

Third, haosgels' stories are suffused with stories of sexual pressure from male employers. Uwan's story is not unique; there are many accounts here of colonial mastas who had sexual relations with domestic servants and other ni-Vanuatu women (6off, 96–97). Some women reported living in fear of their colonial mastas, which would have surely increased the latter's coercive potential. Other women acknowledged that they preferred to work in the fields rather than the house to avoid such risks. But some also reported successfully refusing sex, sometimes by quitting work (59, 68). More consensual sexual relations developed between some haosgels and mastas (80–82, 95–97) and some of these became recognized as marriages, even rivaling extant marriages with a white misis (71–73). Several women lamented how white fathers neglected their children with ni-Vanuatu mothers (62–64).

The collaborative workshop from which this book emerged was aimed not only at analyzing the situation of domestic workers in Vanuatu but also at effecting some positive changes through promoting respect and human rights. The book concludes with a "House-girl Awareness Pamphlet" where several rights are articulated: minimum wages (16,000 vatu per month in 2003), and rights to breaks, holidays, sick leave, and maternity leave, and to report a boss who "hits or touches you" (150). Hopefully both the pamphlet and this book will help improve the situation of domestic workers in Vanuatu.

This book is highly recommended. There might have been more editorial analysis of the integrating themes and

more theoretical reflection in relation to questions posed by the broader literature on gender and domestic work. For example, why have domestic servants been predominantly women in Vanuatu, at least since World War II (unlike many parts of colonial Papua New Guinea and Africa)? What are the differences between indentured and waged domestic work and between concepts of value in commodity and kastom economies? How salient was Christian conversion in transforming models of families, households, and domestic work? How might the material on contemporary domestic work in this Pacific archipelago be situated in ongoing debates about contemporary transnational flows of nannies and maids? Still, perhaps posing these broader comparative and theoretical questions might have diminished the volume of the indigenous female voices herein and even the attraction of the book for Pacific audiences.

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*Une pirogue pour le Paradis: Le culte de John Frum à Tanna (Vanuatu)*, by Marc Tabani. Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 2008. ISBN 978-2-7351-1193-0, 254 pages including photos, figures, bibliographic references, map. €20.00.

John Frum first appeared on the Vanuatu island of Tanna in the late 1930s. Since then, successive generations of ethnographic observers have contributed to a voluminous literature dedi-

cated to the “longest-lived cargo cult” in the Pacific. It therefore comes as no surprise to discover a new author—French ethnologist Marc Tabani—who has taken on the challenge of producing a definitive exploration of the John Frum phenom. Tabani’s main ambition is to capture the previously marginal Tannese voice, thereby offering a presumably more authoritative—because “indigenous”—set of statements which are meant to unveil the inner workings and contradictions of this most persistent of Melanesian mysteries. As he states, “I will seek to show, in the following chapters, the mystic air that this vision [the John Frum movement] retains seventy years after its initial inspiration” (151).

On balance, this objective falls flat because factual ethnographic accuracy becomes a mistaken substitute for analytical rigor. Like many of his predecessors, Tabani fails to transcend the tired tropes of “cultic” mystery and ethnographic discovery that have become inseparable from the John Frum storyline. Before delving into his text it is worth remembering Lamont Lindstrom’s observation, “The John Frum archive is predominantly a Western achievement. Few Tannese voices are recorded directly therein. . . . Some Melanesian movements . . . have produced their own sacred texts. John Frum, however, still awaits his Saint Paul” (*Cargo Cult* [1993], 135–136).

The wait, it would seem, is over. Tabani’s purpose is to revisit, often in quasi-positivist detail, the origin, history, and most recent crises of the John Frum movement as reconstructed from foreign texts and key local informants. Consequently, principal among the attractions of his book are

the extensive transcripts of interviews that Tabani held with well-known John Frum personalities. These materials, “in the raw,” can provide certain insights into the ways Tannese interlocutors interact with and present themselves to outsiders in search of John Frum; whether they constitute authoritative narratives about how most Tannese conceptualize John Frum, however, is an unanswered question that lingers uncomfortably between the lines.

One of the more problematic aspects of these transcripts is that they have been translated and rendered exclusively in French, thereby occluding some of the original nuances expressed in Bislama. Moreover, in regard to linguistic accuracy, it is also telling that, presumably for reasons of ethnographic effect, Tabani peppered his text with terms in Kwamera, one of several Tannese vernaculars, but it is clear that he is not conversant in this or other local languages.

More importantly, all of the persons interviewed are men, and prominent men at that: chiefs, pastors, prophets. Tabani tirelessly hunted down the best-known stars of the John Frum theater over a decade of successive visits to Tanna. The consequent absence of women’s perspectives is only one of the various signs that alert us to the fact that we are being offered not so much an insight into broader Tannese values associated with John Frum, as a heady selection of “insider” autochthonous data couched in a tone of discovery and purported analysis that is consistently ambiguous and even contradictory.

To take one prominent example, the introduction offers an uninspired over-

view of the anthropological literature on cargo cult, in which Tabani takes previous authors to task for employing terms such as “millenarianism,” “prophetism,” “nativism,” and “revivalism.” By contrast, he offers to provide new insights by way of in situ observations focusing on the phenomenon of “radical social change” (*changement social drastique* [26]; also *processus de changements drastiques* [240]). This catchphrase is never really worked out, however, and throughout the rest of the book Tabani’s admonitions are forgotten as he lapses once and again into a style reminiscent of journalistic description rather than thoughtful anthropological reflection. John Frum thereby becomes a multiple phenomenon, ripe with “millenarian processes” (10, 67, 241); “cultic fervor” (241); “symbolic renderings” (64, 192, 239); and “therapeutic prophetism” (215)—terms that are deployed haphazardly and without serious explanation.

In fact, Tabani fails almost from the start to reflect on how John Frum is a construct driven largely by extralocal narratives and projections. This becomes clear during his ethnological description, which begins with a panoramic summary of Tannese “cosmology” as variously reconstructed from the widely different work of authors such as Jean Guiart, Joël Bonnemaison, and Lindstrom. The intention here is apparently to introduce the indigenous kinship structures, origin myths, exotic objects, values, and rituals that are necessary to allow one to penetrate the seemingly incomprehensible longevity and logic of John Frum “cultism.”

Thereafter, Tabani discusses several versions of the John Frum founding

myth: the movement first emerged around 1937 in the southwest coast of Tanna, but eventually shifted to the east of the island, where it found an enduring niche in the visually stunning environs of Sulphur Bay. It is in and around Sulphur Bay that most of Tabani’s story unfolds, although he constantly reminds us about the behind-the-scenes politicking between rival John Frum claimants from opposite sides of the island. This strategy of contrasting diverse and competing sources of authority dominates the middle and final chapters, which come to a climax with a description of the most recent twists, turns, and leadership fragmentation enacted by the three well-known prophets and chiefs: Fred Nasse, Joe Keidu, and Isak Wan.

One of this book’s principal strengths is that it offers a highly detailed and updated exposition of the key events that have shaped John Frum. Tabani provides a wealth of original and previously inaccessible data regarding the recent history of Tanna as told by key local informants. The quality of this information deserves to be highlighted precisely because it was gathered over the course of many years of dedicated work in the field, and constitutes a unique set of valuable and diverse sources for researchers interested in the recent history of Tanna, Vanuatu, and the Pacific Islands more broadly.

However, Tabani’s neopositivist pursuit of data also represents his principal weakness, because in the process he pays lip service to serious scholarship in pursuit of a more attractive but ultimately unsatisfying style of ethnography-cum-descriptive reportage. This may be indicative of

Tabani's perceived intention of appealing to a broader French readership, but to the extent that he is an anthropologist and this work is published by an academic publisher, his work falls short of the standards that one should expect from a discussion of such an intensively analyzed and critiqued subject.

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*The Future of Tokelau: Decolonizing Agendas 1975–2006*, by Judith Huntsman with Kelihiano Kalolo. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007. ISBN 978-0-8248-3254-4, viii + 296 pages, notes, references, index. Paper, US\$40.00.

*The Future of Tokelau* is an important and challenging study of the recent history of Tokelau and its relationship with New Zealand as a colonial and decolonizing power. The book is important because it covers a very critical phase in Tokelau's recent history, potentially of interest to a wide readership. It documents in great detail the consequences of increased interaction between various village institutions, the growing communities of Tokelauans living overseas (mainly in New Zealand), the New Zealand Foreign Service, and the United Nations, to mention some of the major actors in this transnational social field. The text is challenging because for the most part it unashamedly argues against any outside involvement in Tokelau affairs, despite occasional mention of pleas from Tokelau authorities to the

contrary. While the book cannot, however, be said to romanticize tradition against the workings of modernity, the authors seem to view nationhood as inherently contrary to the Tokelau way of life (faka-Tokelau). The reason for this stance can be traced to the historical relationships between the three atolls Fakaofu, Nukunonu, and Atafu, which are competitive and at times antagonistic—hardly an ideal model for establishing nationhood.

Readers with an interest in the precolonial aspects of Tokelau's past, and the dynamics of atoll politics and village life, can favorably read the present work in company with the comprehensive volume *Tokelau: A Historical Ethnography* by Judith Huntsman and Antony Hooper (1997). Huntsman and Hooper have conducted anthropological research on and in relation to Tokelau since 1967. The seriousness and extent of their engagement with Tokelau provides an example for other scholars to follow. Their early work concentrated on traditional anthropological issues of social organization such as kinship, gender, land tenure, and subsistence economy to mention some, and used the standard method of participant observation as their tool. But the more recent publications have a decidedly historical orientation, and are based on a combination of observational data, earlier field notes, interviews, and material gained from archival studies.

Whereas this approach, called historical ethnography by Huntsman and Hooper, and continued by Huntsman with Kalolo, provides rich and very valuable information about aspects of