

MILLENARIAN MOVEMENTS IN POLYNESIA.
THEIR RISE AND SPREAD IMMEDIATELY AFTER
CHRISTIANIZATION

Martina BUCKOVÁ
Institute of Oriental Studies, Slovak Academy of Sciences,
Klemensova 19, 813 64 Bratislava, Slovakia

Syncretic religions seem to be a universal phenomenon typical of the post-contact period in various parts of the world. They share quite a few typological features (despite their different genesis) since they represent a reaction to very similar if not identical circumstances, inevitably combining features of Christianity with some aspects of local religions. In Polynesia they arose as millenarian movements blending a variety of local motifs and mythological elements with various ideas of Christian provenance and appeared in several archipelagoes in the era of Christianization. The rise of syncretic sects may also be interpreted as a defensive mechanism and occasionally as a rejection of the new religion.

Polynesia is one of those regions that were included into the colonial system of the European and American powers fairly late. The first contact of Europeans and the Pacific islanders had taken place as early as 1595.¹ However, several centuries were required to bring under control tens of archipelagoes and hundreds of islands scattered across the eastern half of the expansion of the Pacific. The Polynesian islands are relatively small, the distances between their groups are huge and neither is there gold or silver that would attract adventurers and explorators in the first centuries after Magellan's circumnavigation and his discovery of the Marianas at the westernmost periphery of the largest ocean of the world. The first missionaries in Oceania were the Spanish² and their Christian-

¹ The first archipelago to have been discovered was the Marquesas (by Spaniard) Alvaro Mendaña de Neyra.

² Their first centre was Tahiti since 1772-1774. Their success during this period was zero; their evangelization was hampered mainly by the considerable linguistic and cultural barrier. In 1797 missionaries of the London Missionary Society arrived, who after an initial failure achieved a great success due to the political influence of the chief *Pomare*, unifier of Tahiti.

ization was successful (even if violent) in the Marianas with consequences shared by perhaps all analogous ventures in the New World and in the Pacific area. Early contacts of the Spanish missionaries with the Polynesians (for example in Tahiti) were rather ephemeral – the colonial initiative of the Spanish empire had been gradually losing its efficiency and new powers started to penetrate into the Pacific world. The Christianization of Polynesia took place during the 19th century and roughly in the first half of the 20th century.³ The Dutch started to penetrate into the Pacific, including Polynesia, with the delay of less than a century after the Spaniards but unlike their predecessors they were not interested in missionizing; their goals were strictly commercial.

Soon came the era of Protestant activities in Polynesia, first of all in Hawai'i, Tahiti, and subsequently in other archipelagoes. There were several Protestant missionary societies⁴ serving a variety of Protestant denominations.⁵

Catholic missions (mainly French and also German) came later. At present quite a few sects operate in Polynesia and among the most successful ones are the Adventists, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses, often due to their openhandedness. Protestantism has defended its majority position until today despite the subsequent spreading of Catholics in the Marquesas, Easter Island, and Tuamotu, in Futuna and Uvea in the far West, etc.

The reception of the Christian religion in Polynesia displayed some specific features as well. The young Hawaiian state, unified by the first king Kamehameha, was ripe for far-reaching internal changes in the first decades of the 19th century. It was a period of transition during which the first missionaries (especially from America) settled down. The traditional Hawaiian religion was decaying and losing prestige. The Hawaiians abolished tabu, demolished sacral localities and statues of their gods. However, the evangelization of Tahiti, the Marquesas and Tonga was far from smooth. Neither was that of Rennell, where the first group of missionaries was murdered by the islanders in 1910.

The motivation of conversion was often misguided. The admiration for the material commodities of the foreigners, not excluding their weapons, boats, iron or even jewelry, was often incomparably more persuasive than the influence of the religious doctrine. All these goods had been presented to the people from overseas by their powerful God excelling by his superior mana, at least according to the islanders. The tribal chiefs might represent another key catalyser for if a chief decided to accept the new religion, most if not all of his subjects followed him. However, one should not underestimate the ability of the individual missionaries to understand the importance of acculturation to the local way of life and culture. From this point of view the Catholic missions seem to have been more adaptable than the Protestant evangelizers because the former were inclined to respect the traditional way of life, especially polygyny while quite a

³ The last Christianized islands were Rennell and Bellona in 1938.

⁴ American Board of Commissioners for foreign missions, London Missionary Society, Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society.

⁵ Methodists, Calvinists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists.

few Protestants tended to force upon them a "better life style". Such deep changes often amounted to prohibiting what the puritans regarded as immoral and offensive to God.⁶

The process of uprooting the old culture often disrupted the traditional foundations of the society and let them to succumb to apathy.

Even after a mass conversion of the population there remained a few individuals who resisted the new religion and neither did the converts forget various fragments of the pre-Christian religion. The first generations of converts as a rule rejected the idea that their ancient gods were inventions, but rather were inclined to believe that the Christian God simply "defeated" or at least outshone them. This ambiguity has survived some time. It has become a source of interference and has given birth to a variety of syncretic movements. Another cause of the appearance of syncretic religions may be seen in a disappointment in the God of the white people. Many were frustrated that the powerful God of the foreigners has not granted them the expected abundance of material goods and welfare. In this phase of disappointment quite a few Polynesians rejected the new religion and syncretic movements of a millenarian nature arose in various localities more or less simultaneously.

In this stage new syncretic cults of the millenarian character appeared which announced an early arrival of an era of peace and welfare, a kind of heaven upon the earth. Leaders of these movements made use of the Christian conceptions for their goals, and borrowed elements of the more powerful religion from overseas to defend their independence.⁷

In Polynesia the first millenarian movements appeared in the 1820s as a reaction to the missions. They shared quite a few typological features (despite their different genesis) since they represented a reaction to very similar if not identical circumstances. They inevitably combined features of the imported religion with some aspects of their original religions. They fused a variety of Polynesian motifs and mythological elements with some ideas of Christian provenience and appeared in various Polynesian archipelagoes in the era of Christianization.

The rise of mystic sects may also be interpreted as a defensive mechanism or even as a rejection of Christianity.

The first millenarian movement to appear in the Pacific was obviously the visionary heresy *Mamaia* in 1826. However, it did not remain isolated.

A similar movement *Siovili* appeared in Samoa about 1830.⁸ In Hawaii the so-called *Hulumanu* or *Hapu* sect arose in 1833 and by the end of the 1830s the New Zealand Maoris of Hokianga north of Auckland embraced *Papahurihia*, in

⁶ The Protestant missionaries in Hawaii were too radical and for example forced the Hawaiians to wear long clothes (*muumuu*) in hot weather, because their traditional cloth consisting of skirt or loincloth, etc., was perceived as immoral.

⁷ The Polynesians believed that Christian rituals, prayers and reading Bible were extremely efficient.

⁸ The year of the foundation of this movement was either 1830 or 1829.

1863 movement *Hauhau*, or *Pai Mārire*. New syncretic religions appeared during the 19th century elsewhere in the Pacific and are still alive in Melanesia and Micronesia (Gunson 1962:209).

Tahitian *Mamaia* was mentioned for the first time by J.M. Orsmond in 1828.⁹ The circumstances of this movement reflect events that had taken place between 1767¹⁰ and 1826. The inhabitants of the Society Islands were exposed to a massive civilizational impact comprising a wealth of new material goods imported by Europeans, a new and entirely different religion. These innovations amounted to a deep cultural shock from which the Tahitians were unable to recover immediately. The Protestant missionaries arrived in Tahiti early as 1797 and Christianity became the national religion but despite this many converts who had attended missionary schools, had not given up their belief in the traditional gods right away. Christianity spread in Tahiti as a favoured faith of the Tahitian king *Pomare II*, who after his conversion began a campaign against the old local religion. His followers under the influence of alcohol set out to wreck the existing *maraes*¹¹ and to destroy the images of old gods.

The conversion of the Tahitians was dramatic, the supreme Tahitian god *Oro* was burned – but after he was shot at with muskets. Even the former high priest of *Oro* joined the Christian faith (Gunson 1962:210).

The new religion, however, did not fulfil the material expectations of the native population. And this stimulated the rise of a new millenarian movement. Those who were not willing to accept the Christianity preached by missionaries, were called *tutae 'auri*.¹²

The founder and leader of this new belief was *Teao*, a Tahitian educated by Reverend Pritchard.¹³ *Teao* proclaimed that he was the living Jesus Christ or someone possessed by him. He preached that evil does not exist any more and as a consequence of this belief laws, hell, sin and so on are not necessary any more and one need not be afraid of postmortal punishment. Just like other Millenarian preachers he was expecting an early arrival of Christ as well as the birth of a peaceful and welfare kingdom. And no wonder, for many Protestant missionaries were expecting an imminent arrival of the Millennium (Gunson 1962:215).

The attitudes of the missionaries to the new doctrine varied from rejection to mild criticism. However, the chiefs ruthlessly persecuted this sect of visionaries because it threatened to disturb the political stability of the country.

⁹ Davis and Orsmond tried to explain the meaning of this term. Both agreed that it means "abortive fruit that falls from the trees" (Gunson 1962:210 In: Davies "Specimens from Tahitian Dictionary", 1834, S.S.L., Orsmond, 4 September, 1832, S.S.J., no.100)

¹⁰ Discovery of Tahiti by Wallis.

¹¹ The *marae* was a sacral place, where the Polynesians celebrated rituals and brought offers to their gods. Typical *marae* consists of a sacred area and altar (or of a pyramidal sacral building).

¹² Meaning rust of iron (Gunson 1962:209).

¹³ Reverend Pritchard, Protestant missionary active in Tahiti.

Many adherents of *Mamaia* lived on the island of Maupiti, but the sect had quite a few adherents elsewhere as well. *Mamaia* was preached mainly by those who were punished and forced to leave Tahiti. Thus the sect expanded to the Leeward islands. More than half of the inhabitants of Taha'a and Ra'iatea embraced it and *Mamaia* was especially successful during the war between Tahiti and Leeward islands in 1830-1833 (Gunson 1962: 228).

The adherents of *Mamaia* believed that their leaders could heal diseases and work wonders just like Jesus Christ. They maintained that diseases are caused by sins of the relatives and therefore practised the exorcism of evil spirits who threaten their health.

The displeasure of the islanders with Christianity was due to the fact that their expectations and hopes have not been fulfilled.

The islanders hoped to become rich and wealthy as soon as they mastered reading and writing. Such was the deplorable consequence of those of the Protestant missionaries who preached their doctrine according to which faith is more important than acts because good acts as such are no guarantee of salvation. Polynesians rejected the idea according to which salvation cannot be obtained as a reward for moral behaviour. It was beyond their grasping that both Europeans and Tahitian may believe in the same God.

They called the Bible a "black book" while their own writings were labelled a "white book". They did not like strict morality forced upon them by their chiefs and preachers. The rebellious movement arose (at least partly) as a consequence of the impact of Calvinist-like theology, of the arrival of the Europeans, and as a result of a premature acquaintance with complicated passages of the Bible.

However, this movement was bound with its leader *Teao* who died, just as many of his adherents in 1841 during a disastrous epidemic of smallpox, when they refused the vaccination. However, it was obviously this movement that inspired a similar syncretic movement in Samoa, a movement known as *Siovili* (in 1829). The movement was founded and led by a visionary prophet of the same name. He appeared in the period when Europeans started invading the South Seas. It is true that the Samoans were not physically persecuted or murdered like Tasmanians and yet the arrival of a new culture and the astonishing variety of new material goods amounted to a serious shock which had unprecedented consequences. Information on *Siovili* is known only from the records and writings of the local missionaries and Non-Samoans. The attitude of *Siovili's* adherents have remained unknown. *Siovili* himself was born in the time of far-reaching changes in the way of life of the islanders and gradual retreat of some cultural features. The first European, who discovered Samoa was the Dutch seafarer Joseph Roggeveen as early as 1722. Whalers and seekers of santal appeared much later. It was from them that the Samoans gained their first news of the existence of countries scattered overseas. Many objects brought and used by foreign seafarers seem to have confirmed the Polynesians' belief that the distant countries where these foreigners were at home are a source of a very great mana.

It is thought that *Siovili* was born in the village of Eva, on the island of Upolu.¹⁴ The year of his birth is unknown. His name consists of two words.¹⁵ According to some written records, *Siovili* had served several years on a European whaling ship, and other European mates called him *Joe Gimlet*. After his return to Samoa he enjoyed respect and authority among his fellow countrymen because he had spent a long time with the white men and unveiled the mystery of their power. He firmly believed that he had returned with a message from God called *Sisu Alaisa*.¹⁶ He maintained that God approached him and revealed to him the true religion. His followers observed the Sabbath once a month. It was celebrated by "the firing of guns and the puerile mummery in which their worship consist".¹⁷ Wilkes saw *Siovili* beating on a sacred old teakettle with an iron knife, "making much noise, his face assuming a contemplative expression until he had done with his mummeries".¹⁸ According to Pritchard the new religion "allowed polygamy, dancing, and proclaimed feast days, cured the sick by a miraculous touch, and ultimately selected an old woman for their chief priest".¹⁹

Prophecies preached by *Siovili* were likewise of a Millenarian nature. He foretold that Christ would return to the earth and bring plenty of material goods to the Samoans. After 1829, the *Siovili* religion started to grow rapidly. Chapels for church services were built in the villages inhabited by *Siovili's* adherents. Their ceremonies included prayers, hymn singing, and the celebration of a Christian-like Lord's Supper (Freeman 1959:190).

Interestingly enough, *Siovili* started to preach his new faith in god *Sisu Alaisa*, which obviously comprises a lot of elements borrowed from Christianity, before the arrival of the first missionaries.²⁰ This fact contradicts the claim that movements of this kind arise as a reaction to a strange religion or a disappointment resulting from it. There can be no doubt that *Siovili* acquainted himself with Christian teaching during his voyages on board European ships where he had the opportunity to talk with the Christians, probably with Methodists who came to Samoa as early as 1796.²¹ Besides, he had visited Tahiti, where the London Missionary Society operated and *Mamaia* was active as well. However,

¹⁴ Keil 1992:87 In: Gibson R.P. Samoa 1830 to 1900. Oxford University Press 1970, 65-67.

¹⁵ *Sio* – is a Samoan version of the name Joe; and *Vili* – means gimlet.

¹⁶ Keil 1992:88 In: Pritchard, W.T. Polynesian Reminiscences:of Life in the South Pacific Islands (London, Chapman and Hall, 1866, reprint, Papakura, New Zealand, Southern Book-binding 1985, p. 206.

¹⁷ Keil 1992:88, In: Wilkes, Ch. Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition during the Years 1838, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842 Vol. 2, Philadelphia, Lea and Blanchard 1845, p. 99.

¹⁸ Keil 1992:106, In: Wilkes, Ch. Ibid., Vol. 5, pp. 26-27.

¹⁹ Keil 1992:88, In: Pritchard, W.T. Polynesian Reminiscences:of Life in the South Pacific Islands (London, Chapman and Hall, 1866, reprint, Papakura, New Zealand, Southern Book-binding 1985, p. 206.

²⁰ The successful missionaries arrived in 1835.

²¹ This first attempt London Missionary Society was a failure without a single convert. However, inhabitants have acquired an idea of Christianity. The first success was achieved in Tonga as late as 1822, when the Tahitians joined the English priests.

in addition to this, the Samoans had access to information on Christianity also from white men of various provenience (deserters or whalers) as well as thanks to intensive contacts with neighbouring Tonga.

In addition to obvious Christian features, *Siovili's* faith has absorbed a considerable dose of traditional Samoan polytheism in which the most important god was the creator *Tagaloa* and the spirits of ancestors likewise had the right and ability to interfere into the lives of their descendants. Samoan (and Polynesian) religion admitted the idea that a spirit may be incarnated into a human being and in this way inspire him with his or her ideas or wishes. And it is this fundamental idea that *Siovili* adopted and made a part of his doctrine. *Siovili* was ready to declare that he had such an ability and the supreme God communicated with him.

Siovili compared his supreme god *Sisu Alaisa* with the highest Samoan god *Tagaloa*. He called both of them "celestial deities", which is almost identical with the full name of *Tagaloa*, i. e. *Tagaloa a Lagi*, i.e. *Tagaloa* of the Heaven.²² As mentioned before, in addition to Christian and Samoan elements, *Siovili's* doctrine absorbed some ideas of Tahitian *Mamaia* of which he learned during his voyages throughout Polynesia.

The Tahitians, disappointed by the way of life forced upon them by the missionaries, soon began leaving the new religion en masse, giving preference to their traditional religious ideas and customs like tattooing, etc. In 1826 the Christian convert *Teao* declared that he was possessed by the spirit of Jesus Christ who wanted to announce to the people the beginning of the Millennium (Gunson 1962:214) This was tantamount to a statement that despite the teaching of the missionaries there is no evil in the world, and whatever the Tahitians did, they would commit no bad deed. The only important and relevant religious act is prayer.

Another Tahitian "prophet" was *Hue* who experienced similar visions. Both of them have acquired many adherents. Truly enough, the Tahitians did not return to the abandoned cult of gods, but embraced en masse the new doctrine that promised them a hope for a better life.

According to D. Freeman, *Siovili's* movement was under a strong influence of *Mamaia*, especially as far as the importance of its prophets is concerned, but S. Keil opposes him maintaining that the idea of the importance of the prophets did not need to be borrowed from *Mamaia* because it was deeply rooted in Samoa. In addition to this, *Siovili* did not preach that Millennium was already here and his followers were simply waiting for its arrival in the near future.

The Samoans, just like inhabitants of other Polynesian archipelagoes, accepted the idea of the "great god of the white men" whom they considered a protector and generous donor of welfare and goods owned by the Europeans. This belief helped the islanders to accept the belief in the new deity.

²² Keil 1992:92, In: Elia Tulifau Ta'ase. Beyond Samoan Christianity. A Study of the *Siovili* Cult and the Problems Facing the Church in Samoa Today. Thesis, Pacific Theological College 1971, p. 53.

Siovili chose an old woman, known as a medium and healer to become his chief priestess. One day she announced that *Sisu Alaisa* had appeared to her in the night and said that the end of the world was approaching. *Sisu Alaisa* confirmed that he had decided to settle down and live in Samoa and the islanders would see him arriving upon the waves off the north-west coast of the island of Savaii. On arrival in Samoa, *Sisu Alaisa* would terminate the present way of life. Food, and everything that was required for life would come down from the sky for those who believed in him while the unbelievers would be damned. To prepare for the last days, the priestess ordered the people to weed and clean up the graves in preparation for the resurrection of the dead. They were also to destroy their plantations and crops because *Sisu Alaisa* was going to provide them. All pigs were to be killed and eaten. However, the day of his arrival came and went, but nothing happened. Finally, the old woman announced that she had another message from *Sisu Alaisa*. He "was angry with the present generation of evil-doers, and would not come to them until there were more believers".²³

Around 1844 a young man on Savaii, who was also a *Siovili* and a spirit medium, again announced that the end of the world was soon coming and that everything would be burnt up. Of course this did not occur, but there was a spectacular comet at the time, so that was said to be the fulfilment of the prophecy (Freeman 1959:195).

Siovili and his adherents linked Christ's return with material riches. This longing for welfare is present in songs composed by *Siovili* and his faithful used to learn them by heart.

The rise of this new teaching was indirectly inspired by several waves of influenza after the arrival of Europeans when the natives of Samoa died in great numbers. This circumstance may have been perceived as meaning that the god of the white people does not care too much for the natives. We do not know when the *Siovili's* movement started to recede. However, some indications from 1860 seem to confirm that it had been abandoned. Neither do we know the date of *Siovili's* death, but after 1841 there are no mentions of him. His adherent may have gradually died or converted back to Christianity.

Even today there are respected healers who do not act as media any more, however, people invite them when someone in their vicinity is possessed by a spirit. Visiting healers and exorcists is far from exceptional despite the fact that all Samoans regard themselves as Christians.

Siovili's teaching helped the Samoans to survive in the truly difficult historical period, to survive the first impact of the foreigners and to preserve their identity in the era of the most substantial changes.

Several syncretic sects containing both Christian and traditional religious elements appeared in New Zealand as well. Remarkably enough, it is the Hebrew religious elements that have been absorbed by these sects. The provenance of

²³ Keil 1992:101 In: Pritchard W.T. *Polynesian Reminiscences: of Life in the South Pacific Islands*. London: Chapman and Hall 1966, reprint Papakura New Zealand Southern Book-binding 1985, pp. 206-207.

this phenomenon is of historical as well as of typological nature. Typically enough, after 1840, when New Zealand was included in the British empire, the Maori began perceiving themselves as similar to the Jews. We are like the nomadic Israelites without our homeland, that is what *Te Aroha* said to the Englishman C. Davis in 1849. The idea of a lost Israeli tribe reappeared even in European history, for example in England and it is no accident that it was introduced to New Zealand by Samuel Marsden²⁴ who seems to have speculated that the Maori are descendants of the ten lost Israeli tribes. Protestant missionaries in New Zealand liked to quote examples from the Old Testament and to give children Jewish names. Jesus Christ (at least in this first phase of Christianization) was too distant from the Maori idea of God and too different from Maori tradition and morality, and above all, he was no warrior at all,²⁵ that is, weaker than Jahweh – it was natural for them to be afraid of divine beings rather than to love them.

It is questionable if the early, probably post-contact and esoteric cult of the supreme god *Io (Iho, Kihō)* contributed to the rise of syncretic movements in Polynesia. He was known only to a small circle of priests and chiefs. However, in my opinion it was an obvious discrepancy between the Old and New Testaments that might have instigated the reinterpretation of the Christian doctrine in several parts of Polynesia.

In addition to this, the Maori were perceptive people and noticed that most Europeans did not obey the Biblical commandments and their contact with their God was far from intensive or sincere. In an effort to avoid this hypocrisy some of them decided to look for a solution in new religious doctrines and tried to fuse the best elements of both old Polynesian religion with those of Christianity.

The mass conversion started in New Zealand in a period of considerable chaos. White settlers became a source of a lot of problems in the Maori community, problems that could not be solved in a traditional manner.²⁶ Many Maori arrived at the conclusion that the powerful God of the intruders was obviously protecting the *Pakeha* while the natives were dying (Binney 1966:322). They concluded that the God of the *Pakeha* has sent down a *ngarara* (reptile or monster) and let it to swallow the entrails of the native Maori. It was not long before several Maori prophets started to preach in the 19th century that a turn for better would soon take place. The propagators of Millenarian cults maintained that the time was approaching when the *Pakeha* would be forced to return to the Maori everything they had stolen in the past.²⁷ They believed that their God was not identical with the God of the Europeans.

²⁴ Samuel Marsden operated as missionary in New Zealand. He was also involved in research on traditional culture and language.

²⁵ In Maori society, warriors played an important role and together with aristocracy, to which they belonged ranked among the most respectable social layer.

²⁶ For example uncontrolled usage of guns by Europeans, new mortal diseases, which the *tohungas* were unable to treat etc.

²⁷ Analogy of the cargo cult.

This prophetic period lasted until the end of the 19th century and terminated when the Maori grasped that the modernization of their society was inevitable.

Toward the end of the 19th century a new syncretic sect arose in northern New Zealand, namely the so-called *Papahurihia*. Christianity was spreading at this time in the country, Europeans were settling down upon the island and new problems had to be solved.²⁸ The *tohungas* were helpless and could not heal exotic diseases, and firearms guaranteed their owners a clear superiority over the less advanced Maori tribes. The natives started scorning their pre-Christian religion.

The true name of the founder of the *Papahurihia* sect but he has become known under the name *Te Atua Wera*. He was one of the first pupils of the mission school in Rangihoua.²⁹ The word *Papahurihia* is usually translated as someone who works wonders (*papa* means medium of communication with gods). The sect borrowed many ideas from Christian doctrine and included quite a few Maori religious ideas and thus it is a mixture of Biblical prophecies, of Maori occultism and local prophetic tradition. *Te Atua Wera* resorted to ancient practices of the *tohungas*,³⁰ to ventriloquy and organized seances. The eyewitnesses maintained that the seances were accompanied by whistling. This was the way the spirits of the dead communicated with the living people. Whistling sounds were produced by the prophet in a trance. This movement is also known as *whiowhio*³¹ after this characteristic sound. The missionaries perceived his manners as witchcraft.

In accordance with the Maori ideas, *Papahurihia* taught that the souls of the dead depart to the nether world from Cape Reinga.³² However, the new sect rejected the motif of the souls climbing down the roots of *pohutukawa*³³ upon the Cape and replaced it by a Christian like idea that they climb upwards to a white cloud and thus right to heaven. *Te Atua Wera* had a vision in which he was ordered to worship the Snake. On Saturday evenings they were expected to recite from the Bible and especially the passages concerning Heaven and Hell. The prophet of *Papahurihia* has chosen the Biblical Snake for his god. However, he was unable to understand the snake's ambiguous role in the Bible for there are two seemingly contradictory stories; in the very beginning the snake is a seducer while later he symbolizes the arrival of Christ (Binney 1966: 324).

The adherents of the sect were baptized and acknowledged the Bible. They defended its truthfulness, but maintained that the missionaries offered a false interpretation to the people. *Te Atua Wera* often referred to the Old Testament which he had a chance to read at school and his teachers liked to quote from it.

²⁸ 1814.

²⁹ This phenomenon is relatively frequent with the leaders of movements of this type.

³⁰ Priests – took care of the cult.

³¹ It means whistling (Binney, J. *Papahurihia: Some Thought on Interpretation*. In: *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*, Vol. 75, No 3, 1966:322-323).

³² It is the northernmost cape of north island of New Zealand.

³³ *Metrosideros excelsa*.

In accordance with *Papahurihia* the souls of the deceased in heaven do not feel hunger or thirst, they see only the light, there are enough goods, including boats, guns, and from time to time even murders and amusements occur (Binney 1966: 323).

Te Atua Wera's followers called themselves Hurai, that is Jews. As mentioned before, perhaps it was the missionaries themselves who inspired the Maori with their idea that they might descend from the lost Jewish tribes.³⁴ They adhered to this fictitious hypothesis for some three decades.

Of course, there were several parallels between the two ethnic communities; these, however, were not derived from a common origin but were rooted in typological similarities (e.g. tribal organization, nomadic or seminomadic way of life) based upon universal rules of social development.. And thus the Maori considered themselves a chosen people which were robbed of their country by unwanted aliens. *Papahurihia* supported the Catholics because the latter were rivals of the Protestants belonging to the establishment.

Papahurihia experienced a renaissance during the last decade of the 19th century. Their negative attitude to the missions was typical both for Tahitian *Mamaia* and Maori *Hauhau* (Binney 1966: 330). The adherents of *Papahurihia* regarded their teaching as an improved version of the doctrine propagated by the missionaries. They kept divine services, baptism, the institution of priesthood as well as the principle of holidays. The 1890s gave rise to the cult of the worshippers of *Te Atua Wera* who called up his spirit during seances and his worshippers used to meet even in several parts of the country as late as the 1950s (Parr 1967: 45).

The Maori "prophets" were very active in creating new cults from fragments of their original religion mixed with various elements of the Christian doctrine just as elsewhere in the Pacific region. They were directed against the missionaries as well as against their white society and, naturally enough, their core may be characterized as an element of social resistance against colonial oppression.

In addition to *Papahurihia* mentioned before the syncretic movement *Pai Mārire* arose in colonial New Zealand.³⁵ It has been widely known under the name *Hauhau*, modelled after the combat clamour of the Maori (Ziehr 1984: 38). *Te Whiti* and *Te Ua Haumene* are regarded as the founders of *Pai Mārire*. The sect appeared in 1863 (Parr 1967: 35). *Te Ua*, a young man whom many believed to be psychically handicapped, had a vision during which the two archangels Michael and Gabriel descended to him from a wrecked ship. However he became famous and respected later when he proved his supernatural abilities.

"Handcuffed *Te Ua* had a miraculous vision at night. Michael and Gabriel, the two archangels, appeared again and gave him such strength that he got rid of his fetters. At a later opportunity the archangel ordered him to kill his own son.

³⁴ This idea was propagated by Samuel Marsden, Protestant missionary in New Zealand.

³⁵ *Pai* means good and *mārire* peace.

Te Ua obeyed, caught his son and broke his leg several times. However, when he was preparing to kill him, the archangel stopped him, took the child, washed him, and the child was again healthy. The inner voice ordered *Te Ua* to erect a tall pole and gather all Maori around it. When the angel comes again, he will sing a Trinity hymn, the believers will be able to speak freely and preach to all the peoples of the world" (Krupa 1970: 58).

The old Maori gods were replaced by flocks of angels under the guidance of *Atua Pai Mārire*, the kind and merciful God. *Te Ua* had at his disposal also his special protective spirit embodied into an owl; in the region of Taranaki they regarded the owl as a "hundred-eyed" creature, an omniscient and omniseeing deity (Krupa 1970: 59).

The number of *Te Ua's* adherents has been growing. In 1865, the first conflict of *Hauhau* with the Europeans took place. In accordance with the ancient Maori custom, *Te Ua* had the head of a fallen chief prepared and the head told him that he was the highest prophet. The chief's head told him as well that the Maori will defeat the Pakeha if all the tribes join. The triumph of the sect was celebrated in a bloody style. One of several symbolic triumphs was the murder of a missionary named Volkner. *Te Ua's* son *Kereopa* warned Volkner's semi-Christian followers that the God of *Pai Mārire* would punish them if they would not murder their missionary (Ziehr 1984: 308-309).

Kereopa himself obeyed an ancient and horrible Maori custom, ate both eyes of Volkner and proclaimed in the presence of his people: "Hear me, Israel! These are words of Abraham's, Isaac's and Jacob's God! We are lost and persecuted Jewish tribes. Look here! Listen to me, people! This eye is the English parliament and the other eye the law of New Zealand" (Ziehr 1984: 309).

Te Ua Haumene declared the Anglican faith to be false and ordered the burning of all available copies of the Bible. He forbade Sunday as a holy day because all days are equal before God's face.

The ardent followers of the fresh-born faith visited Maori villages winning over further adherents despite the disgusting baptism. A proselyte had to drink water in which they had bathed the cut-off head of an English captain. Despite these peculiar rituals the adherents of *Pai Mārire* hardly doubted that they are a chosen people and thought their faith was identical with the faith of the ancient Jews (Krupa 1970: 58).

The sect existed less than four years. When the English in 1868 captured their prophet, the movement started to decay (Parr 1967: 35).

In 1856 a new sect appeared among the Maori in New Zealand. It was known as *Wairuarua*, literally "two souls". Its adherents maintained that they believed in Jesus Christ, but declared that they had two souls, and were capable of communicating with the spirits, of healing diseases as well as of exorcizing evil spirits gnawing the people from inside (Parr 1967:43).

A new religion was founded in the 1860s by *Te Kooti* whose true name was *Rikirangi*. In a battle with the English the British troupes captured him and imprisoned him in the Chatham Islands, several hundred km from New Zealand. *Te Kooti*, however, even in banishment did not give up his plan of armed resis-

tance against the British and was just waiting for an opportunity to escape from the Chatham Islands. In an effort to acquire friends for resistance, he invented a new faith named *Wairua Tapu* (Holy Spirit), a mixture of Christianity with Maori paganism. On board a stolen ship *Te Kooti* managed to return home to New Zealand. He resorted to "miracles" to gain further followers and among other things he used to rub his hands with phosphor so that they phosphoresced in the twilight of the church and his countrymen believed in his supernatural abilities. His only goal was to lead a war against the Pakeha (Krupa 1988: 164).

Wairua Tapu is still alive among the Maori. *Te Kooti* has drawn mainly on the Psalms of David, the book of Job, Jeremiah and Salomon. He liked to preach about the suffering of the Israelites in Egypt and compared himself to Moses (Krupa 1970: 60).

In the 20th century *Te Kooti* was replaced by the prophet *Ratana* from the region of Taranaki. He made no significant attempts to modify Christian dogmatics, but he could not avoid working wonders although upon a higher level than his predecessors and gained some supporters even in Japan.

While in the early post-contact period the Polynesians tended to select those features of European culture that suited them, the syncretic religious teachings contained a substantial element of opposition to Christianity, a manifestation of the protest which reflected their feeling of social injustice. The first missionaries obviously contributed to this feeling because not a few of them were prejudiced and intolerant. They naively assumed that the islanders would readily abandon their centuries old tradition and way of life. The gap between Polynesian and European culture was too great and the imported religion too abstract, and the morality of whalers, businessmen and adventurers was far from faultless. Not only they but also the missionaries usually regarded the natives as savages or Satan's children even after their conversion. Converts were often inclined to think that the God of the Europeans simply could not manage everything by himself and that is why they sometimes continued to invoke their ancient gods who must have had a deeper knowledge of many of their problems.

The syncretic sects comprise a significant part of the traditional religion alongside a preference for the faith of the Old Testament because Judaism was obviously closer to the Polynesian way of life than the teaching of the New Testament (Elsmore 1985: 20). Some of the Protestant missionaries supported this attitude among other things by frequently quoting examples from the Old Testament.

The syncretic movements in Polynesia flourished first of all immediately after the conversion when the islanders hoped for a speedy improvement of their economic situation, which was obviously impossible. The resulting frustration could only be healed by new hopes in future. However, the position of Christianity in the mind of population has been gradually consolidated and the process of acculturation advanced. Several sects even rejected the Bible, the concepts of sin, hell, devil and the Day of Judgement (for example *Tikanga Hou*, i.e. "New Truth"), while others preached pacifism (cf. *Parihaka* village), or even the necessity to build a temple after the example of the Hebrews (*Kohititanga Marama*).

Far from all sects accepted Christ as their supreme god. The leader of the *Hauhau* sect opted for Jahweh and there are different solutions. Thus the Tahitian *Mamaia* chose Christ while Jahweh was, according to them, a representative of the Europeans. The New Guinean prophet *Marafi* preferred Satan.

It seems that a great majority of these movements arose under similar circumstances when early converts rejected the new religion because it did not fulfil their expectations³⁶ (Binney 1966: 322).

The prophets of the new movements did not limit their adherents in their personal life, which strictly contrasted with the puritanical attitude of the missionaries. Christianity, as it turned out, guaranteed no immediate welfare to the converts. No wonder that one of the most frequent features of the new sect was foretelling the Millennium and the welfare of which the Europeans robbed the islanders. The same idea is inherent in the cargo cult of Melanesia, especially of New Guinea. The idea of the new order is very simple: "Loaded ships will anchor in the harbours, flocks of fish will besiege the coasts, bottles of wine and cows will fall from heaven."³⁷ It is far from surprising that movements reminiscent of the cargo cult reappear outside Oceania, for example in tropical Africa and in Latin America (Krupa 1997: 11). Put briefly, its core consists in the belief that Europeans have robbed the natives of their riches (or goods, that is cargo) and the day will come when they will have to return the luxury in which they live to its legitimate owners.

Several theories try to explain the rise of Millenarism. According to the anthropologist I.C. Jarvie such a belief occurs when a population suffers from a lifestyle that is hard and disagreeable and they see no end in sight. Instead they focus on "dreams of an unreal world better in every respect than this one. A transition between the two, other than an apocalypse, they cannot imagine."³⁸ There have been many Millenarian movements throughout the world, down through history. In Polynesia and Micronesia, they are comparatively rare – only about forty cases are known, while there are hundreds in Melanesia.³⁹

A very widely known Millenarian movement preaching an early arrival of the Messiah and an era of universal welfare in the Pacific is the cargo cult. Millenarian movements formerly spread throughout Polynesia are far from identical with the cargo cult despite some analogies. One of the shared features is the leader, usually a simple, charismatic man who maintains his prophetic role, but has no especially high status in the society and whose education is modest. All Millenarian movements have borrowed rituals from Christianity as well as many elements of the traditional local religion. Typical features are prophets

³⁶ The natives believed, that if they accepted the new religion of the strong powerful God of the Europeans, they would acquire the same welfare as the Europeans.

³⁷ Binney 1966: 324, In: S. Crook 1828, Gunson 1962:226.

³⁸ Keil 1992:102 In:I.C.Jarvie *The Revolution in Anthropology*. New York. The Humanities Press 1964, p. 116.

³⁹ Which is obviously due to the relatively high homogeneity of Polynesia and Micronesia, while inhabitants of Melanesia are fragmented into hundreds of tribes.

and media, expectation of an early Millennium that is closely linked with the promising era of universal welfare. They are historically linked with the acquisition of material welfare and may be characterized as a specific reaction to the challenge of a new culture.

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