

6

Big Noise from Rambutjo

Paliau depicted the indigenous way of life as one of endless hard labour leading only to sickness and death. He called for discarding it and adopting the white way of life. He had worked with whites for many years, but mostly in police and military settings, so what he knew firsthand of white or European life was limited. Most of Paliau's followers had to fill in even more details of white life from their imaginations than he did. Paliau proposed concrete steps for building a new society with a new relationship to God, but his message aroused anticipation of a rapid and complete transformation. While Paliau was still gathering followers and creating an organisation, rumours spread from Baluan Island that he was revealing a new truth—a truth that whites had hidden from natives. Word spread that Jesus had revealed this knowledge to Paliau and now the people of New Guinea could rise above the condition of humanity after the Fall and expulsion from the First Order. When the native was made all right, the last work of Jesus would be finished. This was the beginning of the Noise.

The rapid spread of the Noise strongly suggests that from early in Paliau's organising efforts many people expected him to bring them the magical secret of the cargo, not a program for gradual change. Rumours of his contacts with Jesus preceded his announcement that he would have much to say upon his return to Manus. He betrayed no details of what that would be, a sure way to elevate people's expectations. Although to the best of our knowledge he never overtly promised restoration of the First Order of God, when he finally returned to Baluan, he made much of the story of the First Order and the Fall from the First Order Paradise. And he did little or nothing to discourage radical expectations, even as he attended to promoting and organising the step-by-step Movement program.

In Manus in the 1940s, some members of the Paliu Movement clearly did see the call for change in mundane, secular time as a promise of sudden magical transformation. In Mok, the village where Paliu found his earliest support, people immediately started the community organising and communal work he called for. Almost as quickly, some Mok people saw signs that their activities were attracting supernatural attention.

The Noise then began and spread contagiously. Figure 6.1 shows the main routes by which people carried news of the Noise from place to place, events we describe below. Decades after the Noise had subsided, a comparatively staid Paliu Movement began using the slogan ‘Like Fire!’ on posters, leaflets, and T-shirts. But the spread of the Noise was more ‘like fire’ than the growth of the Movement as a whole, either before or after the Noise. The first manifestation of the Noise ran its course—at least in public—in less than three months. But they were months of intense activity and high emotion.

Lukas of Mok described the feeling of those days, when he was among those swept up by the Noise:

At the time we started these ideas, we thought that all this trouble that we ... have is not because of our own wrongs but because of the wrongs of the angels and of Adam and Eve. Why should we be burdened with all this pain and hard work because of them? We must leave this wrong of theirs behind us. We must start on the good way of life that was the First Order of God. If we lose these evil ways of theirs, eventually God will hear us. That is what we thought. We tried to follow this. We tried to live with only good *tingting*. At this time, when we worked according to good *tingting* exclusively, the Noise had not come yet, but everything came easy for us. When we went to clear ground for our new village we were completely occupied with that work; we did not need to fish. The fish just died and we gathered them up. In the past we used to build a shelter on our canoes, but now we needed no shelter. Why? Because the rain didn't wet us, there were only good winds for us to sail by. Birds used to come right up to us. Our thoughts were strong about all of this. Why was everything so easy now? If we thought something, God knew. Everything could come to us.

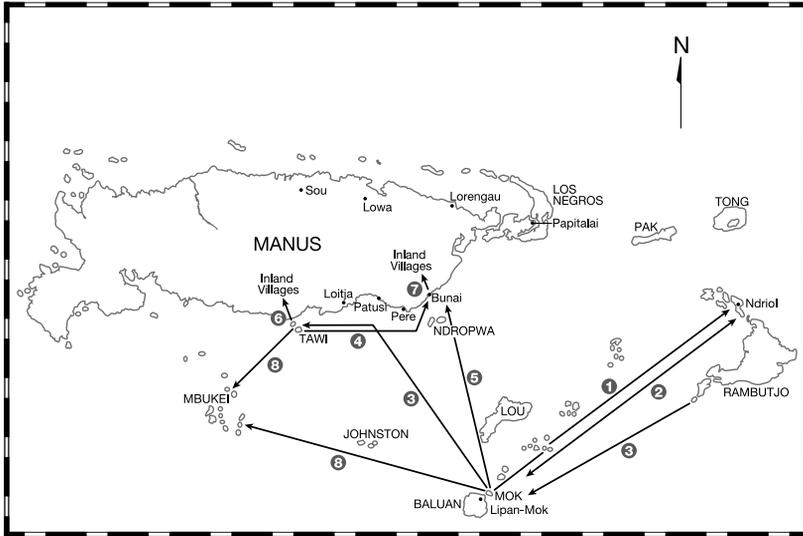


Figure 6.1: The routes of those who first conveyed from place to place news of Wapei's prophecies and the alleged deliveries of cargo already accomplished.

All the journeys shown here took place within less than a week. We know that the dramatic events of the Noise began with people carrying news of Wapei's prophecy from Ndrjol to Mok. But we do not know the precise timing of the other journeys shown, so our numbering does not represent their sequence. The map key summarises what we do know. We expand on this in the main text. (*Guria* usually refers to violent shaking, as discussed in the main text.)

Source: Map created by Michael French Smith and Diane Buric, based on a diagram in Schwartz (1962).

Key to the map:

(distances are approximate)

- *Journey 1: Lungat, Wapei, and others return to Ndrjol from Baluan (40 miles/65 kilometres).*

Wapei began to prophesy the coming of the cargo after returning to Ndrjol with Lungat from Baluan, where they had heard Paliu speak about the New Way. Lungat became an advocate of the New Way, but Wapei's contact with Paliu stirred a more apocalyptic vision.

- *Journey 2: Mok people (Tahan, Pwankiau, and others) travel to Ndrjol and return home with news of Wapei's prophecy (a round trip of about 80 miles/130 kilometres).*

The Mok people came to Ndrjol to get sago palm leaves for thatching a New Way structure on Baluan. Wapei's followers on Ndrjol told them of the cargo prophecy, but chased them away, telling them to go home and wait for their own cargo. The Mok people left and spent the night on nearby Rambutjo, where they began to *guria*. Impressed by this, when they reached Mok they endorsed Wapei's prophecy, sparking the *guria* in Mok.

- *Journey 3: Kosa travels home to Tawi from the direction of Rambutjo via Mok. On the way he stops in Patusi and Loitja, where he also conveys news of the Noise (70 miles/115 kilometres).*

Kosa of Tawi, returning to Tawi from the direction of Rambutjo, stopped at Mok, where people had begun to *guria*. The Mok people would not let Kosa land, but they told him of Wapei's prophecy. Kosa continued travelling, stopping on the way at Patusi and Loitja, where he told villagers of events in Mok, and finally arriving in Tawi, where on hearing the news people began to *guria*.

- *Journey 4: Piluan takes news of the Noise from Tawi to Bunai, conveying it to people of Patusi and Pere along the way (19 miles/30 kilometres).*

Several people from other villages were in Tawi when *guria* broke out, including Piluan of Bunai. She soon brought the news to Bunai, conveying it to people of Patusi and Pere along the way. The news sparked an outbreak of *guria* in Pere, and soon after Piluan arrived in Bunai its people began throwing their belongings into the sea.

- *Journey 5: Tjamilo and Posanau return to Bunai from Mok (25 miles/40 kilometres).*

Tjamilo and Posanau of Bunai were in Mok when the Noise broke out. They returned to Bunai soon after Piluan's return from Tawi and their report increased Bunai enthusiasm for the Noise.

- *Journey 6: Suan takes the news to Peli and other Usiai villages west of and inland from Tawi.*

- *Journey 7: Kampo of Lahan brings news of the Noise from Bunai to Lahan. From there, news spreads to other Usiai villages, including Yiru, Katin, Kapo, and Nuang, and villages further inland, including Bulihan, Karun, and Soniru.*

Kampo is among the Usiai people who heard of the Noise from other Usiai who had visited the coast to trade. Kampo went to Bunai to hear more about the Noise. He then brought what he heard back to Lahan, from where it spread further.

- *Journey 8: The news is conveyed to Mbukei.*

We are not sure who brought the news to Mbukei, but we know it reached there from either Mok (34 miles/55 kilometres) or Tawi (15 miles/24 kilometres).

The Noise in Ndriol

The Noise first appeared in February 1947, only about three months after Paliau began promoting the Movement from his base on Baluan. The canoes of the eager and the curious had begun to arrive there. His meeting house was crowded. He or his best-informed followers repeated the 'Long Story of God' and the details of his program for the benefit of each new arrival. Accounts of this period depict Paliau as constantly active, sleeping little, meeting and speaking at great length to new arrivals, and winning over with his skilled oratory small groups of curious visitors and the crowds at the twice-daily meetings.

When the group from Rambutjo Island was ready to leave, Paliau reminded them that he had entrusted Lungat of Ndriol, the only village on a small island adjacent to Rambutjo, with carrying out the Movement program in Ndriol and on Rambutjo. Lungat was to lead the young men of Rambutjo who had come to Baluan in winning over their elders and

propagating the truth Paliau had taught them. Lungat was also to record people's dreams, for they contained the voice of God. But Paliau gave the voyagers to Ndriol this warning: The ideas he had given them were powerful and if they did not cleave to them closely they would bring ruin.

When Lungat's canoe returned to Ndriol, the men of the village were at their usual tasks, fishing on the reefs or cutting sago palms in the bush. It was the men to whom he wished to speak, and by nightfall he had gathered them for their first meeting. With the remarkable verbal recall typical of Titan people, Lungat repeated all that he had heard from Paliau. He proclaimed the break with the past, outlined the New Way, recounted much of the 'Long Story of God', and explained the way of the *tingting*. In the past, when he had presented his own dream-inspired attempt at local reform, villagers had rejected it. But now, he told Schwartz and Shargo, he was able to win over the older men, including the village *luluai*, to the new program. These men were deeply enmeshed in longstanding networks of affinal exchange obligations, and they spent the next few days settling their affairs by making at least token settlements of their debts from past birth, betrothal, marriage, and mourning feasts. Each night, they met with Lungat to discuss the new, 'true' version of Christianity and discuss, resentfully, the 'lies' of the missionaries.

Following Paliau's instructions, Lungat began collecting dreams. He interpreted some himself. Others he wrote down to take to Paliau, like the dream figuring in the following incident. A few days after his return from Baluan, Lungat and the most influential Ndriol converts to the Movement sent a large number of villagers to cut sago palms and extract the starchy pulp, a staple food in the Admiralty Islands and many other parts of Papua New Guinea. The process would require them to sleep several nights in the bush. The first night, one of Lungat's ancestors appeared in a dream to a member of the party. The ancestor commanded him to take the whole work group back to the village immediately because the men were hungry. But when the recipient of this command awoke in the morning, he decided to keep his dream to himself. That day the entire party paddled up a stream to cut some of the sago palms that grew in the damp soil on its banks. One of the palms they cut fell on one of their canoes and broke it. The dreamer immediately feared that ignoring the command he had received from his dead ancestor had brought this on, and he confessed this to the other members of the group. They decided to hurry back to the village to tell Lungat, who scolded the erring dreamer

for disobeying the dictates of his *tingting*. But Lungat was not sure what the dead ancestor had been trying to communicate, so he prepared to leave for Baluan the next day to consult Paliau.

Titan were prodigious travellers by outrigger canoe, sailing when the winds permitted and paddling when they did not.¹ Even so, Lungat must have taken his responsibility for getting an authoritative interpretation of the dream very seriously, because Baluan was over 35 miles (more than 60 kilometres) away.

But Lungat did not leave the next day. The night before his intended departure, Wapei, an unmarried youth, had a dream that captured the attention of all the people of Ndriol. Lungat and his crew were at the beach preparing for their voyage when Wapei—with an excited but commanding air, strange for his youth and lack of status—accosted them and said they could not leave. Lungat argued at first, but then yielded to Wapei's urgent manner. Wapei said: 'Why are you going to Paliau to hear the word of God? Paliau has said that God is everywhere. He is here too'. Wapei insisted that the men of Ndriol should not listen to the talk of a man from any other village. He told them that Jesus had appeared to him in a dream. Jesus had told him that Ndriol was to receive its cargo on the coming Sunday. Jesus would come to Earth accompanied by the dead of Ndriol.

The cargo promised included every desirable material thing the whites possessed: planes, ships, bulldozers, sheet metal, money, and the food sold in stores. Ships and planes manned by the villagers' own ancestors would bring the cargo. And at the moment of the return of the dead, cargo would also appear in the graveyard.² As Wapei addressed the assembled village he trembled violently, his muscles straining against each other. All who saw him said that his eyes looked 'different' (in Tok Pisin, *arakain*, which translates literally as 'another kind'). Everyone, people told the anthropologists, believed Wapei instantly; they saw him as a prophet and acceded to his leadership.

1 Schwartz notes, however, that unless there was considerable reason to hurry, in the days of sail many Titan preferred to wait for a favourable wind rather than paddle any great distance.

2 Some Ndriol villagers also told Schwartz and Shargo that Jesus told Wapei that when the dead of Ndriol returned they would have white skins.

Paliau deliberately upset existing hierarchies by assigning young men with little status (but no women) to represent the Movement in their villages, but he tried to select effective advocates. When choosing spokesmen from among groups of visitors to Baluan to take his message back to their homes he asked who among them was the best and the boldest speaker. Still, some men so chosen, like Kisakiu and Lungat, recalled that trying to recruit prestigious older men to the Movement had taken all their courage. The Noise, however, generated leaders spontaneously and spread without skilled advocacy. The degree of authority Wapei was able to assume in Ndriol was exceptional. But in other villages, too, claims to supernatural revelations about the cargo almost immediately made young people and others with little status under ordinary circumstances into leaders. The mere rumour of the Noise generated great excitement and fevered expectations. People began destroying property on the strength of reports of a kind that ordinarily would have provoked scepticism and laughter, such as the reports of two old women, whom we will meet below.

Wapei told the people of Ndriol that a return to the First Order of God was at hand, but to ensure its arrival they had to purify themselves. This, he told them, required strict obedience to the commands of Jesus as conveyed through him, Wapei. Everyone was to think only good thoughts. No one was to gather food; they must fast, but they would not be hungry. Wapei also prohibited washing, sleeping indoors, and leaving the village. He told people to throw into the sea or burn everything in their houses; not only the dogs' teeth, shell money, fired clay pots, and coconut oil that represented the wealth and values of the past, but also all the white men's goods they had managed to secure from the trade stores and the scrap heaps of the American army. In his early meetings, Paliau had asked people to destroy a few items emblematic of the old culture, such as shell money, dogs' teeth, and grass skirts. He never suggested they destroy canoes, sails, fishing implements, war surplus tools, or American and Australian currency. But during the Noise, many people discarded things on which they depended for their livelihoods in nearly irrevocable acts of commitment. They abandoned day-to-day, life-sustaining activities, throwing out food and firewood and leaving their children unfed. They believed—or desperately hoped—that their next meal would be like the food of the Americans, a kind of manna in tin cans.

Wapei told the people of Ndriol to destroy their canoes and sails, an act akin to amputating a limb for these sea dwellers. Nothing could have been further from normal Titan inclinations. Yet people heeded his instructions,

thus making a desperate investment in the validity of Wapei's prophecy. They accepted—or perhaps recklessly hoped—that discarding all their possessions was necessary to ensure and to display to higher powers a clean break with the past. Some also assumed they were making room for the abundant cargo soon to arrive. The cargo had to come. Committed to this outcome, many began to notice signs of its imminent arrival.

On Sunday, however, no cargo came. Wapei adapted quickly, saying this was the wrong Sunday. Jesus had really meant the next Sunday. Ndriol waited another week. Each day villagers spent long hours in church, praying intensely, their *tingting* concentrated on God, their bodies trembling violently with the feeling of God's nearness.

This was the *guria*, the trembling of the body which in some individuals became uncontrolled convulsions. In Tok Pisin, the word *guria* refers to various kinds of shaking, ranging from the trembling of the ground in an earthquake to the trembling of a person in fear or fever. *Guria* is a near cognate of the Tok Pisin word *nois*, which also refers to violent shaking. But during episodes like that in Ndriol, people were more likely to describe individual shaking as *guria* and to use *nois* to refer to the larger event. Soon, everyone in Ndriol shook with excitement, taking this as evidence of divine possession. Hence, being afflicted with *guria* validated people's visions or inspirations. Anything anyone said while in the grip of *guria* received rapt attention. (See Appendix A for further discussion of *guria* and other forms of what Schwartz calls pathomimetic behaviour associated with the Manus cults.)

Lungat, people said, became simply another of Wapei's followers. Wapei strode about the village making sure that everyone was following his instructions. Some villagers described his leadership in those days as a virtual reign of terror and told Schwartz and Shargo they had feared his increasingly erratic behaviour. Whether moved by belief or fear of Wapei, men and women walked about with their hands clasped in prayer. Many also communicated in dreams and visions with their ancestors, who always confirmed Wapei's original revelation. The dead spoke to one man by whistling. The sound of ghostly whistling had nearly disappeared from the Admiralties years before, when converts gave up the protection of their fathers' ghosts for that of Jesus and the Christian deity in the 1930s. Now, the whistles, familiar from seances many had overheard in childhood, assured them that cargo-laden ghosts would soon arrive.

One man claimed that money had appeared on a table he had built on the pattern of one he had seen in a dream. This, he reasoned, was a token gift from a dead brother.³

On Wednesday of this week of waiting, several Mok canoes arrived in Ndriol to pick up a load of sago palm leaf for thatching one of the structures Paliau had ordered built. The Mok people pulled their canoes ashore, but the men of Ndriol did not let them come beyond the beach. Wapei approached them and ordered them to return to Mok immediately so they would be on hand to receive their own cargo, which also would come on Sunday. He told them about Jesus's message and the promised return of the ancestors. But he grew angry when the Mok people seemed sceptical. He called the men of Ndriol to come to the beach. A group of men came and stood in attitudes of Christian-style prayer before the Mok visitors. Wapei said he and his followers were in contact with God, then they began to run around, shaking violently. The people from Mok were frightened, but seeing the Ndriol men *guria* helped convince them that Wapei spoke the truth. When they told Wapei they wanted to stay in Ndriol for a while, Wapei said, 'Look, your canoe is on fire'. The Mok visitors turned and, they reported later, they saw the flames. Wapei ordered the fire to stop, and (it was reported) it did, leaving no marks on the canoe. The Mok people then left, carrying news of the Noise with them, first to Pusu, another Rambutjo village, then to Mok and Baluan.⁴

Wapei continued to roam the village, threatening, scolding, and preaching. He whipped men with rattan switches. At one point he whipped a young man and woman after removing their *laplap* and exposing them before other villagers. But the people of Ndriol did not stop him, believing this was somehow necessary to prepare the way for the cargo.

As another Sunday approached, excitement mounted. On Friday, the *guria* became particularly violent. Some villagers fell down when they tried to walk. Wapei led prayers in the church; then he went outside, ripped the cross from above the door and threw it into the sea. He commanded the other men to tear down the church, offering no explanation. But people apparently assumed that the initial round of discarding and destroying property had not gone far enough, so they now had to finish the job. As some began to

3 Not necessarily a biological brother: see Chapter 5, footnote 1, explaining kin terminology in the languages of the Admiralties.

4 The accounts of this incident Schwartz obtained agree closely with those Marjorie Landman (1951) obtained from Mok people who were present in Ndriol at the time.

dismantle the church, others brought more possessions from their houses and began destroying them, and still others set fire to more of the remaining canoes. Ndriol people later told the anthropologists that although they did not eat they had felt no hunger, not even the children. Everyone stayed on the beach at night. Some saw the lights of aeroplanes. Others heard what they could not see: the sounds of ships, their winches lowering an invisible cargo, and the clank of metal objects being unloaded.

On Saturday, Wapei confirmed that the cargo would come at dawn the next day. Some villagers, however, suffering from the extremes of his rule, voiced doubts. Wapei became frantic and struck several older men and women, including the old *luluai*. He quarrelled with Alois Ndreje, whom he considered an older brother (within the Titan kinship system). Although he did not question Wapei's revelation, he protested the beatings. Wapei threatened Ndreje with a fishing spear, commanded him to kneel, then pressed the spear against Ndreje's chest, without breaking the skin. Ndreje said, 'If you want to kill me, you can'. Wapei relented and released him.

That night, Wapei lined up the people of Ndriol on the beach to await the cargo's dawn arrival. Although some saw lights again, no ships arrived. And no new way of life suddenly replaced the ways of the past that, with their dogs' teeth and other goods, they had tried to cast into the sea. Wapei held that he was not wrong about the cargo or the promise of a return to the First Order of God. But somehow, he told his deeply disappointed followers, he had spoiled this opportunity for the people of Ndriol. According to the account Lungat and Alois Ndreje gave Schwartz and Shargo, Wapei made the following speech to Alois Ndreje and another brother, Muli.

You, my two brothers, I have completely spoiled the talk of God. This message from God was no lie. It is true. Lungat brought it and was teaching it to you and me, then I changed what he was saying. That I wanted to follow this through, that was all right, but I didn't do it right, and now I am fully in the wrong. Now what? I am not capable of setting everything straight now. Now I desire that you, my two brothers, should kill me. Lungat told us of it, and we all listened, but I drew this talk of his and this work to myself. I wanted to carry it out. Now I am wrong. Nothing will appear now. Now kill me.

Ndreje said that even on Saturday Wapei had told him that if the events of the coming Sunday proved him wrong, he wanted his brothers to kill him. Although Ndreje and Lungat denied it, others said that Wapei wanted to

die so that he could go to the realm of the dead to see what had happened to the cargo. But it is certain from Ndreje's and Lungat's accounts that many still hoped for the cargo and some felt that Wapei's death might atone for his mistakes and bring a miracle. As an act of magical commitment, asking people to kill him was on a level far above even destroying canoes and fishing gear. No show of faith could surpass it. Yet if the Noise was genuine, no death would ever again be final. Wapei was making a speech on the beach when Muli, coming on him unaware, cleft his skull and then severed his neck with an American bush knife, retrieved from where it had landed on the reef when discarded with villagers' other possessions.

Schwartz studied the testimony from Wapei's murder trial, at which Ndreje and Muli were sentenced to prison terms, and he found it rather confused. It may be that by the time of the trial the people of Ndriol were anxious to attribute as much as possible of their behaviour to sheer madness and to blame as much as they could on Wapei. Those who testified asserted that they had come to their senses immediately after Wapei's death and that the Noise had then ended abruptly. But eight years later, Ndreje told Schwartz a different story shortly after his release from prison, explicitly denying that the Noise in Ndriol had ended with Wapei's death.

Lungat agreed with Ndreje. After the villagers buried Wapei, he said, they were filled with sorrow at his death and despaired of the cargo. Nevertheless, after the funeral the *gurua* started again, as violently as before. Lungat ordered people to finish discarding their possessions. Despite declaring their complete commitment, during each episode of destruction some villagers had held a few things back. But now Lungat urged that they carry out Wapei's instructions to the fullest extent. For several more days some Ndriol villagers continued to fast. Some claimed they saw lights on the sea and in the sky. Some reported seeing planes and hearing the sounds of automobiles. People from as far distant as Tong and Pak islands later told Ndriol people that they had seen searchlights over Ndriol. But no one set another date. By the following Thursday—Sunday at the latest, depending on whose version of events one accepts—the Noise was finally over in Ndriol. 'Our heads cleared', one villager said. 'We knew our chance had been spoiled and was over. We were extremely hungry.' The people of Ndriol dispersed to find fish and sago. They were occupied with these tasks when Australian government officers arrived to investigate the strange and violent events of which they had finally heard.

But the people of Ndriol knew that although their village had given up on the Noise, it had spread. 'It ran like a wave from our village and broke over all the other Titan villages', one man told Schwartz. And Ndriol men said that after they went back to fishing and sago making they saw lights over Baluan like those reportedly seen over Ndriol when the Noise there was at its height.

The Noise on Mok

As they stood by their canoes, the Mok people who had come to Ndriol to gather sago palm leaves quickly dropped their scepticism and accepted the revelations Wapei shouted at them. Such prophecies probably were not entirely unfamiliar to them. Exponents of the Noise claimed direct revelations from God. They made no mention of cargo cults elsewhere or of previous cargo cults in the Admiralties, and Schwartz found no evidence of cargo cults in the Admiralties before 1947. But we know that Admiralty Islands people had heard of cargo cults occurring in Aitape (in what is now Sandaun Province, formerly West Sepik Province) and in Solomon Islands. Some of the Manus people caught in New Britain during the war also told Schwartz and Shargo of encounters with what has been called the Batari Movement there.⁵

Some also knew of the failure of cargo prophecies elsewhere, and a few agreed with the Europeans they knew that such events elsewhere had been a kind of temporary insanity. But when the Noise arrived, it swept up many sceptics. What else but the presence of God could shake people's bodies so violently? Why else would the senior leaders of the village obey an unimportant youth? Wapei had also caused the Mok canoe to catch fire and then made the fire disappear without a trace. But the people of Ndriol denied the Mok visitors any hospitality. Wapei told them to go home and wait for their own cargo. One might see this as selfless advice. But in the accounts Schwartz and Shargo collected, it is clear that Ndriol people did not want to share the cargo that had been consigned to them specifically and delivered by their own ancestors.

5 Jebens (2004b) examines manifestations of the Batari Movement in Papua New Guinea in the 1990s.

Wapei urged the Mok people to lose no time returning home, where on Sunday they could claim their own cargo from the ghosts of their own ancestors. The Mok travellers slept that night in a village on the larger, adjacent island of Rambutjo. In the morning, they prayed in a small church there. Several of the Mok men, among them Tahan and Pwankiau, an old man, began to shake, confirming the truth of Wapei's message. Joyful and excited by what they knew was coming, they set sail the next day for Mok, arriving after nightfall.

On Baluan, in Lipan-Mok village earlier that same day, Paliau had spoken at length about the importance of money and his plan for collecting it. This speech was for the benefit of newcomers to the Movement, including T'jamilo and Posanau of Bunai and 30 men from the Mbukei Islands, led by Napo. That night Paliau retold the 'Long Story of God', not in the meeting house on Baluan where the afternoon session had been held, but on the small islet in the midst of the houses built over the Mok lagoon. While he was speaking, the first of the canoes returning from Ndiriol approached, the crew and passengers shouting their news. Coming close to shore, Tahan shouted:

It is true! It is true! The talk of God is true. Our cargo is coming. The First Order of God has arrived. The way of the *tingting* is here. We must cry out to God. God said we must hurry to prepare ourselves. We must set our *tingting* straight. Hello! Hello! God our father says that our cargo is coming.

Throughout the night, Tahan told and retold of Wapei's message and the events at Ndiriol. People said that, possessed as he was, he spoke in languages other than Titan or Tok Pisin; at times he even spoke the language of the Australians. As he spoke, his whole body trembled and his eyes rolled. People who heard him began to repeat his cries. They also shouted, 'Hello! Hello! God, our father!' They too began to tremble. Some fell to the ground, shuddering and convulsing. Many listened eagerly to every word of Tahan's revelations amidst these signs of its truth.

The accounts Schwartz and Shargo collected agreed that at some point that night, Tahan ran up to Paliau, knelt, and shook Paliau's hand, saying:

It is true! It is all true! What you have said is true. Why, Paliau, did you bring this message to Baluan? God didn't designate Baluan. Jesus marked this place, Mok, specifically. Jesus said 'This village, Mok, it is rubbish. It has no land from which to get either food or fresh water. It has no rattan. It has no trees for making canoes.

It is truly impoverished. The Mok people must range over all the Admiralties. They find their food everywhere'. Now God is sorry and has great compassion for us. He came down upon you at Rabaul ... He came as an ox, then as a spirit. There were two chairs. You sat in one. Jesus sat in the other. He brought this talk to you ... 'This book', he said, 'I have put my breath into it'. When they wanted to throw it into the fire, they could not. When they wanted to cut it with a hacksaw they couldn't. Now you must bring my word straight to Mok. It is a poor place. There are coconut palms on it. You know it, near Baluan. You know it. You must bring it straight to them. Why did you go to Lipan? Why didn't you bring it exclusively to Mok?

Paliau, some said, replied that Tahan was telling the truth; Jesus had singled out Mok, but on returning from Rabaul he—that is, Paliau—had had to go first to Lipan to see his kin. Tahan then repeated that Paliau's teachings had all been true. They had been confirmed in Ndriol, and he, Tahan, had brought the message of God directly to the men of Mok. Tahan announced that Jesus had instructed him that everyone was to follow the way of the *tingting* wherever it might lead. Paliau allegedly replied: 'It is true. All this is just what I have already told all of you. The way is the way of the *tingting*; that is all. You must follow this carefully. Your thoughts must be strong and good'. But as Tahan made amply clear, God's message was not just that people should follow the way of the *tingting*; God's message was that the way of the *tingting* led to the cargo.

We would like to give Paliau's own version of the events following Tahan's dramatic arrival from Ndriol. Unfortunately, in Schwartz's conversations with him, Paliau always skipped lightly over this period to tell of how a few days later (as described below) he ended the Noise on Mok and Baluan, although it was still spreading elsewhere. Paliau never denied that at first he was inclined to give this new turn of events a chance to play out; but on the subject of his own actions from the time of Tahan's arrival until he assumed leadership again, he was tight-lipped.

Most firsthand accounts of his encounter with Tahan show Paliau thinking on his feet. He accepted Tahan's praise and made no effort to question or contradict his report that the cargo was coming. But, some witnesses told Schwartz and Shargo, Paliau also warned the Moks to beware, for the Noise might be a trial; that is, it might be a test sent by God or a deception sent by Satan. In these accounts, Paliau seems to be setting the stage to take charge again if the Noise comes to nothing.

Seeing people's ecstatic enthusiasm, Paliau may have judged that there was no point in opposing the Noise. It is possible, even likely, that Paliau also felt its grip. Numbers of people told Schwartz that this was indeed the case; that is, Paliau and his principal lieutenants—Lukas of Mok, Tjamilo of Bunai, and Napo of Mbukei—also assumed that they had nearly reached the marvellous end of the way of the *tingting*. Some said they even succumbed to the *guria* that ebbed and flowed through the gathering all night.

According to most accounts Schwartz and Shargo obtained in 1953–54, Paliau stepped back and let others lead for the first three days of the Noise on Mok, saying little in public. But it was easy for people to take Paliau's version of Christianity and the vague but portentous promises embedded in his program as prophecies of the Noise. Many years later, Lukas of Ndriol told Schwartz that Paliau had once said that those who followed the way of the *tingting* would be able to see their dead fathers and mothers. It is more telling that a number of people told Schwartz that Paliau had joined the prophets of the Noise in encouraging people to throw their belongings into the sea.⁶

Some of today's adherents of the Paliau Movement—under the name Wind Nation—describe the Noise as something other than a bid for cargo. Peter Kuwoh, a well-educated Wind Nation leader (whom we will meet again) has described the Noise (in English) as a 'spiritual revival' undertaken to revitalise the Paliau Movement.⁷ When Smith visited Manus in 2015, although some Wind Nation members disagreed, others told him that Paliau had indeed told people to discard their possessions. Others said that people had discarded only war spears and the paraphernalia used to make war magic and enact sorcery. Whatever specific items were actually discarded, some called the entire episode—as they put it in English—an act of 'repentance'.

6 Typically, Mead diminishes Paliau's role in the Noise as much as possible without denying it outright, writing only that: 'Paliau himself was caught up in the mystical phase of the cult for several days before pronouncing against it' (2001 [1956]: 227). Gustafsson (1992: 121) writes that 'Paliau believed in the Noise, but preferred to remain outside it ... He still encouraged people to join the Noise, while staying outside it himself ... if and when the cult failed, he would be the only person to whom people could turn'. This is a plausible interpretation of Paliau's behaviour, but Gustafsson provides neither data to support it nor a source from which she may have borrowed it.

7 Kuwoh did so in a radio interview with Cyrus Pomat of the Papua New Guinea National Broadcasting Station in Manus Province. We have heard a recording of the interview but were unable to obtain the date for the broadcast, except that it was post-2000.

We return now to events in Mok in 1947 (where Paliu either did or did not throw himself fully into the Noise). A second canoe soon arrived, returning from Rambutjo. Pwankiau had made the passage from Rambutjo in the grip of the *guria*. But he had seen much, even though—people said—his eyeballs had rolled up, leaving only the whites visible. He had seen, he said, ships on their way to Mok, and they had been so near he could speak to the returning dead who crewed them. He had seen cars moving back and forth in the sky. He had seen bright lights over Mok and heard the sounds of many planes flying overhead. Mok's prize was ready, he announced.

But Mok people had to make additional preparations. Casting out everything in their houses was a prerequisite. Tahan had emphasised that the Ndriol people destroyed all they owned. Schwartz gathered, however, that in Ndriol (and other villages) people discarded and destroyed their property in bursts, hesitating after each bout, then discarding more goods each time someone received a further message from the dead.

The day after the Mok canoes arrived from Ndriol everyone gathered in the church, where they went into convulsions as they tried to reach out to God with all their strength. They also carried the way of the *tingting* to an extreme not contemplated in Paliu's original exposition of his philosophy. They turned the way of the *tingting* from a philosophy merging mind, body, and society into a rigidly ritualistic effort to restore to the *tingting* its alleged power to create any desired object through thought alone. Paliu taught that God was the *tingting* in each man, that God knew each man's thoughts, and that these thoughts had to be both morally good and 'straight'; that is, consistent and free of disturbance. Some adherents of the Noise elaborated on this, reasoning that once people thought of doing something, it was as if they had announced their intentions to God. Not carrying out those intentions but becoming distracted was tantamount to lying to God. If you thought of going to a certain person's house, you must go straight to it. You must control your eyes and ears so that nothing distracted you from your intention. If people called to you on the road, you must ignore them. When you arrived at your destination, you could think another thought, but then you had to act on it. As people described this version of the way of the *tingting* to Schwartz, he could visualise them moving in straight lines from point to point, setting aside their usual amiable receptivity to social interceptions, fearful lest they spoil their chances of realising that idyllic state which they thought of as the First Order of God. Schwartz later saw the same kind of behaviour in Bunai (described in Chapter 9).

Tahan and the others who led the response to the news of the Noise took other steps to remove the last barriers to the waiting cargo ships. Tahan ordered that two flags be set up. It was said that these were American flags. After the morning of prayer and *guria* in the church, the men of Mok marched between the flags throughout the afternoon. Marching has been part of cargo cult ritual in a number of Melanesian locales. In postwar Manus it is possible that people saw it as a quintessentially American behaviour that might tap American metaphysical power.

Tahan and others decided that no non-Moks (other than Paliau and a few visitors already there) were to be permitted to approach Mok. One night, two canoes under the command of a man called Kosa approached Mok. Kosa was from Tawi, a small island with only a single village, a short distance from Manus Island's south coast. As Kosa's canoe came near shore he shouted that he had seen European ships approaching Mok. But Tahan wanted no outsiders interfering with Mok's bid for the cargo and he told Lukas and several other men to repel the Tawi canoes. Tahan himself ran to the beach shouting, 'kill them, kill them'. Kosa and his party left in haste.

On the morning of the fourth day after news of the Noise reached Mok, Paliau spoke in church. He warned the people against doing anything that would spoil their chances in whatever was happening. Then he made the short crossing from Mok to Baluan.

While Paliau was on Baluan, a Mok man named Popau had a vision in which he learned that the cargo was to come that very night (this was either a Saturday or a Sunday night). The dead were to rise from their graves on the small islet the Mok people used as a cemetery. That night, everyone went to the cemetery. Throughout the night they waited, standing in a ring around the graves. As the morning uneventfully grew lighter and lighter they returned to the village, which they had stripped bare in the preceding days. They knew that something had gone wrong, and most of them realised that there would be no cargo.

Lukas of Mok had already gone to fetch Paliau back from Baluan. On Baluan, Lukas also collected the box containing the Movement's pooled cash and loaded it into his canoe. As the canoe neared Mok, one of the crew threw the money box into the sea. People told the anthropologists that Simon and Kusunan of Mok encouraged Lukas to do this, reasoning: 'That which is Caesar's, throw it away. Only that which is God's is of any

consequence in his First Order of things'. Paliau may have agreed they had to discard the money to bring the cargo, or he may have reasoned that he could gain nothing by objecting. In either case, no one reports him objecting, and it is virtually impossible that Lukas and his crew could have obtained the box and thrown it overboard without his knowledge.

Despite this demonstration of complete commitment, on landing and surveying the situation in Mok, Paliau and Lukas found not cargo but the collapsing remnants of the Noise. The only signs of activity were a man wearing a metal bowl as a helmet, posted at the wharf to watch for the cargo, and a group of men watching a crab hole someone's revelation had identified as a place from which the cargo would appear.

Paliau spoke in the church the next morning and reasserted his leadership. He declared the Noise over and instructed everyone to recover as much of what they had discarded as they could. He interpreted the Noise and its failure in a way that gave it meaning compatible with the 'Long Story of God' but did not entirely repudiate it. He blamed the failure of the Noise primarily on Wapei, and claimed that he, Paliau, had predicted Wapei's murder. By revising his teachings, Paliau said, Wapei had brought ruin on Rambutjo and Mok. Some told Schwartz and Shargo that Paliau said that the Noise had been true, something sent by God, but Satan had embedded in it a trial. Wapei and the others had been the instruments of this trial. They had lied and misled the people into madness. Now the First Order was lost. During the Noise, God had come down to them, but now he had gone back to Heaven. Paliau cast Wapei as a figure in a drama like that of Adam and Eve; Wapei had led the people to re-enact the Fall. Now, Paliau told them, all that remained was a return to the Second Order and his original program of more gradual change. People told Schwartz and Shargo that everyone in the church cried in sorrow and self-pity. Some even began to shake again, but they inspired no contagion.

It is impossible to say what Paliau intended to accomplish by interpreting the Noise in relation to the 'Long Story of God' as he did. Did it reflect his true understanding, or did he simply want to proffer a plausible explanation to help dispel confusion and prevent panic? He apparently succeeded, however, in claiming understanding and authority superior to what Wapei, and a few other faces in the crowd, had claimed based on their revelations. And he did so without denying that God was indeed at work in Manus people's lives, not distant and indifferent. Whether he

made such a calculation or not, Paliau seems to have helped keep up morale so that disappointment with the Noise would not undermine the Movement. But he did so at the price of allowing apocalyptic hopes to simmer.

Supposedly, the Movement's money box sank into the great depths beyond the reef. But soon after Paliau arrived on Mok he sent men to dive for the box and retrieve it. It was one of the final, miraculous manifestations of the Noise, some thought, that they found the box on one of the outer aprons of the reef, where another few feet would have meant its loss beyond recovery. Shortly after retrieving the money box, Paliau briefed his followers on what to say when government officers inevitably came to investigate.

The Noise on Baluan

There is little to say about the Noise on Baluan beyond the events in the village on Lipan-Mok that we have already described. Although Lipan village on Baluan was the centre of the original Movement, the Noise did not spread much further on the island. The villages that had joined the Seventh-day Adventist mission had shown little interest in the original Movement. Now they also rejected the Noise. Schwartz learned that in the Seventh-day Adventist villages people had been told that the dreams and visions were the work of a false prophet who would tempt them before the arrival of the true millennium that their own brand of Christianity promised. Otto (1991: 177) observes that 'many of the features that formed the attraction of Paliau's message could also be found in the SDA Church. The [Christian] millenarian expectation of imminent fulfilment was kept well alive; dreams, visions, and predictions to be found in the Bible played an important role in the theology'. Otto also observes that Seventh-day Adventist missionaries made health care and schooling 'top priorities', and Schwartz (1975: 125) has speculated that Manus Seventh-day Adventist converts were acutely aware that the sect was of American origin, so some may have associated it with the American material prowess demonstrated during the war.

The Noise on Tawi

The fullest account Schwartz obtained of the Noise in Tawi village came from Kisakiu, the young Titan man whom Paliau had chosen as his *pesman* there. About two months before the Noise, Kisakiu had returned from Baluan to Tawi, some 30 miles (about 50 kilometres) distant. Kisakiu presented what he had learned of the Movement from Paliau—including the ‘Long Story of God’—as best he could. The Tawi people’s response was sharply divided. But Kisakiu had brought with him a letter from Paliau, an invitation to the people of Tawi to come to the meeting house on Baluan. Kisakiu’s public reading of Paliau’s message swayed the majority of villagers. The *luluai* and the important men of the village decided to hasten preparations already underway for a large feast and exchange. Completing this, which would still take several weeks, would clear their most pressing exchange obligations. Then they would be ready for the changes Paliau urged on them.

Most Tawi people were directly involved in this final grand exchange. Several of the most important men were to make large payments of dogs’ teeth and shell money to their spouses’ kin and were to receive many pigs and much taro and coconut oil in return. Kosa went to Ndriol to collect what contributions to the event he could from his daughter’s in-laws there. He found Ndriol engulfed by the Noise and saw the people destroying their property.

It was on this occasion, as described above, that Kosa attempted to stop at Mok on his way back to Tawi. He had heard talk of cargo in Ndriol and as he approached Mok he saw evidence that it was true. He heard automobiles and he saw red, yellow, and blue lights over the village. As he neared the beach, he saw huge ships unloading cargo. He thought, ‘Mok is alright now!’ But, as described above, when he attempted to land, shouting to Mok people on the beach about the ships that he saw, Tahan’s men drove him away. Kosa finally came ashore at Patusi, many hours travel away, on the south coast, where he spent the night. The next morning, he travelled west along the coast to Loitja, then to Tawi. As he travelled, he spread the news along the south coast not of a promised cargo, but of a cargo already arrived in Mok and perhaps by then in Ndriol, too.

Returning finally to Tawi, Kosa found his own village in the midst of the exchange ceremonies. His news did not immediately terminate the feast, nor did his description of the *guria*, but it stirred great excitement.

Shortly afterward, Tuain and Matawai, two old men fishing near the reef, poled their canoes to the beach to report that they had seen a large ship anchored near Tawi. The ship had a flag and letters on its side which they, being illiterate, could not read. Kisakiu climbed to a high point to get a better look, but he could not see the ship. When he returned to the village, everyone saw a column of smoke on the horizon. They accepted the suggestion that this must be one of the ships bringing cargo to Mok.

Kisakiu then proposed to the assembled village that they had better get rid of everything connected with the feast: 'That's all that I said', Kisakiu recounted. 'Then everyone began throwing out everything they owned.' They threw into the lagoon their cooking utensils, the food for the feast, and the beads and dogs' teeth to be worn for the occasion. The women also discarded their leaf skirts and put on the cloth *laplap* they reserved for church. As the excitement built, Oto, one of Kisakiu's brothers, reported that God had visited him. He described God as a tall man with a long beard, whose face radiated light. God did not speak to Oto, but Oto's encounter convinced Kisakiu that Tawi's cargo was coming that very night.

Shortly thereafter, a youth named Kisokau reportedly received a visit from his dead father that caused him to break into convulsions. Villagers called Kisakiu, apparently assuming that his association with Paliu and the Movement gave him some insight in such matters. He found Kisokau shaking violently, shouting his father's name, pointing to the ghost that no one else could see. Kisokau claimed that he saw many more of Tawi's dead, and he called out their names as they appeared to him. A man named Kusunan, standing nearby, began to *guria* and to see all those Kisokau named. Everyone gathered around the two communicants, raptly observing them in the moonlight. Finally, Kisakiu sent everyone home to sleep except for Kisokau and Kusunan, who continued to shake and shout until the morning.

The next morning in the village church, Kisakiu again told of what he had learned from Paliu of the 'Long Story of God' and the way of the *tingting*. Thus encouraged, everyone joined in an effort to direct their prayerful thoughts to God. As they left the church they began to *guria*. Crying and shouting, they ran, fell, and rolled on the ground, their skins covered with sand. They called out the names of Jesus and Paliu. They saw and spoke to their dead brothers, fathers, sisters, and children. They saw the ships in broad daylight and heard the noise of galvanised iron sheets being unloaded. Then it rained. So hard, people said, that they could

see only a few yards. They heard plainly the sound of an anchor chain. (Kisakiu interjected in his narrative at this point, 'Even I heard this'.) Some perceived that the spirit of Posangat, a man who had been *luluai* of Tawi a generation ago, captained the ship, and one of Posangat's living kin relayed this message from the spirit: 'The white men who teach us lie to us. Now everything that we want is here. You can see it'. Then, through his medium, Posangat told them that they must destroy everything before the cargo could be delivered. The Tawi men then began to set their canoes adrift and throw their sails into the sea.

At about this time, a canoe manned by men of Pere and Patusi arrived. The Australian manager of the Ndropwa Island plantation had sent them to investigate rumours of events in Tawi. A crowd of Tawi men chased them away, shouting threats and saying that this cargo was only for the followers of Posangat.

The Tawi people waited another day and night for the cargo and many people saw signs that it was tantalisingly near. Kisakiu smelled many white men. The odour, he said, was of powder and Vaseline, products some colonial whites used cosmetically in that era. He also smelled the food that was part of the cargo. (No one had eaten since the Noise started.) Each new bit of evidence revitalised excitement and belief during these days of waiting, but waiting became more difficult each day. Finally, a message from the dead broke the tension. Manoi, the Movement *pesman* of Loitja, who was in Tawi through most of the Noise, heard the whistles of his dead brother coming from inside the church. He saw no one when he entered, but he continued to hear his brother's whistles, which he said he could interpret. The message he relayed to the other villagers was that they should stop waiting for the cargo; it was not coming. Instead, the spirit said, they were to go straight to Paliau, who had a letter for them from God.

Kisakiu set sail for Baluan with several men deeply committed to the Noise. On arriving, he saluted Paliau, shook his hand, and then told him about events in Tawi. Paliau called a meeting of Mok and Baluan people and visitors from Mbukeyi. The men from Tawi related their experiences with the Noise, and then heard from the Mok people of its failure there. Paliau—thinking on his feet again—replied: 'You men of Mok, listen. I told you not to tell the people of Big Manus about the talk that I brought you. I told you that God would take care of these places. Now what you have heard from Kisakiu confirms what I told you. The spirit

who appeared to Manoi said that I have a letter for you. It is true. I have your letter. It is the word of God. This is the letter I have for you'. Then Paliau repeated the 'Long Story of God'.

Paliau later took Kisakiu aside to brief him on what to say when the patrol officers would almost certainly arrive in Tawi to investigate. He told the party from Tawi to return immediately and take down the American flags which they, like the Mok people, had erected. They were to inaugurate the New Way as originally presented and to defy all attempts by the Australians to make them abandon it. According to Kisakiu, Paliau advised him how to reply to any threat that he would be killed. He must say: 'You may kill me, but my blood will spill on my own soil'. Kisakiu, still in his early twenties, said that he was afraid he would forget parts of what Paliau had told him when he returned to Tawi. Paliau reassured him that when he stood before his village the words would come because they were neither Paliau's nor Kisakiu's but belonged to Jesus. If Jesus willed it, Kisakiu would remember.

Back in Tawi, Kisakiu told the villagers that the Noise was over, the ships were gone, and the dead had retreated. Their belief had not been invalid, but for some reason they had lost their opportunity. The cargo, so nearly in their grasp, had been withdrawn. The Tawi people then retrieved from the sea what they could of their trade-store goods and their American war materials. But they willingly let the objects that represented the old culture sink beyond recovery.

Even as the Noise faded out in Tawi, it continued to spread to other villages. Suan of Peli village was the first Usiai person to encounter the Noise in Tawi. We know that he carried it to Peli and Bowai, villages in the interior. Schwartz and Shargo were unable to obtain accounts of events there, but we know something of the spread of the Noise in south coast villages.

The Noise in Patusi

Until the time of the Noise, no one from Patusi, a coastal Titan village not far west of Pere, had attended Paliau's meetings on Baluan. The young men had been absorbed in the endeavours Bonyalo of Pere had initiated. Led by Karol Manoi, they were on Ndropwa plantation making copra. But news of the Noise came to Patusi by several routes.

Kosa, returning to Tawi from Ndriol by way of Mok, spent a night in Patusi, on the south coast, and told the Patusi people that the cargo had already arrived in Ndriol and in Mok. When the Noise had begun in Tawi, Piluan and another elderly woman from Bunai village, who had been taking part in the feast there, left and returned to Bunai. As they left Tawi, Piluan saw ships unloading cargo there. She then carried her story all along the south coast. In Patusi, she told the villagers that they should wait no longer. Many ships manned by the dead were on their way to each village. Responding to these and other reports that had preceded her, the people of Patusi began throwing out or destroying their possessions that night. The next day the young men of Patusi working on Ndropwa saw carved wooden bowls drifting out to sea.

Patusi villagers heard the voices of the dead and their footsteps and, in the morning, they found their footprints. After church that day, the *guria* began, afflicting first a young man, Poselok, then an older man, Popeo, who brought from the dead assurance that everything thrown away would be replaced with money. While Popeo was conveying this message, his wife shouted to him to come quickly to his house where money had just appeared on the table. Popeo came back with a £1 note, the first tangible, indisputable evidence of the cargo. Then his wife shouted again. An additional ten shillings had materialised. Popeo and his wife passed the money around for everyone to hold and examine. A group of Pere men also saw this money and took news of it back to their village. Popeo said that he was in communication with his dead brother Popei, who had been *luluai* of Patusi.

Returning to Bunai, Piluan shared all she had seen and heard. From Bunai, travellers to Ndropwa brought the news of ships bringing cargo to Tawi. The young men of Pere and Patusi working there were sceptical at first. The Australian plantation manager sent a canoe to Tawi to investigate (as described above), captained by Gabriel of Patusi. Before the Tawi people drove them away, the men in the canoe heard about Posangat's ship and saw the Tawi villagers' ecstatic excitement. On the way back to Ndropwa, Gabriel spent a night in Patusi where he saw the money Popeo and his wife had allegedly received from Popeo's dead brother. He was also present during at least one seance in which Popeo communicated with the ghost of his brother Popei. In response to Popeo's questions, the ghost whistled if the answer was 'yes' and remained silent when the answer was 'no'. Gabriel's aged father also reported that when he approached the house where a seance was being held, he saw Popei, dressed in white shirt

and white trousers, sitting in the doorway. Gabriel returned to Ndropwa the next day, disabused of his scepticism about the Noise. But he reported to the plantation manager that no one in Tawi had seen any ships bearing cargo. Then he and the rest of his work group deserted the plantation.

In Patusi, Karol Manoi still did not accept the validity of the Noise. He threatened to report the situation to the patrol officers. He, too, counted Popei as a brother, and—people told Schwartz and Shargo—he was angry that Popeo was invoking Popei's ghostly authority in support of the Noise. One night, Manoi attended one of the seances and served as Popei's interrogator. But when he questioned Popei, the ghost's answers indicated that the plan to work for money Manoi endorsed was mistaken and futile. Manoi left the seance angry with his dead brother, but he took with him the £1.10, to which he felt entitled.

In Patusi, the *guria* lasted four days, during which most villagers experienced it to some degree. Events in Patusi and nearby Pere were closely linked, so we now shift our focus to the latter village.

The Noise in Pere

When the Noise started in Pere, some of the most enterprising young men were absent, having gone with Bonyalo to work on Ndropwa plantation. For the time being, Bonyalo had refused Paliau's offer to collaborate as well as his invitation to Pere people to attend the meetings on Baluan. When Piluan stopped in Pere on her way home to Bunai, most of the men there were part of the conservative opposition to Bonyalo, and Pere people, like those of Patusi and Bunai, knew about Paliau's meetings—with their mystical aroma—only through rumour. It is the more remarkable, then, that they believed Piluan's report on the Noise. She told those present in Pere:

There is a ship with many black men of Tawi on board. It is very big. It has already anchored at Tawi. Tawi village is completely filled with cargo. We saw all this, then we left. When we were near Loitja, we saw many, many more ships running beyond the reef. There is one ship for each village. Our ships are on the way; Tawi's has already arrived. These ships are bringing the cargo and everything that belongs to you. Listen, people of Pere, many big ships are coming. All our people who have died are now coming to us. The cargo has already been landed in Tawi. Why haven't

the ships come here? We are blocked by all the things of the past that we own. All these things of ours are like a reef keeping out the ships. The ships cannot come inside. If you throw everything away, then the ships will come with your cargo. When the ships unload the cargo, your village will be so full that you will have no room to walk. Your houses will be full.

The people of Pere spent that night discarding their possessions. Many even threw out their food, their firewood, and the clay platforms on which they made their indoor fires. (It is interesting, however, that in no village did people burn or destroy the houses themselves.)

The Catholic missionary for the south coast made his base in Pere. He woke up one morning to find his congregation's possessions littering the lagoon. When he figured out what was going on, he publicly denounced the Noise as the work of Satan. He saw the Noise as a dramatic aberration by people whom he regarded as the best Catholics in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea. In 1954, Pere villagers told Schwartz and Shargo that in 1946 they had defied the missionary, saying that what they did was their affair. Not only that, the mission had hidden the true word of Jesus from them, and they would no longer listen to the priest. They were taking their fate into their own hands, they told him, and whether it brought them ruin or success, it was their own concern.

The priest responded by ceasing to offer communion. Later, many people claimed they had not quit the church but had been cast out. Whatever the case, Pere people ignored the priest in their midst and pursued the Noise. This marked the beginning of what would soon become a complete break with the mission.

Each morning of the succeeding days, while they waited for the cargo-laden ships to arrive, the people of Pere filled the church. These were not the usual brief services; rather, villagers spent entire mornings in prayer, trying to open the way for the cargo by preparing their *tingting*. But nothing happened. Perhaps, people wondered, they were doing it all wrong; maybe they were ignorant of some vital prerequisite for receiving the cargo. They made short trips to the nearest of the villages also involved with the Noise for information. Pere men visiting Patusi learned about the contacts with Popei's ghost and the money. The money Popei had sent seemed a strong sign that the cargo was imminent, so when they returned home they encouraged Pere people to hold out longer.

Their empty houses like the skeletons of bridges burned behind them, Pere villagers waited, but less than patiently. They grew anxious lest Pere miss the reward that had already made other villages all right. They decided to send a canoe to Mok to learn what was happening there, but the young men picked for the mission refused to go for fear the cargo might come while they were gone. A few people in Pere had waking visions of incoming ships. But their dreams gave them their most vivid visions. Early in the Noise, Mikail Kilepak, a stable and respected man, dreamed that he saw a warship and an aeroplane at a passage through the reef near Pere. He saw the ghosts of ancestors on board. Tjolai, the deceased *luluai* of Pere, stood among them in a prominent position. A white man, whom Kilepak identified as Jesus, stood at the mast. But the ships went back. Something blocked their path. One woman dreamed that she saw the cargo being landed, making a great din. Planes, cars, and ships came to the village, which in her dream was no longer located over the sea but in a large clearing on land.

Some in Pere had heard that Akustin Tjamilo and Alois Posanau had returned to Bunai from Mok with full knowledge of Paliau's teachings and news of the Noise there. Tjamilo returned to Bunai from Mok in the third week after the beginning of the Noise on Ndriol. He brought new knowledge of Noise prophecy and doctrine, thus both revitalising interest and enhancing his authority. (Similarly, in Pere, would-be leaders in the Noise based their claims to authority on the fullness and freshness of their revelations.) In retelling the events from Mok, he presented what he regarded as evidence for the validity of the Noise prophecies. The ships had come, the dead had been with them, the cargo had been almost within their grasp; people had certainly seen and heard it. Unfortunately, he reported, Wapei's wrongdoing had thwarted the people of Mok and they had not yet succeeded in purifying their *tingting* and casting out the past. But Tjamilo reported this as merely a delay.

In fact, by this time the Noise had run its course in Ndriol, Mok, and Tawi. Tjamilo also brought news of Wapei's death. Nevertheless, Pere and Bunai had not abandoned their hope for cargo. Indeed, only after Tjamilo's return did Bunai and Pere begin holding regular gatherings devoted to the Noise and only now did they begin to *guria*. They also undertook to finish destroying property, although leaders urged discarding only the last of the dogs' teeth and shell money rather than all valuable or useful items.

Johannes Pominis had begun to *guria* while in Bunai. Returning to Pere, he brought Posanau, Tjamilo's brother, with him. He, too, had already begun to *guria* and others followed him into spasms of convulsive seizures. Pokanau, the *luluai* in Pere, had long been a bulwark against change. But, moved by the Noise, he assembled as many of the people of Pere as could crowd into his house to receive Posanau's instruction in the 'Long Story of God'. The late returnees from Mok, like Tjamilo, brought a version of the Noise mixed with elements of the Paliau Movement program. Some in this audience not only memorised but wrote down as much as they could of this revised, 'true' version of Christianity. The *guria* spread to several people, but Pere was never shaken by mass contagion.⁸

Meanwhile, Lukas Pokus left Pere quietly late one afternoon, heading for Mok, where he arrived close to midnight, having travelled about 25 miles (40 kilometres). He poled his canoe silently among the houses standing over the lagoon. He overheard groups of people sitting on verandas speaking of God, but he said that they acted suspicious, even hostile. Finally, someone recognised him and took him to see the Movement *pesman*, Lukas of Mok. Lukas of Mok asked Lukas Pokus of Pere whether the patrol officer or the mission had sent him or if he had come to trade. He replied that he had come to learn the talk of God. Lukas of Mok then received him hospitably, and all that night he and others tutored Lukas Pokus. They taught him the 'Long Story of God', the laws of the New Way, and the songs (among them 'John Brown's Body') they sang when marching. The next day, he watched the Moks practising the new, rigid, village routine, a routine that would be widely adopted in the post-Noise Movement.

By this time, an administration patrol investigating Wapei's death had come and gone from Baluan, taking Paliau with them to Lorengau. Unable to see Paliau after three days in Mok, Lukas Pokus returned to Pere. The wind was unfavourable and he paddled about half the distance. The sea became very rough after sunset. Afraid that his canoe would be swamped, Lukas prayed that God would calm the sea. His prayer, he said, was instantly answered. He heard the sound of an aeroplane in one ear and a whistle, as if a man were calling, in the other. God was heavy upon

8 Pere's participation in the Noise was subdued in comparison with Mok and Ndriol. Mead, however, was too eager to portray Pere people as superior and level-headed when she wrote in *New Lives for Old* (2001 [1956]: 228–9) that the Noise came to Pere 'not as a mystical religious seizure in which people felt themselves shaken by an unseen power, but as the practical preparation for the certain arrival of a wonderful cargo of European goods, which had already arrived elsewhere'.

him now, he told us. He could see him with his eyes but could not touch him. Then God spoke to him at length, repeating what the Mok people had taught him, prominently featuring the 'Long Story of God'. Driven by this experience, Lukas went ashore on Ndropwa before going to Pere. He was able to persuade most of the remaining plantation workers to return to the village. Only Bonyalo, John Kilepak, and Karol Manoi of Patusi remained from the first through the last month of Bonyalo's venture. Then they too returned to their respective villages, which they would help reorganise after the Noise passed.

On arriving in Pere, Lukas Pokus went immediately to the church, where, as he concentrated his thoughts on God, he began to *guria* violently. He silenced Johannes Pominis as a false prophet and attacked Tjamilo and Posanau as well. He told Pominis: 'You are not in true communication with God; this quaking of your body is merely something of the flesh'. Lukas Bonyalo (not the Bonyalo who began the Ndropwa venture, who had not yet left Ndropwa for Pere) had also experienced the *guria* during a vision in which the three persons of God (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) appeared to him. On hearing that Paliau had ended the Noise on Mok and Baluan, Lukas Bonyalo aided Lukas Pokus in refuting Pominis. Pokus then dreamed that God instructed him to turn over his leadership of the village to Lukas Bonyalo. The dream was made known to the village in a meeting, as were all dreams that seemed to any degree significant. During the final days of the Noise, these two men were the teachers of the village. Lukas's house was filled to capacity, as Pokanau's had been when Posanau of Bunai had first brought the 'Long Story of God' to Pere.

But the urgent anticipation that had driven the Noise so quickly through its course among what today we might call early adopters could not be sustained. With relatively little drama, Lukas Bonyalo and Lukas Pokus began steering Pere towards a version of the New Way absent prophecies of cargo, but featuring ritualistic marching and singing and imposition of a strict schedule on everyday village tasks. Some still hoped that this would bring about a sudden miraculous change, but most realised they had returned to Paliau's original road, slightly modified, but still a road of uncertain length along which they could move only at a frustratingly slow pace.

Bunai and the Usiai Noise

When Piluan finally arrived at her home village of Bunai—having spread word of the Noise to several south coast Titan villages on her way from Mok—Tjamilo and Posanau had not yet returned. She was thus the first to report that, thanks to Paliau, Jesus was coming soon and so were Bunai villagers' ancestors, just as the ancestors had already returned to Ndriol, Mok, and Tawi. The people of Bunai and those of Pomatjau, a small village that was closely linked with Bunai, began discarding their possessions to prepare for the cargo. The *guria* seized some, and each night many saw the lights of ships beyond the reefs. One night, a young man in his late teens saw a glowing horse in the mangrove swamps, but it was gone by the time those who ran to see this wonderful thing arrived. The next day a group of adolescents and a young boy saw a white man, presumed to be Jesus, in the lagoon near the village.

These were rather feeble portents, however; just barely enough to keep hope alive. But Tjamilo's return from Mok resuscitated it. Tjamilo told the Bunai people that the Noise was real, but Wapei's wrongdoing and others' improvisations on the basic truths Paliau taught had made it go awry in Mok. Desperate not to repeat the Mok's errors, people listened raptly to Tjamilo's accounts of his firsthand experience of Paliau and the Noise. Men from Bunai, Patusi, Pere, and Pomatjau jammed Tjamilo's house, writing down or committing to memory the 'Long Story of God', the commandments of the New Way, and instructions for the synchronised mass activity other villages were undertaking to hasten the Noise.

The second day after his return, as Tjamilo was conveying his knowledge of the Noise to an outdoor assembly, his brother Posanau began to *guria*. He stood up in the midst of the crowd, calling the people to come close. He wept as he said: 'We must all love each other'. He then continued:

We must all stay together. If there is only a little tobacco we must all smoke it. If there is only one small betel pepper leaf [the aromatic leaf chewed with betel nut], break it, we will all eat. However little food there is, we will all eat. We must love each other. We must have compassion for each other. One man must not be angry at another or think bad thoughts of another.

He went on like this, weeping with joy (or perhaps sorrow for his people's sins) and shaking. Thus, starting with Posanau, the *guria* spread to most of the people of Bunai. Accounts Schwartz and Shargo collected in the 1950s

told of 50 or more men and women—most in their late teens or early twenties, but also a few of the oldest villagers—having convulsive seizures. Tjamilo was—as he put it—nothing before the Noise, but people now looked to him for leadership, and he remained the unquestioned leader of Bunai for the duration of the Noise.⁹

In every village in which the Noise took hold, older men who had resisted all proposed changes to the existing order joined enthusiastically in the Noise and, as part of their conversion, resigned their leadership. At Paliau's meetings, the most important men of the villages who attended were called on to publicly renounce the old culture and many did so. In Bunai, following the first pulse of the *guria* Posanau had triggered, Tjamilo led a meeting at which the older village leaders rose one by one to pronounce the dictum, '*nupela tingting, nupela man*' (that is, roughly, 'new minds/ideas, new men').

The Australian administrators assumed—based on their visits to Baluan and Mok—that the Noise had ended everywhere or was at least quiescent, even as it was just beginning in Bunai. Bunai people held their excitement in check when an official, who introduced himself to villagers only as 'Masta John', came to speak there. He had asked the *luluai* of Pere, Patusi, and Pomatjau, and of all the Usiai villages of the Number Two Road, to come to Bunai to hear him. He told this assemblage that the government was not angry with them and that it was good that they had broken with the past. He advised them to earn money by selling their labour and their produce. Villagers who worked hard to advance themselves would eventually earn limited local self-government in the form of Native Government Councils. He assured them that Paliau was not under arrest; rather, the administration was taking him to Port Moresby so he could learn more about the government.

This official visit did nothing to diminish enthusiasm for the Noise. The Usiai visiting Bunai were less impressed by Masta John than by the unanimity and determination with which the Titan people of Bunai adhered to the routines of the New Way. The delegation from the village of Lahan, led by Kampo and Pita Tapo, came to Bunai primarily to seek the 'inside meaning' of the Noise, which the Titan had made a show of concealing from them.

9 Samol—one of the local reformers described in Chapter 4—was still with the small group he had led out of the village before the Noise, when his adopted father, Kisekup, the paramount *luluai*, had blocked his reform efforts.

The Usiai had first heard of the Noise while trading their garden produce for the fish the Titan brought to the regular markets. At a recent market, some older Titan men had offered for sale to Usiai, many of whom still valued them above cash, large quantities of dogs' teeth and shell beads, which they had supposedly thrown into the sea. Kampo and Pita Tapo had heard rumours that God had sent special knowledge to the Titan through Paliau. Kampo implored a Titan friend, Gabriel Suluwan of Pomatjau, to teach him this New Way now taking hold in Bunai. We have seen that in villages committed to the Noise, many people believed that the cargo for each village was for that village alone, to be guarded against the people of other villages. In most accounts, people appear to simply be protecting what they regard as their exclusive property. Suluwan's reply to Kampo, however, suggests another reason some may have felt that the Noise required them to stay aloof from other villages: he feared that, used incorrectly, as Wapei had done, the new revelations would lead to disaster. 'It is true', Suluwan told Kampo, 'God is the father of all of us, but we are afraid. We are not adequate to tell you the ways of God. The ways of God and his words, it would be dangerous if we presented them incorrectly. It would be bad if later this talk turned to poison and killed us'.¹⁰

Suluwan also feared that Usiai people, whom many Titan people still mistrusted, might report them to the Australians. On the latter point, Kampo reassured him that if questioned by the administration he would insist that these ideas had occurred to him directly and had no other source than God. Suluwan finally allowed Kampo to copy from the book in which he had written much of the doctrine and ritual of the Noise. One passage read: 'God, Father, I desire the First Order. All of my strength comes from you. All my *tingting* belongs to you. But I am worthless; I am unworthy of you'.

Then—some three months after the beginning of the Noise—Suluwan brought Kampo and Tapo to Tjamilo, who, after a show of reluctance, agreed to confide in them, saying: 'All right, I will tell you. If you go report, or if you make trouble, it is all right. My body can be imprisoned, it can pay. But my *tingting*, no man can kill it. It is something which belongs to God'. (Such speeches of defiance—'let them kill me, let them beat me', and so on—appear in accounts of the Noise in every village from

10 The English word poison has a Tok Pisin homonym, *poison*, with a somewhat different meaning. Suluwan clearly had this meaning in mind. In Tok Pisin, *poison* can be translated as sorcery. Here, Kampo extended this basic meaning to embrace the more general idea of anything with supernatural power which, if not used properly, may harm the user.

which the anthropologists obtained them.) Tjamilo and Suluwan tutored Kampo's party for three days. When they left, Tjamilo walked with them to the beach. In parting he told them that soon after their return to their village in the interior they too would feel the full force of the *guria*.

Pita Tapo returned to his job with the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit (ANGAU), but Kampo immediately began to reorganise his village, following the Bunai pattern. The first project was a new church. Leaders organised those building the church into coordinated work groups, imitating the way Manus people had come to believe whites worked. For example, in gardening, no longer were individuals or family groups permitted to go to their own plots at their own discretion. Instead, larger groups were to work communally in each garden, as directed by leaders, like the work groups coordinated by white managers on coconut plantations. When the church was completed, Kampo postponed using it until he could return to Bunai to finish transcribing the new liturgy, for the villagers were no longer to worship in the manner the mission had taught them.

Kampo then summoned Pita Tapo. He was still working for ANGAU in Lorengau, but he honoured Kampo's request, arriving in Lahan village close to Easter. Every day the people of Lahan concentrated only on God and their desire to return to the First Order. According to witness accounts, when the *guria* came, a mist or cloud enveloped the village, so dense that it was hard to see. (Recall that something similar was reported from Tawi.) Torrential rain fell while the sun shone. Several rainbows appeared. On the first day of *guria*, the *tultul*, named Lukas (yet another Lukas), and four young men fell to the ground, thrashing around. But they received no messages from God or the dead. On the second day, four women began to shake while they were working in the gardens. One of them, the wife of the *tultul*, saw her dead father and mother, but she was unable to touch them.

On the third day, Tapo began to *guria*. He saw the stars in the sky as if they were near him. He heard the voices of angels. He was filled with joyous compassion towards all the people he saw. He knew then that all he had heard from the Titan was true. He felt sorry for everyone for having to work so hard and he longed for the First Order of God in which people could satisfy their desires without effort. He described to those near him all that was being revealed to him. Late in the afternoon he fell into a coma-like state. Kampo publicly interpreted the coma as the result of some

wrongdoing in the village that had never been resolved, and he confessed one of his own heretofore secret sins: He had seduced his brother's wife. Kampo and his brother then resolved to put this potentially explosive act behind them and shook hands. Kampo declared that the way of the past, in which each man must avoid the house and wife of his brother, was now at an end. He stopped short of speaking in favour of adultery, but he branded all the avoidances prescribed in the old system as evil ways of the past. Now there was to be no more shame.

After an hour Tapo revived. His mind was extremely clear. He had received instructions from God, which he proceeded to carry out, without opposition. First, he lined up everyone in the village, taking a long time to place them in strict order of birth, from the aged to the infants. Then he addressed them as follows:

Soon we must get rid of all the hats of our *luluai* and *tutul*. God says they must all go. Then all the men who have died in the past will rise from their graves. God said this. Soon Jesus will come to hold court for us, for all whites and blacks. All the people who have died, they are many, we who are alive are few. Soon I will put all our houses into one long straight line. These houses must follow the law of God, they cannot be crooked; they must be perfectly straight, like God's word. All of us on Manus Island and in all places of the native will be one, one place and one people. One man will be our leader. When this leader is chosen, we will not choose him alone. Some white men, too, some men of Australia, of America, of China, and of other countries as well will be there. They will all meet in Lorengau to discuss this man who will be our leader. His name is Paliau. There will be another, from another part of Manus. He will be second. [Tapo later claimed he was marked to be second in command to Paliau.] America will take over Manus.

While I slept, God came to me. As he came down, the sun hid, the moon hid, the stars hid. A mist came down with God inside. There were many angels with him, guarding him. When he does come down, he will come to hold court. All the men who have died will rise from their graves. Then God will hold a court to judge all who have died and we who are alive. Then I saw many houses appear. All these houses were in straight lines. There were a great many flowers lining the road. In this place, when men go inside a house, they go into something like a box, a pulley takes them up to the room above. They don't go up a ladder. There were plenty of cars. Later these cars will come to get us. And this place, we will see it also. Then I saw many white men sitting down to eat

at a table. I said, ‘God says that he has forgiven us, yet we still must work’. Then God said: ‘Soon all the whites and blacks will be good friends. They can live together, talk together, work together’.¹¹

In America they have taught the black people. Now they are like the white Americans. When this war started the blacks of America arose to help America make war. They have their own ships. But as for us natives, God is extremely angry at the Australians. They didn’t teach us correctly the word of God that Jesus brought. If they had taught it to us right, we would have been a country by now. But this didn’t happen and God is angry. He sees us natives and is sorry for us, for so many of us died during the war. If they had given us knowledge before and many of us died, it would have been all right. But they didn’t. We remain in ignorance and many of us die because of the many wrongs of our ways. If it weren’t for America and its blacks we wouldn’t be here now. All of us would be finished ... Japan didn’t believe in God and it lost. Australia, too, doesn’t believe in God, and it lost. Why? Because they want only themselves to be all right. The Americans are truly men of Jesus. When they ask God, God gives them great knowledge. America likes us, it is sorry for us, but Australia is boss over us, and its way is blocked ... In the future the Australians will no longer be able to do this work. We will have our own courts, our own offices, and our own government officers.

In keeping with this vision, God also told Tapo that not only the hats given to the village officials appointed by the government should be burned, but also the village census books.¹²

Adherents of the Noise regarded the Australian conspiracy to withhold the cargo intended for the natives as one of the most important of Kampo’s revelations. This is Tjamilo’s version:

When the *kiap* comes to collect taxes each year, he goes all around Manus. He collects ten shillings each year. When he has collected the tax, he writes down each person’s name, and he asks ‘Who is your dead father? Who is your dead grandfather? Which of your children are still alive, which have died?’ All right, I give my father’s

11 Americans and black Americans have a more prominent place in Tapo’s revelations than in any other. Paliau had had less contact with the Americans than many of his followers, which probably explains why he places less emphasis than many others on this aspect of the First Order.

12 Although these ideas were part of God’s revelation to Tapo, he had also heard them from Tjamilo. During the Ndril Noise, Wapei attempted to induce the *luluai* to burn his hat and census book. Tjamilo, however, told Schwartz that Wapei got the idea from Paliau (although Schwartz never checked this point with Paliau).

name, Laloan. The *kiap* reads it, then he lies to me like this. 'I have taken out your father's name.' But he didn't take it out. He wrote it into another book. He does the same everywhere in Manus.

When he has collected the taxes and the names, he goes back to Lorengau. Then he types the names into a book along with the money collected. All right, he brings this to Port Moresby. The money stays in Port Moresby, but the book is sent to the true centre of the world. This place is near America, beyond America. The book goes straight to this place. Now this money, it is like the money that men brought to Jesus. Jesus looked at the money and said, 'This money has the head of Caesar on it. It doesn't belong to me. *Tingting* belongs to me and to God, my Father'. Now I [that is, Tjamilo] see it this way, this money belongs to Caesar [in Tok Pisin, *Kaisa*] and must go back to the government. But the names of men, these are really the most important road to God. The book of names is sent straight along this road. With the money, the government buys from all countries, from America, Japan, Germany, France. The money does not go to the true centre of the world. All the men who have died, the ancestors, do not receive this money, but this book, this is really the road of the native and of all the white men also. This book goes to this place which is the place of the *tingting* [that is, the place of the spirits of the dead and of God]. Jesus is there, together with the dead. There are angels there also. When these men who die think of Jesus, Jesus sends this *tingting* on to God, his father. Now God sends an abundance of goods back to him.

Now when this book arrives at this place, my father's name is in it and the name of my village. Now Laloan, my father, sends this cargo back. Laloan writes my name, Tjamilo, on the case along with his name. There is a book also in which all this is recorded. Now the ancestors just think, and a sling loads the cargo on the ship. This ship is extremely large. They have only to think and the ship is filled ... All right, the ship now goes to Australia. They take all the cargo ashore. They look at the labelling and break open the cases. There is a customs official who inspects and breaks open the cases. They change the planks and put on new labels. [That is, they redirect the cargo, preventing it from reaching the New Guineans to whom the dead addressed it.] Now the British send it to all parts of the world. Carpenters [a major trading company in the Pacific Islands at the time] gets theirs, the company [Edgell and Whiteley Ltd, for which numbers of villagers had worked in Lorengau] gets theirs, the government gets theirs. Now we have thought out all this.

Thus, the *luluai* who were given hats, but no real power, were the guardians of the very books by means of which the Australians stocked their stores with the cargo that rightfully belonged to the natives. It was Tjamilo's own idea to elaborate on this and propose that the natives make their own books and get direct access to the world centre, which they would have if there were a restoration of the First Order of God. Tapo describes the world centre as a huge ship, bigger than Manus Island. A powerful but dimly perceived being, King Berra, is in charge of the ship. (Recall that Paliau allegedly secured his deliverance from the courts of the Japanese and the Australians by mentioning King Berra's name.) After his return from Mok, Tjamilo taught the village a song about Berra, 'Oh, Berra, You Come or I Wait' (in Tok Pisin, '*Yu Kam o Mi Wet*').

Schwartz tried to explain to Tjamilo that King Berra was not a person or a king but a misunderstanding of the name of the capital or centre place of Australia, Canberra. Tjamilo replied that a patrol officer had told them this, but they had naturally assumed the officer was lying. Tjamilo claimed that Paliau brought the King Berra story to the Admiralties. However, at least by 1953—and probably before that, given his long experience in the colonial police—Paliau understood perfectly well that Canberra was the Australian capital.

Tapo easily persuaded his own village of Lahan to burn its official hats and books. The Noise was transmitted from Lahan to other inland villages, including Yiru, Katin, Kapo, and Nuang, and received at least some support in Bulihan, Karun, and Soniru, in all of which villagers destroyed the hats of their *luluai* and the government census books. Kampo of Lahan and Bombowai of Yiru had also received instructions to destroy the hats and books in their own visions, which their episodes of *guria* had validated.

The Usiai had originally intended to put the New Way into effect while remaining in the interior, but Gabriel Suluwan and Tjamilo invited them to leave the interior and amalgamate with Bunai and Pomatjau in a village on the beach. Feeling emancipated and defiant after burning the symbols of their ties to the Australian administration, most Lahan families did move to Bunai.

Tapo tried to persuade other villages to join in the hat and book burning. His speeches were filled with hostility towards the government, and he spoke with the authority of one shaken by God's presence. He claimed that he was now second only to Paliau, who was at this time in Port Moresby. Kisekup, the paramount *luluai* on the south coast, refused to

burn his hat. Tapo himself burned Gabriel Suluwan's book, the Pomatjau census book. In Bunai, the *tultul* Alphonse Kanawi burned his own hat, and a young man took another *tultul's* hat and burned it.

Pere did not join in this last manifestation of the Noise. Lukas Bonyalo heard Tapo speak in Bunai and he found Tapo's ideas attractive. He returned home, planning to bring the rest of Pere to hear Tapo. The canoes were filled for the trip to Bunai. In the new, regimented style, the fleet lined up, with Bonyalo's canoe in the lead, ready to signal the others to start moving simultaneously. On their way to Bunai they met a Pere canoe returning from Bunai where the Pere men had heard Tapo and had rejected his ideas. Many canoes in the convoy then turned back. The appeal of new revelations had worn off. Everyone—except a few who still believed the millennium was imminent—expected government action against those who had burned the hats and books. When the government patrol officers who arrested Tapo, Kampo, and others arrived in Pere, the village greeted the patrol with a conciliatory rendition of 'God Save the King'. Tapo spent 13 months in jail and Kampo served a year. Others served shorter terms.

An overview of the Noise

The Noise sought transformation through supernatural intervention. Living humans had a role to play, but it was largely confined to believing as intensely as possible in the imminent arrival of the cargo, a level of intensity that required active cultivation. It was essential to concentrate the *tingting* on the certain promise of cargo. This brought on the *guria*. And the *guria* not only brought God closer, it was also a sign of his nearness—a sign that in turn strengthened belief.

The advent of the Noise in any particular village curtailed the comparatively gradual progress of the Movement there and replaced normal, secular time with apocalyptic time, which is a prelude to the end of time as mortals know it. In Landes's (2011: 14) words: 'For people who have entered apocalyptic time, everything quickens, enlivens, coheres. They become semiotically aroused—everything has meaning, patterns. The smallest incident can have immense importance and open the way to an entirely new vision of the world ... in which forces unseen by other mortals operate'. Within the world of the Noise, in the near future, there would be no future. On Christ's return, past and future, living and dead, would converge. Life would assume a perfection that admitted of no improvement, the highest condition possible for human beings.

All followers of the Noise agreed that soon everything would be good, but they were not clear about specifics. The transformation would, of course, begin with the cargo arriving and the dead returning. Those willing to speculate envisioned the returned dead as more substantive than ghosts, but they also entertained the apparently contradictory notion that all people—living and dead—would become like angels: pure spirit, pure *tingting*, like breath or wind—in Tok Pisin, *win nating*.

There were also other contradictions in ideas about the new world. Many parts of the expected cargo were tools or building materials, such as galvanised iron. But people also spoke of how, in the new world, they would be able to obtain material goods simply by thinking of them. People said that the cargo would include automobiles, but they also said they would be able to move from place to place by the power of thought. One man resolved the issue by imagining that there would be material cars, but people would be able to think them to their desired destinations. Some descriptions of the cargo included unlimited quantities of money; but it is not clear why anyone would need money. But people certain that the perfection of the world is at hand are unlikely to worry about inconsistencies in their visions of that perfection, for they would see perfection for themselves soon enough.

The Noise upended both Movement and pre-Movement forms of organisation, but it replaced them with only enough structure to prepare to receive Jesus and the ancestors. Pita Tapo, of the Usiai village of Lahan, had some of the most concrete political ideas about the post-millennial society. Destroying government-issued *luluai* hats and census books suggested that colonial authority would disappear and he spoke of black American soldiers helping drive out the Australians. Paliau would be the principal leader in the new world, appointed by Jesus, and Tapo would be second in command. He also had a vision in which people chose the American flag over the Australian flag. But most people were content to wait and see.

The Noise came and went within only a few months. Except for its extension among the Usiai and the later episodes of renewal in Pere and Bunai, the Noise reached the limits of its spread within two or three weeks. During the first week, villages accepted it almost instantaneously. It then reached the apex of intensity within a few days. In villages that entered the Noise earliest, the full cycle—from contact, to climax, to realisation of failure—ran its course within two weeks. In Pere and Bunai, it took much longer, probably because the full content of the Noise was transmitted in a series of episodes, each of which provoked a revival or a deepening commitment.

More people had convulsive seizures and behaviour in general was more extreme in the villages where the Noise manifested first. In fact, Mok was the only village in which the *guria* engulfed virtually all adults almost instantaneously. In the villages that followed Mok into the Noise soon thereafter, it took several confirming events to precipitate the same level of excitement. Even in Tawi, the first news of the Noise failed to entice most villagers. It took sightings of ships bearing cargo and God's visit to a young Tawi man to trigger a collective response.

Perhaps early participation in the Paliau Movement had put Tawi and Ndriol in a mood receptive to the Noise. Patusi and Pere were latecomers to the Movement, and the representatives of Bunai and Mbukeyi who had gone to the meetings on Mok had stayed to join Mok people in the Noise. The Noise began in Patusi only after repeated contacts with Tawi. The *guria* did strike some individuals in Patusi, a ghost appeared regularly, and a few Noise enthusiasts organised seances to converse with the ghosts, but there were no mass seizures. Pere and Bunai were even farther from the centres of the Noise. A series of rumours of the arrival of cargo moved some to try to initiate the Noise in these villages and, following the example of Patusi, throw their possessions into the sea, but—according to the accounts Schwartz and Shargo collected—they did so more hesitantly.

Paliau regained leadership after the demise of the Noise. In village after village, people abandoned expectations of an imminent, sudden realisation of a European Eden, and returned to Paliau's step-by-step program. The early New Way program called for moving towards a society that was not only more prosperous but also more focused on the common good. Thus, working collectively, abandoning gender and age hierarchies, doing away with taboos on interaction between certain classes of kin, and amassing money for collective ventures—none of which could be accomplished quickly—were among the program's key elements.

But some returned to this program reluctantly, and among these many hoped that Paliau still intended to lead them to the cargo, although by another route. It appears that they assumed that the mundane actions Paliau prescribed—building a meeting house, pooling money, strict coordination of daily activities, and so on—were in fact ritual acts; that is, symbolic communication meant to induce a higher power to fulfil their hopes. Such perceptions are common and durable in many parts of what is now Papua New Guinea. For instance, Eric Schwimmer (1979: 308–9) discusses the high rate of failure of small businesses among the Orokaiva people of Northern Province and concludes that they failed in the

European sense because many Orokaiva saw business as fundamentally a ‘religious practice’. And Eugene Ogan (1972: 161–2, 175) observed that in the 1960s many of the Nasioi people of Bougainville Island ‘never differentiated’ between what looked to European eyes like efforts to conduct business more effectively and efforts to obtain riches by supernatural means (cf. Smith 1994: 156ff.; 1990; 1984).

Explaining the Noise

We have now provided enough information on the circumstances of the Paliau Movement to propose an explanation of the cargo cults within it—the Noise and (as described in Chapter 9) the re-emergence of millenarian action in the Cemetery Cult. We think it is likely that the key points of our explanation apply to most other Melanesian cargo cults as well.¹³ But—as we will discuss in Chapter 15—our explanation of cargo cults falls short of applying to millenarianism in general.¹⁴

13 We will not review the major types of explanations for cargo cults offered in the literature. For such a review, we recommend Burridge (1969) and Schwartz (1976a). Although these works are not recent, few or no subsequent efforts identify circumstances that do not fall into one of the categories of explanation Burridge and Schwartz address, barring analyses that question the reality of cargo cults or focus on hypothesised inchoate functions that are not in themselves causal factors. Barkun’s (1998 [1974]) treatise on the relationship of disaster to millenarianism also addresses most of the general categories of explanation on which Burridge and Schwartz focus. Similarly, Hamilton’s (2001) discussion of hypotheses regarding Christian millenarianism addresses general categories of explanation that overlap substantially with those of Burridge and Schwartz.

14 Martin Holbraad and Morten Axel Pedersen (2017: 16), leading exponents of the ontological turn, recommend that the discipline pull away from the ‘rather hackneyed choice’ between interpreting social and cultural phenomena and explaining them, but they are more critical of explaining than of interpreting. They write: ‘For anthropologists to imagine their task as that of explaining *why* people do what they do, they must first suppose that they understand *what* these people are doing. The ontological turn often involves showing that such “why” questions ... are founded on a misconception of “what” ...’ [That is, what is being explained.] They acknowledge that how to conceptualise phenomena is the discipline’s ‘most abiding methodological concern’ (ibid.: 5). But they want anthropologists to be warier about resting on well-worn conceptions, and they propose that anthropologists ‘keep *open* the question of what phenomena might comprise a given ethnographic field and how anthropological concepts have to be modulated or transformed the better analytically to articulate them’ (ibid.: 10). As we understand this school of thought, its proponents do not hold that explanation is undesirable or impossible, but they do not give it high priority. From the standpoint of the ontological turn, our efforts at explaining the Noise (and millenarianism in general) are premature (even though, as we see it, how one conceptualises things—or reconceptualises them—implies an approach to explaining them). But millenarian ideology and activity have immediate political importance (see Chapter 15); people have to react to millenarian ideas and movements now, not later at their leisure. And they can’t do so without at least implicitly subscribing to some kind of explanation. Anthropologists will probably find better ways of understanding millenarianism than those available currently, including our own, but that is no reason to cede the field of explanation to others—most of whom are less qualified—today.

We have argued that cargo cults are about the cargo. By this we mean that the cargo is not merely a symbol for a less concrete desideratum; it is an *essential and integral* element of the desired new world. For some participants in the Noise it may have been enough that in that new world there would be less material want, pain, and suffering. For many, obtaining the cargo (and the secret of continuing easy abundance) may also have helped repair damaged personal and group self-worth, which in Manus (as in much of Melanesia) were tightly interwoven with material wealth. Indeed, we go further and contend that radically upsetting the fused moral/material foundation of indigenous society did more to inspire cargo cults in Melanesia than did subordination of Melanesians to colonial authority. In Schwartz's (1976a: 175) words, 'One can readily conceive of cults arising both in the known cases and all over the Melanesian area', he writes, 'even if colonial domination had not been attempted. The mere presence of Europeans and their possessions and the early contact disturbances to Melanesian ... scales of values were sufficient'. Repairing this disturbance required cargo as cargo—that is, as material wealth.

What Burridge writes of the Tangu people in *Mambu* (1995 [1960]: 258) probably could have applied to many of the cargo cultists of Manus: 'Tangu would like to be men amongst men, not merely men among Tangu'. But to say that participants in the Noise perceived the cargo, either clearly or dimly, as primarily a means of achieving equality with whites goes too far.¹⁵ A form of equality that did not include plenty of cargo for everyone would have been virtually inconceivable and, had it come to pass, unacceptable. Similarly, many participants wanted to be closer to God, but not in monastic austerity. And, just as returning ancestors with empty

15 Schwartz's (1976a: 175) discussion of 'value dominance' in cargo millenarianism is relevant here but it would divert us from our main argument. Schwartz's analysis foreshadows Marshall Sahlins's well-known essay 'The Economics of Development in the Pacific', in which Sahlins suggests that 'humiliation' may be 'a necessary stage in the process of modernization' (Sahlins 1992: 23). Sahlins proposes that for people to reject their culture and attempt to create something radically different they 'must first learn to hate what they already have, what they have always considered their well-being. Beyond that, they have to despise what they are, to hold their own existence in contempt—and want, then, to be someone else' (p. 24). Robbins and Wardlow (2017 [2005]) provide perceptive analyses of the complexities of Sahlins's proposition in several Melanesian ethnographic contexts. Many of the chapters in their volume relate Sahlins's ideas to cargo cults and millenarianism in Melanesia (e.g. Biersack (p. 138) on Ipili 'millenarian expectations', Dalton (p. 106) on 'so-called "cargo-cult" activities' among the Rawa, Foster (p. 211) on Urapmin 'apocalypticism', Leavitt (p. 76) on Bumbita Arapesh 'cargo ideas', and Wardlow (p. 59) on the 'more millennial versions' of Melanesian Christianity). Sahlins's essay and these ethnographic cases largely support Schwartz's observations on the Manus cargo cults, although we would stop short of saying that Manus Noise participants had come 'to hold their own existence in contempt'.

hands would have received an ambivalent welcome (at best), participants in the Noise who hoped for immortality envisioned an everlasting life of material abundance. Thus, as we proposed in Chapter 2, the cargo in cargo cults—at least in those we know the best—is not a symbol but a synecdoche, a part of something that stands for the whole. And we hold that it is the only part of the whole (as variously imagined) that could do so.

Otto (2010: 90–1) proposes a motive for engaging in cargo cults that is more subtle than the desire for material parity with whites. He invokes the ‘so-called New Melanesian Ethnography’ and its ‘key insight ... that Melanesian personhood is constituted through the exchange of material and immaterial things, such as food, valuables, knowledge of ritual, magical spells, and proper names. Agency [that is, personal efficacy] is realised in the act of exchange, during which composite parts of the person [that is, material things or rights to such immaterial things as names, magical spells, or ritual knowledge] are given and received’. Hence, Otto writes: ‘The theme of the white people keeping central parts of their personhood back from exchange with Melanesians runs through many cults’. Some participants in the Noise may have perceived and resented that whites refused to engage with them as full persons through exchange of esoteric knowledge and a wider range of material goods, just as some were angered by alleged white re-routing of the cargo the ancestors were trying to send. But of Manus participants in the Noise we are certain only of this: they were willing to take desperate measures to obtain command of the cargo—the unlimited wealth of which whites, they believed, had mastery—because they understood this as the one indispensable element of a sweeping transformation of their world, including their relationships with whites.

Why Manus people turned to the supernatural to obtain command of the cargo is a somewhat more straightforward issue. The prevailing and strongly institutionalised predisposition to personify the causes of events ensured the force of millenarian notions involving supernatural intervention in human affairs. Regarding specific indigenous Manus precedent for such a millenarian idea, Schwartz found in myths from throughout the Admiralties examples of ‘mythological fantasies ... about a work-free existence that preceded native versions of the Fall of Man, the time before the violation of a totemic taboo or some other act of spoiling

a good thing' (1976a: 197; cf. Smith 1994: 139–40).¹⁶ Even without such indigenous cultural material, by the 1940s Christian missionaries had long since introduced Manus people to a new vocabulary of human failing and redemption embedded in the Christian cosmology of animate and personal causation. It is impossible to say how Manus people would have reacted to colonial rule and the events of the war absent Christian missionary influence, but that is a moot point.¹⁷

In Manus, as elsewhere in indigenous Melanesia, there was also ample precedent for communication with occult entities (in Manus, principally ghosts of the dead) possessing knowledge exceeding that of mortal humans. Given a rich environment for millenarian thinking, it is not surprising that people would claim to be conduits for revelations from the occult sphere and that others would accept their claims. Many people took Paliau as a cargo prophet, whether or not he actually played or desired to play that role. The cargo prophets of Rambutjo Island (Muli and Wapei) made a critical contribution to the Noise and throughout both cult episodes numbers of people served as alleged messengers for occult beings. Finally, as we argued in Chapter 3, the nature of life in indigenous Manus (and much of indigenous Melanesia) pushed to an extreme a tendency to personify causation and find immediate personal relevance in events. This underlay

16 The ethnography of Melanesia also offers many examples of well-developed indigenous assumptions that the world is in chronic danger of ending and must be revitalised by ritual action (e.g. Biersack 2011a, 2011b; Dwyer and Minnegal 2000). One could call this a kind of defensive millenarianism.

17 Some anthropologists—Schwartz (1976a: 172, 177) and Smith (1994: 140–1) among them—have also suggested that a culturally constructed view of time as relatively shallow has been a factor in Melanesian cargo millenarianism, perhaps making an abrupt transformation of the world more plausible. Peter Lawrence (1989 [1964]: 241–3) has advanced one of the best-known arguments in this vein. Lawrence is also among those—including Frederick Errington (1974) and Nancy McDowell (1988, 2000)—who have suggested that an understanding of time and change as episodic, reported from some locales in Melanesia, may also help explain why Melanesians have found cargo cult doctrines plausible. A view of time as episodic is highly compatible with the quest for sudden, apocalyptic transformation, as is ignorance of the depth of human history. Some anthropologists, however, have questioned the importance of arguments in this vein on the basis of ethnographic evidence. For example, Joel Robbins (2004b: 342n7) speculates that in some parts of Melanesia where cargo cults have occurred, notions of episodic time and change 'are not indigenous but have been influenced by experiences of contact and colonialism and by encounters with Christian ideas'. More important, looking at cargo cults in a broader millenarian context inclines us to treat prevailing conceptions of time and history as of marginal value in explaining readiness to entertain millenarian hopes. The very nature of apocalyptic millenarianism, wherever it occurs, is that it seeks radically discontinuous transformation with no concern for any prevailing understanding of time and change. Hence, we find millenarianism even in times and places where an episodic view of history is not the norm and knowledge of how change in the human condition has come about gradually over many thousands of years is widely available.

an ethos—a paranoid ethos—that made many Manus people susceptible to putting aside the pragmatism that ensured their daily survival in favour of nearly full-time preoccupation with suspicions of hostile conspiracy and intimations of imminent miraculous deliverance. This was—and is—the world of cargo cults and other forms of apocalyptic millenarianism.

We know, however, that not all Manus people or even all the people of the south coast of Manus and the southerly islands participated in the cargo cults. Why not? Those who remained aloof from or opposed the cults lived in the same social and cultural world as those who participated. But this common world featured many structural tensions and incentives to compete for status, leadership, and material advantages. These did not make some people significantly more susceptible than others to millenarian hopes, but they channelled enthusiasm for becoming participants in particular millenarian efforts. In Chapters 8 and 9 we will show how the historical and sociopolitical context of the Manus cults helped shape distribution of participation over time and space within a population coping with the same larger circumstances. But we are not quite through with the Noise. Its aftermath is as important to the history of the Paliau Movement as are the events that comprised it. In Chapter 7, then, we look at the ways participants in the Noise reacted to its collapse and how the failure of the Noise set the stage for the idiosyncrasies of the Cemetery Cult, which Schwartz and Shargo were privileged to observe firsthand.

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