

# Strong Words and Forceful Winds: Religious Experience and Political Process in Melanesia

Harvey Whitehouse  
*Queen's University of Belfast*

## ABSTRACT

Melanesian religious movements tend to conform to two contrasting types of regime: the one relatively centralized, hierarchical, stable, long-lived, and nationalistic; the other fragmented, egalitarian, unstable, sporadic, and parochial. Existing theories of 'cargo cults', including the progressivist hypothesis which views millenarism as the natural precursor of nationalism, have failed to appreciate this fundamental divergence. It is shown that politico-religious regimes are rooted in alternative cognitive processes, a point which is illustrated with reference to the Pomio Kivung movement of New Britain and the Taro cult of Northern Papua. One implication of this argument is that typologies of cults, based on ideological variation, are of limited sociological import, and rather that the structure and scale of cults are artefacts of distinctive styles of cognition, codification, and transmission.

There is a strong tradition among social scientists and historians of envisaging millenarism as the ideological and organizational progenitor of nationalism and other secular political movements.<sup>1</sup> In the literature on Melanesian 'cargo cults', the theme is similarly pervasive.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, attempts to secure material benefits through supernatural intervention are commonly manifested in highly fragmented, uncoordinated, and sporadic cults. If the progressivist hypothesis is applied across the board, then fleeting, localized cargo cults appear to be less successful politically than large-scale, centralized movements such as Yali's, Paliu's, or the Pomio Kivung. The former seem to be 'failed' or 'abortive' experiments in political unification and protest. The impermanence of their rituals might also seem to imply disillusionment, resulting from the non-arrival of 'cargo', so they appear to 'fail' in theological as well as organizational terms.

These conclusions are unconvincing, however, because many small cults are highly successful in consolidating a local experience of unity, often stimulating feelings of solidarity which are far more intense than those encompassing the far-flung members of big movements. Moreover, they cultivate moving and mysterious revelations which, for all that they may arise out of a fleeting experience of cultural transmission, have a highly memorable character. In some ways, these kinds of religious experiences are more evocative and haunting than the routinized activities of large movements. Melanesian cargo cults therefore present not one but two basic kinds of politico-religious process.

In this paper, I explore the web of interconnections between codification, dissemination, frequency of transmission, social organization, and political ethos in two very different Melanesian cults. My intention, initially, is to draw out a set of contrasts as clearly as possible, but I will suggest that the divergent models may be said to coexist in

certain cul  
religious m  
The fi  
of centrali  
exemplify  
Britain, p  
commande  
attracted s  
Trompf 19  
fieldwork  
1991, 1992

Secor  
began in  
Unlike the  
adherents  
Pomio Kiv  
thriving ta  
F.E. Willie  
by Chinne

My s  
codified. I  
doctrine to  
the Taro c  
lacking, a  
based pri  
oral elabo  
adherents  
drawing o  
Fredrik B

Thes  
The empl  
elaborate  
knowledg  
addressing  
advantage  
Administ

The  
the popul  
down the  
rituals. O  
centralize  
that conv  
'talked in  
transmiss

I the  
widesprea  
intact thr  
leaders d

certain cult formations, with important implications for the nature and longevity of new religious movements.

The first movement to be considered, known as the Pomio Kivung, exhibits features of centralization, hierarchy, uniformity, longevity, and micronationalist sentiment which exemplify the progressivist model. The Pomio Kivung affects a large area of East New Britain, principally Maenge, Sulka, and Baining populations. Although it has commanded tens of thousands of supporters over a period of nearly thirty years, it has attracted surprisingly little scholarly attention (but see Panoff 1969, Tovalele 1977, Trompf 1984, 1990a, 1990b). My study of the Pomio Kivung, based on two years fieldwork (1987 to 1989) is the most detailed to date (Whitehouse 1989, 1990a, 1990b, 1991, 1992b, 1993).

Secondly, I consider the Taro cult among the Orokaiva (Northern Papua), which began in 1914 and persisted in localized and sporadic outbursts until the late 1920s. Unlike the Pomio Kivung, the Taro cult was highly fragmented and uncoordinated. Taro adherents did not anticipate Western cargo (although see Lanternari 1963:165); like Pomio Kivung members, however, they sought to obtain material prosperity (in this case, thriving taro) through innovative rituals. The Taro cult was most extensively described by F.E. Williams (1928); a shorter account, also based on direct observation, was published by Chinnery and Haddon (1917).

My starting point is a basic divergence in the way religious understandings are codified. In the Pomio Kivung, considerable emphasis is placed on logically integrated doctrine transmitted in the orations of divine leaders and their official representatives. In the Taro cult, by contrast, verbalized doctrine and exegetical commentary were all but lacking, and revelations were cultivated through techniques of non-verbal transmission, based primarily on feasts and spirit possession. Williams was frustrated by the scarcity of oral elaboration, and took this as evidence of the 'primitive' nature of the cult (and its adherents). I attempt to develop a more compelling interpretation of Taro cosmology, drawing on recent theories of 'analogic' communication, exemplified in the works of Fredrik Barth.

These contrasting regimes of codification are related to patterns of dissemination. The emphasis on verbal transmission in the Pomio Kivung facilitated the spread of elaborate ideology over great distances by just a handful of gifted orators. Cosmological knowledge was readily associated with the movement's leader, who proselytized widely, addressing large audiences and moving on. As such, the movement was able to take full advantage of techniques and channels of dissemination introduced by the colonial Administration, especially with the advent of universal suffrage.

The Taro cult, by contrast, did not spread directly from one individual or group to the population at large, but along chains of contagion, like the spread of a virus. People down the chain had no idea who originated the cult, nor what history attached to the rituals. One person was as capable as any other of spreading the cult, and so there was no centralized authority, or sanctified leader. Another aspect to this 'egalitarian' ethos was that conversion entailed a personal, private experience of revelation; nobody was ever 'talked into' joining the Taro cult, because the ideology was not subject to verbal transmission.

I then consider differences in the *frequency* of transmission. In the absence of widespread literacy, an extensive body of Pomio Kivung doctrine could only be preserved intact through regular repetition. In pursuit of doctrinal uniformity, Pomio Kivung leaders designated local 'orators' or 'sermonizers' to keep the Word alive, and their

speeches were monitored by patrolling 'supervisors' from the movement's headquarters, who acted as intermediaries between the central seat of power and grassroots supporters in a variety of ways. Like the repetitive services and sermons of the mission, Pomio Kivung rituals and orations became highly routinized. The Taro cult, by contrast, more closely resembled the initiation complex in which the impact of revelations was related to the uniqueness and intensity of the act of transmission. Like initiation rituals, Taro activities were highly memorable, traumatic, and evocative. People did not (nor were they expected to) undergo such experiences very frequently.

These divergent patterns of dissemination and transmission are easy to picture if one imagines standing on a hill at dusk, watching the street lamps of a city coming on. The dissemination of the Pomio Kivung brings to mind an image of clusters of lights being switched on here and there until the whole area is lit up. Conversely, the spread of the Taro cult may be likened to a series of waves of lights, triggered as if by contiguous contagion, switching off in fairly random clusters before being illuminated in fresh waves.

Differences of political ethos between the Pomio Kivung and Taro cult are related to the kinds of solidarity cultivated in both traditions. Pomio Kivung members are united in a common purpose, namely the collective production of a cargoist miracle which will be of benefit to all. The movement is therefore an 'imagined' community of largely anonymous members, a sort of 'proto-nation' which hopes, one day, to govern itself. Oral histories of the movement, and universal allegiance to central authorities (facilitating institutional uniformity across the region), help to bring the 'Pomio Kivung nation' into focus. But the experience of solidarity among Pomio Kivung members is comparatively weak because the common rituals of members are performed at scattered locations, rather than in massive communal gatherings, and the rituals themselves have a repetitive and even humdrum character. In the Taro cult, however, much more intense feelings of solidarity were cultivated in locally *distinctive* ritual performances, based around a shared experience of traumatic revelations. This in turn reinforced the boundaries of Taro communities, the division of Taro adherents into opposed and competing sects, and thus the fragmentary character of the cult. Histories of 'religious communities' were constructed around autobiographical memories of emotive and revelatory collective performances, rather than in verbally transmitted stories encompassing unknown people and places (as in the Pomio Kivung).

#### REGIMES OF CODIFICATION

Pomio Kivung religion is extensively codified in language, specifically the orations of its inspired leaders and those officials empowered to relay and reiterate authoritative doctrine to grassroots supporters. In every Pomio Kivung community, sermons are delivered on a daily basis (when offerings are removed from the communal Cemetery Temple or *Haus Matmat*), but the most extensive orations are delivered on two afternoons each week in community Meeting Houses or *Haus Kivung*. Every Pomio Kivung community (typically comprising all or most of the residents in a village settlement) has two or three official orators (*komiti*) who speak at the twice-weekly meetings. Attendance at these meetings is obligatory for all community members, except for sick or menstruating persons.<sup>3</sup> Audiences are seated on benches lining the interior bark walls of the Meeting House, or on the dirt floor. Men and women are strictly segregated. Orators may sit anywhere in the male section. During the first part of the meeting (one to two

hours), the  
periods of  
of them  
meeting,  
task is a  
Pomio K  
Decalog  
Ora  
morality,  
tional lo  
(Whiteh  
Spe  
commu  
prepare  
typical s  
especiall  
constitu  
it under  
miracle,  
with a p  
but the  
able to  
power i  
indefini  
among  
attitude  
Only w  
ancesto  
many te  
Or  
themes  
temple  
ancesto  
to conc  
most o  
togethe  
affectio  
obedie  
fortitu  
(its mo  
comm  
oppos  
to this  
the dea  
the cu  
ancest  
withst  
monit



hours), the pattern of turn-taking in speeches is flexible. Orators neither speak for equal periods of time, nor do they have to observe a particular order of delivery, but each of them is required to address the congregation at some point. The second part of the meeting, however, is more formalized. Only one orator may speak during this period (the task is allocated on a rota), and the topic is restricted to one of the ten central tenets of Pomio Kivung morality (known as the *Tenpela Lo*, loosely corresponding to the Decalogue). These central tenets are therefore officially transmitted in five-week cycles.

Orations at community meetings cover all areas of Pomio Kivung cosmology, morality, and political ideology, and bind them together in complex strings of implicational logic. I have explored this characteristic of Pomio Kivung ideology elsewhere (Whitehouse 1990: Chapter One) and must restrict myself to a simple illustration.

Speeches in the Meeting House typically focus on breaches of morality in the community which, for example, are commonly detected among the teams of women who prepare food offerings which are then dedicated to ancestors in the Cemetery Temple. A typical sin would involve the expression of dissatisfaction over relative labour inputs, especially where one woman is accused by the others, behind her back, of being idle. This constitutes a form of character assassination (in violation of the Ten Laws) and, as such, it undermines the collective goal of Pomio Kivung members, which is to produce a miracle, entailing the return of ancestors bearing cargo. The arrival of cargo is associated with a period of temptation, in which hedonism and meglomania may be freely indulged, but the punishment for such indulgence will be eternal damnation. Only those who are able to resist these seductions of the flesh, by channelling their new-found wealth and power back into the Pomio Kivung, will merit salvation construed as a period of indefinite supernatural bliss on earth, in the company of God and the ancestors. Gossip among cooks is driven by self-centred and vindictive motives, precisely the clusters of attitudes which would lead to misuse of the anticipated cargo (and so to damnation). Only when these sorts of feelings have been eliminated or greatly reduced will the ancestors be ready to deliver the cargoist miracle, confident that the living will survive its many temptations.

Orations on the evils of gossip would necessarily take in these eschatological themes, and by a variety of routes. Another crucial factor concerns the purpose of temple offerings. The material substance of the offering is not what is consumed by the ancestors, but rather the moral sentiments of those who prepare and present it. Attention to conduct is therefore far more important during the preparation of offerings than at most other times. A satisfactory offering serves to draw the living and the dead closer together, through a combination of bonds of kinship (based on mutual interest and affection expressed in the commensal meal) and of moral or spiritual unity (in which obedience to the Ten Laws excites the approval of the ancestors). The theme of moral fortitude is thus reencountered in the context of temple ritual. The spirit of the offering (its moral rather than material substance) is received by the ancestors as evidence of the community's capacity to resist temptation. The sullied offering is evidence of the opposite, and consequently delays the miracle. Yet temple ritual adds another dimension to this process of persuading the ancestors. It seeks to consolidate *affective* bonds with the dead, through the medium of food, partly in the idiom of kinship and partly through the cultivation of moral unity. As direct recipients of the goodwill of the living, the ancestors are drawn closer ('enticed') into this world. The readiness of the living to withstand temptation is judged by the ancestors in a rather detached way, by rigorously monitoring behaviour in the community, whereas temple rituals influence the *feelings* of



the ancestors by cultivating a pressing desire to reciprocate the nurturant devotion of their living kinsmen and to be reunited with them on earth. Gossip among the cooks who prepare offerings for the Cemetery Temple has to be understood in this context. Gossip renders offerings the opposite of what they ought to be: they become embodiments of ill-will rather than affection; they separate or estrange the living and the dead, rather than bringing them into a closer or more intimate relationship.

Orations at community meetings cover wide vistas of Pomio Kivung ideology. Diatribes against gossip should take in many themes, beyond those which I have glossed over. The whole religious system is integrated by a network of logical paths which orators traverse with practised skill. My point, however, is that language, or more specifically speech and the force of argument, is the privileged medium of transmission. Pomio Kivung members understand their rituals and other religious activities in terms of a coherent, elaborate, and integrated body of ideas which is most fully represented in oratory.

In this respect, the Taro cult seems to be very different from the Pomio Kivung. Williams despaired of obtaining a coherent account of Taro ideology, or even a set of doctrines (coherent or otherwise), and reached the conclusion that, for Taro adherents, 'theory or doctrine is wholly subordinate to action or ritual . . . those who carry out all the observances of the Taro cult with precision and confidence are often ignorant or indifferent to its theories' (1928:83-4). It is clear that whatever religious understandings were generated by the Taro cult, these were rarely communicated in language and certainly not in the kind of logically integrated ideology transmitted in Pomio Kivung oratory.

Williams' approach, which ought not to be judged too harshly, was to account for the absence of exegetical commentary, and of doctrinal elaboration generally, in terms of a lack of intellectual curiosity or imagination among adherents to the cult. More than sixty years on, however, theories of Melanesian religion have advanced appreciably and thanks largely to the detail of Williams' accounts, it is now possible to develop quite a different picture of the Taro cult. Although, as Williams fully recognized, religious understandings were not codified in language, there is nevertheless good reason to suppose that the Taro cult generated powerful revelations through the medium of its rituals.

The principal observances of the Taro cult were: *Kasamba*, which involved harvesting, feasting, singing, and drumming; *jipari*, which involved a kind of contagious shaking-fit; a number of taboos; a range of magico-medical and fertility rituals, some of which entailed collective performances.

Large-scale *Kasamba* began with the harvesting of taro for the feast. This was undertaken by the whole community. When the guests arrived, they were received with considerable excitement and hospitality. Often, a special band-stand was used to accommodate the choir, which sang to the accompaniment of a consciously slothful drum beat. The food was presented in a distinctive fashion (Williams 1928:39-40), connoting Western domestic habits.

*Jipari*, which Williams described as 'uncontrollable bodily movements or paroxysms' (ibid.:48), resulted from possession by the spirit either of the taro or of a dead person. This kind of possession could occur at any time, although it could not usually be 'brought on' at will, and when one person was afflicted there was a tendency for those around him or her to exhibit *jipari* as well. Among the most graphic accounts of this kind of contagion are those of Chinnery (Chinnery and Haddon 1917) and Williams (1928),

who directly observed instances of individual possession triggering collective shaking-fits. The word *jipari* referred to a whirling or swaying motion and was used, for example, to describe the swinging of branches in a wind. Prior to the Taro cult, Baigona men were afflicted by fits known as *dutari*, of which the archetypal symptom was trembling rather than swaying. A person who experienced *jipari* was said to have 'acquired the taro' and, having achieved this sacred condition, was obliged to forgo certain kinds of foods. These taboos applied as long as the spirit remained immanent in the Taro adherent, a condition which could be instantly terminated by bathing in running water (washing in still water, however, did not have a desacralizing effect).

The Taro cult provided techniques of treating illnesses caused by invading spirits. For example, *Kasamba* songs were sometimes performed at the house of a patient; this was held to stimulate a return of vitality, and perhaps to attract the invading spirit away from the victim. Another variety of this kind of magic, involving *Kasamba* songs, was performed in gardens, to promote the growth of taro. Certain garden rituals encouraged the onset of *jipari* so that the 'energy' produced might benefit the crop.

All the practices of the cult were expected to promote the growth of taro, but Williams had great difficulty establishing the ideological bases for these expectations. In the case of *Kasamba* songs, he concluded:

Very often it is futile to search too deeply for a meaning, because the words of the song have been learned by rote, and so confused in the course of transmission that they have become little more than gibberish. But whatever their meaning, or lack of it, the songs are understood to contribute in some way to the growth of taro (Williams 1928:39).

Likewise, beyond the fact that *jipari* was understood by Taro adherents to be a form of spirit possession, Williams was unable to discern any religious significance in the specific movements of afflicted persons. For Williams, the behaviour pattern described as *jipari* was modelled on the involuntary paroxysms of 'abnormal' or 'neurotic' individuals (ibid.:54), whose symptoms had no symbolic value. Mimicry of this behaviour, on the part of 'normal' individuals, was in turn attributed to a 'low standard of self-control' and 'the native's craving for excitement' (ibid.:92). Had Taro adherents presented Williams with an exegetical account of the movements entailed in *jipari* his appeals to psychiatry would no doubt have remained, but since Williams could see no cultural dimension in the manifestations of possessed behaviour, he explained the form of *jipari* exclusively in terms of the arbitrary symptoms of pathology. Yet even he would have acknowledged, I should think, that this was an attempt to explain variables in terms of a constant: for if the Baigona *dutari* and the Taro *jipari* originated in similar neurotic conditions, then why did one entail trembling, and the other swaying? Even if a psychiatric theory would account for such specific variations, the question would remain open as to whether these two kinds of behaviour might in some way have cultivated different religious understandings.

It was mainly in his discussion of taboos and garden ritual that Williams began to develop insights into the ideas of the Taro cult:

*Pauri*, the cuscus, is forbidden because of the yellowish colour of its fur, dappled with brown spots. Should the Taro man eat *Pauri* it is likely that the taro leaf will develop similar properties instead of keeping the rich green colour which is indicative of health. *Auja*, the red pandanus seed, and *sasaru*, a kind of frog, are tabooed for the same reason. It was explained that the frog, when cooked, is of a

yellow-brown colour which is unwholesome not so much for the Taro man as for the taro. *Ambe*, or sago was avoided in some quarters because the roots at the butt of the palm are often exposed in a way that is not desirable for the taro tuber. *Imbaga* the crocodile, *wotomo* a kind of flat fish, and *ohiti* the eel were 'too heavy'. The idea of weight seems to be associated very commonly with sickness, and it is felt that the Taro man who ate creatures in which this quality is so obviously embodied, would be endangering his powers of healing (ibid.:45-6).

Williams regarded such taboos as evidence of a particular kind of (magical) thinking in which 'the symbolic representation of a hoped-for [or feared] result . . . is felt to assist in the realization [or prevention] of that result' (ibid.:195). He envisaged Orokaiva conceptions of supernatural processes as being strikingly simplistic and even banal. Stated in words, the idea that consumption of a heavy animal will produce the 'heaviness' of limbs that accompanies sickness (e.g. fever), sounds rather like a childlike fantasy, and this in fact appears to be the spirit in which Williams regarded 'magical thinking'. Moreover, his low opinion of the intellectual abilities of the Orokaiva was reinforced by his view that even such very facile explanations for specific taboos eluded many of those who observed them. The exegetical passage quoted above was prefaced by these remarks (ibid.:45):

In a great majority of cases the man who observes the taboo is completely ignorant of any logical basis for it . . . not only has he never heard a sensible argument in its favour, but, if taxed for such an argument, can think of none save *ad verecundiam*. But sometimes one meets a native with a spark of imagination. The explanations which he may give of the taboos are not necessarily the original ones, but notwithstanding they are typical native explanations, and at least as good as the original (Williams 1928:45).

At least two assumptions need to be challenged here. The first is that people who did not supply verbal interpretations of taboos had no insights into their significance. An alternative hypothesis, explored below, is that the religious ideas surrounding taboos in the Taro cult were not amenable to expression in words, and were most effectively codified nonverbally. Secondly, and related to this, the fact that some people could be persuaded to proffer tentative exegesis was not necessarily indicative of superior powers of imagination. It could imply the very opposite, namely a failure to appreciate the multivocal character of the symbolic process, and thus a willingness to render it in a simple and rather sterile form. But perhaps the main reason why some people struggled to explain Taro cult taboos was that, for whatever motives of their own, they desired the approbation of the ethnographer.

A more fruitful way of analyzing religious knowledge in the Taro cult might be to interpret *Kasamba*, *jipari*, and taboos as ways of bringing into focus rather more compelling and sophisticated mysteries than Williams was able to recognize. Among the examples mentioned, the fur of a certain marsupial, the skin of a certain frog, and the butt of a certain palm, exhibit qualities which are undesirable in taro. Dappled fur and yellow-brown skin, however, are not merely reminiscent of a dying taro plant, but are physical manifestations of 'something else' which, in the case of taro (but not in marsupials or frogs) causes sickness and death. Fur, skin, and sago palms are not physically the same as a dying taro plant, but their resemblances indicate the immanence within them of a mystical and intangible process. Indeed, what is explicitly feared is not so much the contamination of one physical material (e.g. taro leaf) by another (e.g. fur)

but the  
imman  
imman  
attribu  
Th  
the wa  
ethnog  
traditio  
the use  
with ri  
may b  
are de  
vegeta  
banali  
certain  
compe  
throug  
It  
of veg  
simult  
to exp  
T  
force  
spirit,  
plant.  
taro.  
consti  
'seen'  
Worsl  
C  
d  
st  
le  
t  
prece  
inste  
tions  
ing t  
conn  
stron  
is to  
Taro  
have  
preju  
wate



but the contamination of one 'force', dimly conceived as the taro spirit which is immanent in the *jipari* victim as well as the crops, with a hostile and deadly force immanent in certain natural species and indicated by the presence of particular physical attributes.

This interpretation accords, not only with Williams' data on Taro ritual, but with the ways in which cosmologies are constructed in other Melanesian religions. Recent ethnographic research has yielded increasingly sophisticated insights into religious traditions cast in non-verbal codes. An excellent example is Barth's (1975, 1987) work on the use of 'concrete metaphors' in initiation rituals. Like Williams, Barth is confronted with ritual acts for which exegesis is not forthcoming, in which concrete resemblances may be discerned between the materials used in rituals and the characteristics which are desirable in taro, and an object of these rituals (as in the Taro cult) is to promote vegetable fertility and growth. But instead of attributing to practitioners the Frazerian banality that 'like produces like' (Williams 1928:194), Barth shows that, in seizing upon certain common properties of natural phenomena, rituals generate sophisticated and compelling conceptions of the world, which cannot in any satisfactory way be shared through the medium of language.

In this light, certain attributes of fur, skin, and palm appear, not merely as correlates of vegetable decay, but as separate manifestations of an underlying process which is simultaneously of crucial importance to human prosperity and yet intrinsically difficult to explain.

The specific form of *jipari* becomes intelligible as a concrete manifestation of the force (the spirit of the taro) which produces vegetable growth. Having surrendered to the spirit, the victim of possession exhibited the physical attributes of the supple, healthy plant. The limbs and trunk of the *jipari* victim swayed like the leaves and stems of the taro. Like the wind animating plants, the forces causing taro to increase in size were construed as invisible (Williams 1928:17). Thus, like the wind, the spirit of the taro was 'seen' by its effects. The interconnectedness of these images was astutely observed by Worsley (1957:62):

Others believed that the wind brought waves of *jipari* trances, and that drumming for the south-east wind would cause the taro leaves to sway and stimulate the growth of taro. Such practices as moving the head like swaying leaves, and drumming as if in 'gusts' of wind, were akin to similar ideas about the south-east harvest wind in the Milne Bay movement.

A similar principle was probably operative in *dutari*, the Baigona practice which preceded the invention of *jipari* by several years. *Dutari* victims trembled or shivered instead of swaying, but these paroxysms probably had similar cosmological implications.<sup>4</sup> Yet *dutari* and *jipari* could not have been merely alternative ways of conceptualizing the same thing, namely the forces of growth. They each cultivated different sets of connotations. For example, *dutari* (unlike *jipari*) symptoms must have resonated strongly with experiences of sickness, especially malaria which induces shivering fits. It is too late, however, to explore the full range of associations which these Baigona and Taro rituals are likely to have triggered in the minds of participants. Such a project would have required greater methodological rigour than Williams could afford (or than his prejudices would allow).

A similar problem besets analysis of the Taro injunction against bathing in running water. It is clear enough that powers of desacralization were thought by Taro adherents to

be immanent in streams and rivers. Moreover, the theme is common enough elsewhere in Papua New Guinea, for example in the Ok region described by Barth (1987:32):

The power of water as an agent of removal is widely recognized in Ok imagery. Water washes away dirt, erodes the land, streams carry away flotsam and debris. Telefomin, Faiwolmin, and others throw dead persons (hated enemies, sorcerers, etc.) into rivers to eliminate their spirits as well as their bodies; novices exposed to sacred influences but not yet assimilated to the higher sacred positions must not wash, or step into streams. Water in which you see the reflection of a bewitching spirit is thrown over the bewitched to remove the spirit. The basic cognition is thus focussed on transportation and removal, rather than laundering and purity as in Eurasian consciousness.

It is not clear, however, how these images of running water, in the case of the Taro cult, related to other desacralizing rites (if at all), nor whether water in other contexts was seen as a vehicle for other types of forces. For example, was rain or dew thought to contain taro-nurturing powers, or was the coldness of running water associated paradoxically in people's minds with the shivering of *dutari* victims (cf. Williams 1928:48)?

Nevertheless, it is plain that the practices of the Taro cult were more than a childlike fantasy that 'like produces like'. They provided ways of locating, guarding, and channeling mysterious forces of life and death. The persuasiveness of this kind of cosmology has to do partly with the way specific images connote and therefore shed light on others. The revelatory character of *dutari* may have had to do with the fact that its symptoms resembled those of a condition deadly to humans (e.g. malaria), while simultaneously bringing to mind the trembling of a thriving taro plant. If so, then *dutari* was not what it might have seemed, a threat to human life, but the very opposite, an embodiment of life-giving force, and something therefore to be welcomed. The experience of *jipari* must in turn have resonated with these understandings by evoking a slightly different image of the wind: no longer a breeze but a gust, an invisible yet palpable force activated with renewed vigour.

The two regimes of codification which I have looked at, namely the language-dependent ideology of the Pomio Kivung, and the non-verbally transmitted revelations of the Taro cult, bring to mind Barth's distinction between 'digital' and 'analogic' communication. Digital codes are based upon the relationship between arbitrary values. This is obviously a pervasive principle in linguistics and structuralist analyses of myth and ritual. But analogic codes are constructed around concrete relations between symbols and referents which are not in the least arbitrary. For example, the skin of a frog refers to dying taro, not because of an arbitrary contrast with another species corresponding to healthy taro, but because the patterns on the skin visually resemble the patterns on a sickly taro leaf. The principle of polarity is of no particular relevance in an analogic code, and if reduced to such a medium, for example through verbal commentary and exegetical discussion, this would fail to convey the real nature and power of the analogic process. As Barth puts it: 'Dichotomies and duality become powerful and interesting only within the closed worlds of digital codifications; as analogic imagery [expressed in language] they remain trite compared to the complex harmonies of which such codes are capable [when transmitted non-verbally]' (1975:229).

Closely  
pattern  
handfu  
audien  
The ba  
tions. I  
of 'con  
visitors  
distinct  
ideolog  
solidar  
fragme  
comple  
In  
persuas  
basic ic  
prophe  
who pr  
Abling  
his can  
fulfilm  
cargois  
by a ha  
three y  
Ke  
brillian  
crystall  
capacit  
the col  
investn  
Britain  
religion  
of exp  
was to  
purcha  
achieve  
was sa  
once th  
collecti  
commo  
Ke  
approv  
and co  
where  
suppor  
alive, a

## PATTERNS OF DISSEMINATION

Closely connected with these divergent regimes of codification are two very different patterns of dissemination. The Pomio Kivung was spread over great distances by a handful of proselytizing leaders, who undertook wide-ranging patrols, addressed large audiences, and trained teams of officials to sustain the Word after they had moved on. The basic models for this process were provided by missions and colonial administrations. In contrast, the Taro cult was spread by rank and file adherents, through a process of 'contagion', for example where a mass possession in one village induced *jipari* among visitors from another village. Each group thus affected tended to elaborate its own distinctive versions of the cult rituals. Instead of being tied to a single authoritative ideology, Taro adherents were bound to localized 'sects', the autonomy, chauvinism, and solidarity of which were emphasized in collective performances. The models for this fragmentary pattern were provided in 'traditional' religion, especially the initiation complex.

In the case of the Pomio Kivung, religious conversion was often inspired by the persuasive oratory of the movement's founder, Michael Koriam Urekit. Some of the basic ideas of the Pomio Kivung were initially formulated in the early 1960s by a Maenge prophet, Bernard Balitape (of Kraiton village in the south-west of East New Britain), who proclaimed the imminent arrival of a new leader. In 1964, Koriam (originally from Ablingi village, West New Britain), visited the Maenge region seeking support for his candidacy in the first House of Assembly elections. His arrival was greeted as a fulfilment of Bernard's prophesy, and Koriam rapidly became associated with the cargoist doctrines already in place. Koriam was duly elected to the Pomio-Kandrian seat by a handsome majority. He was consistently re-elected to office until his death in 1978, three years after Papua New Guinea's independence.

Koriam did not merely appropriate the fruits of Bernard's visionary leadership, but brilliantly modified, extended, and systematized the ideas which Bernard had begun to crystallize. Koriam had a genius for what Lawrence called 'double-talk' (1964:212), the capacity to frame cargoist and other religious ideas in the 'politically correct' discourse of the colonial administration. Koriam was a tireless advocate of law and order, astute investment, development, and self-government for the non-Tolai peoples of East New Britain. Yet these central messages were understood by his supporters to refer to 'deeper' religious themes. Law and order was desirable, not merely in its own right, but as a means of expediting a cargoist miracle. The massive fund assembled by Koriam's followers was to be invested in manufacturing industry, but this was understood to mean the purchasing of shares in 'companies' established by the returning ancestors. Likewise, the achievement of self-government was primarily a millenarian vision. The 'government' was said to exist already on a transcendental plane, and would be established on earth once the 'fence' separating the living and the dead was broken. Thus, the ancestors as a collectivity were referred to as the 'Ancestral Council' (Trompf 1990b:69) or, more commonly nowadays, the 'Village Government'.

Koriam's political career enabled him to undertake wide-ranging patrols, with the approval and material support of the colonial administration. Koriam carried his new and compelling ideas beyond Maenge populations to the Sulka and Baining regions, where the cargoist undertones of his orations were also readily appreciated. Wherever support was forthcoming, Koriam appointed local 'orators' (*komiti*) to keep the ideology alive, and he instructed them extensively in the main ritual activities of the movement



(including their nature and significance). These were founded mainly around meetings, temples, monetary donations, and sacred gardens. Pomio Kivung activities were highly routinized, being performed according to fixed cycles of daily, twice-weekly, fortnightly, and monthly performances. Back at his headquarters in the Maenge region, Koriam appointed 'supervisors' (Koimanrea and Bailoenakia 1983:175) to undertake regular patrols on his behalf, to ensure that the ideas of the Pomio Kivung were being correctly and uniformly sustained throughout the movement.

Over the past thirty years, the institutions of the Pomio Kivung have undergone strikingly little change. Although particular supporters and leaders in the movement have come and gone, the basic ideas, organization, and practices have persisted. Since Koriam's death, religious and political leadership has been split between Kolman Kintape Molu and Alois Koki respectively, operating from the original headquarters. The first generation of local orators has for the most part died out, and a new generation, including persons baptized into the Pomio Kivung in infancy, is gradually taking over the managerial tier. This combination of longevity, doctrinal uniformity, and centralization, which is operative across a vast region of East New Britain, is connected to the emphasis on oratory, and verbalized ideology generally. Pomio Kivung revelations were seen as emanating from a single inspired leader, disseminated by direct proselytization and through the routinized speeches of selected delegates.

In contrast, people were not persuaded to join the Taro cult by the power of the Word. There was no corpus of doctrine to inspire conversions, and nobody was ever 'talked into' joining the cult. The first man to be visited by the spirit of the taro was Buninia. When asked by Williams to relate the experience, Buninia seemed to struggle to put it into words, eventually resorting to a sort of miming of the events (1928:13-14). The experience of possession passed by contagion from Buninia to those in his vicinity (especially those who touched his body). Back in their own villages, or during their travels, these people in turn infected others, and so on like the spread of a virus. Those who received the spirit indirectly from Buninia had no knowledge of how the cult began and certainly no special reverence for the originator (ibid.:30). In many cases of contagion through contact with a *jipari* victim, transmission was unintended. Nevertheless, having been infected, the newcomer felt he had little choice but to observe Taro rituals and taboos. The rules governing these observances were probably not communicated by word of mouth. The indigenous theory was that ritual knowledge was conferred by 'strictly private inspiration' (ibid.:17), during possession or sleep. But presumably these experiences were informed by a knowledge of the taboos and rituals observed by existing Taro adherents.

The Taro cult appeared to spread widely and rapidly, and this is the main reason why it arrested the attention of Western observers. But manifestations of this religious fervour were highly fragmented and sporadic. Williams distinguished the Taro cult from contiguous but distinct movements at the time (ibid.:68-77). He mentioned the Diroga cult (concerned with warlike imagery), the Rainbow cult (concerned in part with auspicious conditions for hunting), the Rooster cult (which emphasized yams as well as taro), and the Manau cult (which was the most remote from the Taro cult, being focused around cargoist and Christian-syncretic themes). Moreover, within the Taro cult proper (as defined by Williams), adherents were fragmented into numerous 'sects' (ibid.:66-8), many of which were named after distinctive varieties of taro. Sects differentiated themselves most prominently by adopting idiosyncratic forms of *jipari*, by decorating

the skin with peculiar markings, or by concentrating their rituals on the promulgation of particular species of taro.

In addition to variant cults and sects, there were other parameters of variation, many of which were established unintentionally, but subsequently became the markers of group identity. Williams commented, for example, on the fact that, in some regions, Taro adherents propitiated spirits of the dead, rather than of the taro (ibid.:30). Williams related this sort of variation to the peculiar pattern of dissemination in the cult which involved strings of contagion rather than direct contact with a single centralized authority (ibid.:11):

Where travel is so difficult and communication so imperfect, a new idea must spread itself principally by a succession of impacts. It will radiate from the place of origin, but those who dwell on the outskirts of the circle will have received their impulse, not directly from the centre, but from some intermediate source. Not only will the idea itself be changed by the time it reaches them, but the credit for originating the idea will be bestowed on the many and various who were merely agents in its transmission.

Now, this 'Chinese Whispers' explanation for the fragmentary character of the Taro cult is unsatisfactory. The 'difficulties' of travel ought not to be exaggerated for, as Williams observed a little further on, 'the Orokaiva are great walkers and much given to visiting their distant relatives' (ibid.:17). Much more relevant are the specific channels of dissemination which, in the case of the Taro cult, were primarily 'traditional'. Contagion tended to occur along the lines of kinship, and spread between villages on occasions when dispersed relatives were brought together, for example at feasts and burials (ibid.:18). These sorts of links did not emanate from a central group, but connected communities indirectly through strings of contact transmission.

In the case of the Pomio Kivung, on the other hand, the channels of dissemination were initially provided by the state, specifically the established routes of government patrol officers and police, which were utilized in Koriam's election campaigns. With the appointment of 'supervisors' linking outlying regions to the centre, the Pomio Kivung established the beginnings of its own state-like structure which operated independently of kinship ties. Morauta highlights a similar contrast between the centralized structure of Yali's movement and the many smaller cults of the Madang area (1972:434-5):

The smaller cults travelled along traditional kinship links or along traditional type channels involving person-to-person relationships . . . The result was that these cults tended to occur in patches which corresponded to the clusters of villages between which there were the largest number of inter-personal ties . . . However, the majority of villages came to see and hear about Yali through his work for the Administration . . . it was largely through the camp leaders and contacts he had made during this period that he established a network of communications.

The really interesting question, as far as this paper is concerned, is how these different channels of dissemination were related to patterns of codification. In the case of the Pomio Kivung, there was only one authoritative earthly source of religious revelations, and that was Koriam (after his death, this role was assumed by Kolman). Pomio Kivung ideology was (and still is) predicated on the assumption that Koriam's statements were divinely inspired and therefore incontrovertible. Being a member of the movement meant, among other things, acknowledging the infallibility of the leader's

words, whether these were consumed directly or transmitted from his headquarters by teams of officials. Either way, centralized organization, transcending all other social relations (e.g. kinship ties), was logically implied.

In the Taro cult, by contrast, revelations were not transmitted by an individual leader, but through a process of personal inspiration. Each adherent to the cult experienced conversion as a result of 'seeing' and 'feeling' for him- or herself the powers of growth, decay, health, and sickness, and the appropriate procedures for controlling them. These insights were not perceived as emanating from any one enlightened individual or group. The crucial revelations could not in fact be adequately communicated between individuals, but could only be cultivated through the personal trauma of *jipari*, dreams, and participation in ritual. The religious significance of these experiences emerged slowly and only partially into consciousness, in a way that people could not communicate to the uninitiated, nor even discuss among themselves.

This divergence is apparent in the way that Taro adherents and Pomio Kivung members conceptualized their religious communities, especially in relation to its origins. The Pomio Kivung has always been conscious of its history and distribution. Every member knows the 'story' of how, when, and where the Pomio Kivung began and spread. These issues are important because they concern (among other things) the authority of the movement's doctrines and its effectiveness as an electoral machine. This historical knowledge is not generated by autobiographical memory, but through the consumption of conventional narratives, transmitted by word of mouth. The Taro cult, however, spread through the contagious condition of *jipari*, involving an essentially non-verbal experience of transmission. Nobody was told, nor did they need or want to be told, how the chain of contagion began and proceeded. Each person's appreciation of the history of the Taro cult was essentially a collection of autobiographical memories. This was an important aspect of the fragmentary character of the Taro cult, and helps to account for the fact that one of Williams' informants, 'when asked whether his ideas [about possession] were the same as Buninia's on the matter, answered that "he knew nothing of Buninia's teaching"' (ibid.:30).

#### FREQUENCY OF TRANSMISSION

I have elsewhere commented on the routinized character of Pomio Kivung institutions and its relationship to the way ideology is codified in the movement (Whitehouse 1992b). My basic thesis was that in a non-literate region, a complex web of doctrines can only be sustained intact over time and space through a regime of frequent transmission. This is why Koriam appointed orators in every Pomio Kivung community, and supervisors to monitor and regulate ideological deviation in even the most remote strongholds of the movement. And this is partly why Pomio Kivung members everywhere devote so much time to public meetings. In the absence of such measures, the intricate logical arguments binding together the 'orthodox' doctrines of the Pomio Kivung, would be inaccurately recalled and, at each occasion for transmission, the ideology would be modified to accommodate the gaps and distortions of memory. Moreover, if the persuasive arguments of Pomio Kivung cosmology were not being discussed and thought about frequently, the influence of the religious system over people's daily lives would diminish. The Taro cult, on the other hand, never encountered problems of this nature.

The experience of revelation among Taro adherents was intrinsically very memorable, because the analogic links between *jipari* and vegetable growth, or between taboo



species and taro diseases, were startling and simple. The complex harmonies between metaphors in this religious system were subject to memory decay and substitution, but this did not undermine the potency of individual revelations, nor did it change the underlying experience of gaining control over life and death, however these mysterious forces were variously conceived by different individuals at different times, or patterned among variant cults and sects. In these general circumstances, there was no necessity for continuous, routinized transmission, and on the contrary some pressure to adopt a regime of infrequent transmission.

This pressure had to do with the fact that analogic insights are most compelling and memorable if they are cultivated in conditions of extreme emotional and sensual stimulation. Whether this stimulation is ecstatic or traumatic, its long-term capacity to haunt people's minds is related to the uniqueness of the experience. If people strive to recapture that intensity by reconstructing the conditions of its original occurrence time and again, the power of the experience is rapidly diminished. This intuition is borne out by empirical observations among the Orokaiva. Chinnery, for example, in commenting on the sporadic pattern of *jipari* outbursts, observed that natives were reluctant to perform the *Kava Keva*<sup>5</sup> too frequently, and refused all requests to repeat the experience scarcely one month after the last attack of *jipari* (Chinnery and Haddon 1917:451; see also Williams 1928:33 and 55-6).

The experience of *jipari* was emotionally very intense and left participants feeling 'strained and drowsy for hours afterwards' (Chinnery and Haddon 1917:450). In some areas, *jipari* entailed a degree of violence, ranging from 'vigorous rubbing and slapping' (ibid.) to the self-infliction of injuries by 'rushing aimlessly through the bush, careless of roots and trailers' (Williams 1928: 67). The general feeling among Taro adherents appears to have been that the sufferings entailed in *jipari* could not be endured very often. In order to protect themselves from further attacks (until the state was induced again through contagion), many *jipari* victims washed in running water. Intense psychological stimulation in the Taro cult was not confined to the traumatic experience of possession. Williams laid great stress on the emotion and general 'high excitement' (ibid.:43-5) which accompanied *Kasamba*. It seems to me that this affective aspect of Taro ritual was closely related to the fragmentary pattern of distribution.

The markers differentiating local groups of Taro adherents were focal images of solidarity. Each community (village or cluster of villages) which collectively endured the sufferings of mass *jipari*, and which shared the jubilation of hosting a *Kasamba*, also tended to constitute a distinctive sect within the Taro cult. Williams described the intense rivalry between local sects with reference to a ceremonial competition which he observed in Kove, 'to see who danced longer and better, and who were the more numerous' (ibid.:19).

Many of these features of the Taro cult are found in initiation systems. The emphasis on analogic codification, infrequent transmission, and intense emotional and sensual stimulation, are pervasive in both regimes. These characteristics, in the context of initiation, have long been associated with the production of enduring solidarity within bounded local communities (e.g. Barth 1975:223,245,251; Lindenbaum 1984; Feil 1987:231; Godelier 1991:294; Whitehouse 1992b). The same general political effects of this type of religious phenomenon were apparent in the Taro cult. *Jipari* and *Kasamba*, the focal practices of the cult, which were performed irregularly in sporadic outbursts (though admittedly not as rarely as initiation rituals among the Orokaiva), generated a

fragmentary political landscape, founded upon the cohesiveness and chauvinism of local communities, and expressed in the rivalrous relations between them.

The Pomio Kivung had (and still retains) an entirely different character. The many communities of which the movement is composed do not engage in the kinds of rituals which promote internal solidarity and external competition. All Pomio Kivung members are united by a common body of doctrines within a sort of 'proto-nation' of largely anonymous comrades. People undoubtedly experience a sense of common purpose, of pulling collectively in a certain direction, and in the face of shared enemies — notably, the 'Tolai-dominated' Provincial Government, and the Catholic Church. But this solidarity is comparatively weak and thinly spread. There are no intense or moving experiences in which Pomio Kivung members, as a sort of collective mass, are able to participate. The price paid in the Pomio Kivung for a large, centralized movement is a relatively unemotional, repetitive, routinized institutional system, in which the authority and persuasiveness of doctrine are everything. In this respect, the Pomio Kivung took its lead from the missions, rather than from traditional religion. The unremitting repetitions of services and doctrines in the missions, administered by their ranked officials and sermonizers, are to the Pomio Kivung what the ordeals of initiates were to the victims of *jipari*. Patterns of dissemination and codification in the Pomio Kivung seem to have been inspired by the institutional forms of colonial administration and missionization to a greater degree than was the case in the Taro cult, which was more firmly rooted in indigenous politico-religious models.

#### CONCLUSION

In this paper I have attempted to explore some of the labyrinthine connections between codification, dissemination, and transmission in two kinds of religious movement. These contrasting regimes seem to be associated with divergent political consequences. On the one hand, an emphasis on verbalized ideology seems to be associated with hierarchy, centralization, uniformity, routinization, longevity, and an imagined community of largely anonymous members. These features provide a suitable basis for effective anti-state protest and the cultivation of nationalist (or 'proto-nationalist') sentiment. And, in fact, although grassroots supporters entertain a millenarian vision of self-government, the political wing of the Pomio Kivung has their full support in campaigning for a separate Pomio-Baining Province by parliamentary means. The movement has thus been able to combine hopes for supernatural intervention with pragmatic efforts to effect change in the 'here and now'.

In the case of the Taro cult, on the other hand, there was neither the organizational nor the ideological basis for even the most rudimentary nationalism. The emphasis on non-verbal, analogic codification seemed to rule out dynamic leadership, centralized control, doctrinal uniformity, and continuity. On the contrary, it encouraged the emergence of fragmented local groups, within which an intense experience of solidarity was generated and regenerated through sporadic outbursts of collective ritual.

Most commentators have sought to assimilate the Taro cult to the progressivist model which holds that 'the activist millenarian movement is typical only of a certain phase in the political and economic development of [Melanesia] and that 'future nationalist developments will probably be less and less under the aegis of millenarian cult leadership' (Worsley 1957:255). For Worsley, the Taro cult exemplified an early stage of this evolution (ibid.:254). He claimed, for example, that 'doctrines of unity, cooperation,

comra  
unifie  
views,  
(1977:  
unific  
accou  
In  
ideolo  
perfor  
ideas  
and t  
gather  
experi  
found  
and 'i  
impre  
about  
signif  
associ  
1928:  
T  
would  
regim  
codifi  
which  
nume  
T  
Taro  
either  
move  
insof  
doctr  
natio  
High  
ment  
collec  
Neve  
same  
break  
Thes  
aban  
exege  
forth  
I  
proce  
break  
re-ad  
proce

comradeship, etc. [were] central to the cult' (ibid.:66), and that this entailed some kind of unified opposition to colonial oppression (ibid.). In this, Worsley was echoing Haddon's views, which he approvingly cited (ibid.). Likewise, Lanternari (1963:165) and Wetherell (1977:189) conflated the wide dissemination of the Taro cult with the idea of political unification. Such interpretations were fundamentally at odds with Williams' original account.

In talking about the 'doctrines' of the Taro cult, Worsley missed the point that Taro ideology was for the most part codified non-verbally, and emerged out of localized ritual performances. That is why many Taro adherents neither knew nor cared whether their ideas were similar to Buninia's (see above). Distant or unrelated practitioners could do and think what they liked; what mattered was that a local community, physically gathered in one place, shared an intense experience of revelation and solidarity. This experience was unique to the group and could not provide a basis for wider unity founded on doctrinal similarities. The use of terms like 'prophet' (Wetherell 1977:190) and 'messianic' (Lanternari 1963:165) to describe Taro cultists likewise gave a false impression of the way ideas were codified and transmitted. Meanwhile, Worsley's claims about 'unity' and 'comradeship' derived from a questionable interpretation of the significance of hand-shaking in the Taro cult (Worsley 1957:65-6), which the Orokaiva associated with *insecurity* rather than unity, specifically the fear of sorcery (Williams 1928:66).

To envisage the Taro cult as a failed or unsophisticated experiment in unification would be to miss the point that it successfully produced a fragmentary politico-religious regime based around intense solidarity within small groups or 'sects'. Non-verbal codification was conducive to the cultivation of traumatic and memorable revelations which were unmediated by prophets, messiahs, or other leaders, and productive of numerous, competing, localized, communities.

This attempt to identify contrasting models with reference to the Pomio Kivung and Taro cult is not intended to imply that all new religious movements in Melanesia are either 'routinized' and large-scale or 'sporadic' and fragmentary/localized. Some movements, such as Yali's and Paliu's, were strikingly similar to the Pomio Kivung, insofar as they emphasized institutional uniformity, centralized control, verbalized doctrine, evangelism through proselytization, and the formation of large, proto-nationalist groupings. Other movements, such as the Letub cult and the Eastern Central Highlands cults, much more closely resembled the Taro cult, in that they were fragmented, sporadic, intensely arousing (emotionally and sensually), and focused around collective possession and analogic imagery (see Inselmann 1944, Berndt 1952/53). Nevertheless, these two kinds of regime can occur in the same region, and even within the same movement. For example, small groups of Pomio Kivung supporters periodically break away from the mainstream movement to embark on cult activities of their own. These activities usually consist of extremely arousing and even traumatic rituals, the abandonment of production, and the cultivation of concrete metaphors for which exegesis is lacking. I have devoted a whole book to analyzing this pattern (Whitehouse, forthcoming), and will draw attention to just two points of relevance to this article.

Firstly, splinter-groups in the Pomio Kivung tend not to undermine the political processes I have identified in the movement as a whole. When the climactic rituals of breakaway sects fail to produce supernatural transformations, most of their followers are re-admitted into the mainstream Pomio Kivung. The general apperception of this process of 'returning to the fold' is not so much one of humiliating defeat, since plausible



rationalizations for failure are always readily available, but rather a sense of having achieved a compelling and enduring religious experience, rather as an initiate might recall his ordeals as a novice (see Whitehouse 1992b). Worsley's description of how the 'Vailala Madness' 'became more wonderful in memory' (1957:92) captures something of the spirit in which splinter-group activities are handled cognitively. This is a process which, far from undermining the Pomio Kivung, positively enhances the persuasiveness of its doctrines. It provides a profoundly mysterious and emotionally compelling dimension to the movement, which it would otherwise lack. For, as I have suggested, routinization is always established at a price. In the case of Paliu's movement, 'life became austere and regulated almost like a military establishment' (Steinbauer 1979:69). Consequently, 'the movement lacked spontaneity and its preachers complained about the people's indolence' (ibid.:71). Likewise, in the Pomio Kivung, years of performing the same rituals and listening to the same sermons every week leads to impatience and frustration. These sentiments are readily apparent during the formation of breakaway sects. Although ancestors do not return as a result of splinter-group ritual, routinized worship under the auspices of the Pomio Kivung leadership is reinstated in an atmosphere of renewed commitment and enthusiasm. The ongoing popularity of the Pomio Kivung probably owes much to the climactic activities revived by its members at different times and places, but which are only sporadically apparent at any given location.

A second implication of this, with which I shall conclude, is that the key to a movement's political dynamics resides in its cognitive and transmissive dimensions rather than in its ideological themes. Labels such as 'millenarian', 'apocalyptic', 'syncretic', 'nativistic', and so on, reveal little, in themselves, about the political nature of new religious movements. This is equally true of the label 'cargo cult', which is incapable of demarcating a particular type of phenomenon (see McDowell 1988), and probably does not apply to many of the movements which it is used to describe. The Taro cult is a case in point. In terms of the politico-religious model I have proposed here, there is little to distinguish the Taro cult from the Letub cult, yet the latter was concerned with obtaining Western 'cargo' (Inselmann 1944, Lawrence 1964), and the former was not (Worsley 1957). By the same token, Pomio Kivung splinter-groups are no more or less 'cargoist', or for that matter 'millenarian, or 'Christian-syncretic', etc., than the mainstream movement. In order to understand the political nature of Melanesian movements, attention needs to be shifted away from ideology and more substantially directed towards the ways in which ideas are codified and transmitted.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is a revised version of a paper prepared for the First European Colloquium on Pacific Studies at the University of Nijmegen, December 1992, and discussed in the workshop entitled 'Religion, Western Imagery, and Cargo Cults'. I should like to thank those attending the workshop, along with the anonymous referees for *Oceania*, for their insightful criticisms. I am also grateful to the British Academy for an Overseas Conference Grant, enabling me to attend the conference.

#### NOTES

1. For a summary and critique of such approaches, see Smith 1979: Chapter Two.
2. See, for example, Worsley 1957:254-256, Lawrence 1964:256-273, Morauta 1974:156-158, Guiart 1951, Belshaw 1950:125, Bodrogi 1951, Brown 1966.

3. Proh  
Kivu  
4. For  
1977:  
5. Kava  
  
BARTH.  
1987.  
1990  
BELSH  
BERNE  
BODRI  
BROW  
CHINN  
FEIL, I  
GODE  
  
GUIAI  
INSEL  
KOIM.  
LANT  
LAWF  
LIND  
MCD  
MOR  
19  
PANC  
SMIT  
STEI  
TOVA  
TRO'

3. Prohibitions surrounding menstruation, which are linked to a ban on betel-chewing, derive from the Pomio Kivung theory of original sin (see Whitehouse 1990b).
4. For further evidence of the link between wind and prosperity in the Baigona cult, see Wetherell 1977:190-191.
5. *Kava Kava* was the original name for the Taro cult, but rapidly fell out of use (Williams 1928:4).

## REFERENCES

- BARTH, F. 1975. *Ritual and Knowledge among the Baktaman of New Guinea*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
1987. *Cosmologies in the Making: a generative approach to cultural variation in inner New Guinea*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
1990. 'The Guru and the Conjuror: transactions in knowledge and the shaping of culture in Southeast Asia and Melanesia. *Man* (N.S.) 25:640-653.
- BELSHAW, C.S. 1950. The Significance of Modern Cults in Melanesian Development. *Australian Outlook* 4:116-125.
- BERNDT, R.M. 1952/53. A Cargo Movement in the East Central Highlands of New Guinea. *Oceania* 2:232-244.
- BODRIGI, T. 1951. Colonization and Religious Movements in Melanesia. *Academia Scientiarum Hungaricae - Acta Ethnographica* 2: 259-292.
- BROWN, P. 1966. Social Change and Social Movements. In E.K. Fisk (ed.) *New Guinea on the Threshold*, pp. 149-65. Canberra: Australian National University Press.
- CHINNERY, E.W.P. and HADDON, A.C. 1917. Five New Religious Cults in British New Guinea. *Hibbert Journal* 15:448-463.
- FEIL, D.K. 1987. *The Evolution of Highland Papua New Guinea Societies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- GODELIER, M. 1991. An Unfinished Attempt at Reconstructing the Social Processes which may have Prompted the Transformation of Great-Men Societies into Big-men Societies. In M. Godelier and M. Strathern (eds) *Big Men and Great Men: personifications of power in Melanesia*, pp. 275-304. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- GUIART, J. 1951. Forerunners of Melanesian Nationalism. *Oceania* 22:81-90.
- INSELMAN, R. 1944. Letub: The Cult of the Secret of Wealth. M.A. thesis, Kennedy School of Missions, Hartford Seminary Foundation.
- KOIMANREA, F. and BAILOENAKIA, P. 1983. The Pomio Kivung Movement. In W. Flannery (ed.) *Religious Movements in Melanesia Today*, pp. 171-189. Goroka: Melanesian Institute.
- LANTERNARI, V. 1963. *The Religions of the Oppressed: a Study of Modern Messianic Cults*. New York: Mentor Books.
- LAWRENCE, P. 1964. *Road Along Cargo: a Study of the Cargo Movement in the Southern Madang District, New Guinea*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- LINDENBAUM, S. 1984. Variations on a Sociosexual Theme in Melanesia. In G. Herdt (ed.) *Ritualized Homosexuality in Melanesia*, pp. 337-61. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- MCDOWELL, N. 1988. A Note on Cargo Cults and Cultural Constructions of Change. *Pacific Studies* 11:121-134.
- MORAUTA, L. 1972. The Politics of Cargo Cults in the Madang Area. *Man* (N.S.) 7:430-447.
1974. *Beyond the Village: Local Politics in Madang, Papua New Guinea*. London: Athlone Press.
- PANOFF, M. 1969. Inter-Tribal Relations of the Maenge People of New Britain. *New Guinea Research Bulletin* 30:1-62.
- SMITH, A.D.S. 1979. *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Martin Robertson.
- STEINBAUER, F. 1979. *Melanesian Cargo Cults: New Salvation Movements in the South Pacific* (Translated by Max Wohlwill) London: George Prior.
- TOVALELE, P. 1977. The Pomio cargo cult - East New Britain. In R. Adams (ed.) *Socio-Economic Change - Papua New Guinea*, pp. 123-39. Lae: University of Technology.
- TROMPF, G.W. 1984. What Has Happened to Melanesian 'Cargo Cults'? in W. Flannery (ed.) *Religious Movements in Melanesia Today (3): Point Series Number 4*, pp. 29-51. Goroka: The Melanesian Institute.
- 1990a. The Cargo and the Millennium on Both Sides of the Pacific. In G.W. Trompf (ed.) *Cargo Cults and Millenarian Movements*, pp. 35-96. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Strong Words and Forceful Winds: Religious Experience and Political Process in Melanesia

- 1990b. Keeping the *Lo* under a Melanesian Messiah: an Analysis of the Pomio Kivung, East New Britain. In J. Barker (ed.) *Christianity in Oceania: Ethnographic Perspectives*, pp. 59-80. Lanham: University Press of America.
- WETHERELL, D. 1977. *Reluctant Mission: The Anglican Church in Papua New Guinea 1891-1942*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press.
- WHITEHOUSE, H. 1989. The Oscillating Equilibrium of Production among the Mali Baining. *Research in Melanesia* 13:62-67.
- 1990a. A Cyclical Model of Structural Transformation among the Mali Baining. *Cambridge Anthropology* 14:34-53.
- 1990b. *Structural Rhythms and Moral Tones among the Mali Baining*. Ph.D. Thesis: Cambridge University.
1991. From Possession to Apotheosis: Transformation and Disguise in the Leadership of a Cargo Movement. *Leadership and Change: International Conference in Honour of Sir Raymond Firth*. London: London School of Economics.
- 1992a. Leaders and Logics, Persons and Politics. *History and Anthropology* 6:103-124.
- 1992b. Memorable Religions: transmission, codification and change in divergent Melanesian contexts. *Man* (N.S.) 27:777-797.
1993. Religions of Fear and Religions of Routine. *Departmental Seminar*, Oxford Institute of Social and Cultural Studies.
- in press. *Inside a Cult: A Study of Religious Innovation and Transmission in Papua New Guinea*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- WILLIAMS, F.E. 1928. *Orokaiva Magic*. London: Humphrey Milford.
- WORSLEY, P. 1957. *The Trumpet Shall Sound: A Study of 'Cargo' Cults in Melanesia*. London: MacGibbon & Kee.

**THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY  
HUMANITIES RESEARCH CENTRE**

**Visiting Research Fellowships 1996**

**CULTURE AND SCIENCE**

The main theme for the HRC during 1996 will be 'Culture and Science', exploring dialogues between various strands of the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences in both western and non-western social contexts.

In July there will be a conference in honour of Bernard Smith, Australia's most distinguished art critic and theorist, whose work has been fundamentally concerned with the dialogue between art and anthropology, particularly in relation to Antipodean settler colonialism and the history of representations of non-European peoples in the Pacific. Entitled 'Beyond Colonialism: a seminar on art history and anthropology in honour of Bernard Smith', this conference will focus on ideas, representations and traditions of art and anthropology in colonial, postcolonial (especially southeast Asian and Pacific) and indigenous Pacific contexts. The conference will work in co-operation with the National Gallery of Australia and will be convened by Dr Nicholas Thomas, Anthropology, ANU.

In late August/early September a third conference entitled 'Science and Other Indigenous Knowledge Traditions' will be held jointly with James Cook University and Deakin University's Sciences in Society Centre. This conference (which also incorporates the Sixth Comparative Scientific Traditions Conference), will be based at the Cairns Campus of James Cook University; it aims to bring together scholars in the humanities and custodians/practitioners/analysts of indigenous sciences to reflect upon relations between indigenous and western cognitive traditions. Its themes will include the fortunes of indigenous knowledges and technologies in the wake of southern hemisphere colonialism (in the Antipodes, the Pacific, Africa and Asia) and the ways in which these knowledges have influenced western intellectual products and practices since the seventeenth century. The conveners are particularly interested in papers which address the uses and understandings of flora, fauna, land, intellectual and cultural property and bio-technologies. It is anticipated that experts in traditional knowledges from northern Aboriginal and Islander communities will be participating. Dr Paul Turnbull, History, James Cook University, Townsville, Ms Henrietta Fourmile, Aboriginal Studies, James Cook University, Cairns, and Dr David Turnbull, Sciences in Society Centre, Deakin University, will convene the conference.

Further enquiries about Visiting Fellowships, and about the year as a whole, should be made to the Director or Associate Director, Humanities Research Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, ACT 0200, Australia. Fax +61 6 2480054.