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After the Noise

The Noise ended in village after village with the disappointed recognition that, at best, the arrival of the cargo and the First Order of God had been postponed. The retrospective accounts Schwartz and Shargo collected suggest that most people accepted this—at least outwardly—within a few weeks. People recalled clearly that Paliau had rallied them to return to his program where they had left off, even though this meant moving step-by-step through the Second Order.

Adjusting to the failure of the Noise

Many people, however, could not relinquish their hopes for something miraculous. They fed their hopes on what they took as the dual meaning of New Way practices and Paliau's version of Christianity. In addition, Paliau's pronouncements on the Noise were ambiguous. He said that it had been unsuccessful and that people must now take another path. But he did not say unequivocally that the idea of the Noise was wrong or that the many visions and manifestations reported had been mere delusions. Some Manus people told Schwartz and Shargo that the Noise had been temporary madness, often using the Tok Pisin word *longlong*. At its mildest, *longlong* translates as stupid or ignorant, but it can also denote what one would call madness in English. Yet the Noise had been a profoundly important experience in many people's lives and the anthropologists found only a few among those whom it had touched who did not feel that—despite their failure—they had indeed come close to God, the dead, and the cargo.

The desire for a direct relationship with God persisted. People pursued this most systematically in their separatist version of Christian worship, resisting overtures to return to the fold from the three missions active in Manus at the time—the Roman Catholic, Evangelical Lutheran, and Seventh-day Adventist. Distrust and rejection of the missions were almost universal within the Movement.

Some leaders of the Noise blamed Wapei—or Muli, his killer—for its failure, and many Noise participants suspected that Australians had somehow blocked the cargo. Still others said that Satan had deceived them. Even some who had been movers and shakers, however, held that the failure was their own fault. As one man put it, ‘We were not ready; there was too much bad thought in our old culture and in ourselves for us to eliminate it so quickly’. Some speculated that the Noise had been a trial imposed by God and that the real Noise was yet to come. But no single explanation prevailed and many people seemed to find all explanations both equally plausible and equally unsatisfying. Only a few seemed truly sceptical, willing to entertain the idea that the strength of their own desires had generated people’s prophetic visions.

Reluctantly turning back to life in the Second Order, people quickly recovered as much as they could of the valuables and other possessions thrown onto the Mok reef. Even as the aura of the Noise was fading, a few still reported signs and wonders, but their reports drew less and less attention. Many, however, regarded the ease with which they found the Movement funds as evidence that their Second Order efforts, although frustratingly slow, were on the right track.

The Noise and wider unity

Paliau was quite certain that the Australian administration would detain him in the course of its investigation of the Noise. He sent notes to a number of the Noise leaders on the south coast, conveying instructions on how to respond to government questioning about the Noise when it came. Local leaders, he counselled, should insist that the Noise had occurred independently within each village, that it was not fomented or directed by any central leaders. This was no deception. In fact, the Noise was not centrally coordinated and most participants did not see it as a collective effort on the part of several villages.

Some analyses of cargo cults hold that in the long term they help create greater political unity, paving the way for forms of political organisation—for instance, nationalist movements (May 1982; Worsley 1968 [1957]) and political parties (Kaima 1991)—that transcend local groups and precolonial networks. The Noise does seem to have created a new kind of solidarity *within* participating villages, the residents of which assumed that each village was to receive its own cargo. Noise adherents demonstrated this uncharacteristic assumption of village common interest most dramatically when, in several cases, they repelled visitors from other villages, fearing that they might try to take shares of the local cargo. This suggests that had the impossible happened and the cargo arrived, it would not have fostered greater trust and cooperation among villages. The *failure* of the Noise, however, did contribute to wider unity. This brings to mind Landes's (2011: 65) observation that 'in matters apocalyptic', wrong does not mean 'inconsequential'.

Schwartz and Shargo found wide agreement that the Noise ultimately involved approximately 33 villages. Its demise left their people with both the glowing embers of similar hopes and a common interest in putting the failure of the Noise aside and finding another path towards better lives. With Paliau's leadership, this proved the basis for inter-village unity of a scope and kind that had no precedent in indigenous Manus. Those who had gone through the Noise seemed to feel bound to one another by the experience. Many said that the Noise had changed them, that it had shaken them loose from their past. And many felt superior to the people of villages that had not been privileged to be near God during the Noise.

The ridicule and censure heaped on them by some who had remained outside the Noise, and by government officers and missionaries, also helped bind former Noise participants together. When they marched in the revived Movement, they marched with defiant pride. Paliau's detention and the jailing of leaders who burned hats and books also fuelled such feelings. When some Roman Catholic priests cut off participants in the Noise from the church, they succeeded only in creating additional unifying hostility towards the church among the ousted communicants. All else aside, people united around the person of Paliau, although many who had joined the Movement after the Noise had never seen or heard him in person. A series of ballads was composed about Paliau's triumph over the administration. It was said that the local administration officers

and the missionaries had wanted to kill him. But they could not because Paliu had spoken so forcefully on his own behalf and because he was protected by both Jesus and the highest government officials.

Paliu realised that the wide reach of the Noise gave him a chance to broaden the influence of the Movement. The Noise spread rapidly, but its abrupt end left the people of many villages sunk in confusion and disorganisation. As they sought a steady compass, people's interest in Paliu's pre-Noise program grew. Granted, some did not perceive the Noise and the Movement as distinct, so cleaving to the Movement was for them a way to continue their quest. Yet as far as Schwartz and Shargo could ascertain, virtually all the villages involved in the Noise now turned to the Movement and looked to Paliu to tell them what to do next. Paliu was ready to do so.¹

The post-Noise New Way

The administration held Paliu responsible for the Noise and assumed he had been its prophet. After detaining him and taking him to Lorengau, the administrators in Manus sent him to Port Moresby in mid-1947.² There, administration officials told him about the government's program for the people of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea, hoping they could enlist Paliu in its support. Paliu returned from Port Moresby later that year. In his absence, the Movement had continued along the lines laid down in the pre-Noise meetings and had done so with remarkable

1 Harvey Whitehouse (2000) uses the Paliu Movement as one of several cases illustrating what he proposes is a common process within religions in which episodes of 'imagistic religiosity' (in the Paliu Movement, the dramatic, emotionally compelling events of the cults) alternate with periods of 'doctrinal religiosity' (such as the focus on the 'Long Story of God', routine liturgical worship, and promulgation of New Way prescriptions and proscriptions during other phases of the Movement). The former, Whitehouse proposes, rejuvenates the latter. From this perspective, Whitehouse (2000: 145) suggests that 'it is probable that the Paliu Movement could not have survived as long as it has done without the intermittent outbursts of imagistic practices that rejuvenated religious commitment and overall cohesion'. This goes beyond what we care to claim for the contribution of either the Noise or the Cemetery Cult to greater solidarity within the Movement. Like Whitehouse, however, we do not believe the cults were conscious efforts to revive a flagging Movement or foster wider solidarity. Gustafsson (1992: 246) seems to suggest that in the cults there was conscious intent to 'accelerate the development of the Movement, or else to change its leadership structure', although she offers no evidence of this.

2 According to Kaima (1991: 175), Paliu was detained for 'misuse of his *luluai* title' without any explicit reference to the Noise.

vigour. Each village had its *pesman*, appointed by Paliu or elected after the Noise. Each village also had men called teachers, who taught the New Way, including the word of God as interpreted by Paliu.

In the immediate aftermath of the Noise, Paliu and his most loyal followers were able to institute a more fully developed and centralised New Way organisation. And as the Noise faded into the background, a more standardised version of Paliu's reinterpretation of mission teaching replaced the variegated beliefs characterising the Noise. Paliu wanted to encourage more consistent forms of worship and to excise from Movement teachings ideas that had crept in during the Noise. The immediate post-Noise Movement teachers preached or taught from written copies of the 'Long Story of God' rather than relying solely on memory. Taking a further step, Paliu also had each Movement village send one man to Baluan Island for training in a new liturgy to replace both recitations and readings of the 'Long Story of God'. Paliu borrowed much of the new liturgy from Catholic and Evangelical worship services and he reinterpreted some of these borrowings to make them explicitly compatible with the Movement. Nevertheless, local teachers were left on their own to elaborate Movement-specific meanings for some items in the liturgy or to leave them to their listeners' imaginations.

At some point after the Noise, the liturgical aspect of the Movement was more formally defined as the Baluan United Christian Church, sometimes called the Baluan Native Christian Church. The *Baluan United Christian Church Lotu Buk* (Baluan United Christian Church Worship Book)—bound in heavy, textured, red card stock—includes 18 pages of responsive readings in Tok Pisin, with places marked for singing and 25 pages of song lyrics.³ Most of the songs are in Tok Pisin, but the English lyrics of several common Christmas carols (such as 'Silent Night' and 'Away in a Manger') are also included. The book gives the date of the church's founding as 1946, identifying it with the founding of the Movement. However, although the founding of the Movement and rejection of the Catholic Mission were virtually inseparable events, we know that Paliu's separatist Christianity assumed the identity of a named church only after Schwartz and Shargo left Manus in 1954.

3 Schwartz was unable to find out who paid for making *Lotu Buk*, the only document with a professional finish the Movement had issued at this point.

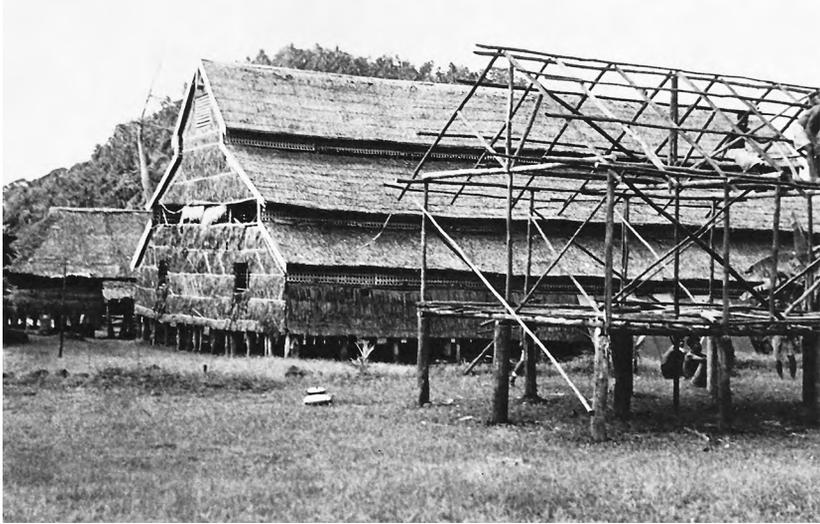


Figure 7.1: The Baluan United Christian Church in Lipan-Mok village, Baluan Island, 1953.

Paliau's followers built it according to his plan and under his supervision. At the time, it was probably the largest structure in the Admiralty Islands built with indigenous technology and local materials, and it boasted a balcony and a choir loft. The only non-local materials used were military surplus perforated metal sheets of the kind used to make temporary airfields. Source: Theodore Schwartz.

Post-Noise, Movement adherents were less inclined than ever to regard its innovations merely as practical reforms for life lived in secular time. During the Noise, many people regarded secular activities as spiritually adulterating. Thus, Lukas Pokus of Pere village explained that, although the *guria* persisted in him longer than in others, he lost his ability to *guria* because he could not concentrate his thoughts sufficiently on God as he became increasingly preoccupied with building the new village and making his daily living. Some tried to avoid descending into the entirely mundane by giving the early forms of the Movement ritual and magical significance. As the New Way re-emerged from the ruins of the Noise, many treated its rules of behaviour as sacred.

We have mentioned some of these rules in previous chapters. We do not think there was ever a single definitive set of Movement rules. While writing this book, we came across a document Schwartz had forgotten he possessed: a small notebook that Paliau had given him containing numbered lists of New Way prohibitions and admonitions, written in Paliau's own hand. Apparently written with a fountain pen that

occasionally blotted, some words—both Tok Pisin and Titan—are hard to decipher. Here, however, is the first of four lists, dated November 1946, translated into English.

List of the things we ban from our villages because they are bad behaviour and cause us to die.

1. We won't argue about land any more.
2. Men can't have bad thoughts about their wives.
3. Women can't have bad thoughts about their husbands.
4. We can no longer [indecipherable word] women with their work.
5. We can no longer make feasts for people who die [indecipherable words].
6. We can no longer fight about trouble [i.e. sexual peccadilloes] between young men and young women.
7. We can no longer lie and talk behind people's backs.
8. We can no longer engage in [the word appears to be *palan*, a Titan term for a kind of gift or payment in the affinal exchange cycle].
9. We can no longer make feasts in the old way.
10. We can no longer arrange marriages; men and women must marry according to their own preferences.
11. We can no longer [indecipherable word].
12. We can no longer get angry.
13. We can no longer fight.
14. We can no longer steal.
15. We can no longer speak angrily in church.
16. We can no longer take things belonging to another.
17. We can no longer kill men, women, and children.

That is all.

Mi Paliau. [That is, 'I am Paliau'.]

There follows a list of things people *should* do, dated 1 November 1946. This is followed by two more lists of prohibitions, both dated 19 January 1948. Each of the three lists of prohibitions repeats some items that appear in the others and includes some distinct items. As fluid as it could be, however, the New Way was now considered the way of God, even if it was uncertain when God might reward those who followed it.

The post-Noise New Way emphasised coordinated, simultaneous behaviour. Movement leaders taught people to march in formation and instituted a shared routine for daily activities. There was no precedent for this in indigenous life; the models were the routines of plantation workers, the administration's quasi-military patrols, and the military camp.⁴ In virtually every New Way village, people hung empty war surplus acetylene tanks from frames to serve as bells. (Many of these still hang in Papua New Guinea villages. Strike one with a piece of metal or a stone and the clang is impressive.) At the sound of the bell, people left their houses in the morning, bathed in the sea, went to church, and then lined up to receive assignments for the day's communal work. The bell then signalled the end of work, time to bathe again, to eat, and to attend church. Finally, after the bell announced curfew (at about nine o'clock), people remained in their houses.

Daily meetings, preceded by singing and marching, were filled with endless reiterations of the new rules of behaviour, the vices of the past, and the virtues of the New Way. A particularly troublesome New Way commandment was that people were to abandon shame. No one was quite sure what this entailed—how far they could go in acting on impulses that the norms of indigenous life called on them to suppress. Both in the late days of the Noise and for a short time during the initial post-Noise New Way, a few people experimented with nudism and mixed-sex bathing. Since Manus lagoon and beach dwellers bathed in the sea, there was still considerable scope for maintaining privacy. Still, these innovations did not catch on.

People were also enjoined to rid themselves of anger. Leaders constantly exhorted anyone who harboured bad feelings towards others to reveal them so that reconciliation could avert the sickness or death that such feelings might induce. When sickness did occur, the leaders elicited confessions of anger or other negative feelings that, it was believed, caused the illness.⁵

Paliau sought to eliminate longstanding horizontal and vertical social divisions and indigenous social fragmentation, and he regarded forming new composite villages as a step in this direction. He had planned that the Titan would move their villages from the lagoons to the beaches.

4 See Smith (1984) for discussion of a similar case.

5 Neither Fortune nor Mead speaks of such notions regarding anger and illness as indigenous among the Titan. Similar beliefs and practices, however, are definitely part of the indigenous heritage in other parts of Papua New Guinea. Smith (1994) gives a detailed account of such a case.

The Usiai were to leave their old villages and join the Titan on the beaches. Movement participants began relocating to beach villages in 1947. By the end of 1949 they had formed a number of Titan–Usiai composite villages. Paliau also urged contiguous or closely related sets of villages to amalgamate in larger settlements, and many did so.

Bunai as the anthropologists found it in 1953–54 was an amalgamated settlement, including both Titan and Usiai groups, formed late in the Noise. The original village of Bunai had itself been composed of the remnants of several formerly separate Titan settlements. These included a settlement of Titan people of the Ndropwa clan, who had left the island that became known as Ndropwa, seeking protection in numbers from constant raiding by other Titan; Titan of Tjalolo clan, a group that had split from Pere in the past; and Titan of Mpoat and Kupwen clans, which had constituted distinct places in the past. Another small, independent Titan settlement, Pomatjau, was the first separate village to join Bunai, by mutual consent, during the last days of the Noise. Several complete Usiai villages followed later, all from the area nearer the south coast known as the Number Two Road. These included Lahan and Yiru and later Malei and Lowaya. Before the move, the latter two had been linked by a distinct dialect and much intermarriage. Also, unlike the other segments of amalgamated Bunai, which had been Catholic prior to the Movement's break from the church, the people of these two villages had joined the Lutheran Evangelical Mission, but this did not seem to hinder their assimilation into the New Way version of Christianity. Small groups from the Usiai villages of Polisan and Kitan and individuals from a few other villages also gravitated to Bunai. Some of the latter had not committed completely to the Noise or the New Way, but they apparently saw advantages in becoming part of such a large unit in such a convenient location.

In 1953, amalgamated Bunai stretched in a single or double row of houses for almost a mile along the beach. It was a long, narrow settlement, with the sea in front, a bit of swampy land behind it, and behind that a steep rise into the forested interior. A wide, straight path of white coral sand ran from the western end of the village to the eastern end. Such a formal pathway was a distinctive feature of New Way villages. The Movement villages on Baluan built similar promenades. Even on Johnston Island, where there was only one village, people had built a formal pathway circling the island, leaving the village at one end and returning to it at the other.

All the Titan sections of Bunai were at the western end (nearest Pere) of the village, in approximately this order: Ndropwa, Tjalolo, old Bunai, Mpoat, Kupwen, and Pomatjau. Next came three houses from the Usiai village of Polisan. Then came Schwartz and Shargo's house. East of this were the remaining Usiai sections: Malei, separated from Lahan by a small stream flowing to the sea, then Yiru, Katin, and Lowaya.

Some villages became parts of larger beach settlements but retained much of their old autonomy by continuing to function as separate units. Yet both in size and in political complexity, these new villages were without precedent in the Admiralty Islands. Residents of the new villages adopted the slogan 'a new place for a new way of life'. Although remnants of their populations remained in their original locations, the majority of people from Usiai Movement villages moved to the beach en masse and burned the structures they left behind. People built each house in the new villages collectively, in the most linear pattern that space would allow. Many houses incorporated European features, having more windows and more separate rooms than common in indigenous dwellings. They were built largely of bush materials, but incorporated war surplus sheet metal, canvas, and plywood. Wherever possible, each village had a main gate and a wharf as well as a more formal demarcation of a clear central space—a kind of village plaza—where meetings were held. These suggested a kind of common village identity and a degree of centralised organisation absent from Manus village life as observed by Fortune and Mead.

As noted earlier, some men who played important roles in the Noise had not manifested such symptoms of supernatural favour as dreams, visions, and *guria*, but had exercised leadership by helping to organise, control, standardise, or interpret such behaviour. Many of them were able to retain some authority post-Noise. But those whose leadership had rested on their cult-specific behaviour lost most of their influence to people with special knowledge of the Movement's program and practices, like Paliau's *pesman* and teachers. Some leaders of the Noise ceded authority readily, at least in part because they did not wish to become entangled in what seemed to them the Movement's preoccupation with mundane matters and its apparent gradualism.

The New Way placed a high value on literacy, putting at a disadvantage the many illiterate villagers of all persuasions regarding the Noise. This included even Tjamilo, whose verbal memory was phenomenal. He knew by heart the 'Long Story of God' and every one of Paliau's speeches he

had ever heard. A number of other men whose status had risen with the Noise were also illiterate or nearly so, among them Posanau of Bunai, Lukas Pokus and Lukas Bonyalo of Pere, and Pita Tapo of Lahan. Having lost what turned out to be their temporary status, some of these men went into rapid eclipse.

Accounts of the first years of the post-Noise New Way suggest that people adapted with surprising ease to the new economic practices. There was to be free exchange, with no strict accounting either within the village or between the Usiai and Titan participants in the Movement. The underlying principle was what is called in Tok Pisin *maremare* (má-ray-má-ray). This is a term still used extensively in Christian discourse in much of Papua New Guinea. It translates as compassion, mercy, or Christian charity. In New Way practice it meant giving without thought of return. Applied to exchange and the use of land and reefs, it amounted to a limited economic communalism. People retained the rights they held to land and other property by indigenous reckoning, but they were expected to share freely the yield of their fishing or gardening and to permit others to use gardening land, sago palms, fishing reefs, or other resources without paying compensation. New Way leaders tried to keep as much exchange as possible between villages as units. Each composite Movement village had a wharf with a shed on it, called the customs house, and an official, the customs officer. The customs officer recorded everything brought to the village from other villages so that a return could be made later. Inter-village travellers were expected to carry passes written by the heads of their own villages.

Every effort was made to make the network of Movement villages economically self-sufficient. Although leaders continued to collect cash in a common fund, they discouraged working for Europeans, even though this was one of the few sources of cash. Europeans in Manus accused Movement leaders of establishing a kind of totalitarian rule, coercing people to work for the Movement, and forcibly preventing villagers from working for the European dollar. The New Way economic system probably relied on strong peer pressure, but Schwartz and Shargo found no evidence corroborating the darker European accusations.

Each village held weekly meetings to decide to what communal tasks men, women, or children would be assigned at the daily morning assemblies. Sometimes a week was set for building up a supply of sago, or a day was set for communal fishing (several techniques of fishing among the

reefs required a group to set and hold nets and drive fish into them), or for maintaining or improving the village paths. Specific days were set for individual work.

Paliau and a few of his followers continued to innovate. Paliau organised regular, Movement-wide meetings, rotating among participating villages. He added to his program much that he had learned in Port Moresby of the administration's program for rural improvement. Among other things, he had learned of administration plans to gradually introduce very limited local self-government in the form of what the Australian administration called Native Government Councils (NGCs). Under the NGC system, each village would elect someone to both represent the administration in the village and represent the village in dealing with the administration, in part through area organisations of these village leaders.⁶ Paliau got a jump on the administration by putting in place in the Movement villages a system approximating this. He retired '*pesman*' as the title for leaders in Movement villages, replacing it with council (in Tok Pisin, *kaunsil*). The latter approximated the title proposed by the administration—councillor—for the elected village leaders once the administration's system was put in place. There was also a secondary village leader called the committee (in Tok Pisin, *komiti*). From here on, when we speak of the leaders of the new Movement villages, we will call them *kaunsil*. When we speak of village leaders under the NGC system, we will call them councillors. We will refer to the secondary leaders under both systems as *komiti*, as villagers did. Context should make it clear whether we are speaking of *komiti* under the Movement system or the NGC system.

The Movement wins a Native Government Council, but loses momentum

By 1949, the Movement was focusing on getting the administration to establish an NGC in the Movement area. Paliau, of course, would be at its head. The Movement also wanted the administration to hasten introducing non-mission schools and forming producers' and consumers' cooperatives. The cooperatives were to give producers of copra and other

6 Moore (2003: 196–7) provides an account of the growth of the council system from informal roots in the 1920s.

local products an alternative to dealing individually with European-owned traders and to provide a more economical source of the manufactured goods people wished to purchase with their cash earnings.

In 1950, the administration established an NGC area encompassing Baluan and Rambutjo and their adjacent islands. But what the administration called the Baluan Council included only part of the Movement area. Villages on the south coast of Manus Island were conspicuously left out. Still, this was a significant step. Australia created the NGCs as entities with statutory authority and financing only in 1949. The only NGCs other than the Baluan Council established within the next year or so were in locales with large indigenous populations and near the European centres of Rabaul and Port Moresby (Moore 2003: 196). Manus, let alone the Baluan area, had no such distinctions. Paliau and the Movement undoubtedly deserved some of the credit for drawing the administration's attention to Baluan. Paliau and the Movement villages had been pressing for an NGC consistently since the end of the Noise and it is reliably reported (Fenbury 1978: 279, cited by Otto 1991: 173) that among the administration's motivations for choosing the Baluan area at this point was the desire to calm what many officials regarded as Paliau's and his followers' anti-government agitation.

Things easily could have gone against Paliau. He was very unpopular with most administration personnel in Manus; one of them described him in a report as 'a pro-Jap, anti-White native with very evil intentions' (Otto 1991: 173–4). In January 1950, some months before the Baluan Council was established, an administration officer charged that Paliau had given an anti-government speech and produced alleged witnesses of this. The administration conducted an investigation, including a visit to Baluan, and charged Paliau with trying to inappropriately influence another *luluai* and making 'false reports which tended to cause trouble among the people'. Behind these spindly charges was the fear that Paliau was setting up his own government in opposition to the administration. The court in Lorengau found him guilty and sentenced him to six months incarceration with hard labour (Otto 1991: 172).

Paliau's followers protested, but their anger did not bear fruit until a United Nations Trusteeship mission visited Manus in May 1950. Paliau's supporters, including several village *luluai*, now addressed themselves to the United Nations representatives, protesting Paliau's harsh treatment and

praising his accomplishments (Otto 1991: 172). Sensitive to the resulting pressure from the trusteeship mission, the district administration took a more subtle course. Paliau was released from prison before finishing his sentence, but only to be sent to Port Moresby. Once again, administration officials tried to enlist Paliau's support for government programs for improving village life, for instance, by taking him to visit examples of showcase programs near the city.

But administration officials took their time buttering up the potentially dangerous agitator. Paliau did not return to Baluan until March 1951, months after his release from incarceration. This suggests that the administration wanted to keep him out of Manus until the Baluan Council was in place. Paliau arrived home to find the council already established. People in Movement villages chose the men serving as Movement *kaunsil* as their councillors within the NGC system. More germane to Paliau's quest for leadership, the chair of the NGC's coordinating body was filled in his absence. But if the administration had hoped to keep Paliau on the sidelines, it failed. At the first opportunity, Paliau sought a seat on the coordinating body and soon after became its chair (Otto 1991: 173–4).⁷ While many members of the administration would have preferred that he simply disappear, becoming chair of the Baluan Council did clip his wings. The Baluan Council area not only excluded the parts of Manus most loyal to Paliau (cf. Mead 2001 [1956]: 397), it also included villages on Baluan that had opposed the Movement. In addition, Paliau had to carry out his new responsibilities under the supervision of a resident assistant district officer (ADO) (Otto 1991: 174). Although the officer, James Landman, was dedicated to the Baluan NGC's success, as Schwartz knew from his personal conversations with Landman, his presence limited Paliau's freedom.

⁷ We assume he was eligible to contend for that post because he was still recognised as village councillor for Lipan-Mok. But we have been unable to find a detailed account of how he obtained the position as chair of the Baluan NGC.

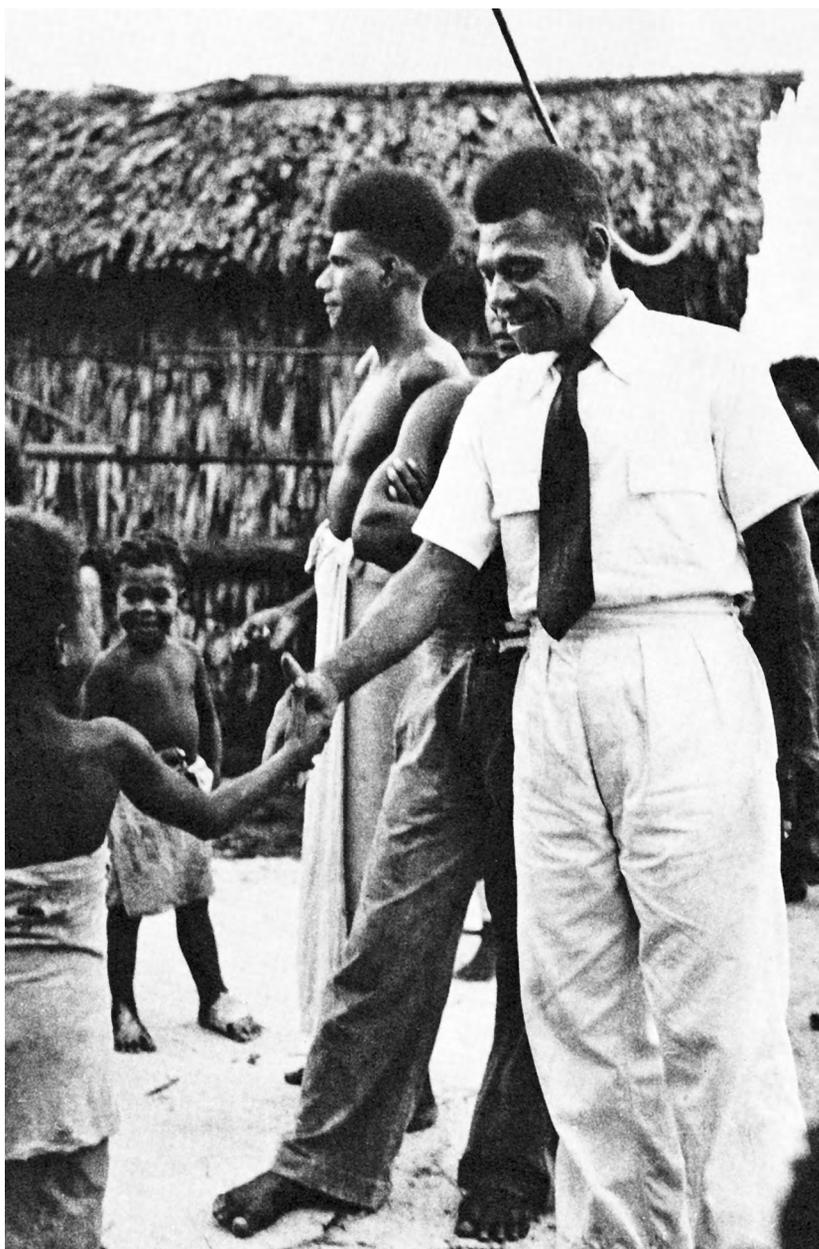


Figure 7.2: Paliu greeting a young admirer.

In posed photographs Paliu often looks rather forbidding. Candid photographs like this one from 1953, however, show a more genial side of his personality.

Source: Theodore Schwartz.

Still, the situation had benefits for Paliau. Many Manus people saw granting the Baluan NGC as administration recognition of the Movement's own improvised system. Paliau exerted himself to provide an alternative to Christian mission schools in the Baluan Council area, for he had no sympathy with the missions. The first government school in Manus outside Lorengau with a European teacher—Marjorie Landman, the ADO's spouse—was established on Baluan in 1951 (Otto 1991: 184). In that era, many indigenous people saw a European teacher as an advantage, not a colonial imposition. Paliau also strove to acquire other government amenities for his NGC area, such as medical aid posts and cooperative societies. Again, many people gave Paliau rather than the administration primary credit. Decades later, anthropologist Steffen Dalsgaard (2009: 93) found that Paliau's followers on Baluan, who are still numerous, saw their schools and aid posts—even those acquired in later eras—as Paliau's accomplishments.

Paliau remained the Movement's leader. But the Movement began to lose momentum. The south coast villages had the rough form of but not the legal charter for an NGC. This situation lasted almost four years. But south coast villages, both Movement and non-Movement, were not content to be an audience for the successes of the Baluan Council, and Paliau and the other Baluan Council leaders were not blind to this. They regarded extending the Baluan NGC to the entire Movement area as a much-needed next step, but they could not make south coast people a firm promise.

Despite Paliau's success in bringing an NGC and the amenities it entailed to Manus, the accounts Schwartz and Shargo collected in 1953–54 show that by 1950 the Movement was struggling. Paliau's followers had become accustomed to a steady stream of new projects and pronouncements. Now, for the first time in the course of the Movement, the pace of change for all but those encompassed by the Baluan Council slackened. Perceptions played a role here. Although Paliau was adjusting the New Way program—for instance, by creating new leadership positions to prepare for the Movement area's full incorporation into the NGC system—he was doing so without the fanfare with which he had presented each innovation pre-Noise, perhaps because he now had to divide his efforts between the Movement and his Baluan Council duties. And extending the Baluan Council to include the south coast had to wait on the Australian administration, and many thought Paliau and the Movement had lost their leverage.

Formerly, each new development of the New Way had been the subject of many public meetings and presented as a significant innovation. Similarly, when Movement leaders called for abandoning aspects of the old culture, they had repudiated them openly and explicitly. If longstanding practices had been associated with material artefacts, these had been destroyed or buried. But by 1953–54, many elements of the New Way were being abandoned almost casually. The curfew; the customs house; the customs official, who had recorded everything that came in or went out in inter-village exchange; the marching and the singing at meetings—these were all falling gradually, almost surreptitiously out of use. When Schwartz and Shargo asked why some New Way practices had been allowed to atrophy, the responses were often vague and the responders uneasy. When Schwartz asked Lokes, the customs official in Pere, why he had ceased monitoring goods leaving and entering the village, Lokes said that people had gradually stopped bothering to follow the rules. There had been no public discussion or decision. People had simply stopped heeding his authority. Much the same, others said, had happened in other villages.

Paliau did not seem unduly concerned about such changes in themselves. Despite his rigidity on many matters of New Way practice, in conversations with Schwartz it was plain that Paliau took a longer view than most of his followers. He saw the New Way as a path, not a destination—what Schwartz (1962) has called a vehicular culture, intended to move people towards a still-undefined but better way of life. Paliau recognised the need to reassure his followers, but his efforts were falling short of the mark.

The best that could be said was that the Movement had reached a plateau. Some Manus people blamed this on administration opposition. But Schwartz's long-term observations suggest the opposite: When administration opposition to the Movement was strongest, Movement morale was highest. The period of sharpest decline in morale (particularly on the south coast) came after the administration established the Baluan Council and relaxed its opposition to the Movement. Declining morale led many to relax attention to the rigid social forms of the early Movement, causing consternation among those who attached magical significance to these forms, thus further damaging morale.

Materially, Manus people were better off than they had been before the war, but their aspirations had grown faster than their conditions had improved. Early in the history of their contact with Europeans they had chosen whites or Europeans as their reference group. Close contact

with Americans and Australians during and after World War II strengthened what had been only a faint hope that Manus people could aspire to a European standard of living. Some saw no reason, other than selfishness and the desire to exploit the native, that Europeans could not help them realise their desires. But if Europeans would not help them transform their lives and take a place in world society, then they would have to find their own way.

Manus people rejected the colonial status quo, in which whites monopolised commerce and government, not because it had undermined the indigenous way of life, but because it fell far short of the European way of life they now desired. In the Movement area, most people considered the stabilised post-Noise New Way a step forward, but not far enough, and many felt becalmed.

The anthropologists' dawning awareness

Mead, Schwartz, and Shargo arrived in Manus in June 1953, as the Movement rested, in many adherents' eyes, on a plateau of uncertain duration. Preoccupied with a barrage of new experiences and distracted by villagers' excitement at seeing Mead again after some 25 years, Schwartz and Shargo initially noticed nothing suggesting a depressed mood. Also, they found themselves comparing the New Way villages with those outside the Movement and with the Manus of 1928 as Mead and Fortune had described it. Against this background, what they saw—first in Pere, then in Bunai—looked like a lively commitment to steady change in secular time.

As the excitement of the Mead party's arrival dissipated, Schwartz and Shargo began to see signs of drift, even in the central Movement villages. Although houses were now arranged neatly on the beach and incorporated new styles and materials, they were still constructed largely of local materials. In the composite village of Bunai the oldest houses approximated the New Way, quasi-European plan. Latecoming Usiai people had built houses of less ambitious design and many were still unfinished. Many houses looked ramshackle and it became apparent that people were neglecting to keep them in good repair. Exposed to brutal sun and heavy wind and rain, palm-thatch roofs need frequent repairs and must be replaced completely every few years. Out of sight, beneath ground level, the heavy posts supporting houses rot, often revealing their

condition only when the house above begins to lean at a crazy angle. Although people were still using it, the Bunai church, where people practised the Paliau version of Christianity, was in ruins. Storms had torn off part of its roof about a year before but no one had repaired the damage. The wharves were collapsing and the Bunai customs house had finished its collapse but no one seemed concerned.

Aside from such physical deterioration, there were signs that support for the New Way was anything but unanimous. Unless the occasion was a special event, meeting attendance was poor. Those who did attend often straggled in more than an hour late. The leaders spent much of their time scolding the latecomers and shouting reproaches in the direction of the houses of those who, bored with the repetitious speeches, had stayed at home. Church attendance was also poor; only a handful of people attended most of the weekday morning and afternoon services. Some complained that the sermons were too long. People did, however, treat Sunday as a holiday, filling the church, dressed in their best European-style clothing.

At the church services in Bunai, where Samol did most of the preaching, he emphasised the prevalence of social sin. His orations often focused on condemning 'bighead' (arrogant stubbornness; in Tok Pisin, *bikhet*), adultery, and divorce. They were replete with invocations to obey the New Way social rules, to 'hear the talk' (in Tok Pisin, *harim tok*). On many Sundays, little or nothing was said of white deception and native redemption, the powerful themes with which Paliau had caught and held his audiences early in the Movement.

Not only had some New Way practices lapsed, its institutions were malfunctioning. The New Way had introduced new principles of organisation, many infused with forms borrowed from the Australian administration. But New Way leaders complained constantly that their supposed followers were *bikhet* who would not *harim tok* (that is, arrogant individualists who did not heed their leaders and the Movement rules of behaviour), and they were having trouble cultivating feelings of solidarity across village boundaries. It looked like people were reverting to the old pattern of individualistic village leadership and hostile inter-village relations. And although Movement leaders volubly disapproved, growing numbers of young men were leaving home to work for the whites.

The Usiai were having even greater difficulties than the Titan in these respects. A sizeable group of their younger men were losing interest in the Movement and treating their elders with disdain. In the past, Usiai had expected young men to be insubordinate, but this was incompatible with the aspirations of the new society. A conspicuous group of young men spent much of their time gambling, playing ukuleles and guitars, disrupting Bunai with their indiscreet adulteries, disdaining the New Way, and rarely doing any work. Schwartz and Shargo came to call them the minstrels. They got on well with them, for Schwartz and Shargo did not represent village authority and they often paused to talk with the idlers. These young men were the conspicuous extreme of a larger trend, but they didn't hesitate to point out to the anthropologists the widespread adultery and gambling with which many older men had begun to relieve their boredom now that the excitement of the Noise was behind them and the New Way was losing its novelty and sense of purpose.

While the south coast waited for an NGC, leaders holding the Movement title of *kaunsil* found themselves in an ambiguous and frustrating position. They were recognised within the Movement but they had no legitimacy in the eyes of the administration. From the point of view of the government, their roles were potentially subversive. Many government officers, however, conveniently overlooked the unofficial status of the Movement *kaunsil* because doing so helped to keep Movement members at least tenuously connected to the official system. But anyone disgruntled at a decision of a Movement court could complain to a government officer and possibly have Movement-appointed judges arrested for holding illegal courts.

Paliau had hoped to extend the Movement to all the Admiralties, but it never expanded more than slightly beyond the limits reached by the Noise. The efforts of the administration and the missions to stop the Noise helped set those limits. Perhaps more important, the accounts Schwartz and Shargo collected suggest that as news of the Noise travelled further from its origins it lost some of its power to inspire. Reports that ships were unloading cargo on a beach just a few miles away probably carried more weight than reports of more distant events, no matter how dramatic.

Another issue troubling the Movement was that it had created a superabundance of capable leadership, but it was crowded into an organisation without scope for it all. Paliau was applying himself to translating European concepts and programs into the New Way and

teaching Movement members how to use the NGC system. But few saw these activities as significant steps towards the cultural transformation Paliau had pictured for them. Also, within the Baluan Council area the grit of everyday administration began to take some of the shine off Paliau's image. In the south coast villages, a visit from Paliau was still a novelty. His occasional appearances produced brief rallies of enthusiasm for the New Way, but nonetheless the New Way was beginning to feel old.

Amalgamated Bunai, a complex, composite village, was struggling to maintain the brotherhood between the Titan and the Usiai that the Movement prescribed. People unearthed quarrels over land rights, some dating back for generations, that they had put aside in the interests of unity. Titan contempt for the Usiai and Usiai reciprocal hostility came more nakedly into the open. Factions within the Titan and Usiai populations pressed grievances against other factions and the Movement leadership by threatening to withdraw from the composite village.

Problems with economic reform

Movement efforts to institute new economic practices lagged behind those pertaining to social and political organisation. Although new communal ways of working and distributing the products of people's labour seemed to work smoothly at first, they were not firmly established. From the beginning, problems also beset other aspects of the Movement's program for adopting a vaguely conceived European economic model. A first step in that direction succeeded. In accord with Paliau's plan, Movement members pooled the cash they had received for war damages and from working for the American military, amassing several thousand Australian pounds. The administration, however, feared that Paliau would appropriate the money for his own use and insisted that he turn it over for safekeeping. The Movement asked the administration to buy a boat with the money, but the administration refused to do so, on the grounds that Movement members had little use for a boat because they were producing negligible quantities of goods—such as copra or trochus shell—to transport to buyers for sale.

Movement participants had few ways to earn money without leaving home. Usiai people, who were not completely at ease with the sea, particularly with diving near the reef, left most trochus collecting to the Titan. But trochus were not abundant in the waters of Movement communities

and yielded only sporadic income. The Titan hoped to find some way of converting their fishing skills into cash income, but there had been only a few, small-scale attempts to engage in commercial fishing, none of them Movement-wide. Neither were people producing much copra. The administration did not give such projects much direct help, other than acting as a marketing agent to help islanders avoid middlemen.

Paliau had told his followers that they would find their wealth in their waters and in their land. But he was little help in putting this vision into practice. On their own, some Titan people did make short inroads into commercial fishing, smoking their surplus fish (in the traditional way, to a board-like state of temporary preservation) to sell to indigenous labourers in the Lorengau market and at the Australian military base. Among the Usiai, Kampo had ambitions and plans for starting plantations rivalling in size those of the Europeans. But it would take as much as 10 years of hard labour before such plantations could yield a profit, so Kampo found it hard to drum up enthusiasm. He and his followers knew that they would probably need the administration's assistance and hoped that their project could be incorporated in administration plans for developing producer and consumer cooperatives. Manus people had built the foundations of the Movement in the face of opposition from the Australian administration, but by the early 1950s many felt that they couldn't make any more progress in the money economy without the administration's help.

Even so, hostility towards Australia and Australians persisted. Many of the leaders of the Movement—notably, Paliau himself—could judge whites as individuals and assess the actions of specific white institutions on their individual merits. But many Manus people were extremely suspicious of the motives of all whites (although Americans were often seen as exceptions to general white perfidy) and all white institutions. So, they looked askance at the possibilities for change the administration offered, even as they recognised—and probably bemoaned—the need for administration help.

The Movement tried to keep young men from going away to work for Europeans for more than very short periods so that they would put their energies into building enterprises within the Movement communities. But migrant work promised independence and adventure, in spite of migrants' justified discontent with poor wages and working conditions. Some within the Movement needed no encouragement to avoid wage work;

they took to refusing to work for Europeans as an expression of defiance, convinced that whites invariably exploited indigenous workers. But as the early solidarity of the Movement ebbed and activity and innovation slowed, more men began going to work for the whites. The men of some sections of Bunai and some male Mbukey Islanders earned appreciable cash by working on adjacent European-owned plantations rather than as migrants. They had negotiated agreements under which they were paid entirely in cash rather than in meagre wages supplemented by food and tobacco rations. But few Movement villages had such opportunities.

Even the most dedicated Movement participants felt the lack of opportunity to earn money in amounts remotely matching the level of their interest in European goods. They had to face the fact that in this very fundamental way they were still near where they had started. They had come to depend on, and to value over their indigenous products, American war surplus goods. But lanterns, tools, galvanised iron, gasoline drums, and clothing all eventually broke down, rusted, or wore out, and people did not have the money to replace them from stores in Lorengau. Moreover, as the extension of the NGC to include all the Movement area approached, they worried about how they would pay the taxes required or raise the capital to start a cooperative.

They began to realise that they might have to sacrifice an important symbol of the early Movement's communalism—that is, they would have to divert the money the administration held on behalf of the Movement from a possible collective project to paying individual NGC taxes and making individual investments in an NGC-sponsored cooperative. They had designated this money for the use of the Movement as a whole. They had told the government that they, as individuals, had no further claim to it. They had told Paliau that he alone was to decide how to use the money for the good of the Movement. But if they wanted whatever benefits the NGC system and associated administration plans for economic development offered they would have to go back on these pledges. In 1953, with much embarrassment, they did so by asking the administration to distribute the Movement funds it held among the individual contributors.

Paliau's initial plan for the New Way called for the Titan, Usiai, and Matankor to abandon their ecological specialisations. All groups were to have mixed economies. The Usiai and the Matankor were to give land to the Titan, and the Titan were to learn to maintain their own gardens.

The Usiai were to learn to build and use canoes to supplement their gardening with fishing. Only in this way could the Movement eliminate the differences between the three groups. All were to be simply Manus. Nothing more was to be heard of the names Titan, Usiai, and Matankor.

Along the south coast, after a few reluctant attempts to overcome their aversion to working the soil, the Titan abandoned their gardens, with the exception of Samol, Bunai's Titan leader, who maintained his conspicuously. The Usiai, on the other hand, changed more than they or the Titan had expected. While they did not acquire the skill and ease of the Titan, they did overcome their aversion to the sea sufficiently to learn to build, maintain, and manage canoes—albeit, in the eyes of Titan people, awkwardly. They began to supplement their diets with simple forms of fishing in the lagoon, carried on mainly by women, children, and older men. And they used their canoes to travel along the coast and up a river that took them close to their gardens in the interior.

This put the Titan at a disadvantage. The Usiai became less dependent on them, while the Titan were as dependent on the Usiai as before. The Usiai within the Movement used their improved position to press for greater prestige and respect, to the great annoyance of many Titan, long accustomed to looking down on the Usiai. It seemed unlikely that the Titan would overcome their aversion to gardening, even while the Usiai continued to improve their canoe skills. The system of communal exchange between the Titan and the Usiai in Movement villages collapsed. Titan and Usiai began trading as individuals or selling foodstuffs for cash. The Titan who had not joined composite villages continued to trade at regular markets with non-Movement Usiai.

Despite recognising that further progress might depend on administration help, Movement members suspected that the administration was deliberately isolating and suppressing them. The administration's introduction of an NGC to only half of the Movement area, its fear of the Movement as vaguely subversive, and widespread dislike for Paliau among administration officers in fact did check the Movement's spread. Attitudes and policies on both sides of the divide thwarted Movement ambitions for greater participation in the larger world.⁸

8 Against these odds, James Landman, the assistant district officer stationed on Baluan, where he oversaw the Baluan Council, doggedly maintained tenuous friendly contact between the Movement and the administration.

Stirrings of the next cargo cult

It is not surprising, then, that a second cargo cult episode broke the impasse. The Movement at this time did not require its adherents to put aside hopes for the closer relationship with God, Jesus, and the ancestors, but it did push such hopes into the background. During the Noise, however, it had seemed that the planes of existence of the living and of the dead had briefly come close together, as people imagined they had been in the pre-Christian past. Truly dramatic improvements in their lives achieved by secular means might have countered memories of such an intense experience, but life in a state of suspended progress could not. Although the Noise abated within a few months of its beginning, the hope of direct relationship to God persisted. Few of the erstwhile adherents of the Noise were fully disenchanted. The Noise had failed, but Schwartz and Shargo were to find that many still clung to the possibility of the kind of radical transformation it had promised.

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