



Negotiating the Horizon—Living Christianity in Melanesia

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INTRODUCTION

Negotiating the Horizon—Living Christianity in Melanesia

[W]here is the horizon that separates the foreign and the indigenous, and who can successfully claim to make foreign powers indigenous or to ‘make the global local’? The boundaries of the foreign and the indigenous are fluid and contested—especially between genders and generations. Moreover, such contests are configured in part by the differences between localities (Jolly 2005, p. 138).

Melanesian Christianities—Over the Horizon

There is ‘at least one truth about globalisation, past or present. People everywhere meet what comes to them over the horizon with neither passive acceptance nor heroic resistance’ (Foster 2005, p. 167). Foster’s observation was taken as the theme of a session on ‘The Local and Global in Pacific Mission, Culture and Religion’ at the Globalising Religion and Culture in the Asia Pacific conference held in Adelaide in 2008. The challenge of adequately representing and documenting the complex, historical interaction between globalising religious influences and Melanesian people, and the validity of using distinctions between local and global in contemporary Christianity given the variety of interactions, institutions and experiences in Melanesia were identified as important research issues.

Churches are a source of considerable authority in Melanesia and Christianity plays a significant role in their everyday lives. Churches have been providing ‘alternative structures’ to state-based institutions for more than 100 years as ‘colonial administrations throughout Melanesia were under-funded and under-staffed, and Christian missions, not the colonial state, provided health services and education to rural villages’ (McDougall 2008, pp. 1–2).¹ Christian churches have made a ‘significant contribution’ to development and modernisation processes and the ‘introduction of morals and values which are now recognised in the country’s constitution’ (Hauck *et al.* 2005, p. v). They range, from Seventh Day Adventists (SDA), Catholic, Lutheran, United, Baptists and Anglican to relatively recent and rapidly expanding Pentecostal and Evangelical churches. In PNG alone, the largest country in Melanesia, there are some one hundred and fifty different churches, sects, and missions (Hauck *et al.* 2005, p. v) and over ninety-seven per cent of the population identify as Christian (Eves 2008, p. 2).

Christianity has been the focus of much recent anthropological research in Melanesia (cf. Dundon 2002, 2007a, in press, Eves 2003, 2008, Goddard & Van Heekeren 2003, Jebens 2005, McDougall 2008, Robbins 2003, 2004, 2007, Scott 2005, 2006, Tomlinson 2009). As Jolly (2005, pp. 139–40) notes, Christianity is ‘of all things . . . first foreign’ yet that which has become ‘most thoroughly indigenised’: ‘Christianity is . . . usually seen as inherently local, as fundamental to the Pacific way and as foundational to the imagination of most Pacific nations.’ Anthropology provides insights into the intersection of Christianity, governance and public performance.

There is a need for ‘serious theorisation’ of the relationship between religion and globalisation, whether understood as religion *and* globalisation, globalisation *of* religion, or globalisation *as* religion (Csordas 2007, p. 265). Csordas argues that the role and experience of religion has been understated in debates about globalisation; yet ‘[t]he rhetorical force of religious moods and motivations in contemporary society and human experience may be as compelling today as in any period in history’. In this context, religions like Christianity are ‘distinctive not because of their de-alienating potential, but because they are critical components in the ideological/religious dimension of a global social system’ (Csordas 2007, p. 259).

The papers in this collection chart ‘transformative engagements’ (Foster 2005) of missionisation processes and contemporary Christian practices, and ethnographically engage Pacific Christianity’s ‘local and global face’ (Barker 1990, p. 2). These engagements include ongoing debates about the globalising nature of Christianity and the implications for conversion and cultural (dis)continuity; everyday, lived Christianities in song, text, revelation and celebration as well as denomination and affiliation; and critical exploration of dialogues between Melanesian Christianities and national, regional and international institutions, as well as local, regional and national governments. The dynamic between Christianity and custom or ‘tradition’ is an essential part of an ongoing dialogue about the experience of Christianity in Melanesia (see Dundon 2007b, in press, Jolly 1992, Jolly & Thomas 1992).

Globalising Christianity: Conversion and [Dis]Continuity

While Christianity has a considerable presence in Melanesia, anthropologists have often struggled with conceptualising the significance of Christian missionaries, institutions, ideational systems and practices. Douglas (2001, p. 616) argues that anthropologists of Melanesia with their ‘pervasively secular and often ahistorical’ approach initially failed to make Christianity a primary focus. Christianity was often cast as ‘the perennial outside force—threatening, corrupting, or merely dusting the surface of the authentic focus of anthropology’; somehow outside of the ‘cultural’ (Barker 1992, p. 165). Yet Barker (1990, p. 1) had suggested that the image of ‘Oceanic religion’ as ‘ancient temple platforms, elegant cult houses, dramatic male initiations and bizarre cargo cults’ had to be replaced with the reality of villagers gathering in

local churches to celebrate Christmas and Easter festivals in which they competitively raise funds to further Christian expansion; indigenous prophets and healers awe followers with powerful visions of Jesus and Mary; and isolated peoples listen raptly to sermons and gospel hymns beamed to them in their language from Evangelical radio stations in the islands and beyond.

The story of the expansion of forms of Christianity throughout the Pacific was originally told primarily by the missionaries themselves. Information about conversion experiences and what Islanders understood about Christianity established an image of European missionaries as 'active agent[s] of history' and 'the Native as history's passive or reactive recipient' (Barker 1990, p. 2). Further, many contemporary Christian denominations mirrored the first mission movements and settlements and did look like an 'extension of the Western original' (Barker 1990, pp. 2–3).² But, this actually told us (then or now) very little about Christianity as lived in the villages and towns of the Pacific: 'it also tells us little about why islanders chose to be Christian or what their Christianity means to them. The European signature does not in itself reveal why and how Christianity remains vital in Oceania' (Barker 1990, p. 5).

Robbins (2007, p. 6) has argued in more recent scholarship that, even when Christianity has been a focus, it has often been represented as 'inconsistently and lightly held or as merely a thin veneer overlying deeply meaningful traditional beliefs, a veneer that people often construct for purposes of economic or political gain'. In this kind of analysis, Christianity in Melanesia is denied the status of a 'meaningful system like others and one with its own coherence and contradictions' (Robbins 2007, p. 6). There is a privileging of cultural continuity over discontinuity in the face of globalising Christian forces and this is related to several basic theoretical assumptions in anthropology, not least of which is that 'cultures endure and are very hard to change' Robbins (2007, p. 6). Anthropology is a 'science of continuity' while 'Christian ideas about change, time, and belief are based on quite different assumptions, ones that are organised around the plausibility of radical discontinuities in personal lives and cultural histories' (Robbins 2007, pp. 6–7). Anthropologists find it hard to conceptualise the ways in which Christianity structures time—particularly as a 'dimension in which radical change is possible' (Robbins 2007, p. 10).³ This has led to a paucity of accounts that privilege Melanesian conversion experiences as genuine and life-changing. 'One does not evolve into a convert', rather it is an 'event': a 'rupture in the time line of a person's life that cleaves it into a before and after between which there is a moment of disconnection' (Robbins 2007, p. 11).

The focus of many recent ethnographic analyses in anthropology have been influenced by the growing presence of 'imported and home-grown versions of evangelical, Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity' since the 1970s (Douglas 2001, p. 619). This movement has also fuelled interest in differing forms of Christianity and the influx of a new generation of missionaries, and in processes of globalisation. Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity in which 'believers receive the gifts of the Holy

Spirit and have ecstatic experiences such as speaking in tongues, healing, and prophesying is one of the great success stories of the current era of cultural globalisation' (Robbins 2007, p. 117, see also Robbins 2003, 2004a, 2004b, Eves 2000, 2011). Despite its North American origins, two-thirds of its adherents worldwide live outside 'the West' in places like Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Pacific—as do some 9 million who convert each year—and in a range of diverse and disparate social contexts. Many adherents 'otherwise remain only peripherally or tenuously involved with other global forms' (Robbins 2004a, pp. 117–8).

Eves (2011) points out that Pentecostal Christianity is remarkably consistent in its form and content throughout the world. It is open to localisation and 'quickly comes to address local concerns' but at the same time is opposed to local culture and concerned primarily with the implementation of the 'global Pentecostal repertoire of beliefs and practices'. Robbins also argues that Pentecostal discourse is 'littered with images of rupture and discontinuity' (Robbins 2004b, p. 127) and this is a distinctive feature in its globalisation. Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity ritualises discontinuity and maintains discontinuity 'through an ascetic code embedded in a thoroughgoing dualism of great hermeneutic force; it preserves that which it breaks from; and its dualism provides a flexible language of satanic influence that is very sensitive to local social concerns' (Robbins 2004b, p. 127).

Based on his ethnographic analysis among the Urapmin in West Sepik Province, Robbins argues that during conversion, there was no process of assimilation, which meant that many aspects of 'traditional Urapmin culture' were left intact (Robbins 2004a, p. 3). The Urapmin 'live with two contradictory cultural logics at one time', where these logics are Christian and indigenous, and the Urapmin 'understand each of these logics in its own terms, and they hold fiercely to both of them' (Robbins 2004a, pp. xxvi–xxvii). It is through the 'cracked lens of this contradiction' that the Urapmin understand their current situation and social dynamic Robbins (2004a, p. xxvi).⁴ Similarly, Eves (2000, p. 74 and 2011) in his work among the Lelet of New Ireland has demonstrated that localised climatic events, like the drought of 1997–8 and an earthquake in 2000, come to 'intersect with global frameworks of understanding' and 'new Christian interpretations' that 'bring home vividly the urgency of their message of sin and salvation, tied to the terrifying vision of the last days of the world'. Local cosmologies and understandings are studied and scrutinised by the Lelet in an attempt to make sense of the two frameworks (Eves 2000, p. 74). The Lelet have been familiar with Methodist Christianity since the early twentieth century, and Pentecostal Christianity has brought a focus on apocalyptic frameworks through which they study current local, but also national and even international events for signs of the 'end times' (2011). The apocalyptic focus of Lelet Christianity encourages local people to seek more information about global events, as evidence of the end times—to be more 'outward looking' (Eves 2000, p. 75).⁵ Globalisation, Eves argues, is not 'a new phenomenon, but . . . it is being emphasised, experienced and associated differently at the present time (Eves 2000, p. 74).

Good Christianity: Heaven, Transformation and the Desires of Development

Holger Jebens in his contribution to this issue, cautions against assuming that globalisation dominates the form of local Christianities in Papua New Guinea. From fieldwork in Pairundu village in the Southern Highlands Province, Jebens demonstrates that both Catholic and Seventh Day Adventist Christianities are the result of the 'seemingly distinct, yet complementary and interdependent aspects of the same process', that of globalisation and localisation. Central to the historical development of these local Christianities, he argues, are both rupture and continuity. Rupture in the sense that becoming a Christian and attaining access to Heaven is predicated on 'giving up everything', a concept and practice that refers particularly to 'traditional culture'; and continuity through the perception of Christianity in cultural terms as a form of work, like a gift, in which the anticipated return on the gift (the demonstration of faith and commitment of local Christians) is high: including access to superior Western powers and capabilities and the 'enhancement of one's own status as a counter-prestation'. In this way, despite the apparent and explicit rupture with the traditional past, it 'persists in its very rejection' (Jebens 2011).

Links drawn between development and Christianity in Melanesia blur the boundary between 'local' and 'global' in both Christianity and development. Making sense of Christianity in Melanesia should incorporate the acknowledgement of its intimate relationship with the desire for and engagement with processes of social, economic and political transformation and the development of modern nation-states. Robbin's account of Pentecostal charismatic Christianity among the Urapmin, for example, is set against the backdrop of the multinational Kennecott corporation mineral exploration. Differing employment opportunities created conflict between the two central groups of the Urapmin, which caused both great shame and a feeling that they had a predilection for sin and conflict (Robbins 2004a, p. xx). This shaped the Urapmin's daily moral dilemma of trying to live 'good Christian lives'.

Throughout Melanesia, Christianity has provided a lens through which to conceptualise relationships between the local, regional or national. It provides a basis for the rationale for difference or relative disadvantage, and for a possible solution. Christianity has come to denote a way of articulating the role of Melanesians (as individuals, ethnic or language groups, and national or regional entities) on the global stage. If Pentecostal charismatic Christianity, in particular, enables and encourages the development of a global or 'outward looking' focus for rural Melanesians—as Eves suggests—its recent marriage with development and aid organisations has only reinforced this perception.

Authors in this issue, have sought to make connections between localised Christianities, and wider regional and national networks, exploring the extent to which central Christian ideas about millennialism and concepts like 'heaven', for example, have become part of a wider discourse on development, national sentiment and regional or local affiliations (cf. Dundon 2004, 2010 and 2011, Eves 2011, Goddard & Van Heekeren 2003, Jacka 2005, Robbins 1998, 2004a). Exploring the

conjuncture of Christianity, capitalist development and ideas of modernisation among the Ipili in the Porgera Valley, PNG, Jacka noted the significance particularly of the concepts of heaven and salvation in conversion processes (Jacka 2005). Christianity, particularly Pentecostal charismatic Christianity, is based on 'not being tied down to any one place', but this represents only half of the equation; local understandings of Christianity as 'place-based', and what appeals to them: 'Heaven, as a place, therefore, legitimates Christianity for Ipili people' (Jacka 2005, p. 644). Heaven—a 'good place'—is the place in which new identities and social relations will be created: there will be no white or black, or distance between people, no-one will have to work or plant their own food. As Jacka argues;

[t]he Ipili idea of 'heaven', as emplaced social relations, indicates that we need to weave together rupture with continuity, local with global, tradition with modernity. Furthermore, we can best do so by examining not only the dystopias of the global world order but also perhaps its utopias and the millennial thinking that these forces can engender (Jacka 2005, p. 649).

Millenarian movements and cargo cults were a 'rich source of analysis' of the incorporation of Christianity into Melanesian communities through the work of missionaries and administrators (Macintyre 1990, p. 81).⁶ In most millenarian movements and cargo cults, the desire for radical and/or rapid change was and still is central and based largely on the capacity of Melanesians to bring about this transformation through their own agency. The connection between the desire for 'cargo', understood in terms of 'things' but also more widespread changes in unequal power relations, and Christianity is made explicit by Lattas (1992, p. 3), who argues that cargo cults are 'forms of knowledge constructed by those who are subjugated'. Millenarian movements, he writes,

express the power of human imagination to idealise and posit a better world which is without pain, suffering and work. Melanesian villagers have imagined and desired worlds where they would shed their black skins so as to acquire the 'beautiful' skin and comfortable lifestyle of whites. Cargo cults are movements where whites lose control of their ability to police and direct the desires of their subjects (Lattas 1992, pp. 2–3).

Such cargo cults, and concomittant 'desires' or expectations, are an essential part of the experience of Christianity in Melanesia and the development of 'forms of knowledge'(cf. Lattas 1992) about transformation, modernity and globalisation. Throughout Melanesia, the concept and practice of development encompasses personal or communal journeys to maturity and/or enlightenment as well as national or regional strategies for achieving economic, political and civic growth and/or prosperity. Such understandings of development are often articulated within the context of Christian, messages, events, actions and concepts (cf. Young 1997, Dundon 2004a, in press). van der Veer (1996) argued that the colonial project—and perhaps the postcolonial one—exemplified in the conversion to Christianity, was to transform

colonised peoples into not only believers in the new faith but also ‘modern’ subjects; ‘the entrepreneurial bourgeois self with his urge for self-improvement’ (van der Veer 1996, p. 9). The conflation of the modern and Christian subjectivity has found renewed vigour in contemporarily politically salient and nuanced uses of development discourses in Melanesia, particularly with international aid agencies and organisations.

So often involved in the provision of basic healthcare and educational services, increasingly Christian institutions and agents are viewed by international development organisations and national governments as an important and stable resource for effective interaction between community and regional and national structures in the formulation and establishment of programs concerned with HIV/AIDS prevention, governance, capacity-building and gender equity, for example (see Hauck et al. 2005, p. v, McDougall 2008).

I have explored the dynamic between Christianity, identity and development in discussions of how ‘customary ways’, Christianity and development feature prominently in Gogodala of Western Province understandings of significant relationships with national and international others (particularly a global Christian community but also a national one) (see Dundon 2007b, in press). Influenced by a close residential relationship with a non-denominational evangelical mission since the early 1930s (and later an indigenous church), the Gogodala Christians express global connections in stories—*iniwa olagi*—that elucidate the contextual and historical significance of ancestral narratives of the migratory route and actions of the originary ancestors (cf. Dundon 2007b). As I describe in the paper in this issue, this recently culminated in a very public claim for a substantive connection to the Lost Tribes of Israel through these ancestral beings, claimed to be descendents of the Tribe of Benjamin. While claims for Israeli nationality through the Lost Tribes is not a singular event, even in PNG, this one was given a substantial boost by a visit from Professor Tudor Partfit, Director of Jewish Studies at the University of London, and the collection of Gogodala DNA. Underlying this public dialogue of an embodied and seemingly ancient Christianity is a concern with a chronic lack of development in the area and Province more generally. Several prominent Gogodala argue that the claim for Jewish identity will result in the long anticipated development of the community but in Israel, with a settlement of homes, cars, televisions and telephones (Dundon, 2011).

Living Christianity: Sense, Meaning, Competition and Customary Christianity

If development and Christianity have been conflated in Melanesia, the lived experience of Christianity, although based on common principles and bearing distinctive institutions, rituals and practices, still differs considerably. ‘Christianity is not a stable, singular object’ in any context or place despite its global reach and salience (Engelke & Tomlinson 2006, p. 19). These papers demonstrate that studies of the everyday, lived experiences of local Christianities in Melanesia are

crucial for the analysis of ‘the nature of locality, as a lived experience, in a globalised, deterritorialised world’ (Appadurai 1991, p. 196), or as Jacka suggests, a reterritorialised Christian world. A focus on the ‘concrete historical processes’ of globalisation (Friedman 1994, p. 13) enables the foregrounding of the lived realities and the many contexts in which these are experienced, discussed and understood. Scott (2005, p. 106) argues that this can be achieved through ethnographic analyses of ethno-theologies and explorations of the ways in which Melanesians selectively ‘privilege’ certain aspects of Christian theologies and narratives, which then ‘become imbricated with their material, social, and philosophical undertakings’ (Scott 2005, pp. 102, 106). Such an analysis can encompass the lived realities and experiences of Christianity and the extent to which its mundane and daily experience may be more (or less) meaningful (cf. Engelke & Tomlinson 2006).

The authors in this issue all deal with the lived experience of Christianity in communities in PNG, but two in particular focus on ‘living the local’ (and its intersection with the global) through sensual and phenomenological engagement. Susan Hemer explores ‘the practices and experiences of Lihirians and their Churches’ through the sensual experience of the services and ceremonies that allowed her to understand the differing ways in which Catholicism and the United Church were ‘interwoven’ in their ‘Lihirian location’. She focuses on the sensual forms of connections between people, places, things and ideas through music, dance, clothing and comportment in everyday practices and experiences of the two Christian denominations. Theories that generate models in which local and global are oppositional fail to give insights ‘on the relationships that underpin the dissemination, interpretation and acceptance of Christianity’ in Melanesia. Her analysis found that the two forms of Lihirian Christian institution and doctrine, each with distinct leadership styles, music, dance, singing, dress and ritual, did not equate with one church being more ‘local’ than the other.

Deborah van Heekeren’s paper focuses on the experiential dimension of song for the Vula’a of Central Province, PNG. She examines the important role played by Polynesian mission teachers and their prophet songs (*peroveta*), first in the initial conversions undertaken by the London Missionary Society and later as an expression of a local Christian identity—the United Church. Singing these prophet songs promotes an ‘existential plenitude’ and reproducing a participatory ontology (Van Heekeren 2011). In this way, sociality and occasions of collectivity are punctuated by song and singing and, through song’s transformatory nature, Christianity was (and continues to be) appropriated by the Vula’a; this resonates with the recent Gogodala claims of embodied, ancient ties with the original Tribes of Israel. The global and local become embodied in contemporary Gogodala people, cementing relationships posited between Gogodala and wider Christian communities throughout the world.

Gogodala Christianity relies on these ancestral connections and agency in the constitution of claims for the ‘continuity’ of Christian practices and persons. Recent claims to genetic ties to Israel is only one of several discursive and substantial contexts in which claims for continuity of Christian practice and personhood are

expressed and constituted. Similarly for the Kamula, neighbours of the Gogodala, Michael Wood (2011) demonstrates some of the contexts used to ascribe new significances to past customary practices in the face of contemporary Christian emphasis on continuities between Christian and customary practice and intentions. The celebrations for the publication of the Kamula version of the New Testament brought together two ritual sequences with contrasting but connected meanings: the Summer Institute of Linguistic Bible Dedication and Kamula ties associated with raiding and initiation. At the ceremony Kamula articulated a desire to celebrate the changes wrought to custom by Christianity while, at the same time, emphasising the capacity for the transformation and encompassment of Christianity through the (at times) violent power of Kamula 'tradition'. In this way, the Bible Dedication Ceremony was based on tricking powerful others—ancestral and white/Europeans—into redefining representations of Kamula and the production of a distinctive Kamula Church.

Like Hemer, Jebens' paper explicitly compares the experiences and practices of two Christian denominations – the SDA and the Catholic Church. He demonstrates the extent to which the relationship between them is essentially competitive, with the more established Catholic leaders and their congregation transforming not only their services, but also consumption practices and styles of dress. In this way, the Catholics seek to become 'more Adventist', which is associated with a more rigid adherence to the Bible and the word of God. Thus the 'gift' of their Christian faith and lifestyle increases in value and, likewise, the return gift. In this way, his analysis also foregrounds the complex relationship between rupture and continuity in these local Christianities and the importance of the interaction between Christianity and traditional custom in understandings of Christianity in Pairundu. Hemer's paper points to the 'contemporary tradition' of Christianity in Lihir arguing that 'Christianity is closely woven into Lihiran lives'. In his analysis of the explanation of events like the earthquake, Eves argues that, while an apocalyptic explanatory frameworks are a primary way of understanding and debating the significance of such events, they have not simply replaced older, customary ones. Eves shows that pre-existing reasons, whether described as customary or traditional, often exist in a dialogue with newer, apocalyptic rationales for determining the significance of certain events, although the latter are accorded greater importance.

The analyses of lived Christianity presented here engage the dynamic between continuity and discontinuity, particularly in terms of 'custom' and Christianity, with a focus on the 'complexity of interconnections' (Hemer 2011) between these domains of experience. This is mirrored in the authors' exegeses of the lived dynamic between the local and global aspects of Melanesian Christianity, exploring the 'multidimensional process [of globalisation], with religion, popular culture, politics, and economics as necessarily coeval and intimately intertwined, as they are in the lives of actors responsible for bringing about globalisation in the first place' (Csordas 2007, p. 260). The complex connections between 'local' and 'global', are best understood as 'a field of mutual influences' (Jebens 2005, p. xv). In this context, the

use of 'traditional' and 'Christian' are often rhetorical resources as well as lived experiences' (cf. Jebens 2005, p. xv, 2011). The papers in this issue pay 'attention to the *distinctive* content of Christian institutions and expressions' in Melanesia now and in the past (Barker 2007, p. 18). This approach engages the 'local' and the 'global' in regard to conversion, missionisation and the lived experience of Christianity—whether experienced as cataclysmic or momentous events, ceremonies that mark significant moments, or everyday practices like singing and attending church services.

Notes

- [1] Increasingly, PNG churches are acknowledged as 'effective service providers' with 'extensive social networks that engage with the clan system, communities and the state' (AusAID 2006, p. 10). Churches, it is suggested, 'form the other [clans being the other] mainstay of PNG civil society' (AusAID 2006, p. 6).
- [2] Protestant missions entered into agreements with each other dividing areas into 'spheres of influence'; while Roman Catholics and Seventh Day Adventists established themselves in areas often as the primary form of Christian institution.
- [3] Christianity has for much of its history chosen to emphasise discontinuity from its own origins in Judaism (Robbins 2007a, p. 11).
- [4] The notion of 'sin' becomes increasingly important in the slippage between the moral logics of these two cultural systems; that is, as Urapmin honour the indigenous logic, they contradict the Christian one, which becomes evidence of their 'propensity to sin' (Robbins 2004a, p. xxvi).
- [5] Douglas (2001, p. 626) noted that all Christianity is ultimately millennial, those with an emphasis on apocalyptic ideas are always so—and Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity is always millennial but not always apocalyptic.
- [6] Early anthropological interest in cargo cults was, argues Douglas (2001, p. 616) 'in part the product of fieldworker's reactions to indigenous millenarians who were sometimes self-styled Christians and whose disconcerting actions and desires left a marked imprint on anthropological texts'. By the 1980s, however, research into cargo cults and millenarian movements began to echo a general anthropological and theoretical emphasis on anti-essentialism, history and reflexivity in anthropology and an increasing interest in modernity and globalisation (Douglas 2001, p. 617); as well as a focus on the historical and emergent forms of indigenous Christianity throughout the Pacific.

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