

22. At the time of this writing, America was in an economic recession; it was also still reeling from the shock of riots in Los Angeles precipitated by the acquittal of police officers who had been videotaped beating a black motorist, Rodney King.

23. It is, to be sure, a matter of ongoing debate whether meta-narratives can ever produce liberation.

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